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**Review of *Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897- 1931: Socio-economic Patterns* By Lawrence A. Cardoso**

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*Mexican Emigration to the United States, 1897–1931: Socio-economic Patterns.* By Lawrence A. Cardoso. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1980. Maps, tables, notes, bibliographic essay, index. xvii + 192 pp. \$8.95.

In this book Lawrence A. Cardoso focuses

attention on the flow of unskilled, low-paid Mexican workers who migrated north across the border between Mexico and the United States from 1897 to 1931. He traces the origins of the northward movement, beginning with the rapid changes in the land and labor systems of rural Mexico in the closing decade of the nineteenth century.

During Porfirio Díaz's long tenure in the presidency, Mexico's national policies favored foreign capital investment, the impact of which transformed the pastoral countryside. Prior to the inauguration of public-sponsored programs for economic development, rural inhabitants lived on communally held *ejidos* or privately owned *haciendas*, if not altogether securely or comfortably, at least with a sense of belonging. In general, the principal economic function of the *ejidos* and *haciendas* in Porfirian Mexico was to supply nearby urban centers with basic commodities.

With the introduction of the machine culture, *hacienda* owners, in need of new arable lands to expand crop production, readily encroached upon the *ejidos*. The process of encroachment forced millions of ejected dwellers to relocate. For the displaced *ejidatarios* the choice was either to find employment and accommodations at the *haciendas* or to join the migratory labor force that furnished additional temporary workers at planting and harvesting seasons.

According to Cardoso, a significant intrusion of the machine culture that accelerated the destruction of the *ejidos* was the highly visible railway system. As the railroads exported voluminous quantities of luxury food items to distant markets, the value of prime land for agricultural production increased correspondingly, fomenting the rapid enclosure of *ejidos*. Unstable working and living conditions in the countryside, compounded by an erratic economy, prompted thousands of families to seek an alternative in the northern borderlands, where they found passageway into the United States.

In a scholarly, methodical style, Cardoso traces the formation of migratory patterns in

the period from 1897 to 1910. The American Southwest, sparsely settled in the early 1900s, required a sizable work force of semiskilled and unskilled laborers in mining, agriculture, and railroad construction. These American sources of steady employment attracted the first wave of Mexican immigrants, with the railroad becoming a facility of penetration into the heartland of the Midwest.

Following the collapse of Porfirian rule, revolution and armed violence provided the thrust for the next wave of massive emigration. For a while, survival superseded economic motivations as hundreds of thousands of frightened Mexicans fled their war-torn nation. By 1920, a semblance of political stability prevailed in Mexico that permitted the inauguration of governmental programs designed to persuade expatriates to return home. Contributing to the southward flow of Mexican nationals was the economic slowdown in the United States after World War I, during which American workers, frustrated by the prospect of losing their own jobs, turned their wrath upon the foreign-born.

Judiciously integrating poignant quotations from a variety of solid sources into the narrative to illustrate the major topics of discussion, Cardoso has produced an informative and provocative monograph on an important aspect of American history, written from a Mexican perspective.

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