

DECENTERING THE REGIME: Culture and Regional Politics in Mexico*

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There is only one real
political center.
José Luis Reyna, *Authoritarianism in Mexico*

Power's condition of possibility . . .
must not be sought in the primary
existence of a central point. . . .
Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*

As a preeminent enduring regime in the world today, Mexico provides a compelling case study regarding the nature and locus of power.¹ Since the 1970s, accounts of politics in postrevolutionary Mexico have assumed that ongoing domination has resulted from centralized, relatively homogeneous power transmitted outward through corporatist mechanisms. The process of transmission replicated the dynamics of the center through a combination of skillful management and efficient coercion. Even now, as researchers are emphasizing the breakdown of corporatism and the complexity and nuance of current Mexican politics, they continue to codify the past according to the terms of the 1970s analysis and view the present through this lens. But while social scientists in the 1970s were right to characterize the postrevolutionary Mexican regime as authoritarian and hegemonic, they were wrong about the nature of hegemony. In constructing a state-centered and center-centered understand-

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1. The current regime has been in place since about 1929, longer than the vast majority of Third World and European regimes.

ing of politics,² social scientists then and now have misunderstood the nature of power and domination in Mexico and the reasons for the endurance of the Mexican regime.

In this essay, I will apply an alternative definition of hegemony to Mexican politics. In contrast to state-centered analyses, this article will argue that the presence of the Mexican state has been uneven and incomplete and that hegemony is constructed and contested in significant part regionally and culturally. I will show that such hegemony takes shape differently in various locations and thus changes or unravels differently as well. I will also demonstrate that cultural practices of ethnicity, language, gender, religion, and civic identity are central to its dynamics. From this perspective, what has been viewed as the triumph of state building under President Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s was actually a simultaneous forging of multiple regional arrangements—each a distinct combination of bargaining, coercion, and alliances—that together reinforced the power of the center in broadly similar ways. These regional arrangements included, but were not limited to, an institutional presence of central state agencies, authorities, and organizations.

Yet because the sets of phenomena woven together and the ways they were joined varied considerably across the country, different regions experienced distinct processes of development and change over subsequent decades. Similarly, different domains of social and cultural life proceeded according to their own dynamics, interacting with geographically based processes. Thus while Mexico exhibits an unusually strong and efficient state apparatus, it is a mistake to view Mexican politics primarily as the breakdown and restructuring of national organizational forms. Rather, the Mexican state and regime should be perceived as parts of a complex and changing center that coexists with and is constituted and embedded in the diversity of regional and cultural constructions evolving throughout Mexico since the 1930s.³

Acceptance of the corporatist analysis of the Mexican past as a basis for political analysis abounds in recent scholarly literature. For example, in the introduction to *Popular Movements and Political Change in Mexico*, a prominent collection of pieces by various specialists that addresses multiple instances of grassroots mobilization in Mexico in the 1980s, Joe Foweraker speaks of “the construction of the corporatist state” in post-revolutionary Mexico, as well as the more recent “crisis in local forms of corporatist representation” (1990, 14–16). Elsewhere, Diane Davis discusses the Salinas administration’s dramatic shifts to free trade and alliance with the United States in the context of a past of “class-based corpo-

2. I am grateful to Terry Karl for this characterization of the analysis of Mexico emphasizing authoritarianism.

3. By *center*, I refer simultaneously to a place (Mexico City), an institutional apparatus of power and decision making, and a set of “national” cultural discourses.

ratism" and "one-party, corporatist rule" (1992, 657). Alberto Aziz Nassif, in an essay focusing on a fragmented present of "regions, zones, localities, groups, classes, ethnicities, languages, and organizations," refers to "the shared identity that once existed between the corporatized masses and the state" and to "a PRI-dominated political culture under the rule of the 'unanimous' party front" (Aziz Nassif 1989, 92).

These analyses acknowledge the complexity of the Mexican present and the changing nature of recent interactions between popular movements and the state. They suggest, however, that the inclusion of ordinary Mexicans in government-sponsored mass organizations was the defining characteristic of postrevolutionary politics from the 1930s to the 1970s. Although such state-centered explanations acknowledge the centrality of bargaining and exchange to the process of domination, they argue that the nature of the bargaining was circumscribed by the state and that the Mexican system as a whole remained relatively unchanged for at least three decades (Collier and Collier 1991, 574). This same framework of a hegemonic state that can make and carry out policy from the center and circumvent or repress opposition was used to explain the apparent success with which President Carlos Salinas de Gortari implemented neo-liberal economic reforms and a targeted social-welfare program between 1988 and 1994 (Centeno 1994). For the moment (since the economic crisis of December 1994), the state's power appears more limited, but a comparable focus on the state's ability to recreate centralized control during the breakdown of corporatism is being used to analyze the problems of governance now facing President Ernesto Zedillo.⁴

Two directions can be discerned in political analysis of recent Mexican administrations. One stresses continuation of the all-powerful state, albeit without the old corporatism, while the other describes complex dynamics between society and a state made up of diverse actors in an arena somewhere between weakened corporatism and emergent pluralism. For Miguel Centeno, the successes of the Salinas administration resulted from the existence of "a well-calibrated authoritarian machine" (1994, 33). This machine enabled Salinas to "dismantl[e] the corporatist structure of the party" while still maintaining firm, centralized control, similar in its overall capacity to the hegemonic state of the past (Centeno 1994, 17). In partial contrast, Jonathan Fox (1994a), Joe Foweraker (1993), and Diane Davis (1989) have emphasized weak points in Mexican state power in recent years and corresponding margins for maneuver for groups in civil society. They consequently have enlarged understanding of Mexican politics by illuminating key points of innovation in intra-state and

4. For example, Wayne Cornelius asked, "If the long-entrenched corporatist structures and patron-client networks of Mexico's regime are inadequate tools for implementing such [new social] policies and actually obstruct their implementation in many parts of the country, what can replace them?" (Cornelius 1995, 139).

state-society relations. For all three, however, the battles they describe are played out on the terrain of weakened corporatism (Fox 1994, 158–60; Davis 1989, 270; Foweraker 1993, 162–63, 168). Each analyst reinforces the notion of a single system that prevailed for decades before ossifying, and each places nuanced discussion of state-society interaction within a set of narrowly political categories, focusing on formal political organizations, actors, and processes and relatively objective state and societal interests.⁵

Indeed, analyses of regime change throughout Latin America have understood power as something that is amassed and brokered at the center among explicitly political actors. Such analyses, rooted in state theory and political economy, view stability (understood as regime endurance) as resulting from particular routinized patterns of centralized control over discrete societal forces. In Latin America before recent transitions to democracy, this process was viewed widely as occurring in an “authoritarian” and “corporatist” fashion (Collier 1979; Malloy, ed., 1977; O’Donnell 1977; Schmitter 1974; Stepan 1978). This focus on the center and on narrowly political negotiations and conflicts has continued in the literature on transitions to democracy (Karl 1990; O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Schmitter and Karl 1993). While this literature has illuminated the nuances of elite bargaining and acknowledged some of the limits of existing democracies, it nevertheless has tended to evaluate democracy in terms of national political processes and explicitly political actors.

In contrast to such a definition of power, theorists such as Raymond Williams (1977) and Michel Foucault (1990) have argued that continuing domination results from contestation and change in multiple arenas, including numerous locations outside the center and formal politics. Williams, for example, argues that hegemony “has to be seen as more than the simple transmission of an (unchanging) dominance” (1977, 113). Rather, “it has continually to be renewed, recreated, defended, and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not at all its own” (1977, 112). Seen in this light, what appears to be ongoing and unchanging domination—such as the endurance of states based on inequality and coercion in Latin America—is the overall result not of an all-controlling center or particular structures of political bargaining and rule but of numerous changing forms and locations of domination and resistance. In Foucault’s words, “‘Power,’ insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert, and self-reproducing, is simply the overall effect that emerges from all these mobilities” (1990, 93).

5. I mean by *formal political organizations and actors*: those who are explicitly part of public bodies of administration and coercion, such as officials of all sorts and the national, state, and local governmental bodies for which they work; those who compete in elections and other processes for designating officeholders, such as politicians, parties, and political bosses; and others such as unions, business associations, media, and grassroots movements insofar as they seek explicitly to influence public policy and competition for office.

Scholars of Mexico, particularly historians and anthropologists, are beginning to rethink politics from this perspective. The contributors brought together by Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent in *Everyday Forms of State Formation* (1994) assess the Mexican Revolution as well as the political arrangements and conflicts it engendered at the level of regions and cultures, arguing that the nature and function of the state itself is established, maintained, and resisted in these multiple locations. Giving specific form to Foucault's conception of power, they have illuminated the ways in which state formation in the 1930s involved particular, localized, and changing forms of resistance and accommodation concerning not only land reform, labor legislation, and party affiliation but also such matters as religious practices (Becker 1994) and Indian identity (Rus 1994). Similarly, Claudio Lomnitz-Adler "specifies and contextualizes the notion of hegemony" (Lomnitz-Adler 1991, 196) by looking at the geographically specific intertwining of economy, politics, and culture in colonial Morelos and during the twentieth-century *cacicazgo* of Gonzalo Santos in San Luis Potosí (1992).

In paying attention to the regionally and culturally differentiated construction of regime politics across Mexico, Joseph, Nugent, and their contributors as well as Lomnitz-Adler illustrate Foucault's view that power is not to be found in "a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state" (Foucault 1990, 92). Rather, the state apparatus is the "institutional crystallization" (1990, 93) of something that happens elsewhere, in multiple local sites of contestation such as workplaces, families, associational groups, and institutions (1990, 94). The apparatuses of the state are thus decentered, entities that the "dense web" of power relations "passes through . . . without being exactly localized in them" (1990, 96).

To demonstrate the applicability of this approach to power in studying Mexico, this essay will proceed in two stages. I will begin by reviewing scholarly analyses of Mexican politics written since the 1960s to show the origin and course of the state-centered analysis, its insights and contributions, and the points at which it might have developed in directions more like the ones I propose. Next, I will look briefly at alternative interpretations of the nineteenth century and the Cárdenas period and then proceed to examine the cities of Juchitán and Naranja and the states of Puebla, Guerrero, San Luis Potosí, Nayarit, and Sonora since the 1930s.⁶ These discussions will demonstrate that regional work uncovers empirical evidence that challenges the state-centered and corporatist analysis of the regime and will suggest ways of reconfiguring regime analysis to take

6. In selecting these cities and states, I have included locations that exhibit a considerable range of geographic, ethnic, and economic characteristics. Thus my argument does not rest on exceptional cases.

this new information into account.⁷ Thus the first task of this essay is to make a case for rejecting a hegemonic scholarly analysis and to suggest ways of doing so on terms that nevertheless borrow from and thus speak to the conceptual framework of regime analysis itself.

