

Community Formation in Frontier Mexico: Accepting and Rejecting New Migrants

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Through a comparison of two communities, this paper addresses village formation in frontier Campeche, Mexico. Mexico's village political unit, the *ejido*, allows farmers flexibility in deciding who may take up residence in their communities. The paper analyzes how established farmers employ ideas of ethnicity, family, and expectations of social strife to assess the long-term compatibility of newcomers. The paper further examines the role of economic stratification, village factionalism, and development programs in structuring acceptance into a village. The findings challenge prevalent economic explanations for migration and point to the need for research into the interaction of economic and political factors in intrarural migration.

Key words: migration, Latin America, political anthropology, Mexican ejido, development

Since the 1960s, Mexico's national policy has turned tropical forests of the south and southeast into an agricultural frontier (Arizpe, Paz, and Velazquez 1996; Gates 1993; and Revel-Mouroz 1972). Southeast Campeche, located on the Yucatan peninsula, is now home to 15,000 people, approximately 3.3 people per square kilometer (Ericson 1996). Migrants to the region represent numerous ethnic groups from all regions of Mexico (Boege 1995). With such a diverse group of people, how do farmers create and maintain their communities? The following answers this question based on 14 months of participant-observation in southeast Campeche, including a survey of migration histories for 30 households. An examination of social organization in two villages shows how factionalism and nonlegal social rules persist in structuring community formation in frontier Mexico.

Few researchers have examined permanent rural-to-rural migration in Mexico (exceptions include Szekely and Restrepo 1988; Cesar Dachary 1993; Hoy Manzanilla and Cauch Pina 1993; and Sierra Sosa 1993). Yet, the ability to stay in the countryside is an important part of a larger migra-

tion picture which includes migration to the U.S. and to urban areas within Mexico (Cornelius and Bustamente 1989; Hirabayashi 1993; Massey et al. 1993, 1994; Rees et al. 1991; Rouse 1991). Most migration theories emphasize economic motivations for moving. The examples here suggest that political strife can intersect with economic factors in ways that encourage continued mobility. More comprehensive migration theories should take into account the pervasive social insecurity that underlies rural life in Mexico.

Overview of Migration to and from Southeast Campeche

Region-wide data on migration to and from southeast Campeche are unavailable. Conventional wisdom describes a situation in which farmers arrive in search of land only to leave because of poor soils and erratic rainfall. Anthropologists working in the 1980s made preliminary documentation of village sites occupied through three distinct waves of migration (Boege and Murguía 1989). During each wave peasants set up farming operations that they were later forced to abandon. Boege and Murguía's work demonstrated how the arrival of government subsidies in the early 1990s allowed for a certain economic stability that slowed out-migration. Since then, increasing government subsidies have enhanced the role development programs play in the region's migratory setting.

Campeche's farmers support environmental explanations of migratory processes when they use environmental conditions as a gloss for the many reasons their former neighbors left the region. At the same time a second layer of explanations shows that farmers can use the environment to obscure stories of fierce village politicking. Campeche's farmers agree

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that family, ethnicity, and length of time in the village should shape village organization. However, these ideals intersect with political contests of constant one-upmanship to create dynamic, sometimes volatile, village structures. A description of village legal and economic structures sets the stage for understanding how common ideals of community formation result in differing social organizations in the villages of Orozco and Tejeda.

On Their Own in the Ejidos

Nearly all communities in southeast Campeche are organized under Mexico's *ejidal* regime. Legally, *ejidal* lands are given by Mexico's federal government in usufruct to a group of farmers. These farmers then become *ejidatarios*. Ejidos are governed internally by an assembly of *ejidatarios* who rule on access to land, individual participation in development projects, inheritance, and village infrastructure. Importantly, *ejidatarios* also hold the power to revoke access to land, and many *ejidatarios* face their neighbors with an underlying insecurity in respect to land rights. Assembly decisions are the end result of long periods of village gossip in which men and women test the social fit of particular solutions to ever-changing power structures both within the village and between the village and outside agents (Parnell 1988). Decisions made in the assembly are written in each village's rule book. However, villagers tend to use rule books only to document a momentary decision, and they continue to formulate local law as situations change. This gives an ad hoc appearance to village law. In actuality, villagers invoke rules of thumb in regard to social organization and test these rules in particular settings.

