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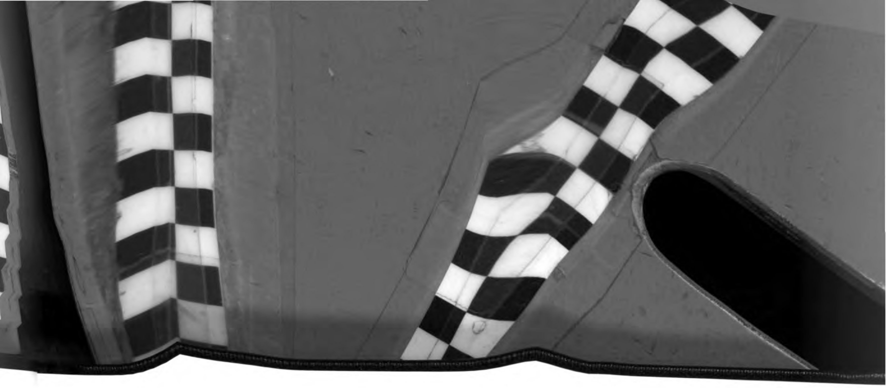

'THE JUCHITECAN SEED OF REVOLT': THE MOBILIZATION OF PLACE-SPECIFIC IDENTITY AND THE CREATION OF A TRADITION OF VIOLENCE IN JUCHITÁN, OAXACA, 1834 -1912

By

Colby Nolan Ristow

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ABSTRACT

'THE JUCHITECAN SEED OF REVOLT':

THE MOBILIZATION OF PLACE-SPECIFIC IDENTITY AND THE CREATION OF A TRADITION OF VIOLENCE IN JUCHITÁN, OAXACA, 1834-1912

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The persistence of the village of Juchitán in the Mexican state of Oaxaca from the pre-Columbian era to the eve of the Mexican Revolution fostered the development of a unified community marked by overlapping collective identities. The lack of cross-cutting, or competing identities produced a village populace with the constant potential to mobilize collective violence. Due to relative isolation during the colonial period, Juchiteco social relations became almost exclusively internal, while social contact outside of the village was either conflictual, or with outsiders who did not share similar patterns of social relations with others. As a result, the most important means of collective social identity became place-specific to Juchitán.

Following Independence, the Juchitecos mobilized collective violence in order to defend community interests fundamentally connected to the Juchiteco identity, and offended by state-sponsored modernization programs. The result was two decades of alternating Juchiteco rebellion and state-sponsored repression that produced a salient conflict between the Juchitecos and the state government, based on the negotiation of boundaries through the mobilization of violence. This period yielded a tradition of violence that informed all future relations between the state government and the Juchitecos. While mobilizing violence against the state became easy in Juchitán, the narrow and radical demands of the Juchitecos severely limited both the size and the scope of popular mobilization. Ultimately, owing to centuries of historical continuity, collective violence in Juchitán was place-specific and anti-state, and therefore inherently parochial.

For my mom and dad

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis will not fundamentally change the way we think about history, nor will it even be the final word on violence in Juchitán. However, over the course researching and writing this humble piece, I have received invaluable assistance from many people. For all their help, I would like to thank: Maria Eu Mudrovicic in the Department of Romance and Classical Languages, Scott Whiteford and staff at the Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and all of the faculty, staff, and students in the Department of History. Because of these people, my time at Michigan State University has been very satisfying.

In regards to this project, I feel that particular history faculty members are deserving of special thanks. Dagmar Herzog challenged me to think hard about everything, which allowed me to study history in ways previously unknown to me. Her and Steve Averill both encouraged me to think theoretically, and thus opened up an entire world of historical literature. Peter Beattie gave me unconditional support and generosity, even when I did not deserve it, and served as a continuous reminder that talking about history can actually be fun. Last, but not least, I give special thanks to my advisor, David Walker. Without him, not only would this project never have started, but I would not even be in graduate school. His confidence, support, and honest advice extend back to my undergraduate days, and have been invaluable. To him I owe my academic life.

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INTRODUCTION AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

While traveling through southern Mexico in 1946, anthropologist Miguel Corvarrubias passed through Juchitán, "a sprawling town of over 20,000 pure or nearly pure Zapotec Indian inhabitants," located on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the southeast corner of the state of Oaxaca. Corvarrubias found the inhabitants noteworthy in two respects: their intense place-specific identity, and their reputation for violence. The Mexican traveler noted that these villagers identified themselves not by ethnic or national affiliation, but by their specific geographic place. He observed that "*Juchitecos* never call themselves *mexicanos* or even *oaxaqueños*; they are first and always *juchitecos*." Moreover, the Juchitecos were "renowned as the most ferocious, untamable fighters in Mexico when it comes to the defense of their own rights against petty tyrants. They are proud of their unbroken record of loyalty to the causes of democracy, equality, and justice throughout the turbulent history of Mexico." Corvarrubias understood that the Juchitecos' distinct local identity and reputation for violence, "the Juchitecan seed of revolt" as he called it, was not spontaneous, but grounded in historical experience. This thesis is an attempt to understand this "seed of revolt." The analysis in this thesis will focus on the role of this place-specific identity in the mobilization of collective violence. More specifically, this thesis will examine how consistent mobilization of collective violence in Juchitán created a tradition of violence between the state and the Juchitecos; a tradition that significantly impacted Juchitán's popular entrance into the Mexican Revolution.[1]

The predominance of the subsistence-based village in the Oaxacan countryside persisted from the pre-Columbian era to the eve of the Mexican Revolution. In Juchitán,

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[1] Miguel Corvarrubias, *Mexico South: The Isthmus of Tehuantepec* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1946), 157-60.

rather than discourage insurrection, village continuity fostered the development of a local populace unified by shared class and ethnic identities, and thus consistently capable of mobilizing collective violence in defense of shared interests. This ability to mobilize based on collective identity combined with a legacy of village-state violence, cultivated over a period of decades, to initiate, facilitate, and ultimately limit the impact of the Juchitecos' participation in the Revolution. Following Mexico's independence from Spain, the Juchitecos violently negotiated the political, economic, and social boundaries between themselves and outsiders. Particularly, the Juchitecos mobilized their collective identities to defend the autonomy they had experienced throughout the colonial era, and the state government initiated and supported programs to integrate Juchitán into a new "modern" state. A period of alternating rebellion and repression resulted which intensified the boundaries between the Juchitecos and the Oaxacan state government. The political objectives that undergirded both Juchiteco rebellion and state-sponsored repression reflected the importance of this conflict, which played a significant role in the formation and process of the Chegomista Rebellion of 1911-1912.

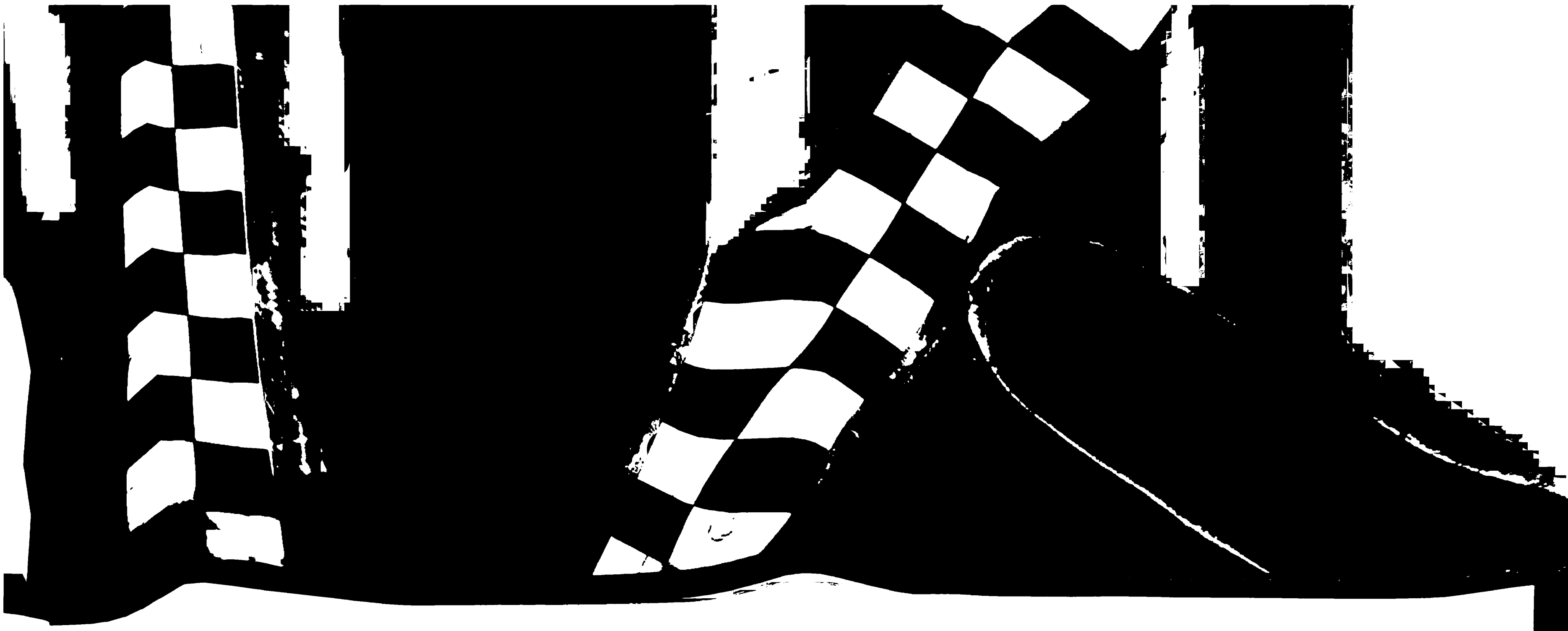
Collective violence was a constant possibility in Juchitán, but manifested itself in congruence with overt conflict and breakdowns in the state's repressive capacity. The decline of Oaxaca's Porfirian political apparatus during the initial phase of the Mexican Revolution allowed the Juchitecos to renegotiate fundamental political boundaries. Meanwhile, the conflict between the state government of Oaxaca and the "revolutionary" federal government permitted a local conflict over the position of *jefe político* to escalate into open rebellion against the state. As a result, the Chegomista Rebellion is best understood as a continuation of a long history of anti-state community mobilization in Juchitán.

The existence in Juchitán of a place-specific collective identity facilitated popular participation in the Revolution, but also limited its size and impact. The Juchitecos' ability to mobilize as Juchitecos gave unity and resilience to the Chegomista Rebellion. In

addition, their history of relatively successful defense of local interests through anti-state violence gave the rebels a heightened willingness to mobilize violence in defense of their interests. However, the narrowness of Juchiteco interests severely inhibited the scale of the mobilization. Participation in collective violence based on identity depended on the resolution of a specific conflict or grievance, making it impossible for the chegomistas to integrate surrounding villages with different grievances. Moreover, the Juchitecos' lack of amiable social relations with nearby villages circumscribed active participation in the Chegomista Rebellion to Juchitán. The visibility of the state government as the antagonist in all local conflicts further reinforced the narrowness of Juchiteco interests. By providing the rebels with a common enemy, the years of continuous conflict between the Juchitecos and the state government also provided the Chegomistas with the common goal of self-determination separate from the state government's influence. Ultimately, the Chegomista Rebellion was inherently parochial, and its inability to garner active support from surrounding populations rendered it unable to greatly effect the Revolution on a national scale.

Theoretical Framework:

In order to understand the mobilization of collective violence, scholars are required to balance numerous, often-competing factors. Over the past decades theorists have debated the importance of long-term processes, which imply long-standing structural relations, and short-term changes or events; they have disagreed about the respective influences of popular discontent, opportunities for rebellion, and insurrectionary potential in the formation of collective violence. Individually, no single theorist can be said to have "figured out" how collective violence is mobilized. However, taken as a whole, the field of social protest theory has offered tremendous insight into why groups of people become violent, and when. By reviewing and combining the theories of various scholars, this



essay will attempt to find an acceptable paradigm by which to make sense of the numerous instances of collective violence in Juchitán between 1834 and 1912.

Likewise, attempting to understand the history of collective violence in Juchitán requires a sensitivity to the diverse factors involved in mobilizing groups of people. In Juchitán, the balance between long- and short-term, and between discontent, opportunity, and insurrectionary potential must be viewed within the context of village-state relations and, moreover, centered on the role of identity. The mutually antagonistic long-term processes of local solidarity-making and "modern" state-building created in Juchitán a political environment capable of fueling nearly a century of reciprocal violence between the Juchitecos and the state government. However, changes in the Mexican state's ability to govern its citizens played a role in when these instances of violence appeared. Most importantly, the mobilization of place-specific identity, the key to understanding collective violence in Juchitán, was directly related to short-term changes, events, or conflicts, generally involving local grievances. The repetitive mobilization of place-specific identity in relation to grievances created significant conflictual relations between the village of Juchitán and the state government of Oaxaca. An examination of this "conflict-making" process will take us a long way toward understanding the "Juchitecan seed of revolt," the tradition of violence in Juchitán, and its influence on the Mexican Revolution.

The solidarity-making process, as defined by Timothy Wickham-Crowley, is a process which leads "to enhanced abilities of people to act collectively" through group solidarity.[2] Individual participation in collective action, especially violence, depends foremost on the solidarity of the group to which the individual belongs. The particular collectivity must be unified enough for the individual to believe that the action itself has a chance of success, and that he will benefit from its results.[3] Thus, participation in

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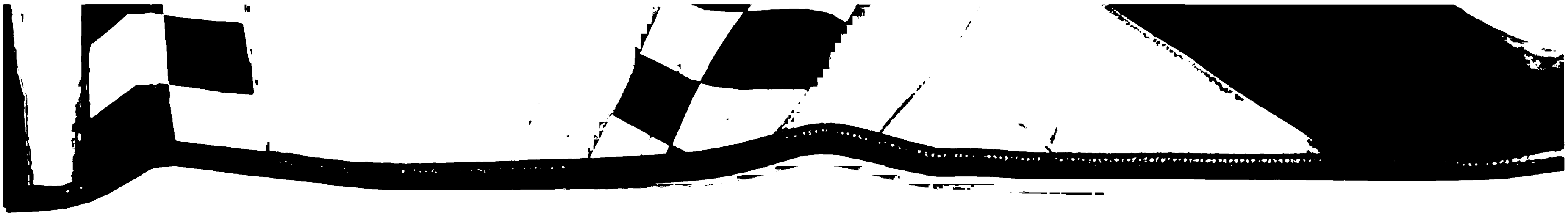
[2] Timothy P. Wickham-Crowley, "Structural Theories of Revolution," in John Foran, ed. *Theorizing Revolutions* (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), 39.

[3] Roger V. Gould, *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris from 1848 to the Commune* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 13-14.



collective action depends on the individual's perception of the group's solidarity. This perception is based on information gained through social interaction. In other words, the individual understands the solidarity of the group in which he is a member only by socially interacting with other members. Consequently, perceived solidarity is the most fundamental prerequisite for the mobilization of collective violence. In Juchitán, solidarity and the process of solidarity-making cannot be examined independent from the collective identities of the people. The key to Juchiteco solidarity, in terms of enhancing the "abilities of people to act collectively," was the strength of their collective identities.

Like solidarity, the study of collective identities must proceed from the basic assumption that all identities are grounded in concrete social relationships. Since relationships themselves are very diverse, it must also be understood that all individuals have multiple ways of identifying themselves. Craig Calhoun suggests that multiple claims to identity are unavoidable, that "social life calls forth or demands identity claims and provides opportunities for their assertion."[4] While individuals identify themselves in a variety of ways, the strength of collective identities is determined by social networks. In his study of "insurgent identities" in France, Roger Gould hypothesizes that collective identities are plausible as a mobilizing instrument only to the degree in which they identify sets of people with: similar patterns of social relations with others, and a sufficient level of internal social contact to ensure mutual awareness of this similarity.[5] These two factors provide the limits of identity mobilization. Collective identity as a mobilizing instrument is perceived, like solidarity. However, unlike solidarity, perceptions of collective identity are made by those inside the group by juxtaposing themselves with those outside the group.

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[4] Craig Calhoun, "Social Theory and the Politics of Identity," in Calhoun, ed. *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994),

[5] Gould, 20.

The strength of collective identity is further enhanced by a sense of structural equivalence within a given society. A collective sense of shared identity is heightened when members of the group are tied in equivalent ways to equivalent others. Essentially, if members of a group enjoy a sense of equality within the existing social structure, the sense of belonging increases. However, although internal relations are important, the key to understanding a group's potential for mobilizing collective identities is understanding how members of a collectivity conceive their relationship to outside society.[6]

Proceeding from the assumption that social actors have some conception of their position in society, we can propose that these actors identify themselves in alliance with a variety of social categories, based on the social relations in which they are involved. Moreover, they will partition others into social categories as well, based on ideas of class, ethnicity, or nationality, to name a few. This "conceptual mapping" of society is based on a diversity of social relations and, according to Gould, "only rarely will diverse types of relations line up so perfectly that the same collective actors will emerge regardless of the type of relation considered; on the other hand," he goes on to note, "when this does occur, the absence of cross-cutting identities should lead one to expect very high levels of mobilization indeed."[7] This rare circumstance characterized Juchitán.

The formation of a powerful local identity in Juchitán produced a population capable of high levels of mobilization, based on all the previously-mentioned factors. During the colonial period Juchitán experienced more-or-less complete autonomy. As subsistence-surplus farmers, or commoners, social contact for the Juchitecos was almost completely internal, and they experienced a large degree of structural equivalence. Moreover, Juchiteco social contact with those outside of the village was either conflictual, or with outsiders who did not share similar patterns of social relations with others. As a

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[6] Ibid., 16-17.

[7] Ibid., 17.

result, two important means of individual and especially collective identification were geographically based: class and ethnicity. Due to a lack of amiable intervillage interaction, there was no broad idea of a peasant class on the Isthmus. Class was geographically based in peripheral villages, including Juchitán. Concurrently, isolation combined with Spanish displacement of Zapotec elites eliminated the social forms which gave unity to the Zapotecs. There was no idea of a Zapotec ethnicity on the Isthmus, for ideas of ethnicity, too, became place-specific.

As a result, a very strong local identity was in place by the end of the colonial period, owing to few cross-cutting identities and limited, but relatively equal social relations. The character of social relations in Juchitán produced a local population with a high potential for insurrection. However, this high insurrectionary potential can not alone account for the turbulent history of Juchitán. For that other variables need to be examined.

Economically, the process of "modern" state-building is a combination of two interrelated processes: the exploitation of labor, related to the distribution of property, and the commercialization of economic activity.[8] Although the process of state-building is loaded with political and cultural imperatives, scholars have generally theorized about it in socio-economic terms, particularly in regards to the encroachment of capitalism. As such, the role of capitalism in agrarian insurrection has deep roots in social protest theory. More specifically, the role of incipient capitalism in state-building has often been cited as a source of discontent essential to the development of agrarian insurgency. However, theorists have differed greatly in their explanations and uses of agrarian discontent as a causal factor for insurrection in general.

The proposition that agrarian discontent results from the introduction of capitalist relations to previously "protected" economies is generally accepted by social protest theorists. The impact of discontent on the formation of popular insurrection is the subject

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[8] Wickham-Crowley, 39.

of much debate. Theorists differ greatly in the amount of importance they place on rural grievances. John Tutino, for example, argues that agrarian grievances are the most important factor in studying rural rebellion. He contends that grievances, in fact, make the rural poor "choose to become rebels."[9] On the other hand, Theda Skocpol argues that exploitation and grievances are inherent in rural class relations. She contends that relations "by which an unpaid-for part of the product is extracted from the direct producers by a class of non-producers" have historically been present in all rural settings; and that "peasants always have grounds for rebellion." According to Skocpol, peasant grievances are a "constant feature of the peasant condition," not an "explanatory variable."[10]

In accordance with Skocpol's hypothesis this study will challenge "the in-built assumption that intensified grievances ... transmute readily into insurrection."[11] That being said, the examination of grievances and discontent cannot simply be ignored. In fact, the study of agrarian discontent is necessary to establish a point of departure from which to analyze rebellion. If Leon Trotsky was correct in saying that "the mere existence of privations is not enough to cause an insurrection; [for] if it were, the masses would always be in revolt," then the historian is still obligated to demonstrate that these privations did, in fact, exist.[12] Not only because specific grievances greatly effect the *form* of a given insurrection, but also because grievances are a necessary precondition for agrarian insurrection. The effect of particular grievances on the formation of collective violence will be addressed further below, while a review of discontent as a precondition will follow immediately.

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[9] John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 32.

[10] Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 115.

[11] Wickham-Crowley, 48.

[12] Trotsky quoted in Michael S. Kimmel, *Revolution: A Sociological Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1990), 91.

In terms of establishing a basic level of discontent, a number of scholars have pointed at the dual processes of labor exploitation and economic commercialization. However, theories tend to differ in explaining exactly how these processes produced discontent. The central difference is located in the emphasis on long-standing relations in human behavior or shorter-term changes. An attempt to balance the two is present in most theories, although in distinct forms. A review of the various ideas about the connection between capitalism and agrarian discontent will aid us in understanding these processes as they appear in Oaxacan history.

