Creating Mexican Consumer Culture in the Age of Porfirio Díaz. *By Steven B. Bunker*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2012. xiii + 333 pp. Illustrations, photographs, bibliography, notes, index. Cloth, $50.00. ISBN: 978-0-8263-4454-0.

doi:10.1017/S0007680515000550

Reviewed by Edward Beatty

For many of us working in the often separate worlds of Mexico's cultural and economic histories, this is a long-awaited book, and one that lives up to expectations. The culmination of over a decade of research, it gives us a richly detailed and intensely satisfying account of Mexico's rapidly changing consumer culture in the nineteenth century. By weaving together the entwined threads of cultural and economic history, Steven Bunker substantially deepens our understanding in both realms and, at the same time, offers a set of compelling new arguments. For business historians, the book provides a vivid illustration of the rise of modern business and its twin, consumer culture, in the context of a "late-developing" country.

This book examines the rapid expansion of modern business practices and especially consumer culture during the thirty-four-year dictatorship of President Porfirio Díaz in Mexico (1876–1911). The so-called *pax porfiriana*, this era witnessed sustained economic growth built on rapidly expanding exports of natural resources as well as substantial growth, especially after 1890, of domestic manufacturing industry. At the same time, Mexico's cities grew faster than did the national population. They became modernizing centers of production and consumption, home to elites, a gradually expanding middle class, ever larger numbers of salaried workers, and an ever present underclass of people across ethnic groups who eked out a living in what would in the twentieth century be called the informal sector. No place exhibited these trends as did the nation's capital; by 1910, nearly 20 percent of all Mexicans lived in Mexico City.

Bunker begins with the story of cigarettes, everywhere one of the first mass-produced products consumed across social classes. This richly told story touches on the critical issues of entrepreneurship, the mechanization of production, immigrant cultures, distribution and advertising strategies, aspirational cultures of consumption, the diffusion of consumption patterns, and the scale, scope, and depth of Mexico's consumer market (typically portrayed as shallow and constrained). The strengths that run through this book are amply evident here: the depth and detail of the research, the vividly illustrated narrative, and the new arguments about consumer culture. Chapter 2 focuses on the subject of commercial advertising (for which Mexicans seem to have had a passion), while chapters 3, 4, and 5 focus on department stores, which "symbolized the apparent triumph of the Porfirian modernization project" (p. 99). The book ends with an examination of consumption's dark side—crime—which took new forms in response to new opportunities, new desires, and new theories of deviancy and criminality.

Historians have long argued or assumed that a widespread consumer culture did not exist in Mexico (or in most other late-developing countries) until the twentieth century. With elite consumption traditionally satisfied by highly skilled artisans and imports, and a professional middle class very small in size, the vast majority of the population lay largely excluded from consuming anything but handmade, homemade, or locally made goods. Economic historians have shown more recently how the business of production changed rapidly through the Porfirian era, putting domestic, factory-produced consumer goods in the market for the first time. However, new knowledge about the production side has not been balanced with a better understanding of consumption, until now.

Bunker argues that after 1870 a "modern" consumer culture appeared and spread rapidly in Mexico across nearly all social levels, illustrating the "popular and participatory nature of the Mexican modernization process" (p. 2). This was a culture of consumption enthusiastically engaged by elites who sought to identify themselves with images of European modernity and by an expanding middle class who sought to emulate their social betters and claim their own space in a modern Mexico. It was a culture also embraced and engaged by the lower middle class and by members of the working class who might have sufficient centavos in their pockets to buy cigarettes, a broadside from the penny press, or a streetcar ride.

Ultimately, it is far easier to research and portray the "everyday life" of consumption by elites and the middle class, amply captured in the press, in fiction, and in the documentation of commercial enterprises. It is far more difficult to capture the lives of plebeian groups. Bunker gives us more and richer detail than previous accounts, but skeptics will likely continue to question the scope of this culture relative to a more traditional, nonmarket culture of poverty, subsistence, and relative autarky.

Although we still do not know just how deep in society this new consumer culture went—which social and occupational groups, exactly, could afford a pack of cigarettes each week, or a bottle of beer or a streetcar ride or a circus ticket or a monthly installment payment for a sewing machine—this book makes it clear that this was an increasingly dominant culture, one driven by local imperatives and local desires rather than imposed artificially by foreign influences or elite interests.

Business historians will find much of interest here. From the detailed portraits of the "everyday life" of consumption across social classes to the innovative business practices of advertising and distribution by department stores (where Mexican businesses were only just behind U.S. innovators and on par with new enterprises in Germany and Britain), the book offers important new evidence and insights. Most importantly, perhaps, it offers a case of the complex nature of business and consumption outside the North Atlantic in a late-developing context. Carefully avoiding the all-too-common division between "foreign" and "domestic" forces, Bunker illustrates the multiple ways in which Mexico's engagement with the Atlantic economy yielded cultural and economic changes deeply integrated in local society.

*Edward Beatty is associate professor of history and associate dean of the Keough School of Global Affairs at the University of Notre Dame. He is author of* Institutions and Investment: The Political Basis of Industrialization in Mexico before 1911 *(2001) and* Technology and the Search for Progress in Modern Mexico *(2015).*

. . .

Making Seafood Sustainable: American Experiences in Global Perspective. *By Mansel Blackford.* Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012. xii + 273 pp. Photographs, maps, notes, index. Cloth, $45.00. ISBN: 978-0-8122-4393-2.

doi:10.1017/S0007680515000562

Reviewed by David Kinkela

Garrett Hardin's influential 1968 essay, "The Tragedy of the Commons," explored the problem of economic self-interest. From the perspective of a herdsman, he asked theoretically, "What is the utility to *me* of adding one more animal to my herd?" The question, however, was not so simple. Because the commons was a shared space, the impact of an individual decision had profound consequences. For example, if one herdsman added more cattle or sheep, others would logically increase the size of their herds to compete economically. The combination of these individual decisions, Hardin argued, placed additional strain on the commons. Within a short time, the commons would become unsustainable.

In *Making Seafood Sustainable,* historian Mansel Blackford examines the history of the commons through a thought-provoking, highly engaging, and significant study of the American fishing industry. Indeed, Blackford explores the contested history of modern fishing, revealing a story of change in which independent fishers who extracted as much