

Judas at the jockey club



As an American in the late 1800's, owning a farm was not too uncommon, especially if that farm was located in Mexico. At this time, though, Mexico was in the Porfirian Era (1876-1911). In this certain era, Mexico was being encountered by two very different cultures at the same time: the industrial, and the traditional. These distinctively separate cultures impacting Mexico made it as what can be described as " backwards" in a sense, as Mexico was practically regressing as the world around it was moving on to bigger and better things.

Mexico was so behind that " many had concluded that Mexico had yet to advance beyond chipped rocks as utensils. " (p. 67). Mexico at this time had locked itself in a stagnancy of its own traditions. The people were simply too anxious towards new technology to move ahead and replace what they had known for so long. In Mexico at this time, stones were used for nearly every operation executed by the natives. Women that would hand-grind the meal for tortillas still used a stone roller and slab for the job.

They would then take the tortillas and place them upon a hot rock, as stoves were unheard-of at this time. The houses that they lived in also represented the backwardness of the era, as they seemed to replicate that of an Aztec or early Spanish hut with its flat top and adobe construction. In these houses, the Mexicans lacked all types of furniture, even a bed. For sleep, they used what were called petates, which were simple mats to sleep on. They also did not possess any means of heating or cooling, so all resources that they had were to be utilized in many ways.

As far as the implementation of new technology goes, Mexico was very stubborn to say the least. As written in the book, " In near disbelief, a New <https://assignbuster.com/judas-at-the-jockey-club/>

York Times reporter wrote that Mexicans scarcely understood the use of the wheel. " (p. 72), so it is not entirely difficult to believe that Mexico was still in an ancient lifestyle. Because of this lack of transportation technology, many Mexicans at the time would use mules as well as men to transport freight across distances.

This was a huge representation of the stunted technological growth that Porfirian Mexico possessed. Another great vision of Mexico's poorly adaptive society was the plow. This plow was described as being " a long tree branch, with a crook, sometimes faced with an iron, serving as the plowshare. " (p. 72). It also is told to be ox-powered, hooked up to its horns, making it unreliable and at most times inefficient. It was also awfully bad for the ox, as it made the creature push and strain on its neck muscles.

On the ranches that did however import plows from the United States, one handle would be removed to replicate the traditional tool that was still used, rather than learning to use the newer and better improved one. Other Agricultural tools were not used in Mexico either, further representing the stubbornness Mexicans possessed toward change. Wheat was still harvested by a sickle, rather than a smooth blade. The wheat was not caught by a cradle either, virtually creating more work for the Mexicans overall. No tools were used to thresh the wheat either.

Instead, " the grain was threshed by spreading it in a corral and allowing the animals to trample it for two or three days. " (p. 73). By the time the process was complete, dirt and animal filth was mixed in with the product, making it very much unsanitary. Not only were these Mexicans stubborn to adapting the new technologies, they were hostile as well. After one hacendado had

learned that the thresher machine was much more effective and practical, the village priest had declared that it was " possessed by the devil and forbade the peons to work with it." (p. 73); the American owner of this machine had to have it exported out of the area to prevent it from being destroyed. Despite the unholy declarations of priests, many villagers naturally opposed using the machines because they left the straw " whole". On top of this resistibility to change, the farmers who grew such crops were ignorant to the fact of rotating and resting the fields. They just did not understand the scientific ways that were upon them.

One of the next biggest appearances of the ignorance and stubborn acts of Mexican workers at this time was the views they held on the basic tools of the Yankees. As the new technologies of shovels and wheelbarrows were being brought into Mexico, they were being completely disregarded. When Mexicans needed to transfer or transport the earth, they would use what was called a horn scoop, and dump their collected dirt into a leather bag for transportation rather than throwing shovelfuls into a wheelbarrow.

An example of wheelbarrow use is told as the following: " one laborer working on the church loaded his wheelbarrow with bricks, lifted it onto his head, and trudged over to the masons. After emptying it, he replaced the wheelbarrow on his head and returned to the brick pile for another load. " (p. 74). All means of irrigation were done by transferring the water by means of a pot or bucket. Sometimes other ways were implemented as well, but nonetheless, these were too known to be dated back to ancient times.

The simplicity of it was so neanderthal in style that its told that these methods of irrigation were derived from those used on the Nile hundreds of

years before, and not improved on since. Mining as well was un-influenced by the evolving technologies, as the mines hardly differed from what they had been over past years. The workers would dig into the hillside, and use long poles, generally 8-10 feet in length, to escape in and out of the mine. The tools the actual miners utilized was a steel-tipped iron rod, rather than the contemporary pick of the modern age.

These drillers, or barrateros, were known as the elite society of the underground, also being paid much better than others. As far as the ore-transferring process went, it was very dangerous, in the fact of ascending up these wooden poles to the surface. It's said that the workers would rest the bag filled with ore, usually around 150-200 pounds, on his back and begin the ascent. It's also said that the carrier would often have to hold the bag steady with one hand to prevent it from falling, climbing and retaining balance with the other.

The process Mexicans used for processing the ore was also deemed very inefficient and mediocre, as " one engineer estimated that using these techniques Mexican miners took away about 60 percent of the metal contained in the raw ore. " (p. 76). Mexicans also sported yet another downfall, as they relied on rawhide as a crutch for and any all repairs. " Thongs yoked the plow to the ox, bound cargoes on the backs of mules, stitched together everything that could be laced, tied rails to fence posts, and held rafters in place." (p. 76).

That previous sentence pretty much sums it up- the idea that " what a Mexican could not do with rawhide was not worth doing. " (p. 76). Mexicans had virtually eliminated the need for any sort of pins or nails in their society.

However, though this rawhide-repairing technique was useful on many things, it would not be accepted let alone effective on machinery. Their means of repair through rawhide put them at a handicap had a repair been needed for any sort of machine, especially one made from cast iron.

When a problem like this would emerge, the Mexicans would simply toss that machine aside and no longer worry about it. This furthermore reinforced the ignorance to technology that Mexicans sported. Mexico in this period of time was very much behind technologically. They did not induce change, nor did they embrace it if it was placed in front of them. They faced many disadvantages in the Porfirian Era because of this, but yet, they were not stagnant in their duties. The Mexicans, still using the ancient practices that have been long used by their ancestors, would get the job done.

Their work ethic was definitely an admirable one, but the shame of it overall is to think that they could've gotten so much more done had they not been so single-minded toward new technologies. This obvious stubbornness sent them into the regression, or "backwardness" that they were known for at the time, strongly reinforced by the idea that "if it's not broken, don't fix it." Eventually, though, Mexico at this time would be attacked by the Porfirian Liberals, who posted restrictions upon the church and seized lands in attempt to "modernize" the so very far-behind Mexicans.

In response to the attacks, "these Mexicans under siege confronted modern life in the countryside and the city, and fought to preserve their customs..." (p. 88). Mexicans of this time were just not going to cave in to any foreign force, whether it be a change in technologies, or a change in customs. They were very stubborn and strong-willed with their beliefs, regardless of who or

what was threatening them. That clearly demonstrates why Mexico is not necessarily a place to implant new technologies, especially ones that attempt to improve on their own previous traditions.