# *Modernist Visions and the Invisible Indian:*
## *A History of Mexican Governmental Thought and Maya Resistance*

*by*

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# *Abstract*

This thesis is concerned with the different ways in which the Maya Indians of Mexico have come to be both thought of and acted upon. It traces a political and governmental history from the time of discovery until the late 1990's, uncovering a distinctively modern approach towards what can best be understood as an essentially contested Indian subjectivity. As a means of understanding the current Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, the thesis looks back to previous moments of Indian resistance and seeks to uncover the nature of state/subject relations as they have been experienced by Mexico's Maya population. On the basis of this analysis it becomes possible to talk of a Mexican 'governmentality' that has failed to 'see' the Indian in terms other than instrumental and calculative.

Approaching politics and culture from this particular historical perspective allows otherwise subjugated questions of identity and state formation to be explored. Traditional concerns in International Relations, such as national interest or national security, thus begin to look partial and insular as the highly contiguous nature of such projects with the practices of order and freedom are revealed. Mexico's Indian population, as characterised by the Maya of Chiapas, thus demonstrate how modernity has multiple trajectories and how a narrow and ahistorical approach to current Indian conflict fails to recognise the non-reductive, non-scientific and characteristically human aspect of political resistance that the ongoing Zapatista rebellion embodies.

*My problem is essentially the definition of the implicit systems in which we find ourselves prisoners; what I would like to grasp is the system of limits and exclusion which we practice without knowing it; I would like to make the cultural unconscious apparent.*

*Michel Foucault, 'Rituals of Exclusion'.*

# *Contents*

# *Acknowledgements*

This thesis has been a long time coming, and as a result, I owe much thanks to many people. In geography alone, I have found myself living in Canterbury, London, Mexico and Glasgow at various times during its duration. I have also been fortunate to have presented my work to diverse academic audiences in Paris, London, Vienna, Los Angeles and Hull. Throughout all these twists and turns it has always been people rather than books that have made my research worth doing. As is customary and as a token of my appreciation, I shall now attempt to put some names to the kindness and companionship that I have been shown along the way.

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Nick Higgins

August 2000
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*to dad, mum, and moni.*

# *Introduction*

# Approaching the Indian in World Politics

Over the Christmas and New Year break of 1993-94 I sat in a cold and damp cottage on the outskirts of St. Andrews, Scotland, writing up my masters thesis. I was trying to make sense of the fact that a war between two Marxist inspired rebel armies in Eastern Africa had concluded with the establishment of two democratic states. During my field work in the region some months earlier I remembered one rebel-turned-government minister expressing his frustration at the fact that after the war ended the biggest shock was to discover that if a new state, such as Eritrea then was, wanted international financial support, they *had to* adopt both free-market economics and multi-party democracy. At the time this financial conditionality was promoted by the donor governments of the West under the policy of 'Good Governance'. Just as I was coming to conclude that the role of non-governmental relief organisations had been central to the 'success' of this policy, I heard the news that a rebellion had erupted in southern Mexico.[1]

What caught my attention about this latest rebellion was that the rebels were in the majority indigenous Maya Indians and their struggle claimed to fight against the very type of 'good governance' being so reluctantly embraced by the former rebels of East Africa. Calling themselves the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) they claimed that Mexico's latest 'development', the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), was "nothing more than a death sentence for the indigenous ethnicities of Mexico, who are perfectly dispensable in the modernization program of Salinas de Gortari."[2] (the Mexican president of the time). Their appearance seemed to raise several important questions to me, and over the next weeks I put a PhD proposal together as a means of studying my hunches, this thesis is the result of that study.

The fact that these Indigenous rebels openly contested an international neo-liberal package, so much more advanced in Mexico than in East Africa, led me to

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[1] This research has since been published as Nicholas Higgins, 'The Politics of Humanitarian Intervention: The Ethiopian-Eritrean Experience' in *New Thinking in Politics and International Relations*, (ed.) Hazel Smith, (Kent Papers in Politics and International Relations, Series 5, No. S2, 1996).

[2] Testimonies from the First day, *La Jornada*, 19/1/1994 reprinted and translated in, *Zapatistas: Documents of the new Mexican Revolution*, (Automedia, New York, 1994), p.62.

believe that perhaps the Indigenous of Chiapas had some lessons they could teach me not just about Mexican politics, an arena about which at that time I knew precious little, but furthermore perhaps they could teach me something about World Politics, an arena that as a graduating masters student I supposedly knew much more.

I say I knew little about Mexican politics, but that's not to say I knew nothing of southern Mexico. Only two years earlier I had spent my summer vacation travelling through Central America and Mexico, following what tourists will know as *La Ruta Maya* - The Mayan Route. Like many before me and surely many to follow, I had spent countless hours scaling and sitting atop the spectacular Maya temples of Tikal, Coban, Chichen Itza, Tulum and of course, Palenque. I thus thought I knew something about Maya culture. I had after all been reading several accounts of the pre-classic, classic and post-classic Maya - as the archaeologists have come to divide up the culture prior to the Spanish conquest. I had even read something of the more contemporary Maya, in particular the supposedly classic studies of Egon Votz on the highland Maya of Chiapas. But even armed with this 'knowledge', and informed by my own 'experience' of the living Maya that populate the villages that surround the temples, and who sell their artefacts to 'culturally sensitive' tourists like myself, I had not suspected even for a second that I might 'discover' the most organised and convincing challenge to international neoliberalism witnessed so far.

Equally if any interested individual was to look back to what was obviously visible during the late 1980's and early 1990s, that means if you were to look in both the international and Mexican national press, or if you were to listen to the proclamations of the Mexican government itself, above all those of that self-promoting then President, Carlos Salinas de Gortari, you could easily be forgiven for believing that Mexico was a country poised on the verge of a deliciously attractive precipice. Moreover, if you were to consider the economic indicators of that period, and allow such statistics to be your point of departure for analysing Mexico's condition, again you would be forgiven for supposing that Mexico was tantalisingly close to joining the coveted green pastures of that international plateau called the 'developed world'. Scholars of International Relations, where the study of institutions, treaties and alliances have long been considered of key academic concern, may also have considered the presence of Mexico amongst the OECD countries (Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development), combined with its successful inclusion in

the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and its subsequent close alliance to the United States of America, as powerful signals that Mexico was indeed a wealthy, confident developed modern nation-state at last assuming an international role that reflected its newly acquired status.

This is was what was obviously visible to sensitive tourist and interested individual alike. But the obviously visible was about to be displaced by the hidden invisible. When the Zapatista rebels erupted onto the international scene on New Years day 1994 the question that seemed to pose itself most strongly to me was how? How had these complex politically motivated Indians stayed invisible for so long? How had these same Indians come to recognise an international governmental logic as a threat to their very survival?, and how had they become so marginalised from Mexico's supposed 'success'? and therefore, how was this now openly contested relationship between the Indian, the Mexican state, and the international to be best understood? and how then was one to approach the Indian in World Politics?

**International Relations and the 'Real'**

Perhaps coincidentally, around the same time that questions and accusations surrounding the marginalisation of the Indians of Chiapas were first being raised in the wake of the Zapatista uprising, the academic discipline of International Relations also faced a challenge to its dominant mode of study. Raised by a women, the charge was levelled at the methods of the 'realists' in International Relations, whom it was argued had effectively rendered the subject devoid of people.[3] Through a concentration on the high politics of international actors, the agreements made by anonymous 'states' and their famous representatives, the subject it was claimed, had forgotten, if not actually erased, the existence of a myriad of lesser elevated realities. The realities to which Christine Sylvester referred were in the main those of women, and in particular women of the third world, but the profound methodological point which she advanced had relevance for the millions of human subjects that live international relations and not merely study it.

[3] Christine Sylvester, *Feminist Theory and International Relations in a Postmodern Era*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994).

Ever since the foundation of the discipline in the years after the First World War, the subject of International Relations has embodied a twofold methodological bias. Firstly, as one of the founding professors, E.H. Carr, was astute enough to recognise, every new scholarly discipline comes into being in response to some social or technical need. In this respect International Relations was no different, except perhaps that in this instance the need was nothing less than "the passionate desire to prevent war". In Carr's opinion this need "determined the whole initial course and direction of the study", leading him to argue that since its inception, "the *science* of international politics has been markedly and frankly utopian".[4] The second bias was a result of Carr's own reaction to such 'utopianism'. In labelling his critique of the liberal institution building of the Wilsonian era, 'realist', Carr initiated a dichotomy that would have a lasting impact on what was to prove a burgeoning discipline.

The fact that Carr's own brand of critique involved what might be called an early variant of ethnocentric awareness, and as such, a conscious recognition of theoretical relativism, has been all but forgotten.[5] In his own opinion, "theories of social morality are always the product of a dominant group which identifies itself with the community as a whole, and which possesses facilities denied to subordinate groups or individuals for imposing its views of life on the community." Subsequently, "theories of international morality are, for the same reason and in virtue of the same process, the product of dominant nations or groups of nations."[6] As a result of this belief which he associated with the Machiavellian dictum that "morality is the product of power", Carr's realist methodology actually involved an attempt to historicise the then widely promulgated theory of a 'harmony of interests'.

Carr should therefore be remembered for offering the young discipline an alternative foundation to the liberal-scientific approach to war prevention with which it was first burdened. His own work instead promotes both the insights of political theory and the utility of historical research as a means to better understand the analysis of contemporary political problems and their political solutions. That Carr is only rarely remembered for these suggestions, and that the discipline studiously ignored such

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[4] Edward H. Carr, *The Twenty Years Crisis, 1919-1939*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1968), p. 8, first published 1940, (my emphasis).
[5] Edward H. Carr, *What is History?*, with an introduction by R. W. Davies, (London, Macmillan, 1986 2nd edition) first published 1961.
[6] Carr, *Twenty Years Crisis*, op.cit., p. 70.

methodologies has much to do with Carr's own unfortunate adoption of the rhetorical garb of 'realism'.

In the aftermath of World War II, the more subtle dialectical relationship behind Carr's rhetorical opposition between realism and idealism found itself reinvented as a strict and often vulgar dichotomy between 'rational' realists and 'woolly thinking' liberals. The reasons for this appear to be twofold and self-reinforcing; firstly, the increased influence of positivism as a marker of methodological rigour and secondly, the growing diplomatic interpretation of the world upon bi-polar lines. The two individuals that best exemplify these new influences on the discipline are Karl Popper and George Kennan. With a concentration on the 'facts' and the rule based demands of falsifiable theory, Karl Popper and his contemporaries sought to deny the utility of historicism and provide a firm scientific basis for all departments within the social sciences. Furthermore, with his publication of *The Open Society and Its Enemies* in 1945, Popper attempted to link his particular 'scientific rationalist' approach to the more overtly political practices of a liberal democratic society. One year later, George F. Kennan, then U.S. Chargé d'affaires in Moscow, provided an analysis of Soviet thinking that made the consequences of the politicisation of rationality and its association with realist interpretation only too clear. He accused the Soviet Union of being, "impervious to the logic of reason", and instead viewed the socialist regime as one "highly sensitive to [the] logic of force". Leading him to recommend the employal of "strong resistance" when confronted with Soviet expansion.[7]

By 1947, the wartime co-operation of the western liberal democracies with the Soviet Union had mutated itself into a 'cold war' of theory, practice, and rationality. International Relations, the discipline, thus found itself dominated by both American academic ideas, and their direct preoccupation with Soviet expansion and threat, manifesting itself most clearly in what was often a poorly articulated theory of 'realism'. As the years passed and the Soviet threat became less pressing, theories of realism took on a greater methodological rigour. The books of Hans Morgenthau and Martin Wight are now considered classics, with later work by Kenneth Waltz viewed

[7] Quoted in Torbjørn L. Knutsen, *A History of International Relations Theory*, (Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1997 2nd Edition), p. 236.

as an attempt to reinvigorate this perspective after behaviouralist criticism.[8] Irrespective of increased theoretical sophistication, the concentration on the state as the principle, and essentially rational actor in an amoral or anarchic system of international relations remained the key component of a dominant realist approach for the majority of the post-war years.[9] In an attempt to contest this dominance and to place the variety of approaches within the discipline that remained overshadowed by realism on a more even footing, a new interpretation of the role of theory within IR was proposed by Michael Banks. In the early 1980's he argued that,

> *"it is wrong to think of 'theory' as something that is opposed to 'reality'. The two cannot be separated. Every statement that is intended to describe or explain anything that happens in the world society is a theoretical statement. It is naive and superficial to try to discuss IR solely on the basis of the 'facts'. This is because whatever facts are selected - any at all - are literally abstract. They are chosen from a much bigger menu of available facts, because they are important. The question is: why are they important? And the answer to that is: because they fit a concept, the concept fits a theory and the theory fits an underlying view of the world."*[10]

Banks called these 'underlying views', *paradigms*, breaking the discipline down into three: Realism, Structuralism and Pluralism. However, whilst such a move was intended to create new spaces and legitimacy for long subjugated strands of thinking within the discipline, consider for example the work of Mitrany and Deutscher, it could also be seen as running the risk of excluding those that do not, or cannot, be accommodated by the definition of norms peculiar to each 'paradigm'. Just as Kuhn was aware of the implications of translation, which he saw as, "always involving compromises which alter communication" so too has Michael Banks by his adoption of a Kuhnian rhetoric outside of the Kuhnian context, altered the meaning that can be attached to the term paradigm. Other theorists such as Michael Nicholson

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[8] Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations*, (New York, Knopf, 1978), Martin Wight, *Systems of States*, (Leicester, Leicester University Press, 1977), and Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, (Reading, Addison-Wesley, 1979).

[9] See Barry Buzan, 'The Timeless Wisdom of Realism?', in *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*, (eds.) Steve Smith, Ken Booth & Marysia Zalewski, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[10] Michael Banks, 'The Inter-Paradigm Debate', in *International Relations: A Handbook of Current Theory*, (eds.) Margot Light & A.J.R. Groom, (London, Pinter, 1985), p. 7, see also his earlier essay,

by the same default, have attempted to introduce the Lakatosian criteria for "appropriate research strategies" in lieu of what he refers to as Banks' "imaginary paradigms".[11] Whilst disagreeing in method, both Banks and Nicholson are nevertheless united in their desire to see some kind of disciplinary matrix or grid accepted within the discipline. What they dispute of course, are the terms that might legitimate the academic field of inquiry. Both thus agree that generalizations are possible but disagree over the terms of normalcy or the requirements of coherence and rigor for the social science of IR. Calling them 'paradigms' or calling them 'appropriate research strategies' does not however alter the attempt to place parameters on the field of inquiry and thus set the agenda for present and future members of the IR community. Whilst such innovation has been widely welcomed as a useful teaching aid, the question remains, can IR really be said to have paradigms? Are there a set of disciplinary norms that can be identified as constituting the concerns of 'normal' or 'real' international relations?

I have already mentioned the perils involved in such an identification process and not surprisingly Banks has had to face the criticism of those who feel they have been marginalised by his categorizations. Steve Smith thus castigates Banks for the introduction of the paradigm concept because, "it anaesthetises the discipline by offering a 'pick and mix' solution, a superficial liberalism which implies that you can choose a paradigm which best explains the things you are interested in."[12] He considers the inter-paradigm debate to be "just another gate-keeping device for maintaining the status-quo, despite the clear intentions of people like Banks to use it as a way of liberating the discipline." For this reason then, Smith welcomes the recent resurgence of normative work because, he believes, "what is commonly treated as marginal, illegitimate or optional becomes central."[13] Smith even goes so far as to call this resurgence "the post-positivist revolution", revealing his own attraction to the Kuhnian rhetoric whilst all too readily ignoring the concerns of those excluded in his own act of

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'The Evolution of International Relations Theory', in *Conflict in World Society: A New Perspective on International Relations*, (ed.) Michael Banks, (Brighton, Wheatsheaf Books, 1984), p. 3-21.

[11] Michael Nicholson, 'Imaginary Paradigms: a Sceptical View of the Inter-Paradigm Debate in International Relations', *Kent Papers in Politics and International Relations*, (Series 1, No. 7.) p. 17, and more recently, Michael Nicholson, 'What's the use of International Relations?', in *Review of International Relations*, (Vol. 26, No. 2, April 2000), pp. 183-198.

[12] Steve Smith, 'The Forty Years Detour: The Resurgence of Normative Theory in International Relations', *Millennium*, (Vol.21, No.3,1992), p. 493-4.

[13] Ibid., p. 495.

identifying what is 'central' to International Relations. Nevertheless, undoubtedly Smith is right to recognize a new strand of thought in International Relations that has, to a certain extent, out maneuvered the early attempts, such as the three paradigm debate, to open up the discipline.

Post-positivism or postmodernism has, since the late 1980's, attempted to introduce to International Relations ways of thinking that not only take issue with realism but to a large extent take issue with International Relations as an enlightenment practice in its own right. Postmodernism, borrowing Chris Brown's definition, is a body of thought that holds the belief that all the varieties of social and political thought dominant in the West since the Enlightenment - the discourses of modernity - are in crisis.[14] As this belief is also shared by Critical Theorists, by whom I principally mean the followers of Jurgen Habermas and the Frankfurt School, a further distinction is necessary; postmodernists are anti-foundationalist whilst Critical Theorists believe new foundations can be constructed for their beliefs.[15] Whilst we might accept this as a working definition, clearly there are a multitude of approaches within these two broad definitions, and rather than attempt a summary or assessment of these perspectives I will instead locate my own position within this broad church of theory, or what at other times I have suggested might best be viewed as a new critical pluralism for International Relations.[16]

**Re-describing Knowledge**

The attempt to provide extraneous justifications and foundations for what we know is what anti-foundationalist philosopher Richard Rorty views as the epistemological and metaphysical quest of the Enlightenment.[17] This quest he suggests

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[14] Chris Brown, 'Turtles All the Way Down: Anti-foundationalism, Critical Theory and International Relations', in *Millennium*, (Vol. 23, No. 2, Summer 1994), p. 214.

[15] This division was however first suggested to the discipline as a result of a debate between Mark Hoffman and Nick Rennger, it has since been recognised by Smith to be "the most important one for the future of international theory", see Steve Smith, 'The Self-Images of a Discipline: A Genealogy of International Relations Theory', in *International Relations Theory*, (eds.) Ken Booth & Steve Smith, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1995), p. 30.

[16] Post-positivists can be split into two camps as evinced by the work of, Der Derian, Connolly, George, Klein, Ashley, Shapiro, Campbell, Sylvester, Bleiker, in the first instance and Hoffman, Linklater, Brown, Cochrane, Frost, Neufeld, Rennger, in the second. See my, 'A Question of Style: The Politics and Ethics of Cultural Conversation in Rorty and Connolly', in *Global Society*, (Vol. 10, No.1, 1996).

[17] This is the central thesis of Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1980).

was captivated by the metaphor of philosophy as the 'mirror of nature' and thus philosophical debates ever since have concerned the 'accuracy' of representation to 'reality'. Such a distinction it is claimed, takes as its source the mind and body dualism first set in play through the work of René Descartes in the seventeenth century. This distinction it is claimed, also continues to provide the basis for what in philosophy has become known as the correspondence theory of truth, a theory which holds that words or facts correspond to an 'antecedently determinate' reality.[18]

For a scientist, or a social scientist, recognition of the facts, or the truth of statements, are only true or factual in this strict sense, in so far as they 'match' the world. Truth is thus determined by its correspondence to the world. However, for this theory of truth to hold, a perspective from outside of 'the world', what we can call the transcendental perspective, is vital. Following in the spirit of René Descartes, this view is what Thomas Nagel calls "the view from nowhere".[19] For it is only by viewing the world from outside that we can confirm or refute whether women or men and their representations 'correspond' with the world. As a consequence it is argued, that only on the basis of a transcendental perspective, can we feasibly make a claim to such a thing as 'objectivity'. Without any such claim, our 'normal' understanding and 'rational' basis for scientific knowledge since Descartes would appear to be in crisis. Our traditional and essentially modern understanding of knowledge and progress has after all been seen as a history of increasing sophistication in 'knowing', and importantly, 'seeing' how the world 'really' works.

If however we have several competing accounts of how the world works, as in the case of Banks' misappropriated 'paradigm approach', we are faced with the puzzle of how to choose between rival representations. This in fact was exactly the kind of question Thomas Kuhn posed in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.[20] As just explained, for the correspondence theory of truth to be maintained, it would appear that we need some further external perspective to provide objective grounds upon which to judge between the now multiple perspectives of conflicting approaches which offer competing 'truths' or 'representations' of how the world works. For Descartes, this

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[18] For a general introduction to this theory see D.J. O'Connor, *The Correspondence Theory of Truth*, (London, 1975).
[19] Thomas Nagel, *The View From Nowhere*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1986).
[20] Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, (London, 1962). See also his *The Essential Tension*, and Ian Hacking's edited volume, *Scientific Revolutions*, (Oxford, 1981).

further transcendental perspective was God; for contemporary philosophers of science like Thomas Kuhn, this further perspective would need to take the form of a 'universal algorithm'. Such an algorithm would thus provide the explanation, and rational foundation for why certain scientific theories appear to 'work' better than others.

Kuhn was to conclude that no such algorithm existed, and he thus famously claimed that major scientific revolutions, such as massive changes in perspective, like the Copernican revolution, did not occur in the manner of a revolutionary 'discovery'. Instead, Kuhn claims Galileo's theory, whereby a belief that the sun revolved around the world changed to a belief that the world revolved around the sun, was not immediately received as 'objectively right'. Rather, the reception of Galileo's theory was a 'revolutionary moment' only in so far as the Copernican theory changed from one of 'abnormal' scientific discourse to one of 'normal' scientific discourse. This 'paradigm shift', as Kuhn was to label it, thus had more to do with relatively gradual and unpredictable historical and cultural factors, such as the changing role of the Church in the 18th century. For it was these particular historical and cultural conditions, rather than the discovery of any external and objective algorithm, that dictated the reception of Galileo's theory and its subsequent change in scientific discourse from abnormal and illegitimate discourse to normal and legitimate scientific discourse. In this way then, Kuhn can be said to undermine our 'modern' approach to understanding knowledge. His argument instead supports a more holistic conception of 'truth' and scientific enquiry that places scholars' beliefs and representations firmly within the historical and cultural context of their 'scientific communities'.

This holism can be better conceived of as 'a coherence theory of truth and knowledge', as argued for by Donald Davidson in his essay of the same name.[21] A coherence theory of truth refutes the Cartesian dualism denying the existence of any external and objective perspective or law, whilst still maintaining a conception of 'truth'. It maintains a conception of truth because it recognises that there are causal connections between what the scientist describes and actual events on earth. Owing to this, Davidson claims it follows that some such laws must exist. These laws however,

[21] Donald Davidson, 'A Coherence Theory of Truth and Knowledge', in *Truth and Interpretation: Perspectives on the Philosophy of Donald Davidson*, (ed.) E. Lepore, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1986), and his, *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1984). Alternatively, for a general introduction to philosophical work on this topic, see Ralph Walker, *The Coherence Theory of Truth*, (London 1990).

are what could be called internal laws, rather than external objective laws, and it is this 'internalism' that characterises Davidson's "anomalous monism". Furthermore, Davidson claims, laws are laws only in so far as they are described as such.[22] In a similar sense to Kuhn then, Davidson is not suggesting a reductive argument whereby 'truth' or 'laws' are internal to language; rather, he argues that their acceptance as truth or law has more to do with historical, societal and disciplinary factors, and thus with irreducible social conditions than to any external 'objective' criteria as such.

Contemporary pragmatists, such as Richard Rorty, have recently taken up this conception of truth as coherence, in recognition of its relationship to both society and politics, and in so doing have come to consider 'truth' as the quest for a community of free inquiry and open encounter.[23] With this quest in mind, Rorty has argued that the existing system of political organisation best suited to this end, is that of liberal democratic political representation. Rorty writes,

> *"an anti-representationalist view of inquiry leaves one without a skyhook with which to escape from the ethnocentrism produced by acculturation, but that the liberal culture of recent times has found a strategy for avoiding the disadvantage of ethnocentrism. This is to be open to encounters with other actual and possible cultures and to make this openness central to its self-image. This culture is an ethnos which prides itself on its suspicion of ethnocentrism - on its ability to increase freedom and openness of encounters, rather than on its possession of truth."* [24]

## Redescribing Politics

Whilst Rorty's anti-foundationalism may provide us with an ethos or sensibility with which to conduct research, we are still left with the question as to how this liberal

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[22] See Davidson's essay 'Mental Events' in his *Essays on Actions and Events*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1985), and also his contribution to, *Causation and Conditionals*, (ed.) E. Sosa, (Oxford, Oxford Readings, 1975). Or, in closer relation to Descartes and Nagel, his 'Myth of the Subjective' in Michael Krausz, (ed.), (Notre Dame, Ind., University of Notre Dame Press, 1989).

[23] The philosophical story I have told so far owes its principal debt to Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, op.cit. His political stance and his interpretation of the implications of such an anti-foundationalist pragmatist conclusion are to be found in the essays that followed, see *Consequences of Pragmatism*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1982), *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth; Philosophical Papers Volume 1*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), *Essays on Heidegger and Others, Philosophical Papers Volume II*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), and most recently, *Philosophical Papers Volume III*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999?)

[24] Richard Rorty, *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, ibid., p. 2, both my emphasis and his.

democratic 'attitude' either progresses or confronts challenges. The provision of a normative basis, which many in the discipline interpret as the result of the 'post-positivist revolution', thus still leaves open the question of how future change might occur or on what basis we might support one political movement over another.[25] In other words, questions concerning both politics and ethics, which on this argument now appear central to the discipline, still remain open. In order to understand the nature of such a self-consciously ethnocentric approach to politics, it is perhaps instructive therfore to proceed via a consideration of an example of anti-foundationalist politics in action. One example available to us concerns the socio-cultural movement of feminism. In addressing this issue we find revealed certain limits on Rorty's approach to politics, and as such we are able to consider the limits upon one antifoundationalist project in order to suggest the possibilities of another.

