

Chapman University Dale E. Fowler School of Law

From the Selected Works of Ernesto A. Hernandez

January, 2005

Escogedoras and Molineras in Veracruz, Mexico (1928-32): Exploring the Political Role of Popular Women in Post-Revolutionary Society

Ernesto A. Hernandez-Lopez



SELECTEDWORKS™

Available at: http://works.bepress.com/ernesto_hernandez/18/



Escogedoras and Molineras in Veracruz, México (1928-32): exploring the political role of popular women in Post-Revolutionary society*

Ernesto Hernández-López©
Assistant Professor of Law
Chapman University School of Law
Research Fellow, Center for Global Trade and Development
1 University Drive, Orange, CA, 92866
ehernand@chapman.edu
<http://ssrn.com/author=522295>

Research for this essay was generously supported by Research and Conference grants from the Center for Latin American Studies of Georgetown University. The author thanks John Tutino, Jim Brennan, Elliot Young, Francesca Ramos, Francisco Robles, and Zulima Alvarez for providing insightful comments on and line-by-line readings of prior drafts; John Womack, Emilio Khouri, and Andrew Wood for substantive suggestions; and the Universidad Javeriana Faculty of Political Science and International Relations and Universidad del Rosario Faculty of International Relations for the institutional support to write this article, and Research Assistant Andrea Suarez for her helpful suggestions. Any errors are solely the author's.

What role did women play in México's revolutionary consolidation?¹ In the state of Veracruz during the 1928 to 1932 period, popular women workers actively participated in politics of the day. Historical investigation in regional archives, newspapers, and economic studies of the day suggests *escogedoras* (women coffee sorters) and *molineras* (women maize-grinders) negotiated political settlements with local, regional, and central state powers.² Specifically, *escogedoras* mobilized to form El Sindicato de Escogedoras de Café de Córdoba, while maize-grinders organized La Cooperativa de Molineras del Puerto de Veracruz. These movements negotiated political arrangements through non-institutional means. By institutional, I refer to formal political activity such as legal action, legislative means, and bureaucratic negotiation. For the political participation described in this article laws, party-politics, constitutional decrees, and elections took a back seat to extra-legal conversations. This essay analyzes the political interaction between popular actors and the state as a 'power negotiation.' By complementing recent historical interpretations with primary research, this essay's central objective is to raise new questions concerning popular participation and women's political role in Mexican society.

Recent historical scholarship on México's revolution permits us to ask new questions concerning the significance of popular political participation. With *Everyday Forms of State Formation-Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, editors Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent demonstrate how despite the revolution's hegemonic trends during the 1930s and 1940s, popular actors did exert their influence

during state formation.³ This multiauthored book shifts discussion from the anti-revisionist/revisionist debate towards an exploration of 'state-formation without leaving the people out.'⁴ These essays show how throughout México popular forces brought their desires to political contests of the day. Likewise, in *Provinces of the Revolution- Essays on Regional Mexican History* Thomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman et. al. convincingly present the regional variation evident in revolutionary México.⁵ Popular participation varied from region to region during the revolutionary war (1910-20) and the process of state formation (1920-32). For the state of Veracruz, Heather Fowler-Salamini demonstrates the powerful role of agrarian forces during state formation.⁶ Following this lead, Romana Falcón and Soledad García Morales chart the political influence of Veracruzano Governor Adalberto Tejeda (1920-24 and 1928-32) in Mexican politics.⁷ Both of these works provide analytically thorough and empirically solid arguments concerning the revolutionary process and popular participation. Ultimately, they convincingly demonstrate the influence popular forces exerted in revolutionary Veracruz.

Recently, historians have provided new interpretations concerning the role of women in Mexican society. In particular, the works of Steven Stern and Mary Kay Vaughn and Heather Fowler-Salamini provide new approaches to analyzing gender in México. Stern's *The Secret History of Gender* unveils the patricarcal contestation evident in colonial México. In a sophisticated manner, he presents how the absence of formal and explicit political activity does translate to inactive or passive roles for women. Daily life in colonial society included negotiation and contestation of patriarchal norms. The essays in *Women of the Mexican Countryside 1850-1900* demonstrate how changing social and economic roles for women created new avenues of influence in Mexican

society. Vaughn and Fowler-Salamini et. al. demonstrate how sociological and anthropological analysis strengthens historical interpretations. Likewise, both works present the importance of regional variation in gender relations. By providing a series of examples, these studies present us with possible arenas of contestation, where historians can pose questions regarding gender in México. They reify the fact that women did influence Mexican history. Without doubt, the issues raised inspire us to ask: how women effect and absorb economic changes? This essay applies these questions to the case of Veracruz in the 1928 to 32 period.

Adalberto Tejeda served as Governor of Veracruz from 1920 to 1924 and 1928 to 1932. As a revolutionary leader, Tejeda sought support from the organized populace. During these two administrations, Tejeda and La Liga de Comunidades Agraria del Estado de Veracruz worked closely to distribute land. The first governorship was mostly devoted to consolidating power and creating a political base for the popular reforms of the following years. During Tejeda's second administration, the governor implemented a vast array of political reforms in the labor, health, and agrarian arenas.⁸ To emphasize these impressive achievements, Heather Fowler-Salamini classified these years as "peasant hegemony."⁹ In this period, state sponsored land reform benefited 21,813 Veracruzanos.¹⁰ Tejeda held quasi-socialist political and economic ideals. There was no revolutionary, Socialist, or Tejedista party which represented the Governor's efforts. Yet, Tejeda did use state power to help workers and *campesinos*.

This essay suggests that popular political participation in Veracruz was not limited to *agraristas*(campesinos seeking land reform). A variety of popular actors, including women, forced the state to listen to their political desires. For example, textile

workers in the Orizaba valley and port-workers in the Puerto de Veracruz maintained active political roles and influenced central and regional politics. Historians have shown the importance the *inquilino*(tenant) movement of the 1920s exerted in inspiring political activism in the region.¹¹ In addition, regional social legislation implemented during these two decades included a variety of issues such as labor, health and sanitation, employer provided insurance, and alcohol regulation.¹² The impressive scholarship on the Veracruzano agrarian struggle and the existence of mobilized workers inspires us to ask new questions about the influence exerted by other popular actors. The works of Fowler-Salamini, Falcón, and García-Morales motivate us to ask questions about the revolutionary process in Veracruz. Accordingly, historians should apply the same analytical and empirical standards, devoted to agrarian struggles, to artisans and industrial workers, in order to ask: with the creation the Constitution in 1917 and the consequential reemergence of a central state, how did popular workers exert their influence in political contests of the day?

Negotiation as political participation

Through conversations and negotiations, workers and state power influenced each other. This essay analyzes Veracruzano labor politics as a negotiation. 'Negotiation' refers to a continual process of political settlement in which both the state and the populace exerted their influence. This extended process does not necessitate the end result of an institutional, formal, or legal resolution. While the field of negotiation was in no way symmetric (differences between popular and state influence were large)

conversations did take place. Conversations between the popular classes and the government did influence state formation. While the civil war of the first decade was over, the government could not overlook the organized populace. Similarly, the mobilized sectors of society did not ignore or fail to work with the governments of the day. Ultimately, the process of state formation (1920-34) permitted for this continual political dialogue.

In Veracruz, Tejeda's politics and worker activism were never intrinsically linked to each other. No state-labor alliance existed. One actor did not speak for the other. No one force found the other an absolute representative during state consolidation. Both Governor Tejeda and labor organizations expressed their concerns separately. Because worker mobilization existed independently of Tejeda, I find it important to investigate their expressions. Labor exerted its influence in revolutionary activity before Tejeda took power.¹³ Tejeda did not mobilize workers. Labor did not express its concerns only to the Governor. As a political leader, Tejeda had other political actors to contend with, not the least of which were mobilized *campesinos* and the central state. Nonetheless, as a mobilized group with its own concerns, workers engaged in political conversations with Tejeda..

This essay's use of 'power as negotiation' shifts analysis of state formation away from the revisionist/ anti-revisionist debate. Anti-revisionists see the interrelation between the state and the populace as alliance making. The Revolutionary state made political alliances in order to improve the lives of the populace. The populace and the state had a concrete relationship, something static. Revisionists provide a more cynical view of the state which manipulated the organized masses. Any reforms initiated by the

state existed as exploitations and deceptions. In essence, both these schools focus their analysis on the institutional end result of the revolution.¹⁴ Accordingly, both views examine how the state acted without analytically probing into what moved it to do so.

By concentrating on institutional products, both of these views ignore the 'negotiation power' exerted by the populace. Examinations of institutional politics and legislative action fail to notice this potential influence. 'Negotiation power' refers to any potential influence possessed by the populace. This power relation with the state or other political actors does not have to be symmetrical or equal in strength. Despite unequal degrees of influence government actors and popular forces did converse and negotiate.

