A major question in the Historical Sciences concerns the nature of the great variety of nation-states created in the last half millennium of our history. A growing number of scholars treat this variation as an indicator of both the multiple projects of modernity in the construction of nation and the fact that the conditions for the construction of each nation-state are interrelated: the success of one, measured in wealth or in the governance of its institutional order, cannot be separated from the failure, backwardness, or even perverse forms of domination that may be found in another.

This, at least, is an important supposition in the study of the relations between the growth of nationalism during the formation of modern states and the development of the most valued institutions of modernity. For example, science, its institutionalization and professional development, is a topic inseparable from modernization and nationalism in state formation. Thus, the thematic section of this issue is dedicated to the exploration of cases or conjunctures in the institutionalization of the production of scientific knowledge but with emphasis on their implications for nation building and state formation.

Science and nation in Mexico is, no doubt, a demanding theme. Mexico is a land of great historical and cultural diversity and, in its history, the number of modernization projects contending to build the nation is remarkable. As Laura Cházaró demonstrates, certain forms of scientific knowledge are particularly oriented to this problem. Cházaró, who coordinated the call for papers in the thematic section, confronts us with the problem of how the Mexican population was conceived and measured in the nineteenth century. By describing the sequence and interrelations of three types of statistical thought in Mexico between 1820 and 1880, she examines the construction of the concept of the “Mexican population” in relation to the nineteenth century concepts concerning how it (the population) should be measured. She describes a paradoxical process in which great efforts are taken to arrive at “exact calculations in support of reflections beyond measure.” In effect, through the review of the resignifications of notions and measures of population in the nineteenth century, the author develops an argument about applied statistics in relation to the valorizations of their results used in an ontological politics of “standardization of social life” – a process in which categories are produced in order to imagine a national community within the heterogeneity and complexity of the population.
Another standardizing process faced with Mexico’s diversity and its multiple and contentious projects of modernity is the movement from the production of knowledge organized in guilds towards a profession based on academic training. Nina Hinke offers us the case of the development of the Mexican pharmacy as an institution at the end of the nineteenth century. The balance between science and art, theoretical and practical knowledge and, also, its organization within a sexual division of labor are the key themes in the process of institutionalizing pharmaceutical practice as superior to the more empirical and traditional practices already well established in the country.

It can be argued that in Mexican historiography the theme of science and nation has long been tied to visions of the revolutionary entrance of Mexico into the twentieth century. As Mechthild Rutsch notes, it is common to argue in favor of a revolutionary reform of the State that breaks with the elitist institutions of porfiran modernization and establishes the bases for new institutional arrangements in the production of knowledge. This position has been dominant in the history of Anthropology in Mexico, although in recent times several important revisionist works have emphasized the continuities between the last half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth. Rutsch, in contrast presents us with the outline of an argument that draws into question both the official post-revolutionary history and the thesis of the new cultural history. She describes the conflicts between the members of two generations in the social network of professionals responsible for the institutionalization of Anthropology during the first decades of the twentieth century. Selecting Luis Mena and Manuel Gamio as exemplary protagonists for each generation, Rutsch affirms that the intergenerational conflicts cancelled for some forty years the possibility of achieving the consensus necessary for the development and definition of lines of research, and training and thus delayed the process of building a professional Anthropology in Mexico.

Eduardo Menéndez closes the thematic section with an article which continues with the issue of Anthropology and its development as a scientific discipline and a professional practice. His concern, however, is with the relation between the terms of the production of knowledge established by the neoliberal state reforms and the methodological requirements of qualitative research. Menéndez examines the case of Medical Anthropology and the study of health, illness, and care. He describes how the qualitative method is a dialogical approach that is particularly demanding as regards the research time needed to produce knowledge. Consequently, while such a method permits the study of the effects of the time-space compression, a supposed hallmark of the postmodern condition, the method itself cannot be subject to this condition without confronting a series of contradictions.

The document presented by Rafael Guevara Fefer in this issue can be considered an artifact of the projects of modernity that sought to systematize the knowledge representative of the nation at the end of the nineteenth century. With this aim, Mexico’s National Medical Institute began the compilation of publications concerned with Mexican plant species and their medical uses, a *Materia médica mexicana*. As a part of or a supplement to this project, Nicolás León produced, between 1888 and 1895, the *Biblioteca botánico-mexicana*. We present here the preface of the document as well as a selection of the corpus of the text that consists in the authors, their bibliographies, a critique or “evaluation” of their work and biographic notes.

The two articles in the general section of this issue examine, from different perspectives, how the power organized and represented in a historical period operates on persons and their bodies. Fernanda Núñez reviews the case of doña Bárbara de Enchaigaray de Xalapa, sentenced by the Inquisition on the sixth of August in 1801. Núñez seeks to comprehend the mentality represented in the sinful and “pseudo-illuminated” life documented in the historical archive. Instead of a genealogical study of the knowledge and institutions behind the judgment and sentencing of doña Bárbara, she explores how the person represented in the archival documents constitutes in itself a form of discourse, and offers us a reading of this discourse that privileges the problem of formation of the self in eighteenth century society.

In contrast, the study by Antonio Padilla Arroyo is concerned with the institutionalization of practices of social control in the nineteenth century. He analyzes the case of the penitentiary of Jalisco as a “porfiran paradigm of order and progress”, and describes the development and institutionalization of the penitentiary as a “total institution” in which the construction of social control was based on surveillance and novel practices of regulation through obligatory work, instruction and new terms for the categorization of prisoners. Through an interesting combination of concepts developed by Erving Goffman and Michel Foucault, Padilla examines the development of the Jalisco penitentiary as a microcosm of state formation in porfiran modernity.
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PAGINA 49: Escuela Nacional de Medicina, fachada del antiguo edificio, en: Mario González-Ulloa y Daniel F. Rubin de la Borbolla, La medicina en México, síntesis histórica, México, Cyanamid de México, s.f.


PAGINA 165: Begonia, en: Alexander von Humboldt, op. cit.


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