In focusing upon the feminist problematique, Richard Rorty in his 1991 Tanner Lecture on Human Values, clearly identified feminism as the contemporary social issue with the greatest revolutionary potential of resulting in positive moral and ethical change within the existing liberal communities of the North Atlantic democracies today.[26] In-keeping with his pragmatic historicist perspective however, Rorty did not approach feminism in the manner of a free floating socio-political project. On the contrary, he firmly located feminism as the latest in a long line of harbingers of intellectual and moral progress. As such, Rorty came to situate feminism within the broader historical parameters of a much larger, and continually evolving, political and

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[25] This is the kind of charge raised by Nancy Fraser, 'From Irony to Prophecy to Politics: A Response to Richard Rorty' in *Pragmatism: A Reader*, op.cit., and her 'Michel Foucault: A "Young Conservative"?', *Ethics*, (Vol. 96, 1985), also Honi Haber, 'Richard Rorty's Failed Politics', in *Social Epistemology*, (Vol. 7, No. 1, 1993) and Christopher Norris, *What's Wrong with Postmodernism: Critical Theory and the Ends of Philosophy*, (Baltimore, 1990). A similar debate has also occured in the pages of International Relations journals see for example: Sankaran Krishna, 'The Importance of Being Ironic: A Postcolonial View on Critical International Relations Theory', *Alternatives*, (Vol. 18, No. 3, Summer 1993), and James Der Derian's response in 'The Pen, The Sword, and the Smart Bomb: Criticism in the Age of Video', *Alternatives*, (Vol. 19, 1994). Also see; William Wallace, 'Truth and power, monks and technocrats: theory and practice in international relations', *Review of International Studies*, (Vol. 22, No. 3, 1996), Ken Booth, 'Discussion: A Reply to Wallace', *Review of International Studies*, (Vol. 23, No. 3, 1997) and Steve Smith, 'Power and Truth: a reply to William Wallace', *Review of International Studies*, (Vol. 23, 1997). And more recently; Colin Wight, 'MetaCampbell: the epistemological problematics of perspectivism', and David Campbell's response, 'Contra Wight: the errors of premature writing', *Review of International Studies*, (Vol. 25, No. 2. 1999).

[26] This lecture has been reprinted as 'Feminism and Pragmatism' in *Pragmatism: A Contemporary Reader*, (ed.) Russell B. Goodman, (London, Routledge, 1995). What follows in the next two sections is based upon my "'Supposing Truth to be a Woman'? Pragmatism and the Feminist Problematique', in *Woman, Culture and International Relations*, (eds.) Vivienne Jabri & Eleanor O'Gorman, (London, Lynne Rienner, 1999).

ethical project, one that I have called Rorty's 'postmodern liberal humanism'.[27] Feminism viewed from this perspective, thus avoids what Rorty believes would be the pitfalls of an essentialist movement, that is a movement concerned solely with the emancipation of the female subject. This is because, from within the setting of a postmodern liberal humanism, feminism plays a much more inclusive socio-cultural role, one that goes beyond gender distinctions, and aims instead at "the production of a better set of social constructs than the ones presently available, and thus at the creation of a new and better sort of human being."[28]

In regarding feminism in such an evidently progressive light, Rorty clearly indicates that his postmodern liberal humanism bears very little relation to the classical universal liberal construct of the rational male individual, a construct that feminist theory amongst others has done so much to deconstruct. This is because Rorty's humanism is metaphysically hollow, it does not claim to be universal in any useful sense, rather its content derives solely from the cultural and social context within which a human being might attempt to make the nature of her humanity intelligible. Such a stance therefore, recalls the unavoidably ethnocentric nature of any human construction of identity, and as a consequence, Rorty's postmodern humanism denies the validity of questions concerning the absolute ontological, or metaphysical, constitution of the human subject. This stance is in-keeping with a pragmatic dismissal of other modernist ideologies, including liberal metanarratives that base their political agenda on such metaphysical constructs.[29] For without an intrinsic nature, it is argued, the question of human identity becomes a highly contested issue, yet such contestation shares a contingent reliance upon the cultural, social and historical resources within which rival interpretations can only make themselves understood. Rorty's humanism is thus firmly situated within a pragmatic philosophical tradition that provides no extra-social or extra-cultural perspective from whence the nature of its humanity could be settled once and for all.

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[27] Feminism thus come to be placed alongside such esteemed company as, "for example, Plato's Academy, the early Christians meeting in the catacombs, the invisible Copernican colleges of the Seventeenth century, groups of working men gathering to discuss Thomas Paine's pamphlets ..", Rorty, ibid., p. 138.

[28] Ibid., p.140.

[29] As an example of his even handed anti-foundationalist approach consider Rorty's, 'Human Rights, Rationality and Sentimentality' in *On Human Rights: The 1993 Oxford Amnesty Lectures*, (New York & London, Basic Books, 1993), also see the 'Priority of Democracy to Philosophy' essay and 'Postmodern Bourgeois Liberalism' in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, op.cit.

It is this very open-ended nature of Rorty's humanism that also informs the character of his liberalism. In much the same way that his humanism cannot be addressed without recourse to ethnocentrically situated historical and cultural resources, so too does liberalism come to function as the minimal sociological structure within which such resources might have the political space to coexist and blossom. Rorty's liberalism thus stands as a loose political framework within which various human natures might have the freedom to pursue their various self interpretations, untrammelled by the imposition of one version of what humanity can be shown to be. Contrary to the liberalism of the Enlightenment, Rorty does not seek justification for democracy by an appeal to transcultural criteria of rationality. Rather, in the spirit of liberal philosophers such as John Stuart Mill, John Dewey and Thomas Jefferson, Rorty gives priority to the pragmatic and procedural nature of democracy over and above any philosophical claims.[30] However, unlike the cold utilitarian rationale of Benthamite liberal democracy, Rorty's democratic impulse recalls the romantic and aesthetic aspect of Mill's more sensitive political liberalism.[31] Liberal democracy in this respect functions as a means of limiting the interference of the state upon the personal life projects of the individual. This being so, the logic runs, because if there is no one correct way of being, then individuals should be free, in a romantic manner, to "create themselves anew." The liberal structure does of course impose limits upon the influence such life projects can assume. These limits, for Rorty, are considered as both community and individual safeguards, manifesting themselves in the classic liberal construct of an institutional division between the realms of the public and the private. The private domain, on this analysis, provides the cultural space within which philosophers and poets can continue to work freely on the creation of novel self-descriptions of what it means to be a human being. The public domain in contrast,

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[30] See Rortys, 'Priority of Democracy' in *Objectivity, Relativism, and Truth*, op.cit., for a full account of the ongoing 'experiment' that liberal democracy comes to represent once foundationalist philosophical liberalism has been abandoned. In particular see p.192 -3 for the resigned admission that such a stance might entail an unavoidable condition of paradox and self-referentiality.

[31] See Rorty, 'Method, Social Science, Social Hope' in *Consequences of Pragmatism*, op.cit., p.203-8 and especially footnote 16 for an explicit account of his endorsement for the liberalism of Mill and Dewey. See also Rorty, 'Moral Identity and Private Autonomy: The Case of Foucault' in his *Essays on Heidegger and Others*, op.cit, for a further elaboration of the procedural role of the public/private distinction. In this instance there might also be good reason to assume that Rorty's conception of freedom remains particularly enamoured by Mill's project of self-realisation as expressed in *On Liberty*. In this respect see John N. Morris, *Versions of the Self: Studies in English Autobiography from John Bunyan to Stuart Mill*, (New York; Basic Books, 1966). Clearly Mill's early feminist thoughts are also of relevence here, see J.S. Mill, 'The Subjection of Woman' (1861).

demands that the role of creativity adopt a self-consciously pragmatic and communal nature. Public politics thus comes to adopt the reformist and practical character appropriate to a political ethos whose contemplation of social problems does not include the radical restructuring of the central mechanisms of governmental organisation within which its diversity finds protection.[32]

Rorty's liberalism and humanism are thus closely interlinked, making little attempt to describe life within a postmodern North Atlantic democracy bar endorsing the necessary double bind of the sociological distinction between the public and the private. Necessary because, if there is no ahistorical human being whose potential could be fully realised if only we were to apply the correct plans and policies, government and politics must be limited to a self-consciously defined public space. A double bind because many of the life projects of individuals are concerned with creating stories about who we are, stories that because they cannot be considered true or valid in any strong metaphysical sense, must have their cultural impact limited to the private domain of their creators. Pragmatic liberals, like Rorty, thus hope to insulate the central political institutions of the state from the adoption of exclusionary political vocabularies that run the risk of subverting a liberal pluralism in the name of some extra-cultural or ahistorical truth. Nevertheless, whilst Rorty's postmodern conjuncture of a liberal humanism might provide a convincing anti-foundationalist political framework with which support for our existing liberal democracies might continue in lieu of a better alternative, it is still far from clear how this pragmatic perspective can explain the achievement of the moral and social progress implicit in his support for a feminist attempt to create "a new and better sort of human being."

**Language and Society**

Whilst agreeing with Chris Weedon that "one should not view language as a transparent tool for expressing facts but as the material in which particular often conflicting views of facts are constructed", Rorty nevertheless wishes to claim that such conflicts occur in a positive dialectical manner.[33] This is because it has been Rorty's contention that moral and intellectual progress will only be achieved if "the

[32] See Rorty, 'Private Irony and Liberal Hope' in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, op.cit., p.73-95.
[33] Rorty, 'Feminism and Pragmatism', p.146.

linguistic and other practices of the common culture[...] come to incorporate some of the practices characteristic of imaginative and courageous outcasts."[34] In light of this belief, such outcasts have to break away from mainstream linguistic practices because, as with other progressive movements of the past, "had there been no stage of separation there would have been no subsequent stage of assimilation."[35] Rorty cannot however, provide reasons as to why a new language, such as a feminist language, might come to be assimilated into wider American culture, and this is because he has foregone the once "comforting belief that competing groups will always be able to reason together on the basis of plausible and neutral premises."[36] As such, "prophecy[...] is all that non-violent movements can fall back on when argument fails."[37] Yet for such prophecy to be confirmed, our approach to the history of the future must also conform to Rorty's whiggishly dialectical account of how historical change, via the role of language, has come to take place. As a consequence, Rorty admits that he cannot provide any analysis of how "the new language spoken by the separatist group may gradually get woven into the language taught in the schools," at least not one that does not start to look increasingly circular. In fact, all he can offer on the back of his anti-foundationalist pragmatism is hope.

Could it be possible that Rorty has overplayed the extent of cultural agency available within the 'fashioning of new names'? For in holding that "all awareness is a linguistic affair" does not Rorty suggest the presence of a cultural and linguistic idealism at work within his analysis, that is, an individualist idealism that exaggerates the moral and social possibilities of freedom within his project of redescription. Even without adopting her Gramscian analysis of the political, we might nonetheless have more than a little sympathy with critics such as Nancy Fraser, when she attempts to engage with some of the institutional structures that influence the realm of possible redescriptions for contemporary woman.[38] Might not woman be especially subject to the limitations of identifications determined by, for example, the American welfare state. And even whilst refusing to make an invidious distinction between appearance

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[34] Ibid. p.139.
[35] Ibid. p.139.
[36] Ibid. p.128. This should also be recognsed as they key difference between Rorty and a thinker like Habermas, an anti-foundationalist/foundationalist divide.
[37] Ibid. p.128.
[38] See Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, (Oxford, Polity Press, 1989).

and reality "in favour of a distinction between beliefs which serve some purposes and beliefs which serve other purposes - for example, the purposes of one group and those of another" might we still not wish to contest that the playing field upon which such groups confront each other is not one of equality but one permeated with the differential effects of power.[39] After all, are critics like Fraser not correct in thinking that some of our cultural institutions and social practices do have more power in the fashioning of names than others, and although Rorty might provide a convincing explanation of how language comes to shape our thoughts about ourself, a position, borrowed from Wilfred Sellars, that he calls psychological nominalism, he nonetheless fails to provide any account of how such social practices and personal thoughts have come to interact.

Interestingly, it is also Wilfred Sellars who appears to recognise the sociological failings present in Rorty's oscillating philosophical stance, when he writes, "one seems forced to choose between the picture of an elephant which rests on a tortoise (what supports the tortoise?) and the picture of a great Hegelian serpent of knowledge with its tail in its mouth (where does it begin?)." Dis-satisfied with either of the options available, Sellars concludes that "neither will do."[40] So might there be another route through the philosophical minefield of history and metaphysics? Ian Hacking believes there is. Calling attention to Rorty's own reliance on the historical influence of Descartes for his subsequent explanation of the dominance of a particular style of philosophical reasoning, that is, one preoccupied with the search for foundations, Hacking wonders whether "perhaps Richard Rorty's *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, with its central doctrine of 'conversation', will some day seem as linguistic a philosophy as the analysis emanating from Oxford a generation or two ago."[41] For although Rorty's linguistic stance is the result of a historicist approach to the practice of philosophy, Rorty has failed to recognise that a historicist approach to

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[39] Rorty, 'Feminism and Pragmatism', op.cit., p.128.
[40] Wilfred Sellars, *Science, Perception, and Reality*, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 170.
[41] Ian Hacking, 'Five Parables', in *Philosophy in History: Essays on the Historiography of Philosophy*, (eds.) Richard Rorty, Quentin Skinner & J. B. Schneewind, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 109. I would like to thank Quentin Skinner for directing me towards this particular article. For a similar use of Hacking's insights for the discipline of Anthropology see Paul Rabinow, 'Representations are Social Facts: Modernity and Post-Modernity in Anthropology' in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, (eds.) James Clifford and George E. Marcus, (London, University of California Press, 1986).

other cultural and social practices may yet reveal the durability of other historically specific styles of reasoning and naming.

This persistence is what leads Ian Hacking to assert a "literal belief in the creation of phenomena, [which] shows why the objects of the sciences, although brought into being at moments of time, are not historically constituted."[42] What *is* historically constituted is the way we use such objects and how we come to describe them, but not the objects themselves This is to make a vital distinction between what Ian Hacking calls 'making things up' and 'making people up'.[43] In this way, then, Hacking does not so much deny Rorty's attempt to create a community of liberals; rather he calls attention to the historically persistent presence of certain phenomena, whose existence, although lacking ahistorical philosophical foundations, nevertheless have an effect upon the *practical* possibilities for creating a "community of free enquiry and open encounter". It is in this sense, then, that the practical existence of institutions and mentalities can place very 'real' limitations on the ability of Rorty's project of anti–foundational redescription to engender the kind of societal change he argues for.[44]

**The Limits of Self-Redescription**

Whilst not claiming to reveal any ahistorical truths, Hacking proposes that an inquiry into the history of certain practices, rather than simply into the history of modern philosophy, may just provide novel interpretations of how it is that certain social practices have come to dictate the human and institutional parameters for the possibility of redescription in the present.[45] One such example that Hacking has

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[42] Hacking, ibid., p. 119, Hacking also recognises his position as having an extremely close affinity to Gaston Bachelard's, "applied rationalism and technical materialism".

[43] See also Ian Hacking, 'Making People Up', in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality, and the Self in Western Thought*, (eds.) Thomas Heller, Morton Sosna, & David Wellbery, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1986).

[44] For a more comprehensive account of Rorty's political project see Richard Rorty, 'Contingency, Irony and Solidarity', (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1989).

[45] For an excellent introduction to the political role of histories of the present, upon which my own perspective is based, see *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (eds.) Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon & Peter Miller, (Hemel Hempstead; Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) and *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neo-Liberalism and Rationalities of Government*, (eds.) Andrew Barry, Thomas Osborne & Nikolas Rose, (London, UCL Press, 1996).

worked on is the history of statistics.[46] He writes, "the bureaucracy of statistics imposes not just by creating administrative rulings but by determining classifications within which people must think of themselves and of the actions that are open to them."[47] Hacking's disagreement with Rorty is therefore not with his claim that a new type of being can be created through a project of redescription, the very project with which Rorty has come to characterise feminism, for Hacking too believes that "categories of people come into existence at the same time as kinds of people come into being to fit those categories, and there is a two-way interaction between these processes."[48] However, Hacking would have to contest Rorty's extension of the new philosophical freedom created by the acceptance of the pragmatist tradition within the discipline of philosophy to the whole of society. Whilst it would be difficult to identify limits in the creative and imaginative attempt to redescribe women in the uninhibited realm of language, critics like Nancy Fraser may well have a strong case for arguing that all the self redescription in the world will not transform the governmentally mediated relationships of power within which many woman *and* men, currently find themselves subject.[49]

In this particular instance, I suspect that the answer lies in the tension between Rorty's picture of *the self* as a centreless and contingent web of beliefs and desires, and his separate endorsement of the over-riding desire of women to unite such contingencies into a unifying story about *oneself*.[50] In this respect it seems appropriate to think of the writing of Marie Cardinal whose international best-seller, *The Words to Say It* describes her personal experience of seven years of psychoanalysis.[51] For it is Cardinal, in a similar way to Rorty, who writes of the personal freedom that she has come to value through creating a personal vocabulary from within which she has been able to articulate what it means to be a woman. Like Rorty however, Cardinal then goes on to extend this very personal experience of the liberating effects of language, as

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[46] See, Ian Hacking, *The Emergence of Probability*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1975) and *The Taming of Chance*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991).
[47] Ian Hacking, 'How should we do the history of statistics?' in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (eds.) Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon & Peter Miller, (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991) p. 194.
[48] Ian Hacking, 'Five Parables', op.cit., p.122.
[49] Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse, and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, (Oxford, Polity Press, 1989).
[50] See footnote 22 on p.144 of his 'Feminism and Pragmatism' article and Rorty's 'The Contingency of Selfhood' in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991) as examples of this tension.

discovered through countless hours of therapy, to the more collective enterprise of a feminist politics. She writes, "speech is an act. Words are objects. Invisible, palpable, revealing[...] Men hermetically sealed these words, imprisoned women within them. Women must open them if they want to survive. It is an enormous, dangerous and revolutionary task that we undertake."[52]

Cardinal's writing thus makes explicit that which Rorty assumes. For it is clear that Cardinals very conception of freedom derives directly from the comparatively recent 'discoveries' of psychology and psychoanalysis. That the sense of self understood by such 'psy sciences', as Nikolas Rose refers to them, is taken for granted by Rorty says much for the cultural prevalence of the 'psy effect' and little for Rorty's narrowly focused philosophical historicism. In much the same way that Hacking has come to approach the history of statistics and probability, Nikolas Rose has provided a cultural history of the sciences of 'psy'.[53] Like Hacking, Rose has attempted to redescribe the history of psychiatry, psychology and psychoanalysis, so as to understand how such linguistic innovation has enabled us to think and act in new ways, to fashion a new human existence, and as such, to treat ourselves and others in new and historically particular ways. In this respect Rose does not deny the freedom of which Cardinal writes, and that Rorty takes for granted, rather he hopes to increase the prospects of freedom not by endorsing the practices of psy but by attempting to describe the manner in which such practices have become central to the government of human conduct in advanced liberal democracies.[54] This is because,

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[51] Marie Cardinal, *The Words to Say It*, (London, The Womans Press, 1993).

[52] Marie Cardinal, *In Other Words*, translated by Amy Cooper, (London, The Womans Press, 1996) p. 41.

[53] See Nikolas Rose, *The Psychological Complex: Psychology, Politics and Society in England 1869-1939*, (London, Routledge, 1985) and Rose, *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*, (London, Routledge, 1990) and Rose, *Inventing Ourselves: Psychology, Power and Personhood*, (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996). For a clear example of Hacking's similar methodological approach as well as a revealing overlap in their research interests see Ian Hacking's, *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1995).

[54] In this regard, whilst Cardinal may represent the 'positivity' within the freedom of 'psy', we would do well to remember the negativity that such sciences also create. See Kate Millets moving account of her experience of psychiatric treatment, treatment which possibly unlike America or France is still very much an unpleasant reality within British medical institutions, *The Loony Bin Trip*, (London, Virago Press, 1991). The fact that Millet was a high profile feminist before she was put into psychiatric care [see Millets best seller *Sexual Politics*, (London and New York, Virago, 1970)], and that Cardinal only became one after her literary treatment of psychoanalysis, may also remind readers of the manner in which feminists are very much situated within the relations of power that our contemporary practices of freedom entail, and thus the need to try and conceptualise such freedom in a more politically sophisticated manner.

*"the subjectifying effects of psy are not simply a matter of the symbolic violence of a particular meaning system: language is structured into variegated relations which grant powers to some and delimit the powers of others, which enable some to judge and some to be judged, some to cure and some to be cured, some to speak truth and others to acknowledge its authority and embrace it, aspire to it or submit to it. And if, in our vernacular speech, we think of ourselves in psy terms, we do so only through the relations we have established with this truth regime: for we each play our own part, as parents, teachers, partners, lovers, consumers and sufferers, in these contemporary psychological machinations of the self."*[55]

From this historicist perspective we might profitably view both Rorty and Cardinal as principally concerned with the creative freedom and individual agency possible within a psychologically and thus self-contained conception of the self at the expense of the very 'public' languages, practices and techniques that have come to constitute such a psychological understanding of personal agency in the first place. Freedom might therefore be redescribed in terms that neither privilege the psychological agency of the modern self nor underestimate the political relationships of power within which such selves are inextricably woven. What is more, in the case of Mexican Indians or other indigenous cultures, we should be sensitive to the employal of contemporary western techniques of self understanding and government when we attempt to describe or approach non-western subjects, such as the Maya of Chiapas. International Relations could therefore benefit from a distinction already proposed in sociology, that is; a distinction between "freedom as a formula of resistance and freedom as a formula of power".[56] Thus the ubiquity of freedom as presented in both the expansion of the 'free market' and the 'free world', of liberal economies and liberal democracies, may come to be better understood as containing certain ethical and political costs, costs that might be better approached from an internal and 'untimely meditation' upon our contemporary practices of freedom, freedom understood as constituted both economically, psychologically and as such inextricably socially.

Proscribing such an 'untimely meditation' within the practices of liberal democracy thus recalls the philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, who first suggested that

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[55] Nikolas Rose, 'Assembling the Modern Self' in *Rewriting the Self: Histories from the Renaissance to the Present*, (ed.) Roy Porter, (London, Routledge, 1997) p.241-242.

[56] Nikolas Rose, 'Towards a Critical Sociology of Freedom', Inaugural Lecture delivered on 5 May 1992 at Goldsmiths' College, (University of London: Goldsmiths' College, 1993), p.3.

history might fulfil such a 'political' task.[57] For such histories, in their attempt to redescribe our contemporary practices of freedom, hope to create new opportunities for future understandings, understandings that might herald a time in which woman and men may have greater freedom from the current truths within which they often unhappily find themselves subject. The acknowledged inheritor of this philosophical and political approach to history is of course Michel Foucault. It was Foucault after all, who not only refused to take for granted the liberal democratic culture from within which he too worked, but who sought to understand the nature of such a western liberal culture in terms of a history of government, control and freedom.

**Identity - Governmentalised not Stylised**

Many of Michel Foucault's books can be read as historical stories about how different types of people were 'made up'. He can be viewed as providing genealogical accounts of how different historical practices led to the creation or construction of different historical subjectivities.[58] In his own words, "my objective[...] has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects."[59] Concentrating on the prison, the hospital and the mental institution, much of Foucault's early work attempted to investigate or 'interrogate' the workings of such locales from the perspective of how they objectivised their subjects. In each instance by focusing on the criminal, the sick and the mentally ill, Foucault sought to reveal societies' implicit understandings of the legal, the healthy and the sane. In this way Foucault approached knowledge in a highly historicised and contextualised manner, and in particular, he attempted to underline the complicated relationship between knowledge and power. Like Nietzsche, Foucault sought to question the 'will to truth',

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[57] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1983)

[58] See for example, Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard, (New York, Random House, 1973), *Birth of the Clinic*, (London, Tavistock, 1976), and *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York, Vintage Books, 1979).

[59] Michel Foucault, 'Afterword: The Subject and Power', in Hubert L. Dreyfus & Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1982), p. 208.

and as such he named his own brand of non-eschatological and non-edifying historiography; 'genealogy'.[60]

Genealogy, he wrote, is best considered as, "a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourse, domains of objects etc..., without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history."[61] Because Foucault is anti-essentialist in his conception of 'the subject' his project has not been concerned with finding out who we 'really are', but rather he attempted to study the processes both institutional and historical that have both made us the way we are today, and made it possible for us to conceive of ourselves in such historically and socially particular ways in the present. As Ian Hacking notes, "just as there was no pure madness, no thing-in-itself, so there is no pure subject, no 'I' or 'me' prior to the forms of description and action appropriate to a person."[62]

The Foucauldian genealogical method therefore propounds what Hacking calls an "extreme nominalism: nothing, not even the ways I can describe myself, is either this or that but history made it so."[63] But this is not to revert to a historicised Kantian idealism whereby language alone 'constitutes' human practice and social reality. Rather, the relationship between human thought and action is best understood as closer to Wittgenstein's reading of the self-language nexus. It was Wittgenstein who called attention to a way of acting, a form of life, that lies at the bottom of a language game, recalling the existence of a very concrete subjectivity within the discourses and practices that makes its articulation possible. "By this he meant that although language games lack rational foundations they do have practical foundations: they are grounded by being woven into human activity and practices."[64] However, the historical process within which new language games or discourses constitute social beings is perhaps not

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[60] For attempts to apply the genealogical method in IR consider James Der Derian, *On Diplomacy: A Genealogy of Western Estrangement*, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987) and Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[61] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, (ed.) Colin Gordon, (Hemel Hempstead, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1980), p. 117.