Authorities rarely check on the legality of internal *ejidal* operations (Sabloff 1981:11). However, villagers may appeal assembly decisions to the federal offices of the *Procuraduria Agraria*. Two points discourage them from doing so. Between 1994 and 1995, the *Procuraduria* in southeast Campeche had just two officers supervising more than 70 villages. These men were also charged with implementing changes in Mexico's agrarian law (see below), making it virtually impossible for agents to pay attention to individual ejidos on issues other than the new law. Farmers in Orozco and Tejeda hesitate to turn to the *Procuraduria* because they find federal authorities are inconsistent in applying their considerable power. Most believe wealthy individuals can bribe authorities not to interfere in internal *ejidal* policy. Farmers also assert that authorities located in distant offices will not be present to enforce their ruling. Plaintiffs are then vulnerable to retaliation by fellow villagers who resent the threat of government interference in village affairs.

While ejidos connect farmers to government authority and to each other, they also connect farmers to the land they need to survive. Unfortunately, land in Campeche provides uneven crop yields that place farmers on the margin of subsistence. Corn and beans comprise the principal subsistence crops. Government officials estimate that corn harvests in

areas home to the poorest agricultural soils yield an average 300 to 400 kg per hectare (Julia Murphy, personal communication). In pockets of adequate agricultural soils, researchers believe yields come closer to the state average of 1,200 kg per hectare (Eckart Boege, personal communication; INEGI 1994). Production figures vary from year to year because of erratic rainfall. Drought affected the 1994 harvest, while hurricane floods destroyed the 1995 harvest. Without government intervention in both years, families would have faced critical situations of food scarcity.

Farmers rely on jalapeño chile peppers as a cash crop, and a few large chile operations provide the majority of (seasonal) jobs available in the region. In the 1980s, farmers migrated seasonally to neighboring regions to take part in chile harvests there. Today, few farmers travel farther than neighboring villages in search of wage labor. Government subsidies explain the diminished need to travel. During the 1990s, federal authorities instituted PROCAMPO, a program that pays farmers for land they keep in subsistence crops. In Campeche, PROCAMPO payments roughly equal the net gain farmers earn from chile crops. An income analysis for ten households shows that in years of crop failure, PROCAMPO can be the largest source of income for even wealthier families (Haenn 1997b). Meanwhile, PROCAMPO is just one of myriad projects in the region that offer cash bonuses, foodstuffs, and farm inputs. Households in Orozco and Tejeda additionally participate in small-scale development projects that among other things promote grade-school education, agroforestry, reforestation, intensive cattle ranching, and ecotourism. Each project offers its own package of benefits to participants.

The combination of political autonomy and economic dependency described above echoes the two most prevalent academic models available for understanding ejidos. These describe ejidos as either closed-corporate communities (Wolf 1966), or peripheral pawns in government games of exploitation (Greenberg 1989; Ronfeldt 1973; Warman 1980). The case of frontier Campeche suggests that both these models may be valid in their own way at a time when the models are receiving renewed challenges from legal changes to Mexico's agrarian law. In 1991, authorities modified Article 27 of the agrarian reform clause of the constitution, ending the future distribution of farmlands, and giving the possibility for *ejidal* privatization. In southeast Campeche, neither change has been put into effect in its entirety. It is still too soon to know how a stilted privatization program will affect land use and migration in the region. In the meantime, a government authority that promotes economic dependency while applying legal rulings only sporadically helps explain an apparent contradiction in village life. Subsidies tailored to *ejidatarios* reinforce the *ejidal* structure which in turn has become a broader cultural norm upon which farmers establish village organization. However, inconsistent law enforcement leaves a gap between the legal ideal of community life and village life in practice. Farmers fill this gap by calling on nonlegal axes of organization to supplement their own interpretations of *ejidal* law.