In *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century*, Eric Wolf explains that "North Atlantic capitalism," by its very nature, produced rural dissatisfaction. This social organization "in which labor is sold, land is rented, and capital is freely invested" led to commodification of labor, land, and wealth.[13] Commodification, then, effectively turned people into economic actors; return maximizers and expense minimizers. Economics took precedence over social obligations and social costs. Wolf contends that capitalism *required* that land, labor, and wealth be commodities, and therefore that traditional social and cultural institutions be liquidated. As a result, "existence and its problems became subsidiary to marketing behavior."[14] The effect of this on rural cultivators was alienation: from the process of production, from the product, from themselves, and from their fellow man. Wolf insists that these were not philosophical concepts, but material tendencies.

The effects of commodification, according to Wolf, did not end with human labor and alienation. The commodification of land presented another real problem. Peasants used land resources to underwrite their minimal livelihood, and the transformation of land into a commodity threatened the peasants' resources, and thereby their subsistence base. With land as a commodity to be bought, sold, and rented, capitalists menaced peasants' access to

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[13] Eric Wolf, *Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), 277-78.

[14] Ibid, 279.

communal land, barred peasants claims to unclaimed land, and seized land outright. The peasant land base receded as a result.

Capitalism also strained the peasant's link to the outside world, according to Wolf. The increased commercialization of agricultural produce and the capitalization of rent created dislocation and tension between peasant and landlord. Capitalist relations put the landlord in a bind: he could continue to fulfill preexisting social obligations and be responsive to the peasantry, or fulfill economic interests and maximize profits. They generally chose to respond to the prompting of the market, and the peasantry became socially dislocated.

In *The Moral Economy of the Peasant*, James Scott cites the encroachment of capitalism as a major contributor to agrarian discontent, but he stresses short-term grievances. Rather than a process of alienation or commodification, Scott emphasizes the scope and suddenness of peasant grievances. More specifically, the scope and suddenness of a shock to subsistence arrangements is the key to agrarian discontent. A shock of substantial scope effects a larger body of people, and a sudden shock is more difficult to adapt to routinely and incrementally. Joel Migdal supports this emphasis in *Peasants, Politics, and Revolution*. For Migdal and Scott, the key to rural unrest is not economic depression, but rather economic crisis. Migdal claims that economic crisis creates a sudden disruption in peasant social exchange, forcing the customarily inward-oriented peasantry to go outside the community in search of new types of exchange. The peasantry is thus forced into a vulnerable position.[15]

James Scott further claims that a sudden and substantial shock to subsistence arrangements is more likely in areas that are most vulnerable. Areas with the sharpest fluctuations in income tend to suffer more frequent and dangerous subsistence crises, and are therefore "brittle and explosive."[16] Some areas are simply subject to natural yield

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[15] Joel Migdal, *Peasants, Politics, and Revolution: Pressures Toward Political and Social Change in the Third World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974).

[16] James Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 196.

fluctuations. The climate just produces massive fluctuations in crop yields, making the zone precarious. A massive fluctuation in annual yields coupled with a low annual income can create a serious subsistence crisis. These areas are often found in peripheral regions -- they are peripheral precisely because they are precarious. Other vulnerable areas according to Scott are zones subject to world market fluctuations. Here, market penetration creates a "shock field": a highly commercialized area in which income is a function of the market. These zones are generally very fertile and productive, therefore, large extractions are assessed by landlords. These extractions are not usually overly harsh, but when the market fluctuates, the extraction remains the same. This is the key to discontent in these areas. When the market fluctuates both the landlord and the peasant are squeezed, so the peasantry is hurt by the landlord and the market, simultaneously. Beyond this, these highly commercialized areas are stripped of their traditional community ties, and left with no retreat from the pressure of the market. The final zones of particular susceptibility are those whose incomes rely on a single crop. A monocrop area has its own shock field, dependent on one product. A price slump on the solitary crop can produce a sector-wide subsistence crisis. For those who live in any of these areas, a sudden and substantial shock can cause more misery than economic depression.

Wolf, Scott, and Migdal agree that economic discontent resulting from the spread of capitalism created intense grievances in the countryside. They do not agree on the type of grievances it created. Wolf claims that capitalism created alienation while Scott and Migdal claim that sudden disruptions, or shocks, created real threats to subsistence capabilities. This disagreement over long-term and short-term economic stress is recognized by John Coatsworth. He offers that the two sides are compatible: "emphasis on short-term economic trends does not necessarily reduce the importance of long-term trends."[17] He

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[17] John Coatsworth, "Patterns of Rural Rebellion in Latin America: Mexico in Comparative Perspective" in Friedrich Katz, ed. *Riot, Rebellion, and Revolution: Rural Social Conflict in Mexico* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1988), 48.

uses eighteenth century Mexico to hypothesize that long-term trends combined with fluctuations to transform grievances into acute grievances.

This essay will examine both long-term trends and short-term changes inherent in the introduction of capitalism. Moreover, by combining ideas about the nature of the capitalist process with ideas about solidarity-making, the social bases of collective violence in Juchitán become evident. The two processes provided the basis for fundamental and powerful conflict between a locality with a very high insurrectionary potential and a state government distinctly antagonistic to local interests. However, to understand the formation of specific instances of collective violence, we need to go beyond these social bases and examine two other important variables: (1) political opportunities for rebellion resulting from the central state's inability to control its citizens; and (2) the manner in which a unified agrarian community relates to specific changes, conflicts, or grievances, and translates that relationship into collective violence.

For agrarian insurrection to occur, the rural populace must have an opportunity to transform their grievances into some form of collective violence. This opportunity for rebellion depends on the central state's ability to exercise control over its people. This connection between state control and opportunity requires that three types of state-centered analysis be considered, as proposed by Jeff Goodwin: the state-capacity, political-opportunity, and state-constructionist approaches.[18] All three of these approaches are tied together by what Michael Mann has termed the "infrastructural power" of the state.[19] In other words, the state's "fiscal resources, military power, and organizational reach into civil society."[20] The ability of a rural populace to rebel is directly related to the penetration of the state's "infrastructural power" in a given location.

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[18] Various approaches introduced in Jeff Goodwin, "State-Centered Approaches to Social Revolutions: Strengths and Limitations of a Theoretical Tradition," in Foran, *Theorizing Revolutions*, 12-14.

[19] Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power, Volume Two: The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

State-centered approaches that focus on infrastructural power are interrelated and essentially stem from the analysis of the capacity of the state. This analysis, according to Goodwin, "emphasizes the actual material and organizational capacity (or lack thereof) of state officials to implement successfully their political agenda."[21] The ability of the state to implement its agenda is directly related to the state's ability to extend infrastructural power over its domain. Where infrastructural power is weak, the ability of the people to transmute grievances into collective violence is enhanced. In weaker areas the rural populace is able to negotiate more favorable political conditions from the state, often by mobilizing collective violence.

This was the case in Mexico following Independence, when the central state's ability to govern its people was crippled by a continuous lack of fiscal resources, diverted military power, and failure to influence peripheral civil society. In the absence of infrastructural control, the nation's peripheries underwent a period of extensive violence. In Juchitán this condition was exaggerated. Throughout the early national period the Juchitecos mobilized and negotiated favorable conditions in the district of Juchitán, although at the expense of repeated violent repression from the state. However, with the Porfiriato the state's governing capabilities changed dramatically.

The Porfiriato marked a major departure from Mexico's national beginnings by replenishing fiscal resources, consolidating military power, and establishing transportation and communications infrastructure. For thirty years the central government maintained stability and control over the nation's rural populace. If the people's ability to rebel depended on the weakness of the state, how do we explain the Mexican Revolution, which brought down Mexico's most capable, centralized regime? Understanding the Revolution requires a different approach, although one that does not part with the examination of the state's governing capacity. The political-opportunity perspective is applicable to societies

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[20] Goodwin, 13.

[21] Ibid., 12-13.

in which political hegemony has been consolidated. According to this approach the opening of a political opportunity is necessary for an insurrection to occur.[22] Many theorists have written about agrarian insurrection using this perspective.

James Scott examines the opportunity for rebellion in terms of "relationships of force in the countryside."[23] He argues that repressive force is the most important deterrent to agrarian insurrection. From here, it is only logical that opportunity would be the key to rebellion. An opportunity, for instance, like a lull in repressive strength: "A change of regimes, the weakness of the state that may follow a military defeat, a regional success by an opposition party, are all signs that the balance of forces may have changed and are often the motivating events for peasant rebellions."[24] Theda Skocpol makes a similar argument. She claims that an agrarian order is immune to agrarian revolts if landlords directly control administrative and military sanctioning machineries at local levels. She continues by stating that the most vulnerable societies have high peasant autonomy, solidarity, *and* high levels of state repression. To understand what makes peasants rebel, we must go beyond peasant society: "widespread and irreversible" revolts resulted from the breakdown of the state's monopoly of repressive capacity.[25] Therefore, the argument follows, these societies with high autonomy, solidarity, and state repression are vulnerable because of political instability. When the state hits political crisis, rebellious peasants will seize the opportunity and rebel.

The Chegomista Rebellion fits into this political-opportunity paradigm. Political conflicts following the fall of Porfirio Díaz resulted in government paralysis and military diversions which gave the Chegomistas the necessary space to flourish in the Isthmus countryside for several months. This political space was exactly what was missing during

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[22] Ibid., 13.

[23] Scott, 227.

[24] Ibid, 229.

[25] Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, 117.

the Porfiriato. Although the people of Juchitán, and doubtless other regions of Mexico, considered their situation intolerable during the Porfiriato, the government repressed or disassembled major rebellions before they crystallized. Although this conclusion underscores the importance of political opportunities, it also points to the necessity of a third state-centered approach. To understand the groundswell of popular rebellion released by the Mexican Revolution it is necessary to examine the state's ability to construct popular support.

The state-constructionist perspective, called by Skocpol the "Tocquevillian" approach,[26] "emphasizes how states shape the very identities, social ties, ideas, and even emotions of actors in civil society;" or perhaps more importantly, "how the actions of foreign or domestic states help to make cognitively plausible and morally justifiable certain sorts of collective grievances."[27] This focus necessarily connects to ideas about hegemony. Hegemony, according to Raymond Williams, is a form of practical consciousness that concerns "a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of our living: our senses and assignments of energy, our shaping perceptions of our selves and our world."[28] This practical consciousness gains predominance by what Gramsci called consent. Joseph Femia has interpreted consent as a "psychological state, involving some kind of acceptance - not necessarily explicit - of the socio-political order or of certain vital aspects of that order."[29] Consent, or acceptance of the socio-political order, is dependent on the concept of "legitimacy;" the belief that conforming to the existing order is

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[26] Theda Skocpol, "Bringing the State Back In: Strategies of Analysis in Current Research," in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschmeyer, and Theda Skocpol, eds. *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 21.

[27] Goodwin, 13-14.

[28] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 110.

[29] Joseph V. Femia, *Gramsci's Political Thought: Hegemony, Consciousness, and the Revolutionary Process* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981).

justified and proper. The state's role in constructing consent is through the construction and extension of civil society.

While the Díaz regime brought stability to Mexico through the extension of infrastructural power, its failure to influence important aspects of civil society limited its ability to control the Mexican people. In Juchitán the Porfirian government imposed jefes políticos on the local populace and extended a railroad through the district, but failed to construct a sense of legitimacy. On the eve of the Revolution almost no Juchitecos attended public schools, very few were literate, and about half spoke Spanish. Juchitán had existed almost completely free of outside influence. As a result, the Juchitecos reacted to political and economic impositions from the outside with a feeling of "moral outrage."[30] The Juchitecos viewed the state and central governments' attempts to integrate them into Mexican society as unjust, defined by Barrington Moore as "a situation they need not, cannot, and ought not endure."[31] By failing to extend key aspects of civil society into Juchitán, public education most importantly, the state failed to make this sense of injustice either cognitively plausible or morally justifiable. Therefore, when political opportunity presented itself, the Juchitecos pushed their local interests with a torrent of popular mobilization.

Understanding how moments of collective violence developed in Juchitán depends on understanding how place-specific identity is actually mobilized. Central to this topic is understanding the relationship between grievance and identity. People typically juggle multiple identities, each with a corresponding set of interests. Short-term changes, events, or conflicts, generally related to grievances, do not change these identities, but rather cause individuals to privilege one identity over another. More specifically, short-term grievances compromise the specific interests of particular groups, forcing the group to reorder its

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[30] Idea of "moral outrage" as a source of discontent presented in Scott.

[31] Barrington Moore, Jr., *Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 1978), 462.

collective identity to defend the effected interests. Thus, by offending the interests of a group of people, these critical events rearrange the priority given to social identifications that already matter to people in varying degrees. Depending on how these short-term grievances call forth collective identities, they can set the stage for mobilization.[32]

In Juchitán the modernization schemes of the state government of Oaxaca, although relatively impotent, created real grievances for the rural populace. Attempts to expropriate land and salt resources from the villages of the Isthmus created conflict between "exploiter" (entrepreneurs sponsored by the state government) and "exploited" (indigenous villagers of the Isthmus), to which the Juchitecos related as "exploited." However, the violent reaction of the Juchitecos could not integrate with other "exploited" villagers because no social relationship existed between Juchitán and the majority of its neighbors. Moreover, the relations which did exist between Juchitán and other villages were generally conflictual. Thus, the reaction to land and salt expropriation in Juchitán was necessarily local, but also very powerful. Juchitán was a highly homogenous society and was able to mobilize almost unanimously based on identity. The strength of the Juchitecos repeated mobilizations stemmed from the lack of cross-cutting identities: to mobilize based on class meant to mobilize as Juchitecos, and to mobilize based on ethnicity also meant to mobilize as Juchitecos. As a result, the Juchitecos shared similar relations to what they were fighting for. The participants in these instances of violence saw themselves as part of a collectivity large enough and unified enough to be successful, and homogenous enough to believe that what was good for one was good for all.

The repetitive mobilization of collective violence in Juchitán reinforced the collective idea of a Juchiteco identity and created a significant conflict between Juchitán and the state government of Oaxaca. Essentially, continuous mobilization enhanced the perception of the Juchiteco participants that they were part of a unified collectivity. Broadly, the

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[32] Gould, Chapter One, especially 13-23.

commitment to collective violence begins with the individual's commitment to a collective identity. Thus, once actual mobilization begins the group commitment to a particular identity, and its corresponding interests, is cemented. As mobilization continues, as it did in Juchitán, the group's commitment to an identity becomes more plausible and significant for members of the group.[33]

The conflict between Juchitán and the Oaxacan government grew from this commitment to a collective identity. The act of committing to a collective identity inherently constructs boundaries between those defined within the group and those defined outside the group. Moreover, people tend to view the world, including themselves, in terms of collective actors, based on a variety of social categories. This conceptual mapping of the world into groups of collective actors carries with it built-in expectations about how members of a particular group are supposed to act. As such, the members of various groups draw boundaries between themselves and outsiders. When identity-based violence begins between two groups, the boundaries between the two becomes more salient and results in an important and intense conflict. The creation and solidification of shared ideas within one group about the other is central to understanding the mobilization of identity because these ideas make the groups of collective actors on both sides appear to be homologous. As a result, the mobilization of collective violence in this type of conflict situation is intrinsically a mobilization both *for* the interests which correspond to the mobilizing identity, and *against* the interests of those defined as opposition. The type of conflict, based on collective identities, was very prevalent between the Juchitecos and the state government.[34]

On the eve of the Mexican Revolution the Juchitecos and the state government of Oaxaca were the inheritors of a legacy cultivated by decades of nearly continuous violence

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[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid.

in Juchitán. The period of rebellion and repression resulted in an intense conflict between the Juchitecos and the state government, and a tradition of violence that transformed the face of the Mexican Revolution as it appeared on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.

The Chegomista Rebellion cannot be understood separately from previous mobilizations of violence in Juchitán. What had occurred in previous decades was not forgotten and effected the behavior of both the Chegomistas and the state government during the rebellion. Owing to the large degree of continuity both in Juchitán and in state politics, each side had an idea, grounded in historical experience, of what was expected of themselves, and what to expect from each other. These expectations were most apparent in the images of the Juchitecos. While the Juchitecos believed themselves to be heirs to a legacy of rebellion in the face of tyranny, the state government saw the Juchitecos as savages, or *indios barbaros*. Both of these images had their roots in the period of violence following Independence, and this fundamental conflict, although reinforced by real political and economic concerns, provided the baseline for the military conflict which took place in 1911-1912.

The mobilizations of collective violence during the nineteenth century also effected the actual direction and process of the Chegomista Rebellion. On the most basic level, like all previous Juchiteco insurrections, the Chegomista Rebellion was separatist in nature. The Chegomistas were not revolutionary in the sense that they did not seek to fundamentally change the existing power structure. Rather, the Chegomistas, like all previous Juchiteco rebels, wanted to remove themselves from the power structure, and more specifically from the state of Oaxaca. This separatist tendency was the result of the Juchiteco conflict with Oaxaca's state government; Juchiteco rebellions did not demand separation from the republic, but rather separation from Oaxaca.

The state government's dependence on violent repression as the primary means by which to control the Juchitecos, in large part, created a tradition of violence in Juchitán. Continuous repression at the hands of the state government increased the Juchitecos

willingness to use violence against the state. According to Jeff Goodwin, "state violence against mobilized groups and oppositional figures is likely to reinforce the plausibility, justifiability, and (hence) diffusion of the idea that the state needs to be violently 'smashed.'"[35] Throughout the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, the government's control of Juchitán depended very heavily on military power and repression. As a result, when the opportunity presented itself with the Mexican Revolution, the Juchitecos attempted to violently sever their ties with the state of Oaxaca. Furthermore, the state's dependence on repression to control a highly unified community like Juchitán created a situation, according to Roger Gould, in which mobilization is typically "marked by an especially virulent sort of hatred."[36] This hatred of the state government and its instruments manifested itself through acts of extreme violence on the part of the Juchitecos. However, it would be an error to understand the tradition of violence as simply a facilitator of Juchiteco mobilization.

The state government of Oaxaca also participated in the construction of this tradition of violence, and saw violence as the best way to deal with such an unruly set as the Juchitecos. In fact, both the Juchitecos and the state utilized violence as a negotiating tool. Throughout the nineteenth century the Juchitecos mobilized collective violence to negotiate relatively favorable conditions in their village, such as de facto political autonomy and access to expropriated land and salt resources. On the other hand, the state government used violence to negotiate an end to such instances of Juchiteco rebelliousness, and met with more-or-less success. Predictably, the end result was that, in 1911, non-violent negotiation between the state government and the Chegomistas was impossible.

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[35] Goodwin, 19; Wickham-Crowley adds, "where the state is unable to control and administer such a region effectively, but is none the less able to terrorize populations therein, such regions are likely to harbor 'persistent insurgencies,'" 54.

[36] Gould, 17.

The theoretical concepts presented in the preceding Introduction had a tremendous impact on Juchiteco society and its interaction with the surrounding world. However, these processes, constructions, conflicts, and events did not simply "happen" spontaneously, nor did they occur independently. In reality, the processes, constructions, conflicts, and events that shaped Juchiteco history and its relation with Oaxaca occurred and proceeded over time, elaborately interwoven. Having separated many of these concepts in the introduction for explanatory purposes, the analysis that follows will attempt to examine the interrelated concepts of community solidarity, nation-building, incipient capitalism, place-specific identity, and the mobilization of collective violence as they existed in reality -- as a complex network.

The preceding Introduction was an explanation and an inventory of various, important theoretical concepts given in an attempt to construct a useful framework by which we can better understand the robust history of collective violence in Juchitán. The following chapters are a test of the utility of that framework.

CHAPTER ONE

COLONIAL PERIOD: Autonomy and Solidarity-Making

The nature of the agricultural economy on the Isthmus limited the effect of Spanish colonialism on land and labor relations. However, the limited Spanish presence did significantly transform indigenous social relations. Owing both to the form of the preexisting Zapotec social structure and the effects of Spanish colonization, social relations as well as class and ethnic identity became localized in the peripheral villages during the colonial period.

Juchitán, a peripheral village, experienced more-or-less complete autonomy during the colonial period, which resulted in social isolation. Social contact between Juchitecos and outsiders was either conflictual, as with the majority of the surrounding villages, or with outsiders who did not share similar patterns of social relations with others, such as the Zapotec "nobles" of Tehuantepec or the Spaniards. Consequently, amicable social relations in Juchitán were almost exclusively internal. The Spanish seizure of power from the Zapotec elite further enhanced the internal solidarity of the Isthmus villages. By reducing the power of the nobles, the Spaniards inadvertently localized both class and ethnic identity. By depending on the Spanish to maintain their social status, the Zapotec elite of Tehuantepec alienated the indigenous working classes located in the peripheral villages. Furthermore, the Spanish displacement of elite power eliminated the social forms that gave unity to the Zapotec ethnicity. Ultimately, notions of collective identity became centered in the separate peripheral villages. Juchitán, in particular, emerged as a population center with a strong local identity, based on limited external social relations and a lack of cross-cutting identities. Prior to Independence the Juchitecos developed as a group of villagers with a high potential for insurrection.

