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The Human Tradition in Mexico. Jeffrey M. Pilcher, ed. Wilmington, Delaware: SR Books, 2003. 243 pps. With index. Paper. \$16.95.

History Department
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

The Human Tradition in Latin America (Scholarly Resources, 2 volumes, 1987, 1989), edited by William H. Beezley and Judith Ewell, is one of, if not the best supplemental textbooks ever published in the field of Latin American History. Its compelling stories of individuals stir students even in our cynical world. Beezley and Ewell led the way to a crucial transformation of the methods by which we all have taught the introductory survey. *The Human Tradition* helped begin the trend toward teaching Latin American history through the lives of everyday people. Scholarly Resources with editors William H. Beezley and Colin M. MacLachlan have established a new series, *The Human Tradition around the World*, to follow up on the acknowledged success of the first volumes. Jeffrey M. Pilcher's **The Human Tradition in Mexico** is the latest of these collections.

The volume sets out to "traverse the labyrinths of Mexican history through the lives of common people" (xiii), "who might scarcely merit a footnote in a standard textbook of Mexican history" (xvi). The editor chose these people "not because they represent some composite of everyday man or woman, but because they faced challenges common to all Mexicans of their generations." (xvi) In fact, the people are anything but ordinary. Many of them were on the margins of society. Some came into the historian's view because they appeared before the Inquisition or the courts. Others were outlaws or pariahs. A few were eccentrics or unrecognized prophets. From each of their lives, however, we learn valuable lessons in social and cultural history.

The women, especially, were brave, eccentric, stubborn, independent, and resourceful. They lived in patriarchal societies, but insisted on their own dignity and worth, often against all odds. Such was the case with Josefa Ordoñez, perhaps my favorite of all the men and women depicted. She defied the customs of colonial society, the Office of the Inquisition, and men in general by her "scandalous behavior." An actress, Josefa was the most famous courtesan (mistress) of eighteenth century Mexico, whose marriage to Gregorio Panseco did not prevent her liaisons with a long series of rich, powerful lovers. At times she carried on with more than one paramour! (Each of whom helped her.) Despite the disapproval of traditional society, she, nonetheless, used her contacts to great advantage and earned a fortune by operating gambling casinos. Her messy separation and attempted divorce from her husband won her the scrutiny of the Inquisition. In the end, the courts, refusing her request for divorce, forced her to live with her husband. Josefa did not let this minor inconvenience alter her life. Her colorful past notwithstanding, she grew old a pious, respected, wealthy woman for whom most employed the honorable title of doña. Her life was a triumph of the will and spirit. Linda Curcio-Nagy's mini-biography, typical of the essays in the volume, is scholarly, instructive, and entertaining. While her behavior was hardly the norm, Ordoñez is illustrative of scholars' changing view of colonial women. Poverty and widowhood pushed women into public spaces to seek out means to make their living. They acquired as a consequence a "certain independence" to counter male control. Moreover, as her career indicates, colonial authorities were well aware of the challenges to patriarchy female employment outside the home entailed and sought to limit them. Women were not passive, nor without voice.

Nahui Olin, an artist of note in the era of the muralists (1920s to 1950s), who lived a hundred and fifty years after Josefa Ordoñez, was another woman who defied custom. She left her husband amidst public scandal, eventually cohabiting with Geraldo Murillo (Dr. Atl), one of the most influential artists and administrators of the 1920s. Olin subsequently became an important artist in her own right. Through Anne Rubenstein's rendition of her life, the story of the world of Mexican art in the 1920s and 1930s comes alive. More importantly, readers get a strong flavor of an era during which the traditional roles of women underwent revolutionary change.

The biographies, all by "younger" scholars, are without exception beautifully and clearly written. They, too, are skillfully crafted to relate the individuals studied to the wider context of the dominant culture and contemporary events. Patrick McNamara's chapter on Felipe García is a model for such essays, offering "a glimpse into the ways in which rural Mexicans understood their own contributions to nation-state formation..." (77) Sarah Buck's chapter on Rosa Torre González presents us with an exemplary summary of the role of women in the Revolution. Glen Kuecker peers into the life of engineer Alejandro Prieto to explore the decided limitations of the modernizing "project" of the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz.

Economist Lic. Moisés de la Peña, portrayed by Enrique Ochoa, provides us with ample lessons on the shortcomings of the Revolutionary regime, which succeeded the Díaz era.

The volume does not leave out the basics of life: love, food, and music. William French uses the love letters between Pedro and Enriqueta (what wonderful discoveries in the dusty archives of the mining town of Hidalgo de Parral, Chihuahua), to bring us lessons on honor, passion, and courtship, all within a drama fit for a *telenovela*. Andrew Wood relates the torrid, violent love affair between the beautiful movie star María Félix and songwriter Augustín Lara in order to illustrate the challenges to traditional gender roles presented by the new popular culture. Josefina Velázquez de León, cookbook author, the subject of Jeffery Pilcher's essay, through her efforts to synthesize Mexican regional cuisine, becomes a metaphor for the creation of Mexican national identity. Eric Zolov's exposition on Armando Nava and his rock singing group Los Dug Dug's explains to us the convergence of international media-driven culture, social protest, and an authoritarian state in the 1960s and 1970s.

Unusual in such anthologies, there is not a weak essay among the fifteen. There is, moreover, nothing stale or rehashed. All the chapters are original, written for the volume. All apply knowledge of the latest scholarship and social theories. Jeffrey Pilcher has compiled an enormously useful aid for instruction. Our students will enjoy it immensely.