Tabascans in the late colony has African blood. The eponymous sauce is made by a Marylander in New Iberia, which happens to be in Louisiana. Even the Lacandones, about as *echt* locals as you can get, one might think, turn out to be comparatively recent products of intermarriage between Yucatán Maya and Caribs.

Yet from early on there was, Rugeley argues, a regional identity that centred on environment, isolation, patriarchy and recalcitrance, and by independence many people saw themselves as Tabascans. There were some cultural specificities, such as counting agricultural produce in base five, but above all there was a pronounced dislike of central meddlers like Bourbon tax collectors. Like more literal *serranos* – northerners, Afghans or Scots Highlanders – these regional populations enjoyed the landscapes to do something about it. Water made the plains that cover most of the state fertile yet untrustworthy, the communities fragmented by painfully slow communications, and while this kept the province poor it also kept it independent. Inside regional politics it also meant that a few tens of men constituted an appreciable force for destabilisation, if not for rule. This, combined with the wealth to be had from tropical commodities, above all cacao, gave ample raw material for the nineteenth century's recurrent civil wars, vendettas between planters, merchants and federal commanders. Amid the unintentional nihilism there were not that many lasting winners, but there were numerous, notable losers, including Commodore Matthew Perry, driven out by yellow fever, malaria and guerrillas in what Rugeley calls the 'war of a thousand puddles' (p. 180).

This is regional history at its finest. It is strongly environmentally-inflected, and there is a strong sense of place from the ethno-historical outset, which is in the pre-conquest era, and a chronological sweep which roots the nineteenth century firmly in the colonial formation of cacao economy and society. The accounts of the ensuing wars – centralists against federalists, federalists against federalists, liberals against conservatives, Tabascans against all comers – do not lose sight of the structural, but do not waste the best of the particular, from the outré sex lives of the Maldonado cacao barons to the tax evasion strategies of the poorest, such as secret burials to avoid paying death dues to the priest. (This clearly worked, as one year the village of Teapa could muster only a jar of peaches in syrup as tithes for the bishop in Mérida.) Analytical summaries interspersed throughout the text point out the relevance of detail to interpretation: thus while the Tabascan story reinforces the fragility of the independent state and national identity, it also waters down the identification of federalism with popular mobilisation advanced by Michael Ducey (in *A Nation of Villages*, University of Arizona Press, 2004) and Peter Guardino (*Peasants, Politics and the Formation of Mexico's National State*, Stanford University Press, 1996), among others. The state's is a story for which there is relatively paltry material; as Rugeley points out, any paper that did not make it out of the state by the 1880s was doomed. As he also points out, though, stories of imperial spoilers make for terrific reading, and in his hands they do just that.

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David Sowell, *Medicine on the Periphery: Public Health in the Yucatán, Mexico, 1870–1960* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2015), pp. xxii + 207, £54.95, hb.

This book provides a wide-ranging account of public health in Yucatán, focusing on the changing power of state and federal authorities. From the late nineteenth century

to the 1920s, Yucatec elites and doctors in Mérida largely controlled the development of new hospitals, medical education, professional associations, laboratories, and campaigns against disease. During the 1930s, the balance began to shift towards greater federal involvement. At the same time, modern biomedicine gradually reached further into the countryside and down the social hierarchy. International innovations in medicine and public health shaped developments in the Yucatán throughout the period in a host of ways. However, the cause of the shift from state to federal power lay elsewhere: Yucatán's political economy. The henequen boom first allowed regional elites to significantly expand public health and keep the federal government at arm's length; the post-war collapse of henequen prices decisively sapped Yucatec authority over public health.

Historians of medicine will find the book a very valuable source of information on different institutions and campaigns. Some of these are quite well known – the 1920s Rockefeller-supported campaigns against yellow fever and hookworm – but the book discusses them alongside many others, providing a sense of overall development. At times, the book struggles to combine this breadth with a deep treatment of the reception and impact of particular policies. However, the approach allows for some revealing comparisons across time and space, and points to areas for future research. For example, in the late 1920s the little-studied anti-rabies campaign 'became one of the most consistent public health activities in the state' (p. 104). By comparing the 1950s project for 'rural wellbeing' with nineteenth-century antecedents we see the profound change in the government's definition and pursuit of public health. At times, more national comparisons would have been welcome and helped to clarify how atypical were developments in the peninsula.

