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Autor: Moore, Rachel A.

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While the literature on Atlantic history is vast and flourishing, few studies have examined the importance of inland settlements to the survival of Atlantic ports. This book explores the symbiotic yet conflicted relationships that bound the Mexican cities of Xalapa and Veracruz to the larger Atlantic world and considers the impact these affiliations had on communication and, ultimately, the formation of national identity.

Over the course of the nineteenth century, despite its inland location, Xalapa became an important Atlantic community as it came to represent both a haven and a place of fortification for residents of Veracruz. Yellow fever, foreign invasion, and domestic discord drove thousands of residents of Veracruz, as well as foreign travelers, to seek refuge in Xalapa. At the same time, these adverse circumstances prompted the Mexican government to use Xalapa as a bulwark against threats originating in the Atlantic.

The influence of the Atlantic world thus stretched far into central Mexico, thanks to both the instability of the coastal region and the desire of government officials to "protect" central Mexico from volatile Atlantic imports. The boundaries established at Xalapa, however, encouraged goods, information, and people to collect in the city and thereby immerse the population in the developments of the Atlantic sphere. Thus, in seeking to protect the center of the country, government authorities more firmly situated Xalapa in the Atlantic world. This connection would be trumped by national affiliation only when native residents of Xalapa became more comfortable with their participation in the Mexican public sphere later in the nineteenth century.

The interdisciplinary and comparative nature of this study will make it appeal to those studying Atlantic history, including historians of Britain, the United States, Latin America, and Africa, as well as those studying communication, print culture, and postal history more broadly.