

Merkel might have complicated further the politics of circulation. In chapter 6, Merkel interprets Bastide's reluctance to go as far as Florestan Fernandes to trouble racial democracy as being rooted in his concerns about the future of French race relations under decolonization (p. 174). Might Bastide's anxieties have affected how he engaged the Black intellectuals whose testimonies served as the raw material for the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) studies? There may have been an opportunity to delve deeper into the Florestan Fernandes archive, which Merkel lists as a source base and where the UNESCO interviews are housed, but the curious will have to look elsewhere.

It would be easy to mistake *Terms of Exchange* as being of value only to the narrow specialist. However, it is part of a broader project to bring the global South to the center of the cataclysmic events and ideas of the last five centuries. Whether it be the Enlightenment, modernity, or antiracism, Latin America has never been on the periphery of these movements, but among its vanguard.

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Strength from the Waters: A History of Indigenous Mobilization in Northwest Mexico.

By JAMES V. MESTAZ. Confluencias. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2022. Photographs. Maps. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. xiii, 298 pp. Paper, \$30.00.

In 1956, in the northwestern state of Sinaloa, Mexican officials chose to decorate a newly finished hydroelectric dam with a replica statue of the Aztec rain god, Tlaloc. The dam formed part of a massive federal investment in the region's commercial agriculture. In addition to generating electricity, the dam served to control the flow of precious water from the Fuerte River. Inspired by other regional development initiatives, such as the United States' Tennessee Valley Authority, the dam's proponents imagined it as a progressive tool for the transformation and uplift of the region.

The decision to adorn the dam with the Tlaloc statue speaks to one of the central contradictions of twentieth-century Mexico: federal policy and rhetoric celebrated the country's Indigenous past while often marginalizing living Indigenous citizens. In the case of the Sinaloa dam, the native Mayo inhabitants of the region watched as their sacred river was seized, controlled, and contaminated by outsiders.

James Mestaz plumbs this contradiction in his excellent book *Strength from the Waters: A History of Indigenous Mobilization in Northwest Mexico*. Over the course of an introduction, five chapters, and an epilogue, Mestaz combines archival research and oral histories to narrate Mayo peoples' survival strategies across the twentieth century. From the end of the nineteenth century through the second half of the twentieth, Mayo individuals and communities navigated evolving federal land and agricultural policy. Over time, those policies empowered Yori (non-Mayo) agriculturalists and commercial interests. This emergent commercial agriculture was lauded as an economic success,

part of the Mexican miracle. But as Mestaz points out, for the Mayo “the cost would be high” (p. 12).

Scholarship on twentieth-century Mexico has been dominated by questions related to the country’s 1910 revolution and the postrevolutionary state that emerged in its aftermath. That focus generated a rich literature that has wrestled with questions of state formation, political authoritarianism, and popular culture. Yet those same strengths have also served as limitations: the literature remained defined by national concerns and the pernicious notion of Mexican exceptionalism. Mestaz effectively challenges this provincialism in the historiography of Mexico through an engagement with two key bodies of work: environmental history and Indigenous history.

One of the stated goals and successful contributions of *Strength from the Waters* is its centering of Mayo voices and cosmogony. In the book, Mestaz does not merely represent Mayo people but rather takes seriously Mayo philosophy. He underscores how the Mayo understand Juyya Annia (the natural world) as one based on reciprocal relations between all living things. This point is central to his discussion of the Mayo’s relationship to the Fuerte River, a relationship that involves mutual obligations and respect. While narrating these dynamics, Mestaz is careful to avoid painting Mayo people and history as static. Rather, he shows the Mayo in all their complexity, as people who adapt, evolve, and are at times riven by internal differences and debate. One of the most interesting examples of this careful analysis is found in chapter 3, as Mestaz examines Mayo perceptions of declining rainfall in the 1950s.