A Peasant Underclass within Farm Communities

Until now, I have discussed farmers as an undifferentiated group, but important distinctions in social recognition need mentioning. Ideally, farmers living in an ejido have a government-issued certificate citing their status as an ejidatario. An ejidatario's rights include access to village lands and voice and vote within the village assembly. Ejidatarios are usually men, but women can also be ejidatarias. Farmers often describe themselves (or their neighbors) as an "ejidatario" when they do not have the legal recognition as such. In these cases, "ejidatario" expresses a person's social status vis-a-vis his or her neighbors. It connotes prestige and legitimacy inside the farming community.

In contrast to ejidatarios are *avecindados*, more commonly referred to in southeast Campeche as *pobladores*. Theoretically, pobladores are people who live within a village and do not farm. It is a category relevant for communities that support an artisan or merchant class. The law attempts to separate this group of people from farmers, leaving all decisions regarding farmland to ejidatarios. However, in southeast Campeche there are no full-time artisans and only one market town supports a merchant class. Pobladores in ejidos are farmers without their own land.

Ejidatarios divide pobladores into two groups. The first of these are teenage sons of ejidatarios awaiting their parcel of farmland. The second group are new migrants to the region whom ejidatarios have not yet accepted as full members of the village. Like ejidatarios, all pobladores must participate in communal work projects, attend assemblies, and contribute to village costs. However, pobladores have no voice or vote within the assembly. Their status is wholly dependent on the decisions of ejidatarios. The most important decision ejidatarios make in respect to pobladores is whether pobladores will receive land, achieve the status of ejidatario, and thus gain long-term acceptance into a village.

"In ejidos, there are always problems," farmers repeatedly told me. Ronfeldt's (1973:216) list of ejidal problems is still relevant after two decades: "population pressures, boundary disputes, competition for ejidal rights, . . . entrenchment of certain leaders in ejidal office, factional power struggles, intrigues with outside political and economic interests, corruption and favoritism, agitation and demagoguery, violence and assassination." All of these were present in some form in Orozco and Tejeda. Despite recognized problems, no other legal framework exists for farmers to construct alternative village political structures. Instead farmers draw on the common tools of factionalism, family, ethnicity, economic stratification, and length of time in the village to compensate for the ejido's deficiencies. The insular nature of ejidos means that, once applied, these tools result in communities with different social structures and with different means of reckoning with new migrants.

Orozco

I arrived in Orozco, an ejido of 2,600 hectares, in November 1994. In January of that year, village population doubled to 230 persons with the arrival of an extended kin group of Cholan (a Mayan language) speakers fleeing Mexico's Zapatista uprising in Chiapas. Initial acceptance for this group was simple and followed a procedure standard throughout the region. Adult men presented themselves to Orozco's assembly. The solicitants provided legal proof they had never committed a crime, and, if possible, a recommendation from authorities in their previous place of residence. Solicitants promised to pay a \$300 peso entrance fee (equal to 15-20 days of wage labor), and put some money toward that debt. Ejidatarios gave a provisional acceptance to the group, admitting them with poblador status. As pobladores, newcomers would work leftover common lands or land borrowed from ejidatarios. During the next two years, landed farmers and newcomers warily examined the prospects for long-term integration of the group into village life.

This examination took place in the context of Orozco's particular social and economic situation. At the time of the refugees' arrival, Orozco's villagers were involved in shifting factions organized around access to development programs, time in the village, and, most importantly, ethnicity. Development programs contribute to economic survival in this village located upon some of the region's worst farmland. Villagers in Orozco farm one corn crop a year. Wage labor remains scarce, and for supplementary income many farmers turn to ecologically oriented development projects. The number of these projects has exploded since the declaration of the neighboring Calakmul Biosphere Reserve. Governmental and nongovernmental agencies sponsor at least eight different sustainable development projects in the village. Each project includes an internal committee of villagers to oversee its implementation. Through these committees a group of five farmers vie among themselves for control over development resources in the village. Committee members exclude Chiapan refugees from development projects, while the power play among members dominates village political institutions. Each man hopes to hold sway over project activities and assure that others will not hoard benefits for themselves. The result is not so much factionalism as intense individualism between village leaders.

