

Introduction to the volume

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I turn over the editorship of the 1987 CLAG *Yearbook* to next year's editor with mixed feeling of relief and satisfaction. Through the course of selecting and editing manuscripts I have learned a great deal about research, writing, and editing; about the CLAG membership; and about Latin America. Admittedly, a lot of work goes into producing a volume of the *Yearbook*, but it is not without reward. The CLAG *Yearbook* reflects the research interests of our membership and is a valuable vehicle for recognizing the work of Latin Americanist geographers. It also contributes to the visibility of our specialty within geography. I hope more of you take the time to submit manuscripts, review manuscripts, and even volunteer to edit a volume. Only by increased participation in the production of a CLAG publication can we expect our diverse research philosophies to be expressed through the *Yearbook*.

I was fortunate this year in being able to draw on papers that were presented at the recent Mérida (Yucatán) CLAG meetings (January 1987). Several papers in this volume result from presentations made in Mérida--among them, the papers of William Doolittle, Clifton Dixon, Hilgard Sternberg, María Teresa Gutiérrez de MacGregor, John Winberry, Klaus Meyer-Arendt, and John Treacy. I am also happy to include Spanish manuscripts by Gilbert Vargas Ulate of the Universidad de Costa Rica, and by María Teresa Gutiérrez de MacGregor of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.

In addition to articles, this volume includes the CLAG Honors Statements for 1984, 1985, and 1986. Traditionally these have been published in the *Proceedings*. As the *Yearbook* supercedes the *Proceedings*, we would like to reestablish the practice of publishing them each year and will use this year's volume to catch up on past omissions.

The 1987 CLAG *Yearbook* begins with a historical article by William Doolittle. Doolittle challenges the traditional assumption that cattle ranching was introduced into northern Mexico and Texas via Mexico's arid central plateau. He proposes, instead, that cattle ranching began in the Gulf Coast lowlands of Mexico, in part because of the environmental similarities between the swampy lowlands of Pánuco and the *marismas* or swamps near Sevilla, an area that provided many early settlers to the New World.

The next several articles fall loosely together: they deal with contemporary issues in Mexico, Peru, and Brazil that are best understood within the historical, political, and socio-economic framework in which they occur. John Winberry's article concerns Mexico's efforts to develop the Isthmus of Tehuantepec as a landbridge with the commercial potential to compete with inter-oceanic freight on the Panama canal. Mexico has a long history of attempting to tap the transportation possibilities of this low, narrow corridor and the latest-rail transfer of containerized cargo--appears to be the victim of Mexico's current economic woes.

James Kus details the elusive proposal to construct an inter-valley irrigation canal in coastal Peru. Chavimochic, as the canal project is called, has been periodically revived over the past 75 years as the solution to prolonged drought, to relieve social tension, and to boost political campaigns, but it is yet to be built.

In " 'Manifest Destiny' and the Brazilian Amazon," Hilgard Sternberg discusses the physical and political isolation of Amazonia from Brazil's heartland and how intentions by some nineteenth-century North Americans to establish an American presence in Amazonia have influenced Brazil's ongoing concern to occupy the basin. The Projecto Calha Norte, on Brazil's northern border, is the latest manifestation of that concern.

Bill Crowley outlines an urban renewal project in Monterrey, Mexico, with emphasis on the implementation of planning within Mexico's bureaucracy and the role of a powerful individual in effecting urban landscape change. His study provides a capsule view of Mexico's current situation, where heightened political and economic tension is altering the long-established order of things.

Klaus Meyer-Arendt describes the development of domestic tourism along the North Yucatan coast of Mexico. The development of roads and port facilities for henequen export, henequen-based affluence in Mérida, and the advent of the automobile aided the creation of a summer home and resort complex. Currently, beach erosion and competition from nearby Cancún notwithstanding, the north Yucatan coast continues to be a popular destination for Mérida's growing population.

The next three articles deal with traditional economic systems in Peru, Belize, and Mexico. The authors emphasize how traditional systems can be integrated into the modern economy in such ways that indigenous integrity and autonomy is maintained. John Treacy recounts the technology of building Andean terraces in the Colca Valley of Peru. He stresses the importance of terracing in pre-Hispanic Peru and conveys the potential for restoring abandoned terraces and increasing agricultural productivity in the Andes.

Marie Price's article reports on the establishment of artisan fishing cooperatives in Belize and how these locally-owned and managed lobster fishing ventures have substantially contributed to local development. Her study focuses on resource management, territoriality among fishermen, and the economic benefits that have accrued to cooperative fishermen.

In "Beekeeping in Southern Mexico," Clifton Dixon chronicles stingless beekeeping among farmers in the Balsas Basin and their gradual replacement, since the 1600s, by honeybees. He documents the importance of bee products in daily life and the role of bee pollinization in agricultural productivity, then discusses the contribution of honey as a cash commodity in the modern market.

Articles by Gilbert Vargas Ulate and by Eugene Wilson and Aaron Williams Jr. concern the physical environment of Middle America. Ulate presents a bioclimatological study of savanna vegetation in Santa Rosa National Park, Costa Rica. Using climate data and vegetation analysis, Ulate discusses the characteristics and dynamics of savanna vegetation in northwest Costa Rica.

Wilson and Williams relate the climatological and hydrologic features that create an anomalous ecosystem in the northwest corner of Mexico's Yucatan peninsula. The existence of savannas, mangroves, and *petenes*, or tree islands, in this region contrasts with the typical image of Yucatan's karst topography, but can be understood in light of rainfall and groundwater dynamics.

Finally, Mar161a Teresa Gutiérrez de MacGregor presents the keynote speech she delivered at the 1986 CLAG meeting in Mérida, an outline of the history and current status of geography in Mexico.

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