Scholars interested in state formation and social history will also find much of interest, particularly the chapter on the 'revolutionary state'. Sowell convincingly argues that health was an important part of the pact that emerged between the reforming President Cárdenas and Yucatán's henequen elite in the late 1930s. Cárdenas expropriated henequen estates, but allowed the old elite to maintain power through control over marketing and credit. However, Cardenismo successfully prompted elites to build one of the most extensive systems of local medical services in the country, if only to shore up their own authority and modernising credentials. Another chapter describes doctors' efforts to define themselves as a profession. Predictably this involved repeated efforts to discredit *curanderos* and folk medicine; more surprisingly, it also led to conflict between doctors and other self-consciously modern pretenders – homeopaths and spiritists – some of whom enjoyed support among political leaders.

Well-researched and interesting, the book could be more tightly organised. Thematic chapters suffer from an unusual degree of overlap, and the discussion of key topics – the colonial background, revolutionary state, infectious disease – are spread across different parts of the book, making it harder to navigate than it need be. At times the international dimension of the argument could also be more developed. Sowell argues that Yucatán became more peripheral in global terms too, although he admits the process was not as 'visible' as the subordination of state to federal republic (p. 167). The main evidence provided for Yucatán's loss of medical power relative to the wider world is the rise of capital-intensive, industrially-made drugs and medicines, which gradually displaced late-nineteenth-century remedies produced in Yucatán. This is certainly an important change, but only one aspect of the relationship with foreign biomedical ideas and institutions. For example, Sowell also

provides some hints of continuing intellectual autonomy and innovation in Mexico in the form of an early embrace of medical anthropology.

All in all, Sowell successfully uses this story to challenge overly static notions of centre and periphery, allying himself with the new literature on medicine and science in Latin America. He shows how the slow advance of biomedicine in Yucatán is necessarily a story of 'shifting centers, peripheries, and nodes of power/authority' (p. xiv). This book represents a valuable contribution to this dynamic subfield, and will also be read with profit by Mexicanists for its original and revealing perspective on the dynamics of regionalism.

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Christina Bueno, *The Pursuit of Ruins: Archaeology, History, and the Making of Modern Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico, 2016), pp. xi + 267, £31.50, pb.

The Pursuit of Ruins joins the growing historiography on the cultural politics of the Porfiriato, the 40-year period straddling the turn of the twentieth century that ended decades of civil strife and enlisted the sciences to achieve a strong, unified, modern Mexico. The study of Mexico's pre-hispanic past benefited directly from the particular alliance between the state and state-sponsored archaeology, and produced a regime of management – collection, conservation, display – of pre-hispanic vestiges which endures to this day. Bueno's book goes beyond the more teleological narratives of Mexican archaeology in the service of national identity both to ask new questions about archaeology's more canonical figures and cast light on the forgotten agents, human and non-human – caretakers at the ruins, villagers, politicians, foreign collectors, speculators, railway trains, mould and photographs – that were involved in the making of the Mexican archaeological object.

The first part of the book offers a somewhat sweeping panorama of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century antiquarianism, for which Bueno relies mostly on second-hand sources, albeit with little acknowledgment of recent Mexican scholarship on the topic. Bueno highlights the more sensationalist episodes of Mexican archaeology (French explorer Desirée Charnay's petition to export Mexican antiquities and the ensuing confrontation over whether Mexicans or foreigners were best suited to study Mexico's past; US consul Edward Thompson's dredging of the Sacred Cenote at the Maya site of Chichén Itzá). And she reduces the complexities of collecting into neat binaries (historians vs. archaeologists, museum professors vs. field explorers, with an obvious bias against the former, who are described as reading the pre-hispanic past in 'almost-mystical' and 'ethereal' ways (p. 70) or as spending their days fecklessly arranging objects in the National Museum). Still, Bueno does make some important points here, mostly concerning the emergence of Mexican antiquities as objects of science and of national politics. This process was predicated on the insuperable divide between the enlightened ancient inhabitants of Mexico and their descendants in the nineteenth century and implied the transformation of the regimes of use of pre-hispanic remains (their uses in religious ceremonies or as construction elements were rejected in favour of their use as evidence in a science of Mexico's past), their displacement and centralisation (from the field to the National Museum), and their new legal status as 'property of the nation', which