In the colonial period, the Spanish crown's protection of Indian lands and the fluctuating nature of the Isthmus' agricultural economy conspired to inhibit the development of *haciendas* and plantations. As a result, Spanish landholdings and presence in Oaxaca, and particularly on the Isthmus, waxed and waned with agroeconomic fluctuations, preventing any sustained threats to protected Indian land. Eventually, Spanish colonizers in the region opted to exploit the indigenous population indirectly.

Following the "conquest" of Mexico the Spanish crown granted *conquistador* Hernán Cortés personal sovereignty over the *Marquesado del Valle de Oaxaca*, which also encompassed the southern Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The region offered commercial opportunities in ship-building, gold mining, and especially livestock raising. For a brief period following conquest the Isthmus played an important role in the Spanish imperial project, based predominantly on its livestock production. During this period Cortés extracted tribute from the Isthmus Zapotecs both in goods and labor. However, the intense interaction of the period induced demographic disaster for the Zapotecs due to foreign disease, and a subsequent retrogression of the Spanish presence on the Isthmus. Following its initial successes the Isthmus became a marginal zone in New Spain and the Marquesado del Valle shrunk on the Isthmus.[37]

Late in the sixteenth century the Isthmus became the target of renewed Spanish interest in the region, in the wake of Cortés' death. The Cortés family recovered its Isthmus estates, which now became the Haciendas Marquesanas, and Spaniards flooded into the region to develop the land of the consistently dying peasantry. This "ranching boom" really brought the Tehuantepec region under the control of the Spaniards. Between 1590 and 1599, the crown granted 122 parcels of land to enterprising Spaniards, who used the flat, dry lands of the Isthmus to graze livestock. By 1620, one hundred wealthy

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[37] John Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance: Juchitán in Mexican History," in Howard Campbell, Leigh Binford, Miguel Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas, eds., *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993), 45-47; Howard Campbell, *Zapotec Renaissance: Ethnic Politics and Cultural Revivalism in Southern Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 11-13.

Spanish families lived in Tehuantepec, the regional head town. However, beginning in the 1630s, the commercial development of the Isthmus declined steadily. The decline of the silver economy in northern New Spain resulted in a decline of livestock production which effected southern livestock producers most adversely.[38]

The limited Spanish economic development on the Isthmus did not destroy the Zapotec lifestyle to any great extent. Throughout the colonial period indigenous communities were by far the largest landholders in Oaxaca, as well as the Isthmus. The Spanish crown granted indigenous communities legal title to their original lands and allowed them to receive additional land. The Isthmus Zapotecs consistently used colonial courts to defend their land and labor rights, and as a result, the minimal permanent labor required by hacendados generally came from African slaves. Moreover, the boom and bust nature of the region's agricultural economy limited commercial development and restricted the Spanish presence on the Isthmus, allowing Zapotec villagers relative autonomy. Ultimately, large estates proved to be too risky; *hacendados* bought, sold, and even mortgaged their holdings on a regular basis.[39]

During this period the merchant classes of Oaxaca discovered that exporting the products of Indian villagers was more profitable and more secure than owning land and directly exploiting Indian labor. By the eighteenth century, Antequera (later the capital city of Oaxaca) became a major center of colonial commerce and was the third largest city in New Spain. This mercantile method of exploitation extorted the products of Indian labor rather than removing the Indians from the land. As a result, the displacement of Indian communities conflicted with the financial interests of the Oaxacan elite.[40]

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[38] Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance," 47-49; Campbell, 13-14.

[39] William B. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972). Tutino, 49.

[40] Brian Hamnett, *Politics and Trade in Southern Mexico*, 1750-1821 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

Midway through the eighteenth century a "boom" in the international dye market renewed profitability and interest in the Isthmus. Motivated by the resurrection of the silver economy in the north and the expansion of the textile market in Europe, dye production brought to the Isthmus a period of sustained economic development. The production of cochineal and indigo for export spread from the Oaxacan highlands to the Isthmus, but owing to the nature of the two crops, did not threaten the land base of the Isthmus Zapotecs. Instead the Zapotecs of the region used this commercial development to supplement their subsistence-oriented activities. Not an estate crop, the village women collected the insects used to produce cochineal dye in addition to familial chores, for supplemental income. Indigo, on the other hand, was a grass-like estate crop that required intense seasonal labor. The indigenous population provided the seasonal labor, but only as a supplement to their subsistence base. Estate owners drew a small required permanent labor force from the region's small mulatto population. Moreover, the commercial development of indigo on the Isthmus required no land expropriation because old cattle estates provided the necessary land.[41]

The indigenous village as the predominant landholding unit was the colonial heritage of the Isthmus section of Oaxaca. Spanish colonial policies and the fluctuating economy kept conflicts over land to a minimum, and guaranteed an autonomous existence for the majority of the Zapotec population.

Before Mexico's independence from Spain, Juchiteco identity developed over a period of centuries, producing a community which distinguished itself through conflict and the rejection of Spanish influence, and compromised various collective identities and their corresponding interests. By the end of the Spanish colonial project the Juchitecos had established ideas of who "we" were as Juchitecos, and who "they" were as outsiders, usually Spaniards and later *Tehuanos*.

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[41] Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance," 51-52.

The first establishment of a Zapotec presence on the Isthmus foreshadowed the conflictive identity that would develop there over time. In the mid-fourteenth century a group of Zapotecs migrated from the highland Valley of Oaxaca and established a colony on the Isthmus, conquering the land of local ethnic groups. Conflict motivated and resulted from this movement. Pressure from encroaching Mixtecs and divisions within Zapotec society impelled the migration, and the migration itself created friction with Huaves and Zoques of the Isthmus. A distinct Isthmus Zapotec identity began with the conquest of the Isthmus. The only tie that remained between the Isthmus and Highland Zapotecs was a tribute payment from the Isthmus center of Guiengola to the highland elite in Zaachila, and the fall of Zaachila to the Mixtecs in the fifteenth century completed Isthmus Zapotec distinctiveness.[42]

Intense class stratification characterized pre-Columbian Zapotec society which was organized geographically into head towns and tributary villages, based on status. Nobles, who drew their power from control of the spirits, lived in head towns and commoners, who generally worked the land, resided in the tributary villages. In Zapotec society nobles lived pampered lifestyles, subsidized by tribute extractions from commoners. On the Isthmus, Guiengola was the head town and accommodated the nobles, and Juchitán was one of several peripheral tributary villages. The establishment of Spanish colonialism aggravated the uneven relations between the head town and its tributary villages, and between noble and commoner.[43]

The Isthmus Zapotecs had little contact with the intruding Spaniards until the end of the sixteenth century, when the small "ranching boom" increased the Spanish presence on the Isthmus and severed formal ties between the Zapotec tributary villages and the head town, now called Tehuantepec. The elimination of formal ties resulted from the influx of

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[42] Campbell, 6; Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance," 43-44.

[43] Campbell, 7-8; Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance," 43.

wealthy Spanish families into Tehuantepec; a total of one hundred families by 1620. The incursion of Spaniards resulted in the imposition of a Spanish *cabildo* government, and the expulsion of the indigenous elite in favor of the Spanish. With the new cabildo government, tributary villages elected their own officials, rather than having them imposed from Tehuantepec. Moreover, with increasing Spanish control of Tehuantepec, Isthmus Zapotec commoners no longer formally depended on the indigenous elite: Dominican friars took over religious ceremony, undercutting elite power at its source; Spanish government took positions from indigenous elite and eliminated hereditary control; and the new imperial cash economy replaced relations between elite and commoner. The peripheral villagers simply no longer needed the nobles of Tehuantepec.[44]

The dissolution of the Zapotec elites' formal authority should not imply that no ties existed between elite and commoner. The persistence of clandestine Zapotec religious ceremonies, as evidenced by cases of idolatry, implies that pre-Columbian power relations persisted, although not allowed within the imposed social structure. That notwithstanding, during this period of heavy Spanish contact in Tehuantepec, cultural relations between Isthmus Zapotec elite and commoner also began to strain. The elite became dependent on the Spanish as the only means by which they could maintain their power: they participated in the imposed style of local government, associated with Spanish authorities, and engaged in commercial entrepreneurial activity. As a result of constant contact and dependence, the nobles of Tehuantepec began to conform to Spanish culture, adopting Spanish clothes, customs, and language. This cultural assimilation increased the tension between Tehuantepec and the peripheral villages, such as Juchitán, which had very little contact with the Spanish.[45]

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[44] Campbell, 13-15.

[45] Ibid., 16-19, 23-24.

After 1660 a series of general Indian revolts swept across the Isthmus and elucidated the complete separation between Isthmus Zapotec elite and commoner. While the peripheral villages took part in these rebellions, the Tehuanos assisted the Spanish in stamping them out. Never before had the elite connection to the Spanish been so obvious. After 1660 Isthmus Zapotec ideas of who "we" are shifted to the peripheral villages, based on a rejection of the Tehuano elite. Ideas about identity shifted to the peripheral villages and became defined both geographically and by social class. Inhabitants of the peripheral villages now identified themselves as commoners and the elite as "*Ladinos*," part of Spanish society.[46]

Like notions of class identification, ethnic identity also shifted to the peripheral villages over the course of Spanish colonization. In the colonial period "affiliation with an Indian community," according to Joseph Whitecotton, "became much more important for the local Indian peasant." This signaled the end of Zapotecness as a defining characteristic: "Although the Spanish designation *zapotecos* may have entered their vocabulary, Zapotec ethnicity, on a larger level, was of little consequence, as there were few, if any, social forms that gave it unity."[47] Essentially, what had been a larger ethnic identity yielded to a place-specific identity, grounded in distinct villages.

Due to the peculiar combination of the preexisting Zapotec social structure and the limited Spanish influence, the nature of social relations on the Isthmus during the colonial period would not permit collective identities to extend beyond a local level. While peripheral villagers, for the most part, shared similar patterns of social relations to others, as subsistence-based rural cultivators they did not share a sufficient level of intervillage social contact to ensure a mutual awareness of this similarity. Thus, there was no broad

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[46] Ibid., 20-24.

[47] Joseph Whitecotton, *The Zapotecs: Princes, Priests, and Peasants* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984), 219; Philip Dennis, *Intervillage Conflict in Oaxaca* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1987), 21-22.

idea of "the indigenous villager" on the Isthmus. In fact, external social contact for peripheral villagers was limited primarily to Spaniards and Tehuanos, two groups with whom they did not share similar patterns of social relations with others. As the products of various social forces, collective identities on the Isthmus became place-specific.

By 1750 the separation between elite and commoner became geographically polarized between Tehuantepec and Juchitán, where the peripheral villagers began to conglomerate, free from Spanish influence. The traditional elite had proven that they would not protect their cultural, political, or economic integrity from Spanish intrusions, and Juchitán, unlike Tehuantepec, existed in isolation from all Spanish institutions and structures except the hacienda, with which relations were conflictual. Juchitán maintained its autonomy and a degree of combativeness against the Spaniards. Therefore, the formation of an indigenous population center in Juchitán was a rejection of the Tehuano elite and Spanish society.[48]

By the end of the colonial period, social differentiation existed in Juchitán because Zapotec society inherently was highly stratified. Furthermore, the rejection of the Tehuano elite was not a rejection of social inequality, but rather a rejection of Spanish social influence. However, the intense differentiation that existed between peripheral villages and Tehuantepec simply could not be replicated in Juchitán because elite status depended on participation in Spanish institutions. As a result of this relative lack of social stratification, the Juchitecos experienced a high level of structural equivalence. Juchitecos generally shared equivalent ties to each other, and to outside society. Furthermore, as a conglomeration of Zapotec commoners, the Juchitecos were a relatively homogenous group. Colonial Juchitán generally displayed a very high degree of community solidarity.

By Independence the Juchitecos had established a distinct local identity through conflict, and founded on equal internal relations and shared collective identities. The lack

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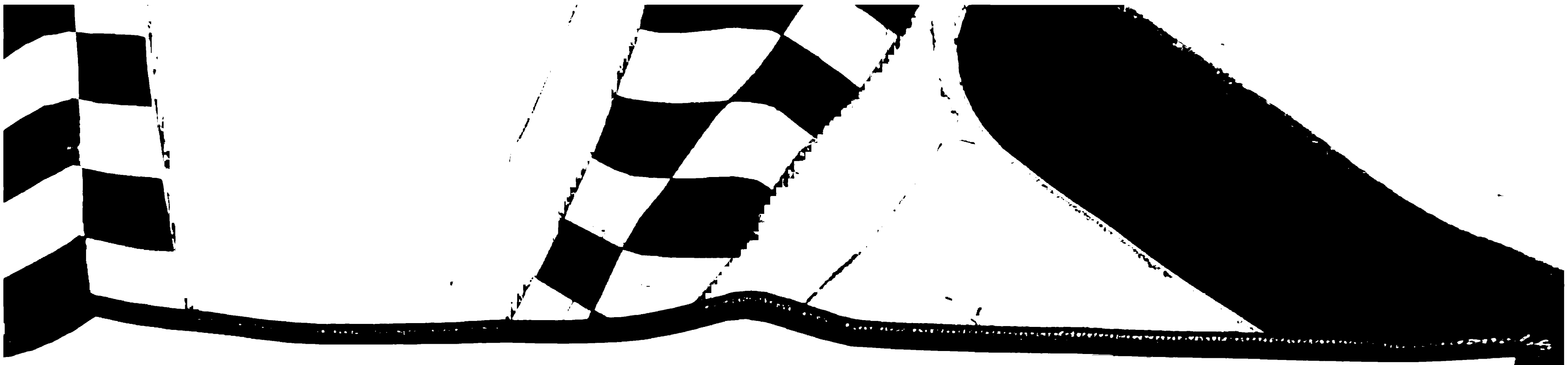
[48] Campbell, 32-33.

of cross-cutting identities resulted in a community with a strong sense of shared local interests. When Juchitecos thought of themselves in terms of class or ethnicity, they thought of themselves as Juchitecos. As a result, the Juchitecos generally shared the same collective interests. In practical terms this defense of local interests manifested itself in a fusion of place-specific economic and political concerns. Isthmus Zapotec commoners withdrew support from Tehuantepec because of the elites' failure to protect common interests; they sought leadership that would answer to common needs, like subsistence. So in order to obtain political power in Juchitán, potential leaders had to protect the subsistence interests of the villagers. In turn, to protect their subsistence interests, the villagers demanded authentic Juchiteco political leadership, which would necessarily guarantee both village autonomy and the political power of their leaders. These shared identities and interests ultimately transmuted into a staunch defense of Juchiteco independence. In the nineteenth century, Juchiteco defense of their independence would bring them into constant conflict with the state government, and eventually produce a tradition of violence.



CHAPTER TWO

EARLY NATIONAL PERIOD: *Rebellion and Repression*

With Independence from Spain, the new powerholders in Mexico replaced the crown's protective policies with liberal economic programs in an attempt to eradicate the vestiges of the colonial economic system. The modernization programs proposed by liberal leaders attacked communal ownership of land and important salt flats on the Isthmus. However, the state's lack of infrastructural power rendered these economic programs nearly impossible to enforce. The state consistently suffered from a severe shortage of fiscal resources, and the chronic instability that resulted only further exacerbated the problem. The constant money shortages also retarded the state's efforts to extend its organizational reach into the peripheries. Furthermore, Mexico's internal instability coupled with military conflict with the United States diverted the federal government's military power. Ultimately, during this period the Mexican state proved to be incapable of effectively governing its people, and unable to carry through with its proposed economic programs.

Throughout the nineteenth century, taking advantage of a weak and unstable central government, the Juchitecos remained in a nearly continuous state of mobilization against the state government of Oaxaca. The modernizing programs of the state government, particularly attempts to expropriate communal salt flats, created real grievances that were shared evenly by the Juchitecos. The power of the Juchiteco mobilizations stemmed from the lack of cross-cutting identities. The Juchitecos mobilized so powerfully against government attempts to seize salt resources because they shared similar relations to what they were fighting for. Consequently, the repeated mobilizations against the state government were understood to be beneficial for the entire village.

Juchiteco collective violence was also a form of negotiation with the state government. The Juchitecos mobilized violently to assure themselves access to valuable resources, which necessarily entailed local political autonomy. They fought to maintain political control of their village in order to maintain access to the land and salt resources that government-backed entrepreneurs wanted to separate them from. Failure to respect the economic interests or the political autonomy of the Juchitecos resulted in a local revolt. These were generally short revolts in which the Juchitecos expelled local political leaders. However, rather than addressing the grievances of the local population, the state government responded to this form of negotiation with violent repression. The Juchitecos ultimately negotiated de facto access to land and salt, but at the expense of repeated repression at the hands of the state government.

The intense violence that characterized relations between Juchitán and the Oaxacan state resulted from a fundamental conflict, based on the image of the Juchiteco. The liberal government of Oaxaca saw the Indian as an obstacle to modernization, and thus sought to integrate indigenous villages into a new "modern" state. However, based on collective identities, the Juchitecos organized a strong defense against the state's encroachment. As a result, the Oaxacan public and state government officials began to imagine the Juchitecos as *indios barbaros*. As such the Juchitecos became a special problem for the state government: they were not only a threat to the future modernity of the state, they were a threat to public safety and order. Consequently, as Juchiteco recalcitrance continued, state-sponsored repression escalated and Juchiteco defense of local interests transformed into separatism. The legacy of this period of alternating rebellion and repression endured until the eve of the Mexican Revolution.

Political and economic instability followed shortly after Independence, when political leaders tried to impose modernizing programs on a rural populace capable of responding with tremendous force. Separation from the Spanish crown opened large cracks in the

political order, and the Wars for Independence filled those cracks with regional military leaders. At the same time, new centralized economic programs began to disenfranchise the nation's indigenous populations. Political and economic instability ensued when regional ex-military leaders mobilized these disenfranchised populations to support their bids for political power.[49]

In Juchitán ex-soldier José Gregorio Meléndez became the leader of local mobilization. Meléndez fought in the liberation army of José María Morelos during the Wars for Independence. His service under Mariano Matamoros gave him military training and the opportunity to learn the political terrain of the Isthmus. Most importantly, however, the wars dispersed arms throughout the region. The leadership of Che Gorio Melendre, as he was known in Juchitán, combined with an armed village population to create a rural sector capable of mobilizing a tremendous amount of force.[50]

Economically, the Federal Constitution of 1824 did not propose any programs that disenfranchised the indigenous populace, but various state constitutions, on the other hand, attacked communal rights to land and resources. Oaxaca's constitution called for a general privatization of communal resources, and more specifically conceded a monopoly of the salt flats in Tehuantepec district (which at the time included the village of Juchitán) "to an individual who would be able to exploit the salt more 'economically' than the Indians."[51] In 1834 the state government of Oaxaca put their words into action and granted a monopoly of the Tehuantepec salt flats to Francisco Javier Echevarría.[52]

As a communal resource "from time immemorial," salt occupied a particularly important position in Juchiteco society. Beyond its use in religious ceremony, salt played a

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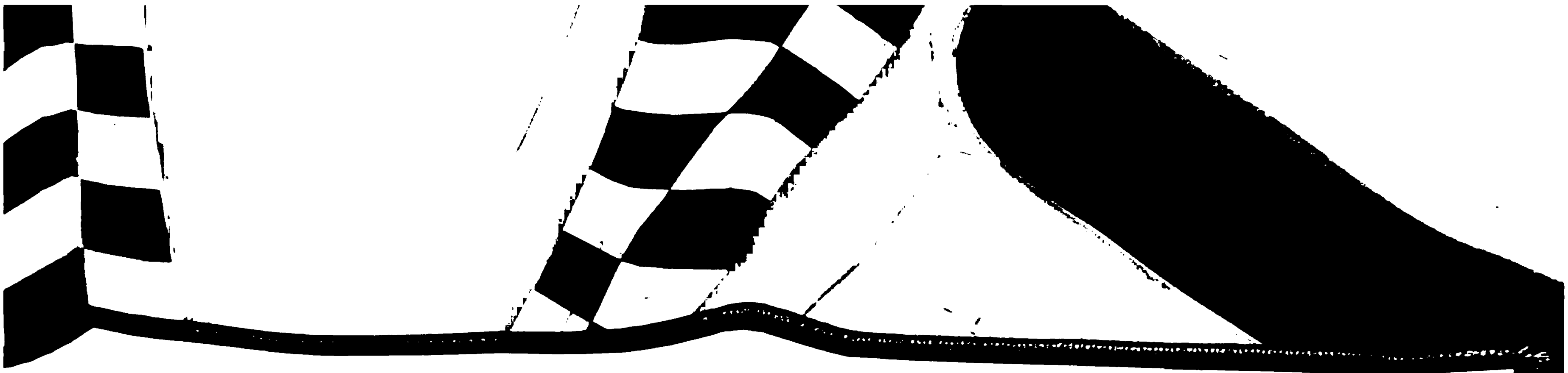
[49] Leticia Reina and Fransisco Abardía, "Cien años de rebelión," in María de los Angeles Romero ed., *Lecturas históricas del estado de Oaxaca, Vol. 3: Siglo XIX* (Mexico City: INAH, 1990), 460.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Quoted in Ibid., 457.