Campeños sought land reform (*agraristas*) while workers organized and expressed their political influence for a reason. Socio-economic realities and workplace issues produced popular mobilization. Any 'negotiation power' the populace possessed came from their spheres of socio-economic influence. Likewise, this power moved the state to 'manipulate' or to 'build an alliance.' The state responded because it was moved to do so by the populace.

Using a model of 'power as negotiation', this essay examines the political power-play between *escogedoras*, *molineras*, and the state.¹⁵ I analyze the space of political negotiation and the power articulated by popular women. This results in an examination of both the consolidation discourse and the socio-economic dynamic of women workers. By minimizing the importance of institutional political analysis (examinations of electoral politics, legislation, executive action, and bureaucratic lobbying), the goal is to open new discussions and spark more investigation concerning popular political influence and gender relations in Mexican society.

State Power Consolidation, Popular Political Negotiation, and the 'Modernization' of Women's Economic Sphere¹⁶

Written at Queretaro, the Constitution of 1917 included Articles 27 and 123, which contained the popular agrarian and labor reform provisions. Article 27 provided communal petition for land and subdivision of large land-holdings. As the most progressive labor legislation in world for its time, Article 123 contained legal measures to protect workers' rights. This included the right to organize, an eight-hour workday, limitation of labor done by women and children, Sundays as rest days, a minimum wage, health and accident insurance, and company schools.¹⁷ At this time though, both of these reforms remained only on paper and implementation conditional on the individual efforts of regional leaders. After a decade of violence, regional power maintained the unstable peace in México. Regional leaders struggled with local popular forces and an emerging central state. Various generals or *caciques* governed in the provinces, while a central power structure attempted to rise in Mexico City.¹⁸

The conflict between regional power and central authority -whomever controlled Mexico City- occurred as popular forces exerted their influence within this process of state consolidation. For instance, the Alvaro Obregón regime (1920-24) supported the Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana (CROM) and *agrarista* groups. In order for the central state to consolidate its power and exert influence over regional power brokers, the Mexico City government needed to negotiate with these popular sectors. State support of popular forces both legitimized the state and offset regional military power.

The ultimate goal was to terminate the threat of political violence. *Campesinos* continued to push for land reform. Peasants fought with various factions during the civil war assuming that promises made by military leaders to distribute land would be kept once the violence ceased. As reconstruction progressed after 1918, each new president had to confront this strong pressure to reform the antiquated and controversial land structure. Likewise, labor negotiated its political agenda with both regional and central powers. Organized labor desired the right to organize, protection during strikes, institutional representation in the government, and the regulation of work-related problems. Most often, workers (as opposed to unions) wanted safe work-places, work-day limits, and wage and price controls.

The rise of the CROM and the *agraristas* demonstrates the participation popular forces had during the process of state formation. While many groups participated in this process, the CROM and the *agraristas* are the most vivid examples of a conversation between the government and organized forces. Popular movements proceeded to create an important space for themselves within this state formation discourse. Political struggles in this discourse included: the central versus regional power struggle, the *Cristeros* (1926-29) and an aggressive anti-clerical state, and the need to reconstruct the Mexican economy while workers (agrarian, industrial, and artisans) pushed for reforms. Simultaneously, popular groups conversed with state power. Whether as electoral support, bodyguards, or armed rebels, popular forces continued to play a vital role in state formation. As Alan Knight concludes, despite the 'elite settlement' (evident in the 1928 creation of Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR)) the Mexican masses persisted to express their political concerns. Knight explains:

Underlying the settlement was a certain structural relationship between elites and masses that deserves attention and that critically affected the settlement process. The basic, and hardly startling, point that emerges is that for all their autonomy, elites had to reckon with a mass presence in politics.¹⁹

It is the focus of this study to investigate the political interaction of these masses as evidenced in the negotiation between women workers and the Revolutionary state

In Veracruz, a variety of forces exerted their political influence and negotiated with the Adalberto Tejeda. The Governor's overall political strategy was to avoid letting one force dictate or control the political scene. Thus, Tejeda governed by not letting one particular force (*hacendados*, the CROM or *agraristas*) gain too much influence. Tejeda wanted to avoid a situation similar to the CROM and Plutarco Elías Calles(1924-28). In which, the CROM gained too much power in influencing the central state. Instead, Tejeda served as a political mediator and negotiator between non-state popular actors and state power, on regional and central levels. The Governor influenced contests between textile workers and mill owners, *agraristas* and *hacendados*, and Port workers and the central state. Popular forces conversed with the government and consequently influenced revolutionary consolidation.

Extra-legal measures and informal arrangements defined much of Tejeda's politics. In this respect, Tejeda did not differ from other Mexican political actors. Despite genuine efforts to help the popular classes, extra-legal methods characterized Veracruzano politics. For instance, Tejeda suspended elected *ayuntamientos* (city councils) and nullified elections in various communities throughout the state.²⁰ Whether these suspensions represent an 'act of fraud' or a 'response to fraud', they signify the existence of extra-legal negotiation in Veracruzano politics. The social reform process

also incorporated these extra-legal, non-institutional, and informal political measures. Legal decrees and elections only scratch the surface of where the real power negotiations took place. It is a basic contention of this essay that historical investigation of these extra-legal power conversations indicates women did influence revolutionary consolidation.

Legal and institutional political analysis, however, explains that women had virtually no political role in Mexican society during revolutionary consolidation.²¹ Despite the popular overthrow of a thirty-four year dictatorship, the participation of *soldaderas* in the decade long civil war, and a new constitution in 1917, women in México could neither vote, nor hold public office. In 1928 Ernest Gruening elaborates 'The Revolution has done little, purposefully, toward the emancipation of women.'²² The only legal contribution the Revolution provided was the legalization of divorce, by Venustiano Carranza in 1914. This though meant little since cultural mores ostracized any divorced *mexicana*. As Gruening reports, a few states such as San Luís Potosí, Yucatán, Tabasco, and Chiapas allowed women to vote in local elections. Thus in some circumstances, regional power provided for some incorporation of women into electoral politics. National full suffrage did not come until 1946, well after revolutionary consolidation. Yet, women participated in both the domestic and economic spheres of Mexican society. Historically, from these non-political spheres, popular women contributed a great deal to Mexican society.²³ Despite an over-inflated analysis of gender relations in North America and the 'Hispanic world', Gruening makes an interesting observation. After explaining a lack of women's desire to participate in fraudulent elections, he writes 'It is more likely that women's march toward equality will come in the

economic field.²⁴ In sum, Gruening hints to the potential significance of female economic power. He also explains how regional power provided some progress toward the emancipation of women.

Following Gruening's observation, this essay argues that from their economic roles women participated in politics of the day. Non-appearance in public politics **does not** signify inactive roles in politics of revolutionary consolidation. From socio-economic spheres as *escogedoras* and *molineras*, popular women possessed 'negotiation power.' During the Porfiriato (1876-1910) these economic roles developed as employment options for women. Along with industrialization, land concentration, and urbanization, economic growth proceeded to change the role of popular *mexicanas*. These economic developments produced both new avenues of employment and eventual redefinitions of a woman's role in Mexican society.

***Escogedoras* and participation in the export economy**

As coffee sorters women not only found employment, but they held vital roles in the export economy. In the town of Córdoba coffee is cultivated, produced, and then exported. Historically from this temperate region, Córdoba has produced the highest coffee yields in Veracruz, with Coatepec at a distant second.²⁵ The *sierra oriental's* topography provides for excellent coffee lands. The mountains toward the west permit moisture to remain at this altitude almost the entire year. The steep terrain also offers rich soils necessary for coffee cultivation.²⁶ As Heather Fowler-Salamini explains coffee production in this region experienced a 'commercial boom' during the latter part of the

Porfiriato.²⁷ This commercial coffee boom in Porfirian México coincided with long-term rises in European demand and Latin American production of this stimulant.²⁸

Commercialization translated into new jobs and new spheres of economic influence for working-class women. This added to their heavy domestic workloads. As coffee workers, women became subjects to the global fluctuations of the coffee market. This new female economic sphere continued in the revolutionary era.

In the 1930s, Mexican coffee became subject to massive market ruptures in the global economy. Beginning with the coffee boom of the late-Porfiriato, Veracruzano coffee was produced for export.²⁹ Coffee production continued through the decade of violence and increased dramatically with the reconstructive economic efforts in the twenty years following the civil war.³⁰ After an extreme reduction in European demand caused by World War I, coffee prices and production steadily increased until 1930.³¹ Following the October 1929 Crash, coffee prices dramatically dropped in Mexico City and New York.³² In 1930 an extreme, but quick, shock hit Mexican coffee production. Consequently, coffee exports fell in accordance with falling coffee prices on Wall Street.³³ As an intermediary coffee producer with diversified exports, this crisis did not hurt México as much as other coffee producer nations such as Brazil or Venezuela. Nonetheless, these global fluctuations affected Mexican coffee workers. This commercial context produced a volatile economic situation for exporters, a state seeking foreign earnings, and most of all coffee workers.