But on moving beyond the national level and the framework of political economy, persuasive reasons emerge to challenge the notions of a straightforward national account and a circumscribed understanding of politics. The next section of the essay will argue that approaches taken in regional analysis suggest broadening concepts of region and politics so as to decenter the regime and place culture and everyday experience squarely within discussions of power. By decentering, I mean that national politics is understood as something partial and complex that coexists with but is different from regional and local politics, only one among several locations and kinds of politics. To demonstrate this point, I will show how cultural practices of religion, ethnicity, political ideology, and gender have played pivotal roles in shaping regional and national politics.

Although the argument will proceed in two stages to engage with and challenge the state-centered analysis, my goal is to move beyond these distinctions. By presenting the events and processes of Mexican politics in new ways, I will show that politics is embedded in cultural meaning and practice and that what scholars traditionally label as "national" occurs in and through what we call "regional." According to this view, "culture" is neither exclusively national nor local. It refers instead to interrelated beliefs and practices equally present in the policymaking of the central state (as when it embraces economic liberalization or negotiates with armed Indians in Chiapas), in municipal discourses of decency and citizenship (which shape contestations over local elections), and in elaborations of indigenous ritual (which affect understandings of daily life as well as interpretations of national politics).

My analysis of Mexican politics suggests envisioning relationships between and among regime, region, culture, and daily life in a way that keeps all these locations and forms in view. It also demonstrates that a new understanding of politics and power should be grounded in the ongoing contestation and balancing among these locations and forms. Such an approach, which impedes the kind of parsimonious model build-

7. I agree with Eric Van Young's recognition of the usefulness of the concept of region, the difficulty of defining it, and his decision to keep the definition open-ended (Van Young 1992). Overall, he has emphasized the cultural, historical, and contingent nature of regions in such a way that "social embeddedness and the dimension of time . . . define regions" (1992, 7). Regions "are to be seen less as rarefied entities, with discernible boundaries . . . then as processual spaces whose internal architecture and direction are subject to constant negotiation by actors both within and without" (1992, 27). Moreover, according to Van Young's paraphrase of Lomnitz-Adler, "regional cultures [are] internally differentiated constellations of communication and meaning occupying regional spaces already constituted by political economies" (Van Young 1992, 17).

ing that has generally characterized political science, is relevant far beyond Mexico. This approach is uniquely suited to political analysis at a time when the coherence of regimes appears to be giving way—as in the former Yugoslavia, the former Soviet Union, Rwanda, Chiapas, and India—to ethnic and cultural conflict with deep local roots and complex historical relationships to nationalism and centralized authority. In addition, the form of analysis to which I point in this essay can illuminate how enduring patterns of domination (which recent processes of democratization have shown to be related only indirectly to regime transitions) are made and unmade in Latin America.

THEORIES OF MEXICAN POLITICS

From the 1960s to the 1980s, scholars assessing Mexican politics sought to develop a model for the country's enduring one-party system. They characterized the Mexican system first as pluralist and representative and then as authoritarian and corporatist. Analysts emphasizing pluralism argued that despite the absence of fair elections, the diversity of interests in Mexico was represented through the party and its sectors and reflected in government policies, thus making the system representative as a whole. Analysis stressing authoritarianism pointed to the ways in which central authorities consistently co-opted, controlled, and repressed political pressures of peasants and workers while promoting economic policies favoring a small elite. As a variant of authoritarianism, corporatism provided a way of making more explicit the connection between establishment of a state-sponsored system of peasant and labor organizations and the regime's ability to rule with a relatively low level of overt violence. Corporatism thus explained how nonmilitary authoritarianism could function.⁸

All these approaches shared a focus on regime analysis, on generalizations meant to apply to politics throughout Mexico and over several decades.⁹ Analysts using these perspectives sought to understand the ways in which regimes as singular entities controlled what were perceived as relatively objective demands expressed by individuals and groups experiencing socioeconomic change. In moving from pluralism to authoritarianism, theorists introduced a much-needed critical perspec-

8. When applied to Latin America, the term *corporatism* implies state corporatism as opposed to societal corporatism, following Philippe Schmitter's distinction. In state corporatism, "singular, noncompetitive, hierarchically ordered representative 'corporations' . . . were created by and kept as auxiliary and dependent organs of the state . . ." (Schmitter 1974, 102). Theorists cited here on corporatism distinguish their use of the term as a form of institutional arrangement from the cultural meaning that others have attributed to corporatism (most prominently Wiarda 1974).

9. For a more historical and less homogeneous view of the Mexican regime, see Whitehead (1981).

tive on Mexican politics, one stimulated by empirical work on economic marginalization and political exclusion. At the same time, they abandoned useful observations inherent in the pluralist analysis. What the theorists of authoritarianism lost were ideas about on-the-ground politics—arenas where varied forms of contestation occurred without predetermined results—and, in the work that emerged in the late 1970s, ideas about political culture. Some accounts of authoritarianism emphasized the presence of “limited pluralism” (Linz 1970), and others identified a considerable degree of diversity and exchange (Anderson and Cockcroft 1972; Collier and Collier 1991). But all accounts placed such competition in a context of centralized control and continuity.

Martin Needler (1971) described a rough-and-tumble politics in Mexico, as did other pluralist authors (Cline 1963; Cumberland 1968; Padgett 1976). In comparing the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) with the Democratic Party in the United States under President Harry Truman, Needler pointed to a loose conglomeration of welfare-state machines, petty dictatorships, representatives of powerful interest groups, liberal intellectuals and professionals, and “rural ignoramuses.” This amalgam was “held together” by professional politicians via influence, corruption, arbitrariness, and occasional brutality: “yet, despite everything, the national party is a force for democracy and progress” (Needler 1971, 37). For Needler, this force “represent[s] on balance the policy preferences of the vast majority of Mexicans” (1971, 21). Howard Cline argued similarly that the PRI won elections because it “deliver[s] the goods” and “incorporates into its programme any really popular issues that seem to attract votes to minority parties” (Cline 1963, 166–67). Thus analysts emphasizing pluralism praised the potential of the Mexican political system and did not see persistent inequalities in either the process or the results of political bargaining and compromise.

An early version of analysis stressing authoritarianism appeared in Pablo González Casanova’s *Democracy in Mexico* (first published in 1965), which identified and documented a process of internal colonialism, understood as the economic exploitation and cultural marginalization of most Mexicans. González Casanova’s statistical portrait of this majority, together with Juan Linz’s identification of authoritarianism as a regime type, inspired a literature that began in the early 1970s and still endures in its basic precepts. González Casanova also anticipated later formulations, like that of Ruth Berins Collier (1982), which found Mexicans to be fully “encompassed” or controlled by the system whether or not they were situated within its formal institutions (González Casanova 1970, 120–21).

In contrast, U.S. analysts who first began to discern authoritarianism in Mexico described a milder form of control from above. (At this time, the paradigmatic cases of more brutal authoritarianism in the mid-

1970s had not yet occurred.) Linz's work on authoritarianism in Spain, the analysis on which virtually all those theorizing about Latin American authoritarianism drew, emphasized limited forms of predominantly elite political interaction and an unmobilized population that "obeys out of a mixture of habit and self-interest" (Linz 1970, 255, 270). Similarly, the influential analysis of the national system by Roger Hansen (1971) as well as studies by Wayne Cornelius (1975) and by Richard Fagen and William Tuohy (1972) of particular cities and neighborhoods all emphasized management, apathy, and co-optation as the central characteristics of Mexican politics. These authors understood political culture as something that changes in stages from tradition to modernity and pertains to formal politics and attitudes toward authority. For them, the key to the limited nature of coercion—in a situation where, they believed, objective conditions for class conflict clearly existed—was a political culture characterized by low levels of demand making and submission to authority.

As described by Fagen and Tuohy, the city of Jalapa experienced little political contestation in the 1960s, and elections had no importance beyond straightforward symbolism. Emphasizing elite control and mass quiescence across classes, they found, "[T]he local agenda is single-mindedly focused on economic and service deficiencies to the almost complete exclusion of structural and political problems. It is an agenda of people who live in a well-managed political environment" (Fagen and Tuohy 1972, 74).

Cornelius's study of a poor neighborhood in Mexico City emphasized moderate demands and identified existing strategies for economic survival, assessing them as realistic. Cornelius did not praise the regime or claim that it represented Mexicans, as had those writing in the 1960s. In contrast, he referred to the "fearsomely high" costs of *caciquismo* (1975, 164), which he saw as the local component of national institutions. Given the limited demand making that Cornelius observed, he portrayed the regime as only mildly authoritarian and repressive. But as I will show, the decades characterized as quiescent in these studies were turbulent and contested in other locations, suggesting that the authors overgeneralized from their case studies or did not notice forms of conflict that were occurring in the places they studied.

Almost a decade after González Casanova's analysis first appeared, other scholars began to document inequality, marginalization, and coercion in virtually all aspects of formal political life in Mexico, such as neighborhoods, labor unions, rural peasant organizations, political parties, and elections. In so doing, they largely eliminated culture from political analysis and played down the role of exchange in Mexican politics. These analysts used the word *hegemony* to mean unchallenged control in an authoritarian regime, rather than in the Gramscian sense of the contested and changing configuration of dominant beliefs and practices

in any regime. In contrast to Linz's authoritarianism, the control they described was active and all-encompassing, doing violence to ordinary Mexicans as they engaged in political activity.