[62] Ian Hacking, 'The Archaeology of Foucault', in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, (ed.) David Couzens Hoy, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 36.

[63] Ibid., p. 37.

[64] This reading owes as much to Quentin Skinner as Ian Hacking. See James Tully, 'The Pen is a Mighty Sword: Quentin Skinner's analysis of politics', *British Journal of Political Science*, (Vol. 13, 1983), p. 505. For Skinners admission of the influence of a Foucauldian archaeological method on his own research see, Quentin Skinner, *Liberty Before Liberalism*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 112.

best described as a process of 'weaving', for it is Foucault who reminds us that such practices have historically emerged in something closer to the form of a war rather than that of a language: relations of power, not relations of meaning. Genealogy can therefore be construed as a strategy that engages with the political power of knowledge not by "emancipating truth from every system of power, but by detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates at the present time."[65]

In his later work however, Foucault began to pay greater attention to a second aspect of subjectivity, as he explains, "there are two meanings of *subject*: subject to someone else by control and dependence, *and* tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to."[66] In addition to this, Foucault also began to outline a more general connection between not only the individual subject and particular instances of governmental power but to argue for a more comprehensive re-understanding of the emergence and success of the modern Western state in its capacity to order and exercise power over whole populations and societies. In a series of lectures at the *Collège de France* between 1978 and 1979 he began to articulate these new analyses under the rubric of 'governmental rationality' or, more often than not, under his own neologism, 'governmentality'.[67]

Foucault sought to chart a transformation in political thought during the Middle Ages that moved away from an oft' ill-defined domain of application traditionally linked to a monarch, the church or a particular community, towards a new modern

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[65] Hacking, 'The Archaeology of Foucault', op.cit., p. 39.

[66] Foucault, 'The Subject of Power', op.cit., p. 212.

[67] Many of these lectures still remain unpublished, however various fragments from this period have been made public. It has also been claimed that Foucault was engaged in plans for further collective work on governmental rationalities shortly before his death. Primary sources include; Michel Foucault, 'On governmentality', *Ideology and Consciousness*, (No. 6, 1979), pp. 5-21, '*Omnes et singulatim*: towards a criticism of "political reason"', in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Vol. 2*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981), and various course resumes; 'Foucault at the Collège de France I: A Course Summary', *Philosophy and Social Criticism VIII*, (Vol. 2, Summer 1981), 'Is it useless to revolt?', *Philosophy and Social Criticism VIII*, (Spring 1981), 'Foucault at the Collège de France II: A Course Summary', *Philosophy and Social Criticism VIII*, (Vol. 3, Fall 1981), all three translated and introduced by James Bernauer. The secondary literature on governmentality and related themes is more extensive, see in particular the contributions to *The Foucault Effect: Essays on Governmental Rationality*, (eds.) Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon & Peter Miller, (Brighton, Harvester, 1981), *Foucault and Political Reason: Liberalism, Neoliberalism and Rationalities of Government*, (eds.) A. Barry, T. Osborne & N. Rose, (London, UCL Press, 1991), *Foucault's New Domains*, (eds.) Mike Gane & Terry Johnson (London, Routledge, 1993), and Nikolas Rose, *Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1999).

domain of power; the governmental state. It was with reflection on reason of state, known in early modern Europe as Cameralism, or the 'science of police', as Colin Gordon explains, that for the first time political thought consciously attempted to "postulate the rationality of government as something specific, intrinsic and autonomously proper to the state; reason of state is *par excellence* a reason different from the general divine and natural ordering of the cosmos."[68] As Foucault himself said, during his own 1979 Tanner Lectures on the topic, "the doctrine of reason of state attempted to define how the principles and methods of state government differed, say, from the way God governed the world, the father his family, or a superior his community."[69]

Central to such a transformation in political thought however, and key to its possible realisation as a rationality of government, was of course the concomitant arrival of new practices. Foucault explains, "the art of governing, characteristic of reason of state, is intimately bound up with the development of what was then called either political *statistics*, or *arithmetic*; that is, the knowledge of different states' respective forces. Such knowledge was indispensable for correct government."[70] Later Foucault would connect up such new practices, alongside modern medicine and science in the articulation of what he called a 'biopolitics'.[71] This new type of politics has been defined by Colin Gordon as "the phenomenon whereby the individual and collective life of human populations, or even the human species, becomes an explicit object of practices of government."[72] Clearly such an analysis poses the question of whether there is, as Gordon calls it, "a latent eugenic totalitarianism or state racism" present within such a historical development.

When Foucault defines the aim of the modern art of government, or state rationality, as "to develop those elements constitutive of individuals' lives in such a way that their development also fosters that of the strength of the state" he suggests as much.[73] However, the principal contribution of Foucault is to identify not only a totalising project at work in the modern art of government but also an individualising

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[68] Colin Gordon, 'The Soul of the Citizen: Max Weber and Michel Foucault on Rationality and Government', in *Michel Foucault, Critical Assessments*, Vol. IV, (ed.) Barry Smart, (London, Routedge, 1995), p. 431.
[69] Foucault, '*Omnes et singulatum*', op.cit., p.242.
[70] Ibid., p. 245-6.
[71] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction*, (London, Allen Lane, 1979).
[72] Gordon, 'The Soul of the Citizen', op.cit., p. 432.

aspect.[74] In this second vector of modern government, Foucault once again recalls his earlier identification of a dual conception of subjectivity as power both imposed upon a subject, and power imposed upon oneself by oneself - this is what Foucault referred to as 'techniques of the self'. In his final works Foucault would attempt to provide a history of such techniques, seeking to build an ethics of the self from a consideration of pre-modern concerns with 'self forming activity' - *practique de soi* - and early Greek notions of a 'care of the self' - *epimeleia heautou.*[75]

Before promoting any new Foucauldian concept of ethics however, it still remains necessary to further explore Foucault's archaeology of modern governmental rule. New techniques of self government could after all only be employed in light of an understanding of existing techniques, and in particular, how such techniques combine with political power. The uncovering of such 'self knowledge' is, Foucault admits, no easy task. "What makes the analysis of the techniques of the self difficult is two things. First, the techniques of the self do not require the same material apparatus as the production of objects; therefore they are often **invisible** techniques. Second, they are frequently linked to the techniques for the direction of others. For example, if we take educational institutions, we realise that one is managing others and teaching them to manage themselves."[76] Just as with the more sophisticated method of psychoanalysis alluded to earlier in respect of the claims of Rorty's feminist freedom, Foucault reminds us that the pursuit of a neutral, a-historical or a-cultural language of freedom is a metaphysical one, and that even what we consider to be our current exercise of liberty is deeply enmeshed with what is our current exercise of power. Once again though, it is Foucault who recalls that, "there is no power without potential refusal or revolt."[77]

**Putting the Problem First**

Governmentality as a concept that combines both the micro-politics of individuals with the macro-politics of states would seem to suggest an alternative

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[73] Foucault, '*Omnes et singulatum*', p. 252.
[74] Ibid., p. 254.
[75] See Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. II: The Use of Pleasure*, (New York, Vintage, 1986) and *Vol. III, The Care of the Self*, (London, Allen Lane, 1988), and also 'On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress', in *The Foucault Reader*, (ed.) Paul Rabinow, (London, Penguin, 1984), especially p. 342 & 345.
[76] Foucault, 'On the Genealogy of Ethics', ibid., p. 369-70.

means of study that overcomes many of the state-centred and reductionist problems of the realist approach in International Relations. Furthermore, as the process of governmentality is not necessarily linked to one particular state, but rather to the process of government that traverses the people and institutions of a particular territory, the benefits of adopting a Foucauldian methodology, even in the loose formation as elaborated above, appear considerable in light of the current international dimension to national rule. In one of his last interviews Foucault even suggests the possibility of extracting a method from his considerable body of work. In respect of my own preoccupation with the Zapatista conflict in Mexico his words seem especially poignant. He suggests that a research project might move forward by "taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analysing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analysing power relations through the antagonism of strategies."[78]

The utility or otherwise of such a method of course depends upon what one is trying to study. However, assuming International Relations or international relations to be one's basis must remain problematic. If we continue to hold to philosophers such as Richard Rorty's anti-foundational ethnocentrism, the 'we' of international relations appears to refer to a community of liberal scholars. Michel Foucault was acutely aware of this issue and, in what is thought to be his last ever interview prior to his death in 1984, he reacts directly to this missing Rortian element in what he then referred to as his problematization of politics,

*"Richard Rorty points out that in these analyses I do not appeal to any "we" - to any of those "we's" whose consensus, whose values, whose traditions constitute the framework for a thought and define the conditions in which it can be validated. But the problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a "we" in order to assert the principles one recognises and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a "we" possible, by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that the "we" must not*

[77] Foucault, '*Omnes et singulatum*', op.cit., p. 253.
[78] Foucault, 'The Subject of Power', op.cit, p. 211.

*be previous to the question; it can only be the result - the necessary temporary result - of the question as it is posed in the new terms one formulates it."*[79]

Perhaps then in light of this theoretical introduction, it is now possible to recognise how in both taking seriously the challenge of anti-foundationalist thought and the difficulty in extracting a methodology from such thought, it became necessary to consider the constitution of knowledge in a discipline like International Relations only in the end to forego it, or rather to step beyond it. Whilst thinkers like Richard Rorty have themselves demonstrated compelling critiques of the creation and conduct of knowledge within Western social science, their usefulness in terms of approaching human political subjects that to a very large extent exist outside of such academic contexts, have, I hope to have shown, proved methodologically disenabling in terms of excavating something of the lived realities that International Relations as a discipline has for so long excluded.

As a result, the move to a Foucauldian 'method' arises not simply out of any idiosyncratic choice, but (with the help of Ian Hacking) because it is the later Foucault that refuses the givens of disciplinary dictate and instead concerns himself with historically situated questions or problematiques that overflow the boundaries of anything we might neatly define as IR, sociology, politics, history or philosophical inquiry. This thesis takes inspiration from such a Foucauldian 'method' and seeks to place the Maya Indian at the heart of a historical exegesis that seeks to provide a novel perspective from within which to consider the current 'problem' of Indian rebellion in the modern Mexican nation-state.

**Overview**

The thesis will therefore commence with an excavation of the means by which the Maya Indian first became an object of Western political and cultural analysis, tracing a path from the first 'discovery' through to the recognised establishment of a colonial system in the Americas. The second chapter will then focus upon the transformation in colonial government that began under the Bourbon adminstration of the late 18th century leading to the eventual independence of Mexico and the creation of a liberal republic. The implications in terms of policy and practice are discussed and

[79] Foucault, 'Polemics, Politics, and Problemizations', in *The Foucault Reader*, op.cit., p. 385.

described, and the third chapter continues to recount the rebellious reaction such governmental modernization provoked. Chapter four will lead us into the twentieth century when Mexico first founded the corporatist and clientist system of government characteristic of the one-party state. At each step, the thesis attempts to return to the historical experience of the Maya Indians of Chiapas to consider how transformations in governmentality effected transformations in political subjectivity at the local level. Chapter five will bring us up to the current neoliberal stage of governmental rule, and chapter six will describe the nature of the Indian rebellion that it currently confronts. Finally in the conclusion, some implications for the future of Mexico and the nature of Indian/state politics are offered in light of the historical account that has been outlined. Throughout the narrative many of the points explicitly raised in this introduction will be tackled in a less explicit manner, and once again in the conclusion, on the basis of such an approach, theoretical issues will be returned to.

# *Chapter One*

# Maps of the Mind: Spanish Conquest and the Indian Soul

*victoria nulla est*
*Quam quae confessos animo quoque subjugat hostes.*

"There is no victory unless you subjugate the minds of the enemy and make them admit defeat."

Claudian, *De sexto consulta Honorii*,[1]

## Colonial Cartography

On the 4th of March 1493 the Genovese Christopher Columbus wrote to his Royal Spanish sponsors announcing the Discovery of the Americas:

*"Most powerful sovereigns: all of Christendom should hold great celebrations, and especially God's Church, for the finding of such a multitude of friendly peoples, which with very little effort will be converted to our Holy Faith, and so many lands filled with so many goods very necessary to us in which all Christians will have comfort and profits, all of which was unknown nor did anyone speak of it except in fables."* [2]

Columbus' reference to the little knowledge available concerning the possible existence of the Indies as fables was in actuality somewhat disingenuous. Believing as he did that he had in fact found a westward route to the orient, much of Columbus' calculations had been based upon the freshly recovered second century AD text the *Geography* of Claudius Ptolemy.[3] Unknown in the West during the Middle Ages, the work of Ptolemy was translated into Latin early in the fifteenth century by the humanist Jacopo d'Angelo. By mid to late century, editions of the *Geography* including colourful maps had become widespread throughout Renaissance Europe. It was a text that both inspired Leonardo da Vinci in his attempts to provide a cartography of the

[1] Quoted in Michel de Montaigne's, *On the Cannibals/ Des Cannibales*, 1588, p. 248-9.
[2] Translated into English for the first time by Margarita Zamora, see 'Christopher Columbus's "Letter to the Sovereigns": Announcing the Discovery', for details surrounding this controversy, in *New World Encounters*, (ed.) Stephen Greenblatt, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993). Quote from p.7.
[3] See Anthony Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts, The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*, (Cambridge Mass., Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1992) p. 48-82.

human body, as much as it did Columbus in his attempts to chart a westward passage to China.[4] Whilst Ptolemy's maps, or rather their Byzantium renderings, were certainly considered authoritative they were by no means considered beyond revision, for at their margins lay the two words most irresistible to the inquisitive explorer; *terra incognita*.[5]

What was to be found in such "unknown land" had been the topic of many a fevered imagination since ancient Greece itself. It had been a tradition within Greek culture from the fifth century BC onwards to write on the customs and institutions of neighbouring peoples. These reports, best exemplified in the works of Herodotus and Ctesias, often moved from the simple descriptions of barbarous non-Greek civilizations to the more colourful tales of monsters and marvels that lurked at the known world's edge.[6] Later, the elder Pliny in his encyclopaedic *Natural History* would list these monstrous beings who populated the marginal spaces unfamiliar to mankind - cyclopses, men with horns, men with heads of dogs, men with their heads beneath their shoulders, men with one large foot under whose shade they could rest in the desert sun. Although such classical sources of anthropomorphic surrealism found graphic pictorial illustration in the medieval era, it was their renewed and popular currency throughout the Renaissance that nurtured Columbus's already aroused and expectant disposition.[7]

It should come as no surprise therefore that whilst the islands that Columbus discovered were, "densely populated with the best people under the sun" who "have neither ill-will nor treachery", his confidence in his capacity to 'understand' the native language allowed him to state that on other parts of the same islands existed tribes where "everyone is born with a tail".[8] Furthermore, "he understood also that far from there there were men with one eye, and others with dogs' heads". The power of expectation being so strong that it only allowed of minor adjustment, as exemplified when one of his companions recalled, "the day before, when the Admiral went to the

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[4] See S. Y. Edgerton Jr., 'From Mental Matrix to *Mappamundi* to Christian Empire: The Heritage of Christian Cartography in the Renaissance', in *Art and Cartography*, (ed.) D. Woodward, (Chicago, 1987).

[5] See Edmundo O'Gorman, *La Invencion de America*, (Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1984).

[6] See Grafton op.cit., p. 35-48.

[7] See Hartman Schedel, *Liber chronicarum*, (the Latin version of the *Nuremberg Chronicle*), (Nuremberg, 1493) for illustrations of these fantastical 'ethnographic' oddities, they can also be found reprinted in Luisa Martin Meras, *Cartografia Maritima Hispana: La Imagen de America*, (Madrid, Lunwerg Editores, 1993).

[8] Columbus, *Letter to the Sovereigns*, p.4. and p. 8. respectively, op.cit.

Rio de Oro, he said that he saw three mermaids who rose very high from the sea, but they were not as beautiful as they are painted, for they had something masculine in the countenance".[9] And perhaps inevitably it was Columbus also who confirmed the existence of that being most other to the European imaginaire, the cannibal. For indeed the island of "Quaris", the Admiral had 'heard said', "was inhabited by a people who are regarded in all the islands as very fierce and who eat human flesh".[10] Nonetheless whilst the *mentalite* of the explorer was clearly pre-disposed to encounter the marvellous and monstrous of classical cartography, arguably there were other more potent and durable desires that had an equal if not more prominent presence on the mental map with which Columbus also navigated this 'unknown land'.[11]

The European Renaissance after all was not simply a moment of expanded knowledge but of competing knowledges. The very means of knowing, the very methods for encountering the 'truth', had both multiplied and in many cases metamorphosised, as the combination of rediscovered Greek and Latin texts animated what often already lay dormant in the canonical tomes of the period. Figures such as the Dominican friar Savonarola who took issue with the decadence of the new aesthetic of Botticelli, or fellow Dominican Giordano Bruno who turned to occultist and hermetic texts, both provide examples of an era that was marked more by its mystical, religious and scholarly experimentation than by its epistemological orthodoxy. The belief in, and propagation of, such complex onto-theological cosmologies could by no means be reduced to the proliferation of 'fables', a fact made only too patent by Savonarola and Bruno's executions. It is in this light therefore that we should interpret John Phelan's claim that, "Columbus' frame of mind belonged to a Spiritual Franciscan tradition."[12] For whilst Columbus was most certainly a man of the Renaissance, an important product of the Renaissance was the desire to reform the church, a desire frequently informed and energised by the apocryphal writings of the

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[9] Quoted in Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1984) p.15.

[10] Quoted in Grafton. p.82. op.cit.

[11] For an alternative interpretation which is in-itself revealing for its Eurocentric and unreflective stance see Leonardo Olschki, 'What Columbus Saw on Landing in the West Indies', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, (No. 84, 1941) p. 633-59.

[12] John Leddy Phelan, *The Millenial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, (Berkley, University of California Press, 1956), p. 22.

middle ages. Columbus' invocation of the twelfth century monk Joachim di Fiore, often regarded as the archprophet of the Apocalypse, should therefore be seen as revealing of a further and more primary motivation behind his desire to conquer the Indies. As history appeared to be nearing its climax, and as the discovery of the New World was thus seen to play an important role in the end of the old, "Columbus consciously sought to surround himself with the magic aura that over the centuries had enveloped the name of Joachim by proclaiming himself the Joachimite Messiah."[13]

It is when placed in this socio-historical context that we might profitably return to Columbus' letter to the Spanish sovereigns and look beyond a seemingly rhetorical stance, towards a more profound location of discovery within an eschatological and spiritual narrative that can also provide us with some clues as to the essentially ambivalent relationship Columbus had towards the Indian. He writes that, "Our Lord, who is the light and strength of all those who seek to do good and makes them victorious in deeds that seem impossible, wished to ordain that I should find, and was to find, gold and mines and spicery and innumerable peoples."[14] That discovery should be understood by Columbus as an act of divine providence with himself chosen as the Lord's earthly receptacle explains his apparent oscillation between an Indian only too unblemished by sin or vice, and one that the western European mind might even have difficulty including within its own species. Equipped with a mental matrix that included the necessity to encounter wealth - gold, and peoples - Indians, Columbus' mission was never simply one of exploration. *Terra incognita* was after all approached with the burdensome desire of fulfilment rather than the always already questionable open-mindness of discovery. Souls *had* to be saved, religious campaigns *had* to be financed and Renaissance nurtured intellects *had* to be accommodated, that is to say, the question of the 'reality' discovered by Columbus had less to do with some 15th century communicated empiricism and more to do with the imposing colonial limits upon what could convincingly be counted as the 'real'.

That Columbus' very first undertaking upon contact with the New World should consist in what Tzvetan Todorov calls "an act of extended nomination" is certainly revealing of the colonial mindset. Even whilst it may now seem preposterous to expect an ideal of free and open inquiry to have regulated the explorer's initial

[13] Ibid., p. 22.
[14] Letter to the Sovereigns, p. 6, op.cit.

encounters, nevertheless, that the act that accompanied Columbus' first foot-steps upon Indian soil should take the form of a juridical-textual pronouncement says much about the grounds of legitimacy upon which the discoverer deemed himself to be subject. "Before the eyes of the doubtless perplexed Indians, and without paying them the least attention, Columbus ordered a deed of possession to be drawn up. 'He called upon them to bear faith and witness that he, before all men, was taking possession of the said island - as in fact he then took possession of it - in the name of the King and Queen, his Sovereigns ...'"[15] The islands did of course have their own indigenous names, yet as with the Indians themselves the act of inquiry was never about the expansion of the knowable and always had more to do with an act of nominal location within the realms of the already known. Even before the question of slavery had become an issue, "Columbus's behaviour implies that he does not grant the Indians the right to have their own will, that he judges them, in short, as living objects."[16]

Whilst Columbus is in many ways representative of his era, and in other ways exceptional to it, we should nonetheless be wary of assuming that his means of coming to terms and locating the ambiguous Indian other within his own mental map were the same means and methods of appropriation and absorption adopted by his European Renaissance culture. His letters and journals, insightful as they are, rather than provide stable answers, in fact contributed to an already smouldering Renaissance anxiety, one that with the widespread circulation of colonial literature was to become increasingly pronounced.

## Charting the Modern Mentality: Europe's Other Heading

"American natives were not usually regarded as true persons", writes Aldo Scaglione.[17] All the same their discovery provoked disquiet rather than confidence within the European self. This being so because, "in the contradictory and confused

[15] Todorov, p. 28, op.cit.
[16] Todorov, p. 48, op.cit.
[17] Aldo Scaglione, 'A Note on Montaigne's *Des Cannibales* and the Humanist Tradition', in (ed.) Fredi Chiappelli, *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, 2 Vols., (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976), Vol. 1, p. 63.

situation of the travellers' reports at the very beginning of literature on America, one finds a central underlying question: what is human nature?"[18]

It was a question which in Renaissance Europe no longer commanded a wholly orthodox response. Whilst European culture was still dominantly Christian, within this culture already lay the seeds for a new conception of self whose conscious unfolding would necessarily lead to reform in both politics, religion and society. The pace of this reform, its content and its consequences would vary as northern Europe would come to embrace Lutheran Protestantism and the southern countries would experience the effects of an internal reform most commonly referred to as the Counter-reformation. The two conflicting religious reformations, both spiritual and political in their nature, would in turn lead to the birth of an alternative conception of selfhood, one that is traditionally identified as the 'modern self'. This modern self, the dualistic being of Descartian design whose mind functions apart from its body, whose emotions run contrary to its rationale, whose soul will soon become the object of a new science, is, alongside its practical Galilean bedfellow, considered the founding moment in a standard modernist narrative which explains how it is that we have come to arrive in the modern world we inhabit today. In opposition to this standard account of modernity Stephen Toulmin proposes a "revised narrative".[19]

Rather than view the Renaissance simply as a transitional period between the medieval and the modern, Toulmin suggests that it is within this period itself that we can identify the birth of an antecedent modernist mentality, one that will later be over-shadowed by the Cartesian creation, but one that nonetheless will remain present even if not dominant throughout our modern genesis. This is to suggest that modernity has what Toulmin calls "twin trajectories"; the first beginning with the humanists of the Renaissance and the second emerging from the rationalist thought of the 17th century.[20] It is probably best to make clear at this stage that the humanism of 16th and 17th century Europe had little in common with the contemporary and predominantly North American idea of a "secular humanism". In contrast, Renaissance humanism, and its concomitant, the foundation of the academic field - the Humanities, first took hold within church governed Catholic universities. So profound in fact was the

[18] Ibid., p. 65.
[19] Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990).

amalgam between church and scholar that it would be more accurate, as for example Myron Gilmore suggests, to highlight the broadly theological nexus from within which humanism took form, with the pre-fix, Christian. "The reality behind the term 'Christian humanist'", writes Myron, "covers a wide range of accommodation between Christian and classical ideas, but even the broadest interpretation of the humanist position cannot obscure the basic assumption which distinguished the generation of which Erasmus was the leader."[21] It was an assumption, continues Myron, which came to express itself through the 'most basic hope' that each humanist might witness "the more complete realization of the form of Christianity in which he believed".[22]

That humanist scholarship should provide the intellectual foundations upon which calls for Church reform were based, needs some explaining. Whilst Europeans of the *quattrocento* were already familiar with the poetic scope of Dante's *Divine Comedy* and the auto-biographical dogmatism of St. Augustine's *Confessions*, the novelty of these works with their evocation of human life as lived history was nonetheless curtailed by their more conscious invocation of an ailing medieval Christian order.[23] The real contribution of the recovered classical texts of the Renaissance was their multiplication of the possible orders within which man might exist. Whether the texts were Platonic or Epicurean, as in the case of Lucretius' poem *De rerum natura*, their insertion within the broadly Christian schemata of the Renaissance did little to bolster the unity of the church and much to contest the dominance of any single religious interpretation. Although much of Greek and Latin learning had already been available to medieval scholars, the uniqueness of the Renaissance lay primarily in the rediscovery of ancient learning in *all* its manifold variety and diversity of form.