Coffee production included divisions of labor along the lines of gender before the post-1850 international coffee boom.³⁴ Fowler-Salamini investigated coffee cultivation in Córdoba for the 1850-1910 period. She reports that the post-1850 coffee boom

proceeded not only to concentrate capital and land in favor of a non-Córdoban elite, it also provided new rural employment for both women and men.³⁵ Most of the new jobs were seasonal and poorly paid. Gender divisions in coffee cultivation intensified with this boom. Women on coffee *ranchos* devoted their efforts to important household and reproduction activities. During the three to four month coffee harvesting and processing period, they also contributed their labor.³⁶ Women usually picked the coffee berries, then cleaned and dried the coffee beans. Traditional Mexican gender ideology proceeded to label this essential aspect of coffee production as 'women's work.'³⁷

Women labored as *manchadoras* or *escogedoras de cafe*.³⁸ The work of '*manchar*' included the tedious and repetitious process of deshelling and sorting coffee beans before they are distributed.³⁹ Because it necessitated an acquired knowledge of what can or can not be processed into drinkable coffee *manchar* was a skilled activity. This knowledge answered everyday workplace questions of how long to let the beans dry in the sun? when to shell the bean? and what is the highest quality taste that can be achieved from a certain bean? *Manchar*, also known as *escoger*, translates into 'quality control' and it greatly influences the market price. Mostly women performed the deshelling and sorting of the coffee beans.⁴⁰ This work was done in an 'assembly line' fashion, with women lined up with mats and baskets of coffee beans. Ultimately, women had the capacity to decide what coffee did or did not reach the market for sale.

This potential economic influence provided popular women with 'negotiation power' with the Revolutionary state. In between the time the bean is harvested and sold, popular women made important decisions which greatly determined the market price. Simultaneously, these women possessed the ability to increase, slow-down or halt the

production process. These everyday work-place activities greatly affected both the quality and quantity of the final product. Next, Veracruzano coffee's economic importance regionally and nationally made government authorities interested in the stimulant's cultivation, distribution, and sale. By far, Veracruz produced the largest amount of coffee in the nation.⁴¹ This coupled with its export focus made coffee production extremely relevant to the state's economic interest. Export earnings fueled the reconstruction of the Mexican economy. In the Veracruz countryside, popular women made important economic decisions. Because of their local and global economic effects, these judgments had potential ramifications in the markets of México D.F. and New York and in the households of Córdoba. Accordingly, during Tejeda's second gubernatorial administration, using this economic influence popular women forced negotiations with state power.

***Molino* technology and Contesting Patriarchal Values**

The development of the *molino* (electric powered maize-grinding mill) further solidified female commercial roles in the Mexican economy. Patriarchal values designated domestic duties as 'women's work.' This included the laborious and constant endeavor of converting maize into tortillas. Since 3000 B.C., the *metate* (the hand-powered stone maize grinder) served as the essential tool for laboriously converting *nixtamal* (lime juice-soaked maize kernels) into *masa* (corn dough) and then into the essential tortilla.⁴² For centuries this job remained perceived as 'women's work', and taboo to men. The tortilla served as a constant food staple for all meals. For millions of

Mexicans the tortilla provided, and continues to supply, a major part of their calorie intake. Because of the tortilla's does not stay fresh from one day to the next, women were required to consistently create *masa*. Accordingly, women worked at the *metate*, twice a day and everyday. A combination of patriarchal values, maize's inability to stay fresh, and family consumption needs made the popular *mexicana* enslaved to the *metate*.

Technological developments in the late-*Porfiriato* introduced electric power to the *masa* making process. *Molino* technology promised to liberate women from extended strenuous physical labor. This development coincided with revolutionary state consolidation. Both Arnold Bauer and Dawn Keremitsis explain how electric powered *molinos* reduced hours worked from 35-40 hours a week to three or four hours.⁴³ For those women who lived near a *mercado* with a *molino*, *masa* creation only necessitated carrying the maize to market. *Molino* technology greatly lessened a woman's workload. Because of this decrease, the introduction of *molinos* in local markets liberated millions of *mexicanas* from '*la esclavitud del metate*' (metate slavery). This in turn greatly altered a popular women's socio-economic role in society. Thus, during the 1920s and 1930s a complicated negotiation took place between popular women, *molineras* (women maize-grinders), and the Revolutionary state. Two subtexts fueled this negotiation: a patriarchal fear of women having less work (and more independence) and a Revolutionary state seeking popular support.

In the 1920s, *molinos* gained popularity and were set up in *mercados* throughout the nation.⁴⁴ Consequently, more women entered the labor force as skilled *molino* workers in the commercial economy. At the same time, local women who used *molinos* to make *masa* found their work hours decreased by 36 hours a week. Despite their

obvious benefits to women (or because of the 'cultural threat' posed by these benefits), *molinos* found active opposition from men. Throughout México, men and their patriarchal mindsets opposed the establishment of *molinos* in local markets. In his study of Tepoztlán, Robert Redfield states that men forced the shut-down of the community's first *molino*.⁴⁵ Redfield explains that local men complained about the quality of *molino* created tortillas. Then, after women forced their reintroduction men refused to ever carry the heavy buckets of maize to be ground.⁴⁶ Cultural mores labeled domestic duties '*para mujeres*.' Regardless of technological developments and revolutionary politics, patriarchal values perpetually attempted to define a *mexicana's* workload and her social independence. To this day, these values continue to attempt to define a *mexicana's* labor requirements and social freedom.⁴⁷

Nonetheless, for women, working in a *molino* involved long hours in a new and complicated socio-economic sphere.⁴⁸ Long and strenuous labor characterized the work environment of *molineras*. In order to have the tortillas for breakfast ready, *molineras* started the maize grinding between three and four in the morning.⁴⁹ The work continued without a break till five or six in the afternoon. This second shift was for the *cena's* (diner's) tortillas. *Molineras* averaged a minimum of twelve hour days. Pay for women tended to be less than half the wages earned by male counterparts.⁵⁰ Keremitsis explains that despite low wages (relative to male workers and other possible avenues of employment), *molineras* could both earn wages and care for their families.⁵¹ Along with a median age between 17 and 18, the *molinera* population was 50 % literate, while only 37% of the male workers could read. This signifies that *molineras* were young and

socially ambitious. For popular women, working in a *molino* provided a new avenue of self-improvement. It facilitated some economic and social independence.⁵²

Molinos and their workers struggled to establish themselves throughout México. Responding to how this technology greatly reduced women's workload, patriarchal mindsets acted as cultural barriers to the political support of *molinos* for their workers. Initially, *molinos* required a capital investment. In most *molinos*, workers labored for an investor, who earned the profits. From the 1920s, both central and local governments regulated *molinos*. Regulations included municipal licenses and government fixed prices.⁵³ In Veracruz, the regional government's support of cooperatives permitted workers to both control and own the means of production.⁵⁴ La Cooperativa de Molineras del Puerto de Veracruz serves as an example of a worker controlled enterprise. Plus, La Cooperativa was a modern economic venture controlled by popular women.

In the 1920s, women workers found labor organization hostile and unhelpful.⁵⁵ With President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40), the central state supported *molino* creation and *molinera* organization throughout the nation.⁵⁶ Cárdenas implemented regulations reducing the hours *molinos* could operate. In the 1920s and 1930s, *molineras* struggled to articulate their political voice in Mexican society. It is within this window, that the Veracruzano social reform process suggests a power negotiation between *molineras* and the Revolutionary state.

Escogedoras negotiate with State Power

This section presents the political power-play between El Sindicato de Escogedoras de Café de Córdoba and the state. It explores the negotiation between coffee sorters, their political expressions, and Tejeda's politics. Investigation in state archives and newspapers of the day suggests working class women mobilized and then engaged in power conversations with the state.⁵⁷ This brief research points to four important characteristics concerning the power-play between the Revolutionary state and popular women: women coffee workers did organize labor movements; these workers introduced themselves as political actors to the state and then expressed their desires; this mobilization forced the state to accept popular women and their political voices as actors in Mexican politics; and these conversations led to political negotiations in an arena of extra-legal arrangement.

The state did not dictate or initiate *escogedora* activism. Organization was not from above. Likewise, workers did not decide the government's labor policy. Regional governments and the central state did not ignore organized women workers. Instead, state power and these popular forces influenced each other. Thus, a conversation took place between coffee sorters and state power. From these conversations women workers influenced the process of state formation. Because these political actors articulated their desires as workers, these conversations do not explicitly mention issues such as revolutionary vanguards, state consolidation, or revolutionary alliances. Similarly, workplace issues, as opposed to revolutionary rhetoric, characterized the *arreglos* (power arrangements) between workers and the state. Resolutions and arrangements were

reached through informal and extra-legal means. A 'give and take' relationship existed between the state and these coffee workers. Tejeda and other government officials took the desires of coffee sorters into account because they were an organized movement. Similarly, this syndicate knew their organized political expressions influenced Tejeda's actions. Thus, a negotiation took place between women coffee workers and the Revolutionary state.

