The labyrinth of otherness: an essay on authoritarian acquiescence in Mexico

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THE LABYRINTH OF OTHERNESS: AN ESSAY ON
AUTHORITARIAN ACQUIESCENCE IN MEXICO

by

Mary Elizabeth Scott

An essay
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in the Inter-American Studies Field
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Chapter 1

ELEMENTS OF AUTHORITARIANISM

A society is a group of unequal beings organized to meet common needs, writes Robert Ardrey.\footnote{Robert Ardrey, The Social Contract (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1970), p. 3.} This description refers to a basic political process in which the canons of civility emerge. In this process of forming a society, certain arrangements are made that specify not only obvious political, historical and institutional structures, but also the underlying attitudes, sentiments and motives that reinforce and maintain the body politic. It has become evident to students of sociopolitics, such as Sidney Verba, Lucian W. Pye, Gabriel Almond, Gerald Bender and Peter Ranis, that not all political arrangements, any more than all personal arrangements, are dictated by a deliberately rigid and rational application of the principles of justice and rights. Rather, as psychologists, sociologists, historians and political scientists dialog, the interdisciplinary result verifies the importance of political culture, that "set of attitudes, beliefs, sentiments that..."
give order and meaning to the political process."  

The principles governing the general culture are not dissimilar to those governing the political culture. That composite of social and individual behavioral characteristics which affect the political process is to the political system what general culture is to the social system. It is to the balance of these irrational and rational processes, varying in degree, that this paper wishes to address itself.

According to Peter Ranis,

... the very concept of nation-state is deeply involved in these kinds of historical relationships between a country's leaders and its peoples. At each historical period this delicate inter-relationship has important bearing upon subsequent successes and failures at nation-building and modernization.  

The significance of this political-cultural imperative will become clearer as this inquiry is traced through the Mexico of Octavio Paz. Neglect of its impact has been the failure not only in the Mexican political scene, but in the development of several emerging nations. If the political history of any country is made up of the "mental associations that people have of their society," and if the contemporary attitudes of the people are "the results of

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3Ranis, p. 150.
past events, then neither the cultural foment of the present nor the ferment of the past can be ignored without serious consequences.

In this inquiry, the attempt is made first to see Mexico through the eyes of Octavio Paz, who in his essay, The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid, considers the development of modern Mexico from a cultural, historical and political perspective and secondly to interface a universal archetype with the Mexican experience. Regarding the first endeavor, it is Paz's intention to bring his nation to a better understanding of its own peculiar dilemmas and to indicate changes of attitudes essential for salutary future progress. It is true that as Mexico's renowned poet, essayist, playwright, editor and diplomat, Paz treats the nation's central and critical problems from his role as an intellectual. A few reflections on this role will be helpful.

"An intellectual is one who, regardless of education or occupation, devotes himself seriously to the analysis of ideas," according to Horton and Hunt. His role in this context is constantly to criticize institutional goals and norms, to defend ideologies and analyze deficiencies. Therefore, he is often received with mixed attitudes of

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4 Ibid.

appreciation and fear for frequently his devotion to the institution is subordinated to his concern for the truth. However, Paz must also be placed under the critical light of scrutiny. For as Samuel Huntington reminds us, immediately following revolutionary struggles, the intellectual furnishes the cadres to staff the new government. Then in the second generation, officials come out of the party apparatus and the bureaucrats supercede the intellectuals.

The result is a widening gap between a regime responding to political and institutional needs and intellectuals who in a relatively stable society have lost all their function except that of criticism.6

In addition, Paz is himself inhabited by the "phantasm" that he later mentions and so perhaps has difficulty in perceiving all its inherent inconsistencies and contrasts.

BACKGROUND

Specific events give insight into the totality of attitudes and the environment at points of confrontation. In his historical and philosophical essay, Paz, through a series of flashbacks, emanating from the 1968 student massacre in the Plaza of Tlatelolco, Mexico City, attempts to explain the inconsistencies in the Mexican national psyche. Although the explosive event was the first major one for a forty-year period, many felt that perhaps it was

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a single event suggestive of possible future problems for the nation. The over-reaction which the government displayed raised questions for many perceptive persons about the actual condition of Mexico.

In any living organism, an exaggerated or excessive reaction indicates fear and insecurity, and the sclerosis is a sign not only of the old age but also of an inability to change. The regime showed that it was neither willing nor able to examine its own conscience; but without criticism, above all without self-criticism, there is no possibility of change.⁷

Comparing the 1968 episode to none other than a carnage to the necromanic "fifth sun" legitimized in the need for stability and order, Paz launches into an explanation of Mexico's history through the thematic Aztec archetype which has haunted the Mexican psyche to the present.

Mexico-Tenochtitlan has disappeared, and what concerns me, as I gaze upon its fallen body, is not the problem of historical interpretation, but the fact that we cannot contemplate the cadaver face to face; its phantasm inhabits us. For this reason I believe that a critique of Mexico and its history—a critique resembling the therapeutics of the psychoanalysts—should begin by examining what the Aztec world view meant and still means.⁸

The "phantasm" becomes for Paz the psychological archetype, the topikos of a more general reality. It embodies the totality of all that being Aztec stood for: subjugation, human sacrifice, the pyramid and hierarchical

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⁸ Paz, p. 95.
theocracy. It appears, in reality, this archetype goes beyond the symbol that Paz gives it. Moreover, it becomes the motif, the tendency, the condition, the reconciler of what is otherwise irreconcilable in the national consciousness. It haunts the Mexican writer in his search for this indefinable yet distinct national characteristic that reflects itself in politics, history, religion, literature and life style.

Other writers have grappled with this "phantasm" that makes Mexico a unified whole. Some have attributed the related tremendous historic failure of Independence to divine wrath or natural inferiority. Others have based their opinions on that topic on the conservative tendency: traditional, Catholic, monarchical, or on its liberal opposite: modern, atheist, and republican. Still others have looked deeper into the political culture to identify, ... a Mexican national outlook, in the hope that more people may be led to interest themselves in the psychological and spiritual aspects (as well as the economic and practical considerations) of the country that lies immediately to the south of the Rio Grande.

What Octavio Paz terms as the "Aztec world view"

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appears to be a classical archetype that is distinctively Aztec. This Aztec archetype contains all the characteristics that both modern psychology and sociology label, under the more functional title, authoritarianism.

The image of Mexico as a pyramid is one viewpoint among many others equally possible: the viewpoint of what is the platform at its top. It is the viewpoint of the ancient gods and of those who served them, the Aztec lords and priests. It is also that of their heirs and successors: the viceroy's, the generals, the presidents. And, furthermore, it is the viewpoint of the vast majority, of the victims crushed by the pyramid or sacrificed on its platform sanctuary. The critique of Mexico begins with the critique of the pyramid.12

It is this latter group, "the vast majority, of the victims crushed by the pyramid," that is the focus of this inquiry. This section of the pyramid seems to be the key, not only to Paz and the aforementioned writers, but also to the present Mexican dilemma.

AUTHORITARIANISM

Before proceeding further, it is necessary to analyze adequately what is meant by authoritarianism, for only then will its parallel with Paz's Aztec archetype be apparent. Both psychologists and sociologists, such as Fromm, Adorno, Dillehay and Kirscht and David Winter, have attempted in recent years to define this human phenomenon. The existence of authoritarianism is not peculiar

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12 Paz, p. 95.
to Mexico and is demonstrable within the social makeup of many nations. Often this is true when it is least expected. For instance, even out of the best-laid plans for democratic systems, authoritarianism has been the result. Even from dreams of equality, man has lifted masses from subjection, moved larger masses into slavery. He has provided new heroes, new myths, new gallantries, but also new despots, new prisons and new atrocities. It is not an accusatory finger that is being pointed at the Mexican psyche, for every human group might be so analyzed. The thread that binds the sack of Mexican history may well be the cord that knots the human umbilicum. In the many ways that authoritarianism is manifested within the human social construct, there is ample soil in the Mexican past to have made it flourish, to have sustained it and to have continued its strong persistence.

At this point it will be important then to summarize what is meant by authoritarianism, to discuss its effects, to describe the psychological process whereby it becomes embedded in the individual psyche, to outline the process of socialization whereby it becomes part of the general culture, and to explain its legitimization through a theodicy which tones the entire political culture.

A Working Definition

Perhaps the best working definition of authoritar-
ianism has been outlined by two writers whose task it was to review all former outstanding international research and theory regarding it. These two writers, Kirscht and Dillehay, summarize the component parts of their model as follows:

1. Conventionalism. Rigid adherence to conventional middle-class values.
2. Authoritarian Submission. Submission; uncritical attitude toward idealized moral authorities of the in-group.
3. Authoritarian Aggression. Tendency to be on the lookout for and to condemn, reject, and punish people who violate conventional values.
4. Anti-intraception. Opposition to the subjective, the imaginative, the tenderminded.
5. Superstition and Stereotypy. Belief in mystical determinants of the individual's fate; the disposition to think in rigid categories.
6. Power and Toughness. Preoccupation with the dominance-submission, strong-weak, leader-follower dimension; identification with power figures; exaggerated assertions of strength and toughness.
8. Projectivity. Disposition to believe that wild and dangerous things go on in the world; the projection outward of unconscious emotional impulses.
9. Sex. Ego-alien sexuality; exaggerated concern with sexual "goings on," and punitiveness toward violators of sex mores.\(^\text{13}\)

It should be noted that this first working definition mixes personal dimensions with a social precondition, aggressive characteristics with an acquiescent response.

(As an aside, some feel that this composite of subparts has

a dynamic relationship to prejudice, and therefore possibly to the xenophobia found in Mexico.)

Further Enlargements

A related theory of dogmatism as developed by Rokeach gives us another facet and extension of authoritarianism. Separate from any specific ideology, this dogmatism is rather the condition of individual cognitive structure.

A high degree of dogmatism appears in the form of (a) sharp distinctions between beliefs and disbeliefs, the existence of contradictory beliefs, and little differentiation among disbelief; (b) a basic outlook of pessimism, fear, and concern with power; and (c) a belief in the absolute nature of authority, intolerance of anyone who disagrees, and "party line" thinking.

Though not all of the subparts need be present in any multivariate construct, there is the strongest evidence to regard the authoritarian as one who lacks the ability to deal with novel cognitive material and who usually seeks external authority when exposed to new situations, especially for support of his belief systems. He is extremely orthodox, ethnocentric and intolerant. He projects distrust and submits only to relevant personal authority. In religious matters as well as political, the content may be either conservative or liberal, though the former prevails. In either case, his stance is strongly

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14 Kirscht and Dillehay, p. 5.
15 Ibid., p. 11.
dogmatic and doctrinaire. He will be a doctrinaire conservative or a doctrinaire liberal. T. W. Adorno attaches to this view the tendencies of admiration for power, repression of sexuality and the blame of others.  

In the process of socialization the individual becomes simultaneously a symbolic microcosm of the whole as part of the "generalized other." Social scientists conclude that

... authoritarianism is not a social classification, yet those exposed to impoverished and constricted social context are more likely to develop authoritarian tendencies: excessive emphasis on the correctness and legitimacy of authority and demands for adherence to a power structure.

The authoritarian emerges not so much from a personal paranoia as from a syndrome of cultural conditioning.

At the heart of the emergency of the authoritarian condition is the struggle for power. As Alfred Adler writes,

Everyone's goal is one of superiority, but in the case of those who lose courage and self-

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17 Horton and Hunt, p. 555. The definition of "generalized other": "The totality of values and standards of one's community or one's social group, whose judgments one applies to his own behavior in forming his concept of self."

18 Kirscht and Dillehay, p. 134.
confidence, it is diverted from the useful to the useless side of life.\textsuperscript{19}

And Adriaan Kortlandt adds, "the greatest concern is aggression and fear,"\textsuperscript{20} the two dimensions in the process of power. The phenomenon then becomes not so much that the leader leads, but that the followers follow. Power in its social context becomes that ability through which one or more persons can affect the emotions and behavior of another person or persons.

**PSYCHOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON POWER**

In his book, *The Power Motive*, David Winter explains the two aspects of power: hope of power which corresponds to the sadistic tendencies of dominance and which is patterned after the role of the father in early childhood, and the fear of power which corresponds to the masochistic tendencies of submission and which is patterned after the role of the mother. In either case, the predominance of one type of power in the individual stems from dominance or lack of dominance that the father has exercised. The two faces of power can be distinguished further. The hope of power, positive in its direction, correlates to a narcissism and superiority that has been rewarded; fear of power, negative in its direction, with an avoidance mechanism against

\textsuperscript{19}Ardrey, p. 104.

\textsuperscript{20}Ibid.
failure and rejection.\textsuperscript{21} Or, as Laswell describes the personality structure: "The accentuation of power is to be understood as a compensatory reaction against a low estimation of the self."\textsuperscript{22}

Despite the striving for freedom that is readily acknowledgable, freedom from the external preying influences of politics, economics and religion, more recent studies stress that man is still anchored strongly to the nomos of his social and psychic past, to the meaningful ordering of his concept of reality.\textsuperscript{23} Given the opportunity, he chooses degrees of nonfreedom over the prospects of insecure responsibility. The nomos that permitted the type of Aztec leadership, the rule of imperial Spain, the kind of local and national leadership represented in Mexico, and perhaps the nation's later one-party system is a surrender to social efficiency.

The Need to Submerge One's Self

Not only do people tend to avoid internal personal anxiety, but also external structures that create indefi-
niteness and anomie. To do this, man sets up mechanisms of escape, as Erich Fromm points out. One such mechanism is authoritarianism; another is automaton conformity in which all critical thinking is suppressed; and the third is destructiveness in which a total blockage of spontaneity provokes explosive behavior.24

For the purpose of avoiding anxiety, each of these mechanisms is given expression in some type of compulsive life. The problem arises when the establishment and development of external structures overemphasize the smooth functioning of society over the development of the individual. In the first process, the self becomes alienated, is surrendered, and fuses with the other, something outside itself. The primary bond of self-integration is relinquished for a secondary bond with some other, outside of the self. An effort ensues that unconsciously leads the individual or individuals masochistically toward submission and domination. The prolonged frustration of the positive struggle for power actually becomes a striving for "inferiority, powerlessness, individual insignificance."25

Masochism reflects the need for power outside of oneself, the need to revel in suffering the privation imposed from without, the need to be disemboweled and

25Ibid., p. 163.
eaten. These needs suggest the symbiotic relationship between the sadist and the masochist, a relationship which is often acted out for the good of the whole.

While at least some common understanding of the process of sadism is more easily grasped, the discussion of the process of masochism, though the essential correlative of the script, is usually skirted. Perhaps the reason is that man has become accustomed to dealing with structures, rather than the motifs that are the rationale for the erection of these structures.

Freud explains the process in terms of sexual perversion, the unresolved Oedipal stage; Adler attributes it to inferiority feelings countered with a will for power; Karen Horney identifies it as an outcome of the socialized character structure that is an escape from unbearable aloneness and powerlessness. 26 To quote a telling description from Dostoevski in the Brothers Karamazov, for some men there is

... no more pressing need than the one to find somebody to whom he can surrender, as quickly as possible, that gift of freedom which he, the unfortunate creature, was born with. 27

The autocentric drive in which "the sharp boundary between the self and the other does not develop as a fixed

26 Ibid., p. 171.
27 Ibid., p. 173.
structure of the ego," 28 "where the self is predicated on the community," 29 prevails. One strives to become part of the more powerful whole, to submerge the self, to submit to cultural patterns, to need the glory of the group, to remain in indebted peonage. Thereby, it becomes unnecessary to decide or respond and one is "saved" from the meaning of his life, from who he is. In the psychological sense, he and his weakness is permitted to be absorbed in duty, in piety, in fate, in the Will of the Lord; or in the more modern conscience, in common sense, public opinion, science; or in a host of other external forces, be they ghosts of the past or gods of the present or future which have been constructed for his adoration and allegiance.

The Dominance of the Superego

One final submission takes place and that is within the psyche of the individual. If authority is automatically internalized, then there is a conquest of one part of nature over the other, the squelching of the ego and of the id for the sake of the tyrannical superego. For some, the externals of religion play their part in rationalizing behavior, for man bears the "imprint of

[29] Ibid., p. 591.
original sin and therefore is bereft of responsibility."\textsuperscript{30}

Courage, heroism, and belief are virtues that the masochist cultivates because and to the degree that they enhance his will to suffer fate. Should the authority in which he believes, however, show any signs of weakness or feet of clay, his adoration turns to hatred and contempt. He himself turns into a rebel.

**SOCIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS ON POWER**

The world-building activity of man is always and inevitably a collective enterprise. "Men together shape tools, invent languages, adhere to values, devise institutions, and so on."\textsuperscript{31} It is man's challenge, unlike that of the instinctive animal, to impose his own order upon his experience. One of society's roles is to be the guardian of order as well as of significance, status. Because this is true for external institutions as well as for internal structuring of the individual consciousness, there is a deep need for a social world or man becomes alienated and threatened.

He loses his orientation in experience. In extreme cases, he loses his sense of reality and identity. He becomes anomic in the sense of becoming worldless.\textsuperscript{32}


\textsuperscript{31}Berger, *The Sacred Canopy*, p. 7.

\textsuperscript{32}Ibid., p. 21.
The general order of things, the nomos, that is socially established serves then in reality as a shield against terror or fear of meaninglessness. Serving to mitigate the threats to socially-constructed worlds are three different functions: that of socialization, that of social control, and that of the process of legitimation.

Socialization

Socialization is the "process by which one internalizes the norms of his groups so that a distinct self emerges unique to this individual." It depends on specific social arrangements which can be internalized positively or negatively in one's personal development. If, in the psychological sense, the individual strives away from his aloneness, it is a radical self-denial, an absorption in an other which gives meaning at the moment of surrender. In the sociological sense, a similar acquiescence is possible. Many people live their lives in surrender to the normative authoritarian social structures and within the established routines that give form and stability to social life, rather than in interaction.

By himself, the individual has no allocentric

33 Horton and Hunt, p. 558.
center, no concept of the "self predicated on its own distinctness and separateness." Role-taking and role-playing, self-doubt or self-initiative are either enhanced or diminished in terms of the "generalized other," the mirror of one's self. This mirror reflects the anticipations of others whose values, mores, folkways, formal and informal relationships and influences are understood in the larger context of economic, political, educational, religious and familial institutions and primary organizations.

We are social beings and our existence is bound to specific social location... Every social role can be played knowingly or blindly... Every institution can be an alibi, an instrument of alienation from our freedom.

The term "man" in Heidegger, used similarly to "one" in English, reflects that normative structure of the vague generality of human beings. As José Ortega y Gasset reinterprets Heidegger, it is Lo que se hace. This anonymous generality bears down powerfully on the concrete individual's conduct.

Social Control

The second function which preserves socially-
constructed worlds, but which can also find expression in authoritarianism is social control. Sometimes this is effected by means of coercion, and if this fails, then violence may be officially and legally used. This violence, ensconced in every institutional form, may extend from police intimidation to physical violence in politics, from financial sanction to bankruptcy in economics, from ostracism to excommunication in religion. Moreover, where the sado-masochistic ties of feelings, status and relationships are intricately interwoven, the social mechanisms of conformity may begin with persuasion, progress to ridicule and gossip, and terminate in opprobrium. 37

Sociologists indicate that in the exercise of social controls, apart from the use of violence, restraint for the sake of order is greatly desired. Moreover, even in a dictatorial and terroristic state, a regime tends to gain acceptance and even acceptability by the simple passage of time. 38

Legitimization

The need for legitimation is the last function which serves to maintain the socially-constructed world. This need is prone to abuse through hierarchical corruption. Institutional arrangements are dependent upon some system

37 Berger, Invitation to Sociology, p. 71.
38 Ibid., p. 70.
which allows them to make the whole structure plausible in the human search for meaning.

The less firm the plausibility structure becomes, the more acute will be the need for world-maintaining legitimations. Typically, therefore, the development of complete legitimations takes place in situations in which the plausibility structures are threatened in one way or another. 39

Legitimation can take place through self-evident needs, by custom or by theoretical constructs. The last is that process by which

. . . the nomos of society is legitimated in toto and in which all less-than-total legitimations are theoretically integrated in an all-embracing Weltanschauung (World View). 40

In this last process of reality-maintenance, religion has often played a crucial part because of its unique ability to "locate human phenomena within a cosmic framework of reference." 41 Just as this is true, so is its disjunctive statement. The oldest antagonist of the sacred is that yawning abyss of chaos.

To go against the order of society is always to risk plunging into anomie. To go against the order of society as religiously legitimated, however, is to make a compact with the primeval forces of darkness. 42

39 Berger, The Sacred Canopy, p. 17.
40 Ibid., p. 32.
41 Ibid., p. 35.
42 Ibid., p. 39.
RELIGION AS THE LEGITIMIZING THEODICY

Adding to these ideas of legitimation, the concept of theodicy must be explained. It is a rationale which is "an explanation of the above phenomena in terms of religious legitimations, of whatever degrees of theoretical sophistication." In all theodicies as in all societies, there exists an implicit function which is the facilitation of the denial of self, one's needs, anxieties and problems. Wherever the individual reduces himself totally to the nomoi established by the society, he reflects a masochistic orientation.

There are two inherent problems within the masochistic attitude. The first, the attempt to negate the self and to make the other the absolute reality, is geared to failure. This side of death the self cannot be destroyed; neither can the other be absolutized except in illusion, in the distortion of reality. The only identity that the individual or the collectivity of individuals has is in the declaration of the "other" as absolute. The second problem is that masochism is dependent on sadism. The human sadist always remains vulnerable, limited and mortal. It is only a sadistic god that would not be handicapped by these empirical imperfections. "The surrender

\[43\] Ibid., p. 53.
to him is ipso facto protected from the contingencies and uncertainties of merely social masochism forever."44

Theodicies affect the concrete individual in daily life. They do not necessarily provide happiness, but they give meaning. For example, one important social function is the explanation of the socially prevailing inequalities of power and privilege. Legitimations serve

... both for the powerful and for the powerless, for the privileged and for the deprived. For the latter, of course, they may serve as "opiates" to make their situation less intolerable, and by the same token to prevent them from rebelling against it. For the former, however, they may serve as subjectively quite important justifications of their enjoyment of the power and privilege of their social position.45

If the theodicy effects the above legitimations for both groups at once, it

... constitutes an essentially sado-masochistic collusion, on the level of meaning, between oppressor and victims--a phenomenon that is far from rare in history.46

An important outcome of legitimation then is world-maintenance for the social order; a possible concomitant threat is authoritarianism. The social order construct may vary, but the same principles of theodicy hold true whether the type be primitive religion, millenarian religion or certain understandings of the Christian religion. The

44 Ibid., p. 57.
46 Ibid.
latter refers to those such as Ignatius Loyola's confession of self-abasement in the Jesuit motto *ad majorem Dei gloriam*; one's own self-expression is demeaned to God's greater glory. It is only when the theodicy's plausibility disintegrates, when it no longer legitimates the inequalities, when the holders of power and the structures of external dominance no longer relate to the *nomos* of society nor carry its banner, that rebellion emerges as a potential alternative.

**CHARACTERISTICS OF THE POLITICAL CULTURE**

These psychological and sociological processes, coupled with a legitimizing theodicy are factors that evidence themselves, as will be seen, in Mexican society. Both in the historical development and the contemporary consequences, the evidence of authoritarianism is impressive despite the attempts toward the democratic process. The political paralysis that Paz sees in the petrifying symbol of the pyramid is none other than the result of a development within the political culture. Both in the *Other Mexico* and in the contemporary Mexican political life similar evidence is present; the prognosis is the Aztec archetype, i.e., authoritarianism.

It will be well to mention the following points before proceeding to the analysis of Paz's Aztec archetype.