[52] Ibid., 457, 460.



key role in everyday life as a preservative for meat and fish. As a result, the Juchitecos shared similar relations to the salt flats. More importantly, the state expropriation of the salt flats forced the Juchitecos to reorder their collective identities to defend the interests effected by the state's action. Where Juchiteco identity may have been more-or-less significant before, the expropriation of the salt flats forced the Juchitecos to give priority to their local identity in order to defend local property. Essentially this critical event, instigated by the state government, set the stage for group mobilization.

In 1834 the Juchitecos launched twenty years of nearly continuous combat against the state government. Although locally-based, the original mobilization of collective violence in Juchitán was a distinct part of a more widespread indigenous reaction to imposed liberal programs from the state of Guerrero to the Isthmus. The movement formed around Juan Alvarez's *Plan de Texca* and threatened to become a massive Indian uprising. Remembering the violent rabble of Indians mobilized by Father Hidalgo during the Wars for Independence, authorities mobilized quickly and suppressed the rebellion, capturing Meléndez in the process.[53]

Following Independence land and labor relations also changed on the Isthmus. A major decline in the international dye market and the disorder created by the wars for Independence carried serious consequences for the Haciendas Marquesanas. The increased production of cochineal in Guatemala and indigo in India created a glut in the dye market, driving down international prices and forcing the collapse of the Isthmus' export economy.[54] Moreover, by the 1830s the indigenous population of the Isthmus began claiming legal ownership of the hacienda lands they had previously used for squatting. As a result, Lucas Alamán, who managed the Haciendas Marquesanas for the Duke of Terranova y Monteleone, began to actively seek out potential buyers to whom he could sell

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[53] Ibid., 460-61.

[54] Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance," 53.

the property. In 1836 Alamán found his men in two Europeans: Frenchman Juan José Guergué, and Milano Esteban Maqueo.[55]

As wealthy immigrants completely unfamiliar with their new setting, the new owners responded solely to market imperatives, creating continuous conflict with surrounding villages, and especially with Juchitán. Immediately after assuming ownership, Guergué and Maqueo attempted to eject several Juchitecos from a parcel of land used for grazing. The dispute escalated and eventually ended up in court where the owners unsuccessfully attacked the validity of the Juchitecos' land title from 1710. The Juchitecos maintained access to the land and continued to use it for grazing, but the conflict with the immigrant hacendados continued. For years following the case both sides stole each other's sheep when found unattended.[56]

With their land and access to resources constantly being menaced by state-supported entrepreneurs, peace did not last long in Juchitán. In 1842 the Juchitecos rejected local authorities for selling land against the will of the people. State officials combated Juchiteco recalcitrance with a combination of persuasion and aggression. However, the Juchitecos refused to compromise and the state could not muster enough force to suppress the movement, leaving Juchitán in a state of rebellion for several years. During this period the Juchitecos assumed autonomy and continued to illegally exploit the salt flats and utilize hacienda land.[57]

By 1847 neither the federal nor the state government had the ability to maintain order. The United States intervention as part of the U.S.-Mexican War dispersed the military strength of the federal government, while the power struggle between valley and Tehuano elite paralyzed the repressive forces of Oaxaca. Under the smoke screen of

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[55] Reina and Abardía, 461-62.

[56] Manuel Esparza, "Las tierras de los hijos de los pueblos: El distrito de Juchitán en el siglo XIX," in *Lecturas históricas del estado de Oaxaca, Vol. 3: Siglo XIX*, 427-29; Reina and Abardía, 462.

[57] Ibid., 462-63; Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance," 56.

disorder, Gregorio Meléndez assumed a position as a sort of defacto governor of the Isthmus. Benito Juárez became the governor of Oaxaca later in the year and immediately attempted to reintegrate and pacify the Isthmus by naming Meléndez head of the region's national guard. Rather than an attempt at reform, Juárez simply wanted to demobilize Juchiteco forces by coopting their leader. The plan backfired, and rather than pacify the Juchitecos, the move precipitated "a wave of violence" in which Juchitecos assaulted the salt flats, stole sheep from haciendas, sacked the local jail, and ultimately reiterated their demand for local autonomy. After the initial uprising, Meléndez publicly called for *istmeño* separation from the state of Oaxaca.[58]

The Juchitecos continued to live in relative autonomy, outside of state control, but when they rejected local officials again in 1849 and 1850, increasingly harsh repression followed. In May of 1850 the Juchitecos expelled the local *alcalde* for not obeying popular volition, and replaced him with Simón López, a former rebel leader. Tehuano officials found this political move unacceptable and requested that the federal government intervene. Intense violent conflict ensued and came to a head on July 19, on the outskirts of Juchitán. A two-hour battle between Juchiteco rebels and the federal army resulted in the deaths of seventy Juchitecos. After the battle federal soldiers pillaged Juchitán, leaving one-third of the village in shambles.[59]

Two national events influenced the state's decision to increase repression in Juchitán: the end of the U.S.-Mexican War, and the Caste War of Yucatán. The end of the war simply freed up federal resources and allowed the state to utilize a previously-unattainable amount of repressive force. Meanwhile, the massive number of Mexicans killed by Maya rebels during the Caste War of Yucatán roused the Oaxacan government's fear of its huge Indian population.[60] The Juchitecos seemed to display the same hatred of

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[58] Reina and Abardía, 463-64; Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance," 56-57.

[59] Reina and Abardía, 465-67; Tutino, "Ethnic Resistance," 57-58.

[60] For details on the Caste War of Yucatán, see Nelson Reed, *The Caste War of Yucatán*

outsiders as the Mayas of Yucatan, and thus terrified Oaxacan officials and landowners. The carnage inflicted by federal soldiers on July 19, 1850 was both a catharsis and a preventative measure against a possible caste war in Oaxaca.[61]

In the face of intensifying repression, the indigenous groups of the Isthmus became more unified, and the rebels of Juchitán became more radical. The state-sponsored repression, which included sweeps through the Isthmus countryside, antagonized indigenous villagers and consequently made Meléndez impossible to capture. The entire region, at least passively, supported Meléndez, and from one of his rural sanctuaries Meléndez announced a more radical *Plan de 28 de Octubre*. The plan articulated the Juchiteco commitment to the defense of their cultural, political, and economic autonomy: it denounced the state and federal government, and pronounced Meléndez's opposition to soon-to-be president, General Mariano Arista.[62]

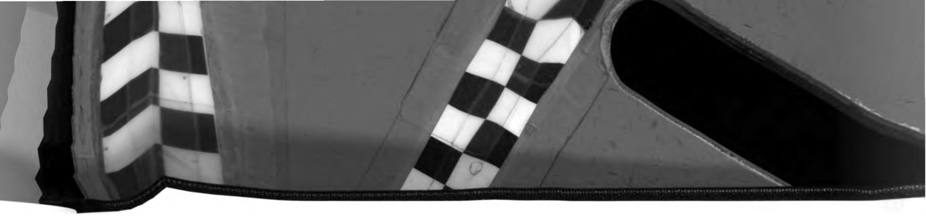
Owing to a more conciliatory attitude from the central government, in the months that followed his announcement, Meléndez's stance changed dramatically. Mariano Arista gave Meléndez an offer he could not refuse. On January 10, 1851 Meléndez announced a new plan in which he recognized government authorities, supported Arista as the new president, and sought peace and harmony with Tehuantepec, which the Juchitecos had sacked in the violence of the previous year. In exchange the government separated the new federal Department of Tehuantepec from the state of Oaxaca, and granted amnesty to all rebels. Through direct violent action against the state government, the Juchitecos officially won their independence from Oaxaca. Ironically, Gregorio Meléndez died on April 20, 1853, just one month before the Isthmus of Tehuantepec officially became a federal territory.[63]

(Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964); and Terry Rugeley, *Yucatan's Maya Peasantry and the Origins of the Caste War* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1996).

[61] Reina and Abardía, 468.

[62] Ibid., 468-69.

[63] Ibid., 469-70.



The Meléndez Rebellions established two important precedents for future incidents of collective violence in Juchitán. First, this marked the first instance in which the federal government intervened to bring order to Juchitán. The federal government, contrary to the state, took a more conciliatory approach to the Juchitecos, making compromise possible, and undercutting the sovereignty of the state government. This interference became a pattern, but not without creating friction with the state. Second, the period of rebellion crystallized a real and significant conflict between the Juchitecos and the state government. The Meléndez Rebellions were a defense of the Juchitecos' local identity and their corresponding political and economic interests. Specifically, the Juchitecos mobilized as Juchitecos in order to negotiate political autonomy and continued access to community property. This mobilization clearly antagonized the state government, creating a fundamental conflict of interests. However, once the violence began, the conflict gained a heightened significance. These rebellions, which began as a defense of local interests, became separatist and anti-state rebellions whose battle cry was "Death to the state of Oaxaca and long live Juchitán."[64] Seeing Tehuantepec as a tool of the state, which was the popular image of Tehuanos in Juchitán, the Juchitecos raided the village twice, burning *barrios* and killing many Tehuanos.[65]

More importantly, the period of continuous violence produced an image of the Juchiteco in the public and official conscience as barbaric and rebellious, and thus an obstacle to modernity and a threat to public order. The progressive, liberal idea of the Indian as barbaric or backward was not new, but the Meléndez rebellions created an image of the Juchitecos as particularly violent barbarians. The image that emerged portrayed the Juchitecos as both an obstacle to progress, and a constant threat to public safety.

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[64] Víctor de la Cruz, *La Rebelión de Che Gorio Melendre* (Juchitán: H. Ayuntamiento Popular de Juchitán, 1983) cited in Campbell, 42.

[65] Campbell, 42.

The account of German traveler G. F. Von Tempsky's visit to Oaxaca toward the end of the rebellions reflected popular opinions of the Juchitecos that existed in Oaxaca and demonstrated liberal notions of Indians, in general. Von Tempsky visited Gregorio Meléndez in his camp, but he noted a great deal about the Juchitecos before even arriving in Juchitán. The German did not go into Juchitán uninformed about the nature of the people who lived there. Their reputation preceded them:

> [Juchitán's] inhabitants have the reputation of being a very unruly set, turbulent politicians and revolutionists ... they have been in Oaxaca often, as well as in Tehuantepec, enforcing their opinions at the point of a bayonet ... this village was, besides, reputed for its hostility against white strangers, or strangers of any kind, and we had been warned not to enter its confines as the people would, at the least, steal our horses.[66]

Von Tempsky did not, however, learn everything he knew about Indians from Mexicans. As a progressive thinker, he instinctively knew some things about the nature of the Indian:

> There is nothing like showing oneself fearless in the intercourse with Indians, shake them vigorously by the hand, look boldly into their eye, and you have them as servants, who would have been your masters had your footsteps been wavering, your hand timid, and your eye winking in approaching them. They are, in that respect, like the wild beasts of their forest. Turn your eye from the tiger, attempt a retrograde movement, and he flies at your throat; but fasten your eye upon him, he will quail, and not dare injure you.[67]

This account characterizes well how progressive notions of the Indian blended with the image of violence that defined Juchitán. The Indian himself was primitive and prone to violence, and the Juchiteco, as proven by past actions, was an amplified, exaggerated Indian. The Juchiteco characterized the savagery and violence inherent in all Indians. Gregorio Meléndez himself was a man defined by "an inextinguishable hatred of Mexicans in general." Ultimately, in the public mind, the Juchitecos were barbarians, naturally disposed to violence and aggressive toward outsiders. The immigrant owners of the Haciendas Marquesanas complained that the expansion of their estate had been cut short

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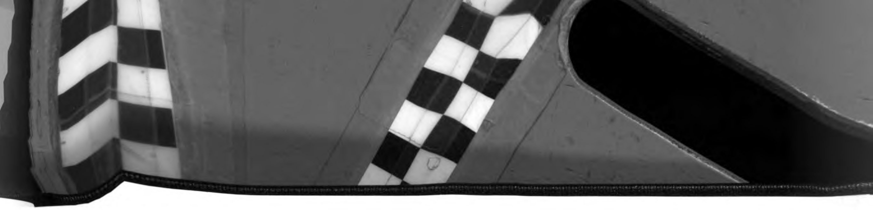
[66] "A German Traveler's Observations in Juchitán," in *Zapotec Struggles*, 119.

[67] Ibid., 120.



"by the insatiable greed of a barbarous village without a title except their brute force."[68] The public viewed the Juchitecos proclivity toward violence as a constant threat to public safety, and as a result, they became a major target of public officials.

The official verbal assault against the Juchitecos heightened in accordance with the increased military assault. In 1849 when the Juchitecos ejected a local official, Tehuano officials appealed to the federal government to intervene and restore order to Juchitán. To support their appeal, the officials compiled a list of Juchiteco transgressions. The list of indiscretions reflects the balanced assault on the Juchiteco as a particularly disorderly Indian: committing outrages against authorities, remaining in a hostile state toward constitutional authorities, promoting public meetings with a beating drum, and being given to all sorts of excesses.[69] The list worked as intended and federal forces intervened. Officials saw Juchiteco recalcitrance and Indianness as interrelated and both were unacceptable in a modern nation.

With this as the predominant vision of the Juchitecos, it made sense that the "Father of Modern Mexico," Benito Juárez, was the most important, and most powerful political enemy of the Juchitecos. The Juchitecos represented a threat to all that Juárez stood for politically. In a speech delivered on July 2, 1850, Juárez addressed Juchiteco malfeasance and even foreshadowed the brutal repression that followed two weeks later. Juárez, a politician, was not alone in his beliefs of the depraved, violent nature of the Juchitecos, and in his speech he clearly appealed to public sentiments on the subject (italics added):

> It would take a great deal of time to describe to you the state of immorality and disorder in which the residents of Juchitán have lived since very ancient times. *You know well* their great excesses. *You are not unaware* of their depredations under the colonial regime ... *You know* that during the centralized government they mocked the armed forces that the central power sent to repress their crimes, defeating and causing damage to it, making fun of its leaders, and scorning local authorities. *You have been witnesses* to

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[68] Quoted in Esparza, 427.

[69] Reina and Abardía, 466.

> these scenes of blood and horror. *You know all this*, which is another reason why I omit a history of the events that have passed before your eyes ... I will ... remind you of the past so that you will know better the unruly character of these rascals.[70]

Juárez felt that the presence of the Juchitecos in Oaxaca did more than threaten the safety of the state's citizens. Their behavior threatened Oaxaca's ability to become a modern state:

> peace has been secured, in general, in the state. Only the town of Juchitán has scandalously altered the tranquillity enjoyed by the District of Tehuantepec. This was done neither to carry out a political plan, nor to propose any useful reforms, nor to complain about its current government, nor to change administrative personnel ... It was done to evade obedience to all authority and the healthy burden of the law, and to rob with impunity and engage without obstacles in excesses that morality condemns.[71]

This conception of the Juchitecos portrayed them as a threat to the state in many ways, and led Juárez to conclude that the village needed to be suppressed. In the same speech Juárez announced that he was preparing to "organize and maintain public forces and prepare the elements of war, so that when peace is threatened or interrupted, the instigators can be repressed and punished as rapidly and efficiently as the security of the Oaxaqueños and the dignity of the Government demand."[72] Two weeks later Juchitán smoldered.

The pattern of rebellion and repression in Juchitán ultimately produced a tradition of violence between the village and the state government. Based on past experiences, the Juchitecos understood that they could mobilize collective violence in order to negotiate better political and economic conditions. Also based on experience, the state understood the Juchitecos to be both savage and rebellious. As a result, the state saw violent repression as the only way to control such an "unruly set." Ultimately, non-violent negotiation became impossible in Juchitán without federal intervention.

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[70] " The Juchitecos as Seen by Benito Juárez: Excerpts from a Speech, July 2, 1850," in *Zapotec Struggles*, 123-24.

[71] Ibid., 123.

[72] Ibid.

Following the Meléndez Rebellions, Benito Juárez wanted to modernize Oaxaca in classic liberal fashion after he became the state's governor. Juárez planned to extend the state's transportation infrastructure in order to, among other things, open the peripheries to new markets and develop all uncultivated land (*terrenos baldías*). The first step toward accomplishing this goal was to account for and regulate all land and land transactions in the state. Juárez sent local government representatives into the field to inventory the amount of terrenos baldías that existed in the state, so the government could then administer the land as public domain. The state instituted a modernization program that revolved around the state government, but local officials throughout the state resisted the scheme as an encroachment on their autonomy. Municipal governments simply did not do the mandated work. By the end of the decade, Juárez's plan had failed due to local noncompliance. In 1862 state officials complained that they still had not received field reports from 1849.[73]

Following the wars of La Reforma in the late 1850s, liberal leadership once again ascended to the top of the state government, and with renewed vigor, attacked communal property with renewed vigor. In the chaos of the violent conflict between liberals and conservatives, and during a brief conservative reign, villagers throughout Oaxaca seized the opportunity to expand their land base by moving onto private property. When liberals resumed power in 1861, Governor Ramón Cajiga denounced this affront to private property, carried out by "revolutionaries ... usurpers, or pernicious vagabonds," as an evil that "personified sedition and signified the dissolution of society."[74] Meanwhile Cajiga reinstituted the act of *20 Octubre 1859*, which transformed *cofradía* land and livestock into private property; an act "dictated for the benefit of all types of honorable poor."[75]

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[73] Esparza, 392-95.

[74] Quoted in ibid., 395.

[75] Quoted in ibid., 395-96.

Despite the passionate pleas of liberal ideologues, the laws of La Reforma which called for the expropriation of communal landholding could not be enforced because the state did not have the infrastructural power to divest villages of their land. The wars of La Reforma, the French Intervention, and the political factionalism that followed kept the state government in desperate need of funds, and incapable of modernizing. Recognizing its failure, the state government warned its constituents: "The state will not rise nor will it be sufficiently wealthy if its vast territory remains as it is now, uncultivated, and we will not stop regretting this mistake if the lands that the villagers possess are not reduced to private property."[76]

Through the periods of La Reforma and the French Intervention, from 1855 to 1867, constant warfare between liberals and conservatives kept the entire nation in a state of chaos, and opened the door to violent conflict between Juchitán and Tehuantepec. During the wars of La Reforma Benito Juárez became the president of the Republic and immediately rolled back the gains of the Meléndez Rebellions. The Benemérito denounced the decree that created the Department of Tehuantepec, and Juchitán rejoined the state of Oaxaca as Tehuantepec's subject, exacerbating an already problematic situation.[77]

In the period that followed the reintegration of the Isthmus into Oaxaca, tensions mounted between the two villages. Under the guise of larger political concern the two villages simply acted on an escalating feud in the absence of a capable repressive state.[78] The state, recognizing that the French were a more serious threat, offered the Juchitecos incentives to support the liberal cause against the French. In 1864 Juárez offered to return

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[76] Quoted in ibid., 396.

[77] Reina and Abardía, 470.

[78] During this period the Juchitecos began wearing green and the Tehuanos red, the colors associated with liberal and conservative causes, respectively. According to Philip Dennis, *Intervillage Conflict in Oaxaca,* this is a common indication of feuding villages in Oaxaca. See page 20.

various salt flats to Juchitán, including those controlled by the Echevarría family, in exchange for armed support in the battle against the French.[79]

Although it is probable that the Juchitecos did have some sense that they would be fighting to protect national sovereignty, it is more likely that the Juchitecos understood their negotiating power as fighters. The state, and most certainly Benito Juárez, understood that while the Juchitecos were indios barbaros, they made better allies than enemies. Although the restitution of the salt flats did not take place, the state did successfully use it to gain support from the Juchitecos.

Meanwhile, the Tehuano military declared in favor of the French and immediately marched into San Blas, historically a Juchiteco ally, and sacked the entire barrio. A guerrilla war ensued which pitted Juchiteco and *blaseño* guerrillas against French reinforcements of the Tehuano military. The violent warfare culminated on September 5, 1866 when a small Juchiteco army routed a French battalion of 2500 soldiers. This victory reinforced the tradition of violence in Juchitán. Afterward *5 de septiembre* became a holiday in Juchitán and marked the pinnacle of Juchiteco rebelliousness. The event became central in the Juchitecos' construction of a rebellious identity.[80]

Just six years after the legendary 5 de septiembre battle the Juchiteco rivalry with the Díaz family began. Félix Díaz, like his brother Porfirio, was a liberal general in the war against the French and afterward a politician. Chato, as Félix was known, shared his brother's interest in bringing stability to Mexico via a strong central state. He became governor of Oaxaca following the expulsion of the French and in 1872 he looked to centralize authority in the state by imposing a hand-picked jefe político in Juchitán. The Juchitecos reacted immediately to the infringement on their autonomy by throwing out the imposed jefe político and naming their own. Albino Jiménez, better known by his Zapotec

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[79] Reina and Abardía, 470-71.