The example of El Sindicato de Escogedoras de Café de Córdoba suggests a heated negotiation between popular women workers and the government. Like with their counterparts in Coatepec, women coffee sorters organized to form El Sindicato de Escogedoras de Café. From their participation in the commercial economy coffee sorters mobilized. Accordingly, this organization permitted for the political expression of coffee workers' concerns. In February of 1932, an intense power contest occurred between the *escogedoras* and various government officials.

The regional newspaper *El Dictamen* reported on the 3rd that the Sindicato halted coffee production.⁵⁸ *El Dictamen* presents the stoppage as the result of internal fighting within the Sindicato. Yet, the reasons for the infighting remain unexplained. Because of *El Dictamen*'s anti-labor stance, there is no elaboration of specific goals or reasons for the work-stoppage. For over twenty days the *escogedoras* refused to work, this suggests the contest involved issues beyond infighting within the union. *El Dictamen* provides limited details about the dispute. Issues such as motivations and *escogedora* ideology escape the paper's analysis. Each of the stories describes the contest as if 'the situation is taken care of.' Yet, consecutive stories point to a real uncertainty and confusion from state power. The paper, though, implicitly presents this contest as a vital concern to the

government. This is evident not only in the reports, but also because the contest made the front page of an elite newspaper from the Puerto de Veracruz. Four stories in twenty days elude to a real inability by state power to easily and/or formally resolve this work stoppage. Plus, the contest's duration and intervention by central power point to a heated power negotiation induced by the *escogedoras*.

Despite limited details offered by *El Dictamen*, an examination of the work context unveils probable issues of negotiation. This stoppage took place in February which in Veracruz follows the three month *cosecha* (harvest).⁵⁹ This month also precedes the planting month of April. Thus, February is a critical month between *cosecha* and planting. This year proved to be one of the worst for coffee production in both México and Veracruz.⁶⁰ Halting coffee production in Córdoba translated into direct labor activism and an expression of power by these women workers. Export production terminated. Consequently, these popular actors forced government authorities in Córdoba, Xalapa, and México D.F. to listen and negotiate with them.

From its commencement, the affair suggests an intense contest between the *escogedoras* and various government authorities. Tejeda first attempted to bargain with the workers with a Junta de Conciliación.⁶¹ The Junta was the formal and legal method of settling labor disputes. The coffee sorters, however, refused to converse through this official mode of arbitration.⁶² In all likelihood the state's interest would have overshadowed workers' concerns in the Junta. The state needed to find another resolution to the problem. Because of Córdoba's importance as a coffee center, securing production very much interested the Xalapa government. By 1930, coffee became the state's number one agricultural export earner.⁶³

Next, the direct activism of the *escogedoras* caught the attention of central government authorities. The contest concerned the México D.F. government because Veracruz was the nation's largest coffee producer.⁶⁴ Plus, Córdoba served as the region's premier coffee center. Ten days after its first story about the Sindicato, *El Dictamen* reported a violent dispersement of the coffee sorters and a consequential by central power.⁶⁵ Municipal police in Córdoba arrested 20 women workers, while some were sent to the Hospital Civil Yanga. Evidently, the *escogedoras* fought back with rocks when the police attempted to terminate their protest. Next, the Secretaría de Industria, Comercio y Trabajo sent Federal Inspector Rueda Magro to 'take care' of the situation. This negotiation between state power and women workers now included the central government. Government officials in Córdoba, Xalapa, and México D.F. responded with both violence and federal intervention when organized female labor expressed its political voice.

On February 19, the newspaper announced that the Governor's representatives proclaimed three resolutions to resolve the problem. These were: the Syndicate's offices are to be respected, the Junta de Conciliación y Arbitraje's decision are to be complied with (as the female workers had done before the difficulties), and all members of the Syndicate are to be considered.⁶⁶ By the 23rd of February (twenty days after its first story), *El Dictamen* reported the conflict was over and it exalted the government's efforts at mediation. This explanation though gives too much weight to the official and public details concerning the labor dispute.

In reporting the work stoppage, the paper consistently referred to the *escogedoras* as '*las señoritas*' (young, unmarried, illogical and 'perhaps foolish?' women).⁶⁷ In doing

so, the paper not only provides a cultural explanation of why these workers resisted, but it also assumes the women were unmarried. Many *cafeteras* both earned wages and were married.⁶⁸ In essence, the work stoppage is attributed to young women and 'most likely foolish' actors. Yet, when reporting the settlement, the paper ends the diminutive description of the workers.

El Dictamen's description of the conflict's resolution ignores relevant power exchanges. The paper does this because extra-legal and non-institutional negotiation took place between the women and the state (regional and central). Interactions -beyond the scope of an elite newspaper and institutional political analysis- resolved this contest. '*Dichos Mexicanos*' (colloquial Mexican phrases) of '*aceitar la maquina*' (oil the bureaucratic machine), '*¿como nos arreglamos?*' (how can we fix this situation?) and '*la mordida*' (the bribe) signify this established extra-legal arena of conflict arrangement.⁶⁹ An examination of the contest's public transcript in *El Dictamen* and an examination of archival sources suggest a state-populace resolution within this informal arena.⁷⁰

Days after reporting the affair's end, the newspaper announced that the Veracruz government would sponsor a 'Comision Feminista' in Córdoba as part of an effort to increase female participation in Mexican politics.⁷¹ These working class women desired an improvement of female roles in Mexican politics. Enough so that, they negotiated a state-sponsored feminist conference with the state. Next, a couple days later this journal revealed that the Secretaria de Hacienda (based in México D.F.) had eliminated regulations on coffee exportation, while special rights had been given to Córdoba coffee.⁷² These two stories elude to elements of hidden -'behind the scenes'- negotiation between popular workers and the Revolutionary government. In this informal arena,

women negotiated with both regional and central authorities. Furthermore, the immediacy of a feminist convention in Córdoba and the deregulation of coffee production demonstrate the real political impact of popular political expression. Female political articulation succeeded in making its desires impossible to ignore to both the central and regional governments. Accordingly, the state offered benefits to these women workers in order to resolve the affair. Deregulation promised to increase coffee sales for the *escogedoras*. Direct labor activism shifted the power negotiation from the official and legal Junta de Conciliación towards economic and political benefits for women workers.

This essay's examination of the political influence of *escogedoras* in Veracruz only begins to scratch the surface. Much more economic, cultural, and sociological analysis is needed to truly explain the details untouched by this essay and to describe the influence exerted by these popular women in Veracruz, México. This essay provides this example as a departure point for more exploration.

***Molineras* Converse with State Power**

Molineras (women maize-grinders) provide another example of political power-play between women workers and the Revolutionary state. The telegram record indicates that La Cooperativa de Molineras del Puerto de Veracruz engaged in extended power conversations with Tejeda and other government authorities. Like with coffee sorters, *molineras'* participation in the commercial economy facilitated their labor activism. Work-place and economic concerns characterized these political conversations. While

not particularly rich in revolutionary rhetoric, in a small way these political exchanges contributed to the process of revolutionary state formation. Archival research indicates four characteristics concerning the power-play between the *molineras* and state power: women corn-grinders did organize a labor movement; *molinera* organization led to popular political expressions; the state did not ignore these expressions; and this led to an extended extra-legal negotiation.

At first La Cooperativa de Molineras del Puerto de Veracruz maintained cordial relations with Tejeda. Like with many other political actors (popular or not) in Veracruz, the Cooperativa and the Governor exchanged holiday wishes of 'good luck' and 'prosperity.'⁷³ These exchanges contained implicit political messages beyond cordialities. They served as introductions or reminders of the Cooperativa as an organized group of women workers. In effect, the *molineras* strategically presented themselves to the Governor. This signified their support for Tejeda. It helped create relations with a strong political ally. With cordial exchanges on inaugurations, holidays, and even in cases of illnesses, political actors presented their existence and expressed their support to political leaders. From these 'apparently friendly exchanges' power conversations between popular movements, in this case the Cooperativa de Molineras, and Tejeda developed.

From this conversation, the Cooperativa attained economic and political benefits from the Governor. For instance, in September 1931 the *molineras* received sanitation facilities from the Dirección General de Salubridad. As part of his order Tejeda said the state government '*tiene el decidido propósito de ayudar a esta Cooperativa y defenderla de la competencia.*'⁷⁴ Tejeda explained the state had the dedicated purpose to help these women workers and to defend them from their competition. The competition was male

owned *molinos*. Other *molinos* did not receive this favoritism. Meanwhile, Tejeda ordered the Dirección to be stringent and strict with its inspections of the *molineras'* competition. In May of 1932, Tejeda increased the severity of sanitary regulation enforcement. The Governor, though, excluded the women's cooperative from this increase in government regulation. Tejeda ordered the Dirección General de Salubridad to conduct intensive health inspections of all *molinos* in the Puerto.⁷⁵ Those establishments not complying with the regulations were to be shut-down. Once again, the state government excluded the Cooperativa from inspections and consequently the likelihood of shut-down. Tejeda also provided 'tax-breaks' to the Cooperativa. The Governor ordered the Departamento de Hacienda to give the *molineras* discounted property tax rates.⁷⁶ These benefits, however, were not given to the competition.