Whilst the foundations of modern political thought can be traced to the recovery of Aristotle's *Politics*,[24] it was only in combination with the later translation of both the *Ethics* and the *Rhetoric* that an Aristotelian sense of the 'circumstantial'

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[20] Ibid. p.21-44.
[21] Myron P. Gilmore, *The World of Humanism 1453-1517*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1962), p. 205.
[22] Ibid. p.205.
[23] On Dante see Wilson Coates, Hayden White & J. Salwyn Schapiro, *The Emergence of Liberal Humanism*, (New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966) p. 8-9. On Augustine see William E. Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative*, (New York, Sage, 1995).
[24] See Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2. Vols, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978), Vol. 2., p. 349.

came to permeate Renaissance reflection.[25] In a cumulative manner, as the novelty of classical drama, poetry and history began to be absorbed, the Renaissance came to experience the perhaps inevitable broadening of the image of man as he was now being presented within ancient literature. The humanists as the principal promoters of this new literature, were no longer willing, nor able, to honestly restrict the interpretation of such texts to the limiting dynamic of a medieval moral casuistry. The fallibility of man once merely described as a means to better contrast mortal failings with that of the divine, now became a realm of interest explored as revealing within its own right. As the human beings that populated these diverse texts could no longer be reduced to a saint/sinner duality, the constitution of humanity began to seem increasingly various and the ambiguity in what might be considered a virtuous action or a vicious one, although most famously reflected upon in the writings of Machiavelli, also found itself manifest in narratives that were not so clearly 'political'.[26]

For the humanists, the result of the textual 'rebirth' of classical learning led to one enduring conclusion; that perfect human self-knowledge can never be realized.[27] "Human modesty alone (they argued) should teach reflective Christians how limited is their ability to reach unquestioned Truth or unqualified Certainty over all matters of doctrine."[28] Foremost amongst such humanists and the undisputed intellectual leader in urging Christian reform was Netherlander Desiderius Erasmus (ca. 1467-1536). In his satirical masterpiece *The Praise of Folly* (1511), Erasmus took issue with both the worldly corruption of theologians, monks and prelates and the superstitious excesses they encouraged, in particular the cult of the saints. This entertaining and irreverent satire built upon a Christian humanist philosophy already partially elaborated in his earlier, *Handbook of a Christian Knight* (usually known from its Latin title as the *Enchiridion*, 1501). In the *Enchiridion* Erasmus argued, "that the true essence of religion is an *inner* spiritual experience which then must be expressed in a life of constant struggle against worldliness in which the believer is sustained by God's gifts

[25] Toulmin, op.cit., p. 26-27.
[26] Most notable amongst which would be the writing of Cervantes, Rabelais, Montaigne, Erasmus and Shakespeare. More excessive, and universal rather than merely European, claims concerning Shakespeare and the new understanding of the human can also be found in Harold Bloom, *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, (New York, Riverhead Books, 1998).
[27] Coates, White & Schapiro, op.cit., p. 5.
[28] Toulmin, op.cit., p. 25.

of prayer and knowledge".[29] His programme for church reform embodied an opposition towards what he viewed as spiritually vacuous and even harmful ceremonial acts of piety and an open disdain for the dogmatism of scholastic theologians that stood in stark contrast to his own humanistic 'Philosophy of Christ'.[30] Whilst Erasmus remained faithful to Catholicism throughout his life his texts were soon to be placed on the *Index of Prohibited Books* and his brand of humanistic reform came to be viewed as laying the preparatory steps for the more radical heresies being propagated in Germany by Martin Luther.

Although Erasmus made a public break with Luther in 1524, he could not help but oppose the condemnation of Luther outright, for in such an act he also recognised the threat to a central tenet of humanist learning, one that understood the value of education and religious instruction as lying in their openness to reform and possible future interpretation. In this regard, and especially in light of the religious schism that was the result of the Protestant Reformation, the true intellectual inheritor of Erasmus should not be considered as Luther but rather, it is in the work of the Frenchman Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592) that the culmination of the humanist tradition finds itself best represented. Furthermore, it is also with Montaigne that we can best recognise the contribution of the American Indian 'Other' to the creation of a truly modern European mentality.

The limits to the universal applicability of Christianity or even its primary use as a means of judging or engaging with an alien culture were all provocatively articulated in the *Essays* of Montaigne.[31] As a witness to the destruction wrought by the religious wars within his own native France, Montaigne was able to recognise the dangers inherent within the universal application of any cultural or theological mindset that owed its political dominance simply to the contingencies and varities of a local and specific historical trajectory. Although he remained a Catholic until his death, Montaigne's faith was such that he did not shirk from the logical implications of his intellectual stance. Thus his own brand of cultural relativism did not represent a spiritual abyss needy of metaphysical content so much as an acceptance of the 'natural'

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[29] Charles G. Nauert Jr., *Humanism and the Culture of Renaissance Europe*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 151.
[30] Ibid., p. 155.
[31] I have referred to the penguin edition, *Michel de Montaigne: The Complete Essays*, translated by M. A. Screech, (London, Penguin Books, 1991).

limitations of context when making claims to certitude. To put it another way, Montaigne's modernism lay precisely in his capacity to confront the inherent and inescapable limits of knowledge, a position that holds great affinity with what, in more contemporary parlance, has come to be known as ethnocentrism.[32] Central to the construction of such a distinctly modern mentality was not only Montaigne's experience of the Thirty Years War but also his particular experience of an often disdainful European reception to the discovery of the American 'Indian'. His reaction to aristocratic and 'educated' society's belittling of native culture was characteristic; "it is no lie to say that these men are indeed savages - by our standards; for either they must be or we must be: there is an amazing gulf between their souls and ours."[33]

As to upon just what grounds savagery and civilization might find their basis, Montaigne was unequivocal.

> *"I find (from what has been told me) that there is nothing savage or barbarous about those peoples, but that every man calls barbarous anything he is not accustomed to; it is indeed the case that we have no other criterion of truth or right-reason than the example and form of the opinions and customs of our own country. There we always find the perfect religion, the perfect polity, the most developed and perfect way of doing anything! Those 'savages' are only wild in the sense that we call fruits wild when they are produced by Nature in her ordinary course: whereas it is fruit which we have artificially perverted and misled from the common order which we ought to call savage."* [34]

Writing in the final decades of the 16th century, Montaigne's *Essays* resonate in a manner that is peculiarly modern. His approach to the reports emanating from the Americas being more akin to contemporary anthropological method than to Columbus' own Renaissance medievalism.[35] Nonetheless both Montaigne and Columbus did hold a shared belief in the value of experience, and whilst I hope to have already shown the cultural limits present within Columbus' own personal experience of discovery, it should not obscure the fact that Montaigne's far more self-reflective championing of experience as a means to knowledge set both him and Columbus in stark opposition to

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[32] See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, (New York, 1973).
[33] Montaigne, *On the Cannibals*, (1588), op.cit., p. 239.
[34] Ibid., p.231.

the methodology of abstract philosophical meditation which was to follow and out-do, in both political and intellectual terms, the significant merit of their own personal achievements.[36]

Why Europe could not accommodate the plurality of interpretation that was the logical conclusion of humanist thought and allow itself to explore the philosophical and ethical consequences of such beliefs is the subject of Toulmin's text.[37] That Europe should need certainty, method and objectivity over modesty, experience and subjectivity rests for him upon the historical context of the religious conflict under which the Western polities of the 16th and 17th century laboured. The dominance of scientific thought and the manner in which Descartes' quest for certainty and method was embraced represent for Toulmin the means by which Europe hoped to transcend its religious difficulties, investing its faith in rationality instead of religion, and constructing a modern Europe based on the nexus between science and politics rather than that of science and religion.[38] Such a transition to modernity has come to over-shadow the ethical and philosophical gains present in Renaissance humanist thought and to a large extent has hidden the existence of an antecedent modernist mentality that was capable of living with uncertainty and difference.[39]

In light of this, and in an effort to provide a historical basis for a claim that stands without one, we might turn our European ears to another European voice and

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[35] The true colonial ethnographer was of course Las Casas , see Anthony Pagden, '*Ius et Factum*: Text and Experience in the Writings of Bartolome de Las Casas', in *New World Encounters*, op.cit., p. 85 - 100.

[36] On the move from Renaissance humanism to 17th century exact science see Stephen Toulmin, 'The Recovery of Practical Philosophy', in *The American Scholar*, (Vol. 57, No. 3, Summer 1988), p. 337-52, and also his co-authored work with Albert R. Jonsen, *The Abuse of Casuistry*, (1988).

[37] Stephen Toulmin, *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1990).

[38] Toulmin's book should be seen as an attempt to answer questions which more 'philosophical' accounts of modernity have ruled out. In particular the accounts of Modernity proposed by John Dewey and Richard Rorty, two American philosophical pragmatists who identify Descartes as the reason why 'modern' philosophy has reached an intellectual *cul de sac*. For Toulmin the fact that these accounts make no attempt to understand why Descartes should have been so appealing to the European culture of the seventeenth century means that they fail to recognise the importance of historical situation and context. This is no minor point, because by providing purely philosophical accounts such philosophers perpetuate the split between rhetoric and logic that in-itself led to the Descartian dead end. See Toulmin p.35-37.

[39] This is to claim, alongside Toulmin, that whilst we can trace the continuance and even development of a certain 'humanistic' modernist mentality within the realms of Literature, Poetry and drama, Shakespeare being the most obvious example, in the realms of science, philosophy and politics, definitions of the 'human' became narrow, over-determined and relative to scientific and institutional definition. This is clearly an argument that finds certain affinities with the work of Michel Foucault and

agree that yes the discovery of the Americas was a unique historical moment, one which as Tzetvan Todorov writes both, "heralds and establishes our present identity; even if every date that permits us to separate any two periods is arbitrary, none is more suitable, in order to mark the beginning of the modern era, than the year 1492, the year Columbus crossed the Atlantic Ocean." This being so Todorov continues because,

> *"we are all the direct descendants of Columbus, it is with him that our genealogy begins, insofar as the word beginning has a meaning. Since 1492 we live, as Las Casas would claim, in a time, "so new and like no other". Since that date the world has shrunk, "the world is small" as Columbus himself will peremptorily declare; men have discovered the totality of which they are a part, whereas hitherto they formed a part without a whole."* [40]

**New World Medievalism**

Whilst the literature surrounding the discovery of the American Indian can be seen to have had a laudatory effect towards the creation of a modern European mentality,[41] even if the Europe of the 17th century should later have chosen to chart an alternative modernist heading, it was in contrast, back in the actual physical 'New World' of the Americas that the Europe of the middle ages continued to sing what was to be quite a lengthy and often barbaric swan song.[42]

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his claim that man as a subject of science was invented around the end of the eighteenth century. See his *The Order of Things, An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, (London, 1970).

[40] Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America*, op.cit., p.5. There is now however some reason to believe that Todorov does share in this identification of the modern with the advent of humanist thought, see his latest publication, Tzvetan Todorov, *Le Jardin Imparfait: La Pensee Humaniste en France*, (Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1998) where he tells the story of a development from Montaigne to Constant to Rousseau. For another brief but suggestive account of this historical moment see also J. H. Elliot, 'A World United' in *Circa 1492: Art in the Age of Exploration*, (ed.) Jay. A. Levenson (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1991), p. 647-652.

[41] In-keeping with the general interpretative thrust of this chapter, this is not to argue that the American Indian always played a positive role in the formation of a European modernist mentality. Later uses of "the noble savage theme" could well be considered regressive, but such transformations in perception only serve to highlight the antagonisms within modernity's genealogy, rather than any fixed notion of the nature of Indian humanity as such. See Hayden White, 'The Noble Savage: Theme as Fetish', in *First Images of America*, Vol 1., op.cit., p. 121-135.

[42] See John Leddy Phelan's, *The Millennial Kingdom of the Franciscans in the New World*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1956) for a fascinating account of the influence and perseverance of mediaeval thought in the Americas. Also see Athony Grafton's *New Worlds, Ancient Texts, The Power of Tradition and the Shock of Discovery*, op.cit., for the central importance of medieval texts in the orientation of the Spaniards as they confronted the 'New World'. It is also worth considering anthropologist Olivia Harris, ' "The Coming of the White People". Reflections on the Mythologisation of History in Latin America' in *The Bulletin of Latin American Research*, (Vol. 14, No. 1, 1995) p.9-24,

That this should have been the case was due in large part to the fact that the Americas were to be governed not by Europe but by Spain, and Spain unlike many of its fellow European neighbours was still very much in the grip of a medieval system of theocratic monarchical rule. Despite the spreading influence of the Italian *quattrocento* Renaissance, Spain's colonial practice was more deeply coloured by recent historical experience than by scholastic innovation. 1492 after all, not only marks the date of Columbus' discovery of the Americas but also the date when the Spanish, after nearly eight centuries of 'Islamic occupation', succeeded in the final and comprehensive expulsion of the Moors from southern Spain. In light of the positive result of the economic and religious tactics employed during this campaign of 'reconquest', it should come as no surprise that when the Spanish *conquistadores* sought a model upon which to base their American colonial project they had to look little further than Spain itself.[43]

Centuries of conflict with the Moors had somewhat inevitably led to a mental conflation between religious and racial superiority amongst Spanish Christians. Such an attitude, although most clearly evident in the symbolism and rhetoric surrounding the Spanish military campaigns, was also underlined throughout Spanish society as a consequence of the widespread practice of enslaving captured Moors and employing them in private service. Furthermore, in an attempt to consolidate recaptured land, the Spanish crown permitted feudal concessions of estates, jurisdiction and labour to those *señors*, that could guarantee a workable degree of regional stability. As such areas were initially devoid of any rule of law, they also became a popular refuge for bandits and fugitives, a state of affairs that led originally free peasants to entrust themselves to the protection of a local *señor*.[44] In this respect therefore, and well before the discovery of the New World, fifteenth century Spain had already shown that for an individual with a combination of military prowess, paternalism, religious and racial arrogance, and most

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for an argument that claims that Columbus' arrival as a historical date does not hold the same kind of significance for contemporary indigenous peoples that it claims within European historical narratives both in Europe and as adopted and adapted by Latin American nationalist historians themselves. In Mexico itself a good example of just this dynamic can be found in Miguel Leon-Portilla's, 'El Nuevo Mundo, 1492-1992, Una Disputa Interminable?' in *Raices Indigenas; Presencia Hispanica*, (ed.) Miguel Leon-Portilla, (Mexico, El Colegio Nacional, 1993) and in Edmundo O'Gorman's, *La Invencion de America*, (Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1984).

[43] J. Elliot, *Imperial Spain*, (London, Pelican, 1970), p. 62.

[44] Luis de Valdellano, *Historia de las Instituciones espanoles de los origenes al final de la Edad Media*, (Revista de Occidente, 1968), p. 522.


SEPTENTRIO
ARCTOS
ARCTOPHYLAX
CAVRVS
FAVONIVS
AFRICVS
EVRVS
EVRO NOTVS
AVS
AVSTER
MARE INDICVM
MARE PRASODVM
SINVS GANGETICVS
SINVS BARBARICVS
PERSIDIS SINVS
ARABIA FELIX
TAPROBANE
ETHIOPIA

importantly an adventurous and opportunistic disposition, large rewards could be reaped. And whilst peninsular Spanish rule was never actually founded upon a system of feuds/alities, the three pillars of early Spanish colonial practice; slavery, the *encomienda* and the *repartimiento*, have all nonetheless been recognised as a "vigorous offspring of the feudal system."[45]

From the very outset therefore, it should be recognised that the techniques and strategies employed by the first colonists on their recently discovered subjects were by no means endorsed by Royal decree. In fact, "it was quite unthinkable that the Spanish monarchs would tolerate in the New World an institution (like the *encomienda*) which would disperse their newly won authority", but as with the bucaneering architect of conquest himself, within Hernan Cortes and the rest of the *conquistadores*, the feudal tradition was so deeply rooted that they "tended to usurp all authority, grab land and treasure, to exploit Indian labor, and, in general, to conduct themselves like conquerors of all times."[46] The principal character of Spanish colonial rule was therefore marked more by conflict than by coherence. On one side lay the often naked ambitions of the original colonists, on the other the spiritual zeal of the missionaries who accompanied them, and in between stood the Spanish crown who both attempted to combine religious with economic concerns, whilst at the same time trying to maintain a tight grip on the institutional tethers that constituted colonial control. Of course, at the centre of all these competing forces was the real subject of colonial conflict; the Indian subject.

**Spanish Theologians and the Indian Soul**

As befits those charged with the care of the 'royal Spanish conscience' it was a Dominican friar who, in 1511, incensed by the deplorable conditions and treatment of Indian slaves on the island of Hispianola, first articulated the theological parameters of the Spanish 16th century Indian problematique. Although directed principally at the colonists within his own parish, father Antonio de Montesino might as well have been

[45] Leslie Byrd Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain: the Beginning of Spanish Mexico*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1950), p. ix. I shall return to a definition and analysis of these practices in a following section.

addressing his Royal monarchs when he beseeched his congregation to "tell me, by what right or justice do you keep these Indians in cruel servitude? On what authority have you waged a detestable war against these people, who dwelt quietly and peacefully on their own land? ..... Are these not men? Have they not rational souls?"[47]

As much as father Montesino's inquiries may ring purely rhetorical to our modernist ears, the question as to whether Indians did, or did not, in fact possess 'rational souls' was paramount for establishing a legitimate basis upon which Hispanic colonial actions and aspirations might be founded. The very conjunction of soul possession with rationality should also alert us to the continued and deep seated entanglement of Christianity with societal and political understandings of selfhood, legitimacy and conduct. In a pre-Cartesian configuration of the human 'I', rationality found itself entwined with spirituality, or rather the parameters of rationality were not to be dislocated from the innate divinity that was present within everyone of Gods human creatures. This presence of the divine within the self was the nature of the human soul, its nourishment, or rather the recognition of what was necessary for its nourishment was the nature of rationality. Suicide, madness and self-abuse were therefore both acts against God and against nature. That such acts could even happen at all was only explicable by the persistence of a medieval duality between good and evil, one that also allowed for demonic acts and spiritual possession. The Catholic clergy thus necessarily played an important role both as mediator and interpreter. Priests, and in particular confessors, were those that could 'make sense' of the often torturous paths between the inner world of the human soul and the all encompassing universe of the Christian transcendental.[48] If Indians did not in fact possess souls, and therefore were not in fact men at all, they neither needed nor deserved priestly ministration. The

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[46] Ibid., p. xi. On Cortes see the excellent revisionary essay by Inga Clendinnen, '"Fierce and Unnatural Cruelty": Cortes and the Conquest of Mexico', in *New World Encounters*, (ed.) Stephen Greenblatt, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1993), p.12-47.

[47] Montesino's sermon related in Bartolome de Las Casas, *Historia de Las Indies*, 2 vols., (ed.) Augustin Milares Carlo, with a preliminary study by Lewis Hanke, (Mexico City, Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1965) Vol. 1, p.263. The historical relevance of this incident is argued in both Lewis Hanke, 'The Dawn of Conscience in America: Spanish Experiments and Experiences with Indians in the New World', in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, (Vol. 107, No. 2, 1963), p. 89, and in Anthony Padgen, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination*, op.cit., p. 14-15.

[48] For more detailed accounts of the spiritual world of the Middle Ages see *A History of Christian Spirituality. Vol. 2, The Spirituality of the Middle Ages*, (eds.) Dom Jean Leclerq *et al*, (New York, Seabury Press, 1982) and Ludger Holscher, *The Reality of the Mind: Augustine's Philosophical Arguments for the Human Soul as a Spiritual Substance*, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), and

nature of legitimate colonial conduct thus rested on the proof or refutation of the existence of an Indian soul.

Whilst the dissemination of father Antonio de Montesino's sermon alone, may very well have resulted in the creation of the 1512 Laws of Burgos, it was only after the conquest had fully penetrated mainland America, and regular reports of Indian culture and conquistador conduct began to filter back to Spain, that the issue of Indian status came to fully occupy Royal attention. Thus it was in 1550 that King Charles V ordered the suspension of all expeditions to America while a junta of foremost theologians, jurists and officials were convoked in the royal capital of Valladolid. The junta took the form of a debate with Dominican friar Bartolome de Las Casas and Italian-educated Juan Gines de Sepulveda invited to argue the theological and juridical case both for and against Indian slavery in the Spanish colonial territories.

To a significant degree, the philosophical grounds upon which such a debate was to be conducted, and thus the very terms within which the problematique of the Indian was itself to be phrased and interpreted, had already been dictated by the unquestionable historical predominance of Aristotles' *Politics* as *the* textual prism through which a society and its members could come to be judged. Employing what was known as John Mair's *via moderna* interpretation of the *Politics*, Sepulveda was able to offer both a defence of the conquest as a 'just war' and a defence of Indian slavery as being 'just by nature'.[49] Clearly championing the cause of the colonists, Sepulveda hoped to convince the council that American natives were in fact barbarians. For according to Aristotle, "among barbarians no distinction is made between women and slaves, because there is no natural ruler among them: they are a community of slaves, male and female."[50] Without a knowledge of the Christian faith, Sepulveda argued, Indian society could not be considered a genuine political society. Indian barbarity was after all a consequence of God willing the Indians to "lack reason". Indians may well possess souls, but they were not rational souls, and whilst they might well be considered perpetual minors needy of instruction they were certainly not men. Presenting a justification for colonial conduct that both sanctioned

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also Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages*, (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998).

[49] Lewis Hanke, *Aristotle and the American Indians: A Study in Race Prejudice in the Modern World*, (Bloomington, 1959).

[50] Aristotle, *Politics*, book 2, Chapter 2, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 11.

enslavement and evangelical instruction, Sepulveda attempted to articulate nothing less than a new ethics of Empire for Spain's sovereign rulers.

In contrast, and in language guaranteed to infuriate contemporary sensitivities, it was Bartolome de Las Casas' contention, "that all the people of the world are men." Rejecting Sepulveda's *via moderna* interpretation of Aristotle, Las Casas instead took up fellow Dominican Francisco de Vitoria's Thomist claim that there is an equal capacity in all men, whether or not they are Christian, to establish their own political societies.[51] This universal reasoning capacity, with the possible exception of a few extreme barbarians, negated Sepulveda's claim that the Indians were in fact natural slaves, whilst still allowing Las Casas to promote the legality of peacefully instructing the Indian in the word of God.[52] Illustrating his argument with descriptions of the impressive scale and organisation of the Aztec and Mayan cities and temples still being discovered in the Americas, Las Casas made comparisons with the recognised achievements of Egyptian culture and even Greece itself. Although he could not claim that the Indians were Christians, Las Casas was still able to make a case for the rational coherence of Indian beliefs and societal structure that whilst permitting peaceful evangelical instruction in no way legitimised colonial enslavement and, more profoundly, even questioned the very right to Spanish sovereignty in the Americas.

The Valladolid conference, for Anthony Grafton, has come to represent, "the most profound debate waged in modern times within a conquering power about the justice of its own actions."[53] J. A. Fernandez-Santamaria however, suggests an interpretation that is altogether more refined. With the demise of Queen Isabel and the discovery of the Americas, sixteenth century Spain experienced what he terms a "double constitutional crisis".[54] The fact that the Valladolid debate never resulted in a collective verdict should therefore be understood as reflective of Spanish uncertainty and fear in the face of the constitutional implications that the acceptance of any one

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[51] Las Casas' and Vitoria's Thomist championing can be seen to have inspired and shaped the content of Spain's New Laws for the Indies and Vitoria himself has also been hailed as the founding father of International Law, see James Brown Scott's, *The Spanish Origin of International Law: Francisco de Vitoria and his Law of Nations*, Part 1, (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1934), and Etienne Grisel, 'The beginnings of International Law and General Public Law Doctrine: Francisco de Vitoria's *De Indiis prior*' in *First Images of America*, op.cit., Vol. 1, p. 305-26.

[52] Hanke, op.cit.

[53] Grafton, op.cit., p. 137-8.

[54] J. A. Fernandez-Santamaria, *The State, War and Peace: Spanish Political Thought in the Renaissance 1516-1559*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.5.

interpretation would provoke. As Santamaria writes, "torn between two versions of Empire, Castile was forced to depart from the straight road leading toward the modern state and steer an ambiguous middle course."[55]

The results of such Spanish equivocation and Castile's slow surrender to "the beckoning charm of the Imperial idea", were threefold. Firstly, and 30 years prior to the Valladolid junta, Castile experienced the *communero* revolt, an uprising that in its challenge to absolutist monarchical rule has been viewed by some as an early precursor to the 'modern' revolutions that would later reinvent French sovereignty.[56] Secondly, the clarification of what might be considered legitimate colonial conduct was to be endlessly postponed, with debate and interpretation of the New Laws, post-Valladolid, now being focused within the capricious corridors of the newly conceived and primary colonial institution, the Council of the Indies. The third dimension of the Spanish 16th century predicament was not so much a result, as a result *and* a cause, of the Iberian dilemma. It was what Santamaria calls Spain's third crisis. "It was a crisis of the mind, of the spirit, and of the soul."[57]

Immediately following the Valladolid debate came the Council of Trent. It was an event that finally put paid to the plasticity of an Erasmian Christian Humanism, and in its place saw the institution of a rejuvenated and fiercely dogmatic Tridentine Catholicism. With the Inquisition as its key weapon, Trent sought to enforce an orthodoxy of Christian reason that could not otherwise be agreed upon.[58] Las Casas, in his confrontation with Sepulveda, and through his application of what was known as the *via antiqua*, as practised by his Thomist allies and mentors, thus illustrated much that was central to the dynamics of the reformation and orthodox counter-reformation conflict that continued to trouble the hearts and souls of Europeans for some time.[59] In this respect, it is possible to regard the Indian problematique as an unsettling presence

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[55] Ibid., p. 6.
[56] Ibid., p. 17-23.
[57] Ibid., p. 271.
[58] See Edward M. Peters, *Inquisition*, (London, Free Press, 1988), and Bernard Hamilton, *Medieval Inquisition: Foundations of Medieval History*, (London, Holmes & Meier, 1981).
[59] See Robert Bireley, *The Counter-Reformation Prince: Anti-Machiavellianism or Catholic Statecraft in Early Modern Europe*, (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 1990), and Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2 Vols., op.cit., in particular see his chapter 5 on the Revival of Thomism (Volume 2), and in general see his volume 2 on The Age of Reformation as a means of locating this debate within the wider European dynamic.

upon which rival theological and political positions came to be illuminated, in a manner unprecedented in both Hispanic and colonial history.