47 Ibid., p. 74.
Authoritarianism is manifest within the political framework in the following three ways. First, as low subject mobilization, wherein the politicized individuals possess a "subject" (dependent) rather than a "participant" (independent) attitude. The regime does not encourage the citizen except on a temporary basis nor does the subject wish to do anything but ratify and support the elite. Second, because of this, there is limited political pluralism. Interest groups are dependent upon the regime. Their sustenance is directly dependent upon the government. And third, the rulership is patrimonial. The sadomasochistic script is played out in the granting of privileges, goods and benefices in return for deference and the acknowledgement of authority.\footnote{Susan Kaufman Purcell, "Decision-Making in an Authoritarian Regime: Theoretical Implications from a Mexican Case Study," \textit{World Politics}, XXVI, No. 1 (October, 1973), 30.}
Chapter 2

AN ANALYSIS OF THE AZTEC ARCHETYPE

Because it is a symbolic image, any archetype has several meanings. In trying to understand the Aztec archetype of Octavio Paz, it should be kept in mind that throughout his book, Paz has drawn from many varied sources and has endeavored to synthesize the material to produce a meaningful interpretation. In this inquiry, it will be necessary accordingly to research related writing in order to elucidate adequately his text.

At this point, attention will be focused specifically upon Paz's Aztec archetype and how it parallels, both from the perspective of other social sciences and from history, what has been described above as authoritarianism. This inquiry continues through the analysis of the "other," that drive for order and efficiency, of subjugation, of human sacrifice, of the pyramid, of the Aztec destiny and of the accelerating status of the Aztec chieftain.

THE DRIVE FOR ORDER AND EFFICIENCY

The complex organization of the militarist state of
the Aztecs grew from what formerly had been a small, nomadic, and despised "chichimec" horde.¹ The old tribal system of easy democracy in which the leaders were selected on the basis of military or other special attributes with no absolute power of their own grew inadequate. For the individual tribesman, large populations and sedentary existence brought the need for collaboration in various projects, such as irrigation. This meant a relinquishment of his own personal power and decision-making.

To accomplish and maintain these works man (the Aztec) had to give up part of his freedom for the collective benefit, since for a successful operation the group must be organized and led. The work must be planned and executed collectively.²

By the time of Montezuma I, a social structure was required which was able to provide and order activities at the center of the consolidated Empire as well as to control subdued peoples at the periphery. About 30 years later, by the coming of Montezuma II, a further organization of the armies, political and economic management, and the adoption of an urban life were again to transform profoundly the structure of the Aztec society.

The society was divided into classes, and there were nobles, plebeians, and slaves. Likewise there

were merchants, priests, specialized workers in many manual skills, and an entire bureaucracy.³

The maintenance of social order and control became the important "other" toward which all was geared. For the Aztec, this imperative was twofold: order and control of the peoples of their developing empire and order in the universe.

**SUBJUGATION**

The practice of subjugation was also dual: subjugation of other tribes and subjugation of members within the Aztec tribe itself. The practice of conquest of other peoples through war had begun with Mixcoatl early in Aztec history. "War held out the promise of material advantages, conquests, booty, tributes, and a constant expansion of territorial boundaries."⁴ Lesser wars sustained the Mexica until their successful conclusion of the Tepanec War secured the economic as well as the political power of the Mexica nobility.

Under Montezuma I, an increasing need for living victims to be offered in human sacrifice resulted in the Aztec adoption of the custom called the "flowery war."⁵ In this ritual warfare, "The subject nations constituted a

³Ibid., p. 122.
⁴Ibid., p. 112.
⁵Bernal, p. 113; Paz, p. 83.
reserve of sacred sustenance. 6

The first seventeen years of Montezuma II's reign were spent in continual wars and in the suppression of rebellions. The latter was necessitated

... by peoples who, desperate because of the suffocating oppression, rose in arms hoping vainly to escape the tributes which had been placed on them. 7

Nonconformity was harshly checked by the toughness of the military leadership. Violence and death became expected phenomena for the multitude under the Aztec domain. Their justification focused on the need for territorial acquisition and boundary maintenance.

The practice of subjugation within the Aztec society itself began and continued as the complexification of the society progressed. Marked social divisions grew up to separate the levels of stratified society. One example will illustrate this fact. The macehual, making up by far the most numerous division, gradually acquiesced to the system by which

... without payment of any kind, [he] worked the aristocrats' lands, built the aristocrats' homes, maintained the noble family, constructed temples, swept streets, and built the roads, the causeways, and the aqueducts. The macehual was the beast of burden, the farm laborer, the unskilled worker with many responsibilities and almost no privileges. 8

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6 Paz, p. 91.

7 Bernal, p. 123.

His role of dependent servitude had now become complete.

Another area in which demands were exacted of the Aztec multitudes was that of religion. Their required duties were extensive and onerous:

The average man devoted some 30 percent of his waking hours to some aspect of religious observance, to which he gave not only his time but his goods.\(^9\)

The people indeed became the part of the human pyramid which supported a dominating minority at the top. Even though the demands upon them grew increasingly more taxing,

... the mass of the people enjoyed none of the advantages of a well-endowed society in spite of the greater complexity of Mexican life in 1519 than in 1450 and despite the great wealth concentrated in the capital.\(^10\)

Then, as now, the "other Mexico" was poor and in misery, generally acquiescent to their subjugation and repression.

**HUMAN SACRIFICE**

The Aztec theodicy reinforced the ultimate script that the common citizen was eventually subject to be sacrificed. This practice was based on the concept of creative destruction which will be discussed subsequently. Due to the continuous offerings of blood through human sacrifice, the insatiable gods would sustain the larger

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 40.

\(^10\) Ibid., p. 39.
life of the universal cosmos and its remaining inhabitants. The obsidian knife of the shaman-king came to symbolize the absolute sadism of the nomos of Aztec society to which the common multitude was acquiescent and dependent upon and through which they found ultimate identity.

Whatever the natural phenomenon which may have provoked the initiation of this horror-filled and terrible practice,

. . . neither population surplus nor custom, however, is in itself sufficient to account for this fanatic obsession with blood and death. . . . Driven by imaginary and real indignities, cruel against himself and others, doing battle against doom and yet attracted by it, as the victim succumbs to the fascination of a snake, haunted by omens, the Mexica warrior constituted an extreme among possible psychological types, ever engaged in fulfilling his prophecies of destruction by acting upon the assumption of imminent catastrophe. 11

Through this custom, the drama of masochism became at once inherited, embraced and transmitted. The victim became the actor in his own projectivity or as Paz suggests, "We are condemned to invent a mask and to discover afterward that the mask is our true visage." 12

THE PYRAMID

Paz believes that the pyramid was an image of the world, an image which in turn was the projection of the


12 Paz, p. viii.
geography and the societal structure of Mexico. The geography of that landscape

... rises between two seas like a huge truncated pyramid: its four sides are the four points of the compass, its staircases are the climates of all the zones, and its high plateau is the house of the sun and the constellations. 13

And "If it is true that man invents gods in his own image, it is also true that he sees his own image in the images that the sky and the earth offer him." 14

For the people of antiquity, then, the world was a mountain symbolically represented by the pyramid.

The Mesoamerican pyramid, archaic archetype of the world, geometric metaphor for the cosmos, culminates in a magnetic space: the Platform-sanctuary. It is the axis of the universe, the place where the four compass points cross, the center of the quadrangle: the end and the beginning of motion. An immobility in which the dance of the cosmos ends and again begins. The four sides of the pyramid, petrified time, represent the four suns or ages of the world, and its staircases are days, months, years, centuries. At the top, on the platform: the birthplace of the fifth sun, the Nahua and Aztec era. An edifice made of time: what was, what shall be, what is... As time, it is the center of motion, the end and the beginning of the eras: the everlasting present of the gods. 15

It is there that man encounters the divine, that it is possible to attain identification with the divine totally "other" through masochistic submission to sacrifice.

13 Ibid., p. 80.
14 Ibid., p. 81.
15 Ibid.
The life-giving space of the platform guaranteed the continuity of time through blood offerings. There the gods played "with time, and their game is the creation and destruction of the worlds."\textsuperscript{16} In these games which were all a form of play, "which are wars and which are dances, the gods create, destroy, and sometimes, destroy themselves."\textsuperscript{17} But even then, after their self-offering, they recreate the world. This same model of creative destruction was translated to the rites, ceremonies and fiestas of man, as is exemplified by the ritualistic penitential dance and "flowery war."

The description of the image of the pyramid as the projection of the societal structure of Mexico can be found in the sections on Subjugation and on the Accelerating Status of the Aztec Chieftain. In addition, that projection has been referred to in Chapter 1, particularly through the following passage:

The image of Mexico as a pyramid is one viewpoint among many others equally possible: the viewpoint of what is the platform at its top. It is the viewpoint of the ancient gods and of those who served them, the Aztec lords and priests. It is also that of their heirs and successors: the viceroys, the generals, the presidents. And, furthermore, it is the viewpoint of the vast majority, of the victims crushed by the pyramid or sacrificed on its platform sanctuary.\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{16}Ibid., p. 82.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{18}Ibid., p. 95.
THE AZTEC DESTINY

The pyramid was also directly related to the Aztec conception of their national destiny. It was through the theodicy that the military and the religious, as well as the common people were possessed by an inordinate and heroic belief "that they were the instruments of a sacred task that consisted in serving, maintaining, and extending the solar cult and thus helping to preserve the order of the cosmos."\footnote{Ibid., p. 90.} As guardians of the sun, they legitimized through their belief the historical aberration which their style of warfare and human sacrifice represented.

Through the process of socialization, the individual Mexica "acquired with his very mother's milk a sense of collective mission in a world balanced upon the edge of destruction."\footnote{Wolf, op. cit.} Their doomsday ideology was a powerful cement for social unity as each Mexica identified himself with the cult of the sun: "Their domination is similar to that of the sun, which is daily born, fights, dies, and is reborn."\footnote{Paz, p. 83.} The avoidance of the end of Aztec supremacy coincided with the avoidance of the end of the cosmic world for these people of the "fifth sun." What was considered a sacred task was to be superceded by its related political-
military enterprise to such a degree that

The "Aztec Peace," as the Mexica's hegemony has been called by one of its erudite contemporary idolaters, made ritual warfare a permanent institution.22

The Aztec destiny was intimately linked with their alleged right of hegemony. In this late period,

Descent from the original Toltec rulers and mystical participation in the original Tollan became the sine qua non of political legitimacy, without which royal descent remained spurious and political overlordship illegitimate.23

It was because of this threat of illegitimacy that the Aztec ruler prior to Montezuma I, knowing that the Aztecs had usurped the power,

... ordered that the ancient codices and documents be burned and that new ones be fabricated, the purpose of the latter being to "prove" that the Aztecs were the descendants of the lords of Anahuac.24

It was not surprising then, when Montezuma encountered the fair-haired god, Cortés, who had come from the east to reclaim his throne, that the former said, "What help is there now, my stalwarts; ... with this they have given us fit punishments."25 The idea of returning time, rooted in a feeling of guilt, unveiled the liability of the revised codices for, when the Spaniards arrived, their

22 Ibid., p. 91.
23 Wolf, p. 120.
24 Paz, p. 97.
supposed divinity "had the same origin as the purported cosmic mission of the Aztec people." At that moment, the mask of Montezuma cracked. He was no longer the symbol of fate to the "other"; he lost his courage to wield superstitious power; and his image as the heroic ideal became tarnished. His symbolism as the national superego crumbled before the people and with it his legitimation. An immediate attempt at rebellion followed and Montezuma died a few days later from the blow of a stone, a wound which he suffered as "he went to a window in order to quiet the turbulent Indians." 

THE ACCELERATING STATUS OF THE AZTEC CHIEFTAIN

Consider now the top of the pyramid, that pyramid which is the projection of human society. As individual leaders or specially qualified groups were needed to direct the collective activities of the tribe, an elite class distinct from the rest emerged. On the one hand, it provided the rationale for sacrificing to the "other" of social order and efficiency. On the other hand, it provided the threat and possibility of organizing the new society for its own advantage. The ruling class for ancient Mexico, originally witch doctors and then priests, developed into

26 Ibid., p. 102.

well-defined social roles. Built around a religious group, the society as a whole shifted its orientation "toward a mystical concept" which became its center and reason for being; its world view and legitimation became then a theocracy.

