

A CONCISE HISTORY OF MEXICO

This concise history looks at Mexico from political, economic, and cultural perspectives, portraying Mexico's struggle to break out of the colonial past and assert its viability as a sovereign state in a competitive world. In this third edition, Hamnett adds new material on Mexico's regional and international roles as they have emerged in the twenty-first century, including membership of supra-national organisations (including and moving beyond NAFTA), the Mexican drug war between government officials and gangs, and the immigration and border crises within the United States. He also discusses Mexico's relationship to the outside world, particularly its efforts to broaden the range of political and commercial associations, especially with European countries, the rest of Latin America, and the Pacific Rim through trade agreements with supra-national organisations.

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A CONCISE HISTORY OF MEXICO

Third Edition

BRIAN R. HAMNETT

University of Essex



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PREFACE TO THE THIRD EDITION

The first edition appeared in 1999 and the second in 2006. There were substantial changes in the country between these two editions, notably the loss of power in 2000 by the monopoly party, the PRI. There have been further, and perhaps more dramatic, changes from 2006 to the present time. This alone requires fresh treatment and a revision of the opening and final chapters of the second edition. At the same time, Mexico's international and regional contexts have radically altered since 2006, including membership of supra-national organisations (beyond NAFTA, that is), not least of which is the Pacific Trade and Investment Partnership (TPP) and the Pacific Alliance between Mexico, Colombia, Peru, and Chile, both in 2016. Relations with the United States still remain central, nevertheless. Cross-border migration, although diminishing, continues to be an overriding issue between these two North American countries. Migration and the impact of NAFTA on specific regions in the USA were both issues in the US presidential elections of 2016. The extension of conflict with and between *narcotraficante* gangs has had international implications.

Chapter 1 needed rethinking, because the overall issues have changed since the first and second editions, and my perspective has altered accordingly. I reaffirm the original principle of this chapter, namely, that the book should begin with a discussion of what Mexico is like now.

Preface to the Third Edition

In 2012, the opposition party, the PAN, lost power and the PRI has been re-elected. We are now able to assess in retrospect the period of PAN supremacy, and what the return of the PRI might signify. The presidential election of 2018 is likely to have profound significance both internally and internationally.

On the whole, the existing text from Chapters 2–7 stands as previously published. There have been a few detailed alterations, but the structure, periodisation, and exposition still remain valid. One commentator noted that I had failed to mention Mexico's first President, Guadalupe Victoria (1824–9). This is easily remedied. The explanation was my attempt to spare the reader too many details of the complicated early political life of the new Republic in Chapter 5 on the period of 1821–67.

As I was walking through the site of the pyramids of Teotihuacan again a few months ago (for the first time since 1966 during my first visit to Mexico), I was struck by its immensity. I felt that I should say more than I have already (in the second edition) on the Pre-Columbian era. Recent discoveries have placed the first known cultures in Peru earlier than those in Mexico.

In the second edition, I particularly enjoyed constructing and writing Chapter 9 regarding cultural developments. This topic was absent in the first edition. In this third edition, I have transformed it into Chapter 8, putting it before the two new final chapters. These deal with Mexico's experience after the year 2000. I felt it necessary to break up the discussion of politics and the economy, which had predominated until this point, and to bring cultural developments more fully into the body of the text, rather than left to the last, almost as an afterthought.

Preface to the Third Edition

In Chapters 9 and 10, my aim has been to present Mexico as a rapidly changing and dynamic North American society. More basic data has been included in these two chapters, giving a clearer picture of ordinary people's lives: material on education, standard of living, the relationship between public and private sectors, infrastructure, and so on.

In the first and second editions, I emphasised Mexican developments in relation to those in the United States, especially after the War of 1846–48. The position of Mexicans in the USA remains a constant issue. In both the first and second editions, I made a point of viewing territories north of the Rio Grande as part of Mexican history until 1848, rather than as US territories which accidentally happened to have a Hispanic past. I continue to think that, despite Mexican attempts at diversification, the particular relationship with the United States, although continually uncertain, is what distinguishes Mexico from the other Latin American countries, most especially, of course, the border issue.

While I have maintained that approach in the third edition, I have stressed here two points which modify this relationship: first, the relative decline of the US position in Latin America from the 2000s, and, second, the increasing importance of Latin American countries' relationships with one another and their integration with supra-national organisations beyond the subcontinent, especially with regard to the Pacific Rim and to Asiatic countries, not the least of which is China.

Parallel to the changes mentioned above, I have updated the Chronology and the Bibliography.

PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

In the years since the publication of the first edition, Mexican studies have continued to expand, as the additions to the bibliography clearly demonstrate. Mexico entered a new phase in its history, when in the presidential elections of July 2000, the electorate voted the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) out of power. Mexicans asked themselves in 2000 whether their country had finally become a working democracy, in which opposition parties gained national power and the institutions of federalism functioned effectively. High expectations of a reforming presidency gradually petered out in the subsequent years amid charges of empty rhetoric, unfulfilled promises and political confusion. I have included a brief analysis of the Fox Presidency of 2000–6 in a new Chapter 8. Since I am a historian and not a ‘political scientist’, I make no predictions about either forthcoming election results or future developments in the country.

This second edition retains the structure, periodisation and themes of the first. However, I have amended certain sections, particularly in Chapter 2, in the light of further reading, and corrected a factual error in Chapter 4, which should never have appeared in the first place. At the same time, I have removed several comments on the events of the later 1990s in Chapter 7, which seemed to be important at the time but which now do not. In

Preface to the Second Edition

retrospect, the first edition seemed to lean too far in the direction of economic and political analysis. I have sought to correct the balance by including discussion in a new Chapter 9 on key aspects of Mexican cultural life, particularly literature and cinema. Both of these have had considerable impact in the international community. This chapter also responds to comment received in conversation that Mexico first struck the attention through its contemporary literature and cinema.

Mexican newspapers can be read on the Internet. 'Latin American Newsletters: Latin American Regional Report – Mexico and NAFTA', published in London monthly, provides detailed information to English-language readers.

I am particularly grateful to Professor Valerie Fraser, Department of Art History and Theory, University of Essex, and Curator of the University of Essex Collection of Latin American Art, for assistance in selecting three images from the collection as fresh illustrations for this edition. Similarly, I must thank Dr Roderick McCrorie, Department of Mathematics, University of Essex, for the use of his Private Collection of Mexican Lithographs. I received considerable help in the technology of picture transmission from Belinda Waterman, Secretary in the Department of History.

PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

Research on Mexico is an exciting and fast-developing topic. Perspectives are repeatedly changing. Mexico, with a population around 95 million, forms part of the North American sub-continent. Since the early sixteenth century, it has been part of the Atlantic world that resulted from European expansion. Before that time, Mexico was also part of a pre-Columbian world unknown to Europeans. For that reason, the country has a complex multi-ethnic and multi-cultural pattern that continues to have an impact on contemporary events. Nevertheless, anyone interested in Mexico quickly discovers that there are few things for the beginner to read. At the same time, those who perhaps might have returned from their first visit to the country will frequently look in vain for a book which enables them to analyse what they have seen with any thematic coherence.

I first went to Mexico as a research student in January 1966. A great deal of my own history has been lived there since that time, and the country itself has in some respects changed beyond recognition. Yet, at the same time, particularly in the provinces and the villages, and in general attitudes and assumptions, a great deal of the traditional outlook, for better or for worse, still persists.

Approaching Mexican history as I initially did from the geographical perspectives of the centre and south, the

Preface to the First Edition

core zones of Mesoamerican civilisation, I was always conscious of the deeply rooted inheritance of the indigenous American past. My consciousness of the importance of the pre-Columbian era has grown over the years, particularly since the region I originally studied was Oaxaca, the centre of Zapotec and Mixtec cultures and still a state with an indigenous majority. My specialisation then was the late colonial era. When I first arrived in Mexico I came by sea from Cádiz after a long period of study in the Archive of the Indies in Seville. I sailed on a 6,000-ton Spanish ship which took two and a half weeks to reach Veracruz by way of Venezuela, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. After the turbulent January winds across the Gulf of Mexico, I certainly did not feel like a Conquistador when I first arrived on Mexican soil. Nevertheless, I had come to Mexico to study the colonial era, and bold decisions had to be made as to how to go about it. In the cities and towns of the central core of Mexico from Zacatecas (where the north begins) to Oaxaca in the south, the richness of a colonial culture transforming from European to American can be immediately appreciated. Cities such as Puebla, Tlaxcala, Querétaro, Guanajuato, Morelia (then Valladolid), San Luis Potosí, Zacatecas and the capital itself all exhibit an architectural and artistic wealth comparable to European cities of the period. My experience as a 'Mexicanist' began that way. However, many other tendencies have emerged since then, the most recent being deepening interest in the north. Readers will find the north and the 'far north' (currently described in the USA as the 'American Southwest') abundantly present in the following pages.