The point being made therefore, is that whilst the Europe of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries buzzed with the dynamics of the new problematic of political governance, the Mexican subjects of the same period, experiencing the pioneering attempts of a foreign power to impose a semblance of Imperial order, encountered institutions and modes of rule that if anything were even more medieval than those which were being practised in peninsular Spain of the same era. That this was so is due in part to the simple fact of isolation, a fact that only accentuated what might be thought of as an already significant natural inertia between the concept of the modern state and the lived experience of the modern citizen. Spain thus reverted to a system of rule that strongly embodied the medieval conjunction between subject, ruler and Lord God Almighty. Whilst clearly a particular reaction to the Renaissance of classical scholarship that was to lay the foundations of modern political thought, the concept of the modern state, which was to be the end result of that historically peculiar period of intellectual intensity, was neither to be an idea nor a practical reality in the lives of Spain's newest subjects for some three hundred years to come.[60]

In the meantime, colonial conduct concerned itself with the creation of the ideal colonial subject form, that is a Royal subject that would be both docile, god-fearing and hard-working. To achieve this however, would involve an attempt to transplant and replicate the fragile marriage between the transcendental and the temporal that now provided a questionable legitimacy for Spanish monarchical rule. It was a process that not only involved the recreation of Spanish institutions in the New World but more acutely, it involved an attempt to enfold a Spanish self-understanding into the opaque recesses of the newly discovered Indian soul.

**Spanish Colonial Practice and the Indian Soul**

The very first institution that made any attempt to mould the desired colonial subject, was the *encomienda*. First established by Columbus and modified by Ovando

[60] See the interesting work of Athony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory 1513-1830*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990).

on the Antilles, the *encomienda* gave individual Spaniards the right to demand labour and tribute from the Indians assigned to them and also turned them into *de facto* administrators, responsible for the control and welfare of these Indians.[61] The administration and exploitation of Indian labour was however principally conducted through the already existing local Indian authorities, the *caciques*.[62] Relying in the main on the continuance of the local Indian economy and political structure, the encomienda system nevertheless, and in this respect it was at least true to the Crown's 'double purpose', also entailed the position of *doctrinero*. This post was to be filled by a peninsular priest charged with the ministering and instruction of the Indians. Being essentially under the *encomendero's* patronage such a religious presence, unlike the mendicant orders, rarely found the liturgy to be in conflict with the materialistic demands of the *encomendero*.

The *encomienda* system was to be reformed many times throughout colonial history until eventually transforming completely into the highly productive *hacienda* of the eighteenth century. One major reason behind its early reform was the sheer magnitude of Indian fatalities that resulted from the arrival of unknown diseases. It was a concomitant to Spanish conquest that is often overlooked, for as exploration of the Americas became ever more comprehensive so too did the ferocious impact of alien illness reach epidemic proportions. Confronted with the enormity of Indian mortalities, and thus with the depletion of many Indian settlements and the geographical isolation of those that remained, the Spaniards decided to enact the *reduccion*. This was a process whereby Indians came to be gathered into a larger town, "where conditions favoured the combination of Indian and Spanish patterns of behaviour and belief, thus making possible the development of a new 'Indian' society, which was not traditional but was still essentially indigenous."[63]

Resettling the Indian populace was not always easy. One famous incident recalls how the original Chiapaneco Indians, after putting up months of fierce resistance to the Spanish, eventually found themselves cornered in a sacred site high

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[61] See Leslie Byrd Simpson, *The Encomienda in New Spain*, op.cit., p. 15.

[62] There is reason to believe that this was not necessarily the case throughout New Spain nor the Kingdom of Guatemala, under whose direction Chiapas remained until 1823. See Robert Wasserstrom, *Class and Society in Central Chiapas*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983), p. 12.

[63] Robert G. Keith, 'Encomienda, Hacienda and Corregimiento in Spanish America: A Structural Analysis', *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, (Vol. 51, No. 3, August 1971), p. 439. The official

above the Sumidero canyon. Realising that defeat was imminent, the Indians, women and children included, chose to throw themselves off the canyon's thousand metre precipice rather than submit to the new colonial order.[64] Whilst the *encomienda* no longer held the institutional primacy it had previously, the colonists key concern with the control of Indian labour merely found itself manifest in the form of the *repartimiento*.[65] If an *encomendero* required manual labour he would have to approach the government sanctioned officers who now controlled the distribution of Indian labour. In the past it had at least been possible to pay *encomenderos* tribute with local products grown and harvested by the Indians themselves, under the *repartimiento* however, the *caciques* were obligated under threat of severe sanction to supply labourers even at the times when the agricultural cycle necessitated their presence in the fields. Essentially forced, although at times paid a nominal fee, the indigenous workforce constructed town buildings and private houses, they worked fields, chopped wood, and looked after the colonists livestock. As the obligation to pay tribute to the *encomenderos* was still applicable, the indigenous experience of both the *reduccion* and the *repartimiento* was one of an ever increasing and ever more intrusive disruption of traditional life.

To describe this relationship between the Spaniard and the Indian as oppressive, although not incorrect, would be insufficient. Colonial institutions were never simply methods of exploitation. Urbanising the Indians and employing them in tasks alien to the local indigenous economy always also involved an ancillary project of Hispanicization.[66] The external order of each settlement, with a central square or *zocalo*, dominated on one side by an impressively sized village church, on the other sides by council and official buildings, with side streets tailoring off in a symmetrical

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name for the *reduccion* was the *corregimiento*, which was also backed by a peninsular inspired legislative order.

[64] Antonio Garcia de Leon, *Resistencia y Utopia: Memorial de Agravios y Cronica de Revueltas y Profecias Acaecidas en la Provincia de Chiapas durante los ultimos anos de su Historia*, (Mexico, Ediciones Era, 2nd edition, 1998), p.44. Jan de Vos, *Vivir en Frontera: La Experiencia de los Indios de Chiapas*, (Mexico, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1994), p. 96-98, claims this account is a version passed on via oral tradition which is borne out by his detailed study of the incident in Jan de Vos, *La Batalla del Sumidero. Historia de la rebelion de los chiapanecas, 1532-1534, a traves de testimonios espanoles e indigenas*, (Mexico, Editorial Katun, 1985).

[65] Nelida Bonaccorsi, *El Trabajo Obligatorio Indigena en Chiapas, Siglo XVI*, (Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, 1990) see chapter four, p.49-59.

[66] Some of the best work on the Spanish project of acculturation has been done by Serge Gruzinski. See his, *The Conquest of Mexico: The Incorporation of Indian Societies into the Western World, 16th-18th Centuries*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1993).

manner to produce a town of progressively smaller squares or blocks, represented not only a victory for the Spanish colonists but a lesson for the Indians in the superiority of the Spanish rationale. The obligatory labour that the Indian provided for the construction of these settlements was in-and-of-itself meant to imbue a sense of Hispanic civilization. The involvement in the creation of an external colonial order would, it was believed, instil an equally orderly, and Spanish, internal rationale within the native populace.[67]

Indigenous culture, admired for its textiles and pottery, and little else, would simply have been dismissed by the colonists as inferior and savage, were it not for the vital religious component within the Spanish colonial project. Whilst the secular *conquistadores* restricted themselves to the strategies of brute force, implied threat and sanction, in their (never very) successful attempts to make peninsular peasants out of American Indians, the Catholic clergy in contrast, arrived with a sophisticated array of techniques and methods designed to convert the natives to the one true faith. Apart from the ineffectual preaching of the *doctrinero* of the *encomienda*, the religious fervour and spiritual zeal that manifested itself throughout New Spain was due to the additional presence of the religious orders - Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians and later Jesuits. Armed with a combination of rituals, symbols, structures, doctrine, pedagogical and prosletization techniques, the mendicant orders set about creating what they believed would be "the best Christians in the world".[68]

Conscious of the growing challenges to Christian orthodoxy in Europe, Catholic missionaries viewed the colonies as a unique and historic opportunity to realise the full potential within the Christian liturgy. Initially the Indians were looked upon as the ideal subjects to receive religious instruction and direction. In the eyes of Don Vasco de Quiroga, Bishop of Michoacan, "such a people - so gentle, so new, so unspoiled and so like soft wax - were ready for whatever one might care to make of

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[67] Sidney David Markman, *Architecture and Urbanisation in Colonial Chiapas, Mexico*, (Philadelphia, The American Philosophical Society, 1984) in particular see chapter 6, 'The Religious and Cultural Conversion of the Indians as a determinant of Town Planning and Architecture of Pueblos de Indios', p. 28-37.

[68] Geronimo de Mendieta, *Historia Eclesiastica indiana*, 4 vols. (Mexico, Editorial Chavez Hayhoe, 1945), vol.3, p. 106, quoted in Elsa Celia Frost, 'Indians and Theologians: Sixteenth-Century Spanish Theologians and Their Concept of the Indigenous Soul', in *South and MesoAmerican Spirituality*, op.cit., p. 137.

them."[69] Friar Geronimo de Mendieta went further and even referred to the Indigenous as *genus angelicum* - 'of angelic descent', recording in his chronicles that "the male and female Indians, especially old people and more women than men, who are so simple and have such pure souls that they do not know how to sin; so much so that confessors find themselves more embarrassed with some of them than with other great sinners, searching for some kind of sinful material for which they can give them the benefit of absolution".[70] For friars like Torbio de Benavente Motolinia, a Franciscan, one of the first and largest of the mendicant orders to reach the New World, there was no doubt that the Indians were literally, "those poor and meek people with whom God wants to fill his house".[71]

It did not take very long however before the "innocent, pure and docile" Indian of the initial encounter became transformed into a far more ambiguous and untrustworthy being capable of all manner of evil and deviousness. In an extract from a pastoral letter dated 1698, the Bishop of Chiapas, Don Fray Francisco Nunez de la Vega illustrates the nature of clerical concern,

> *"there are some bad Christians of both sexes whom, bewildered in the darkness of error, have left the true light, and forgetting the solemn promise that they made to God when baptised, ... are not ashamed to return to the school of the Devil that they had previously renounced, occupying themselves in trickery, divinations, witchcraft, curses, charms, spells, and sorcery and other superstitions to gain knowledge of the divine and the future. In all the provinces of New Spain these are the ones they call Nagualistas."* [72]

A *nagual*, approximates la Vega, is like a guardian angel. It can take many forms, it can be a star, an element, a bird, a fish or a wild beast. The role of the *Nagualista* is therefore one of divination, through invoking the Mayan ritual calendar, "these infernal teachers called the wise Indians of the villages,"... "some of whom

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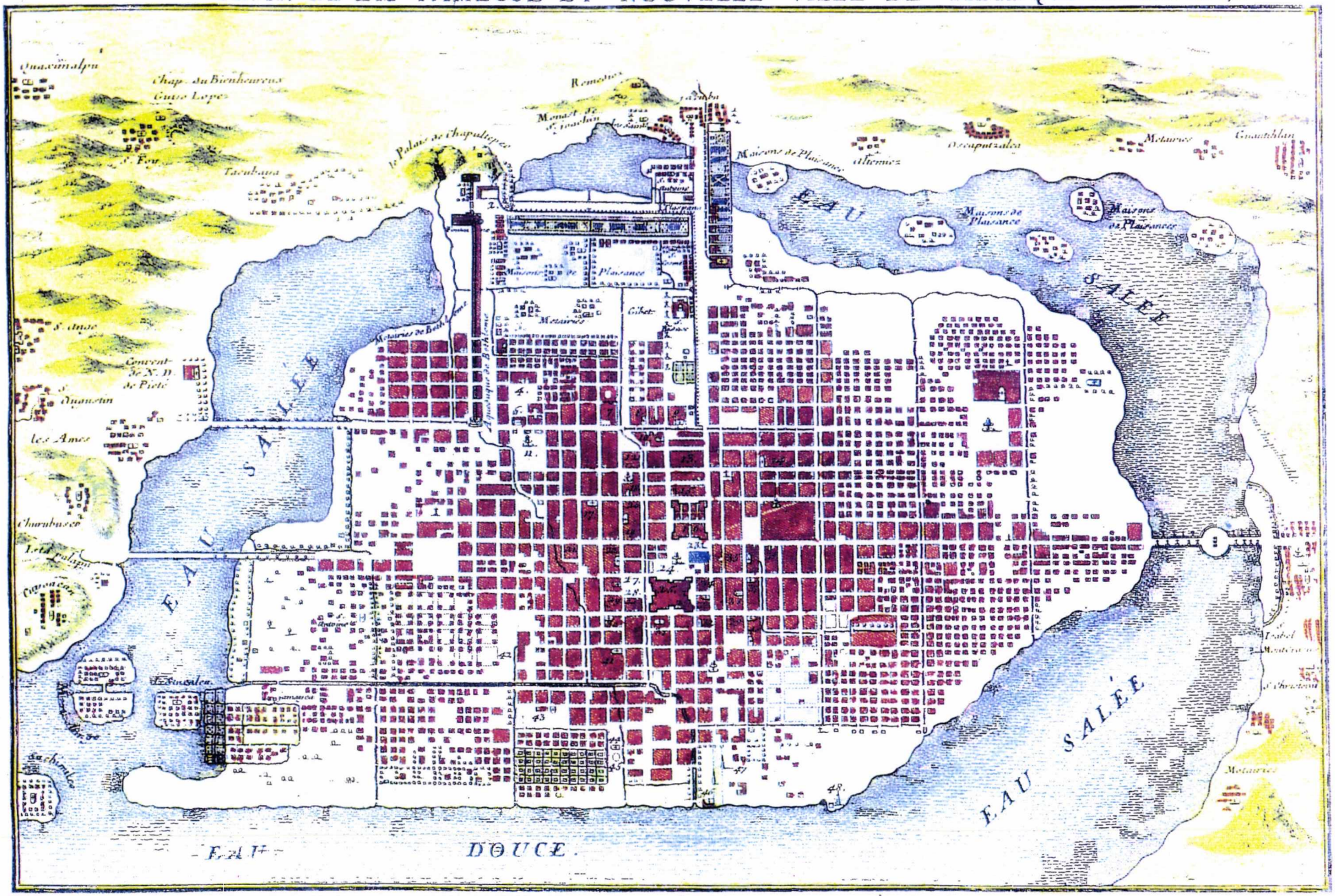
[69] Silvio Zavala, *Sir Thomas More in New Spain: A Utopian Adventure of the Renaissance*, (Cambridge, W. Heffer & Sons Ltd., 1955), p. 17.

[70] Mendieta, p. 106, quoted in Frost, 'Indians and Theologians', op.cit., p.137, also see Phelan, *The Millennial Kingdom*, op.cit.

[71] Torbio de Benavente Motolinia, *Memoriales o libro de las cosas de la Nueva Espana y de los naturales de ella*, edited by Edmundo O'Gorman, (Mexico City, University Nacional Autonoma de Mexico,1971), p. 158, quoted in Frost op.cit., p. 133.

[72] 'Extractos de una Carta Pastoral IX, San Cristobal 1698, por Fr. Francisco Obispo de Chiapa' in Archivo Historico Diocesano, San Cristobal de Las Casas, Chiapas, Junio de 1983, p.8.

# PLAN DE LA FAMEUSE ET NOUVELLE VILLE DE MEXIQUE. *Par N. de Fer 1716.*



without knowing how to read or write," can, from memory, identify the *nagaul* that corresponds to a persons' date of birth.[73]

*Nagualismo*, for more contemporary students of Mayan culture is considered as "the system of practices and magic beliefs that are based upon the concept of the *nagual*".[74] The *nagual* is in this instance described as being "naturally incorporeal or *invisible*, of 'pure air' as the natives say".[75] A *nagual* is thus generally understood as a spirit, that whilst not visible to the human eye is nonetheless capable of not only seeing, but listening, protecting or attacking, depending the case, and its most feared act is its capacity to 'eat' the soul of those who have seriously erred. According to Serna, who wrote circa 1650, the significance of the term *nagual* or *nahual* stems from the Mexica Indian verb *nahualtin* which means to hide oneself, to cover oneself or to disguise oneself.[76] In contrast to Nunez de la Vega's interpretation, not every one can possess a *nagual*, only those who have reached a particular level within a group's political-religious structure, or who have joined those referred to as the elders - *los ancianos*, have the capacity to become 'owners' of such a powerful spirit.[77]

Unlike Bernardino de Sahagun, Nunez has been accused of confusing the concept of a *nagual* with that of the *tona* or *tonalli*. It is the *tona* that is identified according to the date of birth, and following the ritual calendar each person can be ascribed their particular spiritual guardian, what Nunez termed a 'guardian angel'. It is the *tono* that accompanies an individual for the whole of his or her life, and it is to those wise men that understand the ways of time that one goes when there appears to be some disharmony between one's animal spirit or soul and one's human spirit or soul.[78] Whilst belief in the *nagual* and the *tono*, although often described in linguistically differentiated terms, is still widespread throughout Mexico and Guatemala, contemporary manifestations of these belief systems are most often considered to be remnants of the more complex and sophisticated Mayan politico-religious beliefs that permeated Mesoamerican culture from the 1st century AD

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[73] Ibid., p. 8.
[74] Alfonso Villa Rojas, 'El Nagualismo como recurso de control social entre los grupos Mayanses de Chiapas, Mexico,' in *Estudios Etnologias. Los Mayas*, (Mexico, UNAM, 1985), p. 536.
[75] Ibid., p. 536.
[76] Ibid., p. 537.
[77] Ibid., p. 537.
[78] Ibid., p. 537.

onwards.[79] Apart from Sahaguan's account of *tonalismo*, as communicated to him by the Aztecs of the mid sixteenth century, we are also able to consult two sacred Mayan texts of the same period that suggest that Indian beliefs in co-essences and calculable destiny were not only pervasive but profound.

The 16th century *Popol Vuh*, also known as the Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life, "tells the story of the emergence of light in the darkness, from primordial glimmers to brilliant dawns, and from rain-storms as black as night to days so clear the very ends of the earth can be seen."[80] The book itself was, and is, described by the Maya as an *ilb'al*, a 'seeing instrument' or a 'place to see'.[81] Like the *Chilam Balam*, its textual contemporary, which hails from the Yucatan coast of Mexico rather than the Quiche highlands of Guatemala, both texts survived as a consequence of an early process of translation. It was common practice for Franciscan missionaries to educate the young sons of Maya nobles in the European script, as a means not only to assist in the Christianisation of the Indian populace but also to assist in its regulation. The fact that the Maya already possessed a hieroglyphic system of their own was initially admired by the conquering clergy. Soon however, but not before some of their manuscripts had been translated into the European script, (hence the survival of the *Popol Vuh* and the books of *Chilam Balam*), missionary curiosity metamorphisized into inquisitorial zeal. On one particularly tragic occasion, Diego de Landa, afterward Bishop of Yucatan, burned 27 hieroglyphic manuscripts at the now famous *auto de fe* in Mani in 1562. Ralph Roys, anthropologist and translator of the books of Chilam Balam, explains that, "although many Spaniards severly criticized him for this, there is little doubt that other missionaries followed his example whenever they had the opportunity."[82]

Sanchez de Aguilar, writing 70 years after the initial conquest, recalls the content of the destroyed Mayan manuscripts. "In these they painted in colours the count of their years, the wars, epidemics, hurricanes, innundations, famines and other

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[79] There is good reason to think that such ideas can trace their genealogy even further back, possibly even to the Olmecs of 1200B.C. See Gary H. Gossen, 'From Olmecs to Zapatistas: A Once and Future History of Souls', in *American Anthropologist*, (Vol. 96, No. 3, 1994), p. 553-570.

[80] *Popol Vuh: The Mayan Book of the Dawn of Life*, (translated by Dennis Tedlock), (New York, Touchstone, 1996), p.15.

[81] Ibid., p. 21.

[82] *The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel*, translated by Ralph L. Roys, (Washington, Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1933), p. 4.

events."[83] In fact the Mayan obsession with the recording of events and their precise dating has led one contemporary ethno-archaeologist to consider the epithet *chronovision* as a more appropriate description of the Mayan world outlook than the more common anthropological term of cosmovision. Ever since the very first 'modern' explorations, Mayan specialists like Eric Thompson have been led to conclude that "no other people in history has had such an absorbing interest for time as the Maya, and no other culture has ever developed a philosophy embracing such an unusual subject."[84] Miguel Leon-Portilla in his classic account of Mayan culture, *Time and Reality in the Thought of the Maya*, attempts to summarise the ancient Mayan chronovision,

> *"theirs was the desire for knowledge but also a concern for salvation, an attempt to discover the supreme order of things. Thus they conceived their myths, they created symbols, used the zero, invented new systems to adjust and correct their computations. They became worshippers of the primordial reality, omnipresent and limitless. To harmonise with that reality was the most precious aim in life. The wisdom of their priests and sages led them to discover their place on earth, and also to spy on the mysteries of the divine rhythms of the universe."*
> [85]

Maya civilization, as it is most commonly referred to, reached its peak in what is known as the classic period which runs from the 2nd to the 9th centuries AD. During this period, round about the 3rd century, the Maya invented the concept zero, an invention that would not become known in Europe until the 8th century AD, and even then only thanks to the calculative sophistication of Hindustani scholars. It was during the classic period that the Maya constructed the majority of their most impressive large-scale civic-religious centres. The astounding grandeur and architectural confidence that draw hundreds of thousands each year to visit the sacred sights of Chichen Itza, Palenque, Tikal and Coban, now spread between Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras, but once united under the single banner of Maya rule, bear potent testimony to the historical achievements of indigenous culture. Whilst still little understood, the Maya were unable for one reason or another to sustain this level of

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[83] Pedro Sanchez de Aguilar, *Informe contra idolorum cultores del Obispado de Yucatan*, (Madrid, 1639), p. 95, quoted in Roys, ibid., p. 5.
[84] Sir J. Eric S. Thompson, *The Rise and Fall of Maya Civilization*, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1954), p.162.

imperial grandeur, and from the 9th century AD until the arrival of the Spaniards in the early 16th century, Mayan civilization was in decline. Although this post-classic period has been defined by its move away from the large politico-religious centres that have so enchanted foreign academics and tourists alike, the 'collapse of Mayan civilization', as it is sometimes dramatically described, by no means resulted in a disappearance of Mayan culture. The fact that Spanish friars were still discovering Mayan manuscripts, and the 'idolatrous practices' associated with them, as late as the close of the 17th century[86] should alert us to the continued existence of a Mayan culture that whilst no longer capable of the imposing triumphs of the classic period, was certainly a major component in the perpetuation of a Mayan self-understanding whose dogged persistence was exactly the concern of Spanish clerics of the unsavoury character of Bishop Nunez de la Vega.

It was not long therefore before the religious passions excited by the virgin territory of the colonies were doused by ecclesiastical suspicions as to the sincerity of indigenous conversion. Soon the idolatrous practices of the Indians were to be found everywhere. De la Vega's opinion as to the widespread nature of *Nagualismo* was itself widely shared, "there is not one village in which it has not been introduced and their simple souls infected with the contagious pestilence of their diabolic superstition, and they are rare or very few those that have a faith with the purity of true believers, sons of the Church."[87] The Bishop of Chiapas was however, willing to forgive those 'lost sheep' that had 'strayed from the path'. Before one could benefit from the Church's forgiveness though, it was necessary to recognise the sinfulness of one's actions and to repent. The concept of the confessional, which Mendieta had previously found almost redundant in light of the 'angelic' conduct of his own chosen flock, was soon to take on a more overtly instrumental function.

Confession, writes Serge Gruzinski, can become "an instrument for expressing Church-approved forms of individualization and guilt, eroding the traditional ties and interpersonal relations of colonized societies."[88] Through a study of manuals written

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[85] Miguel Leon-Portilla, *Time and Reality in the Thought of the Maya*, 2nd Edition, (Norman & London, University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), p. 112.
[86] See *Chilam Balam*, op.cit., p. 3.
[87] Ibid., p. 10.
[88] Serge Gruzinski, 'Individualization and Acculturation: Confession among Nahaus of Mexico from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century', in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, (ed.) Asuncion Lavria, (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1989), p. 96.

specifically to facilitate the confession of Indians in New Spain, Gruzinski recognises that confession imposes a series of fixed categories upon the indigenous penitents from amongst which they must learn to evaluate their acts and thoughts. "These categories form a system of values that claim to be universal and leave no margin for the most minimal improvisation, since they are supported by written texts and thus protected from the hazards of oral transmission."[89] The confessional, insisted that the Indian,

> *"put aside his surroundings, his social group, the weight of his tradition, and the external forces that used to influence his behaviour, such as the power of god's ire, the incantations of a witch, the envy of a neighbour or a relative, the ill-omened emanations of a sexual deviant or a transgressor of prohibitions." "In other words by centring on the 'subject' - in the Western meaning of the word- the interrogation of the confession breaks down the ancient solidarity and social networks, as well as the physical and supernatural ties."* [90]

Probing in a way that strategies such as the *reduccíon*, with their emphasis on the physical environment, could never have achieved on their own, the process of the confessional created a psychological 'deterritorialization' of the Indian that should be recognised as the most radical break from the traditional indigenous context that Spanish colonialism introduced.