[80] Campbell, 49-51.

name, Binu Gada (Nine Lives), had led the Juchitecos against the French and now became the new jefe político of Juchitán.[81]

Mexico, however, was no longer engaged in a civil war and Governor Díaz would not tolerate Juchiteco assertions of self-determination, much less the rumors of Binu Gada's planned secession. Demonstrating his dedication to peace and order, Chato arrived in Juchitán personally with a federal battalion and routed Binu Gada's men. Afterward federal forces killed all the prisoners, burned down houses, looted the local treasury, and stole the statue of San Vicente, the village's patron saint, which they dragged out of town tied to a horse. After vehement protest from the Juchitecos the military sent San Vicente back to Juchitán with his feet cut off. The idea of village autonomy represented a threat to the state in and of itself, but the Juchitecos' reputation fostered a reciprocal aggressive and violent attitude from the state. The state not only felt obligated to suppress the Juchitecos, they wanted to suppress them in order to teach the stubborn Indians a lesson. This act of brutality also represented the violent hatred that had developed between Juchitán and the state government.[82]

Despite the brutal repression, when the next political conflict created disorder in the state, violence broke out on the Isthmus. Porfirio Díaz's announcement of the *Plan de la Noria* precipitated political chaos as factions battled one another. On the Isthmus armed supporters pushed Díaz's bid for presidency, but lost to forces led by Binu Gada. The movement behind the plan failed and the results were similar throughout Oaxaca, forcing Félix Díaz to flee the state. The Juchitecos captured Díaz as he attempted to leave the state through the Isthmus, beginning a sequence that became part of Juchiteco folklore. The Juchitecos cut the skin off the bottoms of Díaz's feet, forced him to walk on hot sand, then

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[81] Ibid., 54-55; Corvarrubias, 229.

[82] Campbell, 54-55; Cibeles Henestrosa de Webster, *Juchitán: Un pueblo singular* (Mexico: Editorial Alcaravan, 1985), 71; Reina and Abardía, 471.

castrated and shot him. They then sent Chato's body to Pochutla draped over a horse with his own testicles placed in his mouth. The moment became a centerpiece in the resistant imagery that surrounded the Juchitecos, and the boundaries between Juchitán and the state continued to solidify.[83]

A short time later the Juchitecos took up arms once again, but this time in support of Porfirio Díaz's *Plan de Tuxtepec*. Díaz succeeded in his second bid for presidency, but Binu Gada died in the fighting. Ironically, Nine Lives died helping to install what would become Mexico's most centralized regime.[84]

The period of continuous collective violence following Independence was an assertion, in absence of the crown, of Juchiteco political and economic autonomy, and as such, was a function of their local identity. The constant violence against outsiders also altered their identity by solidifying an image of themselves as rebels. Where their identities as Juchitecos gave them solidarity and made collective *action* easier, their identity as rebels made collective *violence* easier. Ultimately, the Juchitecos themselves mobilized the image of the Juchiteco rebel, which they had constructed as part of a "village-specific history" essential to local thinking and local identity.[85]

Juchitán existed, throughout history, almost completely free of outside influence, especially in civil society. By 1910, less than ten percent of the population was literate, less than five percent attended public schools, and a majority probably did not speak Spanish.[86] In Juchitán, then, there was no colonial or national history, only a local conscience. History, for the Juchitecos, was a collection of local memories; "memories of

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[83] Henestrosa de Webster, 71; Campbell 55.

[84] Campbell, 55-56.

[85] Dennis, 20.

[86] Paul Garner, *La Revolución en la provincia: Soberanía estatal y caudillismo en las montañas de Oaxaca, 1910-1920* (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), 27, 29.

old struggles rooted in centuries of injustice."[87] The key to understanding the dissatisfaction of the Juchitecos lies in understanding their local history, and the sense of injustice it highlighted.

The Juchiteco identity began as a rejection of outsiders, developed locally in isolation from outside influence, and ultimately yielded a local culture that perceived outside impositions as inherently unjust. The Juchitecos did not have what Barrington Moore calls a "sense of inevitability." Owing to their independent development, the Juchitecos viewed the state's attempts to integrate them into society through land privatization and social control as "a situation they need not, cannot, and ought not endure,"[88] and their local history emphasized this. The memories of Meléndez, of Juárez, of Binu Gada, were loaded with victories over outsiders and struggles against injustice. This local conscience "convinced them of their rebelliousness in the face of oppression." This gave local political leaders a "spirit of rebelliousness" to appeal to "when conflicts finally did sharpen."[89] This, then, was the legacy of village continuity in Juchitán: the Juchitecos were rebels, unafraid to use violence to protect their independent lifestyle from the impositions of outsiders.

This legacy of mobilizing violence in Juchitán also created a tradition of violence between the Juchitecos and the state government. While the Juchitecos were consistently able to mobilize collective violence against the state, the state was consistently able to violently repress the Juchitecos. As a result, non-violent negotiation between the Juchitecos and the state government was no longer possible without interference from the federal government.

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[87] de la Cruz, quoted in Adriana López Monjardin, "Juchitán: Histories of Discord," in *Zapotec Struggles*, 67.

[88] Moore, 462.

[89] López Monjardin, 67.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PORFIRIATO: Hegemony Without Consent

General Porfirio Díaz seized the Mexican presidency in 1876 and ruled the country with a centralized state for over thirty years. The Díaz regime brought economic growth to Mexico by luring foreign investment with guarantees of "peace, order, and progress." It was in this period, particularly, that Ramon Ruíz claims Oaxaca was "bypassed by the tides of modernization."[90] However, stories of Oaxaca's "backwardness" and lack of economic growth during the Porfiriato are greatly exaggerated. During the Porfiriato various sections of Oaxaca, including the Isthmus, experienced dynamic growth in commercial agriculture, owing to the extension of railroads into the region. On the other hand, despite intense economic growth, the indigenous village continued to predominate in the Oaxacan countryside. The newly-formed district of Juchitán reflected a unique pattern of development: while major economic growth characterized the district, the *municipio* of Juchitán maintained its land base.

The Porfirian state represented a unique relationship between Juchitán and the government in that it both antagonized Juchiteco interests and monopolized repressive capacity. Whereas the interests of the Spanish crown, generally, were not especially opposed to the interests of Indian villagers, the Porfirian government sought to "bring civilization" to the Isthmus region by stimulating economic growth. More importantly, for the first time since Mexico became an independent nation, local-level administrative and military sanctioning machineries answered to the central government, producing a high level of state repressive capabilities. Using a combination of effective military aggression

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[90] Ramón Eduardo Ruiz, The Great Rebellion: Mexico, 1905-1924 (New York: Norton, 1980), 23; For a similar view of Oaxaca during the Porfiriato and the Revolution, see Ronald Waterbury, "Non-Revolutionary Peasants: Oaxaca Compared to Morelos in the Mexican Revolution," Comparative Studies in Society and History 17:4 (1975).

and strategic exile and imprisonment, the Díaz regime suppressed opposition before the popular sectors could be mobilized in mass to seriously challenge the state's authority. Porfirio Díaz continued to see Juchitán as a special problem, and thus utilized all methods at his disposal to maintain order on the Isthmus. However, although the Díaz regime brought unprecedented infrastructural power to Mexico, the state did little to construct consent from its citizens. For the Juchitecos, the Porfiriato represented three decades of injustice.

In areas of rigid social and political hierarchy, according to John Coatsworth, an improvement in the profitability of agricultural enterprise generally resulted in a regressive movement in the distribution of property. Such was the case in Porfirian Mexico. By sharply reducing transportation costs and connecting previously isolated areas with distant markets, railroads, the key tenant to Porfirian economic development, removed previous obstacles to owning land in Mexico and made land owning more profitable than ever before. As a result, railroads introduced to Mexico "an era of land grabbing."[91] Oaxaca experienced a dramatic reversion of land tenure with the introduction of multiple railroads. Due to its geographic location, which made it ideal for a trans-Isthmanian railroad, the district of Juchitán experienced acutely the effects of the railroad.

During Díaz's first presidency, Oaxaca's liberal government, led by Matías Romero, actively worked to attract American investment. The government wanted to develop mining interests by connecting the central valley to Mexico City and commercial agriculture interests by constructing a trans-Isthmanian railroad. Government officials considered the extension of a good infrastructure central to modern development. Railroad construction in Oaxaca began with the formation of The Mexican Southern Railroad Company on March 24, 1881. Although the company went broke shortly thereafter, other programs followed and by the end of the Porfiriato three lines connected Oaxaca to Mexico

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[91] John Coatsworth, "Railroads, Landholding, and Agrarian Protest in the Early Porfiriato," *Hispanic American Historic Review* 54: 1, 48-49.

City and to two ports, one on the Pacific Ocean, and one on the Atlantic. Whereas in the central mining zone, the railroad amplified traditional patronage relations without greatly effecting land tenure, in many other zones in the state the railroad produced a reversion in land tenure.[92]

From the beginning of the Porfiriato to the eve of the Revolution Oaxaca achieved "progress" through the concentration of land and foreign investment. The Díaz administration reinvigorated the process of land appropriation. In 1874, 123 haciendas existed in Oaxacan territory, and by 1910 the number had jumped to 450.[93] Not incidentally, this regressive movement of landed property coincided with a major influx of foreign investment. Between 1900 and 1910 the state's foreign population increased from 844 to 2,026 people; although not a major part of the population, it was a 133 percent increase. Moreover, by 1910 Americans had invested more capital in Oaxaca than all but four Mexican states.[94] Land concentration and foreign investment were not evenly distributed throughout the state, however, and the district of Juchitán, in particular, became an export agriculture enclave.

Due to easy access to both the *Ferrocarril Panamericano* and the *Ferrocarril del Istmo*, agricultural enterprises in the district of Juchitán diversified and expanded during the Porfiriato, partly due to foreign investment. The region had the third largest variety of cultivated crops in the state, which included sugar cane, coffee, tobacco, rubber, cotton, anil, and a variety of fruits. The district of Juchitán also had the state's largest haciendas to carry out this diverse regional production for export. The average Oaxacan estate covered

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[92] Francie Chassen and Héctor Martínez, "El desarrollo económico de Oaxaca a finales del Porfiriato," in María de los Angeles Romero ed., *Lecturas históricas del estado de Oaxaca, Vol. 4: 1877-1930* (Mexico: INAH, 1990), 55-57; Paul Garner, "Federalism and Caudillismo in the Mexican Revolution: The Genesis of the Oaxacan Sovereignty Movement (1915-1920)," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 17:1 (1985), 120-21.

[93] Carlos Sánchez Silva, "Estructura de las propriedades agrarias de Oaxaca a fines del Porfiriato," in *Lecturas históricas del estado de Oaxaca, Vol. 4: 1877-1930*, 122.

[94] Chassen and Martínez, 50; Sánchez Silva, 115-16.

less than 5,000 *hectares*, but four haciendas of over 40,000 hectares existed in the district of Juchitán, led by the Hacienda Santo Domingo in Ixtaltepec which covered 77,000 hectares. Also, the United States-owned Tehuantepec Mutual Planters Company actively exported a great deal of produce to the United States. Their exports included sugar, bananas, and with 570 hectares under cultivation, they owned the largest orange groves in Mexico.[95] In terms of foreign investment, the Tehuantepec Planters Company was by no means alone on the Isthmus. Various foreign agricultural enterprises obtained land on the Isthmus, such as Illinois Coffee and Rubber, Mexican Land and Coffee, the Mexican Tropical Planters, the Isthmus Plantation Association, the Brown State Company, Rock Island Tropical Plantation, and United States Mexico Sugar, among others.[96]

The district of Juchitán was by no means economically "backward," but owing to its massive surface area and low population density, Juchitán was economically dynamic without displacing a large amount of the rural poor. The majority of the land appropriated by entrepreneurs was terreno baldía rather than communal land. Although this method barred village access to previously accessible land, it did not require displacement. The village of Juchitán was the second largest settlement in Oaxaca with 13,891 people, but encompassing 11,133 square kilometers, the district of Juchitán was also the largest in the state. Overall, the district contained a very sparse 5.8 people per square kilometer.[97] As a result, while estate agriculture expanded, villages generally remained intact, a conclusion which is borne out by looking at agricultural labor relations. In 1907, 12,818 *journaleros* worked in the district of Juchitán, the second most in the state. However, these journaleros maintained their village land base, worked seasonally, and had a great deal of leverage in

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[95] Chassen and Martínez, 66.

[96] Esparza, 404-05; Campbell, 58.

[97] Paul Garner, *La Revolución*, 28.

labor negotiations; the average wage in Juchitán was 75 *centavos* per day, which was 25 centavos more than any other district.[98]

More particularly, large landholdings threatened the municipio of Juchitán much less than any other area in the district. In 1889 General Francisco León, former *jefe político* of Juchitán, filed a complaint to Governor Gregorio Chavez about land tenure in the municipio of Juchitán. Leon complained that a scant three villages -- Espinal, Union Hidalgo, and the cabecera, Juchitán -- controlled 35 square leagues inside municipio boundaries. He claimed that the villagers did not cultivate a majority of this land, and it should therefore be pronounced public domain. "To preserve peace and order in the district" Governor Chavez ignored León's complaint. Only after threatening to break the peace himself did León get his day in court with the Juchitecos. In court, jefe político Manuel Muñoz Gómez made the startling confession that in Juchitán "everything has been conserved under the same conditions as before the law [of La Reforma]."[99] Never in the municipio of Juchitán had there been a single adjudication to communal land in accordance with the laws of La Reforma. Muñoz Gómez defended his by pointing out that the communal land of the municipio was not *ejidal*, but rather *terreno de común repartimiento*, and thus protected from the law. The Juchitecos won the case.[100]

In several cases following the turn of the century, however, the federal government stepped in and alienated land in the municipio of Juchitán, citing the new *Ley de Tierras* of 1894. Most notably, during the construction of the trans-Isthmanian railroad, which ended in 1907, the federal government gave a concession of 13,000 square meters to the railroad company to build a train station in Juchitán, and 15,000 square meters in Unión Hidalgo.

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[98] Chassen and Martínez, 67.

[99] Quoted in Esparza, 431-32.

[100] Ibid., 429-32; A study of communal landholdings in the central valley of Oaxaca found similar results there; see Charles Berry, *The Reform in Oaxaca, 1856-76: A Microhistory of the Liberal Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

For the most part the village of Juchitán avoided the land problems that plagued other areas in the state, and especially on the Isthmus. Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to conclude that the Juchitecos lacked grievances in relation to land tenure.[101]

The Porfirian program of modernization through economic development and political centralization was directly opposed to Juchiteco autonomy on the Isthmus. Nonetheless, the Porfiriato marked thirty years of peace in Juchitán, which endured while the state hand-picked jefes políticos, brought in a foreign-owned railroad, and installed a military barracks inside the village. The Díaz regime, to some degree, integrated Juchitán into the state without violent resistance.

The Porfirian peace did not begin immediately after Díaz became president of the Republic. During the early years of his regime, while he attempted to consolidate power over the nation's peripheries, ample opportunity existed for the rural populace to protest against the new government by show of force. In the years that followed the initiation of the Porfiriato, disorder ruled throughout much of Mexico, and particularly on the Isthmus in the state of Oaxaca.

Part of Porfirio Díaz's economic strategy was to "bring civilization" to the Mexican peripheries, and as such was a sort of ideologically justified assault on Indianness. The notion that by integrating peripheries into the market and extending national infrastructure, Indians would become civilized economic actors provided the foundation for this program. With 97 percent of its population classified as Indian, the government saw the Isthmus as a region in desperate need of civilization.[102]

The Porfirian regime attempted to civilize the Isthmus through European colonization and the introduction of the railroad. In May 1879 two colonizing schemes were in place on the Isthmus. Between Tehuantepec and Jalapa the government conceded

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[101] Esparza, 432-34.

[102] Garner, *La Revolución*, 27.

10,000 hectares of land to Gonzalo Ramos to promote the immigration of colonists. The government also had a plan to place two hundred families from the Canary Islands in the district of Juchitán by granting each family fifty hectares, equipment and animals, and exemptions from military service and taxes. Moreover, on May 31, 1879 the government publicly announced its intention to build the Ferrocarril del Istmo de Tehuantepec, which would attract foreign investors. Clearly the federal government and local authorities wanted to civilize the Isthmus by diminishing the Indian element. This became a real source of popular dissatisfaction among the rural population.[103]

Díaz's attempts to consolidate political power during his first presidential term also generated discontent on the nation's peripheries. Díaz's strategy of political centralization focused on controlling states and villages by imposing or coopting officials who would collaborate unconditionally with the executive government. As a result, his first term was extremely turbulent, as it consisted of the replacement of public officials on a state and local level. Díaz viewed the imposition of jefes políticos as another means by which to integrate the peripheries. Essentially, jefes políticos served as "the direct and effective link" that Díaz sustained with distant villages and districts. Consequently, the rejection of a jefe político was a rejection of Díaz and the central government.[104]

Díaz's continuing interest in his home state exaggerated the effect of these impositions at a time when his term as president was coming to a chaotic end. Díaz, who campaigned on the slogan "Effective Suffrage. No Reelection," vacated the presidency when his first term ended in 1880. This resulted in a national conflict over succession. The intense conflict and disorder over presidential succession hit Oaxaca as well, opening the door for the discontented agrarian sector to openly protest.[105]

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[103] María Eugenia Terrones López, "Istmeños y subversión en el Pofiriato: 1879-1881," in *Lecturas históricas del estado de Oaxaca, Vol. 4: 1877-1930*, 156-57, 162.

[104] Ibid., 140, 148.

[105] Ibid., 137-50.

Between 1879 and 1881 the Juchitecos railed against attempts to impose political and economic "rationalism" on the Isthmus. The Juchitecos plotted and threatened to rebel against the despoliation of communal lands and salt flats, expelled an imposed jefe político, declared the community independent, and engaged in banditry throughout the Isthmus. However, Porfirio Díaz returned to Oaxaca following his resignation to put an end to Juchiteco rebelliousness.[106]

Porfirio Díaz returned in 1881 to run for the position of governor of Oaxaca. His gubernatorial campaign for "peace, order, and progress" became a statewide consolidation of his power, and really transformed into a campaign of co-optation, with Díaz creating clients throughout the state. On June 26 Díaz became governor with 133,552 votes, compared to 397 for the runner-up. The consolidation of Díaz's power in the state spelled doom for Juchiteco rebels who now faced intense repression. By the end of the year, attempting to bring Juchitán under state control, federal forces crushed the "bandits" on the Isthmus and burned down several villages.[107]

The following year, under the leadership of Ignacio Nicolás (known by his Zapotec name, Mexu Chele), the Juchitecos took up arms in open rebellion against the state. The revolt itself was quite familiar: the rebels killed the jefe político and took de facto control of Juchitán, demanded the restoration of lands supposedly usurped by Esteban Maqueo, and called for independence from Oaxaca. Beyond that, the rebels directly protested development, particularly the proposed trans-Isthmanian railway. The state reacted to the rebellion severely, reflecting the President's personal feelings toward Juchitán and his dedication to civilizing the Indians of the Isthmus. Díaz himself led a military battalion from Oaxaca City in a thirty-day siege of Juchitán, after which "the male population was reduced to a small proportion."[108] The Díaz government exiled a majority of the surviving

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[106] Ibid., 159-66; Campbell, 55-56.

[107] Terrones López, 144-49.

[108] Lewis Haskell, Salina Cruz, 8 Nov. 1911, *State Department: Records relating to the internal*

males to the work camps of Quintana Roo and the Valle Nacional, and sent the women to San Miguel Chimalapa.[109]

Following the severe repression, a kind of peace settled over the Isthmus. Although Mexu Chele escaped, this was the last instance of Juchiteco collective violence until the Revolution. The Juchiteco reputation persisted through the peace and Díaz, who returned to the presidency in 1884, took care to transform nearby San Geronimo Ixtepec into "one of the biggest garrison towns in Mexico."[110]

The establishment of peace in Juchitán did not necessarily dissolve the Juchitecos sense of injustice, nor did it veil them in "the illusion of inevitability" in regards to their condition. However, the Díaz regime's strategic exile and imprisonment of potential dissident leaders undermined collective action before the populace could get involved. The examples of two very important dissidents, José F. Gómez and Adolfo Gurrión, illuminate how these tactics functioned.

José Gómez was "a squat, fat mestizo"[111] born in 1858 to relatively wealthy Juchiteco parents. After finishing primary school in Juchitán, Gómez transferred to the *Instituto de Ciencias y Artes del Estado* in Oaxaca City, where he studied law and distinguished himself "by his love of istmeños."[112] He made his way through law school defending the cases of Juchitecos in the state capital. Gómez received his degree in 1887 and afterward received his first post in Tlacolula, Oaxaca.[113]

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affairs of Mexico, 1910-29 (hereafter SD) 812.00/2498.

[109] Campbell, 55-56.

[110] Alan Knight, *The Mexican Revolution, Vol 1: Pofirians, Liberals, and Peasants* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 374.

[111] Ibid., 375.

[112] Víctor de la Cruz, "Che Gómez y la rebelión de Juchitán: 1911," in *Lecturas históricas del estado de Oaxaca, Vol. 4: 1877-1930*, 248.

[113] Ibid., 249.

