

explain why twenty-first-century Venezuela still retains elements of nineteenth-century caudillismo. This explanation might not be valid for other Latin American countries that have managed to build more stable political institutions and where the “dancing Jacobins,” their monuments and antics, have not been the norm or so resilient.

ELENA BLOCK, University of Queensland

DOI 10.1215/00182168-7160391

Precontact

Political Strategies in Pre-Columbian Mesoamerica.

Edited by SARAH KURNICK and JOANNE BARON. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2016. Photographs. Illustrations. Maps. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xi, 291 pp. Cloth, \$60.00.

While Mesoamerica is viewed as a single cultural area, Mesoamericanists have long been aware of the perils of emphasizing commonalities in the region, thus compromising a deeper analysis of a diverse and divergent set of cultural practices, ecological adaptations, and social arrangements. This volume takes on an ambitious challenge, not only by attempting to address regional diversity through a variety of examples but also by positing a sustained conversation regarding the emergence, development, and persistence of centralized authority, along with its contradictions, over several chapters. Moreover, this work covers a wide range of case studies across an ambitious temporal frame in Mesoamerica, from Maya sites to ancient Oaxaca as well as central and western Mesoamerica.

The book's main objective is to elucidate the various governance strategies that produced stability in terms of political control across Mesoamerican Formative, Classic, and Postclassic early and mature states. Such impressive breadth is one of the volume's main strengths. Sarah Kurnick provides an apt introduction to the volume's concerns and adopts a Weberian stance on the production of authority while also focusing on an account of supernatural mediation and the negotiation of contradictions in relationships of authority. Takeshi Inomata takes up Kurnick's discussion of Max Weber. Inomata introduces Michel Foucault's account of power and social relations into the mix, to improve on what he sees as a “monolithic” view of authority, and deploys this insight to suggest that rulers in Middle Preclassic Ceibal had limited control over their subjects in terms of coercion. A chapter by Arthur Joyce, Sarah Barber, Jeffrey Brzezinski, Carlo Lucido, and Víctor Salazar Chávez addresses the initial drive toward political centralization in Río Viejo, a Terminal Formative site near Oaxaca's Pacific coast. The authors examine the move of the main ceremonial center from a local site to an acropolis that resonated with some of the region's local elites, who were in the process of differentiating themselves from commoners. In the end, this path to centralization is contrasted with the emergence of Monte Albán in central Oaxaca, where centralization did lead to integration and political control of neighboring communities.

In a shift to western Mesoamerica, Christopher Beekman examines transitions in the ceremonial architecture of the Tequila valleys of central Jalisco between the Late

Formative and the Early Classic period. Beekman first introduces the arrangement and use of shaft tombs by members of elite lineages and then discusses the significance of the tombs' emplacement and design under *guachimontones* (circle-shaped modular structures). He then proposes potential parallels between the symbolic practices embodied by these structures and the cosmological theories of contemporary Náyari, while touching on the tension between elite lineages, community members, and newcomers in terms of ritual usage of built spaces. In a chapter devoted to Classic Maya patron deities, Joanne Baron explores important distinctions among "general" deities, patron deities, and ancestors, noting some important examples of the adoption of new patron deities—such as Waxaklajun Ubaah Kaan, "The Eighteen Images of the Snake." She goes on to review the introduction of the patron deity Ikiy at La Corona in the Petén region and describes the interdigitation of the worship of ruling lineage ancestors, who secured the well-being of elites, with that of patron gods, who protected the entire community.

Going further into state organization dynamics, Tatsuya Murakami investigates the emergence of administrative buildings in Teotihuacan and the role played by intermediary elites in urban renewal projects. He concludes that standardized apartment compounds reflected reciprocal relations between subjects and elites as well as bureaucratic negotiations while excluding lower-status individuals. Bryce Davenport and Charles Golden examine landscape and power through an analysis of the linkages between rulers and bounded landscape. Drawing examples from the Classic-period Maya kingdoms of Yaxchilan and Piedras Negras and from the representation of toponyms and bounded regions in Postclassic and colonial Mixtec communities, Davenport and Golden emphasize that the links between rulers and territory complemented, rather than clashed with, commoner practices. Returning to western Mesoamerica, Helen Pollard provides a useful and authoritative review of the Purépecha empire's state structure, political positions, economic basis, and centralization tendencies and then turns to an important legitimation strategy employed by some ruling elites: the alternation between emphasizing Chichimec heritage and Purépecha origins (in fact, a strategy also reflected by the use of Chichimec honorific titles by Nahuatl elites). In order to bring together common threads that run through these chapters, a final reflection by Simon Martin provides a concise intellectual history of theoretical approaches that support hypotheses regarding political rule derived from archaeological data, insisting on the emergence of multiple vantage points that have informed archaeologists engaged in postprocessual approaches. In the end, while its case studies tend to focus on the production and endurance of authority rather than on contradictions and collapses, this volume stands out both for its insistence on theoretical acuity and for its fluid discussion of archaeological data. It will attract audiences beyond the Mesoamerican and archaeological realms, such as scholars and students of the political history of ancient American societies, ethnohistory, art history, and cultural anthropology.

DAVID TAVÁREZ, Vassar College

DOI 10.1215/00182168-7160402