Advancing a conception of selfhood that involved the idea of a free will and a specifically Christian understanding of a soul, the Indian, to be penitent, was instructed to follow the ancient dictum of the Greeks. "It is very necessary first to learn what is inside your soul, which is not what it seems outwardly; know thyself ...the right knowledge is the knowledge of yourself."[91] This exercise of introspection cannot however be conducted without prior memorisation. It was thus vital to first "know and remember all the sins" and then secondly to "put your sins in order".[92] What was fundamental about such psychological operations was that they should produce the

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[89] Ibid., p. 97.

[90] Ibid., p. 98. Also see Juan Pedro Viquiera, 'Matrimonio y sexualidad en los confesionarios en lenguas indigenas', in *Cuicuilco: Revista de la ENAH*, (Mexico, No. 12, January 1984), for an account that considers the colonial attempt to reconstruct the practices of sex and marriage mainly amongst the Indians of the north of Mexico. Also consider Louise M. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahau-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth Century Mexico*, (Tuscon, The University of Arizona Press, 1989), and Maria Cristina Sacristan, *Locura e Inquisicion en Nueva Espana, 1571-1760*, (Mexico, Fondo de Cultura y Economia, 1992).

[91] Alonso de Molina, *Confesionario mayor en lengua mexicana y castellana*, (Mexico City, Antonio de Espinosa, 1569), p. 5-6, quoted in Gruzinski op.cit., p. 98.

[92] Ibid., p. 99.

correct feelings of guilt. Confessors would therefore emphasise to the Indian the necessity "to know thyself as sinner, to cry for your sins", and to "tell your sins with feelings and crying; declare them with an abundance of tears and deep sighs."[93]

Gruzinski better than anyone, summarises the profound nature of acculturation that is intrinsic to the psychological process of the Catholic confessional.

> *"This exercise comprehends the entire course of life, concerning itself with actions as well as 'thoughts, desires, intentions.' It is an attempt to master new categories, to read into past actions through the individualistic filter of the Christian ethic. That is to say, to organise such material according to a concept of "Western" time, perceived as a concatenation of causes and personalised consequences that shape the singular and irreducible trajectory of the biographical self."* [94]

At the conclusion of one Indian confessional, the penitent of Juan de la Anunciacion, succinctly communicates the desired outcome, confiding, "I am not the one I used to be."[95]

**The Indian Soul as a Smoking Mirror**

Although the confessional should certainly be recognised as amongst the most invasive, if not *the* most invasive of Hispanic colonial practices, it was to a very large extent atypical in terms of the degree of subject-observation entailed. The majority of transplanted Catholic rituals neither involved nor permitted anything near a comparable level of clerical interference. Whether as a result of over-confidence, ambivalence or perceived necessity, the indigenous population was often left, after an initial period of instruction, to regulate the style and to some extent the content of religious worship conducted within their own communities. In the highland villages of Chiapas, one

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[93] See Pablo Escalante, 'Sentarse, Guardar la Compostura y Llorar: Entre Los Antiguos Nahuas, El Cuerpo y el Proceso de Civilizacion', in *Familia y Vida Privada en la Historia de IberoAmerica*, (eds.) Pilar Gonzalbo Aizpuru y Cecilia Rebell Romero, (Mexico, El Colegio de Mexico y UNAM, 1996).

[94] Gruzinski, op.cit., p. 99. Gruzinski's work in this area is of course a self-acknowledged extension of the research of Michel Foucault in his *History of Sexuality Vol. 1 The will to knowledge*, (London, 1976). It was Foucault's contention in that book that the practice of confession became a more important practice during the Counter-Reformation in Europe. See p.52-56.

[95] Juan de la Anunciacion, *Doctrina christiana muy cumplida donde se contiene la exposicion de todo lo necesario para doctrinar los indios ...*, (Mexico City, Pedro Balli, 1575), p. 141. Quoted in Gruzinski op.cit., p. 98.

enduring example of the creative cultural and psychic possibilities afforded by a low level of religious monitoring can be witnessed in the unorthodox manner by which the introduction of the Spanish *cofradia* was absorbed.

Perhaps it should have come as no surprise to the ecclesiastical authorities that the adoption of the *cofradia*, or confraternity, as a means of Indian worship, should have been problematic. After all, the *cofradia*, essentially a co-operative association of lay believers whose principal objective is the maintenance and financing of the worship of a patron saint, had been a practice of contention even within the 12th and 13th century European society from whence it hailed. It is arguable however, that any reservations concerning the appropriateness of the brotherhoods for the Indian population were over-ridden by the financial requirements confronted by an economically depressed colonial church at the end of the 16th century.[96] The structure of the confraternities was standard, each village with its appointed patron saint, usually the same as the community's designated Spanish name, i.e. Santa Marta, would have appointed a group of men amongst which the roles of *mayordomo*, *alfrez*, and *fiscal* would be apportioned. After the *alcalde*, the village mayor, the *fiscal* held the most important role in so far as it was he who, in addition to recording the number of masses, baptisms, confessions and weddings conducted by the local parish priest, now also shouldered the responsibility for recording the amounts and regularity of the community's *cofradia* contributions. Whilst the economic aspect of colonial religious practice should not be underplayed, equally it was the opportunity afforded by even this limited degree of religious autonomy, undoubtedly accentuated by the financial pressures associated with it, that gave the celebrations of the village patron saint an increasingly 'indigenous' dimension.

In much the same way as the *cofradias* had previously been criticised in medieval Europe, it did not take long before the colonial administration and high clergy of the Spanish Audencia of Guatemala became openly critical of this particular form of worship. Decried as an extravagance, with overly elaborate processions, that created a carnival atmosphere with excessive drinking and dancing, the *cofradias*' inclusion of flags, standards and rituals whose origins were unknown, soon resulted in

[96] This is in fact the approach of Murdo J. MacLeod, see his 'Papel Social y Economica de las Cofradias Indigenas de la Colonia en Chiapas', in *Mesoamerica*, (Vol. 5, 1983).

the rearticulation of the never fully silenced charge of idolatry.[97] During a period when the competition for the control of Indian tribute and labour was intense, the discourse of idolatry had a double function whereby it not only suggested the need for even greater religious supervision and instruction, but in doing so, it also reinforced the local Dominican friars' position of power and further fortified their already considerable claim to Crown support.[98] Whilst the diversions from accepted Catholic practice remained limited, or rather, as long as the cost of their disruption was considered disproportionate to the financial gain associated with their continuance, the religious and cultural space presented by the *cofradia* celebrations greatly contributed to the creation of what Murdo MacLeod has called "Catholicisms' of the people".[99] Soon however, this limited taste for the autonomy, and exclusiveness, of Christian worship was to become total.

Presaged by the preaching of a *ladino* (white) hermit, exhorting the Indians to recognise an image of the Virgin which was giving off rays of light near Zinacantan, closely followed by the appearance of the Virgin to a woman in the village of Santa Marta, and later by the 'miraculous' sweating and illumination of the patron saints of Chenalho, all of which were dismissed as hoaxes or further examples of *nagualismo* by the colonial authorities, the appearance of the Blessed Virgin[100] to a young Indian woman in May 1712 in Cancuc, heralded the start of the largest co-ordinated Indian resistance to colonial rule that Chiapas has ever witnessed.[101]

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[97] Ibid., p. 69-70.

[98] For an elaboration on this insight see Robert Wasserstrom, 'Spaniards and Indians in Colonial Chiapas, 1528-1790, in *Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica: Essays on the History of Ethnic Relations*, (eds.) Murdo J. MacLeod & Wasserstrom, (Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1983), p. 106.

[99] See Wasserstrom ibid., and MacLeod, op.cit., p. 71.

[100] On the role of the Virgin in Mexico see Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Quadelupe: the formation of Mexican National Consciousness*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1976). In general see Michael P. Carroll, *The Cult of Virgin Mary: Psychological Origins*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1992), Marina Warner, *Alone of all of all her sex: The myth and the cult of the Virgin Mary*, (London, Picador, 1985), and Eamon Duffy, *Madonnas that Maim? Christianity and the Cult of the Virgin*, (Glasgow, Blackfriars, 1999).

[101] There is now an impressive literature available on the Tzeltal rebellion of 1712. See Juan Pedro Viqueira, *Maria de la Candelaria, india natural de Cancuc*, (Mexico, FCE, 1993), Kevin Gosner, *Soldiers of the Virgin: The Moral Economy of a Colonial Maya Rebellion*, (Tuscon, University of Arizona Press, 1992) and Victoria Bricker, *The Indian Christ, The Indian King*, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981), and for an account of how these events are still recalled in contemporary Mayan Indian oral history see Domingo Gomez Gutierrez, *Letras Mayas Contemporaneos*, (Mexico, INI, 1992). Of course whilst the 1712 revolt was the largest organised Indian resistance of the colonial period, in modern and contemporary Mexican history, there can be little doubt that the current and ongoing Zapatista rebellion emanating from Chiapas represents incontrovertible proof that Indian/government

Maria de la Candelaria, as she soon became known, was only thirteen or fourteen years old when the Virgin appeared to her in the form of a 'very beautiful and very white lady'. The heavenly apparition spoke to the young girl, and, as in previous instances, asked that a Cross and a candle be placed in the hamlet near where she appeared, telling Maria that they should first cense it, and afterwards build a chapel on the same site so that she [the Virgin] could live amongst the Indians. Sometime later, the local parish priest Fray Simon de Lara, was informed of the incident. Incensed by the 'dangerous' and 'diabolic inventions' being promoted by the young woman, Father Lara immediately removed the Cross from the now sacred location, and had Maria, her father and another Indian woman whipped for their blasphemous tales. His exemplary castigations were to no avail however, and as soon as he left the village, to which he would not be permitted to return, the Indians set about constructing the chapel exactly as divinely requested. On completion, and as later recounted to the Spanish judiciary by a young Indian villager,

> *"Maria Lopez [de la Candelaria] entered the chapel accompanied by the other Indian woman called Magdelena Diaz with a bundle covered with their clothing and put it behind the [hanging] mat; and they announced that Our Lady had been placed there, that she had appeared to them; and then the whole town entered the Chapel and worshipped [before] the mat counting the Rosary and crossing themselves .... and having proclaimed the miracle in the towns of the province, their inhabitants came to this [town], some carrying pine needles, others candles, and others alms that they gave to that Indian girl Maria Lopez, who before all the collected villagers declared, 'Believe me and follow me, because now there is no tribute, nor King, nor Bishop, nor village Mayor, and now you need do no more than follow and believe this Virgin that I have behind the mat'."* [102]

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relations still fall tragically short of the modern democratic ideal of mutual respect. The historical link between the two movements was first raised by the publication of a short article by the highly respected Mexican historian Enrique Florescano in the Mexico City daily, *La Jornada* during the first weeks of the Zapatista uprising, January 1994. See the Kevin Gosner, 'Historical Perspectives on Maya Resistence: The Tzeltal Revolt of 1712', in *Indigenous Revolts in Chiapas & the Andean Highlands*, (eds.) Kevin Gosner & Arij Ouweneel, (Amsterdam, CEDLA, 1996), p. 28, for details. In addition, for an interesting and suggestive linkage of contemporary oral history to the current Zapatista conflict see Carlos Montemayor, *Chiapas: La Rebellion Indigena de Mexico*, (Mexico, Editorial Joaquin Mortiz, 1997), Chapter 6.

[102] Declaracion de Juan Perez, indio de Cancuc de 18 anos. Cancuc, 28 de noviembre 1712, quoted in Juan Pedro Viqueira, *Indios rebeldes e idolatras: Dos ensayos historicos sobre la rebelion india de*

The Virgin cult of Cancuc might well have amounted to little more than a minor lapse in colonial order were it not for the arrival of an Indian from Chenalho who introduced himself as Sebastian Gomez de la Gloria. Gomez, complete with an image of St. Peter, told the people of Cancuc that he had gone to Heaven, where he had spoken with the Holy Trinity, the Virgin Mary, Jesus Christ, and the Apostle St. Peter, who had given him the authority to appoint literate Indians to serve as priests in all the towns of the province.[103] Furthermore, he had been advised that "there was no longer King, tributes, *alcalde mayor*, nor officials of Ciudad Real [now San Cristobal] because they had come to free them from all this; and that there was no longer Bishop nor priest because all this was now ended; and that they should now enjoy their ancient liberty; and that they should have only *vicarios* [vicars] and parish priests of their own who would administer all sacraments."[104]

Not only was the peculiar nature of Gomez's story embraced as further proof of the divine legitimation of the Virgin cult, but in addition, it was his intimate knowledge of the structure and practice of the Spanish colonial Church that provided the movement with a novel yet familiar means with which to organise and sustain an already heightened climate of indigenous resistance. Soon the majority of villages in the highland districts of Chiapas received the following summons,

> *"Jesus, Mary and Joseph - Honourable alcaldes of ... (such and such a town) - I, the Virgin, who has descended to this sinful world call you in the name of Our Lady of the Rosary and order you to come to this town of Cancuc and to bring with you all the silver of your churches, and the ornaments and bells, with all the coffers and drums and all the cofradia books and funds because there is no longer God, nor King, and thus come at once, because otherwise you will be punished if you do not respond to my summons and God's, Ciudad Real of Cancuc. - The Blessed Virgin Maria de la Cruz."* [105]

In the end some thirty two villages responded, or were forced to respond[106], and although the result was what some have referred to as the creation of a 'Tzeltal Republic', there were in fact a near equal number of Tzotzil and Chol Indian villages

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*Cancuc, Chiapas, acaecida en el ano de 1712*, (Mexico, Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropologia Social, 1997), p. 96.

[103] Bricker, op.cit., p. 60.

[104] Ibid., p. 60.

[105] Ibid., p. 60.

involved in the rebellion.[107] In a revealing display of symbolic and rhetorical appropriation, the rebel centre of Cancuc was renamed *Ciudad Real Cancuc de Nueva Espana*, Hueytiupan became *Guatemala*, the Spaniards themselves were denigrated as 'Jews' and the real Ciudad Real ('Royal City'- now San Cristobal) became 'Jerusalem'.[108] The rebel Indian forces also adopted a consciously Spanish model of military organisation; with ranks of *capitan generales* (captains general), *capitanes* (captains), *sargentos* (sergeants), *cabos* (corporals) and *soldados* (soldiers), who, in their own words, considered themselves to be "soldiers of the Virgin".[109] This reversal of the colonial nomenclature took on a more chilling aspect when, after the first attack on a Spanish settlement, and after disposing of all the non-Indian adult males, the captured women and children were taken to Cancuc where they were called 'Indians' and compelled to serve the native authorities as domestics.[110] However, it was the ordination of an indigenous clergy, including priests, vicars and bishops, their plans to crown an Indian King[111], and ultimately their mimicry and promotion of an indigenised version of a Spanish theocracy that bears most potent testimony to a more deep-seated and persistent Indian desire to maintain an active role between the realms of the supernatural and the temporal, whose recent Spanish colonisation provoked such an unusual form of violent contestation.[112]

Although the rebellion was eventually suppressed after some four months of fighting, the memory of its occurrence remained strong in the minds of colonists and their historical successors. Nevertheless, rather than succeeding in a reassessment of the nature of colonial conduct, the longest lasting effect of the Cancuc rebellion has been to embed a suspicion that the Indian mind and soul might not be so transparent as once imagined, a preoccupation that even today strikes fear into the hearts of the non-Indian population of contemporary Chiapas.

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[106] See Gosner, 'Historical Perspectives', op.cit., p. 37-38, on the nature of Indian coercion.
[107] See Viquiera, 'Dos Ensayos', op.cit., p. 97, and Bricker, op.cit., p. 61.
[108] Gosner, op.cit., p. 38.
[109] Quoted in Bricker, op.cit., p. 63.
[110] Wasserstrom, 'Spaniards and Indians', op.cit., p. 112.
[111] Ibid., p. 114.
[112] Perhaps such a choice is not so unusual. In this regard we might do well to consider the work of anthropologist Michael Taussig, *Mimesis and Alterity*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1992), and *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1987).

## Conclusions

So who, or what, in fact was the colonial Indian? This chapter hopes to have at least outlined some of the contours of a colonial Indian subjectivity. It has shown that at various moments, and often simultaneously, the Indian has been understood as a monster, a noble savage, a natural slave, the possessor of a rational soul, a tribute payer, the best Christian in the world, a *nagualista*, an idolater, and finally a rebel. The question of identity thus becomes a far more difficult question to answer, in fact it is hoped that at every moment when *the* Indian has been defined in this chapter, it has been an instance more revealing of the different matrixes of power within which the colonised Indian subject found him, or herself, enmeshed, than any 'true' moment of identity *per se*. This attempt to locate the Indian subject within the maps of the colonial mind has thus been an attempt to uncover the relationship between colonial identifications and colonial practice. It has been an endeavour to show that the idea of a Spanish colonial oppressor, and equally, a completely defeated Indian colonial subject, is not only insufficient as a description of the colonial encounter but that it is also concealing of the more slippery element that lies at the heart of any human subjectivity: freedom.[113]

To suggest that the colonial Indian subject was essentially free might sound peculiar, even ridiculous. However, only if we insist on an understanding of freedom that is entirely untrammelled by circumstance, that reifies the freedom to act over and above the freedom to think, and fails to interrogate the unpredictable relationship between the two, shall we wish to deny that the colonial Indian subject was free in some sense. Freedom on this understanding is therefore a relationship enmeshed within both society, culture and the self. As such it is inevitably a deeply contextualised relationship both personnel and public to such an extent that it is highly questionable as to whether or not it can even be usefully articulated outside of the concrete parameters from within which it draws content. It is for this reason that the question of Indian

[113] This understanding of subjectivity and the 'human' is clearly derivative from Michel Foucault and his inheritors. See Michel Foucault, 'The Ethics of Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom', in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, (ed.) Paul Rabinow, trans. R. Hurley, (New York, The Free Press, 1997), and Nikolas Rose, 'Towards a Critical Sociology of Freedom', Inaugural Lecture delivered on 5 May 1992 at Goldsmiths College, (University of London, Goldsmiths College, 1993) and his, 'Authority and the Genealogy of Subjectivity' in *De-Traditionalization: Authority and Self in an Age of Cultural Change*, (eds.) P. Healas, P. Morris & S. Lash, (Oxford, Blackwell, 1996).

subjectivity has been approached historically, for in doing so it hopefully becomes possible to at least discern the socio-cultural limits imposed upon the Indian subject. A historical narrative that attempts to describe this nexus of power whilst never being totally transparent nonetheless affords us the opportunity to consider the limits of freedom inscribed upon the Indian subject, and to question the nature, the rationale, and the subsequent ethics that such a peculiarly circumscribed freedom provokes.

Anthropologists, for their own disciplinary reasons, have often wished to impose a fixed definition on the nature of Indian subjectivity as it was at the end of the colonial period and even as it is now. Most commonly this has been referred to as a case of religious syncretism.[114] The Indian on these analyses created a new culture, a meaning system or as it is most often referred, a 'cosmology', out of the encounter between the 'traditional' Maya culture and the conquering Hispanic culture, that was a merging or meshing of the two.[115] Whilst this type of analysis is not particularly wrong it nevertheless remains particularly facile. To say that the Indians adopted some aspects of Spanish culture and rejected others, maintained some pre-Hispanic beliefs and lost others, is in fact not to say a great deal. Whatsmore, in concluding that the end result of the colonial encounter was the creation of a syncretic indigenous culture, many anthropologists side-step the more demanding and interesting questions of how such syncretisms came about. Failing to tackle difficult questions like: in whose name or upon whose authority were culture, village life and individual relations with the self and others legitimised, or, at minimum, made possible? In fact to be satisfied with the description 'religious syncretism' is to de-politicise and de-contextualise the complex

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[114] The classic article is William Masden, 'Religious Syncretism', in *History of Middle American Indians*, Vol. 6, p. 369-391, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1967).

[115] The available literature, is considerable, however a representative cross-section might include David G. Scotchmer, 'Convergence of the Gods: Comparing Traditional Maya and Christian Maya Cosmologies' in *Symbol and Meaning Beyond the Closed Community: Essays in MesoAmerican Ideas*, (ed.) Gary H. Gossen, (New York, University at Albany, Institute for MesoAmerican Studies, 1986), p. 197-226, Munro. S. Edmonson, 'The Maya Faith', and Eugenio Maurer Avalos, 'The Tzeltal Maya-Christian Synthesis', both in *South and Meso-American Native Spirituality: From the cult of the feathered serpent to the theology of liberation*, (ed.) Gary. H. Gossen in collaboration with Miguel Leon-Portillo, (New York, Crossroad Publishing Company, 1993), p. 65-85; John M. Watanabe, 'In the World of the Sun: A Cognitive Model of Mayan Cosmology', in *Man*, (Vol. 18), p.710-28. A useful overview can be found in Appendix B, of Miguel Leon-Portillo's *Time and Reality in the thought of the Maya*, 2nd edition, op.cit. Also to give some idea of the sheer volume of work constantly being produced on the Maya consider the research essays in the *Latin American Research Review*, especially Barbara Tedlock, 'Mayans and Mayan Studies from 2000 B.C to A.D. 1992', (1993).

power relations, both Indian and non-Indian, that infused the creation of 'new' indigenous identities.[116]

Whilst Chiapas is currently home to some 9 different Indian ethnic groups and the category Maya itself refers to a further 17 different ethnic groups spread throughout southern Mexico, Guatemala, Belize and Honduras[117], we might even wonder what purpose such a broadly encompassing term like 'Indian' and (or in this case) 'Maya Indian' performs. The purpose is of course political, both within the disciplines of anthropology, Maya studies and history[118], and within the practices, rationales, and mindsets of those who govern the Maya Indians of colonial and modern day Mexico. As we will later see the two realms are by no means distinct and the politics of representation should never be considered confined to the domain of public policy solely. To speak and write of the Indian is therefore to engage in this politics of representation, and thus to involve oneself in the intercultural, inter-subjective and international relations of the political subject. This thesis thus hopes to intervene in the most contemporary and violent manifestation of the politics of identity, as raised by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) and their continued contestation of the latest modern Mexican governmentality. But before doing so it must first ask the difficult question as to in what exactly does modernity consist? And in particular, in what way has a Mexican modernity made itself felt upon the limited freedom of the Indian subject?

This chapter hopes to have made some initial steps towards answering such questions. It hopes to have demonstrated that: (1) Europe and the Spanish colonies had different modernist historical trajectories. (2) That European modernity has within its own dynamic humanist traditions worth recovering and which in some way are indebted to the discovery of the American Indian 'other'. (3) That the Indians experienced the govern-mentality of an ailing [counter-reformation] Spanish

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[116] There are of course exceptions to these criticisms, authors to whose pioneering work I am greatly indebted, and not surprisingly they are generally scholars who have adopted a historical approach to the study of Indian life. See Murdo McLeod, Jan de Vos, Jan Rus, Juan Pedro Viquiera and Robert Wasserstrom. An excellent collection of just such work can be found in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de otra Historia*, (eds.) Juan Pedro Viquiera & Mario Humberto Ruz, (Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, 1998).

[117] For both a broad geographic, demographic and anthropological overview see *Los Mayas: La pasion por los antepasados, el deseo de perdurar*, (eds.) Alain Breton & Jaques Arnauld, (Mexico, Editorial Grijalbo, 1994).

[118] This theme will be returned to in more detail in Chapter 4.

medievalism rather than a modern European governmentality, and that this can best be understood not simply by the specific medieval genealogy of colonial economic and religious practice, but by a particular relationship with the transcendental, that if not classically medieval was certainly pre-modern. In fact it is probably important to remind the reader that the Spanish never completely dismissed the Indians' beliefs as primitive or ineffectual. Throughout the colonial period it has been shown that the colonists took the Indian capacity to commune with the transcendental very seriously, even whilst viewing such practices as demonic and idolatrous, rather than merely those of another, alternative religious and spiritual culture, the existence and power of the supernatural was never itself doubted.[119] (4) Finally, the chapter hopes to have shown that the colonial Indian as a subject of study, neither presented a *tabula rasa* awaiting colonial inscription nor a cultural entity pre-determined by 'traditional' pre-Hispanic practice. Rather, the Indian soul, so precious to clerical desire, seems to be that very intangible absence upon which the various historical masks of Indian identity have come to be placed. Whilst ambiguous until the end, it has only been when caught in the powerful nexus of discourse and authority that Indian identity has ever been fixed. And as long as the Christian dynamic was part of Spanish rule, the unpredictable nature of the colonial encounter, probably best understood as a process of mimesis and alterity, at least allowed for the conscious acknowledgement of the spiritual realm as something active and pertinent to the government of the temporal. However, as we shall soon see, it was an understanding fast declining as the new modernist visions of a post-colonial government began to impose themselves on a less than malleable Mexican Indian subject.

[119] See Viquiera, *Dos Ensayos*, op.cit., p. 137-140.

# *Chapter Two*

# Enlightenment Legacies: Colonial Reform, Independence and the Invisible Indian of the Liberal State.

> "How shall we judge, then, from these miserable remains of a powerful people, of the degree of cultivation to which it had risen from the twelfth to the sixteenth century and of the intellectual development of which it is susceptible? If all that remained of the French or German nation were a few poor agriculturists, could we read in their features that they belonged to nations which had produced a Descartes and Clairaut, a Kepler and a Leibnitz?"[1]

With these words, written in 1808, some three hundred years after the initial discovery, the famous scientific explorer Alexander von Humboldt conveys the profound sense of loss and mortification that his encounter with the American Indian provoked. Although dedicated, like Columbus before him, to his Catholic Majesty of mainland Spain, his *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain* makes no secret for the reason behind the native populations current condition of degradation. Attributing blame directly to the 'European ferocity' and 'Christian fanaticism' that characterised much of early colonial rule, Humboldt's humane recognition of the Indian plight must nevertheless be recognised as more correctly reflective of the significant transformations in European intellectual life, than revealing of any 'true' arrival at an understanding of the colonial Indian predicament *per se*. As revealed in the quote above, his rhetorical references to 'intellectual development', Descartes, Kepler and other Enlightenment luminaries, epitomise the early modern European gaze with which Humboldt, one of Europe's greatest scientific minds, came to re-discover the elusive marvels of a once more, new world.[2]

Landing first at Cumana, on the 16th of July 1799, Humboldt and his erstwhile companion, French botanist Aime Bonpland, began what was to be a five year scientific adventure that would take them through Venezuela, Ecuador, Cuba, Columbia, Peru and Mexico. Looking today at the multi-volumed product of their research one cannot fail to be impressed by the painstaking descriptions and delicate

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[1] Alexander von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, based on the original four-volume translation by John Black in 1811, (New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), p. 53-54.

