

themselves, because the radio did not need breaks during which productivity dropped as the workers discussed what they had just heard.

The tradition of reading aloud has survived the competition of radio, however, and is alive and relatively well in post-revolutionary Cuba, albeit reflecting some of the changes in the industry and in Cuban society generally. Of the 230 readers that are still actively employed (they are now state employees paid a monthly salary), 137 are women, which in turn reflects changes in the gender balance in the tobacco industry. There appears still to be a wide range of literature in use, from Agatha Christie through Gabriel García Márquez to modern Cuban authors of detective fiction such as Leonardo Padura – as well, of course, as the ubiquitous *Granma*. We hear the inevitable complaints that young people today are less interested and less attentive, which makes one wonder whether two generations of mass literacy have undermined the appetite for the spoken word, or whether it is just that young people are always accused of failing to respect tradition and will make the same accusations in their turn in 20 years' time.

The best aspect of this book is the glimpse it provides of the interaction between reader and listener, whether silence means rapt attention or bored indifference, whether the listeners shout either to applaud and encourage or in outraged disagreement. We can never know how they would have reacted in individual cases, but the author gives us the means to understand the world in which that interaction took place.

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Antonio Escobar Ohmstede (ed.), *Los pueblos indios en los tiempos de Benito Juárez (1847–1872)* (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma 'Benito Juárez' de Oaxaca, 2007), pp. 360, pb.

Based on a conference held in 2006, bicentenary of the birth of Benito Juárez, leader of Mexico's Liberal *Reforma*, this collection shares some of the weaknesses of commemorative volumes: unevenness of quality and, in several cases, only loose connection to either Juárez or Indian villages, the main subjects of the book. Juárez, of course, turned his back on his Zapotec roots and saw the eradication of the separate and subordinate status of Mexico's Indians as one of his duties. Yet, as some of the essays show, Mexico's anguished politics during the mid-nineteenth century required Juárez to be pragmatic in his dealings with Indian resistance to Liberal state building.

This pragmatism is evident in Francie Chassen's account of ethnic rebellions in the strategically important Isthmus of Tehuantepec. As state governor of Oaxaca between 1847 and 1857, and later as president, Juárez learned that Liberal theory had sometimes to be sacrificed to compromise in the interests of governability. The stubbornness of the isthmus Zapotecs in reclaiming and defending their natural resources matched Juárez's single-mindedness in unfurling and implementing the Laws of Reform at the national level.

Education, seen by Juárez as the key to successful Liberal reform, is explored in Daniela Traffano's chapter on the evolution of Oaxaca's laws on public education. She shows how Oaxaca's village communities deftly took advantage of the individualising and universalising precepts of Liberal legislation to petition for state support for local schooling throughout the second half of the nineteenth century.

In an excellent essay, the only one in the collection to explore politics and warfare during the Juárez period closely, Raymond Buve traces how service to the Liberal cause enabled Tlaxcala's Liberal leaders to press for full statehood. This was achieved in 1856, as a reward for Tlaxcala's support in the defeat of rebellions mounted by the Conservatives and the clergy in the city of Puebla and in the Puebla sierra. Buve reveals how this Liberal clientelism was a consequence of Tlaxcala's internal ethnic politics as National Guard chieftains from the more Indian, proto-industrial towns of the centre and the south defeated attempts by great landowners from the Conservative northern hacienda districts to seek annexation to Puebla. Here is some of the strongest evidence that *juarismo* brought significant change to the creole-dominated power structure that had prevailed since Independence.

Focusing on forced military recruitment (*la leva*), Romana Falcón argues that Liberal legislation during the Reform period 'stopped having justice as its object. The law became merely a cold instrument of the state's social control'. Although Emperor Maximilian's *Junta Protectora de las Clases Menesterosas* (JPCM) provided a brief reversion to a justice that peasant communities could recognise and address, Falcón argues, on evidence from the state of Mexico, that the Liberal *juicio de amparo* proved much less amenable to appeals from Indians and peasants against forced recruitment than the JPCM. Yet, in presenting Liberal legislation simply as top-down fiat rather than charters of social rights and guarantees, Falcón fails to consider whether the state of Mexico shared in the struggles for entitlement and the right to be heard evident in other regions such as the Sierra de Puebla and the Sierra de Ixtlán in Oaxaca, where peasant communities sometimes succeeded in achieving legal redress in exchange for political and military support for the Liberal cause.

