



Tornel and Santa Anna: The Writer and the Caudillo, Mexico 1795-1853 (Contributions in Latin American Studies)

William M. Fowler

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This is a study of one of the leading politicians of Independent Mexico, Jose Maria Tornel y Mendivil, whose loyalty to Santa Anna and whose skills as a writer led him to play a crucial role in enabling the caudillo's repeated rise to power during this period. This first biography of Tornel in English provides a new insight into the political thought of the santanistas and the ways in which Santa Anna was able to return to power time and again in spite of the fact that he was deemed responsible for such major national disasters as the Texas campaign of 1836 and the 1847 defeat against the United States. A close analysis of Tornel's own political evolution, from advocating a radical federalist agenda in the 1820s to defending reactionary dictatorship in the 1850s, illustrates the extent to which the santanistas' policies changed as the hopeful, early 1820s degenerated into the despair of the late 1840s.

As the leading ideologue of the santanistas, a study of his politics, paying close attention to the way they evolved in response to the different crises Mexico underwent, highlights, for the first time, the extent to which Santa Anna and his followers upheld a particular political agenda which was essentially populist, militaristic, antipolitics, and nationalistic, and varied depending on the prevailing circumstances and the different historical contexts in which it surfaced. A study of Tornel's activities as Santa Anna's main informer in the capital, his leading propagandist, and as a key player in the orchestration of revolts such as the 1834 Plan of Cuernavaca, serves to show the extent to which Santa Anna's success relied on Tornel's services. Coincidentally or not, without Tornel, Santa Anna was not able to return to power after his fall in 1855.

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