



Mexico: Biography of Power

By Enrique Krauze

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The concentration of power in the caudillo (leader) is as much a formative element of Mexican culture and politics as the historical legacy of the Aztec emperors, Cortez, the Spanish Crown, the Mother Church and the mixing of the Spanish and Indian population into a mestizo culture. Krauze shows how history becomes biography during the century of caudillos from the insurgent priests in 1810 to Porfirio and the Revolution in 1910. The Revolutionary era, ending in 1940, was dominated by the lives of seven presidents -- Madero, Zapata, Villa, Carranza, Obregon, Calles and Cardenas. Since 1940, the dominant power of the presidency has continued through years of boom and bust and crisis. A major question for the modern state, with today's president Zedillo, is whether that power can be decentralized, to end the cycles of history as biographies of power.

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Editorial Review

From Library Journal

Krauze is a well-known Mexican literary and historical author who has worked with and written for the important Mexican magazine *Vuelta* since its inception. His well-translated work, originally published in Mexico as three separate volumes, offers a readable history of the country since independence in 1810.

Krauze first identifies themes that permeate Mexican history, e.g., the concentration of power, the role of the church, and the importance of history to Mexicans, which he then elaborates on by relaying the history of Mexico through the biography of its leaders, primarily presidents. As a result, he offers rewarding insight into how Mexicans see their own history. A useful volume that will be of value to academic libraries and public libraries with an interest in Latin America. --Mark L. Grover, Brigham Young Univ., Provo, Ut.

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From Booklist

Krauze offers a unique perspective of modern Mexico by interweaving the biographies of a number of consequential nineteenth-and twentieth-century leaders into a cohesive historical overview of the Mexican nation. Rooted in both Indian and Spanish cultures, the notion of the *caudillo* leader granted an inordinate measure of respect and control--is one of the most pervasive elements and formative themes in Mexican custom and tradition. Arguing that these leaders have both reflected and influenced the shape and the direction of Mexican history, the author provides detailed accounts of the personal and professional lives of a variety of individual *caudillos*. An insightful examination of how this unbroken cycle of power has played a decisive role in the political and social history of Mexico. *Margaret Flanagan*

From Kirkus Reviews

A vigorous, detailed history of Mexican politics, concentrating on the 19th and 20th centuries, and more particularly on the men who have contested for control of the nation. Journalist and historian Krauze, convinced that the nature of Mexican political life and identity have been greatly shaped by a longstanding cult of the all-powerful leader, focuses on the dominant personalities on the national scene, from the great liberator Benito Juarez (who led the resistance to French occupation forces in the 1860s) up to Ernesto Zedillo, elected to the presidency in 1994. His narrative has pace and color, and his analysis of dictators and heroes seems generally shrewd and persuasive (if a bit impressionistic). Those looking for a history of Mexico's turbulent national politics will find this a useful introduction. But readers expecting details on the impact of politics on Mexico's social and cultural life, on its diverse regions, and on its self-image, will likely be disappointed. (50 b&w illustrations, 4 maps, not seen) -- *Copyright ©1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

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