Judith Adler Hellman was one of the first to chronicle the ongoing violent repression of peasant and labor activism in detail (see Hellman 1983, first published in 1978). In contrast to claims about the representative character of the regime made by pluralist researchers, Hellman and others theorizing on authoritarianism in the late 1970s demonstrated the ways in which political institutions in Mexico shaped participation so as to preclude effective voicing of political beliefs and claims. In their accounts, the regime's willingness to use force—not Mexican culture—explained the "effectiveness with which the state is able to impose social control over a population of peasants and workers who have every reason to be discontented and rebellious" (Hellman 1983, 170). These theorists focused on the long reach of state-sponsored mass organizations and their ability (particularly from the late 1930s to 1968) to control potential and actual lower-class demands through co-optation and repression. These analysts identified the origins of such structuring in the state-building reforms of President Lázaro Cárdenas in the 1930s, identifying ways in which widespread reform and progressive marginalization had become linked (Cornelius 1973; Hamilton 1982; Hellman 1983).¹⁰

Hellman and others focused attention on the historical origins of inequality, the centrality of outright violence, and the discernible structure of coercion in formal political dealings. Yet in keeping with political science's commitment to characterizing national political models and its tendency to assume that such models were replicated at all levels, scholars who discerned coercion claimed virtually unchanging absorption and control, focusing primarily on the ways in which these outcomes were achieved by elite policies. In describing Mexican politics, Hellman spoke of "the way the government and the official party manage to monopolize political power" (Hellman 1983, 170). In Ruth Collier's words, Mexico was characterized by "a multi-class, integrative, hegemonic, one-party dominant system. In the electoral arena, in the interest group arena, and in the symbolic arena, the PRI has been able to bind and integrate popular sector groups to the state" (R. Collier 1982, 77). Susan Eckstein gave absorption and hegemony an even more active, colonizing role, anticipating theories of corporatism. Eckstein argued, "Mexico's paternalistic system is deliberately re-created in new areas as they emerge" (1977, 41), and she found that this process of re-creation occurred "regardless of the intentions of políticos and residents" (1977, 25). Such analyses, however,

10. Earlier theorists did not discern Cárdenas's pivotal state-building role. Needler, for example, characterized Cárdenas as "another strong personality and military figure" and suggested that "with Cárdenas' successor, the task of institutionalization was resumed" (Needler 1971, 6).

overlooked the possibility of changing configurations, the possibility that mixtures of coercion and resistance in varying geographic and political locations might indeed create new identities, alliances, and political forces.

Much like Eckstein, theorists of corporatism moved a step beyond the concept of the all-encompassing state to one that actively structured the emergence of political activity (Erickson 1977; Malloy 1977; Stepan 1978). These analysts discerned in numerous Latin American regimes “interest representation based on non-competing groups that are officially sanctioned, subsidized, and supervised by the state” (Collier and Collier 1979, 967). Such corporatist regimes tended to exhibit common characteristics that included territorial units subordinated to central bureaucratic power, nonexistent or purely symbolic elections, and party systems dominated by a single party (Schmitter 1974, 105). As political systems with diverse histories conformed more or less to a similar pattern, diversity within nations also diminished. According to Schmitter, under state corporatism, “political subcultures based on class, ethnicity, language, or regionalism are repressed” (1974, 105).

Authoritarianism in Mexico (Reyna and Weinert 1977) played a major role in applying corporatist theorizing to Mexico. According to co-editor José Luis Reyna, recent literature in political science had addressed “the study of political domination based on corporatist theory” (1977, 155). Like most observers of Mexico since the 1960s, Reyna sought to explain the absence of violence in a situation of extreme inequality and suffering. For these scholars, this situation would not be surprising in a pluralist regime, one of “openly conflictual, multifaceted, uncontrolled interest politics” (Schmitter 1974, 127) where it was assumed that citizens had access to political means to challenge domination and freely made use of such means. But according to this perspective, oppressed individuals in a nonpluralistic situation can be expected to rebel, unless something prevents them from doing so. Corporatism was identified as that something, “an alternative to the indiscriminate use of repressive measures” (Reyna 1977, 161). In Reyna’s view, the corporatist system in Mexico had been established so successfully and power secured so completely within the state that “there is only one real political center. The state can activate or exclude the masses according to the circumstances” (Reyna 1977, 162).

In *Shaping the Political Arena* (1991), Ruth Collier and David Collier pressed against some of the boundaries assumed by corporatist analysis of Mexico, insisting on the diversity of corporatist organizations since the 1930s and the centrality of bargaining and exchange to the Mexican political system. In their analysis, the Mexican center could not single-handedly impose its policies and had to work hard to maintain legitimacy. But Collier and Collier looked exclusively at national-level political arrange-

ments and formal political and economic organizations. They based their conclusions about regime continuity solely on cessation of formal conflict and maintenance of formal organizational cohesion in labor confederations, which could claim only a small minority of Mexican workers by the 1980s. As a result, Collier and Collier concluded, "though the Mexican party system experienced some changes in response to these challenges [during the years from 1952 to 1982], it contained them, remained stable, and was characterized primarily by continuity" (1991, 574). But they did not examine the substance of political and social life under the enduring regime and thus gave little significance, other than formal affiliation, to "incorporation and containment," the words they used to characterize the dynamics of power in Mexico and the political activity of ordinary Mexicans.

THE PATHS NOT TAKEN

At several points along the path from pluralism to corporatism, scholars of Mexican politics might have made use of their empirical findings and new observations to move in alternative theoretical directions. For example, they might have combined pluralist and authoritarian insights to discern variation and resistance as ongoing components of domination. Rather than concluding that the political system as a whole subsumed a vast and undifferentiated mass of people, González Casanova (1970) might have explored the complexity of a situation in which Mexicans were not only within the institutions of the political system but also outside them or somewhere in between, resisting and shaping the political practices of the state even as they were controlled by them. Likewise, the study of caciquismo, focusing on regional locations and on forms of rule intimately linked to local cultures, offered an alternative direction for analysis of Mexican politics. Cornelius's attention to the distinctive characteristics of caciquismo could have been a starting point for combining analyses of rough-and-tumble politics, political culture, and patterns of economic and political domination (1975, chap. 6). Together with the limited presence of the PRI, which was particularly obvious in situations of cacique rule, such an approach might have pointed the way toward characterizing hegemony in Mexico as contested, uneven, and constituted out of specific regional cultures. But subsequent scholars perceived caciquismo predominantly as a particular extension of corporatism (Friedrich 1986; Pansters 1990, 9–10), and even when caciquismo was identified as an obstacle, the state-centered framework went largely unquestioned (Fox 1993, 130–31; Grindle 1977).

By arguing that state power was not only successful but successfully disguised, Eckstein demonstrated how an all-encompassing power imposed "political order" on an undifferentiated territory. In this way, Eck-

stein suggested another path, like those of González Casanova and Cornelius in their discussions of marginality and caciquismo, toward rethinking the nature and location of power. But rather than examining the interconnectedness and permeability of “state” and “society” so as to question these categories themselves, Eckstein placed this insight squarely within a paradigm that focused on societal groups with objective material interests versus an all-powerful, institutionalized state. Thus in her analysis of conflicts between grassroots groups and corporatist organizations, the fight was always basically the same and the state always won.

If, however, the corporatism described by Eckstein and Reyna is reconceptualized as something that acts covertly to prevent rebellion, something that resists resistance, then corporatism as a theory about the workings of power begins to seem compatible with forms of analysis derived from Foucault (1990) and Bourdieu (1977; see also Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). These have found structured forms of power as well as multiple sites and forms of resistance in previously unexamined locations. Where theories of pluralism and authoritarianism relied on clearly discernible competition, management, or manipulation among actors with discrete and enduring interests, corporatism suggested that the strategies and identities of some actors—in this case, actors outside the state—were affected by the ways in which state actors could shape the very environment in which the outsiders operated. Such an analysis might have been pushed to include the categories of thought, the domain of the imaginable, within which nonstate actors made political choices; been pushed again to recognize the ramifications of actions and beliefs not formally political on such choices; and pushed once again to suggest the permeability of the state in its numerous forms to beliefs and practices originating or adapted in locations apparently outside the state. In other words, corporatism’s insight into the ability of power to cross apparent boundaries and shape political action and imagination “from the inside” might have led to a rethinking of the all-encompassing state as the explanation for Mexican politics. Instead, Reyna’s formulation of a state that could “activate or exclude the masses” from the 1930s to the 1970s became codified in scholarly writing about Mexico in the 1980s. It is being drawn on yet again to explain President Salinas’s success in implementing a neoliberal project and to frame the problems of governance facing President Zedillo.

In that case, what is not explained by corporatism and by the targeted social spending of the social-welfare program known as the Programa Nacional de Solidaridad? For one thing, theories of co-optation and repression, along with their corporatist counterparts, do not explain why individuals negotiate when and as they do. Which forms and degrees of autonomy are surrendered and which ones maintained? How do needs, values, alliances, and autonomies change over time? With what

languages and beliefs are cases argued? In other words, if corporatism exists, why does it work, and in what way? Theorists explain only that it works and assume the reasons are self-evident, based on discernible, objective interests.

Yet co-optation and repression become forms without content if they are separated from meaning and historical context. Situations of contestation do not occur nationally, throughout all of Mexico, but in particular towns or regions, in particular cultural or economic arenas. These regions and arenas diverge over time, house new forms of politics, form new configurations with what might be labeled “national”—both outside and inside, both shaping and shaped. The rebellion in Chiapas makes this point abundantly clear in the emergence of armed opposition within indigenous villages that ostensibly supported the PRI and in the dramatic changes in national discourse and policymaking prompted by the rebellion. According to this view, President Salinas was able to carry out a transformative economic project and faced limits in doing so because a complex and changing state was able to negotiate separate paths among partly distinct and partly interrelated regions and arenas.¹¹ All-encompassing authoritarianism or corporatism describes neither this present nor the past that shaped it.

A STATE-CENTERED CHRONOLOGY

In what has become the customary retelling of the postrevolutionary past, President Plutarco Elías Calles maneuvered revolutionary generals into partial subservience to a centralized state and an incipient national party in the 1920s. President Cárdenas then thoroughly restructured and institutionalized that state and party between 1934 and 1940, rewarding cooperative generals, ousting others, and creating and fortifying centralized mass organizations. This incorporation was facilitated by extensive and unprecedented land reform and labor legislation. The resulting system, according to this state-centered analysis, maintained stability in Mexico for the next thirty years, partly by balancing political constituencies on the Left and the Right and then increasingly by exercising control over those opposed to or harmed by inegalitarian forms of economic development.¹² During this period, regular elections served merely to ratify what had already been decided behind closed, centralized doors. The personalist politics of caciquismo coexisted with the new system, forming part of its inner structure.