[2] For a useful analysis on Humboldt's contribution to modern scientific thought, see Margaret Bowen, *Empiricism and Geographical Thought: From Francis Bacon to Alexander von Humboldt*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981).

illustrations of the thousands of exotic flora and fauna that the two men took such care to record. Neither can one dismiss that this was an at times arduous and perilous journey, one that saw the adventurers flee pirates, brave the snake, alligator and mosquito infested rivers of the Orinoco, scale the heights of Chimborazo, at 6310m, then thought to be the highest peak in the world, whilst all the time being engaged in the meticulous measurement, mapping and classification of the foreign environment that surrounded them. Their motivation however was unique. Even after three centuries of conquest, both Humboldt and Bonpland understood that they would be the first to objectively *know* the true nature of America. They were after all the self-conscious ambassadors of a European Enlightenment, that in its thirst for knowledge had literally begun to re-map the contours of the known universe.

Like Columbus before him, except this time armed with an impressive array of some 36 scientific instruments, including; eudomitors, hygrometers, barometers, chronometers, inclinometers, sextants, quadrants, achromatic and reflective telescopes, a cyanometer and a Ramsden graphometer, Humboldt set about making his new world fit with the knowledge he had already embraced from the old.[3] Emboldened this time with the certitude of scientific method, like his Renaissance predecessor Humboldt also confronted the strange and made it familiar; unknown flowers and plants were forced into classical botanical and biological categories, peculiar rock formations were likened to those in native Prussia, even the altitude and air pressure were understood through comparison with data from his previous European expeditions.[4] With these novel scientific acts of naming and recording, Humboldt took what Anthony Pagden has called 'cognitive possession' of his surroundings. His charting of isotherms and isolines allowing him to 'dissolve in the imagination' the huge physical and cultural distances that lay between him and his enlightened Europe.[5] Whereas before the world had once been expanded by the discoveries of the inspired navigator, now the planet could be shrunk thanks to the detailed study of the scientist and his microscope.

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[3] As we are currently in the 200th anniversary year of Humboldt it is possible to see many of these instruments on display in a touring exhibition on Alexander von Humboldt, which began in Mexico, then Cuba and currently is showing in Germany.

[4] Incredibly detailed diagrams and cross sections of volcanoes and land formations can be found in Alexander von Humboldt, *Examen critique de l'histoire de la geographie du nouveau continent*, (1813). For the delicate life studies of plants, flowers and animals see the illustrative folios of the multi-volumed collection, *Atlas geographique et physique des regions equinoxiales du nouveau continent*, (Paris, Libraire de Gide, 1814-1834).

Viewed by many as an early predecessor to our current understanding of the world as an ecosystem, it was Humboldt's singular drive to achieve total scientific comprehension that spurred on his American expedition. In the words of one commentator, "he went because the entire world must be made to yield up its common laws, and Spanish America had not been adequately studied toward that end; it was part of the 'Globe as a great whole' whose relationship to the rest was unknown, and which might give new insight into the laws of the universe."[6] Nowhere can Humboldt's belief in such universal laws be more clearly witnessed than in his unfinished project, *Kosmos*. An undertaking that he himself described as that 'mad fancy', *Kosmos* sought no less than to represent "in a single work the whole material world".[7] However, as systematic and focused as his lifetime quest for knowledge might now appear, Humboldt was no cold rationalist. As a contemporary and friend of both Goethe and Schiller, Humboldt was deeply influenced by the harmonious and sublime understanding of nature characteristic of early German Romanticism, and it is to this aspect of his intellectual formation that we must look in order to better comprehend his approach to the American Indian.[8]

Perhaps best demonstrated by the frontispiece to his 1814 *Atlas geographique et physique du Nouveau Continent*, Humboldt's romantic empathy with the American native contributed to an already well established European tradition of the noble savage.[9] The illustration, in which a fallen Aztec warrior, surrounded by the toppled gods and destroyed ruins of the once great Tenochitilan, is seen being helped up by the twin figures of Greece and Rome, represented by Minerva and Mercury, vividly captures the neo-classical values to which Humboldt subscribed. So as not to leave the reader in any doubt, below this picture he also placed the caption, 'HUMANITAS, LITERAE, FRUGES', - 'the Liberal Arts, Science and Agriculture'. With these three

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[5] Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism*, (New Haven & London, Yale University Press, 1993), p. 108.

[6] Mary Maples Dunn, from the introduction to Alexander von Humboldt, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, ibid., p. 6.

[7] Quoted in Pagden, *European Encounters*, op.cit., p. 106.

[8] For a detailed account of Humboldt's life see Hanno Beck, *Alexander von Humboldt*, (Mexico, 1971).

[9] A rare, but partially incomplete, original edition of Alexander von Humboldt's *Atlas geographique et physique des regions equinoxiales du nouveau continent*, (Paris, Libraire de Gide, 1814-1834) can be seen in the Glasgow University special collections unit, Glasgow University, Scotland. On this topic see also Hayden White, 'The Noble Savage: Theme as Fetish', in *First Images of America: The Impact of the New World on the Old*, Vol. 1, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1976), p. 121-135.

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words Humboldt answered his own rhetorical question as to how Indian culture could best be judged. Showing, in his opinion, little evidence of these basic tenets of civilisation, Humboldt paid scant attention to the living Indians that surrounded him, instead preferring to investigate the now mythical achievements of the fallen Aztec past.[10]

Nonetheless, whilst limited in ethnographic detail, Humboldt's published volumes on Mexico remain obligatory reading for their startlingly modern style of analysis. Purposefully contrasted with the mainly historical theses previously published on America, Humboldt's, *Political Essay on the Kingdom of New Spain*, was written in a style revealing of the new relationship between Western science and government. Guided by the Enlightenment benchmarks of utility and progress, Humboldt's essay provides not only an accurate map of the kingdom, but detailed statistical data on population, health, manufacturing, commerce, agriculture, Crown revenue and mining. Viewing New Spain as a working-whole, and in a manner not at all dissimilar to contemporary World Bank country reports on Mexico, Humboldt was able to make science based assessments on the progress and efficiency of the Spanish colony both unthought of, and unavailable, to his intellectual precursors. Although Humboldt himself should in this regard be recognised as a unique individual representative of both a European culture and its novel modern means of encounter with America, his personal contribution was only possible with the sanction and assistance of the Hispanic colonial authorities, a body that as we shall soon see, had already undergone what some refer to as a 'revolution in government'.

**Enlightened Despotism**

Whilst the seeds of a European modernity first began to flourish within the historically novel environment of artistic, textual and scientific experimentation that characterise the Italian Renaissance, it is generally agreed that it was not until the advent of the Enlightenment that the European states began to undergo institutional and governmental transformations that laid the societal and practical foundations of that paradoxical entity that we now call the modern European nation-state. Although

[10] This approach is best exemplified in Alexander von Humboldt, *Vues des Cordilleres et monuments des peuples indigenes de l'Amerique*, (Paris, 1810).

the 17th century may well boast the 1648 treaty of Westphalia, an undeniably pivotal moment in the creation of a Europe of 'nations', the consequence and logic of this agreement centred on the institutional resolution of Reformation religious differences. Seeking to provide sovereign boundaries within which the vexed question of religion would at last remain contained, Westphalia renegotiated the relationship between church and state finding in favour of a European peace temporarily provided by a seemingly transcendent international judicial process. For many International Relations scholars Westphalia marks *the* foundational moment of a modern international state 'system'.

Irrespective of the dubious nature of any such historical assertion to an 'international system' or 'society', the principle focus of this thesis is the Mexican Indian, and as such it is with some confidence that we can say that the Westphalian moment had little direct effect on the Mexican experience of modernity with which we are concerned. The influence of the Enlightenment, however, was significant. With the accession of Louis XIV's grandson to the Spanish throne in 1700, the Spanish peninsula and her colonies began to experience a transformation in the style of governance that was to be a harbinger of more radical change. Throughout the 18th century, beginning with Felipe V and then continued by his sons, Fernando VI and Carlos III, the Bourbon dynasty introduced a programme of reform often described as a period of 'enlightened despotism'.

Although on first reading such a description may appear to be something of a contradiction in terms, the political reality to which it applies was in fact just such an unusual conjunction of intellectual desire with royal necessity. On the one hand, during the early stages of the 18th century, the authority of the King was still seen by most as indispensable to the realisation of an enlightened new world. "What was essential", writes Georges Lefebvre, "was that the despot listen to the physiocrats and philosophes, that he follow the natural laws they had discovered, that he accept the rationalist conclusions they had formulated - in short, that despotism became *enlightened.*"[11] On the other hand, as monarchs throughout Europe became increasingly absolutist in reign, in large part to curb the internal conflicts provoked by the Reformation, the royal courts came increasingly to be populated by non-religious

[11] Georges Lefebvre, 'Enlightened Despotism', in *The Development of the Modern State*, (ed.) Heinz Lubasz, (London, Macmillan, 1964), p. 52

advisors. What propelled such advice to the realm of practice however, was the vital imperative for fiscal reform, "which may be expressed very simply as the inadequacy of traditional sources of revenue to meet the staggering costs of 'modern' warfare in the eighteenth century."[12]

The Spanish empire which Felipe V inherited at the beginning of the 18th century was very much an entity labouring under a financial burden. So much so, that most historians refer to 17th century Spain as a period of depression, a result of the costly wars and internal rebellions undertaken by the Hapsburg dynasty. After the royal splendour of the 16th century, usually considered as Spain's 'golden age', the 17th can be regarded as a "text book example of Imperial over extension".[13] Within this context, it is perhaps not surprising that the advice of the physiocrats, considered the founders of modern political economy, and of major influence on the work of Adam Smith, should find a receptive audience among the Bourbons.[14] In combination with the philosophe commitment to science as the proper tool to redefine the laws of society, the predominantly secular nature of Bourbon reform should therefore be seen as broadly in-keeping with the European wide influence of the Enlightenment on royal governance.

In particular however, and for the first time, we find that the nature of governance undergoes a transformation, resulting in the equation of good government with that of 'economic government'. Michel Foucault explains the significance of this transformation,

> *"to govern a state will therefore mean to apply economy, to set up an economy at the level of the entire state, which means exercising towards its inhabitants, and the wealth and behaviour of each and all, a form of surveillance*

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[12] John G. Gagliardo, *Enlightened Despotism*, (London, Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), p. 87

[13] Bruce D. Porter, *War and the Rise of the State: The Military Foundations of Modern Politics*, (New York, The Free Press, 1994), p. 20 -25.

[14] On the physiocrats see Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, *The Origins of Physiocracy: Economic Revolution and Social Order in 18th Century France*, (Ithaca & London, Cornell University Press, 1976), on their influence on the thinking of Adam Smith, see Andrew S. Skinner, 'Adam Smith: The French Connection', (Glasgow, University of Glasgow, Discussion Papers in Economics, No. 9703) and on their pivotal role in the creation of modern economics, see *A History of Economic Doctrines: From the time of the Physiocrats to the present day*, (eds.) Charles Gide & Charles Rist, (trans.) R. Richards, (London, George G. Harap & Co., 1915, 7nth Ed. 1950), p. 21-68.

*and control as attentive as that of the head of a family over his household and his goods."* [15]

To this end the Bourbon reign is defined by its administrative priorities rather than its judicialist principles. It thus marks a clear divide with Hapsburg Spain in its practices of centralization, uniformity and distinctive 'governmentality'.[16]

Whilst in the Spanish peninsula itself such new policies were both created and introduced by a new breed of government ministers and royal bureaucrats, spearheaded by the likes of Campomanes and Floridablanca, the process of governmental transformation within the American colonies rested principally on the shoulders of one man, Jose de Galvez. Although spared the obstacle of aristocratic privilege, unlike his peninsular counterparts, Galvez confronted an administrative structure far more deeply entrenched in a *modus operandi* resistant to change than anything encountered on the mainland. Often referred to as the Hapsburg consensus, for centuries colonial bureaucrats had adopted a 'flexible' approach to reform and policy changes emanating from the metropolitan centre that they viewed as disruptive to the colonial status quo. Encapsulated in the much employed bureaucratic expression, "*obedzco pero no cumplo*" - 'I obey but do not execute', previous attempts at centralization and uniformity had inevitably found themselves reduced to the dictate and whim of a long established hierarchy of influence and vested interest.[17] In an attempt to break such local intransigence and ensure reform, Galvez himself embarked upon a visitation to New Spain that lasted some six years.[18]

Predictably enough Galvez was not well received. Ignoring Viceroy Bucareli's advice not to tinker with the delicate balance of local power elites, he set about undoing the twin strands of lay and ecclesiastical privilege that operated throughout the colony. Although long since settled in the unique manner of a colonial accommodation, the moral dispute between friar and *encomendero* once so symptomatic of 16th century colonial rule, now found itself displaced by a singular bureaucratic force that sought to

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[15] Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (eds.) G. Burchill, C. Gordon & P. Miller, trans. R. Braidotti, (London, University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 92.
[16] See John Lynch, *Bourbon Spain: 1700-1808*, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989), and Richard Herr, *The Eighteenth-Century Revolution in Spain*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1958).
[17] John Leddy Phelan, 'Authority and Flexibility in the Spanish Imperial Bureaucracy' in *Adminstrative Science Quaterly*, (Vol. 5, June 1960), pp. 47-66, and Brian R. Hamnett, 'The Mexican Bureaucracy before the Bourbon Reforms, 1700-1770: A Study in the Limitations of Absolutism', Institute of Latin American Studies, Glasgow University, Occassional Papers, No. 26, 1979.

outflank both instances of corporate and private intervention. More precisely, with the extinction of tax-farms and the termination of the sale of public offices, Galvez sought to remove local Mexicans from the decision-making process and by doing so achieve his primary goal: the increase of Royal revenue.[19]

Early on in his *visita*, Glavez encountered the ingrained corruption of the colonial office of *alcalde mayor*, the very agency created by the Crown in the 16th century to collect Indian tribute and oversee Indian labour. Even though prohibited by Royal decrees as recent as 1687 and 1716, and explicitly attacked by the previous visitador-general in 1721, the abuse of the system of *repartimiento* had persisted, effectively functioning as a private trading-monopoly benefiting both the individual *alacalde mayor* and the merchant financiers of Mexico City, at the expense of the native population and the Crown. Whilst the level of exploitation varied with the levels of greed and avarice particular to each *alcalde mayor*, the role of middle man, whereby wages, tools, seeds and basic commodities were distributed to the Indian populace in exchange for labour, dyes, cotton and textiles, had become a prime example of the institutionalised corruption which Galvez sought to eradicate.[20] His plan was simple but radical, he proposed the introduction of the intendancy system.[21]

Already at work in Spain, the establishment of 12 intendancies in New Spain sought to completely overhaul the colonial administration, re-mapping the spheres of responsibility and the nature of office at both district, provincial and metropolitan levels. *Alcalde mayores* would be replaced by intendants, who were to be paid on a commission basis thus providing the foundation and incentive for a more professional approach to the task of tribute collection. So as to ensure a clean break from past practices, Galvez also promoted the appointment of 'new' men from the peninsula, effectively bypassing local creole aspirations and strengthening Crown control. With such a structure in place Galvez hoped to increase bureaucratic efficiency and thus generate extra revenue. First though, tobacco, playing cards and gun powder were all made Crown monopolies, new taxes were introduced to profit from the colony's richest

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[18] For a detailed account of Galvez's visitation see H. I. Priestley, *Jose de Galvez, Visitador-General of New Spain 1765-1771*, (Philadelphia, Porcupine Press, 1916, 2nd edition reprinted 1980).
[19] Priestly, ibid., p. 123-134.
[20] Similar reforms were also taking place in the kingdom of Guatemala, the province under which the colonists and Indians of Chiapas remained until 1824, after which it became part of Mexico, see Miles L. Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America, 1680-1840*, (New York, Columbia University Press, 1982), especially p.172-183 on how the reforms affected the Indians.

resource of silver mining, and, with the establishment of the *comercio libre* in 1778, a new era of free trade began to challenge the dominance of the Mexico City trading houses, which in turn increased the proportion of customs and excise duties collected by the Crown's newly salaried civil servants. In all these measures Galvez was eventually successful, his appointment as Minster of the Indies on his return to Spain permitting the full realisation of his reform programme.[22] However, the degree of disruption to New Spanish society, both elite and Indian, cannot be under-estimated. Perhaps best exemplified by the Bourbon attack on the role of the Church, the comprehensive nature of enlightened despotism led to the breakdown of a long-standing social accommodation, which although blatantly unequal, had nevertheless maintained a relatively high level of colonial stability for hundreds of years.

### *La Segunda Aculturacion*

No single act expresses more clearly the Bourbon administration's demand for absolute loyalty than the expulsion of the Jesuits from New Spain in 1767.[23] That the order for their arrest and exile was greeted by the Indians and mine-workers with violent revolts in both Michoacan and the Bajío region, should also tell us something of the popular religious sentiment with which Enlightenment reform took issue. Galvez himself left the determination of the Bourbon government in no doubt, when with a cruelty rarely witnessed in the colony, he hanged 85 people, flogged 73, banished 117 and condemned 674 to prison, all for their respective participation in the uprisings.[24] Having long been the principle educators of the American born Spanish, or creole elite, the expulsion of the Jesuits could also not fail but to be seen as another attack on the growth and autonomy of an educated and increasingly independent New Spanish society.

The special attention accorded to the Jesuit order should not however overshadow the broader renegotiation of the role of the Catholic Church as part of a more general reassessment of the potential of the colonies based solely upon the new

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[21] Priestly, op.cit., p. 322-329.
[22] For more detail on the extent of Bourbon reform see David A. Brading, *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763-1810*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 33-92.
[23] On the expulsion of the Jesuits see Jacques Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Quadelupe: The Formation of Mexican National Consciousness 1531-1831*, (Chicago, Chicago University Press, 1976), p. 99-112.
[24] Priestly, op.cit., p. 228.

materialistic and economic governmentality of the Bourbons. For the Indians in particular, after a sustained period of recovery in both demographic and cultural terms, this new onslaught of external intervention, heralded nothing less than a second wave of colonial acculturation.[25] The priest, long since accepted by the indigenous population as the sole legitimate colonial mediator between the spiritual realm and the distant yet acknowledged presence of the Spanish King, now found his role increasingly redefined to include greater control, surveillance and discipline of his Indian parish.[26] Along with the new tax inspectors, the priest was now expected to advise the Indian population to "avoid extravagant practices and the inefficient spending occasioned by their celebrations, worship of images, and *cofradia*", and to promote the use of "their limited resources to the improvement of their manner of dress, their diet and their education".[27] In this last respect the priest encountered administrative pressure to fulfil the role of teacher in a renewed campaign of "linguistic unification", that involved swapping his classes of catechism for lessons in Castillian Spanish.[28]

The Bourbon emphasis on education reflected a general Enlightenment belief in the role of schooling in the creation of a 'civilized republic'. However, the complicity of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church in such a project must also be recognised as an attempt to move away from popular displays of devotion and worship, and evidence of a greater emphasis on the interiorisation of piety, and the 'privatisation' of religious experience.[29] In Althusserian and Foucauldian terms, the weakness of the European Catholic Church at this time, debilitated after sustained challenges from both science, Protestantism, and internal factions, resulted in a subversion of doctrinal purity in place of an increased role in the normalisation and discipline of the populace, as it became, unwittingling or helplessly, an apparatus of state control. In New Spain, this

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[25] Serge Gruzinski, 'La "Segunda Aculturacion": El Estado Ilustrado y La Religiosidad Indigena en Nueva Espana (1775-1800)', *Estudios de Historia NovHispania*, (Mexico, UNAM, 1985, Vol. IIIV).
[26] On the Bourbon methods of control of the clergy see, Nancy M. Farriss, *Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico 1759-1821: The Crisis of Ecclesiastical Privelege*, (London, Athlone Press, 1968), and David A. Brading, *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico: The Diocese of Michoacan 1749-1810*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), and David A. Brading, 'Tridentine Catholicism and Enlightened Despotism in Bourbon Mexico', in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, (Vol. 15, 1983), pp. 1-22.
[27] Gruzinski, 'Segunda Aculturacion', op.cit., p.190.
[28] Bourbon success in this endevour can be evinced by an increase of curates that included a 'Castillian school' from 84 in 1754 to 237 in 1755, see Silvio Zavala, *El Castellano, lengua obligatoria?*, (Mexico, Centros de Estudios de Historia de Mexico, Condumex, 1977).
[29] See Georges Duby, (ed.) *A History of Private Life*, 5 Vols., (Cambridge Mass., Belknap Press, 1987).

combination of governmental edict with ecclesiastical conservatism created an environment within which the Church inspired practice of the Indian confraternity or *cofradia*, whereby an image of the virgin is worshipped with a procession, music and community celebration, as discussed in the previous chapter, once more found itself subject to colonial censure. Instead of the charges of idolatry previously raised against perceived indigenous adulteration of the ceremony, criticism of this by now well established act of Indian religiosity and sociability now revolved around questions of decency and, of course, economy.[30]

The new utilitarian and paternal sentiment of colonial rule was well expressed in a document of the time:

> *"it is neither just, nor must we permit in a civilized republic that whatever person with the title of mayordomo of a (sacred) image... can seek contributions, because in that way each saint or advance upon their behalf will lead to the suffering of the (Indian) people of grievous extortions."* [31]

In this way then the 'civilized republic' of the 18th century replaced the Christian republic of the previous centuries and the early evolution of the modern state made its numerable interventions upon the life of the Indian under the guise of guarding against communal and individual excess, exorbitance and ignorance.[32] So entwined in fact had become Indian cultural life with the practices of an earlier baroque and Tridentine Catholic Church, that for their part the defence of the *cofradia* was based on the grounds that it was a ceremony conducted since 'time immemorial'.[33] Whilst some parish priests became little more than civil servants, others became increasingly disaffected, and with the support of a 'loyal' indigenous parish behind them, the combination would soon prove to be incendiary.

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[30] See Brading, *Church and State*, op.cit., p. 131-170.

[31] Archivo General de la Nacion, 1793, Clero regular y secular, exp. 10, f. 201v-202, quoted in Gruzinski, 'Segunda Aculturacion', op.cit., p. 188.

[32] Of course not every creole or Spaniard saw the Indians as indecent, but exceptional was the individual who spoke publicly in their defense. One such instance was however recorded in Chiapas, see, Documento 28, 'Un Ladino Ilustrado defiende a los Indios contra los que opinan que ellos son ocios y borrachos por naturelza', Guatemala, 15 y 22 de Octubre de 1801, reproduced in Jan de Vos, *Vivir en frontera: La experienca de los indios de Chiapas*, (Mexico, CIESAS, 1994), p. 245-247.

[33] Gruzinski, 'Segunda Aculturacion', op.cit., p. 193.

**Nascent Creole Nationalism**

Whilst the experience of Bourbon enlightened despotism had created feelings of resentment and bitterness among the creole elite, their displeasure stemmed more from the manner in which reform was introduced than with the premises upon which such reform was itself based. The American born colonial elite had after all fully embraced the new world of science and philosophy that the European Enlightenment had to offer. The warm reception accorded to Alexander von Humboldt, and the assistance and respect given to his methodical collection of data, although aided in large part by the new peninsular bureaucrats, was principally due to the creole elite's shared belief in the advancement and progress that such an intellectual project embodied. The Crown itself had actively facilitated the diffusion of Enlightenment ideas and methods through the support and foundation of several centres of elite learning. Thus it was that the eighteenth century saw the creation of the Royal School of Mines, the School of Textiles, the School of Fine Arts and the Botanical Garden of Mexico City. Like their European counterparts, from where many of the heads of these schools came, the New Spaniards eagerly adopted the rigours of scientific study, altering both their knowledge and understanding of the colony, and in doing so transforming not only their relationship with the geographical, historical and scientific constitution of New Spain, but their relationship with themselves.