The ideological power of the priests, however, had limitations. It was when the old gods became impotent under the flames of revolt and the violence of repression that the new gods of war and human sacrifice were brought to power. When the plausibility of power disintegrated, when the symbols of dominance no longer related to the nomos of society, rebellion became the alternative. Those who were denied power vainly confronted those who hoped for greater power, the ruled pitted themselves against the rulers, the poor battled the rich.

The rulers emerging from this struggle may still have clothed themselves in the ostentations of the theocratic rule, but their religious function became less visible than their military one. Moreover, where the network of controls had formerly been more loosely knit, "the new era drew tight the strands of power."

At the time of the Spaniards arrival, the complexity

28 Bernal, p. 27.
29 Wolf, p. 106.
30 Ibid., p. 117.
of the Aztec aristocracy was evident. Those in the upper administrative levels carried the title, tlatoani, or in Cumberland's writings, tecuhtli.  

The term designated a function rather than a person and is defined by Pedro Carrasco as follows: "A tlatoani was the supreme ruler and had civil, military, and religious duties. He also stood at the head of the fiscal system. . . ." These formerly elective positions had become appointive and virtually hereditary by 1500; likewise, the position of the emperor was almost invariably filled from the predecessor's family.

In addition to these changes, the bureaucratic societal structure had effected a change in the person of the leader himself,

. . . who became more and more of an autocrat and who, as Montezuma II, was transfigured into a kind of god. Like the Roman Caesars, power went to their head, and the former organization turned increasingly into a kind of Oriental despotism.  

This idealization gave the tlatoani an absolute nature; he had allowed himself to be depersonalized by the masking of his humanity. For Paz, the tlatoani was significant because he represented "impersonal, priestly, and

31 Cumberland, p. 23.
33 Bernal, p. 122.
institutional" dimensions of power to which all the subjects could acquiesce. He came to symbolize an impersonal continuity of rule, while a specific caste of priests and hierarchs exercised power during its successive incarnations. For him, all was legitimized in legality and formalisms. He was indeed the "very model of stability."\textsuperscript{35}

It was then toward the need for social efficiency and order that both sides of the power structure, the objective and the subjective, focused. For the majority, it was the initial and consequent acquiescence to power, uncritically or unwittingly made, which interacted with the insatiable hope for power and its acquisition on the part of the hierarchical minority. Even the symbols of aristocracy, dress and life style, for example, became institutionalized as symbols of dominance while acquiescence, dependency, servitude, slavery and victim-status became the symbols of submission. As one historian notes,

From the standpoint of post-conquest history, the chief fact about ancient Mexican civilization was that it drilled the people into a mute discipline which prepared the way for Spanish dominance and rule.\textsuperscript{36}

\textsuperscript{34}Paz, p. 102.

\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 104.

The Aztec archetype had been impressed well; the sadomasochistic script would be played out, as shall be seen, for centuries to come. The Mexica made malleable through the process of authoritarianism would yield as clay to whatever leader would dare to put his foot to the treadle.
Chapter 3

THE COLONIAL PERIOD: THE STONES
OF THE PYRAMID IN PLACE

When Montezuma stood side by side with Cortés, all
the preconditions had already been completed for the
transfer of the structure of power. Montezuma fell as
might all heroes of the authoritarian interface. In his
mad drive to placate the gods, in his acceptance of this
white foreigner as a superior, he displayed his humanness
and therefore he could not enjoy the theocratic luxury
of a glorious death. He, too, must submit himself to the
sacrificial model of the masochist.¹ There was no middle
way.

The yoke of acquiescence was taken from beneath
the feet of the dead tlatoani and placed beneath the feet
of the new Spanish conqueror. "Spanish power took the
place of Aztec power and thus continued it."² In this
"changing of the guard," the powers symbolized by Cortés


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paralleled all the powers formerly held by the tlatoani. He represented the Spanish monarch who in effect was a shaman-king with a princely pope providing him with a legitimizing theodicy.

Initially, the steps of this transfer were easy as Cortés was presumed to be Quetzalcoatl. For the vast multitudes, all their projectivity was realized in this fair-skinned, bearded, iron-clad, four-legged anthropomorphic figure who came from the east in the year 1-Acatl, and who could make his own thunder and spew death from the end of a metal stick. In speaking, not of those who govern, but of the governed, Paz says,

It is apparent that the Spanish viceroys were unaware of the mythology of the Mexicas, but their subjects were not, whether Indians, mestizos, or creoles: all of them, naturally and spontaneously, saw the Spanish state as the continuation of Aztec power. This identification was not explicit and never assumed a rational form: it was something that was in the nature of things. Besides, the continuity between the Spanish viceroy and the Aztec lord, between the Christian capital and the ancient idolatrous city, was only one aspect of the idea that colonial society had of the pre-Columbian past. That continuity could also be seen in the realm of religion.

The reference to the capital city deserves notice. The name Mexica-Tenochtitlán which signified all that had conquered and been conquered was now placed beneath the feet of the new conquistadores. The Aztec archetype was

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3 Ibid., p. 98.
4 Ibid., p. 86.
more firmly fused as this symbol, never to be remote from their thoughts or conversations, remained.

The fact that the whole country was given the name of the city of its oppressors is one of the keys to the history of Mexico, her unwritten, unspoken history.⁵

Should there have been any doubts about the specific Aztec world view, the reinforcement of it by a parallel alien structure only cemented the Aztec in acquiescence. He was to be further submerged by two factors: the far more desperate channels of communication and the far more advanced technology of the Spanish weapons and techniques of agriculture.

**THE HERITAGE OF THE CONQUISTADORES**

There were no alternate models of structure that the Spanish conquerors could impose, nor were there any alternate models for the indigenous multitudes to follow. For both their histories had conditioned them to comparable modalities of power: it was either to impose or to bear the yoke. The Spanish model of authoritarianism had all the ingredients necessary to play out the Aztec, authoritarian script.

As a result of its own round of invasions and subjugations, Spain herself had lived under a societal system

⁵Ibid., p. 85.
whose essence was a "relationship between the conqueror and conquered," a society divided horizontally between the lord and vassal, master and serf. Its political-military tendencies were at times aligned with religious motivation as in the Christian Crusades against Israel and against the Moslems.

Only recently had Spain become a nation state. Its divine right monarch whose first purpose concerned the principles of the Eternal Law had become, in addition,

... the form in which their (Spaniards) inmost yearning for living together, inherent in the human condition, acquired reality. The Spaniards, given their manner of existence, could not untie themselves except in a belief; faith in the monarchy was an anchor of salvation, as was religious faith, neither of them critically analyzed in Spain before the nineteenth century.7

The peoples "devoted" themselves to the "other," the shaman-king, Los Reyes Católicos, whose further religious legitimation had been granted by the Papacy of the Spaniard Alexander VI at the defeat of the Moslems in 1492.

Ready for something new, the Spaniards poured their religious-political energies over the Atlantic. As Renaissance men they had lost the structured and secure forms of the former society. "They were more free, but they

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7 Ibid., p. 51.
were also more alone."  


9 Ibid., p. 49.

denominator is local power used for national purposes.¹¹

Basically, its strong local power, organized pyramid-fashion, occasions the interlocking of chiefdoms which forms the political infrastructure.

These new caciques quickly became aware of the opportunities afforded by Spanish imperialism. They often sought favors from Cortés, perhaps under the presumption or desire that the new Spanish rule was to resemble the former centralist character of the Aztecs. Some even had direct recourse to the king, but after repeated disappointments, they became disillusioned with the lack of response. Regardless of this limitation and of certain gradual limitations on their authority, their particular position in the colonial society normally induced them to look favorably upon Hispanic ways and to Hispanize themselves as actively as circumstances allowed. "For them Hispanization was both a system of authority and a method of maintaining authority. "¹²

Several opportunities for personal advantage came to these intermediaries with the Spanish officials. Their duty of collecting and delivering taxes provided occasion for coercion, extortion, embezzlement and other illegal practices. In providing labor quotas, they were susceptible to bribery.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 1-2.
¹²Ibid., p. 22.
Even though the colonial period saw a broadening of the power base, the role of the leader remained essentially the same: that of gathering the acquiescence and submission of the multitudes and facilitating their oblation.

THE COLONIAL SYSTEM

The extra-legal system of the cacique facilitated the fluid acceptance of the Spanish colonial rule. The pattern of the large, almost completely inarticulate, passive majority which was to evolve throughout the colonial rule had its roots in the Aztec experience; only its forms were to change. With very little adaption of their own lifestyle, the vast multitudes submitted easily to the external symbolism of theodicy, the economic demands and the political overstructure. The yoke, though perhaps more tolerable under the Spanish format, did not disturb their patterned acquiescence.

Religious Colonial Dimensions

Replacing the codices of Montezuma, likewise rationalized through legalistic and theological adaption to meet hegemony desires of territorial expansion, was the imposed theodicy of the Requirement. No opportunity for the common people existed but that of continuing in acquiescence or of suffering drastic consequences. So the authoritarian syndrome remained.

Perhaps the single most important religious document
of the conquest and early colonial periods was the Requirement. This legal brief, sent aboard all Spanish vessels from 1513-73, while intended by the Crown to bring glory to God, at the same time provided the religious legitimation and moral justification for the invasion of the New World. While the Crown's theory may have been sincerely well-intentioned, the individual conquistador was not always imbued with the purity of noble motives.

The document's main purpose was to require Amerinds, considered "infidels" according to the definition of Thomas Aquinas, to accept the Church and the Papacy, the King and his New World representatives, and to enable preachers to convert them. After including reference to the Hapsburg monarchs, the Creation Story, the Petrine Theory, the Treaty of Tordesilles (1494), it compares the present invasion to the Just War Theory.

One Martín Fernández de Enciso had convincingly stated that the Spaniards' cause was similar to that of the Biblical Joshua. The latter had the right to conquer Jericho because idolaters were there; the Spaniards, through the Pope's approval, had a similar right to wage just war against non-Christians in the New World. In addition to giving religious legitimation, it provided justification for the brutal treatment of the "infidel" Indians.

This ultimate in legalistic documents allowed for temporary restraint from punitive measures for those who
complied. However,

If you do not this, and of malice be dilatory, I protest to you, that with the help of our Lord, I will enter with force, making war upon you from all directions and in every manner that I may be able, when I will subject you to obedience to the Church and the yoke of their Majesties and I will take the persons of yourselves, your wives, and your children to make slaves, sell and dispose of you, as their Majesties shall think fit, and I will take your goods, doing you all the evil and injury that I may be able, as to vassals who do not obey but reject their master, resist and deny him; and I declare to you that the deaths and damages that arise therefore, will be your fault and not that of his Majesty, nor mine, nor of these cavaliers who came with me.13

The general pattern of the role of the Church during the colonial period was that of a state within a state; it was the Crown that held absolute power. Through the patronato real, the Pope ceded many of his powers to the Spanish monarch. Individual missionaries to the New World found this practice provided security and privilege as well as authority for them. Because of these advantages the "missionaries sided with the monarch against the encomendero and never sought to create an independent organization in defiance of the royal government,"14 except perhaps in certain particular cases.

In addition to recognizing the power given the Crown, it should be remembered that the


... Patronato Real implied dominion over the Church, but it simultaneously allowed for ecclesiastical intrusion into civil-political affairs. In the complexities of law and precedent it is impossible to say where Church authority ceased and state authority began. ... The whole of imperial government, and hence any aspect of imperial control, could be justified as propagation of the faith. ... 15

This fusion of the political and religious authority found its place also in the basic mission of the Church which was to evangelize, which was to Christianize, which was to civilize. Four specific activities enabled this purpose to be realized: evangelization, diffusion of the traditional European culture, control of the thought and orthodoxy, and control of the Indians.

Control of thought and orthodoxy, a specific concern of the authoritarian schema, was achieved through sermons, education, extensive use of printing press, and most formidably through the Inquisition. This last practice reflected the high degree of dogmatism which sharply distinguished between beliefs and disbeliefs and which condemned, rejected and severely punished nonconventional ideas. 16 Its three areas of control were religious: purity of faith; moral: censorship of behavior; and political: censorship of books with threatening political theories. Unlike the total religious-political

15 Ibid., p. 80.
fusion of the Aztec theodicy, the Spanish one provided the Church with a separate though minimal means of imposing sanctions. Although the theodicy was another means of Spanish rule, it did tend to maintain a semblance of checks between the political and religious areas. This resulted from the fact that little criticism from political authority or from the public was dealt to the Church due to the fear of the Inquisition and to the fatalistic submission to "God's Will."