Throughout his career José Gómez harbored political aspirations, and in 1893 he ran for municipal president of Juchitán. Although details about his life before the Revolution are not completely clear, it appears that Gómez won the election based on a campaign promise to return the salt flats to the people of Juchitán. The regional newspaper accused Gómez of going too far, and labeled him a socialist; a label that stuck. Within the year, Gómez left his position in Juchitán for reasons unknown. Also, a key member of Porfirio Díaz's cabinet, the "diamond" of the *científico* party, Rosendo Pineda, was a fellow Juchiteco who had attended school with José Gómez. Pineda knew well Gómez's socialist political ideals and made sure that Gómez never again would return to Juchitán in any political capacity. For the remainder of his career before the Revolution Gómez received posts throughout the country, but always far from the Isthmus. In 1904 he became the principle stamp tax collector in La Paz, Baja California, as far from Juchitán as possible. He remained there until the eve of the Revolution.[114]

Adolfo Gurrión, a rural cultivator from Juchitán, also expressed discontent with the regime and consequently spent a great deal of time incarcerated and exiled. After a long education in agriculture in Mexico City, Gurrión returned to Juchitán and was disgusted by the fraudulent reelection of local and state officials. In 1902 he publicly opposed the third reelection of General Martín Gonzalez as governor, and received his first jail sentence for his efforts. Later, the government-chosen jefe político of Juchitán, Manuel Bejerano, on the orders of *porfirista* Governor Emilio Pimentel, had Gurrión arrested in 1905 for being a correspondent for the radical *magonista* periodical *Regeneración*. Once liberated, Gurrión published his own journal *La Semecracia*, in which he criticized the corruption and authoritarianism of local porfirista functionaries. One such functionary, Municipal President Fernando de Gyvés, warned Porfirio Díaz that Gurrión, by diffusing "his machiavellian principles among the people," was "giving a bellicose character to the

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[114] Ibid., 249-53; Henestrosa de Webster, 74.

Zapotec race."[115] Shortly thereafter, Díaz ordered Gurrión arrested once again and confiscated the printing press used to publish La Semecracia. This time Gurrión's release depended on his acceptance of a government post in Tepic and later in Baja California, where he remained until after the first phase of the Revolution.[116]

During the Porfiriato, relationships of force in rural Oaxaca clearly favored the government, and strategic repression by the Díaz regime deterred agrarian insurrection in Juchitán. However, the infrastructural power exercised by the Porfirian government depended on replenished fiscal resources and consolidated military power rather than the construction of meaningful aspects of civil society. As a result, when the armed phase of the Revolution altered the balance of power in the Oaxacan countryside, the Juchitecos seized the opportunity to reassert local interests through collective violence.

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[115] Fernando de Gyvés to Porfirio Díaz, México, 1 Nov. 1905, *Archivo de Adolfo C. Gurrión* (hereafter AACG), (Mexico: INAH, 1988), 23-24.

[116] Héctor L. Zarauz López, "Introducción," AACG, 7-14.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE MEXICAN REVOLUTION IN JUCHITÁN: The Chegomista Rebellion

On the eve of the Madero Revolt in 1910, the Juchitecos were the inheritors of two important historical legacies that would shape their participation in the Mexican Revolution. The legacy of village continuity facilitated and limited popular mobilization during the early phase of the Revolution. The endurance of Juchitán as a relatively autonomous village fostered the development of a local populace unified by shared class and ethnic identities, and capable of mobilizing collective violence in defense of shared interests. However, the consolidation of a place-specific identity based on shared notions of class and ethnicity limited the ability of the Juchitecos to mobilize support from surrounding villages. The Juchitecos mobilized around collective identities, called forth by the state's violation of shared local interests. The mobilization of collective violence based on local interests and local identity was inherently parochial. As a result, village continuity limited the size and scope of Juchiteco protest.

The Juchiteco legacy of violent conflict with the state government of Oaxaca also had an ambivalent effect on popular participation in the Revolution. Decades of violent conflict with the state government of Oaxaca in the nineteenth century facilitated collective violence by giving both the Juchitecos and the state a historical tradition to call upon. The Juchitecos could appeal not only to a history of successful rebellions that had won them political independence and access to resources in the face of the state's "petty tyrants," but they could also recall their own brutal repression at the hands of the Oaxacan state. To mobilize as a Juchiteco was inherently to mobilize against the state government. However, this conflict also limited the size and scope of Juchiteco collective violence. The visibility of the state as a common enemy and the history of conflict between the two resulted in a separatist tendency in all Juchiteco movements. Surrounding villages did not share

Juchitán's conflict with the state government and thus *did not duplicate the Juchitecos'* demand for independence from the state of Oaxaca.

The tradition of violence in Juchitán also effected the state government's reactions to Juchiteco insurrection. The Oaxacan government, due to extraordinary continuity in state politics, continued to see the Juchitecos as barbarous rebels who represented a threat to order and progress. In large part due to this traditional image of the Juchitecos, the state government had historically depended on violent repression as the primary means by which to control the Juchitecos. Continuous state-sponsored repression, in turn, justified the Juchitecos utilization of violence against the state. Ultimately, peaceful negotiations between the Juchitecos and the state government became impossible without federal intervention. The Chegomista Rebellion conformed to this pattern: neither the Juchitecos nor the state government were willing to negotiate peacefully until the arrival of a federal peace commission.

The federal intervention in Juchitán during the Revolution also had an ambivalent effect on the direction of the Chegomista Rebellion. While the presence of the federal government in Juchitán made non-violent negotiation possible, it also created the opportunity for sustained Juchiteco rebellion. The Oaxacan government saw federal intervention as a violation of state sovereignty, which resulted in a conflict that paralyzed the state's repressive apparatus. As a result, the Chegomistas persisted in a state of rebellion for several months following the initial revolt. Surviving the assassination of their leader, the Chegomistas were, at the end of 1911, the largest armed rebellion in Mexico behind Zapatismo.

Stemming from a presidential succession crisis and Porfirio Díaz's interview with James Creelman in which he invited political opposition, liberal landowner Francisco Madero and the Anti-Reelectionist Party became a real threat to Díaz's power in 1910. As a result, Díaz outlawed party meetings and jailed Madero shortly before the presidential election.

Announced in late September, Porfirio Díaz won the *election in a landslide. Released*, but defeated by electoral fraud, Madero crossed the border into the United States and announced the *Plan de San Luis Potosí.* The plan denounced Díaz and named Madero provisional president. While the Plan de San Luis only vaguely addressed social questions, it explicitly called for an armed uprising at precisely 6 p.m. on November 20, 1910. Madero's shift from official to violent opposition shifted the thrust of the Revolution from town to country, where the rural population used the opportunity to bring down existing local power structures. On May 10, 1911 *maderista* forces led by Pascual Orozco and Francisco Villa, took Ciudad Juárez in northern Mexico. Two weeks later Porfirio Díaz resigned as President of the Republic.[117]

In Oaxaca various villages supported the Revolution by expelling state officials in short, powerful revolts. Villagers took control of the western half of the state through these "jaqueries," making the state ungovernable. On May 2 porfirista governor Emilio Pimentel resigned from his post hoping to stem the tide of rebellion. Attempting to appease the popular sector without fully relinquishing his regime, Porfirio Díaz named his nephew, Félix Díaz (son of Chato), as interim governor. The move failed to slow the popular revolution in Oaxaca. In June, with rebel forces moving in on the capital and his uncle out as president, Félix Díaz resigned from his post. Within a week the state legislature elected recognized anti-reelectionist Heliodoro Díaz Quintas as the new interim governor and scheduled regular elections for July 30.[118]

The campaign for state governor was a contest between two familiar names from the nineteenth century. Félix Díaz represented the state's old guard and hoped to win the election on the basis of his name and his connections. Benito Juárez Maza, son of the

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[117] Freidrich Katz, *The Secret War in Mexico: Europe, the United States, and the Mexican Revolution* (Chicago, 1981), 32-35; David Brading, "Introduction," in Brading, ed., *Peasant and Caudillo in the Mexican Revolution* (Cambridge, 1980), 7; Knight, 77.

[118] Fransisco José Ruiz Cervantes, *La Revolución en Oaxaca: El movimiento de la Soberanía, 1915-1920* (Mexico, 1986), 137-41; Garner, *La Revolución*, 52-67.

Benemérito, was an anti-científico who hoped to win the election based on support from all opponents of the regime. For the anti-reelectionists, who had very little support in Oaxaca, Juárez Maza seemed to be the better choice. For Francisco Madero, however, the election in Oaxaca presented a particular problem: he disapproved of Díaz because of who he represented, he disliked Juárez Maza personally, and there was no viable anti-reelectionist alternative. Madero supported Juárez Maza throughout the campaign, but also entertained thoughts of a federal intervention in Oaxaca following the election. Juárez Maza won the election easily and took possession of the state's executive power on September 23, but with only suspicious approval from Madero.[119]

During his exile from Juchitán, José Gómez became a supporter of Francisco Madero and the anti-reelectionist cause. In the period leading up to the Madero Revolt, Gómez began corresponding with the brothers Emilio and Francisco Vázquez Gómez. Through them, Madero asked Gómez to return to Juchitán to assemble support for the struggle against Díaz. Gómez obliged and returned to Juchitán for the first time in several years.[120]

"Che" Gómez, as he was known in Juchitán, arrived in Juchitán in 1910, and immediately gained popular support. However, despite popular support for the revolutionary cause, Juchitán remained peaceful throughout the Madero Revolt because of its geographic isolation. The only connection between Juchitán and the state and national capitals ran through San Geronimo Ixtepec, where the federal army reviewed all correspondence. As a result, the federal forces used censorship to effectively cut Juchitán off from the Revolution.[121]

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[119] Peter V.N. Henderson, *Félix Díaz, the Porfirians, and the Mexican Revolution* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1981), 31-39; Ruiz Cervantes, 137-41.

[120] Henestrosa de Webster, 74-75.

[121] Macario Matus Gutiérrez, "La Revolución en Juchitán, Oaxaca," in *Mi pueblo durante la revolución, Vol. 2* (Mexico: INAH, 1985), 77-78.

Although the Juchitecos did not participate in the armed revolution, they did not simply support the status quo. Juchitán held municipal elections in December 1910, and even with the porfirista apparatus crumbling, the científico party of Juchitán rigged the election. The economic growth of the Porfiriato created a conservative class in Juchitán that supported the *científicos*. The north side of the village became identified as porfiristas, and enjoyed government support in the form of the 25th Battalion, stationed in the local Carlos Pacheco barracks. These members of the "red party," often associated with Tehuantepec, according to one Juchiteco, "made the rules."[122] However, the presence of Che Gómez combined with the deterioration of the regime to erode the red party's power base in Juchitán. With the balance of power thrown off by revolutionary activity in northern Mexico and the overwhelming support of the "unruly" Juchitecos behind Che Gómez, the people ordered a new election. Capturing ninety percent of the popular vote, Gómez took office as the municipal president on the first of May. Without bloodshed, by the time the Madero Revolt had ended, the Juchitecos had reasserted their claim to autonomy with a popular election.[123]

The leadership of Che Gómez resulted from his understanding of the national political situation and his appeal to popular sentiments. Essentially, Gómez arrived in Juchitán as an outside agitator, and one with a reputation as a socialist. His ability to immediately gain popular support in Juchitán was not the result of his personal ties nor his charismatic leadership, but rather his perception. Gómez understood that the state's monopoly of the tools of repression had been broken, and that the balance of forces in the countryside was shifting. When the Juchitecos recognized that the era of repression and exile had ended, they believed that they could successfully reassert their local interests, just as they had done throughout history. In Sidney Tarrow's terms, by understanding the

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[122] Ibid., 92.

[123] Henestrosa de Webster, 75; de la Cruz, 256.

Although the Juchitecos did not participate in the [illegible] revolution, they did not simply support the status quo. Juchitán held municipal elections in December 1910, and even with the porfirista apparatus crumbling, the científico party of Juchitán rigged the election. The economic growth of the Porfiriato created a conservative class in Juchitán that supported the científicos. The north side of the village became identified as porfiristas, and enjoyed government support in the form of the 25th Battalion, stationed in the local Carlos Pacheco barracks. These members of the "red party," often associated with Tehuantepec, according to one Juchiteco, "made the rules."[142] However, the presence of Che Gómez combined with the deterioration of the regime to erode the red party's power base in Juchitán. With the balance of power thrown off by revolutionary activity in northern Mexico and the overwhelming support of the "unruly" Juchitecos behind Che Gómez, the people ordered a new election. Capturing ninety percent of the popular vote, Gómez took office as the municipal president on the first of May. Without bloodshed, by the time the Madero Revolt had ended, the Juchitecos had reasserted their claim to autonomy with a popular election.[143]

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[142] Ibid., 92.

[143] Henestrosa de Webster, [illegible] la Casa, [illegible].

political environment, Che Gómez provided "incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting the expectations for success or failure."[124] The impositions of the Porfirian government had never been acceptable, so when the Juchitecos learned that the state's repressive capacity had diminished, they rejected these impositions, first with the vote and later with violence.

Che Gómez also appealed to local interests to obtain support from the Juchitecos. During the Porfiriato, Gómez gained popularity as a lawyer by defending the rights of Juchitecos, and later won a municipal election by proposing to return alienated salt flats to Juchitán.[125] Although the details of Gómez's campaign for Municipal President in 1911 are not clear, it is clear that the Juchitecos believed that Gómez represented local interests. The Juchitecos supported Gómez with the idea that he would defend their land and restore their salt resources.[126]

Representative of many lower level elites in Porfirian Mexico, Che Gómez was unhappy with the halted social mobility he experienced at his position in La Paz. Clearly dissatisfied with his job, Gómez repeatedly petitioned the federal government for reassignment, only to be repeatedly rebuffed by Ministerio de Hacienda, José Ives Limantour. Limantour, in fact, refused "to enter discussions of any nature" with Gómez.[127] As a result, Gómez supported Francisco Madero and the Anti-Reelectionist Party in 1910. Gómez's appeals to popular sentiments in Juchitán were an attempt by Gómez to secure himself a piece of the Revolution. It is likely that Gómez believed, as did many, that Madero's revolution would allow a redistribution of land.

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[124] Sidney Tarrow, *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 85.

[125] de la Cruz, 249.

[126] Matus,

[127] de la Cruz, 255.

The torrent of popular support for the Madero *Revolt produced* various, *often* competing visions of the Mexican Revolution. In the summer of *1911*, the antagonistic ideals of the Juchitecos, the state government, and the federal government converged in Juchitán. Through their election of Che Gómez the Juchitecos officially supported an ideal of economic and political autonomy: the recuperation of the salt flats expropriated by the liberal government, the restitution of communal lands, and the restoration of municipal autonomy through local control of the *jefaturas políticas*. The latter issue remained unresolved, even after municipal elections, as *porfirista* Carlos Rodriguez stayed in office as jefe político, and could be removed legally only by the state government. Resolution of this particular issue resulted in escalating tensions that reached a national level in 1911.

The state government's reaction to the formation of the Chegomista movement displayed a similar correlation of economic interests and political principle. The state could not allow the Juchitecos to control the position of jefe político because the Juchitecos would elect somebody who would accommodate local interests. In the case of Che Gómez this included the protection of land and the requisition of salt flats. Considering the heavy foreign investment on the Isthmus, the state government could not allow Juchiteco self-determination. Politically, to acquiesce to the demands of a group with a reputation as rebels, who had mobilized against the government numerous times in the past, would have encouraged further disorder at a time when the state desperately wanted to maintain peace. Instead, the state attempted to suppress and subjugate the Chegomistas in order to set an example for potential rebels elsewhere, and for potential Juchiteco rebels of the future.

Although neither could permit Juchitán to exist outside of government authority, the "revolutionary" visions of Madero and the Oaxacan government conflicted greatly. In the aftermath of the Revolution, Madero sought moderate reform centered around the federal government, while Oaxacan politicians looked to centralize the state government and protect the tradition of state sovereignty. The formation of the Chegomista movement in the face

of these competing views brought the conflict to a head after a summer of actions, counteractions, and escalating tensions.[128]

As the dust settled and the new "revolutionary" regime began to stabilize, the state government looked to continue past methods of control by imposing a jefe político in Juchitán. Hearing rumors of the state's plan to impose either Francisco León, Che Gómez's "irreconcilable enemy," or Martín Meléndez, a elite, the Juchitecos came together to defend their autonomy. On June 20 the people of Juchitán, not including Che Gómez, sent a telegram to interim governor Díaz Quintas expressing their desires and issuing an ultimatum to the state:

> The people of Juchitán know perfectly the characters alluded to, and are indignant against the proceeding, if the Government wishes to honor the promise of placing authorities according to the will of the people, it would do well to name impartial people who will consult public opinion ... the truth is found in the people. We beg you to find an effective way of avoiding unrest. False information could cause unfortunate consequences.[129]

This telegram marked the beginning of the Chegomista movement; a movement of the people of Juchitán which basically gave the government an ultimatum: respect the will of the people, or the people will rebel. The following day Che Gómez outlined the Juchiteco vision of the Mexican Revolution to Governor Díaz Quintas, and also solidified his position as its leader:

> I will consider just any movement within the revolutionary movement which restores the sovereignty of the people. I consider appropriate the opportunity for creating a strong government supported by sovereign people, if the present government intends to maintain past impositions, then there will definitely be serious difficulties ... it would be best for you to respect the people's movement within the system, given the present circumstances to go against the well-directed will of the people today is the equivalent of considering the revolution unfinished.[130]

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[128] de la Cruz, 257-58.

[129] The people of Juchitán to Gobernador del Estado, Oaxaca, 20 June 1911, *Documentos del archivo José F. Gómez* (hereafter DAJFG), (Juchitán: H. Ayuntamiento Popular de Juchitán, 1988), 7.

[130] José F. Gómez to Heliodoro Díaz Quintas, Oaxaca, 21 June 1911, DAJFG, 8-9.

The sovereignty of the village, for the Juchitecos, was the only way to ensure the protection of their way of life.

Following the initial protests of the chegomistas, Díaz Quintas responded to Gómez by ordering him to obey his immediate superior, the jefe político Carlos Rodriguez. The Juchitecos reacted by forming a "preventative" police force, armed mostly with machetes. Gómez, a lawyer, defended the action by pointing out that such a police force was the province of the popularly-elected *ayuntamiento*, and could not be obstructed by the state or federal government, according to the Constitution. Moreover, in direct response to the governor, Che Gómez issued a threat aimed to force the state's hand, writing that "if tolerance of the Jefe continues, for my own good I will take the consequential steps to give you the head of the serpent ... There is no compromise: either you support me or the jefe político and his followers. I hope for an immediate solution ... To be or not to be."[131] Gómez left no room for negotiation or compromise, and neither would the state government. With the escalation of tensions, the state set into motion a plan to repress the Juchitecos.[132]

The state government never intended to bargain with the chegomistas. As soon as tensions mounted Díaz Quintas turned to Francisco León to bring an end to troubles in Juchitán, and immediately named him jefe político. León had long been disliked in Juchitán stemming from his harassment of village lands and his role in the brutal repression of Juchiteco rebels in 1881. Gómez, whose family feuded with León's, referred to Francisco as the "Coronel of one hundred battles and a virgin sword."[133] News of his imposition reached Juchitán almost immediately and resulted in a massive demonstration

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[131] Gómez to Díaz Quintas, Oaxaca, 26 June 1911, DAJFG, 15-17.

[132] de la Cruz, 258-59.

[133] Gómez to Díaz Quintas, Oaxaca, 22 June 1911, DAJFG, 10.

that drew the attention of the federal government, and *opened a second level of conflict,* between the state and the federal government.[134]

The federal government heard of the escalating conflict in Juchitán, and against the will of the state government, got involved in the affair. The federal government, as it did during the Meléndez Rebellions, took a much more conciliatory stance toward the Juchitecos, and in late June interim president Francisco León de la Barra invited Che Gómez to the capital to hear his side of the story. Subsequently, Gómez applied to the state for money to travel to Mexico City. Resenting the federal interference, Díaz Quintas denied Gómez's request for 500 pesos. A few days later a military detachment arrived in Oaxaca under General Gabriel Gavira to investigate the conflict. The state government saw this as a direct violation of their autonomy and did all that it could to obstruct the investigation. Ultimately, Gavira suggested to the governor that, in the name of peace and order, he accept the resignation of Carlos Rodriguez as jefe político and replace him with Che Gómez or leave the position vacant. The state ignored the general's suggestion and looked to solve its own problems in a distinctly less conciliatory fashion.[135]

Following the federal intervention the state went ahead with its plan to "restore peace" in Juchitán by sending "Pancho" León, "not as jefe político but as a private citizen." The governor sent León to Juchitán with the recommendation and the power to use the force of the federal military zone, and publicly announced his expected arrival in Juchitán for July 10.[136] On the morning of the tenth a group of Juchitecos invaded the local jefatura política and stole all existing arms. Then, anticipating León's arrival, "ninety percent of the population, crowded together" at the train station "with the intention of lynching the intruder."[137] Having been informed of the Juchitecos' plan in San Geronimo Ixtepec,

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[134] de la Cruz, 259-60.

