Panel: “Mexico: Domestic Transformations and International Relations”

Heather Dewey

Title: “The Historic and Contemporary Literature of the Causality of Article 27 and Re-emergence of the Mexican Ejido”

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Paper written for: History F346: Modern Mexico (Fall 2015)

Heather Dewey is a senior with a History major and three minors: Spanish, International Studies, and Creative Writing. This presentation was the first research assignment she completed that made use of historic foreign language journals. She plans on attending graduate school in 2017, but hasn’t decided whether she wishes to focus on American History or Latin American Studies. She also submits work to fiction writing magazines, and is always eager to see their criticisms because it gives her a way to improve her skills.

Abstract

After Article 27 was edited to reinstate the Mexican ejido system, scholars in Mexico and the United States attempted to trace what had led politicians to include the ejidos in the new constitution. Out of this literature emerged three common interpretations: That the ejidos were a political maneuver to gain the support of the lower classes following the 1910 Revolution; that they were added to settle long-standing issues with the racial social organization of Mexico; or they were the necessary resolution and restart for land ownership after years of brutal industrialization and modernization during the Porfiriato. These interpretations often shared similarities, and their authors cited the same body of research, which created a major issue with the literature of the ejidos. The literature was a product of its time and could not provide a thorough analysis of the ejidos because it relied on the racial – and frequently racist – views of Mexican society and the ideas of traditionalism that were popular in intellectual circles. It was also heavily tinged by politics and nationalism, with many authors attempting to write in favor of their desired politicians or nation. However, the main problem was that the literature about the Mexican ejidos relied too heavily on a small body of research that was based in even older traditions of racial characterization, stereotypes, and demonization of the Mexican system of land tenure. The literature became derivative and embedded in older traditions that failed to address the individual nuances of the 1910 Revolution. The conclusion drawn here is that the literature, despite its varied interpretations, failed to convey the complexity of the 1910 Revolution or to address in depth the causes for the revision of Article 27 and the inclusion of the ejido system because it relied too much on previous literature and incomplete analysis of the situation following the Revolution. This meant that it was not as useful for understanding the politics of the ejidos as it was for understanding how the United States studied the ejidos.

Bibliographical Note
Many of the materials used for this project were secondary sources from the 1920s-1940s as well as more contemporary journals in both Spanish and English. The main authors studied were Tannenbaum and McBride, while other significant ones were Friedrich and Kouri. The paper was originally based on a primary source, the revised Article 27 of the 1917 Mexican Constitution, which was developed after the 1910 Revolution.