By the 1960s, according to this account, the system was suffering

11. On “power regions and hegemony,” see Claudio Lomnitz-Adler (1992, 201–2).

12. Collier and Collier separate the incorporation project into two phases: first mobilization and reform under Cárdenas, and then conservative reaction and retrenchment between 1940 and 1952 (1991, 407–20).

from “petrification” (Pansters 1990, 101). The structures of corporatism and caciquismo on which the system was built could not respond to diverse challenges brought about by economic differentiation and demands for political participation. This rigidity, which supposedly led directly to the explosion of 1968, became the central dilemma of Mexican politics thereafter. In the 1970s and 1980s, the regime tried unsuccessfully to recoup, reinvent, or replace corporatist success. Generally, these efforts were perceived as failures. Policies shifted repeatedly, but they neither revived corporatism nor transcended it. Out of this stalemate, Salinas largely managed to complete the process of economic liberalization in an atmosphere of relative social peace until the Chiapas rebellion in the final year of his *sexenio*. He strictly limited political liberalization and apparently pacified impoverished Mexicans by means of a targeted social-welfare program.

This analysis of twentieth-century Mexico, like the theories of the all-encompassing state, emphasized the thoroughness of the transformation achieved by Cárdenas, the stability of the years between the 1930s and 1968, the effective centralization of politics, and the failure to reestablish stability, even with increasing coercion, in the 1970s and 1980s. My analysis of Juchitán and other Mexican regions will show in contrast that regional power structures coexisted with Cárdenas’s state building and that the reach of the central government was limited. Mexican states and regions were ruled by political bosses from the 1930s through the 1950s. The politics of these years resulted from interactions between local histories, contemporary local culture and economy, and the needs and projects of the central state.

This kind of politics was combative and changing. The deaths of caciques and their immediate heirs in the 1950s and 1960s precipitated some of the central political dilemmas of recent decades—how to create functioning political parties and satisfactory arrangements of participation and representation—and led to the emergence of new forms of political voice and negotiation in the 1980s. These new forms were in turn shaped directly and indirectly by the cultural practices and political and economic conflicts of the cacique years. Furthermore, the task of political construction was understood, debated, and acted on in routine and extraordinary ways by ordinary Mexicans. Their actions, often at the regional level and in arenas outside of formal politics, shaped and challenged the policies of state actors by providing vetoes, new languages, changing cultural and political forces, and alternative institutional arrangements.

THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND THE CARDENAS PERIOD

Revisionist work on the colonial period and the nineteenth century has illuminated the kinds of partial sovereignty and contested hege-

mony absent from analyses of postrevolutionary Mexico. Historians such as John Tutino (1986), Paul Vanderwood (1981), Alan Knight (1986), and Florencia Mallon (1995) have demonstrated the regional roots of national events, the ongoing interaction between region and central state, and the limits on the presence of the central state in the nineteenth century.¹³ Ernest Gruening (1934) and Alicia Hernández (1979) addressed similar issues for the 1920s and 1930s, respectively. Gruening focused on the endurance of regional power structures before Cárdenas, and Hernández identified the mechanisms by which such forms of power persisted through the Cárdenas administration. The contributors to *Everyday Forms of State Formation* (1994) have provided compelling illustrations of the varied cultural and political forms through which postrevolutionary hegemony was constructed.

In tracing the course of the Hidalgo revolt in the Bajío region of central Mexico, Tutino followed the revolt from region to region, explaining why it gained support in some areas but was opposed in others and the differing reasons for support from one region to the next. Although Tutino focused more on socioeconomic phenomena than on culture and politics, his analysis explained an event of national significance by scrutinizing regional events and variation. It laid the groundwork for tracing regional changes and conflicts throughout the nineteenth century and then understanding the revolution as a product of these different regional events and the actions taken by the central state under Porfirio Díaz. This kind of analysis was also employed in Alan Knight's (1986) study of the revolution, which detailed the array of regional patterns and conflicts that occurred in its course. Lack of focus on regions and ongoing rebellion had led earlier historians to divide the nineteenth century too neatly, identifying a national-level progression from failed rebellion, to unsuccessful centralization, to political consolidation under Díaz, and finally to revolution.

Paul Vanderwood's work on the Mexican *rurales* during the Porfiriato complements Tutino's study of rebellions by demonstrating the uneven degree of central state presence under Porfirio Díaz and also the role of ideology and symbols in creating the myth of Díaz's all-powerful rule—among not only contemporary political allies and investors but subsequent historians as well. "The pax Porfiriano, or Porfirian peace," Vanderwood comments, "was more imagined than real, invented by those

13. Tutino, Vanderwood, Knight, and Mallon all draw on previous work in regional analysis of the nineteenth century, exemplified by Luis González (1972). Wasserman (1984) made points similar to Vanderwood's regarding the Porfiriato. In contrast, an earlier generation of scholars had established a tradition of "top-down" and national histories of nineteenth-century Mexican politics and ideology. See Reyes Heroles (1988, orig. pub. 1961) and Hale (1968). The works of Inga Clendinnen (1987) and Serge Gruzinski (1993) on the colonial period linked issues of culture and representation to the dynamics of colonial domination. I am grateful to Barbara Corbett for her insights on nineteenth-century historiography.

who stood to profit from such an impression" (1981, p. 89). Vanderwood's research into what was actually going on among Díaz's rural police discredited many of the assertions made on the assumption of relative regime stability at the national level. Vanderwood thus foreshadowed arguments similar to those I am making here about postrevolutionary regions and the national regime. For example, he found the rurales to have played sizable roles in creating and re-creating regional "orders and disorders." As arbiters of local justice, the rurales had their own ambitions for economic and political power: "as frequently as rurales did the bidding of local strongmen, they refused to be handmaidens to such authorities. . . . the relationship between the rurales and a jefe político . . . raised the question, Who is in charge?" (Vanderwood 1981, 127).

Vanderwood also noted the coexistence of regional identities and power structures with the Porfirian state and the very uneven presence of the rurales across Mexican territory: "Regionalism did not just evaporate under the impact of dictatorship and development. It took until 1892 to foist Porfirian governors on Michoacán and Chihuahua. . . . And, unlike the dictator, governors frequently faced substantial opposition to their re-election" (1981, 85). Vanderwood described how hard Díaz worked to buttress the myth of the all-powerful and omnipresent police, particularly among Mexicans who did not see rurales daily: "The president systematically created pomp and circumstances to feed imaginations" (1981, 135).

During the middle third of the twentieth century, regional bosses were a key element in this linking of the local with the national. Ernest Gruening and Alicia Hernández demonstrated clearly where twentieth-century bosses came from and how and why their power was reinforced by the newly powerful central state. In a detailed discussion of fourteen states, Gruening described the growing strength of the federal government, the high degree of inner conflict in that government, and the wide range of maneuverings by which that government coexisted with different regional forces in every state. Gruening catalogued impositions of elected authorities made by existing state governments and by the governments of adjacent states as well as instances of successful opposition to state governments and to such attempts to impose political authority.¹⁴ His descriptions of state politics in the 1920s suggest several characteristics of Mexican politics that Hernández substantiated for the Cárdenas period (traits strikingly similar to post-1968 contestation): the interweaving of state and national political power and policy making; the combining of electoral and nonelectoral forms of political battle and maneuvering; mobilization of civic coalitions seeking honest public administration and clean elections; and the durability of regional political factions and ideologies.

14. For a summary of political conflicts and arrangements in the states, see Gruening (1934, 397–98); for a detailed analysis of each state, see Gruening (399–467).

Gruening's discussion never lost sight of the chieftains. Alicia Hernández further explained the ways in which these revolutionary military leaders became political bosses, developing and elaborating forms of regional economic and political power even as the Mexican military as a whole became subservient to civilian authority (Hernández 1979, 77–78). Her discussion of "la mecánica Cardenista" (the mechanisms by which Cárdenas transformed the central state) documented the costs of overcoming these regional power bases. In this respect, her analysis diverged from other studies of the Cárdenas period. Like Hamilton (1982) and Cornelius (1973), Hernández documented the political skill with which Cárdenas transferred and outmaneuvered politicians and military leaders. Yet Hernández also showed how the regional locus of power persisted through the formation of the official party in 1929 and its subsequent reformulations, as well as through Cárdenas's political maneuverings and impositions in individual states in the early years of his sexenio.

The Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR) was originally formed as a federation of regional parties, with its membership and power resting on the political power already acquired by regional groups and families. In 1933 these parties were dissolved and their members reincorporated individually into the PNR. But as Alicia Hernández noted, "this measure did not wipe out the power held by the local politicians nor eliminate the internal divisions in the party that these groups caused" (1979, 27). Their rootedness derived from the fact that "each of their members, while ascending the political ladder, had been cultivating contacts and influence in the agrarian leagues, the unions, and other groups that made up the political life of each state" (Hernández 1979, 27). Finally, these groups' ability to organize state politics was essential for effective national public administration "because in the 1920s, the federal government still lacked centralized institutional mechanisms, and it was via these local groups that it obtained the effective regional control that it needed" (1979, 27).

Hernández showed that the same method by which Cárdenas outmaneuvered some power blocs in the states reinforced the strength of others. Although he transformed the national institutional landscape, Cárdenas did not transform the human occupants of those institutions at the state level: "In 1936 he had restructured his second cabinet with people whom he thought believed in his idea of government, while in the states he returned to power those political groups who had been displaced by Obregonismo and then by Callismo" (Hernández 1979, 74). These individuals and groups were willing to support Cárdenas's policies in the short term in exchange for access to power.¹⁵ But given that the newly empowered leaders were not chosen because they shared Cá-

15. For an example of Cárdenas's maneuvering in Puebla, see Pansters (1990, 74).

denas's vision of Mexican politics, they generally were willing to support subsequent presidents in limiting or undoing the widespread reforms that had been achieved during his presidency.

Part of Nora Hamilton's pathbreaking analysis of Cardenismo mirrored Hernández's findings about regional power: despite the dominance of new progressive groups at the national level during the first half of the Cárdenas sexenio, "the previously dominant coalition . . . did not disappear. Moreover, certain groups within this alliance . . . continued to be strengthened during this period, in part through state initiatives favoring private accumulation" (Hamilton 1982, 276). But by focusing on the central state and the national class structure, Hamilton interpreted the events of the Cárdenas period as resulting in one predominant national transformation: "Within the next fifteen years, a powerful governing group—the Sonoran dynasty—emerged and achieved the centralization of state power, eliminating regional military and political power bases" (1982, 272). In her view, "The state has been limited as an arena for class conflict; in general it functions to repress mobilized groups it cannot co-opt" (1982, 280). In contrast to these conclusions, the works of Gruening and Hernández and subsequent regional histories discussed here indicate that the national state in Mexico was not a limited arena for conflicts. Even as centralized, potentially authoritarian mechanisms of control and mediation were being constructed at the national level, other forms of control and mediation (perhaps equally likely to be repressive and authoritarian, but often in different ways and in conflict with the central government) were being reinforced at the state and local level.

