



Peripheral Visions: Politics, Society, and the Challenges of Modernity in Yucatan

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Yucatan has been called “a world apart”—cut off from the rest of Mexico by geography and culture. Yet, despite its peripheral location, the region experienced substantial change in the decades after independence. As elsewhere in Mexico, apostles of modernization introduced policies intended to remold Yucatan in the image of the advanced nations of the day. Indeed, modernizing change began in the late colonial era and continued throughout the 19th century as traditional patterns of land tenure were altered and efforts were made to divest the Catholic Church of its wealth and political and intellectual influence. Some changes, however, produced fierce resistance from both elites and humbler Yucatecans and modernizers were frequently forced to retreat or at least reach accommodation with their foes.

Covering topics from the early 19th century to the late 20th century, the essays in this collection illuminate both the processes of change and the negative reactions that they frequently elicited. The diversity of disciplines covered by this volume—history, anthropology, sociology, economics—illuminates at least three overriding challenges for study of the peninsula today. One is politics after the decline of the Institutional Revolutionary Party: What are the important institutions, practices, and discourses of politics in a post-postrevolutionary era? A second trend is the scholarly demystification of the Maya: Anthropologists have shown the difficulties of applying monolithic terms like Maya in a society where ethnic relations are often situational and ethnic boundaries are fluid. And a third consideration: researchers are only now beginning to grapple with the region’s transition to a post-henequen economy based on tourism, migration, and the assembly plants known as maquiladoras. Challenges from agribusiness and industry will no doubt continue to affect the peninsula’s fragile Karst topography and unique environments.

Contributors: Eric N. Baklanoff, Helen Delpar, Paul K. Eiss, Ben W. Fallaw, Gilbert M. Joseph, Marie Lapointe, Othón Baños Ramírez, Hernán Menéndez Rodríguez, Lynda S. Morrison, Terry Rugeley, Stephanie J. Smith

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