Within this politicking, length of time in the village is an important claim to power. Ejidatarios especially invoke their position as village founders as a basis for exerting greater authority than more recent arrivals. The time frames at issue are often arbitrary to the persons involved. One farmer might claim authority over another because he has been in residence longer, by three, five, or ten years. Time of arrival is influential in forming alliances as well as divisions. The most active *compadrazgo*, or fictive kin relationship, in the village takes place between two families who repeatedly assert a shared experience of village life grounded in their arrival in the same year.

Ethnicity in Orozco

Ethnicity permeates economic stratification, individual competition, and time in the village as the village's most fundamental axis of organization. While all pobladores are Cholan speaking, only half the ejidatarios are. Spanish-speaking Mestizo families include migrants from the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Veracruz, and Campeche. The topic of ethnic difference is sensitive, and villagers are reluctant to address the issue openly. However, through conversational asides, and choice of friends, work partners, and factional allies, differences between Cholan and Spanish speakers are clearly manifest.

Before the arrival of the Chiapan refugees, Orozco was evenly split between the ethnic groups. Attempts at ties between the two had generally failed. Paulita, a Mestiza, told me her two youngest children were unbaptized because she could not find suitable godparents in the village. Her *compadrazgo* ties with Cholan speakers were inactive because, she said, they did not know how to behave as *compadres*. Mestizo parents frown upon the marriage of their children to Cholans, although they are unable to prevent such unions. The village has two failed interethnic unions, and two successful ones, in which the wives abandoned ties with their ethnic group. Both Mestizos and Cholans proffer racist remarks. Cholans described Mestizos as fierce (*bravos*) and Godless. Mestizos describe Cholans as lazy people who are willing to turn to witchcraft to seek vengeance.

The following points to why political factions between the two groups can be fragile and fleeting. Differences in conflict management styles set up bathers to working together in the assembly. Mestizos tend to dominate village assemblies with the aid of one or two Cholans. Mestizo oratory style entails loudly telling it like they see it. Cholans settle conflicts by speaking softly and as they say by "using pretty words" (see also Pura Mora and Hernandez Diaz 1994). In one conflict between two Cholans (conducted in Spanish), the accuser even provided the accused many opportunities to save face. Not surprisingly, these two styles clash. Cholan speakers accuse Mestizos of being heartless and rude. Mestizos counter that Cholans, who are generally silent in village assemblies, do not want to participate in running community affairs.

Ejidatarios never said the Cholan refugees were unwelcome. However, over two years ejidatarios repeatedly delayed distributing land to the newcomers, thus sending the message to leave. The refugees did go on to colonize an abandoned village site in the region. Reflecting on structural factors of village organization, the long-term acceptance of the refugees was certain to fail. Orozco has uncultivated land, but distributing this to such a large group of newcomers would mean denying land to ejidatarios' own sons. Favoring strangers over kin in regard to access to land is anathema to farmer ideals of family life. The village's larger population size also meant unwelcome competition for development project resources. These resources were already perceived to be too scarce for the few families in control of them.

Cholan refugees also upset the village's delicate ethnic balance by making the village majority Cholan speaking. Mestizo ejidatarios who prevailed within the village assembly now held power out of proportion to their numbers within the village and despite the lack of unity among them. Although pobladores had no voice or vote within the assembly, their presence suggested the potential for Cholan action. The refugees had no kinship ties to any ejidatario but were related to each other through blood and fictive kin ties. Ejidatarios, who had not formed similar ties, were now faced with a group whose size and unity made it plausible they would dominate village politics.

When I saw how reluctant ejidatarios were to give the refugees land, I asked for more details on the acceptance process. Rules for accepting newcomers are informal and quite personalized. Ejidatarios describe the process as one where they take awhile to see how pobladores behave. This process might take six months to three years. When I asked what benefit pobladores could contribute to the ejido in the meantime, ejidatarios answered almost exclusively that newcomers pay their entrance fee. Dominant ejidatarios appear to have accepted the refugees precisely because they thought they could control them through their dependent position as newcomers. The refugees included 23 farmers, each charged the \$300 entrance fee. In this way, pobladores subsidized a village treasury with few means of raising funds. Refugees resisted paying because they suspected ejidatarios were just interested in their money. Indeed, ejidatarios never discussed distributing land to the few newcomers who had paid in full. Even after moving to another village, pobladores attempted re-entry only to have ejidatarios refuse them and demand the refugees leave their PROCAMPO with the village treasury, ostensibly to cover unpaid entrance fees?

