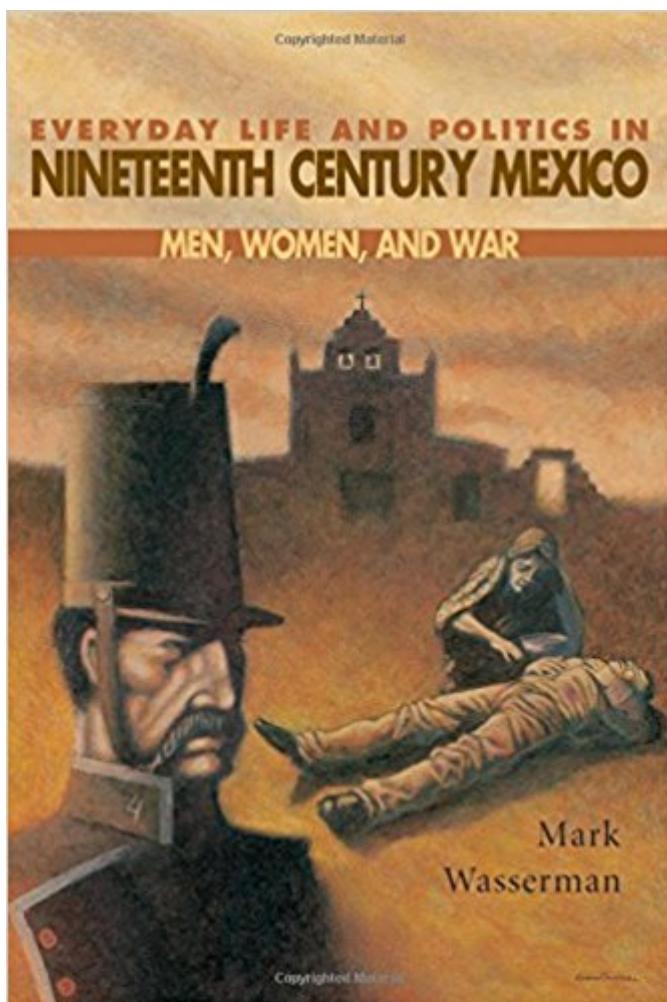


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# Everyday Life And Politics In Nineteenth Century Mexico : Men, Women, And War



## Synopsis

In this new and masterful synthesis, Wasserman shows the link between ordinary men and women-preoccupied with the demands of feeding, clothing, and providing shelter-and the elites' desire for a stable political order and an expanding economy. The three key figures of nineteenth-century Mexico-Antonio López de Santa Ana, Benito Juárez, and Porfirio Díaz-are engagingly reinterpreted. But the emphasis in this book is on the struggle of the common people to retain control over their everyday lives. Concerns central to village life were the appointment of police officials, imposition of taxes on Indians, the trustworthiness of local priests, and changes in land ownership. Communities often followed their leaders into one political camp or another-and even into war-out of loyalty. Excesses in partisan politics and regional antagonisms gave rise to nearly eighty years of war, resulting in the nation's economic stagnation between 1821 and 1880 and the mass migration of women from the countryside to the city. The industrialization of urban employment forever altered gender relations. During wartime, women acted as the supply, transportation, and medical corps of the Mexican armies. Moreover, with greater frequency than has been known, women fought as soldiers in the nineteenth century. This account of Mexico from Independence to the Revolution combines lively explanations of social history, political and economic change, and gender relations. Wasserman offers a well-written, thoughtful, and original history of Mexico's nineteenth century that will appeal to students and specialists alike."At long last, a clear-headed, non-romanticized, and non-adversarial analysis of everyday life and politics across the vast sweep of a century of change and rebirth. This is a first-rate book, expert and highly accessible."-Professor Timothy E. Anna, University of Manitoba

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## Customer Reviews

At long last, a clear-headed, non-romanticized, and non-adversarial analysis of everyday life and politics across the vast sweep of a century of change and rebirth. This is a first-rate book, expert and highly accessible. --Professor Timothy E. Anna, University of Manitoba

This account of the history of Mexico from Independence to the Revolution traces the struggle of common people to exert control over their everyday lives.

The book was very well written and the time flow was held together well enough to see how the train of events and personalities related to one another. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in knowing why Mexico is what it is today and why its relationship with the United States is the ways it is.

For all its historical riches, the nineteenth century, particularly the first half, is a period in Mexican history neglected by historians for far too long. Almost forty years ago, Nettie Lee Benson lamented the lacunae when she stated that much was yet to be learned about what actually happened during the period between 1810-1857. Fifteen years ago the refrain was much the same when Eric Van Young called this early national period a "hueco." Four years later, Josefina Zoraida VÁzquez focused on the lack of attention to nineteenth century Mexico when she characterized this period the "forgotten years." As late as eight years ago, Professor VÁzquez exhorted the historical community to apply social and economic histories to clarify who the actors were and what role they played in the political life of nineteenth-century Mexico instead of shrouding the political realities behind the themes of foreign aggressors and pronunciamientos. It would be misleading, however, to interpret the introductory paragraph on this review as characterizing a complete void in historical studies of the period in question-much has been done in the last forty years. Seemingly as a response to Professor VÁzquez, Mark Wasserman, whose book is the subject of this review, masterfully synthesized a suite of extant historical works-books and articles-which previously had to be consulted collectively to order and place in perspective this neglected period of Mexican history known erroneously for its chaos and disorder. *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century*

Mexico demarcates the nineteenth century into three periods, from the formation of the nation-state until the disastrous war with the United States; Guadalupe Hidalgo through the internecine wars of the Reform ending in the triumph of Liberalism and the Tuxtepec Revolution; and the Profiriato until the dawn of the Mexican Revolution. Wasserman introduces each period with a biographical sketch of the leading figure of the period, in this case being Antonio López de Santa Anna, Benito Juárez and Porfirio Díaz. Additionally, the author provides a brief but useful timeline that orders the period in question. The overarching theme that the author provides for nineteenth-century Mexico is that it was a time of pervasive wars, the most disastrous one for Mexico being the war with the United States followed by the Reform civil wars. And it is this constant warfare that resulted in the nation's economic stagnation and hence inability to develop fully. Furthermore, this constant warfare reverberated in the social space by creating demographic shifts, particularly of women. War and the resulting migrations also irrevocably altered gender relations as women fought wars with greater frequency than had been thought, and migrated to industrialized urban centers and became workers. This book is clearly meant for the introductory survey level, hence its limited bibliography and lack of footnotes. While the bibliography is limited, many more studies were consulted in constructing this synthesis as evidenced by the acknowledgement section of the book and the footnoted acknowledgements at the beginning of each chapter. *Everyday Life and Politics in Nineteenth Century Mexico* provides a much needed synthesis of nineteenth-century Mexico with an excellent balance of political economy, social and gender history that will surely become the de rigueur introductory survey for students of Mexican history in general and nineteenth-century Mexican history in particular.

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