MEXICAN REGIONS SINCE THE 1930S

The new postrevolutionary state coexisted with powerful regional bosses in the cities of Juchitán, Naranja, and Namiquipa and in the states of Puebla, Guerrero, Nayarit, San Luis Potosí, and Sonora. These bosses and their political allies maintained power from the 1930s until the late 1950s or early 1960s, steering a course between accommodation and autonomy. Although the time frame of 1930–1960 corresponds roughly to the periodization used in state-centered analysis, regional histories suggest a different understanding of that period and connect its key political events and conflicts more directly to what came before and after. The autonomy secured by the various caciques reflected claims for which regional groups had long been fighting, often since the middle of the nineteenth century. The politics of caciquismo itself engendered ongoing political opposition to its substance as well as procedures, opposition that linked discourse on clean government and administrative efficiency to claims about religion, ethnicity, social justice, and democracy. The immense difficulties of forging a public politics following the deaths of the caciques fostered a turbu-

lent process of political contestation in the 1960s and subsequent decades. Forming a political party was a complex and urgent undertaking, and the result was uneven and contested. The dynamics of this contestation were shaped profoundly by the events of the cacique years, in interaction with initiatives of the central state. The conflicts and alliances emerging in the 1960s and 1970s, which differed from region to region, established the framework for negotiations over electoral competition, economic restructuring, the autonomy of popular movements, and the meaning of citizenship in the 1980s and 1990s.

In Juchitán, a rural city located in the southern part of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec,¹⁶ nineteenth-century rebellions drew on aspects of Juchiteco experience in preceding centuries to create an identity that emphasized the unity of the *pueblo* against outside incursions—whether Oaxacan, Mexican, European, or North American. This identity also stressed the *pueblo's* capacity and willingness to defend its resources and autonomy through various forms of resistance that included petitions, land invasions, illegal use of private salt flats and pastures, attacks on businesses, and armed rebellion. In resisting economic incursions, Juchitecos came to view themselves as a unified *pueblo* and were defined by Oaxacans in the capital city as criminal and barbaric.

After the revolution, regional political arrangements made during twenty-five years of cacique rule by General Heliodoro Charis (initiated by negotiations with President Cárdenas) succeeded in garnering regional support for the new national state precisely because they left the isthmus alone, guaranteeing for Juchitecos, initially at least, the kind of economic and political autonomy for which they had repeatedly rebelled. In addition, the multiclass alliance supporting Charis shared in the elaboration of Zapotec language and ritual practices, an activity reinforced by the central state's use of narratives of Indianness in defining and legitimizing its rule. The PRI barely existed in the isthmus between 1930 and 1960, with political activists calling themselves "Charistas" even as they supported the new national system. Mass organizations formed later and much less uniformly than accounts of national politics have suggested, and Charis was challenged almost immediately by local and state-level reformers. His tenure as regional boss was marked by intrigue, murder, and a mixture of protection and exploitation of peasants. It was also filled with stormy public political battles—often centering around elections—between two elite camps with conflicting visions of present and future political life.

These tensions came to a head in Juchitán in the 1960s and early 1970s in dramatic public conflicts over private property, electoral procedures, and the role of the PRI. The politics of the Charis period had

16. The following discussion of Juchitán draws on Rubin (n.d.b).

produced neither a political party nor any other accepted mechanisms for distributing and exercising local political authority. Construction of schools, hospitals, highways, and a dam—the fruits of the regional-national alliance and national economic development plans—had begun urban commercialization and agricultural change that transformed daily life and public discourse. In the name of the *pueblo*, elites actively mobilized peasants and workers behind two major projects: repeal in the mid-1960s of a presidential decree that would have turned most of the Juchitán irrigation district into an *ejido*; and election in the early 1970s of a reformist municipal government in opposition to the PRI. In both undertakings, elites invoked the dual legacy of nineteenth-century rebellions and the Charis cacicazgo—the unity of the multiclass ethnic *pueblo* against the outside—to seek guarantees for private property and clean government.

Efforts to change the character of the PRI in the 1960s began mid-decade with support for primaries within the official party, in accordance with short-lived national moves to establish a primary system. When these attempts failed to achieve lasting change, opponents of closed party procedures and the imposition of candidates by state and national authorities formed independent groups within the PRI in the late 1960s, fighting for a role in candidate selection and municipal administration. They broke with the official party in 1971, a shift culminating in the installation of an opposition leader as municipal president the same year. Thus in Juchitán, it was elites in the 1960s—not grassroots radicals in the 1970s—who first promoted mass mobilizations and widespread electoral participation as political strategies and articulated thoroughgoing critiques of failed economic development, widespread poverty, and political corruption. Through this and subsequent conflicts over political competition and social life, the meaning of citizenship was debated and reshaped in Juchitán. Moreover, promotion of elections in the 1960s and early 1970s did not signify an overriding desire by Juchitecos for electoral democracy. Rather, they were weighing the importance of elections in comparison with other pressing matters, such as the internal procedures according to which the PRI functioned, the value of a ruling party, and the appropriate path for economic development.

In the wake of the failure of the 1971–1973 reformist government, radical students in Juchitán formed an activist grassroots movement that eventually became the Coalición Obrera Campesina Estudiantil del Istmo (COCEI), which has proved to be one of the most militant and enduring popular movements in Mexico. COCEI gathered consistent support among Juchitán's overwhelmingly Zapotec population, drawing on and reshaping ethnic language, customs, art, and historical knowledge. COCEI also fought with considerable success for rural land and agricultural opportunities, urban wages and benefits, and municipal sovereignty, withstanding violent repression in the process. In the early years of the Mexi-

can *reforma política*, the radical movement pressured the regime to annul fraudulent elections in 1980 and recognize its victory in subsequent elections. COCEI governed the city until it was thrown out of office by state and national authorities in 1983. Through a skillful combination of militancy and negotiation, COCEI continued its radical mobilizations, joined a coalition municipal government between 1986 and 1989, and went on to win elections and govern the city again in 1989, 1992, and 1995.

During its 1989–1992 and 1992–1995 administrations, the COCEI government participated in the Salinas administration's program of *concertación social*, thereby securing considerable development funds for Juchitán. COCEI is one of the few indigenous and leftist groups recognized by the Mexican government as a legitimate and autonomous political force. Mexican authorities have respected the results of democratic elections in Juchitán, invested in municipal services there, and curbed local abuses of human rights. COCEI's relationship with the national government has become a model for a democratic politics that includes ongoing negotiation over cultural representation and economic justice. Because fair elections were only sometimes considered important by Ju-chitecos and then as merely one of several pressing matters, the development and meaning of democratization in Juchitán in the 1990s (as in Mexico generally) can be understood only by analyzing the embeddedness of democratic beliefs and practices in historical and regional contexts.

The presence of COCEI also prompted considerable change within the PRI. The perceived threat of militant opposition increased the clout of reformists within the official party. Reformist groups had played pivotal roles in regional politics throughout the twentieth century—in opposition to Charis in the 1940s and 1950s, in support of internal primaries in the 1960s, and in opposition to the PRI in the early 1970s. But they had consistently lost their bids to control the party, with a new version of the old-style boss gaining the upper hand in the early 1980s. COCEI's presence and success in winning elections actually fortified the alliance between the central government and the reformers within the PRI. By the late 1980s, the Salinas government faced two substantial regional forces in the isthmus that had not existed a decade earlier: a radical opposition committed to negotiation and some forms of economic development, and a moderate wing of the elite and the official party committed to some degree of electoral competition, administrative openness, and social well-being.¹⁷

In Puebla and Guerrero, the breakdown of state-level cacicazgos took different forms and led to divergent political scenarios in the 1980s and 1990s.¹⁸ In Puebla, the Universidad Autónoma de Puebla became the

17. On COCEI in the 1970s and 1980s, see also Rubin (1987, 1994).

18. The discussion of Puebla draws on Pansters (1990), and that of Guerrero, on Armando Bartra (n.d.).

arena of conflict over the cacicazgo of Maximino Avila Camacho. As Wil Pansters has demonstrated, this conflict was shaped and polarized by an anti-communist discourse. Promoted by state-level elites who conflated drugs, pornography, crime, the progressive church, leftist guerrillas, and homosexuality, this discourse pitted leftist students, workers, and peasants against the coalition of the bourgeoisie, the Catholic Church, and the private sector on which the Avila Camacho cacicazgo had been based. Grassroots mobilizations inside and outside the university, together with what Pansters has termed “moral panic” (Pansters 1990, 131), eventually produced two new political forces (a result somewhat similar to what occurred in Juchitán). Both new groups in Puebla consisted primarily of younger Mexicans: a left wing linked to the old university and to poor people’s struggles, and a right wing with its own new university, linked to the private sector, opposed to statism, and partially allied with the conservative Partido Acción Nacional (PAN). As in Juchitán, the combination of discursive conflict, mobilization, and political maneuvering shaped the nature of citizenship and beliefs about politics in Puebla in lasting ways.¹⁹

In Puebla, as in Juchitán, polarized conflict provided a pathway for reformist federal intervention, although with different results. In Puebla, President Luis Echeverría initially supported the leftist student and grassroots groups, much as he sided with the radical COCEI in Juchitán. But as COCEI moved beyond his control, the Echeverría administration responded with violence and military intervention from the 1970s to the mid-1980s. When reformist accommodations were made later in that decade, they centered around the participation of a powerful Left. In Puebla, in contrast, the regime in the 1960s and 1970s acted as an arbiter between the Left and the Right. The Left in Puebla did not emerge from the radicalism of the 1970s with a coherent political movement, while the new Right used the heritage of conservative ideology, the presence of PAN, and emphasis on elections to influence the official party.

In Guerrero, what Armando Bartra calls “a rural cacicazgo of agrarista origin” was established under Cárdenas. The governor of Guerrero promoted agrarian reform in the 1930s, reviving the defeated radicalism of the 1920s and including former guerrillas in implementation of the reform. Radical organizations and leaders thus survived the formation of new state institutions, although Bartra believes that they were fully controlled within the corporatist framework.²⁰ In the 1950s, new organiza-

19. Teresa Caldeira (1994) demonstrates in her discussion of debates about the death penalty and human rights for prisoners in Brazil that beliefs about democracy (in the Brazilian case, on the protection from violence afforded human bodies) derive as much from the kinds of social issues identified by Pansters in Puebla as from experiences of elections, parties, and government.

