

early 1990s. This is fine for the case study, but it means that the wave of popular contention in Argentina since the mid 1990s, as well as the country's complex transformation during the Kirchner governments (2003–15), is largely missing from the picture. Second, the book overall is less about the role of urban popular contention in processes of “democratization ‘from below’” (2) than about understanding the internal logics of popular urban social movements and their contradictory relations with local politics. In this latter regard, it is however an important contribution, both in empirical and in theoretical terms. Its particular strength lies with the author's capacity to combine the stance of a sympathetic participant-observer with a critical distance that allows her to identify patterns of stigmatization and outright hostility among those studied.

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MEXICO

Mexico's Supreme Court: Between Liberal Individual and Revolutionary Social Rights, 1867–1934. By Timothy M. James. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014. Pp. 168. \$45.00 cloth.
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Anyone who has experienced Mexico's legal world is most likely familiar with the type of court case called the *amparo* suit. The *amparo* is a constitutional procedure that both common Mexicans as well as their elite counterparts have utilized to defend their liberal individual rights against what they consider local or state violations. Timothy M. James provides a much-needed study of this suit and the careers, writings, and interpretations of jurists and Supreme Court justices, who had the final say in the *amparo* cases, from approximately 1867 to 1934.

One of James's most original contributions to the legal history of modern Mexico is precisely his focus on the judiciary branch, which has often gone unexplored by historians of modern Mexico. His command of the legal intricacies of the judiciary, his analysis of justices' interpretation of laws, and his extensive use of judicial sources is quite impressive. His creative efforts to uncover some of these sources deserve applause—some judicial archives are uncatalogued and almost inaccessible.

One of the author's main arguments is that the members of the Supreme Court were autonomous individuals who were not pawns of Mexico's presidents. James challenges the notion that jurists were conservative and opposed the *amparo* during the Porfiriato, and shows that it was during this period that justices resolved thousands of *amparo* cases. The interpretations that emanated from the court in the last decades of the

nineteenth century (not before, as James emphasizes) helped build a firm legal tradition of the defense of constitutional rights. This finding helps readers understand why there was much consensus during the revolutionary years to keep the amparo when social rights were included in the new constitution of 1917.

The book then moves on to its main subject, tracing the changes brought by the Revolution of 1910, especially with regard to constitution articles 27 and 123. James sees more continuity than change in the judiciary interpretation of laws and in the resolution of amparo cases. Consistent with its position in the late nineteenth century, the Supreme Court remained an autonomous body, albeit with a younger and more radical membership. James shows that justices' loyalty to the legal tradition of the amparo suit actually made of the Supreme Court an obstacle to the implementation of revolutionary changes, especially with respect to agrarian matters. Landowners benefitted much from the amparo suit—to the point that it became necessary to reform certain laws in the 1930s that weakened the independence of the Supreme Court. As a result, the author suggests, the Supreme Court became more malleable, giving in to pressure from later twentieth-century executives as well as from those who represented the interests of the elites.

The author is at his best when he provides specific examples of amparo cases and how the justices discussed and resolved those cases. These examples help readers understand highly complex legal terminology and procedures. In that sense, this reader wishes the book had a glossary of legal terms and charts of how the Supreme Court was constituted over time. But these shortcomings should not detract from this well-researched monograph. This is a fine addition to the historiography of the Porfiriato and the Mexican Revolution.

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SANDRA C. MENDIOLA GARCÍA

The Dead March: A History of the Mexican-American War. By Peter Guardino. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017. Pp. 512. \$39.95 cloth.
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Scholars who study Mexico and Mexicans themselves would probably agree that the most important event in the history of the Mexican nation was its war with the United States. The war, like the US Civil War, was a consequence of slavery—in the Mexican case, its abolition. In 1829, Mexico's only afro-mestizo president, Vicente Guerrero, ended its citizens' legal rights to hold other people in bondage as property. When the Mexican government shifted from federalist to centralist in 1836, the Anglo settlers in Tejas-Coahuila revolted against the possibility that they could no longer hold others as slaves. Guerrero's decision would ultimately cost Mexico over one-half of the territory it