Control of the Indian followed the simple logic that if an Indian had the privilege of evangelization, he had a responsibility to work. This labor which was wealth was a primary area of conflict for the Church and the hacendados. The latter group argued that the aggrandizement of the state depended on them for capital accumulation for rising industry and trade. Regardless of the various pressures, the result of tight control and of the absence of channels for incorporation, was a closed peasant community with its own leaders, religious practices and fiestas.

Political Colonial Dimensions

The basic political imperative for the conquistadores was the setting and maintenance of territorial boundaries. With forty times as many Amerinds as Spaniards, government took on a primary duty of control of behavior. 17

Not only because of the vast subordinate populations but also due to the great distance from the throne, the maintenance of systems of hierarchies and classes was of the greatest importance. Spain was prepared for this in several ways.

Its "genuine bureaucratic despotism" was transferred through a maze of officials, headed by King's representative, the viceroy, who had "authority in military, economic, and political affairs, and in the administration of the Kingdom." (It should be remembered that ecclesiastical affairs fell under the heading of political.) The king had no choice but to rely on the viceroy's decisions and to relinquish to him all the means of control: the bureaucracy, the ordinary courts, the military and the police. He did, however, reserve the Crown's role as the ultimate source of privileges and favors; it conceded land, monopolies, titles, honors, and offices. It was the supreme court of appeals. As final arbiter it checked and balanced the powerful centrifugal forces which were a constant threat to social stability.

The concentration of authority was located in Castile, not in Spain as a nation; this provided for an even

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tighter system. From the beginning, the line of authority was from the top down; town representation was circumscribed and stifled. Meticulous and innumerable royal orders came down, leaving no escape but in distant or neglected marginal areas. This maze of laws and orders created only further alienation, confusion and anomie, with consequent powerlessness and psychic acquiescence.

**Economic Colonial Dimensions**

Highly-structured, capitalistic and oriented to the support of the crown, the colonial economic system exacted heavy social overhead costs. In areas such as mining, a rationale legalized, or better, justified the demands: only productive labor could make the Indians a part of the civilized world. Long hours, dangerous tasks and unhealthy conditions were their daily lot. They were expected to carry "average burdens of between 225 and 250 pounds on exceedingly steep ascents,"22 for example. The symbolism of the following statement is striking, especially when one realizes that the society did know of the wheel: they relied on "bodily skills to balance heavy burdens upon their backs with the aid of the tumpline, a leather strap laid across the bowed head."23

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21Gibson, p. 91.

22Cumberland, p. 63.

It seemed as if the disappointed Spaniards, unsuccessful in their attempts to find "the cities of gold," exercised "unreasonable fury" toward the Indian. Land and labor were the wealth and with the vast numerous populations, there was not even expediency to warrant a restraint on his unrestrained demands. Both the encomienda and the repartimiento systems developed grave abuses.

The former provided an open invitation to exploitation by allowing the possibilities of demands on the Indian to be "any service desired." It was not until 1542 that limitation of these demands were somewhat specified. What began as a light tribute in 1526 based on the number of men, had become an unbearable burden by 1550 when the population was only one third as large. As time progressed, the changes in tributes from the Indian villages mounted. A specific example of one village may be insightful.

The village of some 6000 should contribute a daily work force of fifty men and four women plus a few items of food during the years immediately after the grant. In the early 'fifties the encomendero commuted a portion of the work force into additional produce. For the next generation the village contributed roughly 30 tons of corn and half that amount of beans annually, twenty-five petticoats, and the same number of shirts every eighty days (an Aztec unit of time for

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24 Ibid., p. 189.
25 Cumberland, p. 67.
26 Ibid., p. 72.
tribute), and a steady work force of thirty herdsmen. In addition, the villagers furnished the encomendero's overseer a daily ration of one chicken, a few eggs, sufficient forage for his animals, wood for his fires, and tortillas for his table. The village also delivered to the encomendero in Mexico City a weekly tribute of thirteen hens, thirteen quails, an unspecified number of eggs, fish for his fast days, wood and charcoal for the daily fires, hay for the animals, household pottery items as needed, and two women servants. These weekly tribute items allowed the encomendero to maintain a household of some fifteen or twenty people--his immediate family, relatives, and friends--in some comfort while the other tribute items gave him a good outside income. 27

Perhaps the additional last line is the most telling: "The record is mute on his contribution to the village." 28 The state of the peon remained the same under the new Christian liberators.

Referring to the repartimiento system, the same writer notes that,

The native population found no cause to object to the concept of forced labor as it developed under the repartimiento system; the indigenous societies had long demanded uncompensated forced labor from their members, and the original regulations concerning the use of Indian labor were neither onerous nor ruthless. 29

Soon, however, legality began to mask harsh injustices. The vagueness of the two basic provisions of this system--forced labor in the public interest only, at an adequate wage, almost invited exploitation in a frontier

27 Ibid., p. 73.
28 Ibid.
29 Ibid., p. 75.
society because of the lack of precision in defining the terms. Labor in silvermining, it was argued, while bringing personal gain also enriched the extraction and coinage of silver. In years of smaller harvests, wheat crops were considered the concern of the public as well as the hacendado. Wages adequate one year may be totally inadequate five months later when the prices of a given crop had doubled. Several other geographically-related examples abound. Distances, lack of provisions, and transportation were the Indians' responsibility.

Confronted with a week's journey in unfamiliar terrain, the unexperienced native frequently carried insufficient food and arrived exhausted and undernourished, if he arrived at all.30

Such conditions of malnutrition coupled with a lack of resistance to the new diseases were partly the cause of the epidemics which decimated the Aztec population within a period of years: from twenty million in 1520 to six and a half million in 1540; to four and a half million in 1565; to two million in 1607; to slightly more than a million in 1650.31 Life had become cheap and starvation replaced the obsidian knife.

30 Ibid., p. 79.
31 Ibid., p. 30.
SUMMATION

Even though Cumberland says that the Spanish victory was perhaps "as much of a deliverance as a conquest," he adds that perhaps the native previously experienced the "psychic salve of laboring for his own civilization." Perhaps many did, but as Wolf suggests, with the fall of Montezuma, many became worldless, "orphaned by the old gods yet unsaved by the new, and despaired of the world in which they had to live out their lives." Exploitation was not new; it was rather that the sense of participation in the process to which they offered up their lives was absent. "Like the baroque altars soon to arise in the colony, the splendor and wealth of the new possessions but covered a grinning skull." The people ran to the skirts of Mother Church, as the penultimate step to their masochistic drive for legitimized death provided by the visible, external symbolism of Christian theodicy.

32 Ibid., p. 83.
33 Wolf, p. 200.
34 Ibid., p. 195.
Chapter 4

THE NATIONAL PERIOD: CRACKS IN THE CEMENT OF THE PYRAMID

Intense European and Spanish turmoil, the ascendancy of Napoleon and the dethronement of Charles IV, converged to erode the invincibility of the "other" as represented by the Spanish Crown. The theodicy that had sustained Mexico was fissured both by the tenets of the Enlightenment and by the particular cast given it by its Spanish representatives. With the changing response to Spanish monarchy, provoked in part by the Enlightenment and the new political Liberalism, came the need for a different cast in the theodicy. The new movements had begun to affect all of Latin America. Elites struggled for power and for the norms of power almost as if the Aztec gods were battling among themselves. The vast multitude was generally brought into the struggle only when needed as pawns by the elite. Even the previous channels or norms for upward social mobility were severed.

Because man reads reality through the institutions which he makes, he learns to cope with the world "outside" and "inside" through the social process that they provide. Through them, he differentiates what is valuable, good, or
bad, and identifies his meaning system. What is real for
the individual is more often part of the perspective given
him by institutions. In time, the latter become sacralized
as they continue to shape minds, give vocabulary, selec-
tivity and the vision of reality. To keep that vision
intact, they guard it with taboos, social acceptance and
stratification. However, when one societal institution
outpaces another, the vision becomes precarious. Symptoms
of this imbalance are anomie, tension, defensiveness and
rebellion. During the nineteenth century the political,
economic and religious institutions strained to read their
own vision of reality amid severe internal disturbance.
No leaders emerged who could at the same time balance one
institution without aggravating the imbalance of another
one. This situation only accelerated the cyclical reaction
of ataraxia and explosion. For the vast majority, the
scales teetered between powerlessness and normlessness
(anomie).

ATARAXIA AND EXPLOSION

Although rebellion was reported in the colonial
period, why it became "endemic to Mexico"\(^1\) with the advent
of the Independence Period is answered only in part by

\(^1\)Leon V. Padgett, The Mexican Political System
(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1966), p. 6. See also, Robert
Quirk, Henry Parkes, Ernest Gruening, Charles Cumberland
and Frank Brandenberg.
several writers. In order to penetrate this problem, it seems essential to focus on the repeated recurrence of the "cycles of ataraxia and explosion,"\(^2\) for if the repression and lethargy, enforced or voluntary, are part of the system, so is the rebellion, explosion, that follows them, and vice versa.

One of the definitions of "ataraxia" presented as "tranquilidad" or "imperturbabilidad"\(^3\) is an attitude in which "hay que ser asceta, no dejarse influir por nadie ni nada y morir en un rinconcito lo más decentemente que se pueda."\(^4\) For Octavio Paz, it is "that state of equanimous lack of anxiety which the Stoics believed would be achieved by control of the passions."\(^5\) It serves as an "opiate" which anesthetizes man in a stupor of resignation and submission while yet permitting heavy work and feverish activity.

Its related though disjunctive reaction, that of explosion, punctuates history by its attempts to burst out of this anomie and repression. Usually short-termed, it serves only to diffuse pent-up energies in a confronta-

\(^4\)Ibid., p. 40.
\(^5\)Paz, p. 6.
tion of the "implacable phantasm of the future with the spontaneous reality of the now."  

It is a challenge and an affirmation, a shot fired against an imaginary enemy, and an explosion in the air . . . we affirm ourselves in front of, against, and in spite of the "others."  

SIGNIFICANCE OF PADRE HIDALGO Y COSTILLA

Initiating the process that proved to be the unraveling of a tenuous webbing that had previously juxtaposed the several institutions in a state of equilibrium was Padre Miguel de Hidalgo y Costilla of Dolores, Mexico. It was he who as a member of the elite of the Church scored an attack on both the political and the ecclesiastical processes. He did this by bringing the poor, exploited multitudes into confrontation with the rich, powerful exploiters and thereby corroding the theodicy. This together with other influences proved to be only the beginning of a state of precariousness that enveloped Mexico from 1810 to modern times.

Padre Hidalgo emerged from the nationalist revolutionary tradition in Mexico. Former dean of the college of San Nicolás at Morelia, a focal point of ecclesiastical life and training, this widely-read humanitarian was aware of several factors which in other Latin American countries as well as Mexico influenced the struggle for national

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6 Ibid., p. 7.
7 Ibid., pp. 74-5.
independence: the ideologies of the European Enlightenment, the hostility of the creoles to the peninsulares, the gradually developing unique American identity, the despotic character and corruption of the imperial government, and the Bourbon reforms which fell short of needed changes and thereby provoked new demands for reform.  

In the creole rebellion against the Spanish Crown, Hidalgo's leadership was the significant focal point for the eventual corrosion of Spanish domination and for the emergence of Mexico's own political development. When the news of his plan broke prematurely, he decided that immediate rebellion was necessary. Without availability of weapons or allies, he could only appeal to the Indians and to the resentment engendered in them by centuries of oppression. What began as a creole war for independence from Spanish colonialism became unsuspectingly a ten-year class war between the aggressive and acquiescent elements of Mexican society. This civil strife proved only to be the beginning of a century of sado-masochistic interplay. The creole, in the authoritarian schema of things, found himself more at home in his alignment with the peninsulares than with the submissive multitudes.

