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Author
Cancian, F

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This is an excellent collection of essays focused on women. My only reservation is not about the quality of the book, but about process in the discipline of anthropology itself. I have the slightly uneasy feeling that the feminist perspective that has brought so much intellectual excitement to the discipline in the past two decades is now moving out of the mainstream. Is it becoming a marginalized subinterest, taken up by a few women, but not by the anthropological power elite and the ambitious young scholars making a claim to be the avant garde? Many of the current books on reflexive anthropology, for example, hardly mention the feminist critique and do not acknowledge that women anthropologists have always been much closer to the reflexive mode they advocate.

Carol MacCormack  
Bryn Mawr College


This study of a Mexican village emphasizes internal economic and political differentiation and then draws out the implications of this internal differentiation for the design of development programs. It is particularly interesting because of changes that took place between Krantz’s first fieldwork in 1976–77 and a three-month follow-up visit in 1985 and because it documents the substantial inequality that is possible in a village established under land reform laws that mandate equality.

The village, which carries the pseudonym “San Vicente,” included 738 individuals in 72 households at the time of Krantz’s first fieldwork. Located at the northern edge of the rich Bajio agricultural region in the state of Guanajuato, it was settled in the 1930s as an *ejido*—i.e., under the land reform laws that followed the Mexican Revolution of 1910–17. Under the land reform laws, each of the landless families (household heads) received an equal amount of land at the outset. The lands were contiguous and were part of haciendas near the hacienda where the family members had worked as peons and sharecroppers. Krantz describes the establishment of the ejido (using documents from the 1930s); he relates the internal inequalities in landholdings that have developed to inequalities among those who backed the initial petitions to external land reform authorities and to several other factors.
San Vicente had another important characteristic for those interested in inequality and development: in the late 1970s it changed from an individually organized ejido, in which each member worked his own land independent of others, to an ejido with substantial collective organization. The change resulted from government initiatives meant to increase production through collectivization and technological improvements. In response to opportunities to get irrigation wells and tractors through the government programs, three collective groups of six to nineteen members formed in the late 1970s. When Krantz returned in 1985, two of the three groups had, for the most part, returned to individual production.

This history is carefully recounted in a way that lets Krantz muse about various issues that concern development planners and students of peasants. For example, he sees the actions of men joining the collective groups as strictly based on perceived opportunities for individual gain—as opposed to any collective instincts. Most important, he shows that the inequalities present before the collectives were formed almost certainly were the principal causes of their demise a few years later. Tables (8:1 and 8:2) show the amount of land each member of two of the groups committed to collective work at two points in time (the late 1970s and early 1980s). They show how members tried to solve early organizational problems by getting rid of initial inequalities in the amount of land contributed by each member. And they show that the overall distribution of land was such that the greater equality of contribution to the collectives achieved by the adjustments required all the land of some members while others met the norm with less than a third of their land.

In his final chapter Krantz critiques those who pay little attention to internal differentiation in ejidos and those who blame the problems of collectivization programs on external factors (like governmental imposition of mode of operation) rather than on internal differentiation. And he raises questions about related ideas that interpret peasants in terms of special qualities of community or moral economy (he says early on that San Vicente is an “open” community in Eric Wolf’s terms), but he definitely sides with the peasantization rather than the depeasantization side in the Mexican debate about how to interpret what is happening in the countryside. That is, he sides with those who see persistence of peasant subsistence adaptation rather than proletarianization and incorporation of rural residents directly into the national class system. Krantz ends by urging that realistic attention be paid to the internal differentiation that undermines programs imposed on the countryside by agencies that imagine a more homogeneous population.

This is a valuable study.

Frank Cancian
University of California, Irvine