



Setting the Virgin on Fire: Lázaro Cárdenas, Michoacán Peasants, and the Redemption of the Mexican Revolution

Marjorie Becker

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In this beautifully written work, Marjorie Becker reconstructs the cultural encounters which led to Mexico's post-revolutionary government. She sets aside the mythology surrounding president Lázaro Cárdenas to reveal his dilemma: until he and his followers understood peasant culture, they could not govern.

This dilemma is vividly illustrated in Michoacán. There, peasants were passionately engaged in a Catholic culture focusing on the Virgin Mary. The Cardenistas, inspired by revolutionary ideas of equality and modernity, were oblivious to the peasants' spirituality and determined to transform them. A series of dramatic conflicts forced Cárdenas to develop a government that embodied some of the peasants' complex culture.

Becker brilliantly combines concerns with culture and power and a deep historical empathy to bring to life the men and women of her story. She shows how Mexico's government today owes much of its subtlety to the peasants of Michoacán.

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