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978-0-521-02881-3 - Power and the Ruling Classes in Northeast Brazil: Juazeiro and
Petrolina in Transition

Ronald H. Chilcote

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POWER AND THE RULING CLASSES
IN NORTHEAST BRAZIL

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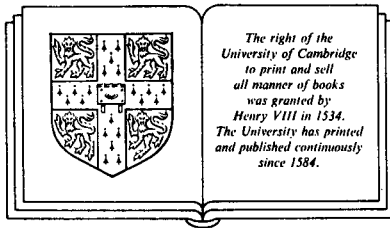
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POWER
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JUAZEIRO AND PETROLINA IN TRANSITION

RONALD H. CHILCOTE

University of California, Riverside



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whose example teaches us how to
struggle, persevere, and commit to
resolving problems of human need.*

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The initial idea for this project evolved from discussions with colleagues in about 1964. Originally, the plan was to undertake a comparative study of communities in northeast Brazil, northern Chile, and northwest Mexico. With the completion of the Brazilian work, a portion of the investigation was replicated in Chile and Mexico as originally planned.

Preparatory work was undertaken in Brazil during 1967 with the support of a sabbatical leave from the University of California and a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation, administered through the university's Dry Lands Research Institute. Development of research instruments and some pretesting were done during 1968 and 1969 in Baja California and in the Mexican–American community of South Colton, where I was able to coordinate the activities of two seminars of students. Research in two towns of the backlands or *sertão* of northeast Brazil was first carried out in summer 1969; these towns were Juazeiro and Petrolina, on opposite banks of the São Francisco River, in the states of Bahia and Pernambuco respectively. This investigation consisted of identification of the power structure in each community; initial interviews with leaders, decision makers, and knowledgeable or influential persons; and some background research into the history of the region. Between March and June 1971, with a sabbatical leave from the University of California and a grant from the Organization of American States, I turned to a survey among high school seniors and semiprojective interviews with eleven- and thirteen-year-old sons and daughters of members of the elite ruling classes. From July until October 1971, supported by a grant from the Social Science Research Council, interviews of roughly three hours' duration were conducted with 118 members of the ruling classes. Thereafter effort was devoted to coding and preparing the data for computer processing.

I studied these communities from nearly every conceivable angle. I delved into archives, read newspapers, and conducted interviews in order to understand the history of the region. To assess economic developments, I gathered statistics and data through banks and corporations and the regional census office. I read through municipal records, minutes of mu-

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nicipal council meetings, and budgets in order to gain insight into local and state politics. I explored personal relationships and traced family genealogies so as to comprehend the social life of the area. I used various techniques and approaches to identify the structure of power in each community. I interviewed a universe of persons representing the ruling classes, and I interviewed their sons and daughters as well. In sum, I gathered a tremendous amount of information. I probed for values, attitudes, and views on issues, problems, and needs of each community. During the course of research it became clear to me that in many respects I was becoming more knowledgeable than those who had lived in the communities all their lives. Of course, I would not assume such a pretentious position, but the implications of possessing so much knowledge and realizing the possibility that it could be used in constructive ways by the communities were indeed exciting.

A mass of computer printouts contains my data from the study. I have tried to present as much of it as possible and to do so simply and clearly. Because I interviewed nearly everyone in the universe of rulers, I have not concerned myself with sophisticated manipulation of data and statistical techniques. Instead I have synthesized and presented the data as representative of the perceptions of the people interviewed.

In this short space it is not possible to acknowledge all the persons and institutions who have supported this work, but I shall identify those who were especially helpful in seeing me through the many years of investigation, analysis, and writing. Let me begin with Amaury de Souza of the Instituto Universitário de Pesquisa in Rio de Janeiro, who joined me in 1967 as a researcher in the now defunct Latin American Research Program at the University of California, Riverside, and offered suggestions and ideas. Maria Laura Menezes assisted me in the Biblioteca Pública of Recife, and Lúcia Nery of the Arquivo Público Estadual in Recife was always cooperative and helpful in locating materials. Manuel Correia de Andrade of the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco provided me with insights from his personal experience and investigation. Estanislau Monteiro de Oliveira of the Superintendência de Desenvolvimento do Nordeste (SUDENE) recounted his months of investigation in Juazeiro and Petrolina during 1967 with a team of researchers from the Centro Latinoamericano de Pesquisas em Ciências Sociais of Rio. I am deeply indebted to all these Brazilian specialists. Jean Casimir, who directed the Centro study, was especially helpful in discussions of research problems. Although he showed me his raw data and early writings on Juazeiro and Petrolina, any references to the Centro study (which was not made public) are to copies of the final report in the archives of SUDENE and the Comissão de Desenvolvimento Econômico do São Francisco (CODESF).

Had it not been for the patience, understanding, and counsel of Pedro

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Mansueto de Lavor, former director of Petrolina's radio station and now federal senator from Pernambuco, this study probably would not have been completed. From the outset he had a clear perception of my objectives, and he believed that the resulting data and analysis would contribute to the betterment of his community. Such encouragement stimulated my motivation, even in the most difficult of field conditions. I hope that the product meets his expectations. Not only was he able to arrange the interviews, to assist in the administration of a school survey, and to recruit interviewers for the project, but he came to my rescue when the project itself was threatened with termination. For example, near the end of my early field work a military intelligence officer in Juazeiro initiated an inquiry into my activities, the result being an interrogation by local and state military officers both in Bahia and Petrolina. Mansueto immediately arranged an open meeting of major personalities in the two communities and invited me to describe my project and answer questions. My anxiety over a tape recorder brought to the meeting by one of the officers and over two jeeps of military police at the entrance of the building was alleviated by sympathetic and laudatory statements by several community leaders who even went so far as to invite me to return to the community to present the results of my study.