Preface to the First Edition

This book adopts a number of significant positions. It does not start in 1821 with the independence of Mexico from the Spanish Empire. It does not assume that in historical perspective Mexico should be defined as the truncated political entity of the period after 1836–53, when the United States acquired half of Mexico's claimed territory. The approach is thematic as well as chronological, allusive perhaps rather than all-inclusive. The book opens with a look at Mexico today and a few suggestions about how it came to be that way. After this, we shall then go back to the pre-Columbian era for the real historical beginning, and continue forwards from there through a combination of themes and chronology. The periodisation I have adopted corresponds more to contemporary reinterpretations of Mexican history than to traditional approaches.

In attempting a revised periodisation, I still found I had to compromise significantly. I had originally hoped to bridge the traditional historiographical divisions at Independence (1810–21) and the Revolution (1910–40) by a more radical periodisation: 'Destabilisation and Fragmentation, 1770–1867'; 'Reconstruction, 1867–1940'; and 'The Monopoly Party, 1940–2000'. However, I still found that the dividing lines at 1810 and 1910 could not and should not be avoided. At the same time, I have compromised by placing these more traditional turning points within the context of my original broader sweeps. It seemed to me also that the collapse of the French Intervention and with it Maximilian's Second Empire in 1867 represented a major turning point in the nineteenth century. This signified the end of European attempts to recover control in Mexico and assured the survival of the

Preface to the First Edition

sovereign state which had emerged from the War with the United States (1846–8). Similarly, 1940 and 1970 emerged as subsequent points of arrival and departure. The former initiated the period of consolidation of revolutionary changes and provided a symbolic starting point for three decades of economic expansion and political stability; the latter opened the way for descent into three decades of political division and economic dislocation. These lines of demarcation are, of course, subject to criticism and revision. I hope that the question of periodisation will occupy part of the ongoing historical debate concerning the interpretation of Mexican (and Latin American) history.

Colleagues and friends in Mexico and elsewhere have contributed to this book, sometimes without realising it. Many rewarding conversations helped to give it shape. Dr Josefina Zoraída Vázquez (El Colegio de México) has been a continuous source of encouragement and support in many of my recent projects, and always a stimulating critic and discussant. Professor Brian Connaughton (UAM – Iztapalapa) has also been a great help in probing the problems and issues of latecolonial and nineteenth-century Mexican history, not only as a result of seminars at the UAM, but also in regular, three-hour breakfasts in Mexico City, which have ranged across the dynamics of Mexican culture. Dr Bernardo García Martínez (El Colegio de México), author of an alternative concise history of Mexico, pressed home to me the dynamics of the north in a memorable conversation in a Galician restaurant in Mexico City in March 1996, and thereby contributed decisively to my shift in perspective. Professor Paul Vanderwood (San Diego State

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University), who has been a source of ideas and a good critic over two decades, gave me his hospitality in San Diego at a crucial stage of rethinking and writing early in January 1998. The libraries of the Instituto José María Luis Mora and the Centro de Estudios de Historia de México (CONDUMEX) provided agreeable places of study. Students and colleagues at the State University of New York at Stony Brook, Strathclyde University, and Essex University helped refine the ideas and interpretations offered here. I am particularly grateful to Xavier Guzmán Urbiola and Carlos Silva Cázares, in Mexico City, for their help in selecting the illustrations and maps which form a significant part of this work.

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Mexican newspapers, national and provincial, have, as in the two previous editions, provided immense material for Chapters 9 and 10 of this third edition. Similarly, the London-based *Latin American Newsletters: Latin American Regional Reports: Mexico and NAFTA*, has again provided me with a great deal of ongoing information and comment

Acknowledgements

on political and economic issues and trends in Mexico. I have also found *LatAm Investor* (London) of considerable value in identifying current investor perspectives and in setting Mexico within its wider Latin American context.

ABBREVIATIONS

APEC	Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CTM	Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos
DEA	Drug Enforcement Agency
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FSTSE	Federación de Sindicatos de Trabajadores al Servicio del Estado
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
MORENA	Movimiento Regeneracion Nacional
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPEC	Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries
PAN	Partido de Acción Nacional
PARM	Partido Auténtico de la Revolución Mexicana
PEMEX	Petroleos Mexicanos
PETROBRAS	Petroleo Brasileiro
PRI	Partido Revolucionario Institucional
PRM	Partido de la Revolución Mexicana
UNAM	Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNS	Unión Nacional Sinarquista