

disarray of 1920s political, economic, and social turmoil. Moreover, rather than simply reproducing arguments about the disjuncture between 1930s ruling party radicalism and its 1940s conservatism, they highlight important continuities in state building from the 1910s to the 1950s. Most importantly, they show how efforts to maintain regional sovereignty transcended political ideology, and left an enduring, if ambivalent, mark on the ruling party's twentieth-century authority.

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Maximino Ávila Camacho and the One-Party State: The Taming of Caudillismo and Caciquismo in Post-Revolutionary Mexico. By Alejandro A. Quintana. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2010. Pp. xviii, 155. Introduction. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$60.00 cloth.

As Alejandro Quintana suggests in this biography, General Maximino Ávila Camacho undoubtedly can be viewed as the most influential political figure in the Mexican state of Puebla in the twentieth century. The author uses this biography to address a broader, prevalent characteristic of Mexican and Latin American politics, the role of caudillos in regional affairs. He argues further that Ávila Camacho's violent techniques and extensive corruption formed a common pattern among other powerful regional leaders. Finally, he views him as an individual who preserves authoritarian legacies during the rise and consolidation of an authoritarian party over the Mexican state.

Despite the political influence Ávila Camacho exercised in the state of Puebla and his impact on national politics in the 1940s, little is actually known about his career and rapid rise up the political ladder during the complexities of the post-revolutionary era. Quintana sheds considerable light on this period of his life, allowing the reader to view firsthand how careful and skillful an ambitious politician needed to be to survive dangerous military uprisings during the 1920s. Most revealing in this biography is how Maximino interacted with his brother Manuel, president of Mexico from 1940-1946. Maximino's long-term ambition was to become president of Mexico himself, and on numerous occasions he attempted to manipulate his brother to achieve that goal, forcing him through his own public actions to appoint Maximino as a member of his cabinet. Such interactions tell a larger story of a president's strength during his initial year in office and the extent of his authority. This incident, and the president's successful efforts to deny his brother's presidential ambitions in 1945, also shed light on the president's personality.

Despite these strengths, Quintana is hampered throughout his research by the lack of revealing primary sources. As he points out, the Puebla state archives would have been the most useful source for providing extensive information about Maximino's controversial tenure as governor, but the tradition in Puebla was for each governor to remove all documents upon leaving office. Moreover, although he uses the national archives and the national defense archives, he did not have access to family archives, often the most impor-

tant sources when crafting a political biography in Mexico. It would also seem that Calles's archives potentially would have been useful for understanding the relationship between Maximino's revolutionary mentors and Calles, and the Miguel Alemán archives in shedding more light on Maximino's presidential ambitions. Quintana is often forced to speculate about certain controversies associated with Maximino's career, and these explanations lack depth. Finally, a nagging question is whether more primary research on President Ávila Camacho, who is given little attention, would have provided additional insights into his brother's career.

In laying out the historical background of the period, Quintana provides helpful insights into the national setting, but his description and explanations of Puebla itself, where much of Maximino's rise to national prominence occurs, are brief. Throughout, he tends to blend presidential and party influence together at a time when the party and its leadership was strictly a creature of the president. Significantly, we learn that political mentors were crucial to Maximino's success in the late 1910s, equally true of politicians in the decades since the 1920s. Quintana further demonstrates that the authoritarian practices Maximino learned as a zone commander in the 1920s and 1930s prepared him for employing similar techniques in Puebla's civilian political world. The author also discovers that President Cárdenas expanded the general's military zone in 1935 to cover the entire state of Puebla, thus placing an ally in firm control of the state. His loyalty to Cárdenas led to Maximino becoming the next governor. These are all important findings, and in developing these prevailing features of national politics in the 1930s and 1940s one wishes that Quintana would have had the opportunity to flesh out Maximino's career in richer detail.

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Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca. By Benjamin T. Smith. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009. Pp. vii, 578. Maps. Photographs. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$35.00 paper.

In *Pistoleros and Popular Movements*, Benjamin T. Smith explores the formation of the postrevolutionary state in Mexico, focusing on the southern state of Oaxaca and the period between 1928 and 1952. Like most recent histories of revolutionary and postrevolutionary Mexico, Smith argues that popular movements, local and regional political bosses, and state-level elites confounded the efforts of the central government to expand its reach across the national territory through ongoing efforts to contest, resist, appropriate, and reshape the center's socioeconomic and political reforms. Smith goes further than most historians, however, in claiming that generalizations about state formation in Mexico are all but impossible. He contends that the three major efforts to characterize the relationship between state and society in postrevolutionary Mexico—pluralist, revisionist, and postrevisionist or neo-Gramscian—all fail to “describe the sheer panoply of regional arrangements enacted by the Mexican state” (p. 5). Smith suggests, therefore, “a move away from these overarching models of state formation and toward an analysis