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México Profundo (Translations from Latin America Series)

Guillermo Bonfil Batalla

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This translation of a major work in Mexican anthropology argues that Mesoamerican civilization is an ongoing and undeniable force in contemporary Mexican life.For Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, the remaining Indian communities, the "de-Indianized" rural mestizo communities, and vast sectors of the poor urban population constitute the México profundo. Their lives and ways of understanding the world continue to be rooted in Mesoamerican civilization. An ancient agricultural complex provides their food supply, and work is understood as a way of maintaining a harmonious relationship with the natural world. Health is related to human conduct, and community service is often part of each individual's life obligation. Time is circular, and humans fulfill their own cycle in relation to other cycles of the universe.Since the Conquest, Bonfil argues, the peoples of the México profundo have been dominated by an "imaginary México" imposed by the West. It is imaginary not because it does not exist, but because it denies the cultural reality lived daily by most Mexicans. Within the México profundo there exists an enormous body of accumulated knowledge, as well as successful patterns for living together and adapting to the natural world. To face the future successfully, argues Bonfil, Mexico must build on these strengths of Mesoamerican civilization, "one of the few original civilizations that humanity has created throughout all its history."

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