Governor Tejeda had introduced health and sanitation regulations to the state's labor policy. Enforcement of these issues remained as 'bargaining chips' in negotiations between the state, employers, and workers. Veracruz law 'legally' required employers to provide workers with health services.⁷⁷ Informal and extra-legal concerns determined whether these regulations were applied or not. Regulatory enforcement only became relevant when the regional government wanted to increase or decrease the influence of a particular actor. The state government informally (definitely not publicly) excluded the *molineras* from regulations enforced on their competition. For Tejeda, favoritism served as a strategic mechanism to increase *molinera* support and/or decrease the influence of their competition.

The detailed record of these benefits suggests that women workers did exert their political influence. The state provided them with political and economic benefits. This

indicates that the government did not ignore the political activity of the *molineras*. These advantages resulted from informal bargaining between working class women and Tejeda. This negotiation appears neither in Tejeda's public alliances, nor in the newspapers of the day e.g. the public transcript. The everyday communication between government offices unveils Tejeda's effort to help the *molineras*. Tejeda needed to maintain control of the popular movements in the Puerto. The Port of Veracruz had traditionally been the site of much labor activism. This coupled with CROM unions and *agraristas* provided for a diverse base of popular actors in Veracruz. Popular movements alone represented a divided body of power actors seeking to influence the Governor.⁷⁸ By increasing the influence of La Cooperativa de Molineras, Tejeda managed to empower one more independent political force in the Puerto. This in turn, inhibited one actor such as CROM unions or Communist unions from controlling the popular voice in the region's most populous city.

The conversation between the *molineras* and Tejeda also provided for representation for the workers in their interactions with the central government. Tejeda chose Heriberto Jara (former Veracruz governor 1924-28) to represent the Veracruz government and various popular movements in México D.F. On the 29th of October 1931, Jara met with Licienciado Vasquez Vela, the Ministro de Industria, Comercio, y Trabajo.⁷⁹ Jara's purpose was to represent the *molineras*, the port workers (Federación Mar y Tierra), and the Veracruz government.⁸⁰ In both his communications to the popular forces from the capital, Jara explained they should remain confident in their position. The Secretaría did not seek to diminish the influence of either working-class organization. Furthermore, the federal office commended the economic activism of the

molineras. Jara explained that both the port workers and the corn-grinders could count on support from the Secretaria. Next, he made the explicit distinction between them (the *molineras* and the port workers) and '*elementos equivocados socialistas*' (mistaken or erroneous socialist elements), the CROM. Despite the CROM's apparent support, Ministro Vela assured 'tranquility and confidence' for the *molineras* and the port-workers.

This exchange points to Tejeda's support of certain power actors (the Federación and the Cooperativa) as part of an effort to avoid having one Veracruzano political actor (CROM unions in this case) from attaining too much influence. Specifically, the *molineras* and the Port workers represented non-CROM and more independent labor groups. Furthermore, because *molineras* found active opposition from male labor groups and their patriarchal fears, La Cooperativa operated more independently. Before 1928, because of its connection to the central state and its national focus, the CROM attained unprecedented political power.⁸¹ The CROM became the de facto civil representative of the central state in many regions outside the capital. It not only controlled much union activity, but its influence also entered other political struggles such as *la Cristiada*. With the assassination of Alvaro Obregón in 1928 and its corrupt practices, the CROM quickly lost its power as 'the behind the scenes' President Elías Calles attempted to increase central power with the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR).⁸² With the Partido Veracruzano del Trabajo, the CROM though still had a huge powerbase in the Orizaba Valley.⁸³ It still exerted much political influence in the textile mills and consequently in regional power contests. The Federación Mar y Tierra though remained a Communist-led syndicate.⁸⁴ Tejeda's representation of the Cooperativa and the Federación politically supported non-CROM and more independent syndicates. Likewise, Tejeda's

representation of women workers supported a politically disenfranchised sector of society.

Tejeda needed popular political support in the state's most populous city. During the first three decades of this century, El Puerto de Veracruz received a consistent influx of new migrants searching for jobs, wages, and a place to live. Moises de la Peña explains that from 1930 to 1940, the city's population increased by nearly 4000.⁸⁵ This steady-stream of migrants produced social tensions in a perpetually hot and humid city. Newly arrived migrants provided fertile ground for labor activism. New migrants were young, unattached, and exposed to union activism in the Puerto.⁸⁶ With this activism, popular sectors of Puerto society articulated their political voice. Thus, the Puerto and its residents remained critical to providing popular support for Tejeda's government.

As the nation's largest port, El Puerto de Veracruz was extremely important economically. Foreign capital and potential export earnings moved through the port. Plus, popular support in this city assisted Tejeda in his other political contests. For instance, while negotiating land reform both *hacendados* and *agraristas* also influenced regional state power. Tejeda's strategy was to avoid having one extremely strong political voice control Veracruzano politics. An overwhelming voice, such as a CROM or Communist controlled labor federation, inhibited state consolidation. Powerful political actors bred antagonism and violence. This prevented the state from resolving disputes. Thus, strong political actors, such as the CROM or the military, derailed state consolidation. As evident in *la Cristiada* from 1926-29 and San Luis Potosí's Cedellista revolt in 1938, regional political violence still threatened central state power in México.

While these power relations can be termed clientalistic, popular forces influenced how political figures governed.

The Governor's strategy was to let no one non-state actor gain too much power. Tejeda offered a regional forum in which different popular forces articulated their political desires. The result of this balancing and negotiation is through Tejeda regional state power slowly consolidated itself. Accordingly during Revolutionary consolidation, power contests in Mexican society slowly moved from violent disputes to influencing regional leaders and then to negotiating with a state structure. The power conversations between Tejeda and the *molineras* represented one of the beginnings of the Revolutionary state as a space of political resolution. Leaders such as Tejeda provided an audience for workers' grievances. Whether *agraristas*, CROM-led, female-led, or Communist, popular forces negotiated with Tejeda.

Like with Veracruz's agrarian reform, Tejeda's political interaction with the *molineras* served as precursor for President Cárdenas's national politics. Popular mobilization before Cárdenas moved the central state to implement social reform such as land reform. Historical scholarship shows that land reform under Tejeda provided an example for Cárdenas and the central state.⁸⁷ This essay suggests that a similar process occurred with Tejeda and *molinera* support. Veracruz's social reform under Tejeda permitted progressive state intervention before it occurred on a national level. By conversing with *molineras*, Tejeda incorporated popular actors politically disenfranchised by gender. These extended negotiations, between the organized populace and revolutionary leaders, resulted in the state slowly consolidated itself as a space where popular forces articulated their political desires.

This essay presents the case of La Cooperativa as a point of scholarly departure for asking more questions, concerning the influence of popular *mexicanas*. Much more economic and cultural analysis is needed to accurately understand and describe what occurred.

Conclusion

From their economic roles, Veracruzano women organized to exert their influence in revolutionary society. In the countryside, the coffee lands near Córdoba, and in urban settings such as the mercado of the Puerto de Veracruz working-class women mobilized and then conversed with state power, regional and central. Specifically, *escogedoras* and *molineras* negotiated power settlements with the state. Because of the non-existence of political alliances and the importance of informal and extra-legal negotiation, I define these political interactions as conversations. Organization was not from above. No political alliance existed between state power (central nor the Governor) and working class women. Likewise, workers did not decide the state's labor politics. Instead, both government officials and these popular actors influenced each others actions, creating power conversations. These conversations did influence and affect the issues during state formation. Workplace concerns characterized these conversations. Issues such as uniting all Mexican workers, attaining the right to vote, or providing a revolutionary vanguard for the masses failed to appear on either side of these conversations. Neither the women workers, nor the state introduced these 'revolutionary' notions into the

discourse. Instead two subtexts fueled these conversations: non-allied popular support for the state and work related improvements for popular women.

Working women used their 'negotiation power' in these conversations. For coffee sorters, this refers to stopping the production of exports, as demonstrated in February of 1932. For both sets of workers, popular support for the state signified their 'negotiation power.' Because these groups did not have national or 'revolutionary' goals, political negotiation did not necessarily threaten the state. The focus of these women labor groups permitted for political negotiation with government officials. An opposite situation existed with the CROM. Because it represented too many voices and competed with central and regional state power, in 1928 the central state cut ties with this labor confederation.