Despite ongoing arguments about the status of pobladores, ejidatarios in Orozco had yet to make a formal decision closing the village to future in-migration. Instead, farmers returned to lines of factionalism to assert who would and would not be accepted in the future.

Tejeda

Tejeda stands in contrast to Orozco in numerous ways. Four years previous to my arrival in 1995, ejidatarios distributed the village's available land to their sons. They then closed the village to future in-migration. Tejeda's three pobladores work land belonging to their ejidatario kin. Although in the throes of a bitter factional dispute, Tejeda is stable in respect to migration. To understand this, I draw on stories of village conflict to depict how villagers use factionalism, ethnicity, economic stratification, power structures, and kinship to create order.

During my five month stay in Tejeda, villagers were divided into two factions, the *Campechanos* and the *Quintanaroenses*, hereafter Faction A and Faction B. Tejeda lies within the ill-defined border between Campeche and Quintana Roo states. As of writing, the issue remains un-

settled.) The village has close market and historical ties to the state of Quintana Roo. However, the village is officially registered in Campeche. During the year before my arrival, villagers argued heatedly regarding whether they should continue to receive economic support from Quintana Roo or whether they should limit themselves to resources offered by Campeche. Similar to the situation in Orozco, Tejada's garrulous Mestizo migrants from the states of Veracruz and Tabasco argue over control of development resources and seniority in the village. However, they do so in the language of state affiliation.

The argument began in 1994 when ejidatarios voted two newcomers as village president and supervisory council (*consejo de vigilancia*). Both men had entered the village three years earlier when they paid \$500 in entrance fees. Because they had personal connections within the village, farmers accepted the two as ejidatarios, bypassing poblador status. Both men are from Veracruz, the home state of Tejada's strongman. While in power, the newcomers adopted a legalistic interpretation of village life, attacking what they saw as illegal acceptance of government aid from the state of Quintana Roo. Their actions countered previous village policy and soon resulted in a full-scale village dispute. Factions A and B began to conduct separate village assemblies. The emotional tone of the debate quieted down after Faction B replaced the village president with one of its own.

Essential differences between the factions remained. Although living in the same village, Faction A votes in Campeche state elections and Faction B votes in those of Quintana Roo. Faction A reserves all benefits from Campeche state for its group, while Faction B does the same with development funds and projects from Quintana Roo. The overall number of projects on offer is fewer than in Orozco. Neither faction earns an economic advantage over its neighbors through project participation. Instead, both factions cultivate lines of patronage outside the village that bolster their political position within it.

The dispute coincides with other lines of cleavage within the village. Faction A mainly consists of ejidatarios who arrived in the village after 1990. Faction B includes all founding ejidatarios and those farmers arriving in the 1980s. These villagers saw Faction A as social upstarts, ungrateful for the helping hand extended to them when they first arrived to the village. Indeed, Faction A includes dynamic individuals anxious to put in practice their vision of village life. This vision includes an ideal of the self-sufficient smallholder and compliance with the laws of the nation. Esteban, a leader of Faction A, used a kinship analogy to explain the village's relationship with the nation-state. He explained that Campeche is their father, and as such they were obligated to work with Campeche state.

Faction B's leader also has a vision of prosperous village life. To put this into practice he encouraged relatively wealthy migrants from his home state whom he thought would share his vision. He also manipulated the village's ambiguous location to take advantage of government projects from

both states. Rejecting the kinship analogy offered by his opposition, he asserted his view of appropriate village relations to the government, "We want the state that will give us something, not the one that will love us." Faction B's leader poses himself as limiting governmental interference in the village, while beating the government at its own game of soliciting political support through subsidies (see also Chevalier and Buckles 1995; Dresser 1991). Most members of Faction B are comfortable using their leader as a bulwark against unwanted government attention.