[135] Ibid., 260-61.

[136] Carlos Marín to José P. del Pino, Ixtaltepec, 22 June 1911, DAJFG, 11-12.

[137] Matus, 87.

León did not arrive on the train, and the crowd dispersed. *Although no shots were fired,* this marked the initial armed conflict between the two sides. When questioned about the incident by federal authorities, Díaz Quintas denied that anything had happened.[138]

The next couple of months were quite peaceful as the Juchitecos and the state reached an uncomfortable stalemate, and the presence of the federal army, led by maderista generals, balanced the state politically. On September 23, however, Benito Juárez Maza took his place as the governor of Oaxaca and dramatically changed the complexion of the entire conflict. Juárez Maza inherited his father's desire for a strong central government, his intolerance of disorder, and undoubtedly his hatred of Juchitecos. While campaigning for governor Juárez Maza promised that the first action he would take would be to abolish the jefaturas políticas so that "all villages will have direct communication with the capital." He also promised that he would immediately punish Che Gómez for instigating the disorder.[139] The political platform of Benito Juárez Maza, like that of his father, directly opposed Juchiteco notions of autonomy and the sovereign village.

Governor Juárez Maza, as he promised, took immediate action in the matter by naming Enrique León jefe político of Juchitán. When confronted with a petition from Juchitecos seeking to avoid unrest, Juárez Maza's answer was, in the opinion of the Juchitecos, "categorical, brutal, excessively dictatorial, [and] capricious: 'I am completely unable to acquiesce to your demands; the jefe político is named and has to begin his duties.'" When they then turned to congress they found Díaz Quintas as "slippery" as Juárez Maza, but decidedly more "diabolical:" "The petition of the people of Juchitán was not taken into consideration. The petitioners are formed by reckless mobs instigated by bandits and if they want blood they will get blood!"[140] This direct violation of the public

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[138] de la Cruz, 260-62; Matus, 87.

[139] Marín to del Pino, 22 June 1911, DAJFG, 11-12.

[140] Various juchitecos in Mexico City to Presidente de la Republica, Mexico, 8 Nov. 1911, AACG, 58.

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[138] de la Cruz, 264-65; [illegible]

[139] Marín to del Pino, 22 June 1911, [illegible]

[140] Various juchitecos in Mexico City to Presidente de la República, Mexico, 8 Nov. 1911, AACG, 58.

will made it clear that the new governor planned to forcibly subjugate the Juchitecos. One chegomista recalled that "just the name 'León' provoked the repudiation of the Juchiteco people;"[141] a fact that could not have been lost on Juárez Maza.

The escalating confrontation over who appointed the jefe político of Juchitán was a conflict between two contradictory ideals: state sovereignty and village autonomy. A compromise between Juchitán and the state on control of that office would necessarily compromise the ideals of both sides. Consequently, this emerging conflict, which made Oaxaca "the most problematic area in Mexico" according to the British consul,[142] had to have a winner and a loser. A state-imposed jefe político in Juchitán would breach local autonomy, while a popularly-elected jefe político would circumvent the state's sovereignty over the people of Oaxaca. This situation was far from new in Juchitán and the actions of both sides were informed by past experiences. As a result, each side matched the aggressive and recalcitrant attitude of the other, making certain a violent conclusion.

The Chegomista Rebellion:

By late October Juárez Maza made the final decision to send Enrique León to Juchitán to take his post as jefe político, and thus bring the conflict to a head. Essentially León was an instrument with which to force the Juchitecos' hand and to give the state a viable excuse to subjugate Juchitán. As municipal president, the jefatura política was the charge of Che Gómez, and consequently it was his duty to turn the office over to León. Receiving news of León's anticipated arrival in Juchitán, on the first of November Gómez telegrammed both León and Díaz Quintas, warning them that to turn over the position would be an "inexcusable mistake" that would result in "grave consequences that would

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[141] Matus, 91.

[142] Garner, *La Revolución*.

will made it clear that the new governor would not [illegible] against the Juchitecos. One chegomista recalled that "just the name León [illegible] of the [illegible] of the Juchiteco people;"[141] a fact that could not have been lost on Juárez Maza.

The escalating confrontation that was emerging over the jefe político of Juchitán was a conflict between two contradictory views: state sovereignty and village autonomy. A compromise between Juchitán and the state on the appointment of that office would necessarily compromise the ideals of both sides. Consequently, this emerging conflict, which made Oaxaca "the most problematic area in Mexico" according to the British consul,[142] had to have a winner and a loser. A state-imposed jefe político in Juchitán would breach local autonomy, while a popularly-elected jefe político would circumvent the state's sovereignty over the people of Oaxaca. This situation was far from new to Juchitán and the actions of both sides were informed by past experiences. As a result, each side matched the aggressive and recalcitrant attitude of the other, making certain a violent conclusion.

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[141] Maza, 91.

[142] Garner, La Revolución [illegible]

hurt the entire country."[143] Fully aware of the consequences, Díaz Quintas ordered León to continue.[144]

The following day Enrique León arrived in Juchitán with 250 federal reinforcements from San Gerónimo to join the 25th Battalion, stationed in the local barracks. About five hundred in number, the federal forces found themselves surrounded by about three thousand Juchitecos almost immediately upon entering the village. From his refuge in the barracks, León demanded that Gómez turn over the jefatura and dissolve his massive group of followers.[145] Gómez rebuffed his demands on both accounts, claiming (probably accurately) that he was not capable of dispersing the crowd, and thus to hand over the jefatura would result in violence.[146] Shortly thereafter, open hostilities began.

Although the actual commencement of open fire is unclear, it is certain that for the next three days federal forces and the chegomistas fought continuously, with the army confined in the barracks and the Juchitecos surrounding them. Chegomista forces constantly besieged the barracks, but being armed with machetes, sticks, slingshots, spears, and antiquated "wait a minute" rifles, they could not overwhelm federal forces. On the third day of fighting a federal contingent of about fifty cavalrymen attempted to penetrate Juchitán and give ammunition to the soldiers confined to the barracks. As the cavalry entered the village from the north, the chegomistas slaughtered them in the barrio of Cheguigo, killing almost the entire unit and supplying themselves with arms, ammunition, and horses. Convinced that they could not subdue Juchitán with rifles, the next day the federal army sent in from Orizaba a large unit of reinforcements with heavy artillery. The cannons of the artillery created a "thunder that nobody had ever heard," and forced the

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[143] Gómez to Enrique León, Juchitán, 1 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 17-18.

[144] Díaz Quintas to León, Juchitán, 1 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 18-19.

[145] León to Gómez, Juchitán, 2 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 19.

[146] Gómez to León, Juchitán, 2 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 20.

chegomistas from Juchitán. One participant in the battle made the symbolic analogy that the cannon was "unknown to [the Juchitecos] until now ... as the horse was unknown to the valiant soldiers of Moctezuma when the army of Hernán Cortés appeared, for they imagined that the horse and rider were one; [the chegomistas] evacuated the village and left for the mountains."[147] By the end of November 5, the federal forces took control of the village, and began burning the dead bodies and the houses of the "hostile natives ... with a view to furnish a warning and as a punishment." All tolled, several hundred died in the fighting, including a Spaniard and the district judge in the local hotel, and the local battalion's paymaster and medic, whom the rebels tortured "horribly."[148]

While more federal reinforcements arrived to fortify the village, the chegomistas, now about five thousand strong, took up positions in the countryside and remained in "a state of armed hostility."[149] Meanwhile the dispute between the federal and state government resurfaced. Governor Juárez Maza wanted to use the massive force accumulated in Juchitán to thoroughly subjugate the battered chegomistas. Madero, on the other hand, hoped to negotiate and establish relations between the rebels and the central government. The conflict paralyzed federal forces in Juchitán and drove an even deeper wedge between Oaxaca and the national government. The indecision caused by this conflict gave the chegomistas the necessary breathing room to take control of the countryside. The new jefe político complained of rebels roving around Juchitán "in search of plunder, taking shots, and without being pursued by the *federales*, perhaps due to lack

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[147] Matus, 81, 90.

[148] Haskell, Salina Cruz, 6, 8, 11 Nov. 1911, SD 812.00/2497, 2498, 2528; Henry Lane Wilson, Mexico City, 20 Feb. 1912, 812.00/2889; Pablo Pineda to León, Juchitán, 24 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 39-40; León to Díaz Quintas, 5 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 21-22; Augustín A. Valdes to León, Juchitán, 25 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 44; Alfonso Fransisco Ramirez, *Historia de la Revolución Mexicana en Oaxaca* (Mexico: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1970), 38-40; Knight, 373-78.

[149] Haskell, Salina Cruz, 11 Nov. 1911, SD 812.00/2528.

of instructions."[150] Government paralysis gave the chegomistas relative freedom in the countryside.[151]

Che Gómez established his main barracks within the jurisdiction of Juchitán at a point called Guela Beñe, where the rebellion began to conform to the traditions established by a century of violent conflict. From his barracks Gómez blamed the rebellion on the government for not respecting popular consent in the election of local officials, expressed fears of isthmeño villagers losing their lands to Americans, and ultimately, following in the footsteps of Meléndez, Binu Gada, and Mexu Chele, he addressed the vital need for the Isthmus to secede from Oaxaca and form its own entity. At Guela Beñe Che Gómez formulated the slogan of the chegomistas: "While we depend on Oaxaca, we are lost."[152]

Following the initial revolt the Juchitecos demonstrated an understanding of their position in history. They called upon the traditions of place-specific identity and collective violence to explain their participation in the rebellion. For the Juchitecos, the imposition of outside authorities was an affront to their collective, local identity. Consequently, the Chegomistas basically asked that Juchitán be governed by Juchitecos, free of outside influence: "the government wanted an outsider to occupy the position of jefe político and 'Ché Gómez' asked that it be one of our people, so that would be of our blood."[153] The Juchiteco identity signified more to the people of Juchitán than a shared geographic location; it was a shared class and ethnicity. As a result, the Juchiteco identity took on heightened significance as shared blood, ancestry, and race.

Calling upon their local history, the Juchitecos also understood themselves to be inheritors of a tradition of violence. To be of the Juchiteco "race" was to be heir to a legacy

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[150] León to Díaz Quintas, 5 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 21-22.

[151] Wilson, Mexico City, 20 Feb. 1912, SD 812.00/2889; Leon Porsch, Tapachula, 5 Mar. 1912, SD 812.00/3446.

[152] Ramirez, 39-40.

[153] Matus, 85.

and of valiant warriors, who fought for independence and democracy. The chegomistas saw themselves as an extension of that tradition, as evidenced by a petition presented to President Madero in the wake of the revolt. This petition demonstrates where Juchitecos conceived themselves in a long history of collective violence:

> A virile people, that, on many occasions during the French Intervention demonstrated itself to be a dignified descendant of our heroic ancestors; a people harassed for thirty years, humiliated by the brutal hand of local authorities, has entered into an armed conflict on the impulse of a just ambition and a just right, that is the village of Juchitán ... The people did not want to accept the imposition, and now do not want to depend on the government of Oaxaca ... to resist imposition, they confront danger with indifference; to obtain their independence, they will spurn their lives ... we do not want more blood, because we want to preserve our race; because we do not want by the whims or ambitions of certain individuals, to be an exterminated race that, in dangerous times for the nation, could lend a brave contingent of the bold valor of its sons ... We want, since we live in full democracy, the petition of the people to be agreed to; their just ambitions to be agreed to, for the voice of the people to be heard.[154]

The chegomistas were first and foremost Juchitecos, and as such, in the eyes of the rebels, a "break with tradition" such as the imposition attempted by Juárez Maza had to be met with violence.

The distinct identity of the chegomistas produced nearly unanimous participation from the people of Juchitán, but limited the scope of the rebellion. Once forced into the countryside, the Juchitecos could not rally additional support for the rebellion. Immediately following the initial revolt, the United States consul at Salina Cruz noted that "one thing that will militate against a spread of this disorder is the fact that the tribes of Indians are not altogether in sympathy with each other."[155] In fact, while in the countryside the chegomistas attempted to forcibly recruit supporters for the rebellion, but met with a great deal of resistance. Neighboring villages hated and feared the Juchitecos more than they feared the state, and turned to the government for support against the recruitment tactics of the chegomistas. Specifically, they appealed to the state for protection

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[154] Juchitecos to Presidente de la Republica, Mexico, 8 Nov. 1911, AACG, 58-60.

[155] Haskell, Salina Cruz, 8 Nov. 1911, SD 812.00/2498.

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> A virile people, that, [illegible] during the French Intervention demonstrated [illegible] descendant of our heroic ancestors; a people harassed for [illegible] the brutal hand of local authorities, has entered [illegible] only from the impulse of a just ambition and a just right [illegible] . . . The people did not want to accept [illegible] did not want to depend on the government of Oaxaca [illegible] they confront danger with indifference, [illegible] they will spurn their lives . . . we do not want more blood, because we want to preserve our race; because we do not want by the whims [illegible] of certain individuals, to be an exterminated race that, in dangerous times for the nation, could lend a brave contingent of the [illegible] . . . We want, since we live in full democracy, the petitions of the people to be agreed to, their just ambitions to be agreed to, for the voice of the people to be heard.[144]

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[144] Juchitecos to the [illegible], 1911, [illegible], 58-60

[145] Haskell, Salina Cruz, 8 Nov. 1911, SD [illegible].

and arms in order to assist in persecuting the rebels. In at least one village, Rincón Antonio, the conflict resulted in casualties.[156]

As the Juchitecos threatened to separate from Oaxaca, the dispute between Oaxaca and the federal government escalated over how to reestablish control on the Isthmus. In mid-November General Gabriel Gavira arrived in Juchitán, commissioned by the federal government to negotiate peace with the chegomistas. As negotiations between Gómez and Gavira began, Oaxaca threatened to secede from the Republic because of the direct violation of the state's sovereignty. General Gavira, under direct orders of President Madero, offered the rebels amnesty and the right to be consulted in the choice of a jefe político. He even went as far as to blame the conflict on the authoritarianism of Juárez Maza. As a sort of compromise, Madero proposed that General Candido Aguilar occupy the position of jefe político on an interim basis and with the approval of the people of Juchitán. The federal government, in effect, undermined the sovereignty of the state, and as a result peace seemed eminent.[157]

Meanwhile, Governor Juárez Maza moved to obstruct the negotiations of the federal government in order to protect the sovereignty of the state. Juárez Maza told Enrique León that Gavira had no power over affairs of the state, and commanded León not to turn over the jefatura unless ordered to do so by the state government. In addition, while the federal government negotiated, the state purged Juchitán of its officials and named científico Pablo Pineda, brother of Rosendo Pineda, as municipal president in place of Che Gómez. In the name of state sovereignty, Juárez Maza did all that he could to obstruct federal negotiations.[158]

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[156] Díaz Quintas to León, San Gerónimo, 13, 16 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 24-26; León to Benito Juárez, Oaxaca, 17 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 27.

[157] Juárez to León, Juchitán, 17, 18 Nov. 1911; León to Juárez, Oaxaca, 18 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 26, 28-29; Haskell, Salina Cruz, 20 Nov. 1911, SD 812.00/2572; Wilson, Mexico City, 20 Feb. 1912, SD 812.00/2889; de la Cruz, 262.

[158] Juárez to León, Juchitán, 18, 20, 23, 24 Nov. 1911, DAJFG, 27-28, 33, 36, 38.

At the same time, clandestinely, Juárez Maza *himself entered negotiations with* Che Gómez. In a letter delivered to Gómez at Guela Beñe by Braulio Toledo, Juárez Maza proposed to pardon Gómez and his followers if he agreed to join Juárez Maza in supporting the presidential coup of Bernardo Reyes. Like his father, Juárez Maza understood that, though dangerous, the Juchitecos made better allies in war than enemies. Their support during the French Intervention had been invaluable. Che Gómez, on the other hand, like his predecessors, knew better than to trust the government of Oaxaca. The state government rolled back the reforms promised the Juchitecos for their support against the French. Moreover the precedent did exist for a successful treaty with the federal government, which also had offered amnesty to the rebels. Che Gómez refused Juárez Maza's offer and prepared to leave for Mexico City to negotiate personally with President Madero. Guaranteed a safe passage to the capital by the president, Gómez took Juárez Maza's letter with him.[159]

The governor set into motion a plan to assassinate Che Gómez in order to eliminate proof of the conspiracy. Juárez Maza explicitly ordered all authorities along the route to the capital to apprehend Gómez, under the pretense of bringing him to justice in the military courts of San Gerónimo Ixtepec. Gómez, who traveled with a entourage for his protection, feared having to travel through the Isthmus villages. On December 4, in the village of Rincón Antonio, which had previously petitioned the state for arms to help persecute the chegomistas, the municipal president and a group of "thugs" arrested Gómez and his escort.[160] The following day, claiming to be taking the prisoners to San Gerónimo to be judged, the group of men took the Juchitecos to the nearby *Ranchería de Barrancón* and killed them. Displaying their feelings toward the rebel leader, the assassins, led by Tomás

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[159] *Causa contra Tomás Carballo (a) Matanche* (Juchitán: H. Ayuntamiento Popular de Juchitán, 1983), 15; de la Cruz.

[160] Díaz Quintas to León, Juchitán; León to Presidente Municipal, San Gerónimo; León to Presidente Municipal, Petapa; León to Presidente Municipal, Matías Romero; León to Josué A. Esteva, Matías Romero; Esteva to León; Catarino Abad to León; Venturo Cano to León, 4 Dec. 1911, DAJFG, 55-61.

Carballo (known as "Matanche"), left 52 holes in the body of Che Gómez. Beyond covering up his conspiracy, undoubtedly Juárez Maza had Gómez assassinated to protect the state's sovereignty, and to warn potential rebels that disorder would not be tolerated.[161]

Juárez Maza's application of the *Ley Fuga* changed the complexion of the entire situation. The death of Che Gómez diffused the state's conflict with the central government by removing the source of the problem. The state officially claimed that Gómez "was assassinated by the relations of the people whom he had injured" at Rincón Antonio shortly before the incident.[162] Knowing the reputation of the Juchitecos, Madero apparently believed this version and simply offered Gómez's widow 150,000 pesos in compensation. The death of Che Gómez also transformed the rebellion itself. The chegomistas had been close to accepting government offers of amnesty before the assassination, and now, with their leader dead, the Juchitecos began to flood back into Juchitán.[163] The jefe político reported on January 12 that 2,671 rebels had presented themselves and returned to their homes, turning in about one hundred rifles.[164] The state congress roundly applauded Governor Juárez Maza for crushing the rebels and maintaining the sovereignty of the state.

However, motivated by the state's aggression toward them, roughly half of the chegomista forces remained in the interior mountains and the marshes of the Isthmus. Although not in a familiar manner, the rebellion continued, and at the end of the first full year of the Revolution the chegomistas were the second largest armed rebellion in Mexico.

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[161] Ramirez, 108; Knight, 377; *Causa contra Tomás Carballo*, 15.

[162] Wilson, Mexico City, 20 Feb. 1912, SD 812.00/2889.

[163] León to Díaz Quintas, Salina Cruz, 8, 9 Dec. 1911; León to Díaz Quintas, Tuxtepec, 11 Dec. 1911; León to Benito Juárez, Tehuacán, Puebla, 13 Dec. 1911; Benito Juárez to León, Juchitán, 15 Dec. 1911; León to Benito Juárez, Oaxaca, 16 Dec. 1911; León to Díaz Quintas, Oaxaca, 17, 18, 21 Dec. 1911; Díaz Quintas to León, 22 Dec. 1911; León to Díaz Quintas, Oaxaca, 5 Jan. 1912, DAJFG, 68, 71, 73, 76-80, 85.

[164] León to Díaz Quintas, Oaxaca, 12 Jan. 1912, DAJFG, 86.

The death of Che Gómez did not bring on a concerted Juchiteco insurrection, but rather led to a period of sporadic, small-scale activity under seemingly disjointed leadership.[165]

In March 1912, with the *Orizquista* Rebellion intensifying in northern Mexico and diverting federal military attention away from the Isthmus, the chegomistas came down from the mountains for the first time since the assassination of their leader. From March to July about two thousand chegomistas took active control of the country between Juchitán and Reforma, a village to the south in the state of Chiapas. The reappearance of the chegomistas in mass resulted from the dispersal of federal forces on the Isthmus and an illicit arms trade with Guatemala. The shipment of arms to southern Mexico from Guatemala took place through the "*estero* system." The pacific coast of between Guatemala and Oaxaca was full of esteros (lagoons) which rendered "patrol of the coast practically an impossibility." It was "generally understood" that before the November revolt, the Juchitecos "had received consignments by way of the 'esteros'"[166] In the last week of February, seven thousand rifles landed near Pijijipam, a station in Chiapas on the Pan-American Railroad. Clearly this was not an exclusive trade between Juchitán and Guatemala, but within a week the chegomistas reemerged with arms.[167]

On the first of March, the same day that Pascual Orozco initiated his rebel movement in Chihuahua, about two thousand chegomistas burned down six bridges on the Pan-American Railroad, and cut telegraph lines to the region, effectively severing all communications below Juchitán. For the next four months the chegomistas protected their zone outside of government control by burning bridges frequently and harassing the

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[165] Eusebio Ramirez, Niltepec, to León, Juchitán, 8 Dec. 1911; Presidente Municipal, Rincón Antonio, to León, 8 Dec. 1911; León to Díaz Quintas, Salina Cruz, 10 Dec. 1911; León to Presidente Municipal, Union Hidalgo, 11 Dec. 1911; León to Díaz Quintas, Tuxtepec, 11 Dec. 1911; Ventura J. Cano, Rincón Antonio, to León, 12 Dec. 1911; Presidente Municipal, Estación Reforma, to León, 20 Dec. 1911; Díaz Quintas to León, 25 Dec. 1911; León to Díaz Quintas, Oaxaca, 29 Dec. 1911; Díaz Quintas to León, 3, 6 Jan. 1912, DAJFG, 69-70, 72-74, 79-81, 83, 85; Campbell, 62.