Nonetheless El Sindicato de Escogedoras de Café and La Cooperativa de Molineras expressed political visions and negotiated with the state. For La Cooperativa de Molineras this meant strategic introductions to Adalberto Tejeda. These women workers presented themselves as political actors in Veracruz. With this, the Governor knew another independent popular movement existed in the region. For El Sindicato de Escogedoras de Café de Córdoba, the direct action of halting coffee production served as their political expression. In both cases, women workers desired improvements for their daily lives. With this desire, they articulated their political voices to the state. Next, the state listened to these popular political expressions. A political process of 'give and take' developed. Women workers influenced Tejeda and the Governor influenced the workers. No formal alliance between Tejeda and women workers arose. Yet, worker mobilization caused the Governor to respond politically.

Meanwhile during the consolidation process, the Revolutionary state needed popular support. These conversations with popular women took place as the central state attempted to curb popular violence brought on by *Cristeros*. Along the same lines, the central state moved to control the various regional power structures. Similarly, Adalberto Tejeda governed the state of Veracruz while a variety of actors (popular, progressive, and conservative) exerted their political influence. The ultimate goal of both Tejeda and the central state was to attain popular support in order to prevent the likelihood of political violence.

From the power negotiations charted in this essay, women workers attained economic benefits and the state gained popular support. Because these negotiations were of a work-related nature, the resulting 'power-concessions' were also work-related. With the *escogedoras*, popular political expression not only caught the attention of authorities in Córdoba and Xalapa, but officials in México D.F also noticed. This led to a negotiation between the *escogedoras* and the state. The *escogedoras* forced government authorities to provide 'off the record' benefits. These were a feminist conference in Córdoba (provided by the state government) and a deregulation of coffee exportation (provided by the Departamento de Hacienda and the Cámara Nacional de Comercio). In the Port, the *molineras* received the benefits of exclusion from shutdown and discounted tax rates. Tejeda also provided the maize-grinders representation with central authorities. For La Cooperativa, their strategic mobilization led to a position of favoritism with the Governor. While not explicitly about political parties, regional power structures, or state formation, these three conversations occurred as a Revolutionary state consolidated. Historical investigations focused on institutional and formal politics (political elites,

party politics, constitutions, and policy implementation) have overlooked this power-play between popular women and the Revolutionary state.

From a different point of view, an investigative focus of 'power as negotiation' examines the political interaction between *escogedoras*, *molineras*, and the Revolutionary state. Specifically, this essay analyzes the telegram record, newspapers, and economic studies of the day. Analytically, this focus isolates the 'negotiation power' possessed by popular forces during Revolutionary consolidation. The cultural and work contexts of women workers become extremely relevant when analyzing popular mobilization. Likewise, such a focus examines why the state responded the way it did to popular mobilization. Accordingly, explanations of state formation shift from 'manipulation' and 'alliance making' to power conversations between the organized populace and the state. State formation ceases to be something static and unilateral. Instead, state formation becomes a process in which power actors (popular and the state) exerted their influence, not just a 'populist' or an 'alliance-making' state.

Specifically, an application of this focus to the Veracruz example unveils how 'informal' and 'non-institutional' negotiation characterized Mexican politics. From this arena of 'behind closed doors discussions' and strategic application of the law, the state and popular women reached *arreglos políticos* (power arrangements). In particular, the power concessions of feminist conferences, export deregulation, tax-breaks, and exclusion from shutdowns developed from this non-policy and non-party politics arena of negotiation.

An examination of politics in this 'non-institutional' arena not only unveils female participation, but it also demonstrates the significance of relevant economic and cultural

negotiations. Revolutionary politics coincided with dramatic economic and cultural changes in Mexican society. In particular, I refer to the 'modernization' of the female economic sphere, the importance of work-place realities, and what this meant in a patriarchal society. Despite the inability to vote, women did bring these concerns to the political discourse.

Female participation in coffee production necessitated skilled and tedious labor. Sorting and deshelling coffee beans translated into both 'quality and quantity control' of a highly profitable export. Although occurring in the countryside, coffee production involved complicated and highly commercial work-place decisions.⁸⁸ Meanwhile, coffee producers throughout the world openly resisted attempts to increase production and/or maximize profits.⁸⁹ Likewise, because of coffee's economic importance government powers in Xalapa and México D.F. needed to secure its production. In this respect, coffee sorters possessed 'negotiation power.' They controlled a critical point during the means of production. They, also, possessed the necessary work-knowledge to produce exportable coffee. Thus, the labor activism of El Sindicato de Escogedoras de Café gains particular significance.

The development of *molin*os throughout México demonstrates another complex economic and cultural negotiation. Specifically by greatly decreasing women's workload, *molin*os threatened patriarchal mindsets. Female independence or social empowerment found active opposition from husbands and labor organizations. Consequently, *molino* creation and *molinera* organization confronted patriarchal-fueled opposition. For this reason, the widespread establishment of *molin*os required state intervention. With Adalberto Tejeda, La Cooperativa de Molineras found a strong

political ally. In essence, state support of La Cooperativa in the Port assisted both popular women (who ground maize into *masa*) and *molineras*.

The focus of this essay, power negotiations between women workers and the Revolutionary state reflects larger cultural contests between women workers and patriarchal mindsets. While state power, political parties, *agraristas*, *Cristeros*, and foreign interests exerted their influence during revolutionary consolidation, popular women contested both state power and cultural mindsets. The public transcript of revolutionary politics claims women could not vote nor hold public office. It is a basic contention of this essay that **non-appearance** in institutional politics **does not** translate into inactive roles in revolutionary politics. As indicated with the power negotiations between state power, *escogedoras*, and *molineras*, women did participate in Mexican politics. These negotiations reflected both cultural and political contests of early twentieth century Mexican society.

Despite 'modern' spheres of economic influence, patriarchal and *machista* values attempted to define female workloads. New labor roles offered popular economic opportunities and poorly paid 'low prestige' positions.⁹⁰ Patriarchal values conceptualized harvesting, sorting, and deshelling coffee as 'women's work.' Similarly, male-centered values defined maize grinding and a plethora of other domestic endeavors as 'para mujeres.' For centuries, *masa* creation kept *mexicanas* busy for 30 to 40 hours a week. The electric *molino* greatly reduced this by at least 27 hours per week. For *molineras* and *escogedoras*, economic modernization provided popular women with 'negotiation power' in their political interaction with the state. This coupled with the state's need for popular supports presents the socio-cultural context of these negotiations.

This essay suggests that despite a public transcript of political inactivity and political voicelessness, popular women did negotiate with the Revolutionary state. Simultaneously, this political power-play points to larger cultural redefinitions of a woman's role in Mexican society. This study breaks from an analysis of where the state (revolutionary or not) did not let women participate, towards an exploration of how women forced the state to negotiate.

In sum, by minimizing the importance of institutional and formal politics, this essay begins to unveil the political participation of women workers during revolutionary consolidation. In Veracruz, working class women forced the state to engage in extended power conversations. These power conversations between women coffee-sorters, maize-grinders and state power illuminate to the need to explore the notion of popular participation in Mexican politics. Despite limited alliances, popular movements forced the state to make power concessions. Thus, to some degree they influenced the process of state formation. These examples suggest that analytical models of 'manipulation' or 'progressive alliances' ignore the power popular forces exerted during Revolutionary state formation. By articulating their political voice, through mobilization, workers moved the state to respond accordingly. Examinations of informal and extra-legal resolutions indicate women did exert their political influence. Furthermore, extra-legal resolutions and economic power permitted women, usually perceived as politically voiceless, to actively and significantly participate in political contests of day.

This essay does not proclaim the era of revolutionary consolidation or Veracruz as examples of a 'golden age' for women in México. Similarly, this period in no way signified a 'brighter day' for workers. Even to this day, young and socially ambitious

mexicanas working in 'modern' *maquiladoras* (owned by General Electric, Converse, Hitachi among other multinationals) consistently contest patriarchal mindsets of '*patrones mexicanos y gringos*.'⁹¹ However, an examination of state archives and an analysis of newspapers begins to explore the political articulation of popular Veracruzano women. This essay does not pretend to be the final word on the political participation of women in Veracruz or México. Various state archives, diaries, newspapers, and innumerable cultural icons remain to be appreciated historically. Instead, this essay poses new questions and sparks more investigation concerning women in México. The ultimate goal has been to urge historians and social scientists to ask: how did women participate? Did they voice their political desires? how did political changes affect their lives? How did women change México's economy and culture? The historiography is much too filled with the names of Hernandos, Miguels, Benitos, Porfirios, Venustianos, Emilianos, Lázaros, Carlos, and Ernestos to present all the actors and their struggles in Mexican history.