A few weeks after Hidalgo's sudden decision to arouse the forces, he admitted "that he knew what he had

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planned but not what had actually occurred." 9 Ironically,

Most of the rebels scarcely knew what they were fighting except that their oppressors were to be overthrown; they still shouted vivas for King Ferdinand; but they arrested the gachupines, threw them into prison, and seized their property. 10 Apparently they presumed that the battle was legitimized because the shaman had led it. Hidalgo had understood his actions as pertaining only to the political domain; the multitudes, however, did not make a similar distinction between the political and the religious domains. As priest, Hidalgo did what no layman could have done; though unknowingly, he attacked the theodicy from within, thereby corroding its plausibility.

THE PERIOD OF PRECARIOUSNESS

It was only later, after the War of Independence had been won and the king was no longer the symbol of the "other," that the deep implications became apparent. For according to Frank Tannenbaum, power in the Spanish tradition, "must have a moral basis. Power over other people is something that can only be exercised if it has divine sanction." 11 The cleavage between the sacred and

10 Ibid., p. 148.
the secular came too abruptly for any development and subsequent internalization of a theodicy of legitimation. In addition, the hitherto developed Mexican authoritarianism could not tolerate the intraception of the attempted and imposed democratic forms in political, economic and ecclesiastical institutions.

**Political Sphere**

It is not only in the arena of conservatism/centralism and liberalism/federalism that the political interaction takes place in the ensuing years, it is also on the more deeply rooted battleground of personalist and doctrinaire, of actualizer and manipulator,\(^\text{12}\) of channels of communication and social mobility as against the symbiosis of sado-masochistic interplay.

The first in the series of leaders was Augustín de Iturbide, who at the behest of the royalists reacting to the liberal position of Ferdinand VII, attempted in vain to set up a monarchy and thereby complete a political retrenchment with the infrastructure of the colonies. With the overthrow of his government by Antonio López de Santa Anna, dictatorship found a congenial environment in Post-Independent Mexico. Because of the precariousness of the institutions and the inability of the elite to legitimize their structures, the multitudes

in their authoritarianism reverted to a more familiar archetypal form, that of the cacique.

During this century, the cacique became a vital force because of the persistence of the rural and agrarian economy. His peak period as an organized "shadow" government came after the emergence of Liberalism about 1850. With its emphasis on constitutional and limited political participation, Liberalism was a facade for the operations of the systems of "bossism." Their often narrow and self-interested leadership frequently led them to prevent or to control development by manipulating institutional processes so as to keep the individual bound to certain socioeconomic pressures.¹³

On a larger national scale the caudillo fulfilled a similar role. Both he and the cacique were sought as chieftains rather than as tyrants, according to Castro. It is because of

... the will of a few to dominate and the desires of many to meet in happy engagement. If this were not the case, the dictators would not prosper. They have come into existence to fill the void... ¹⁴

One caudillo who rose to national stature was Santa Anna. He burst onto the scene of Mexican politics as a doctrinaire liberal. With him came others of the old


revolutionary element, including General Guadalupe Victoria who was to emerge as Mexico's first president under the Provisions of the Constitution of 1824. Ten years later, as Santa Anna's vice-president, Valentín Gómez Farías led the effort to define the revolutionary liberal tradition in terms of greater nationalist emphasis, legal reforms, civil controls over the army and the church, and progress in education, and Santa Anna reversed his stance to that of a doctrinaire conservative. The disillusionment of his followers as well as the merciless brutality with which he suppressed his new opposition recalls a parallel occurrence in the Indian allies of Cortés.

Playing ambitious power games, Santa Anna was hailed by the clergy "as the Saviour of Mexico" and his coup d'état "the holiest revolution our republic has ever seen." 15 The Church together with the aristocracy and the army buttressed their own positions with this popular figure. He was brought back three out of four times from exile because of the people's need for his compelling mystique and charisma.

Because in practice the government was always dictatorial, the presidency of Benito Juárez as well as that of Porfirio Díaz may be considered as the reign of the national cacique and caudillo, respectively. 16 The former, a backbone of

15 Parkes, p. 197.
16 Ibid., p. 181.
the Liberal Party, even with charismatic rapport could not establish and sustain a plausible legitimation because while the rationale of Liberalism was clear, the populace was not sufficiently indoctrinated. Even more importantly, it ran counter to a more basic need for domination. (Vilification of the human and anti-intraception were inherent to the authoritarian archetype.) Though certain positive contributions were made by Juárez, the victory over monarchy and the consequent sense of nationalism, the specific gains were not the benefit of the multitude, but rather for the elite dominating minority. Perhaps it is telling in this war of the gods that Padgett places Juárez within the "Mexican pantheon."  

Throughout the period of Díaz the state of precariousness prevailed. His pragmatic arrangements, often enforced by social manipulation and violence, alienated rather than integrated the ingredients of the authoritarian character of the Mexican multitudes. His only way of relating with them was in repressive violence. Imprisonment, assassination, use of the _rurales_, the practice of the _ley fuga_ all reflect this.

**Economic Sphere**

After Independence, the need to sustain order and the need to sustain financial power became paramount. In such a period where several forces vie for power, a strong

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[^1]: Paz, p. 18.
military, often costly and wasteful, was required. Concomitant with this demand on financial resources were the industrial and corporate developments of Europe and the United States. Mexico readily divested itself of its raw materials and resources to its new foreign masters, the United States, England, and France, in order to secure its economic survival. These economic pressures placed upon Mexico tended to increase the role of the military, to sustain the power of the elite, and to place the vast multitudes in a more desperate system of economic bondage.

With the operation of the formerly prosperous silver mines and without the capital of the former peninsulares, the only immediate untapped monetary resource was the Church. However, the creoles, unwilling to permit the Church's wealth to be divided, turned to a new profession, that of the agiotista. These men provided short-term loans to the government accompanied by high interest rates. In turn, they received a mortgage on the government property or on custom duties. When payments came due, the agiotistas collected their profits, the government's revenues dwindled and usually revolution followed. Because they profited from government deficits, "the agiotistas stimulated disorder and allied themselves with the caudillos who led the military rebellions."18

Both the common people as well as the creole agiotista

18Parkes, p. 179.
depended on the caudillos, those "self-appointed leaders who are followed by those who are in distress and who need to follow the leader. . . ."\(^\text{19}\)

This vicious cycle led to an alternate recourse, the capital of immigrants and investments from abroad. Related problems were incumbent on this practice; for example, the foreign capitalist had behind him the force of guns from his government and "whenever revolution interrupted the flow of dividends, there was the threat of foreign intervention."\(^\text{20}\) Mexico's unbalanced budget was part of the rationale for the French invasion in 1862. The defeat of Archduke Ferdinand Maximilian Joseph by Juárez contributed to an emerging nationalism which resulted from turning hostility outward toward a common French enemy. The vast multitudes found in this national pride a new, though inadequate, "other" to whom they could sacrifice themselves.

With Díaz's reign, the people were to be sacrificed to another god, that of corporate finance. The elite became increasingly more powerful and the multitudes more submerged in ataraxia. By the end of his rule, nearly half of Mexico belonged to less than three thousand families.\(^\text{21}\) Of the ten million Mexicans engaged in agriculture, more


\(^{20}\)Parkes, op. cit.

\(^{21}\)Ibid., p. 306.
than nine and a half million were virtually without land. It was the building of the railroads which became the visible symbol of financial alienation for the majority of people. As the peons, "the victims of slow starvation," watched their produce being transported for sale on foreign markets and the prices of their goods increase, their frustration continued to ferment. At the time of the Revolution, it was the railroads which were the target of their hostility, even as the altars had been during Juárez's time.

It was precisely the failure in the financial battleground that brought Díaz down. The Wall Street crises of 1907 had several repercussions in Mexico the following year. A bad national harvest in 1909 created grave starvation conditions in rural districts. Díaz had isolated himself behind the profit-loss columns of his economists. With the motivation of the military waning, he could no longer sustain even order. His "usurped" legitimacy began to topple as the Constitutionalists brought him up to his dictatorial inadequacies. His humanness exposed, he could no longer fill the role of surrogate god.

**Ecclesiastical Sphere**

The Church increasingly found it more difficult to

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22 Ibid.

23 Ibid., p. 308.
provide an adequate and plausible theodicy that would cement the nomos of society and reconcile the institutions that provided vision as it had been able to do for centuries. Its supremacy in the political world wrested from it due to the new secular Liberalism, the formerly untouchable Papacy was first attacked by Napoleon in the forced march of Pope Pius VII from Rome and then by Giuseppe Garibaldi's takeover of the Papal States. Prior to that, the right arm of the pope, the Jesuit Order, had been suppressed. Its influence in Mexico had been significant both in terms of educational and territorial dominance.

Hidalgo came on the ecclesiastical scene as a catalyst to the eventual diminishing of the ecclesiastical influence. For a time, the Church survived, as it had previously, because it emerged from the War of Independence with even greater estates and more numerous independent powers. Even these were to be divided later as the advocates of Liberalism seeking power for themselves found it necessary to divest the institutional Church of its means of wealth. Juárez, for example, moved against the clergy, by decreeing that all their real property belonged to the nation, that tithing was abolished, and that monastic orders were dissolved. Further decrees established civil marriage and freedom of religion.24

His determination that all temporal power would be removed from the Church was clear.

24 Padgett, p. 17.
The Church, too, saw the precariousness of its predicament. As a result, Vatican Council I was convened in 1869-70 primarily in order to reclaim the Church's power lost through the problems resulting from the Reformation and the decline of monarchies. There, the discussion on infallibility became the instrument to regain the Church's supremacy, if not in the temporal realm, at least in the spiritual domain.

It was only because of political expediency that some later dictators, such as Díaz, chose not to exercise power to confiscate Church property. His goal of material progress harmonized well with the old conservative ideals of clerical privilege.

SUMMATION

Mexico was swept into the modern era as one of several pawns in the power struggles that were festering in both the Old and the New Worlds. Its political system in disarray, its economy bankrupt and exploited by foreign investors, the Church struggling for survival, the vast multitudes were left in a more entrenched state of anomie, poverty and dependency, a state which facilitated the possibility of further manipulation by the maze of a future faceless bureaucracy. In this desperate situation, the multitudes tended to revert even more readily to the familiar patterns of acquiescence.
Chapter 5

THE MODERN PERIOD: REPOINTING THE PYRAMID

In chapter 5, as in the preceding ones, this inquiry is intent on avoiding the danger of Procrustes. A sound historical basis has been and continues to be the springboard for further interpretation and discussion. In the Modern Period, the focus will again be on the uses of power within the context of significant and comprehensive historical themes.

After the vying for power which seemed the lef­motif of the precarious nineteenth century, institutional roles shifted. The political was to become paramount for the first decades of post-revolutionary Mexico. The Church was divested of its temporal power and structure in both the political and the economic realms; it maintained only an extremely tenuous legal hold. The economic institutions became more firmly based in national, not foreign, ownership.

In spite of, perhaps because of, the institutional upheaval, there are several factors which make the Aztec archetype still much of a reality for the vast multitudes. The ever-present dominant "other" becomes more entrenched in
the nation's attempt to preserve its Mexicanism. As Paz indicates,

The Aztec archetype became more and more solidly consolidated. It could not have been otherwise; that archetype is the very model of stability, and after some twenty years of civil war and of violent quarrels among the revolutionary caudillos, stability is the political value that Mexico most desires and appreciates.\footnote{Octavio Paz, \textit{The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid} (New York: Grove Press, 1972), p. 104.}

Resources, lives and honor are dedicated to serve the revolutionary inheritance as it is institutionalized. That inheritance hangs over Mexico as modern-day Mexicans are constantly confronted with the rebellion of their ancestors through monuments, heroes, revolutionary songs and street names. If Mexico once served the faceless ancient gods without question, it now serves the god of faceless bureaucracy where human dialogue is designedly, systematically avoided. For those "participants" in Mexican society, their options are limited to those circumscribed by the bureaucratic party; for those "subjects" in Mexican society, they are chary to identify or express the desire for alternatives.

\textbf{DEVELOPMENT TOWARD A PARTY OF AN AGGREGATION OF BUREAUCRACIES}

After the fall of Porfirio Díaz, it seemed as if the country of Mexico was condemned "to repeat again--and
forever—the monotonous, bloody cycle of dictatorship followed by anarchy, anarchy followed by dictatorship. 2

The search for effective government was paramount. The same recurring problem of leadership appeared.