Focusing on Teposcolula and Coiztlahuaca, two districts of the Mixteca Alta in Juárez's home state, J. Edgar Mendoza y García shows how, in spite of the Liberals' centralising reforms that ostensibly deprived towns of their political autonomy, corporate status and landholdings, towns and villages, especially smaller communities of fewer than 500 inhabitants, succeeded in 'evading, adapting and even appropriating [Liberal] municipal laws, combining them with their communal traditions, in such a way that councils continued maintaining their common lands and administering their communal properties' (often renamed 'agricultural societies' in deference to the new Liberal legislation). Hence most traditional aspects of communal self-government, policing and taxation, around an intricate system of civil and religious *cargos*, reinforced by new bodies such the *cuerpos filarmónicos*, remained intact during the second half of the nineteenth century, ready to be studied by twentieth-century anthropologists.

Brian Connaughton and Mario Vázquez Olivera explore the divergent experience of two neighbouring regions of highland Maya peasantry, the central highlands of Chiapas and western highlands of Guatemala, during the middle decades of the century. Unfortunately, although individually well documented and revealing, the two cases are treated separately, each with a quite distinct thematic focus. This affords only cursory comparisons that shed little light on the peculiarities of each case, and represents an opportunity missed.

Carmen Salinas Sandoval and Diana Birrichaga Gardida provide a useful overview of the Liberal Reforma as it was applied to the state of Mexico, showing how the creation of two new federal entities, the state of Morelos in 1868 and the state of Hidalgo in 1869, reinforced the control of Liberal elites and increased their effectiveness in confronting armed resistance to the two Liberal reforms that most

antagonised Indian communities: the privatisation of corporate and communal landholdings, and secularisation of the public sphere. Although this chapter sets out very clearly the legal and administrative agenda of the Reform, some assessment of whether the *'obedeço pero no cumpro'* formula achieved in Oaxaca and in other parts was at all possible in the state of Mexico would have contributed to the overall coherence of the collection.

In a final essay, and one which most closely addresses the title of the book, Alonso Domínguez Rascón shows how Rarámuri communities in the Sierra Tarahumara based their post-revolutionary agrarian claims, and their resorts to armed rebellion during the late 1920s, on the memory of land grants conceded to their communities by Benito Juárez during his two-year residence in Chihuahua between 1864 and 1866, when that state became the locus of republican resistance against the empire. This is the only essay in the collection that reflects both on how Juárez was seen by indigenous groups at the time, and how the memory of Juárez as a symbol of justice contributed to twentieth-century struggles.

This collection of essays reveals that Mexican regional studies are in a healthy state, but also suggests the need for more inter-regional comparisons and bolder interdisciplinary and cultural approaches that would surely shed more light how a Zapotec president was seen and remembered by a partly indigenous nation.

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Elisa Servín, Leticia Reina and John Tutino (eds.), *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change: Crisis, Reform, and Revolution in Mexico* (Durham NC and London: Duke University Press, 2007), pp. xvi + 405, £64.00, £14.99 pb.

Conceived in 1998 when the EZLN indigenous insurgency was barely into its fourth year, born at a millennium conference held between the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia* and Georgetown University, and published initially in Mexico as *Crisis, reforma y revolución, historias de fin del siglo* in 2002, this broad-ranging and generally excellent collection of essays has been 'expanded, reorganised and revised' for this English-language edition. The participants were asked to ponder the historical lessons of two periods of economic boom and state-led reform that culminated in social revolutions in 1810 and 1910, and to consider the implications of these cycles for the approaching centenary: 'Once again, amid times of boom and bust, crisis and reform, Mexicans faced deepening inequalities and political uncertainties. Could a new round of civil conflict follow? Could it possibly begin in 2010?' The book is divided into three parts: it contains three essays on 'Communities', 'because they have been a constant, important and too-often ignored participants in Mexico's history', four essays on 'Revolutions', 'because they marked the pivotal transformations that made Mexico a nation in 1810 and 1910', and four essays on the 'Contemporary Crisis'.

The study starts, appropriately, with two closely observed episodes of communities in turmoil: a riot in Cuautitlán in 1785 in defence of popular religious practices, involving hostility to the parish priest; and the lynching in Atacamulco of four Spaniards on All Saints' Day 1810, soon after the outbreak of the Hidalgo revolt. Eric Van Young's purpose in telling these tales is to reflect on the relationship between local conflict and the wider 'general crisis' accompanying the