Ernesto Hernández-López

Orange, CA, January 18, 2005

¹ Taking place after 1920, 'Revolutionary Consolidation' was the political struggle between the central state, regional power structures, and the organized populace from which the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano-led state developed in 1934. 'State formation' and 'Revolutionary Consolidation' refer to the same political process. I define the 'state' or 'state power' as any government body, local, regional, or central. This includes political figures, law enforcement, and bureaucratic bodies. Accordingly, both Adalberto Tejeda and the Camara Nacional de Comercio represent state power.

² For the purposes of this article, I define "popular" as those individuals who labor in the industrial and agricultural fields. This includes *obreros*, artisans, and *campesinos*. For popular women it was necessary for them to provide economic and domestic participation in their household economies.

³eds. Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent *Everyday Forms of State Formation-Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, Chapel Hill: Duke University Press, 1994.

-
- ⁴Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent 'Popular culture and State Formation in Revolutionary Mexico'. eds. Joseph and Nugent, : 3-23.
- ⁵eds. Thomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman *Provinces of the Revolution-Essays on Regional Mexican History*. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990.
- ⁶Heather Fowler-Salamini *Agrarian Radicalism in Veracruz*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978.
- ⁷Romana Falcón and Soledad García Morales *La semilla en el surco. Adalberto Tejeda y el radicalismo en Veracruz, México*: El Colegio de México, 1987.
- ⁸Santillan, Vincente Palacios. 'La Legislación revolucionaria y radical de Adalberto Tejeda 1920-1924 y 1928-1932.' Tesis de Maestría en Historia Universidad Veracruzana, Agosto 1983.
- ⁹Fowler-Salamini, 1978,
- ¹⁰Fowler-Salamini, 1978, :101.
- ¹¹Andrew Grant Wood 'The 1922 Tenant Movement in Veracruz' and Elizabeth J. Norvell 'Las Mujeres Libertarias, 1922-1925: A Struggle for Dignity and Participation in the Making of Post-Revolutionary Society in the Port of Veracruz' both presented at the LASA Conference September 28-30, 1995.
- ¹²Vincente Palacios Santillán 'La Legislación revolucionaria y radical de Adalberto Tejeda 1920-1924 y 1928-1932.' Tesis de Maestría Universidad Veracruzana, 1983.
- ¹³Organized workers negotiated with state power during the Porfiriato. With the Red Battalions, labor participated in the revolutionary civil war . Alan Knight 'The Working Class and the Mexican Revolution, c. 1900-1920,' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, XVI, 1984, :51-79 and Ramón Eduardo Ruíz *Labor and the Ambivalent Revolutionaries Mexico, 1911-1923* , Baltimore: John Hopkins Univ. Press, 1976.
- ¹⁴Although, a plethora of anti-revisionist and revisionist works exists, the scholarly argument between Arnaldo Córdova and Nora Hamilton best exemplifies this debate concerning Revolutionary consolidation. Arnaldo Córdova *La ideología de la revolución mexicana*, México D.F.: Ediciones Era, 1973 and Nora Hamilton *The Limits of State Autonomy: Post-Revolutionary Mexico*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982.
- ¹⁵For more analytical elaboration of the 'power negotiation' model see Ernesto Hernández 'Cafeteras, Molineras, and Adalberto Tejeda: unveiling negotiations between Women Workers and State Power in Veracruz, México (1920-32)' Masters Thesis, Georgetown University, 1996.
- ¹⁶This essay does not equate 'Modernization' with improvement or movement towards a better condition of socio-economic affairs. A central theme of this essay is that despite commercial developments and changes in traditional values, women still struggled as both working-class laborers and individuals living in a patriarchal society. Instead, 'modernization' is utilized in order to place commercial and technological developments within their historical context. A context in which traditional values confronted economic, technological, and commercial developments. In México, this discourse is most marked by rise in wage-laborers, commercial economics, and participation by women.
- ¹⁷Ramón Eduardo Ruíz *The Great Rebellion Mexico 1905-1924*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1980, :356.
- ¹⁸Descriptions of the regional nature of revolutionary México exists in eds. Thomas Benjamin and Mark Wasserman, 1990 and specifically for San Luis Potosí Romana Falcón *Revolución y caciquismo: San Luis Potosí, 1910-1938*, México: El Colegio de México, 1984.
- ¹⁹Alan Knight 'Mexico's elite settlement: conjuncture and consequences.' in eds. John Higley and Richard Gunther *Elites and Democratic Consolidation in Latin America and Southern Europe*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, :125.
- ²⁰*La Gaceta Oficial del Estado de Veracruz*. Tomo XXI, Febrero -Abril 1929, No. 42, No.43, No. 44, No. 45, No. 51, No. 22, No. 35, No. 37, No. 38, No. 39, and No. 151.and Tomo XXII, Octubre-Diciembre 1929. No. 154, No. 155, No. 182, No. 183, No. 184, No. 185, No. 186., and No. 131 reports these nullifications in the communities of Axocuapan, Las Vigas, Apazapan, Zaragoza, Acayucan, Santiago de Tuxtla, Medellín, Teocolo, Coatepec, Nautia, Veracruz, Chontla, Yecuatla, Martínez de Torre, Tepetizintal, De Mistantla, Chontala, Chiconamel, Acyucan, Puerto de Mexico, Ozuluama, Tuxpan, Huayacoctla, Catemacaco, and El Puerto de Veracruz.
- ²¹Llian Estelle Fisher 'The Influence of the Present Mexican Revolution upon the Status of Mexican Women' *Hispanic American Historical Review*, February 1942, : 211-228, Shirlene Soto *Emergence of the Modern Mexican Woman: Her participation in Revolution and Struggle for Equality* Denver : Arden Press, 1990 and Anna Macías *Against all odds: The Feminist Movement in Mexico*. Westport, Connecticut:

Greenwood Press, 1982 all provide analysis of Feminist movements in México and a woman's role in 'formal politics.'

²² Ernest Gruening, *Mexico and its Heritage*. New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, 1934, :627.

²³ William Taylor in *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979, explains how women were responsible for *pulque* (what moonshine is to whisky, *pulque* is to *tequila*) production and sales in colonial México.

²⁴ Gruening, :630.

²⁵ For instance in 1878 Córdoba and Coatepec accounted for 68% and 12% of Veracruz's coffee, respectively, Moises T. de la Peña *Veracruz Económico* tomo 2. Xalapa: Gobierno del Estado de Veracruz, 1946, :50.

²⁶ De la Peña, tomo 2, :59.

²⁷ Fowler-Salamini, 1994, :51-72.

²⁸ During the late Porfiriato coffee became the second largest agricultural export earner Mabel M. Rodríguez-Centeno 'La producción cafetalera mexicana. El caso de Córdoba, Veracruz' *Historia Mexicana*, XLIII, 1 :88. Stanley Stein's *Vassouras- A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850-1900*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985 and eds. William Roseberry, Lowell Gudmundson, and Mario Samper Kutschbach *Coffee, Society, and Power in Latin America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994, provide regional and global explanations of the political economy evident in nineteenth century coffee production.

²⁹ Heather Fowler-Salamini, 'Gender, Work, and Coffee in Córdoba, Veracruz, 1850-1910' in eds. Heather Fowler-Salamini and Mary Kay Vaughn *Women of the Mexican Countryside 1850-1900*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press 1994 and Rodríguez-Centeno.

³⁰ Coffee cultivation in México consisted of 47,724 hectares in 1900; 90,515 hectares in 1930; and 116,152 hectares in 1940. De la Peña, tomo 2, :51.

³¹ Using figures from a 1933 economic study, Rodríguez-Centeno charts millions of kilograms produced in México as 57mill. for 1919, 35mill. for 1921, 40mill. for 1922, 41mill. for 1926, 42mill. for 1928, 39mill. for 1929, 38mill. for 1930, 33mill. for 1931, and 42mill. for 1932; :93.

³² Rodríguez-Centeno, :95.

³³ Rodríguez-Centeno, :94.

³⁴ Fowler-Salamini, 1994, :51-72

³⁵ Fowler-Salamini, 1994, :52.

³⁶ Fowler-Salamini, 1994, :55.

³⁷ Fowler-Salamini, 1994, :55.

³⁸ While the term for coffee sorting is usually labeled *machar*, this essay also uses *escoger* (borrowed from the Sindicato's name). Coffee producers were not affected by the land reform instituted by Adalberto Tejeda. Both the large coffee estates and individual land owners remained untouched by land distribution. Foreign presence in Córdoba coffee had fallen from Porfirian levels and down to only 25% of the *finca* owners. Even though this study focuses on women as coffee sorters, Córdoba women participated in all levels of coffee production. They labored as *mano de obra contratada* (contract labor), *propetarias* (small-landowners), and *jefas de explotación* (overseers). Women made up 25% of the *propetarios* and 13% of the *jefas de explotación*. Rodríguez-Centeno, :99& 105-08.

