Soldiers, Saints, and Shamans: Indigenous Communities and the Revolutionary State in Mexico's Gran Nayar, 1910-1940. Nathaniel Morris. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2020. 392 pp. $55.00. Hardcover. ISBN-13: 9780816541027.

Nathaniel Morris's *Soldiers, Saints, and Shamans* makes important contributions to our understanding of the history of Mexican Revolution and offers generalizable insights into how state-building has impacts on and is impacted by hill-dwelling and agrarian societies, and the micro-dynamics of civil war. The book draws upon an impressive range of source materials to narrate in detailed but lively and readable prose the social and political history of the Revolution in the Gran Nayar, a large, mountainous region of western Mexico containing the homelands of four Indigenous peoples: the O'Dam, Wixárika, Náyari, and the Mexicanero, as well as a Spanish-speaking mestizo minority.

The Gran Nayar has generally been depicted, in both popular and scholarly treatments, as a region sealed off from the rest of Mexico and from what is often unhelpfully described as the "modern world." It is a place out of time, whose inhabitants still practice ancient ways of life in isolation from both scientific, economic, and cultural advances and political instability and violence. Consequently, though the region is known as a source of Indigenous handicrafts and as a destination for peyote tourism, and though the belief systems and ritual practices of the O'Dam, Wixárika, Náyari, and Mexicanero peoples have been documented by anthropologists and folklorists, it has not been studied as a site where Mexico's national history was made. Though limited and partial accounts of the region's history during the Mexican Revolution appear in existing scholarship, *Soldiers, Saints, and Shamans* is the first systematic treatment of the subject.

Morris challenges popular and scholarly images of the Gran Nayar less by reversing them than by making them a puzzle to be explained. It is true, he argues, that the O'Dam, Wixárika, Náyari, and Mexicanero are some of the most politically and culturally autonomous Indigenous peoples in the western hemisphere. Morris, however, demonstrates that this relative autonomy is not the product of hermetic isolation, but of regular, frequently intense, and sometimes violent exchanges between the region's Indigenous communities and a long series of conquerors, missionaries, settlers, teachers, functionaries, and foot soldiers fighting for a wide range of causes. He also shows that maintaining relative autonomy has not meant either that the political organization and cultural practices of the region's peoples have remained unchanged over time or that their actions have had no effect on historical processes unfolding outside the region. Rather, contemporary institutional forms and practices in the Gran Nayar can only be fully understood as the products of changes wrought during the Mexican Revolution, and the Mexican Revolution can only be fully understood in light of the actions undertaken by the peoples of the Gran Nayar during its course.

To support these arguments, Morris had to overcome significant research challenges. As already noted, there are very few secondary accounts of the Revolution in the Gran Nayar, and the primary source material available in local, state, and national archives is both scarce and, in many cases, biased by the same presuppositions that have hampered scholarship. Thus, Morris supplements evidence drawn from nine archives located in four Mexican states and the Federal

District with insights collected through participant observation and in interviews with forty-six informants, many of them now very elderly first-hand observers of the Revolution. He also draws from explorers' field notes, autobiographical novels, and songs and rituals performed by the region's communities that commemorate events during the Revolution. Morris is sensitive to the difficulties involved in balancing the different perspectives these varied source materials offer, and the narrative he uses them to construct is compelling, meeting the rigors of historical argumentation while, one imagines, remaining recognizable to the people whose actions it describes and their descendants.

A substantial background chapter introduces readers to the history of the Gran Nayar from the eve of the Spanish Conquest to the eve of the Revolution, offering a good introduction to its four Indigenous peoples and noting that their struggles to preserve autonomy in the face of determined state-builders did not commence in the twentieth century. Morris then details the early "armed phase" of the Revolution, showing that, particularly as conflict between Villista and Carrancista factions brought fighting and banditry to the region, O'Dam, Wixárika, Náyari, and Mexicanero responded by forming community defense organizations that sought out and were supplied with arms, ammunition, and horses from both sides. The leaders of these organizations, often young men who were still relatively marginal players in their communities' patriarchal political orders, leveraged these connections to gain authority and amass cattle, becoming what Mexican historians call *caciques*, political bosses with local power bases but the capacity to influence events in broader regions. The availability of new, extra-regional sources of power provoked conflict with older, more established community authorities, which was exacerbated by the Revolutionary state's efforts to implement land reform and education programs in the Gran Nayar. While the bureaucrats and teachers sent by the National Agrarian Commission (CAN) and the Secretariat of Public Education (SEP) made only limited inroads, better-connected, more "cosmopolitan" leaders took advantage of their presence to gain resources, promising to restore lost landholdings to their followers, while more "conservative" factions mobilized supporters to protect their communities that were threatened by the political autonomy.