20. I question Armando Bartra’s conclusion on corporatism during this period in Gue-

tions sought unsuccessfully to survive outside of the PRI. As in Juchitán, full-blown conflict occurred in the 1960s, escaping regime control, but in Guerrero it led to an armed guerrilla struggle. As in Puebla and Juchitán in those years, opposition in Guerrero first occurred within the system, expressing divergent and changing beliefs about citizenship. Protest against electoral fraud in the town of Atoyac in the early 1960s, however, brought escalating conflicts between civilians and soldiers as well as ongoing military presence and abuses.

Led by schoolteachers Jenaro Vázquez and Lucio Cabañas in successive mobilizations, the guerrillas in Guerrero survived at least nine years. In Bartra's view, this armed battle separated anti-regime struggle from the daily lives of the non-guerrilla population, where efforts for change had been rooted since the 1950s. In contrast to Juchitán, it ended radicalization and grassroots opposition. According to Bartra, guerrilla leaders in Guerrero did not envision the possibility of the kind of non-violent social movement that emerged in subsequent years in other parts of Mexico. Like Pansters's argument on anti-communism in Puebla, Bartra combined political economy and attention to political discourse to explain the course of regional political crises. In Guerrero, the regime responded to the guerrilla conflict with extensive agricultural reform. Grassroots movements that formed in the 1980s then positioned themselves against the state and its agrarian agencies and policies, rather than being primarily against regional caciques and elites, as in Puebla and Juchitán. As a result, some of the strongest grassroots movements in Guerrero in the late 1980s and 1990s were producer cooperatives, groups that were more willing to negotiate with the state over economic issues and to pursue innovative economic relations with the outside than were the leftist movements in Puebla and Juchitán.

In Puebla and Guerrero, as in Juchitán, groups opposing boss rule in the 1950s failed to overturn existing power relations but were succeeded by more far-reaching and disruptive challenges in the 1960s. As in Juchitán, these challenges coalesced around issues concerning elections, accountability, and moderate reform and expanded into militant class-based pressures for economic, political, and cultural transformations. Fierce and public, these arguments raged largely outside official national politics, which they critiqued vigorously. Studies of Juchitán, Puebla, and Guerrero demonstrate that key political phenomena appearing in the 1980s had been developing in Mexican regions since the 1960s: the forma-

rrero as well as Pansters's claims about its significance in Puebla. Pansters argues that personalism and institutionalism were fused to produce a new form of political organization (1990, 74–75). He thus revises the corporatist analysis but leaves intact the notion of one predominant political location and form. My hunch is that more information will make it possible to modify the corporatist framework further and link events in the 1930s to the 1960s in these states to preceding and subsequent historical processes in a different manner.

tion of a leftist movement and its participation in social concertation in Juchitán; the strengthening of PAN and the development of new forms of political influence by business groups in Puebla; and the establishment of agricultural cooperatives in Guerrero.

In analyzing political conflict in San Luis Potosí in central Mexico, Enrique Márquez (1987) emphasized regional cultural history and structures of power in explaining *Navismo*, a political movement that first challenged state-level *caciquismo* between 1958 and 1961 and then reappeared in 1981 to challenge Governor Carlos Jonquitud Barrios, also head of the corrupt national teachers' union. Opposition to boss rule led by Dr. Salvador Nava Martínez shared several characteristics with reform movements in Juchitán and Puebla. The Unión Cívica Potosina (like Juchitán's Frente Renovador Democrático opposing Charis) was a coalition of promoters of "good government" who sought to end the "fierce, greedy cacicazgo of Gonzalo N. Santos" (Márquez 1977, 112). Presidential candidate Adolfo López Mateos supported the union, declaring during a campaign visit, "cacicazgos persist only where the people tolerate them" (1977, 113). Following a statewide Navista strike before and after municipal elections in 1958, in which Nava won more than 90 percent of the vote, the central government recognized the opposition victory and oversaw the transfer of municipal power to Nava. But when Nava sought the governorship in 1961, he was rejected by the PRI. His candidacy as an independent resulted in his arrest and military occupation of the state. A similar pattern occurred in the 1980s, when initial support from the administration of Miguel de la Madrid for Nava in municipal elections gave way to retreat in the face of Governor Jonquitud Barrios's hostility to the reformer.

In contrast to Juchitán, Puebla, and Guerrero, where conflict assumed a class-based character after initial multiclass efforts at reform, *Navismo* reappeared in the 1980s with much the same multiclass membership and middle-class ideology of the 1950s. Yet despite this difference, *Navismo* reinforces the picture of Mexican politics derived from the discussion of other states. Although the PRI existed in San Luis Potosí, it took a back seat to cacique Gonzalo Santos until 1958 and functioned largely as a set of impositions from Mexico City thereafter. The locus of political belief and activism in both the 1950s and the 1980s lay outside the PRI. As in Juchitán, Puebla, and Guerrero, the reformers' inability to gain a foothold in the official party greatly complicated the task of forging political mechanisms to mediate interests and generate consent.

Márquez explains this process much as I have interpreted accounts of post-cacique politics in other states: as politics structured by *caciquismo* rather than by corporatism. In his view, attention to national electoral processes and state policies failed to take into account the extent to which "the dynamics of regional power and the presence of local

traditions of political culture and ideology help explain the progress as well as the absence of political parties" (Márquez 1977, 111). Creation of new forms of interest mediation, partially successful between 1967 and 1979 and associated with the "modernized politics" favored by central state reformers, was limited by rural social structures and caciquismo. Where a new consensus arose, "it did so primarily in the capital, and even then only among businessmen" (1977, 121). The politics and cultural life of San Luis Potosí, like those of Juchitán and Puebla, thus exhibited a distinctly local identity and history and can be understood as part of a local project, which Márquez calls "the Potosí style" (1977, 121–23).

The growth and national prominence of Navismo in the 1950s provides another example of the high level of conflict in the period of supposed corporatist peace. It also demonstrates that in San Luis Potosí (as in Juchitán), cacique politics, opposition to it, and the subsequent construction of a political party were the central political characteristics of the postrevolutionary decades. Moreover, the 1980s incarnation of Navismo spotlighted its ally, PAN. In this way, the regional history that engendered the appearance and reappearance of Navismo was significant in shaping national negotiations surrounding elections and relations between business and government.

In the northern state of Sonora, politics in the 1920s and 1930s involved confrontation and negotiation (often centering around elections) between regional bosses as well as between civil and military leaders.²¹ Supporters of General Calles generally prevailed, controlling access to power and running the state branch of the national party until they were ousted by the combined efforts of religious groups, peasants demanding land, and leftist politicians after Cárdenas won his national power struggle with Calles. Here as in the quite different southern state of Guerrero and the central states of Michoacán and Nayarit, leftist forces active before and during the revolution achieved a role in the political arrangements overseen by Cárdenas. In Sonora, peasant and worker organizations gained some influence in state politics in the 1930s and 1940s, culminating in the activities of the Unión General de Obreros y Campesinos de Mexico (UGOCM) under Jacinto López. These activities paralleled in some ways the challenges of the Frente Renovador Democrático in Juchitán and the Unión Cívica Potosina, although popular movements in Sonora at this time represented an explicit class challenge in a way that the other organizations did not. Successful exclusion of these challenges from Sonoran politics in the 1950s led to new forms of organization and opposition within the official party after 1958 and a series of reform movements in the 1960s. When reform negotiations failed, broad popular movements mobilized around gubernatorial elections.

21. This discussion of Sonora is drawn primarily from Rocío Guadarrama (1987).

The Echeverría administration responded to the radical challenge posed by 1975 land invasions in Sonora with federal intervention and land expropriation. Land recipients went on to form the Coalición de Ejidos Colectivos de los Valles del Yaqui y Mayo (CECVYM), an enduring rural organization of collective agricultural enterprises that negotiated successfully with state agencies and addressed economic and social needs of its members. Business groups responded to their weakened position first by transforming PAN into a strong opposition in the 1980s, and in 1985 by conducting pre-election negotiations with the PRI candidate for governor and supporting him in the elections (G. Guadarrama 1987, 104–5). This pattern of events closely resembles that in Juchitán (a region economically and culturally different from Sonora), with reform movements within the PRI giving way to class-based challenge, regime intervention, and in the 1980s, the coexistence of an enduring peasant movement and a strengthened position for pro-business reformers within the PRI. In this light, it can be seen that new forms of business-state relations (a central component of Salinas's economic liberalization) have developed in close interaction with radical grassroots mobilizations. Thus it is neither the homogeneous strength of the center nor that of center-business alliances that has made possible thoroughgoing neoliberal reform. Rather, the hegemony that permits economic restructuring has resulted from ongoing contestation and reformulation.

In the center-western state of Nayarit, an agrarista cacicazgo broadly similar to that in Guerrero not only engendered a moderate reformist movement centered around schoolteachers and their newspaper but also fostered the rise of a famous local bandit, El Caso, to the status of regional peasant leader. Championing peasant causes, El Caso formed the Congreso de Tuxpán in 1956, initiating a large-scale new grassroots movement that expanded over the 1960s and achieved significant gains between 1966 and 1970. As in Juchitán and Guerrero, one kind of opposition in the 1960s in Nayarit contributed to a more innovative and potentially radical form in the 1970s, a coalition of ejidos called the Unión de Ejidos Lázaro Cárdenas (UELC) (Hernández 1990).²² This movement's survival during the 1980s provided a model of a producer organization that, along with the CECVYM in Sonora, influenced the formation of producer cooperatives in Guerrero and Oaxaca in the late 1980s. It also played a role in negotiations with the central state over agricultural economics as part of a national coalition of producer organizations called UNORCA (Unión Nacional de Organizaciones Rurales Campesinas Autónomas).

The accounts just presented demonstrate that twentieth-century

22. The historical information on Nayarit before the formation of the UELC is covered in Luis Hernández's manuscript, but it does not appear in the published version.

