

International Symposium

2021-1821-1521. The Making of Mexico: Conflicts, Alterities, Communities

Université de Toulouse 2 Jean Jaurès, FRAMESPA

Wednesday 7, Thursday 8 and Friday 9 April 2021

Call for papers:

Aware of the civic function intrinsic to their discipline and concerned with intervening critically in the public arena, historians regularly take part in the commemorations of the most emblematic events of national construction. Rather than obeying multiple and contradictory political injunctions, social scientists knowingly use these singular moments to defend a scientific interpretation of history. As the past is not the property of any nation or social group, it is also common practice for researchers to engage in cross-border dialogue to clarify the issues at stake.

2021 will not derogate from this rule. The five hundred years of the fall of the Aztec Empire will coexist, in the minds of contemporaries, with the bicentenary of Mexican Independence, marking the end of the conflictual process that began in 1810 and ended in 1821. Political authorities and memory bearers will simultaneously invoke two central events for the national building of Mexico: the bloody beginning of Spanish domination and its less than glorious end. All history being contemporary, conquest, colonization and independence continue to act as discursive battlefields. Since the beginning of the 19th century, the interpretation of this obsessive past has shaped the country's various political cultures: liberal hostility to "gachupines" has been partly transmitted to the Mexican left of the 20th and 21st centuries, while pro-Hispanic sentiment remains an undeniable conservative marker. As during the centenary celebrations of the independence in 1921, the year 2021 will likely be the occasion for a reflexive return to the life of a "young" nation, born from the ashes of an extremely conflictual process of independence and which can still be widely understood as a "postcolonial" society, in response to the anthropological criticism of the 1970s. The instrumentalization of history by a government promoting a "fourth transformation" of the

country and seeking to favour a left-wing turn, against a continental movement to the right, will come up against conservative interpretations of the establishment of the Spanish empire and the withdrawal of the former imperial power. Finally, it is highly probable that the unspeakable humanitarian crisis that Mexico has been experiencing since the mid-2000s will shed a harsh light on this exploration of past centuries and on the commemoration of these two pivotal dates.

The antagonistic memories of 1521 and 1821, however, cannot hide the multiple historiographical renewals concerning the conquest, the colonial period, the processes of independence and the construction of the Mexican nation-state in the contemporary period. While these new contributions are the result of a particularly organized and active historical community in Mexico, they are also largely the result of the strength of Mexican Studies in the United States and abroad. In this configuration, French-language research plays a crucial role that could now be structured in a formal and sustainable way. The International Symposium "**2021-1821-1521. The Making of Mexico: Conflicts, Alterities, Communities**" thus responds to a twofold ambition: to offer a scientific space for all French-speaking Mexicanists, in close contact with Mexican and foreign researchers; to think of "Mexico" as an historical object in the long term by bringing together all the disciplines of humanities and social sciences. Three axes will more precisely guide this conference, in connection with the renewal of French-speaking research:

From a methodological point of view, the papers presented should include a reflection on the different **spatial scales** in order to shift the focus and rethink the "Mexico" object from outside the national framework. Work on borders, the integration of analyses bringing into play global logics or studies focused on a specific area - for example, a village, a region, a stewardship, a diocese or a federated state - will be particularly favoured. The link with the Americas, the North Americanization of Mexican society, migration, transnational perspectives and circulatory logics can thus be explicitly addressed. The relationship, imaginary or practical, between Mexico and distant places, Asia and Africa in particular, should make it possible to broaden the usual focus, ranging from the commercial relations between Acapulco and Manila in modern times, to the contradictory reception of the Algerian war by a Third World country. The question of the national framework and the formation of a territorial identity, from the vice-royalty of New Spain to the republic, will be part of this set of scales.

Concerning the themes, the symposium will highlight the work on three specific objects: **conflicts**, forms of **alterity** and the notion of **community**. Conflicts, clashes,

guerrillas, wars - whether civil or foreign, regular or irregular - appear as nodal moments to understand the formation of Mexico in the long term. In addition, the question of alterity has been the subject of many recent studies, both in history, anthropology and sociology, which should be summarized. From the "Indian Republic" to multicultural or multinational perspectives, to moments of invisibility or claiming indigeneity, the issue of Indian otherness seems to be one of the backbones of the making of Mexico. To mention alterity, internal or external, also leads to the question of the relationship with Afro-descendant Mexicans, who are largely excluded from the national narrative, as well as with foreigners. Finally, the community, whether it is the nation as the "imagined political community" described by Benedict Anderson or the diversity of local affiliations, from pueblo to regionalism, has also been the focus of many recent and challenging analyses. To what extent is the making of Mexico a process of nation-building? This problem, the object of racial nationalism in the early 20th century, raises the question of Mexico's long-term status and the permanence, or otherwise, of the logic associated with Spanish colonization.

In this context, **temporalities** will logically form the third axis of our collective reflection. Without formally returning to the "longue durée" of civilizations dear to Fernand Braudel, it is nevertheless a question of taking into account the different temporal scales, in accordance with the objects studied. To ask this question is first and foremost to rethink periodizations and ruptures (as, for example, the chronological time frame of the Mexican Revolution). It also calls for a different reformulation of the long term, advocated by Anglo-Saxon historiography, both for economic history and for conceptual history. Beyond time as an analytical category of historians, it is also and above all necessary to question socially situated historicities and what Christophe Charle called "the discrepancies of time", i.e. the contradictions within a society in regards to the collective experiences of time.

The International Symposium "**2021-1821-1521. The Making of Mexico Conflicts, Alterities, Communities**" will focus on recent work in these different areas that integrate a multidisciplinary perspective. It is intended for researchers specializing in Mexico or for whom Mexico represents a central area of study, from different disciplines of the humanities and social sciences.

Abstracts should be sent to fabmex2021@gmail.com before June 12th 2020 and must include:

- Personal informations: last and first name, e-mail, affiliation, discipline and very short bio
- a title of the proposed contribution
- a one page abstract, specifying the content, research question, method and sources/data used
- Languages: French, Spanish, English

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