

Feeding Chilapa: The Birth, Life, and Death of a Mexican Region. By Chris Kyle. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. 2008. Pp. xvi, 269. Figures. Tables. Maps. Appendices. Notes. References Cited. Index. \$45.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.

This book is a clear and interesting regional analysis of economic and political changes over time and place in the Atapa basin of Guerrero during the last 200 years. The book begins with a discussion of Mexican regions in which the author criticizes anthropologists for having abandoned regional analysis in the 1950s in favor of community studies. After a description of Mexican geographic diversity, Kyle discusses generally how Mexico's regions "met extinction by the close of the twentieth century" (p. 15), largely from industrialization and especially modern means of transportation. He then describes the region that is the subject of the book in terms of patterns of food production and distribution and how Chilapa, the urban community that was the region's center and the main focus of study, became an impoverished backwater as neoliberal policies were instituted by the Mexican government. Whereas most studies of the impact of neoliberalism stress the declining role of the state, Kyle argues that in the Atapa basin, the state's involvement in the region increased over time, first by its role in the construction of a highway. The highway facilitated neoliberal consequences since the 1980s: competition between the region's "preindustrial producers" and outsider producers and the abandonment of the autonomous household food production of those preindustrial producers. The next six chapters describe the region and the factors that led first to the persistence of subsistence production and then its rejection and the growth and decline of the city and the region.

After an overview of the area in Chapter 1, the second chapter, "The City," describes the emergence of Chilapa as an urban center and the area as a region in the late eighteenth century as numerous residents of the community became involved in commerce, either as muleteers involved in the transporting of cargo, especially cotton from the coast to Puebla, or as merchants dealing in those commodities or marketed food which was increasingly necessary as the population left agriculture for commerce and later textile production. Chapter 3 analyzes a rebellion by those in the countryside in the 1840s. Kyle begins with quantitative data culled from a variety of sources showing increased maize consumption beginning in the late eighteenth century until the mid-nineteenth century in order to feed the growing nonagricultural population. The need to feed this growing urban population was met by Chilapa's elite with a new head tax backed by the use of force. Rebellion by the agricultural producers and then a devastating cholera epidemic ended the violence. Chapter 4 discusses the political relationships that followed the rebellion and later the impact of Mexico's Agrarian Code from its establishment through the twentieth century. Chapter 5 goes back to the mid-nineteenth century and describes how both commercial maize production and the rebozo industry that had developed after the rebellion declined as a result of higher and more unstable costs of food for the urban population. Chapter 6 argues that road construction in the 1960s led to Chilapa importing more than it exported and the government's stepping in with various programs to subsidize both rural and urban dwellers. Beginning with federal support of road construction, the author discusses various programs and stresses how federal support continued even after neoliberal reforms. Despite this support, the book's conclusion points to increased migration out of the area—

to Chilapa, Acapulco, Mexico City and the United States. Kyle suggests that pursuing the story further would require examining the Mexican government, global trade negotiations, and other policy-making venues that go beyond the region.

The major strength of the book is its regional approach. This leads to a very useful description of changing patterns of the distribution of goods and services between an urban center and its hinterland. The regional approach, however, also has limitations. Although Kyle shows how relations between different zones in the region change over time, he treats the Atapa basin as a fixed and static unit. Additionally, breadth comes sometimes at the expense of depth. He is vague about his fieldwork; he mentions some surveying, interviewing and participation in various activities, but rich ethnographic description is lacking. His ethnographic observations, especially of the rural areas, are often generalized and oversimplified statements such as “heart-stopping” (p. 22) travel or “gluttonous feasting” (p. 36). His language when discussing subsistence cultivation, “preindustrial agriculture” or “vestiges of life as it was lived in the preindustrial world” (p. 26), ignores how subsistence cultivation varies and goes against the dynamism in rural agriculture that he himself shows. Despite these criticisms, however, the book is a useful account of the economic and political relations involved in feeding a growing and then declining urban center and its surroundings.

Montclair State University
Montclair, New Jersey

FRANCES A. ROTHSTEIN

DOCUMENTARY FILM

Lucanamarca. Directed by Carlos Cárdenas and Héctor Gálvez. Brooklyn: Icarus Films, 2009. 69 minutes. DVD. Color. \$398.00.

This is a powerful and effective film. The documentary explores the causes, course and complex legacies of the April 3, 1983 massacre of 69 campesinos by militants of Peru’s Shining Path. This mass killing was an act of retributive violence, intended to punish residents of the rural Ayacucho town of Santiago de Lucanamarca for their forceful rejection of the Maoist political party. Although many Lucanamarca campesinos initially sympathized with—and even joined—the Shining Path, numerous community residents attempted to stave off state military repression by publicly executing local Shining Path commander Olegario Curitomay in March 1983. Just over a week after Curitomay’s killing, approximately 60 Shining Path militants entered Lucanamarca and perpetrated the massacre.

The film begins nearly 20 years later, shortly before investigators from the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission arrive in the town. Lucanamarca campesinos describe the Shining Path’s initial emergence in their community, the decision to kill Olegario Curitomay, and the subsequent massacre. In a series of deeply moving scenes, the documentary shows the Truth Commission’s exhumation of the victims, the forensic examination of their bodies in Lima, and their final reburial in Lucanamarca. Toward the end of the