Most of the politically active population belonged to the small and aristocratic ruling elite.

But the Revolution occurred because the old political system was unable to accommodate the mounting pressure of demands from an increasing number of new interest groups. Many of these were willing and were able to resort to force when the formal government failed to satisfy their needs. 3

Besides this problem of selection and transfer of power, the growing complexity of Mexico's society made the former caudillo style inadequate.

The very forces which had produced the Revolution—increasing specialization of economic activity, the proliferation of competing interests, and all the other products of Westernization—made it increasingly difficult for even the strongest military man to rely successfully on the outmoded political mechanisms which had failed. 4

No longer was "personalistic control based on military force, through which policy decisions were reached in face-to-face meetings with the leader" adequate; a more viable system based on something other than physical force was necessary, a system


4 Ibid., p. 105.
through which the formal agencies of government could operate to serve the increasingly complicated demands which groups of citizens made upon revolutionary leaders.  

The man who emerged to consolidate such a system was Lázaro Cárdenas, president of Mexico from 1934-40. Prior to him "the progressive and violent elimination of military chieftains (had) led to a regime which, if not democratic, was also not self-destructive." General Plutarco Elías Calles, the outgoing president, decided to meet the crisis of succession by forming a political party, the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR). In the initial consolidation of revolutionary power, Calles included hitherto underrepresented interests; however, at this stage of development

... the original PNR was not highly centralized; instead it was an amalgam of local political machines and of various agricultural, labor, and other interest associations, backed by the silent but ever-present force of the military.

The PNR masked authoritarian operational structures as Calles continued to dominate it behind the scenes for six more years. Even his own later threat of violence to Cárdenas' government only tended to strengthen it.

The political situation was ripe for Cárdenas.

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5 Ibid.
6 Paz, p. 24.
7 Scott, p. 108.
Several factors enabled him to meet the country's two basic needs: the establishment of order and the reconciliation of various factions within Mexican society. With reference to the first point, "the fact that he is often called the 'last caudillo'"\(^8\) is significant. Through this role, he was able to provide stability, "the one meager advantage of personal rule."\(^9\) This personalistic element had been endemic in the older system.

Cárdenas was an extremely popular president. One reason was that "the politically awakening masses knew and identified with him"\(^10\) because prior to his election he had traveled throughout the entire country, campaigning everywhere. Later, his government and its "jefe máximo" . . . were always visible to the public, as they attended local events, opened highways, inaugurated new public works and awarded titles of lands to the ever-increasing army of ejidatarios.\(^11\)

A second reason was that Cárdenas revitalized the myth of the Mexican Revolution. His patriotic nationalism and zeal led him to effect in reality the verbalizations of the revolutionary reforms and to "integrate the Mexican people into a nation, a program that had been delayed since

\(^8\) Ibid.

\(^9\) Ibid., p. 106.

\(^10\) Ibid., p. 126.

Mexico's independence in 1821.\textsuperscript{12} As shall be shown further, his "legacy to the masses was not so much in material improvements, but in the psychological position of importance which he gave them, . . ."\textsuperscript{13} This he accomplished by reviving the social ideals of the Constitution, by bringing the multitudes into politics in organized groups which could no longer be ignored, by providing a counter balance to the power of the military and its generals in the urban and rural proletariat groups, by assuming the policy of active state intervention in all phases of life.\textsuperscript{14}

There is no doubt then that Cárdenas was a charismatic leader; the springboard of popularity enabled him to successfully launch his program of reconciliation of various groups within Mexican society. This alone would not have been enough, however. Significantly, Cárdenas was also viewed by the multitudes as "the prototype of the new Mexican middle class,"\textsuperscript{15} Through his ability to represent meaningfully many of Mexico's multiplying interests, he "provided a link to bind together all


\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., p. 282.

\textsuperscript{14}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15}Scott, p. 126.
facets of national life."\textsuperscript{16} This, rather than administrative ability, was the secret of his accomplishment.

Whereas the PNR had been primarily composed of government employees and office holders, the party under Cárdenas sought a realignment of the principal functional power groups. His powers of reconciliation were first challenged in his rebuilding of the power structure for he was concerned,

\ldots not to arouse the enmity of existing interests. He appeased the bureaucrats by supporting legislation establishing the theory of a permanent civil service and recognizing the right of government employees to strike, as well as by granting them economic benefits. He attempted to impose as many national and state officers who were personally loyal to him as possible, but he carefully avoided open conflict with General Calles' adherents, at least until he could organize the mass bases of his strength. In doing this, the president had all of the advantage on his side, for General Calles had long since lost sight of the interests and needs of labor and agrarians, as well as direct contact with lower-rank politicians. As chief executive, on the other hand, Cárdenas had all of the legal and extra-legal resources of government to win their support, and both groups were ripe for organization.\textsuperscript{17}

Once he had established his leadership as undisputed, he sought means to formalize relationships among various organizations and interests who had supported him. By 1937, he was ready to dissolve the PNR and redirect a new revolutionary party, the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana.

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., pp. 127-8.
Cárdenas' functional reorganization of the party to include four basic societal sectors, agricultural, labor, popular and military, has been referred to as "corporate centralism." The party's candidates for state and national elections were now to be apportioned among the four sectors; their leadership then named the individual candidates for the offices allotted them, with the exception of the military. Even presidential nominations reflected the corporative tendency by requiring support from specified numbers of the sectors.

In bringing together the most active interest groupings under the mantle of the revolutionary party, where they could be dominated by national-level sector organizations, Cárdenas took a giant step toward centralizing political control in the national capital. Internal policy concerning each sector's interests was made and implemented by means of the pyramidal sector organization, but, given the realities of the political and social environment [italics not in the original], rather than moving from the grass roots up, policy decisions usually emanated from the bureaucracy and leadership of the sector, filtering down through the hierarchy to the rank and file.

As the official party grew stronger, so did the president of Mexico who headed it. Besides being the Revolutionary spokesman, "In a very real sense he tied the whole system together making possible the party's very existence." His virtual monopoly of centralized

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18 Ibid., p. 130.
19 Ibid., p. 134.
20 Ibid., p. 137.
authority offset any opposition threats to order while his control function over the most active interest groups within the party kept internal friction to a minimum. This latter control was necessary, for in the mid-1940's when the middle class tried to end sector political power, the move was short-lived because of intraparty problems and the dissatisfaction of labor. It was demonstrated that

... the sector system, at the very least, shows a tenacity in the official party organization indicating that for the time being the nature of Mexican society requires this type of hierarchical relationship, for it results not simply from slow growth of general agreement on political values, but also from the continuing weakness of internal cohesion in Mexican social life.21

It was in response to this need of the people that Cárdenas determined upon the policy of the active state. He insisted and continued to insist, as Wilkie indicates, "that if the government gives the people something to do they will work."22 Because of this symbiotic arrangement between the institutional government and the vast multitudes, the basis for both the source and the nature of presidential power required radical change in only a few years. The center of the locus of power which began as the extra-legal official mechanism of the revolutionary party had moved toward a more formal, constitutional government, even though this process is, of course, not

21 Ibid., p. 173.
22 Wilkie, p. 283.
complete; the president's political role has correspondingly shifted from that of a personalistic party leader toward the director of an increasingly powerful government bureaucracy that arbitrates among the reasonably well-adjusted functional associations which submit themselves to the discipline of the emerging governmental system. In other words, the "routinization of charisma" described by Weber has transpired. Further, this routinization has given rise to a formal organization with bureaucratic structures.

Bureaucratic Politicizing of Economic Institutions

Prior to Cárdenas, the political concern had dominated the scene. It was during his regime that efforts toward change were initiated in the economic area. Many elements of the elite society found it necessary to acquiesce to economic policies if they were to have part in new national directions.

One of Cárdenas' earliest moves on the domestic scene was to reorient the economy away from the agricultural

23 Scott, pp. 244-5.


hacienda system. He created *minifundios* and with them programs for irrigation, the mechanization of agriculture and *ejido* credit banking. The basis for a new order unintentionally grew out of the distribution of land, for

Many wealthy landholders, fearing expropriation, invested in the city, at first in real estate, then in business, and finally in light industry.26

The monies of the private sector were channeled into the business of urbanization.

Requiring the further submission of the domestic private sector in 1936, Cárdenas lent strong support to the organization of labor unions into federations, such as the Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos (CTM). A number of enterprises, including the railroads, were nationalized and their management entrusted to men drawn from among the laborers. Labor continued to flourish, initially under Vicente Lombardo Toledano, the first secretary-general of the CTM, "who found a sympathetic ear in the Mexican president."27

From the foreign private sector, Cárdenas also required compliance. In 1938, he made one of his boldest moves, that of nationalizing foreign oil companies who had declared themselves unable to comply with government orders to give employees higher wages and other benefits. In addition, he began the development of the *Mexicanization*  

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26 Wilkie, p. 277.  
27 Ranis, p. 114.
legislation.

This flourished during the López Mateos government and is today the Mexican instrument for dealing with foreign capital. Under this legislation, foreign capital is allowed into the country and directed toward the more essential economic areas, and 51 per cent of the stock and control in management is consigned to Mexican capital and capitalists. 28

Miguel Alemán was to accelerate the drive for industrialization and to realize a period of vast economic growth in areas such as

... urban renewal, university buildings, dams, roads, airfields, harbor facilities, petroleum industry, steel production, and the development of hundreds of small enterprises from soft drinks and textiles to paper products. 29

Both he and Adolfo Ruiz Cortines believed that

Money from social and "unproductive" economic expenditure was to be channeled into investments and subsidies of private enterprises developed in conjunction with government planning. 30

This aided in the extensive expansion of state action into economic life.

Bureaucratic Politicizing of Ecclesiastical Institutions

Prior to Cárdenas, Church-State relations had undergone severe unrest. Genuine popular support buttressed the anticlerical and secularizing reforms of the Mexican Revolution for previously,

28 Ibid., pp. 114-5.
29 Ibid., p. 115.
30 Wilkie, p. 278.
Besides being the largest single landholder and the largest single banker, the Mexican Church had preached submission to civil authorities and to the hacendado, the factory owner and the mine superintendent.  

In general, the provisions of Article 130 of the Constitution of 1917 were an attempt to rescind the political power of the clergy, but they were not easily acceded to initially. Over years, reaction and counter-reaction prevailed, until finally the Church went out "on strike," proclaiming a cessation of religious services in the hope of forcing changes to be made in the Constitution.

The government countered with sharp repressions for Calles, an anti-clericalist, believed that the Church "had held back the development by keeping the people in ignorance and poverty," and that presently it was in open defiance of the Mexican government. It was only through the mediating efforts of American Ambassador Dwight Morrow that Calles agreed to meet with Church spokesmen. In the course of negotiations, the Vatican became involved, holding out for three conditions on any agreement toward a peaceful solution. However,


the leaders of the Mexican Church, tired of the fruitless struggle, ignored the conditions imposed by Rome and settled on the only terms possible, . . . 33 those prepared by the American ambassador and agreed to by Calles.

After three years, the strike had ended; the Church had agreed to accept an unsatisfactory modus vivendi, an arrangement to disagree peacefully. Order had been achieved, but at a high price to the Church. "It meant that the Catholic religion could probably never play a significant role in effecting social change in Mexico." 34 In general, this modus vivendi set the pattern for Church-State relations in Mexico since 1929. However, in the 1930's, Calles' anti-clericalism flared up again as he limited numbers of priests, expelled Archbishop Leopold Ruiz y Flores, amended the Constitution to require all education to be not merely secular, but "socialistic." A brief but bitter conflict which claimed many lives ensued.