I wish also to thank my interviewers. Flor de Maria Nascimento Jacobá and Maria José de Souza Carvalho patiently and with great persistence demonstrated remarkable success in seeking interviewees and carefully pursuing every question until completion. Flor de Maria, in particular, was able to move the project along quickly, sometimes obtaining three or four interviews during a day. I was impressed by her determination to complete an interview with a very busy, important, but cautious agency head; realizing the difficulty – sometimes impossibility – of returning to complete an unfinished interview, she did indeed finish the interview but only after a six-hour encounter. When to my dismay both these interviewers were unable to continue for personal reasons, the gap was very ably filled by Rosália de Araújo Oliveira, a social worker with SUDENE. Jussara Maria Belfort Alemida Saldanha obtained sixty-six interviews with sons and daughters of the ruling class, and Rosângela Rocha Ferrari assisted with coding of most of our interviews. Not only was the work of all those persons efficient and meticulous, but it met every standard of professional rigor and at the same time was carried out with a spirit of enthusiasm and interest probably unique to such tedious research.

I am of course indebted to all persons who gave us their time and shared their thoughts. Their collaboration allowed me to reach all my objectives. In particular, I am appreciative of the assistance of Luiz Augusto Fernandes, who during my first visit to the region in 1967 encouraged me to pursue my study. Upon my return in 1969 he instructed Dr. Giuseppe

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Muccini and Honório Rocha to help this project. They provided me with the facilities and services of the Fundação Educacional and CODESF and introduced me to important personalities. The late regional historian Antônio de Santana Padilha recounted events of life in the communities, outlined family genealogies, and read and checked the historical portions of my manuscript. The history of these communities is only partially recorded and not well preserved. But I was able to read newspapers: *O Farol* and *O Serião* of Petrolina, edited respectively by João Ferreira Gomes since 1915 and by Cid Almeida de Carvalho since 1948. I am appreciative to these gentlemen for letting me delve through their newspaper archives. Also I wish to thank the officers of the Clube Commercial for allowing me to examine their collection of late-nineteenth-century daily newspapers of Juazeiro and Ermi Ferrari Magalhães for assistance in reviewing *Rivale*.

Simão Durando Amorim and the late Américo Tanuri, then mayors of Juazeiro and Petrolina, were receptive and always cooperative in my project. At the outset of my investigation these mayors invited me to meet with town officials and to explain my project; this tended to mitigate a variety of concerns that always are apparent when one asks personal, sometimes sensitive, questions. I also appreciate the cooperation of the former bishops of Juazeiro and Petrolina, respectively Dom Tomás and Dom Antônio Campelo de Aragão, as well as Dom José Rodrigues de Souza, presently bishop of Juazeiro.

Finally, I am especially grateful to the school directors who allowed us to survey and interview students. Because of their efforts, we were also able to survey school teachers. Among these directors were: Nicolau Boscardin, Iêda Nogueira, and Irmã Nazaré Nobrega of Petrolina; and Antonilio de França Cardoso, Edgard Chastinet Guimarães, and Raimundo Medrado Primo of Juazeiro. I am also thankful to students of the Centro de Menores (CEMIC) for their assistance in mimeographing and assembling questionnaires.

Without the intelligent and resourceful effort of Elizabeth Tilly, formerly the Social Science Programmer at the University of California, Riverside, my data would not have been processed so accurately and quickly. She made a very substantial contribution to this study, of which I am most appreciative. Diane Radke, formerly of the Latin American Research Program of the University of California, facilitated the project with typing of questionnaires and coordinating details on campus while I was in the field. Susan Gregory, Danielle Bouvier, and Roseanna Barrón-López also typed portions of the manuscript. My wife, Frances Bunker Chilcote, assisted in many important ways. She helped coordinate interviews with the eleven- to thirteen-year-old students, and she coded those interviews and analyzed some of the data. She checked coding of interviews with high school students as well as with members of the ruling

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classes. She read and edited the manuscript and suggested revisions. Her help and encouragement always were available when needed, for which my appreciation cannot adequately be expressed in writing.

I am grateful for a critical reading of my manuscript by Professor Charles Adrian of the University of California, Riverside, who looked at Chapter 2; the late Professor Peter Eisenberg of the Universidade Estadual de Campinas, who read all of it; and Barbara Metzger of Laguna Beach, California, who copyedited an early draft. Professor Manuel Correia de Andrade of the Universidade Federal de Pernambuco and Professor André Haguette of the Universidade Federal do Ceará reviewed Chapter 12. Professors Peter McDonough of the University of Michigan and Thomas Skidmore of the University of Wisconsin commented extensively on an early draft of the first ten chapters.

During the review process Professors Arturo Valenzuela of Georgetown University and Simon Collier of the University of Essex were especially encouraging and generous with comments and suggestions. I am appreciative of the Cambridge University Press editorial staff who moved the manuscript toward publication, especially the executive editor, Frank Smith; the production editor, Katharita Lamoza; and Brian MacDonald, who copyedited the manuscript. Claudia Maria Pompan, a doctoral recipient at the University of California, Riverside, provided invaluable assistance in the final revision of the manuscript. Tami Barton prepared the Appendix, and Linda Biro organized the Index.

I wish also to thank the following organizations for financial assistance: the Social Science Research Council; the Rockefeller Foundation for its grant through the Dry Lands Research Institute; and the Organization of American States. I also wish to acknowledge the financial assistance of the Committee on Research, the Computer Center, and the Latin American Research Program of the University of California, Riverside.