Mexican politics has been significantly shaped by the formation and decline of regional cacicazgos, as well as by the conflicts over authority that succeeded them. These accounts suggest both a common pattern of political crises (different from those put forth by the state-centered analysis) and a panoply of contexts in which these crises occurred. Political beliefs and power relations varied widely across states and regions in the 1980s, much as they had in preceding decades. On some level, such a conclusion is obvious—the political, economic, and cultural landscape of Mexico has always been characterized as diverse. But the claim being made here is that such variation directly contradicts the relative homogeneity of political process and outcome postulated by the state-centered approach.

CULTURE AND DAILY LIFE

One reason for this variation is the disjunction between the fabric and substance of regional life and the identity and projects of the central state. This disjunction was underscored in Márquez's description of "*potosinidad*," with its historical roots and cultural identity separate from national Mexicanness, a complex category of its own (R. Bartra 1992; Lomnitz-Adler 1992). Pansters and Armando Bartra, in contrast, assumed that caciquismo and corporatism in Puebla and Guerrero were compatible until the explosive civic conflicts of the 1960s. This compatibility will be questioned here by examining local political and cultural practices in three locations, one northern, one central, and one southern. It will be shown that the power relations of local life were distinct from those promoted by the central state and that they obstructed state projects. As locations of alternative belief and practice, furthermore, the power relations of local life influenced regional and national politics in key ways.

Paul Friedrich's (1986) study of regional politics in Michoacán from the 1930s to the 1960s, *The Princes of Naranja*, detailed the political and cultural life of a regional cacique and his political clan. Friedrich's work emphasized the distance between regional and national power relations by demonstrating that even the towns that supported the postrevolutionary government did so via formal political arrangements and daily cultural practices that severely limited the reach of central authorities. In Juchitán, it is more appropriate to speak of "Charistas" and in Naranja of "Caso politics" than of the official party. In both locations, the boss supported by Cárdenas had considerable regional support in the 1920s but was denied entry to political office until Cárdenas arranged a deal among the boss, his popular supporters, and regional elites. Although such a deal nominally entailed forming local branches of national mass organizations, the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC) did not become a means of central government control in either place. In Juchitán, it barely

existed, and in Naranja it developed as a result of local agrarian mobilizations and remained largely under the control of the boss's allies. For example, when members of the boss's political group expropriated the ejido land of a rival faction, they could convince or buy off the representatives of the central government to support their claim. When President Avila Camacho opposed these policies, the boss's supporters disregarded national directives: "The delegate read them the order. Ezequiel Peñasco [a Caso supporter and president of the ejidal commissariat] said they were going to disobey" (Friedrich 1986, 23).

In Naranja, as in Juchitán, the ability to achieve the status of boss depended on the capacity (repeatedly attributed to Charis) to *traer gente*, meaning to demonstrate and mobilize a following. In Michoacán, according to Friedrich, "Local mounted militias were a key factor in the struggle for power in the village, the region, and even the state and national arenas. . . . candidates who could bring a few thousand such men into the state capital stood a better chance of getting elected" (Friedrich 1986, 8).

In Juchitán and Naranja, word play in the indigenous language was a central component of local political speech (Friedrich 1986, 16). The regional boss gained his hearing in state and national political arenas through a combination of political and military connections and claims to representation of Indian identities and interests (1986, 30–31, 174). In both places, the authoritarian aspects of the boss's control were complemented by the relative autonomy he achieved for the region. The administration of justice in Naranja was distinctly local and (like cacique politics generally) functioned to keep the outside out. Friedrich observed that Camilo Caso, a lawyer and unofficial grassroots judge, "tries to judge in accordance with local mores, to distribute compensations and punishments over as wide a field as possible, and to protect fellow villagers from state and national law . . ." (Friedrich 1986, 37).

Friedrich's work illustrated considerable disjunction between regional experiences and national projects. In Juchitán and Naranja, local life exhibited qualities of intensity, self-awareness, and self-definition at odds with the notion of a territory penetrated by state-centered ideological, economic, and mobilizational mechanisms.²³ Corporatism implies state structuring of political interests and institutions, when or even before those interests emerge in public form. An all-encompassing state similarly implies centralized regulation of social and political life. Cacique politics, in contrast, is much more caught up in local conceptions of the world and local structures of power. In paternalistic and authoritarian ways, caciques allow not only for inhabitants' survival but also for

23. For broader discussions of Michoacán that support this characterization, see Purnell (1993) on the nineteenth century and the Cristero Rebellion and Aitken (1994) on the postrevolutionary period.

aspects of shared community life with dynamics that differ considerably from those of national projects. The accounts presented here demonstrate that in Juchitán and Naranja, from the 1930s to the 1960s, local cultural forms challenged the directives and projects of the central state. At the same time, local forms sheltered and re-created forms of local autonomy, including distribution of ejido land, use of indigenous language, administration of local justice, and manipulation of electoral activity.

In the northern Mexican town of Namiquipa, anthropologists Daniel Nugent (1989) and Ana Alonso (1988a, 1988b) discerned a historically rooted local life distinct from and often opposed to the institutions and policies of the central state. Nugent and Alonso traced the twentieth-century culture of Namiquipans to the town's origins as a land-grant military settlement at the end of the eighteenth century. Alonso (1988a) examined the concepts of civilization, male honor, female reproduction, and sexuality that were constructed during and after this period of vanguard civilizing, when the settlers acted to subdue the Apaches with the full support of the central state that existed. After the Apache wars ended around 1880, a succession of landlords and capitalists, supported by the Porfirian state, attacked the very autonomy that had served preceding states so well in their task of pacification (Nugent 1989, 220). As a result, the supposed "Porfirian peace" consisted in Namiquipa of a succession of middle-class and peasant rebellions and confrontations with the Federal Army, the national rural police, and U.S. mercenaries over control of land and exercise of economic power. Alonso pointed out the ways in which the discourses of gender and sexuality developed during the earlier period fostered opposition to the newer state policies. For example, the commercialization of land was experienced and opposed as an attack on male honor (Alonso 1988a, 19–22).

During the Mexican Revolution, Namiquipans sided first with Pancho Villa in his armed defense of local interest. But once the United States occupied the area in opposition to Villa, they abruptly switched sides. In 1916 Namiquipans formed local militias that cooperated with the United States in opposing the now nationalist and anti-imperialist Villa. In explaining this perhaps surprising shift, Alonso focused on the disjunction between the local identity and needs of the Namiquipans and the nationalist consciousness that scholars tend to assume was present in all locations (Alonso 1988b).

Nugent's description of the subsequent period of coexistence between the Namiquipans, now *ejidatarios*, and the central state recalls the situation in Juchitán and Naranja in these years as well as the coexistence of region and nation described by Vanderwood regarding the Porfiriato. Namiquipa, because of its enormous ejido, constituted "an image the State hoped to perpetuate throughout the country" of a community where agrarian conflict had been successfully resolved (Nugent 1989, 225). But

Nugent also observed that local institutions such as the municipal government, the ejidal commissariat, and the municipal and state police were “nominally connected to the State and later to the Party” but that in fact “power was being exercised by the leaders of the successful faction to emerge from the Revolution” (Nugent 1989, 225). Nugent therefore argued that the actual organization of relations of power and production within the community and especially within the ejido remained largely in the hands of the Namiquipans. Alonso (1992) and Nugent (1992) also discerned instances of difference and opposition between region and central state in the development of music, forms of work, and practices of personal adornment in Namiquipa. In daily practices central to their identities and family economies, men and women borrowed selectively and creatively from cultural forms north of the border, using them to elaborate the *norteño* identity that had long opposed the cultural and political claims of the center and still figures prominently in north-south divides in Mexican politics today.

Nugent explained that the myth of the centralized state could take hold in both political and academic discourse because from the outside, the local scene looked like a miniature version of the supposed national peace. The same was true for Juchitán and Naranja. Resistance and opposition were local during these years. The cacique, while presiding over intensely local politics and culture different from those promoted by the state, could nonetheless be imagined as an extension of the state. But in carrying out the functions assigned him during these years—the maintenance of order, the administration of justice, and the establishment of official organizations and agencies—the boss presided over regional identities and politics that had direct impact on national politics (in Juchitán and Naranja, as in Puebla and San Luis Potosí).

Regional power structures were not simply obstructions to national arrangements but rather active forces in shaping local inhabitants' daily experiences and in defining the arenas and possibilities of central state action. In Juchitán, the elaboration of Zapotec culture in a city during the years of Charis's rule (demonstrating the ability to resist the hegemony of the national urban culture while actively borrowing from that culture) provided resources that COCEI used extensively and creatively several decades later in its militant class-based mobilizations. The endurance of Zapotec ethnicity in Juchitán resulted both from local phenomena—the boss's protection and the peripheral but relatively strong nature of the economy—and from the ways in which the national project in the 1930s and 1940s provided tools and paths for the survival of local ethnicity, even as it attacked ethnic identities generally. In turn, COCEI's enduring strength, along with the successes of other regional grassroots organizations, pressured Mexican politics in such a way that social concertation—the coexistence of established grassroots oppositions and technocratic,

market-oriented PRI officials in Mexico City—could be imagined and implemented in the 1990s, as could turbulent and conflictual local democracy in Juchitán. In addition, government officials as well as the Zapatistas themselves could view the uprising in Chiapas partly through this lens of coexistence and democracy and thereby envision, albeit in contrasting ways, negotiated resolutions to the conflict.

Despite broad continuities over time, Zapotec cultural discourses and economic practices were woven together in different ways and with various relationships to local and outside power over the course of a century. Analysis of this changing construction of local hegemony affords the best understanding of the relationship between region and center, along with the political changes engendered by that relationship. The configuration of multiclass *pueblo* versus outside, which was central to nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century rebellions, shifted during the establishment of the Charis *cacicazgo* in the 1930s to one of innovative coexistence of local and outside. As in other regions, local hegemony at this time reinforced the power of the newly consolidated central state. In the 1970s and 1980s, COCEI transformed the construction of ethnicity once again and successfully appropriated Zapotec culture—including its elaboration and leadership—for a poor people's movement. In this process of shifting hegemony, the relative absence of conflict between Juchitán and the outside during the years of boss rule (when Zapotec elites claimed cultural and economic predominance) shaped a twentieth-century *pueblo* that could later remember and wield the discourses of nineteenth-century violence and barbarism—against the outside and also against the indigenous elite.