When Cárdenas became president, he again exercised his conciliatory abilities. Though not a friend of the Church, he did not share Calles' bitterness toward it. He therefore restored the modus vivendi . . . with a gentlemen's agreement that the laws would remain, but that they need not be enforced,

33 Ibid., p. 243.
34 Ibid., p. 247.
if the Church kept in its own sphere and did not attack the Revolution.35

Since that time, the churches have operated schools, said to be private and secular. Though religious ceremonies are restricted in public, religious garb is worn there; many religious order members function public though illegally; and the National Action Party, PAN, is known to be Catholic. The recent degree of rapport which has evolved is evident by

. . . Pope John XXIII's consecration of the Bishop of Guadalajara as Mexico's first cardinal and the public prayers for God's blessing upon President López Mateos' administration led by the Auxiliary Bishop of Mexico.36

TLATOANI TODAY

As the personalist caudillo, Cárdenas, left office, it is ironic that what remains is a semblance of the tlatoani described by Paz. He had achieved what every former caudillo had aspired to: the category of tlatoani.37 The successful transfer of power had done away with the disruptive emotional tie between the leader and the follower through the institutionalization of the presidency, . . . that is, by replacing the charismatic government altogether with a less personal, mechanistic, and semi-constitutional system.38

36 Scott, p. 174.
37 Paz, p. 104.
38 Scott, p. 246.
The enormous power of the presidency had become "impersonal, priestly, and institutional" representing "an impersonal continuation of rule." 39

As shall be demonstrated, it is through this process of bureaucratization that authoritarianism itself becomes institutionalized. In order to meet certain basic societal needs, definite norms are established which assign status, positions, and role functions in connection with expected, patterned, regular, and predictable behavior which becomes routinized. Cultural symbols, codes of behavior, and ideologies, attitudes, values, and rituals are components in the cluster of institutional traits. "Like roles of all kinds, institutional roles may be filled most successfully by those who have learned the proper patterns of behavior." 40

INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF AUTHORITARIANISM

By the time Cárdenas appeared as president, the people were tired of rebellion, tired of the vying for power, tired of the promises of caudillos who only drove people into war, expended resources, ravished towns and decimated the population. They were tired of Church-State

39 Paz, p. 103.

conflict and unrest which was the scene of other battles. They were tired of high food prices, destruction of property and nil credit availability on the international market.

The establishment of a national political party had been the first major step to put order back into the nation, a task left unaccomplished by Independence, delayed by the Mexican-American War, the war against the French and the Mexican Revolution. The people were indeed tired.

Acceptable as a revolutionary, a charismatic leader, a Mexican for Mexicans, a shaman-reconciler, Cárdenas understood the peculiar problems of Mexico in the light of how economic, political and religious conditions had been imposed upon the nation. The elite needed him; the vast multitudes demanded him. In response to these needs, he set up a spectrum of personal extensions of his ubiquitous self through an aggregate of bureaucracies.

Wittingly or unwittingly, both for Cárdenas and for the Mexican subordinates, high or low, the day of the caudillo had ended; the symbiotic relationship between those in need and the specialists who responded to that need found its new mediation in the officialdom of bureaucracy. The president becomes the hierarch who for the sake of order, involves the people in a "social process of economizing," 41 that is, of making use of specialization of

skills and functions. This process provided Cárdenas and all subsequent leaders "with a very high degree of unilateral control over non-leaders,"42 who were never to be displaced peacefully after either an explicit or implicit suffrage.

Because Mexico, through Cárdenas' legislation, had disrupted the importance of the hacienda, the process of urbanization was accelerated. This fact gave further impetus toward bureaucratization for as Thomas Jefferson correctly foresaw, "Urban society leans heavily on hierarchy." 43 For the sake of economizing government, that bureaucracy becomes a sine qua non for the hierarchy. It economizes, is rational, is efficient, is pyramidal, and for a relatively small number of people at the top, it enables them a chain of control for a relatively large number of people below them. 44

In order to fulfill this function of economizing, specialization of skills and functions within the organization is essential. Such specialization, to be effective, requires inflexibility and rigidity of performance and control of the means of production. Therefore, "property rights are vested in the bureaucracy as a whole or more commonly in the prescribed organization to which, by

42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., p. 234.
44 Ibid., p. 235.
legal fiction, the bureaucracy pertains," the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, the name given the dominant party after 1946.

What evolves is a "corporate centralism" in which the bureaucracy now apes the former role played by the cacique for it delivers the acquiescence of a tired people to the president. Cárdenas rallied the applause, allayed the opposition's fears, neutered insurrection, and stood at the apex of the hierarchical pyramidal organization, "at the apex of the present patrimonial system."

To sustain the smooth functioning of this order of things, as in every bureaucracy, rules and regulations to orchestrate the whole ascent of individual roles and status becomes exceedingly important. Their enumeration, overabundance and rigid application are at once a protection and a relinquishment of responsibility. Orthodoxy to this secular ideology of order is articulated in bureaucratic rigidity. In such a society, religious ideology, the right to self-determination and the right to private ownership may need to be acceded to the demand for a lessening of anxiety, to a less anxious specialization, order and peaceful acquiescence. The party that had emerged with dictatorial mandate from out of the fires of

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the Revolution now itself played host to the needs of order and specialization.

THE DYNAMICS OF BUREAUCRACIES

Once initiated, the bureaucracy, in order to maintain this rigid framework which "saves" people from inner aloneness and anxiety, justifies and legitimizes its hierarchical chain from within. Hence, "empire building" takes place in order to accommodate the vast numbers of people who need to be coordinated. In order to assist the divisions of labor and to solve the seemingly extraordinarily complex problem of economizing its extreme divisions, the pragmatic solution becomes "creating an organization in the image of bureaucracy."47 There is "a deliberate, calculated, conscious attempt" on the part of the party and the people "to adapt the means to the ends in the most rational manner."48 For the bureaucracy

. . . stems from the magnitude of the task: (1) the need for a relatively small number of people to coordinate the actions of relatively large numbers of people and (2) the need to make complex decisions beyond the competence of any one person to make. Another reason is (3) the advantages of the division of labor. In these three instances, the "need" or "advantage" is a cause of bureaucracy, of course, only to the extent that those who influence the decision to institute a bureaucracy subjectively believe in the need or advantage. But two other reasons are

47 Dahl, p. 245.

48 Ibid.
predominantly psychological or subjective in character: (4) the desire of status and control as ends and (5) a cultural bias in favor of deliberate, conscious efforts at an apparently rational adaptation of means to ends.49

It is not all profit and rationality that bureaucracy spawns. Because of its orthodox rigidity, inflexibility, personal irresponsibility, impersonality and non-participative centrality, there is the reluctance on the part of the individual to make decisions and the tendency to "pass the buck" and to leave vast multitudes buried in the labyrinth of red tape. This designed inertia at times creates other negative by-products of subjective and political inequalities, of wasteful expenditure of resources for bureaucratic definitions, and irritating divisions of responsibility.

The party under Cárdenas (and subsequently) "made great strides in integrating large sectors of the total masses into governmental programs."50 But the rapid growth of population and urbanization only aggravated the need for "the multiplication of functional interests and of specialized groups to represent those interests."51 Bureaucracy became the fabric of Mexican society, "the binding threads . . . for dealing effectively with intri-
cate political relationships."\textsuperscript{52} Through this means, the application of the vast authority of the president is best described as a "government by consultation."\textsuperscript{53}

All the characteristics of authoritarianism are now defined in terms of the bureaucratic aggregate called the PRI and its constitution through its assignment of controls, status and social mobility. Even that process called schooling is, in Mexico especially, a training-ground for conformity. Adherence to bureaucratic norms makes conventionalism and compliance the style of life fed by authoritarian submission and contained by authoritarian aggression. Human beings are involved in a process that submerges them to the necessary rules and regulations inherent in bureaucratic functioning. Whatever is human, whatever is tender-minded, whatever is subjective is gradually disallowed in the service of the party and in the reduction of the bifurcation of allegiance. Fear of previous exploitation of foreign corporations and of intrusions into Mexican territory lends sufficient fuel to feed the projectivity and to create superstition and stereotypy of the gringo who at one time marched into Parral and into Chapultepec Park. At one end of the Paseo de la Reforma is the statue of Cuauhtémoc which leads to

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\textsuperscript{52}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{53}Scott, p. 279.
the monument of *Los Niños Héroes* to remind the Mexican of his Mexican nationalism. The model of authoritarianism that was discussed in Chapter 1 is, if not in theory, at least in function, the mortar that cements the Mexican nation, that maintains the apartness of the divisions of responsibility, that is the pointing of the pyramid.
Chapter 6

CONCLUSIONS

Three years ago, this writer stopped at a hotel restaurant in Jiquilpan, a small Mexican village that served as a midpoint on the old road between Guadalajara and Morelia. After approaching the table to take the order, the head- and only waiter paused as he heard the name of the president of the "new" Mexico, Lázaro Cárdenas, in whose home town he had been reared. At the mention of the former jefe máximo, one could read in his black mestizo eyes a radiance that contained all hopes and aspirations of the rural peasant of Mexico.

What manner of people was this that could acquiesce such sustained fealty to a man who had left office more than three decades ago? It was because of the pervasive and permeating effects of such underlying irrational realities, "invisible histories," that this inquiry was begun.

Mexico with its particular geography and its particular history has a discernible characteristic that emerges in the life of the citizen, the polis. Octavio Paz calls it the "Aztec archetype"; this inquiry identifies it.
by the modern psychological and sociological label of authoritarianism. It is first submissive, acquiescent, conforming, orthodox, doctrinaire, superstitious and ethnocentric, and only then interfaced with aggressive dominance. This is the conclusion to which this inquiry has been led; this is "what the Aztec world view meant and still means." It is "that tendency to remain bound to the mothering person or her equivalents" which submerges "the tendency to be born, to progress, to grow," and which facilitates the desire for acquiescence to some power outside oneself. It is man's fear of himself, of his aloneness, which impels him to seek escape and to flee responsibility.

It was the peculiar Aztec history that permitted the Mexica to cluster beneath the formal canopy of legalisms, and in his submission, to force the leader to be divinized, impersonal and inhuman. The extent of the distance which grew between the leader and the subject was abysmal: the former was sustained at the pinnacle of the Aztec pyramid while the latter, in his appetite for masochistic oblation, placed himself in a mind set no more significant than the stones which kept that lofty altar.

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suspended somewhere between earth and heaven. Otherness was indeed a projection on oneness. ³

That history permitted the Aztec to project himself into some "other" rather than to face himself in the tézcatl, a carved and polished stone which "faithfully reproduced the face." ⁴ It permits Octavio Paz to mystify the Aztec symbol, the "phantasm" of the Mexica, "the People Whose Face Nobody Knows." ⁵ The purpose of this inquiry has been to unmask that "phantasm" and in the analysis to see the shape of authoritarianism that is pre-conditioned by a psychological need, reinforced by the process of socialization, and that continues to need some structure to sustain it and a theodicy to legitimate it.

What Octavio Paz as well as others have defined as extreme cruelty and repression in Aztec history was also authoritarian acquiescence relinquishing power to authoritarian aggression. The former sustained the forceful domination of Spanish colonialism. Its related though disjunctive reaction of explosion emerged during the national period's institutional precariousness which

³Paz, p. 76.


precluded any one sustained form of power from claiming acquiescence as the multitudes teetered between powerlessness and normlessness. In the modern period, a similar acquiescence was delivered through a more complex system of bureaucracy, the aggregation entitled the **Partido Revolucionario Institucional**.

It was with tragic irony that it was suggested that the man of charismatic proportions, Lázaro Cárdenas, widely acclaimed and admired, had unwittingly ushered in a new age of the Aztec archetype. What had previously been a condition for social order and efficiency now was institutionalized in the party whose bureaucratic structure has for its matrix authoritarianism. Where the Aztec legitimation was contained in the need for divine appeasement, in the twentieth century the theodicy of a national secularism prevails. Rather than the physical mutilation, it is a spiritual one in which whatever is specifically human becomes submerged to the efficiency of specialization. In the place of the ancient chieftain, a modern tlatoani stands at the apex of the hierarchical organization.

Further studies which could follow this inquiry might have for their focal point accesses to human freedom. Social engineers may continue to encourage structural changes in order to achieve their desired results, but it would seem foolhardy to attempt only
further imposition of external structures without striving to reduce substantially the aloneness and alienation of peoples. Such reduction might begin with increased social mobility, alternate means of establishing status outside of the PRI, internal self-criticism of a free and responsible press and freedom of assembly without fear of government censor.
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