[166] Porsch, Tapachula, 23 Feb. 1912, SD 812.00/3050.

[167] Porsch, Tapachula, 23 Feb. 1912, SD 812.00/2860, 3050.

railroad almost daily. United States Ambassador Henry Lane Wilson lamented "intermittent and dangerous outbreaks, the existence of large bands of brigands and a general insecurity of life" on the Isthmus.[168] The federal government sent troops, but they could not subdue the Juchitecos, who utilized guerrilla tactics to keep federal forces at bay. The United States consul at Salina Cruz observed that "the road is repaired, and then promptly a band tears up some hundred yards or so and returns ... keeping the Federal soldiers from approaching them on the railroad, or rather augmentation of the Federal force against them by way of the railroad."[169] In this manner the federal army and the chegomistas reached a stalemate; federal reinforcements secured the village of Juchitán and the rebels controlled the countryside.[170]

In the absence of federal forces the chegomistas menaced large landholdings of the interior, and even burned and destroyed the town of Reforma. The presence of the chegomistas, apparently led by Felipe López, and instrumental figure in the November revolt, scared interior land owners. Moreover, with zapatistas and orozquistas fighting against the government in Morelos and Chihuahua, respectively, Isthmus landowners began to fear that the chegomistas would attach themselves to a larger movement. An American on the interior claimed that the Juchitecos had already declared for both Zapata and Orozco. By May landowners, especially Americans, began to abandon the Isthmus in mass.[171]

The beginning of planting season combined with waning revolutionary activity in the north to bring the Chegomista Rebellion to a close. In northern Mexico the federal army, under Victoriano Huerta, routed orozquista rebels, and by June the rebellion ceased

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[168] Wilson, Mexico City, 20 Mar. 1912, SD 812.00/3365.

[169] Haskell, Salina Cruz, 17 Apr. 1912, SD 812.00/3729.

[170] Haskell, Salina Cruz, 4, 21 Mar., 2 Apr., 2 May 1912, SD 812.00/3036, 3476, 3568, 3789; Porsch, Tapachula, 4 Mar. 1912, SD 812.00/3015.

[171] Haskell, Salina Cruz, 21 Mar., 21 May 1912, SD 812.00/3476, 4093; Wilson, Mexico City, 6 May 1912, SD 812.00/3877.

to be a threat. The army's success in the north "directly and immediately" effected "the attitude and bearing of the population on the Isthmus."[172] The stability of the government no longer seemed so uncertain. Perhaps more important "in causing the people to become more pacific" was "the necessity of getting crops planted and cultivated." In mid-July the U.S. consul celebrated that "the indians of Juchitán have quieted down, raiding has stopped, and the great majority of country people are devoting themselves to putting in their crops."[173] Ultimately, the ability of the Juchitecos to maintain their land base undercut the rebellion. When planting season came, the Juchitecos had fields to return to and plant. The reestablishment of federal control in the north also signified that more military attention would be sent south. Consequently, in July of 1912, the chegomistas returned to Juchitán, bringing the rebellion to a close.

Owing to the state government's diminished governing capacity, the Juchitecos found their relations with the state much improved following the violent phase of the rebellion. Guerrilla warfare in the Sierra Juárez threatened the capital and diverted the state's military power, while the period of instability on the Isthmus had left the state nearly broke. In August 1912, hacendado and pofirista Miguel Bolaños Cacho became the new governor following the mysterious death of Benito Juárez Maza in April.[174] However, the state government simply lacked the ability to effectively govern Juchitán and, consequently, the Juchitecos experienced a large degree of freedom. As a sign of that political freedom, Juchitán elected Adolfo Gurrión as district representative on September 13. Gurrión used this freedom and his office to attack the remaining pofiristas in the state legislature, and to address the need of the Isthmus to separate from the state of Oaxaca. On the latter issue, Gurrión warned congress that "the Isthmus has not waited nor will ever wait for anything"

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[172] Haskell, Salina Cruz, 28 June 1912, SD 812.00/4411.

[173] Claude Guyaut, Salina Cruz, 19 July 1912, SD 812.00/4503.

[174] Ruiz Cervantes, 244, 246.

from the state government.[175] In the unstable environment that followed the Chegomista Rebellion these statements were accepted, but repression followed the next year when the Porfirian Order once again came to power.

In February 1913 General Victoriano Huerta named himself President of Mexico following the assassination of Francisco Madero and Pino Suarez. In Oaxaca, with active support from Bolaños Cacho and the old porfiristas, Huerta began to tighten the screws on political opponents. In Juchitán, the Huerta regime forcibly recruited Juchitecos into the federal army. In the month of July alone, the government sent over five hundred Juchitecos to fight against rebels in the north. The Isthmus remained relatively quiet during this period until July, when former jefe político Alfonso Santibañez rebelled in Tehuantepec. Shortly thereafter, Adolfo Gurrión returned to Juchitán from Mexico City with the intention of aligning Juchiteco forces with Venustiano Carranza, in opposition to the Huerta regime. Accusing him of being involved in the uprising in Tehuantepec, local officials arrested Gurrión on August 17. Three days later, without a trial, local police killed Adolfo Gurrión. As Porfirio Díaz had done so effectively in the past, Huerta was able to dismantle Juchiteco rebellion before it started.

When civil war broke out in Mexico following the resignation of Huerta in July 1914, Juchiteco participation in the Revolution conformed to the traditions of separatism and conflict with the state. The Constitutionalists, led by brothers Venustiano and Jesus Carranza, appealed to these traditions to gain the political and military support of the Juchitecos. This alliance between the Juchitecos and the Constitutionalists marked the beginning of a shift in Juchiteco social protest from radical and violent to institutional. Although this alliance signified a dramatic break from strictly local forms of collective violence, it did not represent any break from the defense of local identity or local interests.

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[175] Sesion de Colegio Electoral de la Camara de Diputados, 11 Oct. 1912, AACG, 78-79.

The Constitutionalists initially wanted to secure the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and its railway in order to transfer troops and supplies between the Gulf and Pacific zones of operation. Led by Jesus Carranza, the Constitutionalists played on the relationship between the Isthmus and the state of Oaxaca to gain acceptance on the Isthmus. With the central valley already opposed to the presence of the Constitutionalists in Oaxaca, the Juchitecos saw *carrancismo* as a means by which they could secure autonomy from the government of Oaxaca. By conforming with the Juchitecos primary political objective, national-level political officials succeeded in gaining Juchiteco support where state-level officials had consistently failed.

Jesus Carranza found competing military forces in Juchitán and Tehuantepec when he arrived on the Isthmus in August 1914. Hoping to reach some sort of compromise by playing the two off of each other, Carranza recognized both forces. Carranza extended the Constitutionalist umbrella to cover both groups, accepted both into his army, and named Alfonso Santibañez, head of the Tehuano faction, as operations chief. However, this strategy forced Carranza to juggle leaders to avoid civil war on the Isthmus. By the end of the year, Carranza began to fear a Santibañez coup on the Isthmus, and moved to replace him with the stepson of Che Gómez, Mario Palacios. Santibañez heard the news and moved first, capturing Carranza and his staff. The Juchitecos who were captured were killed immediately, while Santibañez kept the First Chief's brother as a hostage. When Venustiano Carranza refused to negotiate, Santibañez executed Jesus, and fled to Oaxaca City to join the state government's *soberanista* movement.[176]

The assassination of Jesus Carranza was another incident in a long history of the state's violent repression of the Juchitecos. The incident further entrenched the tradition of state-village conflict and the vision of the Tehuano as an instrument of state-sponsored repression. For the Juchitecos, Jesus Carranza represented autonomy from the Oaxacan

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[176] Jorge Fernando Iturribarria, *Oaxaca en la Historia: de la época precolombiana a los tiempos actuales* (Mexico: Editorial "Benito Juárez" de Oaxaca, 1955), 330-31.

state. Che Gómez's widow and daughter traveled with Carranza, and Mario Palacios served on his staff. On the other hand, Santibañez represented the state government, which ultimately entailed repression. His staff included members of the León and Maqueo families. Furthermore, Santibañez had connections with the Oaxacan Sovereignty Movement, led by state officials, before and after the assassination. According to many sources, Santibañez assassinated Carranza on the orders of the soberanistas. Following the assassination, he became a military leader for the Sovereignty Movement until *felicistas* shot him to death in 1916.[177]

Juchitán continued to be a bastion of support for the Constitutionalists, even after the death of Jesus Carranza. For the remainder of the violent period of the Revolution, Carranza called upon the Juchitecos for military support. Four battalions of Juchiteco soldiers fought all over Mexico in support of Carranza, and later Alvaro Obregón. Obregón once commented that there was not one cemetery in Mexico that was not filled with the remains of at least one Juchiteco killed in the Revolution. It was Obregón's friendship with Juchiteco General Heliodoro Charis that helped to bring the century of rebellion to a close in Juchitán.[178]

Heliodoro Charis came to power in Juchitán following the Mexican Revolution and brought, for the first time, decades of political stability with the consent of a majority of the population. Charis' ability to rule with consent resulted from his peculiar combination of national and local political connections. On a national level Charis began as a political client of Obregón. He exchanged loyalty to Obregón for military support in ending the violence between Juchitán and Tehuantepec, and the financial resources to establish an agricultural colony on the Isthmus. Locally, the people of Juchitán respected Charis and his authority because of his personal ties to the community, and especially because they saw him as a

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[177] Ramirez, 211; Iturribarria, 330-31.

[178] Campbell, 76-78.

"real" Juchiteco. Charis lived in Juchitán all his life, he never attended public schools, he was illiterate, he did not speak good Spanish, and he did not fit in to so-called "civilized society." As far as the Juchitecos were concerned, they were being led by someone of shared "blood" and "ancestry." Eventually, Charis became a PRI politician, and thus institutionalized the "Juchitecan seed of revolt." Howard Campbell summarizes Charis as a *cacique* who "helped keep the Isthmus in check and amenable to national government policy in return for federally funded development programs, public works, and a degree of regional autonomy."[179] Ultimately, the strong Juchiteco identity and the tradition of conflict with the state, which had combined to fuel a century of separatist rebellion, also combined to transform the Juchitecos rebellious past into an "institutionalized revolution."[180]

The local and regional sense of what it meant to be a Juchiteco initiated, sustained, and ultimately, limited popular mobilization on the Isthmus. Conceiving their position in history as uncompromising defenders of their local integrity, the Juchitecos felt humiliated by the government's imposition of local authorities. Although their condition in regards to land and labor were good compared to many Mexican regions, juxtaposed with a long history of collective violence in defense of local autonomy, they viewed their position in Mexico as "a situation they need not, cannot, and ought not endure."[181] By shifting his opposition from formal to violent, Francisco Madero "let the tiger out of the cage," unleashing a torrent of popular rebellion in the countryside that, ultimately, broke the monopoly of repressive capacity held by the army, and opened the door for the Juchitecos to take their place in history alongside their "heroic ancestors."

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[179] Ibid., 81.

[180] Campbell, 78-79.

[181] Moore, 462.

The conflict between the state and the federal government following the Madero Revolt provided the opportunity for the chegomistas to persist in a state of armed rebellion for several months. The state government, instructed by years of disorder in Juchitán, carried a familiar, uncompromising attitude toward the Juchitecos, while the federal government, as it had historically, took a more conciliatory stance toward the rebels. This dispute over how to bring order to Juchitán kept the government from taking decisive action and created a sense of ambivalence among the chegomista rebels. The assassination of Che Gómez made this ambivalence clear. With the chegomistas on the verge of accepting federal offers of amnesty, the death of their leader simply expedited the process of demobilization for about half of the rebels. However, for the other half the assassination of Che Gómez underscored the state's wickedness and provided the impetus for remaining armed and hostile toward the state.

As they had for centuries prior, the Juchitecos fought during the early phase of the Mexican Revolution for cultural, political, and economic autonomy, which necessarily limited the rebellion in size and scope. Supported by illicit arms from Guatemala and intense rebel activity in northern Mexico, the chegomistas maintained an existence beyond the pale of government control, but found it impossible to integrate themselves into the larger revolution. Its distinct identity as Juchiteco isolated the Chegomista Rebellion both regionally and nationally. Juchiteco attempts to garner anything more than tacit support from surrounding villages met with stiff resistance, and when planting season began and the "revolutionary" government began to stabilize, the Juchitecos returned to their fields, ending the violent phase of the Chegomista Rebellion.

CONCLUSIONS

The persistence of the village of Juchitán from the pre-Columbian era to the eve of the Mexican Revolution produced a unified community marked by overlapping collective identities. Centuries of continuity fostered a distinct community formation that diminished horizontal cleavages within the village. Reduced social stratification produced a community in which the majority of the population shared similar social relations to each other, and to outsiders. Moreover, the limited impact of Spanish colonialism displaced Zapotec elites, eliminating the social forms which unified Zapotec ethnicity, and shifting ideas of ethnic identity to specific villages. Ultimately, class and ethnic identity overlapped with local identity resulting in a community capable of mobilizing a large percentage of its population in defense of their collective identities.

The government's attempts to integrate Juchitán into a new "modern" state following Independence represented a fundamental challenge to the collective Juchiteco identity. Over a period of centuries, the Juchitecos had developed a distinct place-specific identity based on social relations relatively free from outside influence. The state's proposed modernization programs essentially required a realignment of village social relations, and thus challenged the central feature of place-specific identity. More specifically, Mexico's modernization plans violated specific local interests that were inherently connected to the Juchiteco identity. All collective identities include a corresponding set of interests, and therefore the violation of a specific interest is also a violation of a specific identity. In a community with few cross cutting identities, such as Juchitán, the violation of a specific identity resulted in a nearly unanimous local mobilization in defense of the offended identity. However, because the Juchiteco identity

included an aggregation of collective identities, and even more local interests, the mobilization of collective violence in Juchitán has been difficult to classify.

In regards to the Mexican Revolution, Alan Knight divides popular mobilization into two distinct categories, neither of which adequately embodies general Juchiteco mobilization or the Chegomista Rebellion, specifically. In his own terms, Knight characterizes the Chegomista movement as a *serrano* rebellion, rather than an agrarian rebellion. Serrano movements derived from peasantries free from landlord control, but also unfamiliar with the hand of political authority. Consequently, the movements themselves represented a backlash of autonomous communities against incursions of the central government.

The difference between a serrano and an agrarian rebellion was that serranos reacted against Porfirio Díaz's program of political centralization, whereas *agraristas* reacted against the expropriation of their land by large landowners. Essentially, the serrano movement sought to protect its political autonomy while the agrarian movement sought to protect its land base. The Chegomista Rebellion was, indeed, a popular reaction against "the brutal hand" of government imposition that resulted from Díaz's policy of centralization. However, the nature of modernization and popular mobilization in Juchitán both call into question the usefulness of Knight's typologies.[182]

The Díaz regime implemented a program of economic development and political consolidation on the Isthmus that added direct conflict to an agrarian system already rife with horizontal cleavages. Although the most powerful members of provincial society lived in the state capital and exploited the rural populace indirectly, a dichotomy between large landowners and rural cultivators both drawing their income from the land characterized the organization of the Isthmus. The modernization programs proposed by the Mexican government to privatize agricultural land attempted to lure capital into the

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[182] Knight.

countryside by increasing the profitability of owning land. To extend landholdings on the Isthmus, or in any society in which the elite derive their income from the land, the elite needed the approval of political authorities. As a result, the political nature of land ownership focused conflict on control and distribution of landed property, and battles for land became battles to decide who got to make the rules. This formula worked inversely as well: conflicts focused on who got to make the rules were, implicitly, battles over the control and distribution of landed property. Essentially, then, conflicts in the export agriculture sectors of rural Mexico were both agrarian and serrano.[183]

Mexican modernization programs attacked the local interests that corresponded with the various collective identities embodied in the Juchiteco identity, and consequently the Juchitecos countered government programs with community-based mobilizations of collective violence. Juchiteco mobilizations reasserted the Juchitecos cultural, political, and economic autonomy, and as such were attempts to reclaim the right to make the rules, and control and distribute land. The strength of Juchiteco collective violence stemmed from centuries of village continuity which resulted in a unified, resilient community, willing to use violence to defend itself. Mobilizations experienced minimal internal opposition, proposed a bold challenges to the state's political ideology, and did not dissolve in the face of adversity. Perhaps most importantly, however, on the eve of the Revolution the people of Juchitán believed themselves to be heirs to a legacy of collective violence, and thus were unafraid "to spurn their lives" to "obtain their independence." Ultimately, the perseverance of the village in Oaxaca did not necessarily inhibit participation in the Mexican Revolution. In fact, continuity in Juchitán clearly facilitated local entrance into the revolutionary fray.[184]

By the same token, village continuity limited popular mobilization in Juchitán owing to the narrow interest of the Juchitecos and the history of conflict with surrounding

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[183] Jeffery Paige, *Agrarian Revolution: Social Movements and Export Agriculture in the Underdeveloped World* (New York: Free Press, 1975): Chapter 2.

[184] José Antonio Cheibub, "Mobilizing and Sustaining Collective Action in the Mexican Revolution," *Politics and Society* 23:2 (1995).

villages and the state. On a broad level the Juchitecos fought for the sovereignty of the people, but more specifically they fought for their own local independence. The Juchitecos were socially dislocated from the remainder of the rural population, thus limiting the scope of their mobilizations, even when their ideology seemed to transcend local boundaries. Moreover, throughout history the Juchitecos accentuated their local distinctiveness by cultivating conflictual relations with all outsiders. As a result, the Juchitecos could never garner enough support to propel their rebellions beyond a regional level.

The creation of a tradition of violence between the Juchitecos and the Oaxacan state helped to initiate, but ultimately limited collective violence in Juchitán. The mobilization of anti-state violence solidified the Juchitecos' commitment to a local collective identity, and thereby enhanced the people's ability to mobilize in defense of local interests. Moreover, the success of collective violence in defending local interests and negotiating with the state government increased the willingness of the Juchitecos to mobilize violence. On the other hand, collective violence in Juchitán also reinforced the state's image of the Juchitecos as unruly and barbarous Indians. As a result, this conflict facilitated the use of violence on both sides, and precluded peaceful negotiation between the two. The end result was a relationship defined by decades of continuous violent rebellion and repression.

By giving the Juchitecos a common enemy, the conflict between Juchitán and the state government limited popular mobilization in Juchitán by further narrowing Juchiteco interests. All popular rebellions in Juchitán demanded independence from the state of Oaxaca as a main objective. This limited the size of these rebellions because surrounding villages did not share the Juchitecos' antipathy toward the state, and did not desire to be independent. This conflict also limited the scope of Juchiteco rebellion. The Juchitecos were not revolutionary in that rather than changing the existing power structure, the Juchitecos sought to remove themselves from the power structure entirely. As a result, once this basic demand was satisfied, once Juchitán was free from the influence of the state government, popular mobilization waned.

Ultimately, whether mobilized from within or looked at from the outside, the Juchiteco identity shaped the period of violence from 1834 to 1912. The tradition of violence that developed between the state government and the Juchitecos was based on a conflict of interests, and necessarily a conflict of identities. This conflict dictated the formation and direction of Juchiteco protest before, during, and after the Mexican Revolution. Consequently, when Miguel Corvarrubias took special note of the Juchitecos intense place-specific identity and their reputation for violence, he had identified the two elements essential to "the Juchitecan seed of revolt."[185]

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[185] Corvarrubias, 159.

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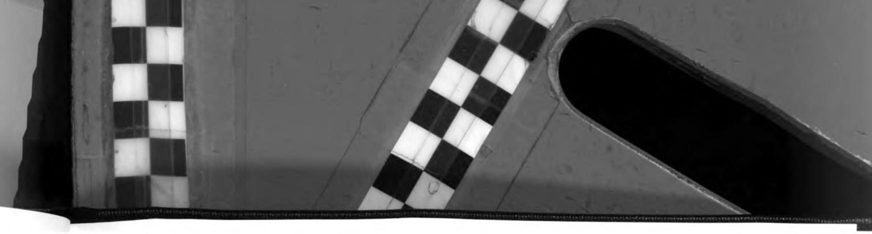

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