Charis's support of local ethnic practices was made possible by his resistance to the Confederación Nacional Campesina and to the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos, the national peasant and worker organizations, and his attention to local land and livestock associations. This stance, in helping to keep the national state out, fostered spaces for discussion and resistance in the 1960s in local organizations, the newly forming PRI, and local newspapers. In subsequent decades, the church, the opposition movement within the teachers' union, the central market, and local information and media networks all expanded spaces for voice and autonomy outside the domain of state authority and electoral politics (Rubin 1994). Moreover, myths and practices of women's economic and cultural prominence constituted one of the most important of such spaces because women played a key role in incorporating foreign influences while maintaining the prestige of Zapotec language and daily customs (Rubin n.d.b; Sokoloff 1993). As a result of women's activity (which was closely related to predominantly male control over violence, artistic production, and formal political narrative), Zapotec culture could simultaneously galvanize political solidarity and negotiate the tasks of daily

life in practical ways. In its public elaboration of an alternative male gender role, Zapotec culture also demonstrated its capacity for complex forms of cultural experimentation and autonomy.

Thus in several ways—selective creation and adaptation of formal political procedures, elaboration of genres of ethnic practice, and a particular linking of gender, sexuality, and cultural production—the boss and the system of power that he represented and re-created set the stage for a politics of conflict and innovation in which the central state was only one actor among several and was neither all-encompassing nor unchanging. The enduring self-government that resulted has been a prominent component of the struggle for democracy in Mexico. Thus a focus on the pathways of the hegemony that joined region and center in Juchitán in the 1930s and how that hegemony changed over time is essential for understanding the uneven phenomenon of democratization at the national level and the meaning of democracy in the daily lives of Juchitecos.

In Naranja, the power of the Casos, the battle against their cacicazgo, and resentment toward it were the most salient characteristics of regional politics. As in Juchitán, this sort of power made central state penetration and control highly problematic. The nature of local rule became in some ways personal and arbitrary, contested by numerous local individuals and groups, and it did not directly represent or implement the beliefs and policies of the central state. Moreover, the central state could not carry out its policies at the regional level. For example, Avila Camacho's efforts to settle an ejido dispute were successfully resisted by Scarface Caso, the principal cacique, and the other "princes," and subsequent outside efforts to support local opposition to Scarface were overturned through alliances between the local princes and their outside allies. The central state thus encountered limits in using the citizens and political organizations of Naranja in a politics alternately aimed at implementing regional economic changes, establishing new political procedures (like internal primaries), and combating class-based oppositions.

The enormous success of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in Michoacán in the 1988 presidential elections can be interpreted as comparable with the mobilizations of COCEI in Juchitán in the 1970s and 1980s or PAN's growing political clout in Puebla or Sonora in the early 1980s. All these phenomena demonstrate the national implications of regional conflicts and practices. In Michoacán, the organizations that were supposedly the local organs of the national PRI "suddenly" exercised a completely different politics, and the national and state PRI responded with violence, electoral fraud, and funding of social-welfare programs.

The local nature of identity and politics established in Friedrich's work on the period 1930 to 1960 explains the context in which such political shifts could occur, while the more recent work of Rob Aitken (1994) has uncovered the dynamics of recent changes. Aitken showed that

support for Cárdenas was by no means a straightforward transfer of the loyalty of local political clans (the descendants of agrarista caciques like the Casos) from the PRI to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. Rather, his support grew out of challenges to established cacique power by ejidatarios and indigenous peoples who had begun to resist cacique control by competing for local offices and organizing independent indigenous and peasant movements (Aitken 1994, 20–23). Massive opposition politics in Michoacán was thus facilitated by citizens' roots in the older Cardenismo linked to Lázaro Cárdenas and their opposition to it. Furthermore, regional and cultural divisions in Michoacán made support for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas and his party, the Partido de la Revolución Democrática (PRD) an intensely local and varied matter, rooted in the partial autonomy of the local branches of national mass organizations and the persistence of ethnic identities and practices amenable to new forms of party politics. Here as in Juchitán, the key to understanding the regional politics of the 1980s and its dramatic effects on national politics lies in unraveling cultural and political histories that preceded the state formation of the 1930s and developed partly autonomously from corporatist organizations.

In sum, the work of Friedrich, Aitken, Nugent, and Alonso and my own research on Juchitán suggest a definition of politics considerably broader than the one employed in standard accounts of Mexican politics. Such a definition includes the ways that Mexicans construct various aspects of their collective social life, including religion, violence, gender, kinship, land cultivation, and public positions of economic and political authority. The successes of COCEI in Oaxaca, Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in Michoacán, and PAN in the center and the north stem directly from these arenas. State officials today negotiate with independent grassroots opposition groups and worry about democratic political competition in significant part because ethnicity was preserved and re-created and the PRI and its mass organizations were kept at a distance in Juchitán; because the Casos joked in Tarascan, controlled local politics, and oversaw land distribution and agricultural practice; and because anti-communist discourses in Puebla survived regime hostility, linked up with a redefined PAN, and joined social and religious commitments with a neoliberal economic agenda. Similarly, the successes and failures of the Salinas administration in implementing its Programa Nacional de Solidaridad, as well as the short- and long-term effects of that program, depend on distinct interactions, rooted in particular histories, with regional popular movements (Haber 1994; Fox and Moguel 1995), indigenous organizations (Fox 1994a), urban social forces (Contreras and Bennett 1994), and (as in Chiapas) cacique-based power structures (Harvey 1994). Region as a political location and culture as a political force are central to Mexican politics because they form the place where life is experienced and characterized, where national initiatives are mediated and become practice, and where

repositories of habitual, accommodating, alternative, and challenging political discourses are perpetually recast. Seen in this light, the numerous cultural phenomena described here are as much the shapers of power in Mexico as the central state privileged by most theorists or the regional configurations of power just outlined.²⁴

CONCLUSION

What then are scholars to make of regime and state as sets of political rules and centralized entities of administration and coercion? The analysis presented here suggests the need for rethinking social science approaches to politics and power in Mexico in several ways. It remains true that there is a Mexican state (although not a unified one), as well as discernible political rules (if informal and unstable). Yet the regional histories discussed here have introduced major qualifications.

First, the presence of that state and the implementation of those rules are far less complete (in terms of geography and domains of social life) than the model of the all-encompassing or corporatist state has asserted. Second, the discussion here has established that political and cultural processes at local and regional levels accommodate or resist national projects and in so doing create new political forms. These new configurations of power in turn become the terrain on which the center acts, as well as a primary source of knowledge for envisioning and implementing such action. Third, analysis of regional power has demonstrated the centrality of cultural discourses and practices to the formation of even narrowly political phenomena such as parties, elections, policy making, and social movements.

Fourth, the contrasting economies, cultures, and political identities and alliances of the regions described here demonstrate that there is no single system of politics operating in Mexico. Although regime and state may assume particular (if partial and changing) forms at the national level, the functioning of power in Mexico—the configurations of knowledge and action within which leaders, organizations, economies, and ordinary Mexicans live and act—differs across geographic and cultural locations. In studying politics, state and regime are pieces in a network of relations that extends in multiple directions. Thus to study Mexican politics or Latin American politics should entail discerning these networks within and across borders.

Juxtaposing my work on Juchitán with that of Mary Roldán (1992)

24. For more examples of the complexity of everyday cultural practices and their relationship to the construction of regional and national systems of hegemony, see Alonso (1992) and Nugent (1992) on Namiquipa; Aitken (1994), Becker (1993, 1994), and Purnell (1993) on Michoacán; and Campbell (1990, 1994) and Rubin (n.d.b) on Juchitán. For new work of this kind on Mexico generally, see Beezley, Martin, and French (1994), Joseph and Nugent (1994), and García Canclini (1989).

on Antioquia, Colombia, before and during the period of La Violencia provides an example of the direction that such work might take. As I have done for Juchitán and Alonso and Nugent have done for Namiquipa, Roldán has distinguished politics in Antioquia from claims about national politics, detailing the construction of beliefs about decency and order that shape and maintain Antioqueño society. In addition, she has contrasted this hegemonic discourse with the economic and cultural practices of frontier regions in the state of Antioquia. She used this cultural and subregional analysis to explain the different courses taken by violence in the two different arenas: limited violence within the diffuse bounds of liberal-conservative conflict and enduring guerrilla opposition on the frontier.

Comparison of Roldán's work with the Mexican examples cited herein suggests the possibility of making regions or forms of cultural life the unit of analysis. From this perspective, it makes more sense for those studying power to describe and compare Puebla and Antioquia, or gender relations in the Antioqueño frontier and Namiquipa, or discourses of decency and anti-communism in Medellín and San Luis Potosí than to study "Mexican" or "Colombian" politics or regimes. By focusing on the building blocks of which hegemonies are constructed, this approach facilitates understanding of the complexity of power formations and the varied ways that they change over time. It illuminates the "dense web" of power relations of which regimes and states are the "institutional crystallization" (Foucault 1990, 96, 93). This accomplishment makes it difficult to describe regime rules and state formations in parsimonious ways or to provide step-by-step connections between region and nation or between culture and politics. Yet at the same time, such an approach reveals previously undiscerned similarities and differences among regimes themselves. For example, Roldán's work on Antioquia and my own on Juchitán reveal considerably more similarity between the Colombian and Mexican regimes in terms of the unevenness of state presence, the impact of urban discourses of civility, and the complexity of ideological transmission between center and region than predominant political science models have suggested.

This form of analysis, based on subnational comparison across borders, can contribute to new ways of discussing phenomena that manifest themselves in multiple locations, such as regimes or states. In this regard, the approach I have taken elsewhere for characterizing the internal dynamics of COCEI, the radical Zapotec movement in Juchitán, is useful (Rubin n.d.a). In contrast to descriptions of leftist political movements as embodying or moving toward a homogeneous consciousness and solidarity, I have focused on forms of ambiguity and contradiction within COCEI, arguing that the movement consists of and gains considerable power from the balancing of multiple disjunctions and tensions. Experiences of violence, internal democracy, gender, historical narrative,

and cultural elaboration involve leaders and followers, men and women, middle-class and poor in cross-cutting ways, while a coherent political force powerfully challenges central government policies. To understand how this coherence occurs, it is essential to examine the movement's complex history, how it is situated regionally and nationally, and the conflictual cultural locations it contains. A regime or state may similarly be perceived as a political form that consists of multiple and shifting constructions of meaning and experience—of multiple and shifting forms of hegemony—and at the same time acts with apparent coherence in assembling and enforcing public policies. Contrary to the assumptions about power inherent in the corporatist state analysis of Mexico, incompleteness, instability, and domination are intimately connected.

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