The ultimate success of Faction B is further indebted to the strength of social ties within the group. Members of Faction B are tied to each other through extensive connections of blood kinship and intermarriage. Kinship here acts as a political organization in a region where other political institutions are weak. Only 2 of Tejada's 33 households have no kinship ties within the village. More than three-fourths of all individuals who arrived to Tejada unmarried ended up in union with another villager. This fact is more startling in light of the small size of the village, just 171 persons, and the many exchanges that take place between Tejada and another village just one kilometer to its south. Marriage brought separate families into webs of long-term exchange and support. Meanwhile, families in Faction A stand outside this web. Their children were already married before moving to the village. Fictive kin ties were not an option as the older residents are nearly all Protestants.

Ejidatarios reinforce the primary authority of the family in a number of ways. Family is clearly a necessary element for social cohesion, but is it sufficient?

Staying in Tejada

With such deep divisions, Tejada's stability in respect to migration needs further explanation. The minority faction describes campaigns of public gossip and injury to farm animals among other tactics they believe are intended to run them out of town. No single event is so significant as the accumulation of insults that indicate a permanent rupture in social relations. Still, members of Faction A insist on staying. Ethnic composition, economic and ecological factors, as well as the role of personal strength of character in negotiating conflict all contribute to preventing out-migration from the village.

Tejada's location provides it with some of the region's best agricultural soils. Ejidatarios in Tejada harvest two corn crops a year. This not only provides greater food security, villagers receive twice the amount of money from PROCAMPO. Factionalism also works to the village's financial benefit. As one man explained his view of patronage, "Campeche is our father and Quintana Roo is our godfather." State programs are not coordinated, so subsidies arrive at different times from the different states. Cash circulates through the village at a greater number of intervals during the year, and someone nearly always has money on hand to lend or to hire wage labor. More stable economic conditions relate to

more secure access to land. Although ejidatarios in Tejeda discuss the possibility of being forced out of the village, for the interim they count on respect for their land claims.

The essentially homogeneous ethnic affiliation among villagers leads farmers to believe they have some common ground for negotiation. The debate between Factions A and B in Tejeda is not so much about identity as it is about lines of patronage. State of origin, or *paisanazgo*, does play a role in Tejeda's organization. Some villagers explain the different factions as a result of differences in state of origin. However, in practice Veracruzanos and Tabasqueños intermarry, work together, and nearly all attend the same church. Neither faction is truly representative of a single state.

Finally, individual strength of character is important to maintaining social cohesion within factions. This cohesion, in turn, forms a basis for relating between the two groups. For example, one of Tejeda's few pobladores is a Campeche supporter. He believes Faction B wants to expel him from the ejido. He cites foremost as his evidence the assembly's decision not to give him land. His reaction to the situation was to call on his personal strength of character, which coincides with what he sees as his superior intellectual and financial capabilities.

They gave land even to minors and conveniently put me aside. They thought that would finish me off, but if they want me out, I won't be going. They want to see me working for them, begging at their houses, but my heart is stronger than that.

Embattled members of Faction A remain in Tejeda because they believe they have the intellect, social connections, and strength of character with which to defend themselves. Their positions are reminiscent of research into Mexican *caciques*. Definitions of *cacique* differ (see Lomnitz-Adler 1992; Sabloff 1981; Schryer 1990), but one universal quality to *caciques* and strongmen is a powerful personal will. Farmers in both Tejeda and Orozco emphasize strength of character as a fundamental quality necessary for weathering the storms of village factions because no trustworthy adjudicating body exists for settling village conflicts.

Discussion

The cases of Orozco and Tejeda point to the need to re-evaluate the roles of factionalism and nonlegal social rules in migration out of Mexico's rural areas. Village factionalism, regardless of its basis, was not a new phenomenon for migrants to southeast Campeche. Their migration histories include stories of factionalism and violence which unseated farmers from ejidatario status in the past (see also Parra Mora and Hernandez Diaz 1994). While farmers did move to southeast Campeche in search of land, they were well aware that obtaining access to land entails living in an ejido, and living in an ejido entails the possibility of becoming embroiled in disputes. Thus, the search for a secure social situation takes on as much importance as the search for land.