In chapter 4 the author develops a comparison between the divergent Mayo histories of Sinaloa and the neighboring state of Sonora. This proves the utility of Mestaz’s nimble analysis of Indigeneity. Yet one is left wondering what we might learn from even more comparative work. Much of the literature on Indigeneity in Mexico focuses on the country’s south. In this sense, *Strength from the Waters* offers an important contribution to Indigenous history in the Mexican north. But what might we learn by putting these northern and southern histories in more sustained dialogue with each other?

While *Strength from the Waters* challenges certain tendencies in Mexican historiography, many of its findings confirm long-standing assumptions. Scholars have long argued that after President Lázaro Cárdenas’s *sexenio* (1934–40), the Mexican federal state shifted its policies to favor the growth of corporate agriculture at the expense of small farmers and Indigenous peoples. Mestaz summarizes the Mayo experience in Sinaloa thus: “As large landowners gained control of irrigation water in the mid-twentieth century, they used this leverage to marginalize the Mayo farmers who had long been there. The Mexican state either turned a blind eye to or—as a stack of denied petitions grew into an impressive pile—were complicit in the process of Indigenous land dispossession” (p. 160).

As historians, how do we balance this understanding of the outcomes of Mexican federal policy with an acknowledgment that its official rhetoric, at particular historical moments, proved useful to Indigenous subjects? How do we narrate Indigenous agency while underscoring processes of dispossession? Mestaz successfully grapples with this contradiction in clear and compelling prose, demonstrating how Mayo peoples

advocated for themselves at every turn, even while they faced diminishing hopes of retaining their lands and relationship to the Fuerte River.

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Agrarian History of the Cuban Revolution: Dilemmas of Peripheral Socialism.

By JOANA SALÉM VASCONCELOS. Translated by BHUVI LIBANIO. Studies in Critical Social Sciences / New Scholarship in Political Economy. Leiden: Brill, 2023. Maps. Figures. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxiii, 330 pp. Cloth, \$196.00.

Agrarian History of the Cuban Revolution: Dilemmas of Peripheral Socialism by historian Joana Salém Vasconcelos is a meticulously researched study about development politics and the economy in Cuba after its 1959 revolution, translated from Portuguese and originally published in Brazil in 2016. Grounded in political economy methods, the book relies on a framework drawn from dependency theorists, especially Celso Furtado. A study framed in such a way might feel anachronistic after more recent historiographical turns, but with it Vasconcelos significantly expands our understanding of the logics and workings of the Cuban revolutionary economy.

At its core, the book traces Cuba's attempts to move from a highly unequal "saccharocracy" to an industrialized, sovereign, and socialist state. The book understands Cuba's prolonged underdevelopment as a consequence of its peripheral role in capitalist structures—a feature determined by its colonial past. How Cuba's revolutionary government dealt with obstacles that arose from its attempts to shed this determination is the central question throughout.

The first chapter provides an overview of the problematic structure of land tenure following Cuba's independence and through the rise of the US-dominated sugar industry. The prerevolutionary state's fundamental economic attributes, Vasconcelos concludes, made it incapable of solving Cuba's persistent development challenges. In this view, Cuba's 1959 revolution was essentially a revolution against the system of dependent agrarian capitalism that undergirded the island's underdevelopment. As the "real engine of the revolutionary process," Cuba's agrarian reform takes center stage (p. 76). Chapters 2 and 3 trace the debates and policies around the revolution's first (1959) and second (1963) agrarian reforms, respectively; the fourth chapter provides an impressive in-depth analysis of the famous 1970 ten-million-ton sugar harvest that served to bookend the first decade of the Cuban Revolution.

The book revisits classic studies about the effects of revolutionary policy on the agricultural economy, written by experts at the time—Jacques Chonchol, René Dumont, Michel Gutelman, Orlando Borrego, and Regino Boti, for example—rekindling debates about how Cuba transitioned to socialism that were never resolved in the historiography. The author brings new interpretations, with more than 15 oral history interviews that she conducted with key actors who led agricultural planning in Cuba. Their voices