³⁹ De la Peña, Stein, and Roseberry all offer detailed descriptions of the necessary specialization and divisions of labor embedded in this post-harvest process. De la Peña, tomo 2, :59-72, 'Introduction' by William Roseberry in eds. Roseberry, Gudmundson, and Kutschbach, :13-14, and Stein, : 35-39.

⁴⁰ For description of female involvement in deshelling and selecting see Fowler-Salamini, 1994, Rodríguez-Centeno, :107-108, and Stein, :35-69.

⁴¹ During the 1930-1940 period, Veracruz produced over 43% (in tons) of México's coffee. Rodríguez-Centeno, :96-99 and De la Peña, tomo 2, :53.

⁴² The *metate* is comprised of a stone rolling pin and an extremely heavy stone base, where the *nixtamal* is ground. Arnold J. Bauer 'Millers and Grinders: Technology and Household Economy in Meso-America' *Agricultural History*, 1990, vol. 64, no. 1, :3.

⁴³ Bauer, and Dawn Keremitsis 'Del metate al molino: la mujer mexicana de 1910 a 1940.' *Historia Mexicana*, 33, 1983, :285-302.

-
- ⁴⁴Bauer charts *molino* establishment in communities in Cuernavaca and the Yucatan during this decade, : 15. Gruening also makes reference to the rising popularity of electric powered *molinos* in México, :85; Keremitsis explains that the twenties produced an increase in workers employed by *molinos*, :286.
- ⁴⁵Robert Redfield *Tepoztlán: A Mexican Village*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1930, :49.
- ⁴⁶ Oscar Lewis explains how patriarchal values kept maize grinding culturally defined as women's work *Tepoztlán-Village in Mexico*, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1960, :25.
- ⁴⁷ In *Borderlands-La Frontera The New Mestiza*. San Francisco: Spinsters|aunte lute, 1987, Gloria Anzaldúa provides a sophisticated and powerful testament about her personal struggles with patriarchal and *machista* values.
- ⁴⁸ The primary sources researched for this essay do not elaborate on many details concerning La cooperativa de molineras. By complementing these unique evidence with secondary sources this essay poses new historical questions concerning women and popular participation.
- ⁴⁹ Keremitsis, :287.
- ⁵⁰ Keremitsis, :288.
- ⁵¹ Keremitsis elaborates that textile and tobacco work provided more attractive wages, :300-01.
- ⁵² Today, a similar situation exists in northern México's *maquiladoras*. Where young socially ambitious women work in high-technology industries. As evident in the case with *molineras*, these young women must also combat patriarchal and *machista* mindsets on a daily basis. María Patricia Fernández-Kelly *For We Are Sold, I and My People: Women and Industry in Mexico's Frontier.*, Albany: SUNY Press, 1982.
- ⁵³ Keremitsis, :291
- ⁵⁴ Tejeda supported the creation of La Cooperativa Hidroeléctrica de Minatitlán and La Unión de Tranviarios del Puerto de Veracruz. In Tejeda's *Memorias de la labores del gobierno constitucional del Estado de Veracruz-Llave, durante el cuatrienio 1928-1932*, he writes that cooperatives achieved three important goals in Mexican society: the concentration of work technology, decentralization of public utilities, and administration of businesses by the workers themselves. Falcón and García Morales, :237.
- ⁵⁵ For instance the Sindicato de Molineras y Trabajadoras de Ameca, Jalisco found male unions influencing local officials, as part of an effort to make female organization difficult, Keremitsis :295-96.
- ⁵⁶ Keremitsis.
- ⁵⁷ The historical record as presently researched does not yet explain the history of formation of El Sindicato.
- ⁵⁸ *El Dictamen* 3 de Febrero 1932.
- ⁵⁹ De la Peña, tomo 2, :63.
- ⁶⁰ De la Peña explains that in 1932 Mexican coffee sales totaled only 14,212,057 pesos, as opposed to 20,928,277 pesos in 1930. The Secretaría de Agricultura reports that for Veracruz 1932 translated into only 42,202 hectares harvested and 8,757,000 pesos in sales. While in 1936 hectares harvested equaled 54,951. De la Peña, tomo 2, :51-52.
- ⁶¹ Vicente Palacios Santillán writes that Tejeda enacted the Ley de Trabajo on June 30, 1921. This law provides for the Junta de Conciliación as an arbitration mechanism. The Junta includes representatives of employer, organized labor, and the government's interests. Santillan, : 115.
- ⁶² *El Dictamen* 3 de Febrero 1932.
- ⁶³ Rodríguez-Centeno, :96.
- ⁶⁴ During the 1930-1940 period, Veracruz produced over 43% (in tons) of México's coffee. Rodríguez-Centeno, :96-99 and De la Peña, tomo 2, :53.
- ⁶⁵ *El Dictamen* 13 de Febrero 1932.
- ⁶⁶ *El Dictamen* 19 de Febrero 1932.
- ⁶⁷ This translation of 'señoritas' is from the author who incorporates a critical view of patriarchal values and *machismo*.
- ⁶⁸ Fowler-Salamini, 1994.
- ⁶⁹ In no way do I intend to isolate this arena of informal conflict arrangement to this contest. *Arreglos*, extra-legal settlements, bribes, corruption, and other 'behind the scenes understandings' have resolved endless conflicts in México. These include Pancho Villa and President Venustiano Carranza, travelers and customs agents, and the 1990s quick sale of state-enterprises.
- ⁷⁰ I define the newspaper record as a 'public transcript.' I borrow this term from James Scott's examination of resistance and domination. Scott contends that power negotiations contain both 'public transcripts' and

'hidden transcripts.' 'Public transcripts' only represent a fraction of the relevant power articulations. James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance-Hidden Transcripts*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990.

⁷¹*El Dictamen* 25 de Febrero 1932 reports this in a small story. This report is the only instance when *El Dictamen* does not refer to the women workers as 'Senoritas.'

⁷²*El Dictamen* 29 de Febrero 1932 contains two stories. The first reports the lifting of export tariffs for coffee by the Secretaria de Hacienda. The second provides non-specific details about special rights for Córdoba coffee as proclaimed by the Camara Nacional de Comercio.

⁷³AATT, vol. 180, 27 de Diciembre 1929 from Tejada to Juana Rosa.

⁷⁴AATT, vol. 80, Acuerdo 8 de Septiembre 1931.

⁷⁵AATT, vol. 97, Memorandum 6 de Mayo 1932.

⁷⁶AATT, vol. 80, Acuerdo 9 de Septiembre 1931.

⁷⁷For instance, La Primera Reforma a la Ley de Trabajo stipulates that employers are responsible for worker's injuries, employers must pay the families of workers who have died, incapacitated workers will receive compensation and health services provided by the employer, the Dirección General de Salubridad will examine workers to measure employer's responsibilities, and other such pro-worker health requirements, Santillan, :269-272. Ernest Gruening also explains how Veracruz law requires employees to provide health services and compensation pay for workers. Gruening though argues that these laws favor abuse by 'faking workers', : 385-86.

⁷⁸All though not part of this study, less-popular and less-progressive actors such as the military, the central government, *latifundistas*, and the Catholic Church also sought to influence the Veracruzano Governor. Therefore, this 'political balancing' was not limited to organized popular actors in Veracruz.

⁷⁹AATT, vol. 79, 29 de Octubre 1931, URGENTE from Heriberto Jara to Maria Teresa.

⁸⁰AATT, vol. 79, 29 de Octubre 1931, URGENTE from Heriberto Jara to F. Gutierrez, J. Reyes, and Nefi Avila.

⁸¹Jean Meyer 'Mexico: Revolution and Reconstruction in the 1920s.', *The Cambridge History of Latin America vol. V*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986, : 155-93, and Carr.

⁸²Marjorie Ruth Clark. *Organized Labor in Mexico*. New York: Russell & Russell, 1934,: 133-137, and Knight, 1992.

⁸³Clark, :143.

⁸⁴Gruening, :340.

⁸⁵De la Peña, *Veracruz Economico*, tomo 1, :195.

⁸⁶Gruening describes labor activism in the Puerto as 'out of control' and very much correlated to the high density of workers in the area. :340.

⁸⁷Serafin Maldonado Aguirre *De Tejada a Cárdenas: el movimiento agrarista de la Revolucion Mexicana, 1920-34*. Guadalajara: Editorial Universidad de Guadalajara, 1992, Benjamin 1990, and Fowler-Salamini, 1978.

⁸⁸Laird W. Bergad 'Coffee and Rural Proletarianization in Puerto Rico, 1840-1989' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 15, 1984, :83-100, and Fowler-Salamini, 1994

⁸⁹Charles David Smith 'Peasant Resistance to the "Grow More Coffee" Campaign in Kagera Region, Tanzania' *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, X, 2, 1989: 273-87 and David McCreery 'Hegemony and Repression in Rural Guatemala 1971-1940' *Peasant Studies*, 17, :157-177.

⁹⁰Fowler-Salamini, 1994, :52.

⁹¹ Fernández-Kelly.