The examples of Orozco and Tejeda show how factionalism may drive people apart and, paradoxically, keep them together (Hunt 1976). Factions form pillars around which individuals organize. At the core of factional disputes is village gossip which constantly evaluates individual positions in respect to village power structures. Escalating disputes provide a mechanism through which disputants explore and evaluate possible social ties (Parnell 1988). This mechanism is especially useful in a frontier region where social ties across groups are new and untested. Disputing is further useful in a context where government involvement in village life is ambiguous, providing a shifting basis for authority. Factionalism establishes an atmosphere where villagers seek out and generate the information that ultimately contributes the basis of village norms, however temporarily.

While factionalism can center around pressing questions of ethnicity and control of economic resources, behind these lie real differences in definitions of community life. The disagreements in Orozco and Tejeda should give us pause before asserting universal concepts of "community," "campesino or peasant," "indigenous," and "the Mexican nation." Although in some respects, the above cases show the enduring relevance of Mexico's ideal of village solidarity based on self-sufficient smallholders (Hart 1987; Nugent 1993), in practice that ideal continues to be caught up in a series of contradictions, including economic dependency on the government. Leaders in both villages are preoccupied with how they might take advantage of government programs, while they both insist on a certain independence from government authority. For example, Tejeda's Faction B refused a campaign visit by a Campeche state gubernatorial candidate (*Diario de Yucatan*, August 13, 1996). The factionalism DeWalt and Rees cite as endemic to Mexico's ejidos (1994) is a challenge to anthropological concepts of "community." Factionalism on the frontier is even more of a challenge to these concepts because it shows how tenuous even lines of agreement can be.

Historians and anthropologists increasingly utilize a regionalist approach to make sense of both the unity and diversity of social organization in Mexico (Lomnitz-Adler 1992). This approach states that a space for localism exists because Mexico's corporatist state derives its power in part from incompleteness and instability (Rubin 1996:121). The federal government provides an idiom for national communication, while brokered deals with regional power holders allow a variety of power structures to operate throughout the country. Historically, these local structures have depended on strong-arm tactics for efficacy. Campeche's frontier communities demonstrate the results of this process at the ejidal level. Farmers draw on a national language of smallholder agriculture to build village power structures that reflect regionalist and ethnic affiliations. They attempt to build communities based on kin to counter a general lack of accountability. At the same time, farmers reproduce the monopolization of wealth and power as part of a larger project to protect themselves both within and outside the ejido.

Mexico's farmers have been quite creative in contributing to this larger project. For heuristic purposes, I have presented as neatly distinguishable categories of social organization, economic stratification, the ejidal structure, ethnicity, and family relations. In practice these categories are not clearly differentiated. Overlap exists among the categories, and individuals use the principles asserted within one realm to organize relationships within another. The interweaving of categories requires that farmers consider the acceptance of newcomers as part of a multifaceted process rather than as a single event. A newcomer brings to a village a variety of identities and roles. These roles and identities overlap in the context of intense competition for power and resources. The stakes are such that farmers must carefully evaluate a group or individual's potential to dominate village life on a number of fronts (Haenn 1997a).

Rather than move to full-time wage labor, migrants to southeast Campeche insist on staying in farming in part because they believe agriculture is their most secure economic strategy. At the same time, farmers know that social insecurity threatens their ability to establish long-term farming operations. Established farmers walk a dangerous line between accepting newcomers to exploit them and rejecting migrants, who will only increase competition for scarce resources. Newcomers are also in a precarious position, having little political voice and a high level of economic insecurity. The acceptance/rejection of migrants is a messy process that brings larger issues of security into stark relief. When farmers talk about their migratory journeys they add to the search for land a desire for a stable social situation, "as long as they leave me to work quietly with my family." The example of southeast Campeche suggests the need to better incorporate such political factors into our understanding of migratory processes.

Notes

follow Schryer (1990) in capitalizing Mestizo in order to express that Spanish-speaking farmers are a distinct ethnic group.

²In addition to a source of cheap labor and cash for village funds, migrants also contribute to village life by the fees they pay for village needs such as water. Migrant participation in communal work days alleviates the burden of work for ejidatarios. Finally, migrants tended to work in areas of older growth forest. I suspect ejidatarios use newcomers to clear fields they intend to occupy during following years.

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