The book's central, longest, and most ambitious chapter focuses on La Cristiada, a conflict sparked in 1926 by the national government's efforts to enforce anti-clerical measures of the 1917 Mexican Constitution. Fighting between government forces and the conservative Catholic Cristero rebels was concentrated in northwest Mexico and drew in participants from all four of the Gran Nayar's Indigenous peoples, dividing communities as fighters took up arms for both sides. Morris shows that participation and partisanship cannot be explained by adherence to the main ideological cleavage driving the conflict. The O'Dam, Wixárika, Náyari, and Mexicanero who fought with the Cristeros were not, in the main, Catholic converts, but active practitioners of pagan ritual. Their opponents were not anti-clerical advocates of state-led modernization. Rather, leaders chose sides for a number of reasons: in order to pursue longer-standing goals of preserving local political autonomy and regaining lost landholdings; in order to counter Caciques rising on the strength of their connections to state authority; in order to settle scores with rivals; or simply for security in a period of widespread violence and theft. It is in exploring these micro-level causes of variations in

participation and partisanship across the region, analyzing the strategic calculations that led individuals and groups to fight for either the government or the Cristeros, in biographical detail, that *Soldiers, Saints, and Shamans* shines.

Across two more chapters, Morris describes how, after La Cristiada, some individuals and groups in the Gran Nayar resisted renewed efforts by the national government to implement education and land-reform programs. As in earlier chapters, he emphasizes variation both across and within O'Dam, Wixárika, Náyari, and Mexicanero communities. Existing factional affiliations and animosities deepened as leaders chose to support or oppose government programs, less out of ideological conviction than in an effort to protect autonomy, secure landholdings for their followers, gain resources and influence, or exact revenge. Resistance turned violent once again during the mid-1930s, as revived Cristero rebel groups attacked government soldiers and functionaries, including schoolteachers. Without defending these actions, much maligned in Mexico's official history and popular memory, Morris provides new context for understanding why some Indigenous communities participated in them as they sought to resist "compulsory education of their children" that was "explicitly designed to transform the costumbre that defined their lives into meaningless 'folklore'" (264). Once again, this resistance preserved political and cultural autonomy in the Gran Nayar, but left legacies of inter- and intra-community factional conflict that are still visible in the region today.

Though the primary contributions of *Soldiers, Saints, and Shamans* lie in the detailed historical narrative it provides, there are more generalizable insights to be found as well. Morris draws extensively on Alan Knight's framework for categorizing actors in the Mexican Revolution, and suggests at points that Knight's categories do not adequately capture the social position and motivations of the O'Dam, Wixárika, Náyari, and Mexicanero communities, who combined qualities of Knight's *serranos* and *agaristas* without fitting neatly into either category. Venturing even further afield, Morris appeals to the work of James C. Scott, whose studies of peasant and hill-dwelling communities in southeast Asia furnishes concepts like the "weapons of the weak," a term for non-violent and minimally violent forms of resistance to authority that are often misunderstood or missed entirely by observers. One only wishes that Morris had pursued these engagements more extensively, showing at greater length how studying the Gran Nayar advances or even challenges Knight's and Scott's theories, rather than simply illustrating them. Given the kinds of questions he poses concerning La Cristiada—questions about what caused variation in the participation of different groups and individuals—Morris might also have drawn from, and contributed to the growing literature in political science on the micro-foundations of violence in civil wars.

These reservations do not, however, reflect deficits of Morris's work, but rather opportunities for future research generated by the new knowledge and fresh insights *Soldiers, Saints, and Shamans* provides. The book is worthy of careful consideration by anyone interested in the Mexican Revolution, the politics and cultures of Indigenous peoples, peasant and hill-dwelling societies, state-building, and civil wars.

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