Whilst the continued influence of the Church can by no means be completely dismissed, we may well view this period as the founding moment of creole nationalism and identity. As already mentioned, with the beliefs in the practices and transparency of Enlightenment knowledge, the relationship towards the self, and self knowledge, became dichotomised, that is to say the understanding of the relationship between an individual and the Church began to be considered as something appropriate to the private domain, meanwhile the new sciences of the Enlightenment and the self understanding and practices which they engendered became increasingly public.[34] So it was then that in New Spain at this time we witness the publication of a wide array of new, and often short-lived, journals, and the essay, preferably including statistics, became the favoured means of intellectual expression and exchange within a freshly

[34] See Michel Foucault, 'Right of Death and Power over Life', in *The Foucault Reader*, op.cit., p. 261.

developed public intellectual domain.[35] Even while the Americas, unlike Europe, had not yet experienced on the same scale what Ian Hacking refers to as "an avalanche of numbers", statistics as an illustration of the new science of state also became, as a means of analysing the colonial kingdom, almost obligatory. [36] It is no coincidence that it was at this time that the first ever census of New Spain was conducted. However, the distinctive historical novelty of the American experience of Enlightenment ideas was the role of the Jesuit order in their unique application towards the creation of a historical imaginary with which the colonial born Spaniards could base their claim to independence.[37]

To the extent that the Spanish monarchy regarded the Jesuit order as a challenge to their power within the colonial kingdom, they were, at least in this one sense, quite correct. The Jesuits had been, after all, the main educators of the higher echelons of New Spanish society for some time.[38] Just as in Spain they held a near monopoly on the instruction of the administrative and bureaucratic elite, nearly all the creole members of the New Spanish ruling council - the *audencia*, were graduates of Mexico City's Jesuit university, San Ildefonso. Mirroring the *manteistas* attack on the *colegio mayores* in Spain, the Jesuit expulsion in Mexico differed however, in that it both came too late, and left no alternative educational structure with which to ensure creole appointment to high office.[39] This frustration of ambition only made the creoles reflect longer on their old teachers, and in particular created an ever more receptive audience for the continued scholarship of the Jesuits in exile.

Displaying a loyalty to the colony and a familiarity with both the great books and debates that occupied European intellectual life, several Jesuits continued with their project to create a historical genealogy that situated the colony as a separate, and culturally legitimate, polity from that of its peninsular overlords. Following on from the work of the seventeenth century savant, Carlos de Siguenza y Gongora, one

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[35] See 'Rationalization, Reform and Reaction', in (eds.) Colin M. MacLachlan & Jaime E. Rodriguez O., *The Forging of the Cosmic Race: A Reinterpretation of Colonial Mexico*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990).

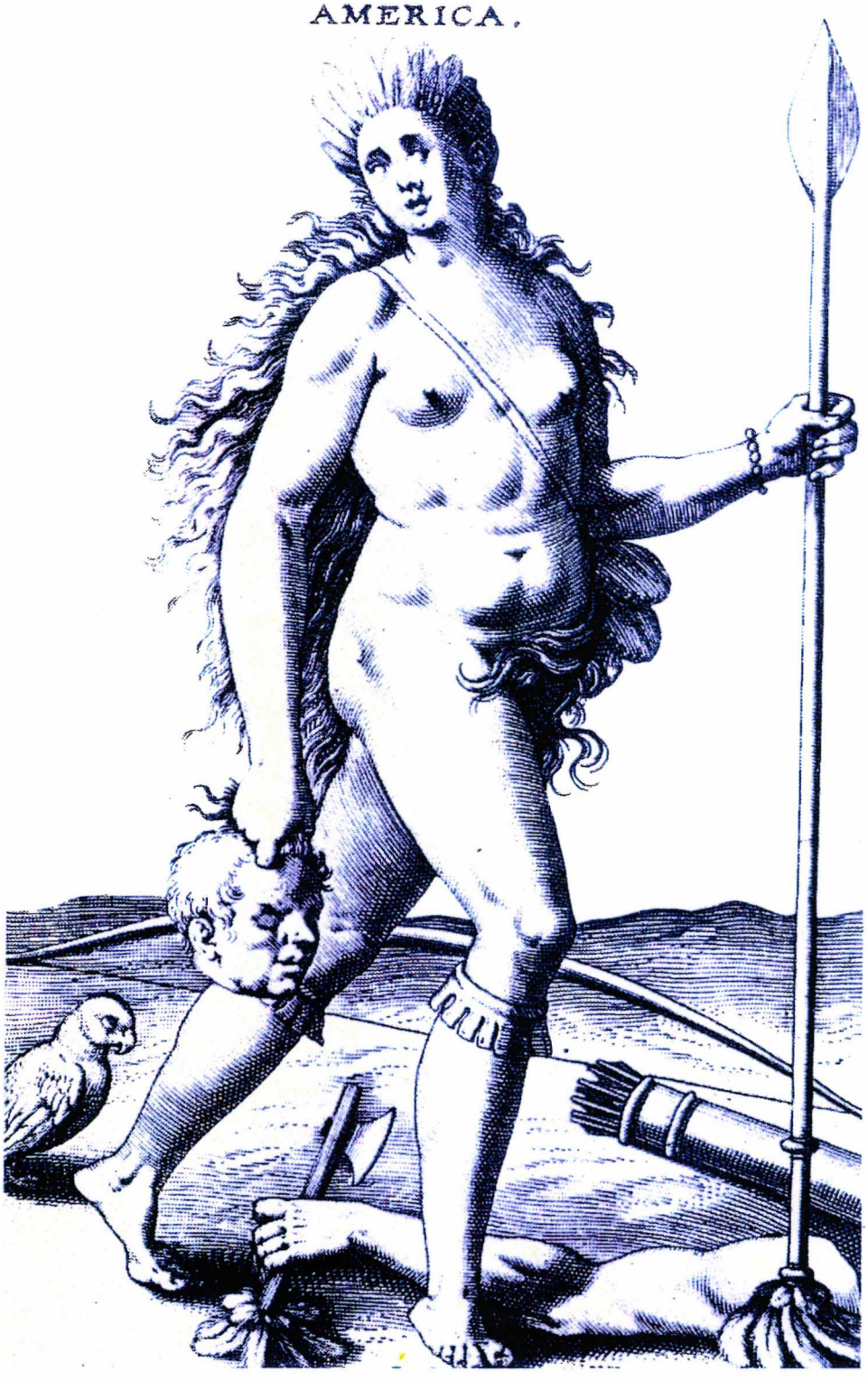
[36] See Ian Hacking, 'How should we do the history of statistics ?' in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (eds.) G. Burchill, C. Gordon & P. Miller, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991), and his *The Taming of Chance*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990).

[37] See Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Quadelupe*, op.cit., p. 109-112.

[38] The Society arrived in New Spain in 1570 just after the conquest and conversion period was considered to have ended and their energies were therefore principally directed at the urban elite, although some Jesuits also set about the creation of missions in the still untamed north of the colony.

[39] See Lynch, *Bourbon Spain*, op.cit., p. 280-290.

AMERICA.



particular Jesuit, Francisco Javier Clavigero, made the greatest impact with his Italian publication of the *Storia antica del Messico* (The History of Ancient Mexico) in 1780. With his novel interpretation of pre- and post-conquest New Spanish history, which, owing to the employal of a wholly secular explanation of the causation of human affairs, was in-itself heavily indebted to Enlightenment thinking, Clavigero managed to present a convincing basis upon which an independent cultural identity for the New Spanish creole could be argued.[40]

Like his predecessor, Siguenza y Gongora, he exalted the high civilisation of the central Mexican Indian past, even renaming this culture the Aztec to emphasise the cultural and historical distance between the contemporary Indian populace and their geographical progenitors.[41] The Aztec 'civic life' was thus robustly reclaimed as a means of re-writing an indigenous past that could supply a burgeoning New Spanish identity with an antiquity both equal, and on occasions, superior to that of the Greeks. It was in effect a history that employed the noble savages of the Amerindian past as the basis for creole claims to a political and civic culture independent from that of mainland Europe. There was of course the inescapable question of the plight of the contemporary Mexican Indian, but even whilst blaming their depressed condition on the cruelty of the early colonists, Clavigero made no attempt to argue for a return to their sophisticated, and now deeply mythologised, former glory.[42] The future clearly lay with the American born Spaniards, and although Humboldt most certainly shares with Clavigero a romantic attachment to the 'Aztec past', as a commentator who had witnessed the French revolution of 1789, he at least could recognise that within the huge divide between Indian and colonist lay the worrying potential for the "explosion of social conflict", a potential which as we shall see was soon to be realised.

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[40] In this context Creole refers to those of Spanish descent born in New Spain. For an analytically comprehensive account of the historical project adopted by both scholars see in particular chapter 4 of Anthony Padgen, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish-American Social and Political Theory 1513-1830*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1990).

[41] See Pagden, ibid., p. 104, and R. H. Barlow, 'Some Remarks on the term "Aztec Empire"', *The Americas*, (Vol. I, 1945).

[42] There was and is, of course, a limit as to just how much one can 'write-out' the present, and this was brought painfully to bear firstly upon the intellectually sensitive psyche of Siguenza y Gongora with the Indian uprising of June 1692 in Mexico City after which he wrote no more of the glorious Indian past, then later with the Hidalgo uprising. See Padgen, *Spanish Imperialism*, op.cit., p. 97. The same might

**The Wars of Independence**

As all Mexican school children know, not least because it is still honoured with an annual public holiday, the key historical moment upon which independence was founded came on September the 16th 1810, with the '*Grito de Dolores*' - the Cry of Dolores. With the words, "Long live Ferdinand VII! Long Live Our Lady of Guadelupe! Death to the *gachupines*! Death to the rotten government!", the parish priest of Dolores, Miguel Hidalgo, started a rebellion that would become a civil war, and eventually - ten years later, would result in an independent Mexico.[43] It was undoubtedly an incendiary moment and, although the details of an alternative government had been given little thought, the widespread feelings of resentment and anger against the ruling peninsular Spaniards, contemptuously referred to as *los gachupines*, ensured that Hidalgo's call to arms was swiftly answered. Furthermore, as his rebel forces began to march, and with an inspired feeling for popular instinct, Hidalgo seized from the church of Atotoniclo a standard with the effigy of the Virgin of Guadelupe, thus providing the rebel movement with a uniquely Mexican image behind which the revolutionary force of Indians and creoles could unite.

Our Lady of Guadelupe, the dark skinned virgin who had appeared to an Indian, Juan Diego, on the site of the principle shrine to the Mexica mother-goddess Tonantzin some centuries earlier, had long been the object of official and public devotion. More recently however the 'cult' had been attacked by the Bourbon and Church hierarchy. For Jacques Lafaye, her invocation as a revolutionary icon, symbolised a final step in the spiritual emancipation of the Mexican people which he believes was the "necessary prelude" for the creation of a popular national consciousness, to which Hidalgo's revolt gave violent expression.[44] However, Eric Van Young, amongst others, has done much to explore the subjugated history of the Indian beliefs and motivation that have come to be written out of a still popular narrative, or foundational myth, of Mexican nationhood.[45] He concludes,

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well be said of the rude awakening that the 1994 Zapatista uprising presented for those who have attempted to provide a 'first-world' script for contemporary Mexico.

[43] Quoted in David Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, (Cambridge, Centre of Latin American Studies, 1985), p. 48.

[44] Lafaye, *Quetzalcoatl and Quadelupe*, op.cit., p. 306.

[45] See a series of articles by Eric Van Young, 'Millennium on the Northern Marches: The Mad Messiah of Durango and Popular Rebellion in Mexico, 1800-1815', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*,

*"in the plentiful primary documentation of the era there is virtually no evidence to suggest that Indian soldiers, rebels, and rioters subscribed, except in the vaguest and most passive fashion, to the tenets of protoliberal elite ideology, and indeed there is abundant indication that they held very different beliefs and goals from those of the elite directorate of the movement."* [46]

In particular the Indians appear to have been inspired by a mixture of millenarian and messianic notions, often with King Ferdinand VII in the role of the messiah figure. An example of such beliefs can be illustrated by the popularity of rumours surrounding the existence of a mysterious person whose appearance was always hidden behind a silver mask or obscured from view in a curtained carriage, the identity of which was most often attributed to that of the King of Spain.[47] Before laying claim to the birth of a Mexican national consciousness then, we might well consider how a mixture of clergy, Indians, *castas* (blacks and mulattoes), mine workers, artisans and creole men of a distinctively New Spanish managerial and commercial class, found common cause in a revolt against the Spanish. Whilst by no means dismissing the spiritual, transcendental or psychological elements of the Hidalgo revolt, we should also recognise that the Bajío region from whence the rebellion hailed, had suffered particularly grievously under what David Brading calls "the concluding act in the Bourbon revolution in government [...] the amortisation decree of 1804".[48]

With this act the Crown ordered that all ecclesiastical funds should be paid into the royal treasury. As the majority of the Church's funds took the form of mortgages and loans, over the next couple of years the new law threatened the very economic basis of a good many agrarian, commercial and mining interests within the region. Combined with this financial assault came the added hardship of poor harvests and a disastrous drought. However, above and beyond these local conditions, came the dramatic transformations in the fortunes of the Bourbon dynasty itself. In 1808, as part

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(Vol. 28, No. 3, July 1986), and 'The Raw and the Cooked: Elite and Popular Ideology in Mexico, 1800-1821', in *The Middle Period in Latin America: Values and Attitudes in the 17th -19th Century*, (ed.) Mark D. Szuchman, (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1989), and also 'Who was that Masked Man, Anyway?: Popular Symbols and Ideology in the Mexican Wars of Independence', *Proceedings*, Rocky Mountain Council on Latin American Studies, Annual Meeting, (Las Cruces, N.M., Vol. 1, 1984), p.18-35. Also see William Taylor, *Drinking Homicide and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1979).

[46] See Van Young, 'Millennium on the Northern Marches', ibid., p. 386.

[47] See both Van Young, 'Millennium', op.cit., p. 406, and 'Who was that masked man anyway?', op.cit. In this instance we might also do well to ponder the mystique created around the figure of Mexico's current masked man, Sub-commondante Marcos.

of the expansionist policy of Napoleon Bonaparte, Charles IV, and his recently proclaimed heir, Ferdinand VII, found themselves forced to abdicate in the name of Bonaparte's brother, Joseph, the new King of Spain. The *coup d'etat* resulted in a widespread insurrection, and rebel Juntas were quickly established throughout the peninsula. It was not long though before French troops regained control of the majority of Spanish cities, leading the Central Junta to withdraw to Seville. Faced with a constitutional crisis, in 1810 the Junta called a general council in Cadiz, inviting deputies from the Americas as well as from the loyal provinces of the peninsula, in an attempt to re-constitute the nature of Spanish rule.

Nervous of the American born elite, the European born Spaniards reacted to the Napoleonic invasion by overthrowing the vacillating viceroy, Jose de Iturrigary, in 1808. Witnessing the political turmoil in Spain, and ever resentful of a now illegitimate Spanish born minority, the creole community began to plot. It was in one such conspiracy that the parish priest of Dolores, Miguel Hidalgo was involved. Already active in the promotion of self-reliance and cottage industries among his Indian flock, Hidalgo was both a victim of Bourbon reform and of church hierarchy displeasure, but on hearing the news of the discovery of the Queteraro conspiracy, he became the historical catalyst for the dissolution of colonial rule. The rebellion Hidalgo began, and in particular the manner in which it was embraced, was thus due to a combination of factors, all of which coalesced around a hatred and distrust of Spanish rule. However, the murder and pillage that followed Hidalgo's army soon lost it creole support. By 1811, he had been captured and was executed, his army dispersed and no longer in control of the areas north of Mexico city. But the forces of rebellion Hidalgo had unleashed could not be quelled that easily and immediately another priest Jose Maria Morelos, and one time student of Hidalgo, led a far more strategic and better organised revolutionary army, only this time from the south.[49]

With Morelos came a far more conscious articulation of the demands of the rebels, and at the Congress of Chilpancingo of 1813, the rebel leader presented two documents, the Reglamento - concerning the form of government, and his 'Sentiments of the Nation, or Guiding Principles'. With these two documents Morelos laid the

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[48] Brading, *Miners and Merchants*, op.cit., p. 340.

[49] See Farris, *Crown and Clergy*, op.cit., p. 254-265, for an extensive list of the numbers of lower clergy who participated in the movement.

clearest foundations for a Mexican constitution, and in his opening address he boldly stated the republican aspirations that have inspired Mexican patriots ever since,

> "*Our enemies have been obliged to reveal to us certain important truths... They are: that sovereignty resides basically in the people, but is transmitted to monarchs; that by their absence, death, or captivity, it devolves once again on the people; that they are free to reorganise their political institutions in any way agreeable to them; and that no people have the right to subjugate another. You, who govern this august assembly, accept the most solemn pledge that we shall die or save this nation... We are going to re-establish the Mexican empire and improve the government; we are going to be the spectacle of the cultured nations that will respect us; finally, we are going to be free and independent.*" [50]

The 'we' to which Morelos referred was one irrespective of 'social gradation', it included Indian, mulatto, and mestizo (of which Morelos was one himself), "for all native-born were to be designated Americans".[51] He called for the end of Indian tribute, the abolition of slavery, the institution of Catholicism as the state religion, and the exclusion of Europeans from government. His southern movement was, however, to suffer some heavy defeats, and two years later he was captured and executed.

With the return of Ferdinand VII from captivity in France, events in Spain rapidly transformed. The liberal constitutionalists of the council of Cadiz found themselves imprisoned, and suddenly a force of some 15,000 Spanish regular troops were made available to the New Spanish viceroy. Large parts of the colony soon fell under the heavy handed government of military law, and the entry of the Spanish troops into the colonial conflict has been widely recognised as dealing a final blow to the possibility of a recovered relationship between the Spanish Crown and their American subjects. Instead, "what gripped New Spain was one of the greatest guerrilla insurgencies in modern history".[52] The fighting continued for another six years, causing the colonial kingdom to break down along increasingly regional lines, and when in 1820 the Spanish Liberals rebelled and restored the constitution, the subjects

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[50] Discourse of Morelos, Chilpancingo, 14 September 1813, *Morelos Documentos*, 2:177-81, quoted in Wilbert H. Timmons, 'The Political and Social Ideas of Morelos', in *Mexico: From Indepedence to Revolution, 1810-1910*, (ed.) W. Dirk Raat, (Linclon & London, University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 37, although the original speech was apparently written by Carlos Bustamente.

[51] Ibid., p. 32.

of New Spain were war weary and near bankrupt. Under these circumstances then, when a previously royalist officer, Augustin de Iturbide, proposed a compromise, known as the Plan of Iguala, the proposal received widespread support.[53] And the eleven years of war eventually ended with the declaration of Independence signed on September 28, 1821.

**Liberalism and the Invisible Indian**

When independence was achieved, as a result of the compromise Plan of Iguala, rather than as the arrival of peace, it might better be seen as the removal of Spanish Imperialism as just one, albeit structurally the most important, of the many options now available to a group of creole individuals that were still engaged in a war of ideas that was to continue, and to be taken advantage of, for some three decades to come. The questions of "how to govern oneself, how to be governed, how to govern others, by whom the people will accept being governed, how to become the best possible governor", all the problems that Michel Foucault has identified as being characteristic of sixteenth century Europe, seem to have first appeared, although primarily nourished in the late 18th century, in their full and complex intensity during this early independence period.[54] However, to suggest that New Spain, now Mexico, was awash with a multitude of diverse political ideas in response to such questions would be mistaken. The central problematique of government that had in Europe been given such impetus by the colonies themselves, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, found itself expressed within the debates of the creole elite in the singular, if often at times expansive, vocabulary of liberalism.[55]

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[52] Christon I. Archer, ' "La Causa Buena": The Counterinsurgency Army of New Spain and the Ten Years' War', in *The Independence of Mexico and the Creation of the New Nation*, (ed.) Jaime E. Rodriguez O., (Los Angeles, University of California, 1989), p. 86.

[53] Agustin de Iturbide, 'Plan de Iguala', in *Mexico: From Indepedence to Revolution*, op.cit., pp. 46-48.

[54] See Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', trans. R. Braidotti, in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (eds.) G. Burchill, C. Gordon & P. Miller, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 87.

[55] See Charles A. Hale, 'Alaman, Antunano y la continuidad del Liberalismo', in *Historia Mexicana*, (Vol. xi, Oct-Dic 1961, No. 2), pp. 224-245, and Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968), also see Will Fowler, *The Liberal Origins of Mexican Conservatism, 1821-1832*, Occasional Paper, Institute of Latin American Studies, Glasgow University, 1997, and Fowler, 'Dreams of Stability: Mexican Political Thought During the "Forgotten Years". An Analysis of the Beliefs of the Creole Intelligentsia (1821-1853)', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, (Vol. 14, No. 3, 1995), pp. 287-312.

Apart from the obvious liberal implications of a Mexican constitution, to which we shall return, the central tenets to which nearly all the post-independence creole elite could agree surrounded the economic project of liberalism rather than its political management. In a similar vein to that of peninsular Spain, the doctrines of economic liberalism were discussed in both secretive societies and public forums, such as *las Sociedades Economicas de Amigos del Pais*, and the masonic lodges.[56] Most of these societies had first made their appearance during the Enlightenment, and their existence as previously mentioned formed the early stages of a newly secularised and public space, what the liberals themselves recognised as the formative stages of a 'civil society'. That the parameters of this nascent civil society only encompassed a few thousand of the creole elite was a reality not lost amongst its members, not least due to the constant reminders of social fragmentation that characterised the post-independence period. Undoubtedly then, it was this realisation of the limited appreciation of their economic vision that brought the first contradiction of the liberal doctrine to light.

Based upon the physiocratic thought of the late 18th century and developed by Smith and Ricardo, classical liberalism was premised upon the idea of the self-interested individual in society. In Smith's, *The Wealth of Nations*, the logic and equivalence of this self-interested individual with an industrious individual was set out.[57] Proposing the market as a massive and complex social mechanism that made possible the exchange of the work of individuals, and which allowed the egotistical interests of all to be served, Smith believed that the mechanism of the market operated independently of the will of its participants. What he called the "natural harmonisation of interests" was due to the work of "an invisible hand" that directed each and every individual to achieve an end which had not entered into their original intentions. In following their own self-interest they would increase the prosperity of a nation more effectively than if they entered into its design. Now that Mexico was independent, such a conception held radical implications for the scope of government. On the one hand it

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[56] See Brian R. Hamnett, 'Liberal Politics and Spanish Freemasonry, 1814-1820', *History: The Journal of the Historical Association*, (Vol. 69, No. 226, June 1984), and Jean Pierre Bastian (ed.), *Protestantes, Liberales y Francmasones. Sociedades de ideas y Modernidad en America Latina, Siglo XIX*, (Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1990). For evidence that this was also the case in the audencia of Guatemala and Chiapas see Antonio Garcia de Leon, *Resistencia y Utopia: Memorial de Agravios y Cronica de Revueltas y Profecias de Chiapas durante los ultimos quinientos anos de su historia*, (Mexico, ERA, 1998), p. 134-138.

suggested that the wealth of a nation was best achieved through the non-interference of the state, and on the other it implied that "the work of an individual - and consequently his idleness and lack of a productive occupation - was an issue of public interest that exceeded the limits of the private sphere".[58]

Clearly the existence of a market economy could not be taken for granted, and as shall be witnessed throughout the history of Mexico, rather than the mythical 'invisible hand' of classical liberalism, the creation of a 'free' market was going to necessitate the near constant intervention of the state. Soon the debate turned to questions concerning the 'conduct' of individuals, and just as quickly, in recognition that Mexico was not like France or England from whence such doctrines came, a distinction was made between the 'industrious individual' and his 'idle and needy' compatriots.[59] The 'absolute freedom' to choose the nature of employment that one would follow became the demand of those with property. Those creoles who already had commercial interests thus called for the abolition of a variety of rules and regulations that they viewed as impediments to the accumulation of wealth. To a large extent there was among the educated elite a shared view concerning the need for industrialization. After the destruction and near bankruptcy wrought by eleven years of war however, the financial stimulus to engender such a process was little in evidence. In view of this Lucas Alaman, later to be recognised as Mexico's foremost conservative, sought to combat this lack of private capital with the foundation of a national bank, el Banco de Avio.[60]

Alaman recognised the need for investment to create an industrialised nation and in doing so he also recognised another of liberalism's contradictions. To promote a technologically advanced industry such as the production of textiles it was going to become necessary to defend and protect such domestic industries from the influence of an international market. He realised that countries such as Britain would rather maintain Mexico in a position whereby it only produced primary materials such as cotton which could then be manufactured back in Europe. Defending budding industries from the domestic perils of international 'free' trade was only one aspect of

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[57] Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations*, 1776.
[58] Beatriz Urias Horcasitas, `El pensamiento economico moderno en el Mexico independiente', in *The Independence of Mexico and the Creation of the New Nation*, op.cit., p. 266.
[59] See David Harris, 'European Liberalism and the State', in *The Development of the Modern State*, op.cit., pp. 72-90.

Alaman's policy. He soon recognised that for independence to have any meaning, greater intervention on the part of the government would be necessary in the planning of large scale agriculture and industry. However, when liberals such as Esteban de Antunano extended this logic, like the Bourbons before him, to suggest that an unexploited source of capital lay with the wealth and land holdings of the Catholic Church, the latent conservative and corporatist limits of Alaman's liberalism were revealed.[61]

There was at least one question upon which agreement was broadly reached; the question of legitimacy. It was an issue that had long troubled Spanish jurists in regard to their colonial kingdoms, and following the French and American examples, now found itself resolved in the adoption of a modern liberal constitution. However, whilst a constitution took on the theoretical task of creating a social contract with the people, it was in fact the first step in the juridical erasure of the indigenous subject.[62] For in the newly envisioned liberal republic the question of the Indian came to be subsumed in the wider problem of the question of the citizen and its economic counter-part; the industrious individual. In liberal eyes therefore, apart from the first tentative steps towards a liberal understanding of the individual undertaken by the Bourbon reformers, the Spanish regime, and in particular its ecclesiastical missions, were considered both negligent and oppressive for their failure to develop a sense personal independence amongst the Indians.

From this perspective, the principal means by which Catholic missions maintained the Indians in such a "condition of stationary infancy" was through "perpetuating the notion of common property" amongst them.[63] For it was in the institution of private property that the squabbling Mexican liberals sought the individual and constitutional stability that the creole elite so dearly desired. Thus it was that "the communal property of the village was threatened by liberal theory as well as

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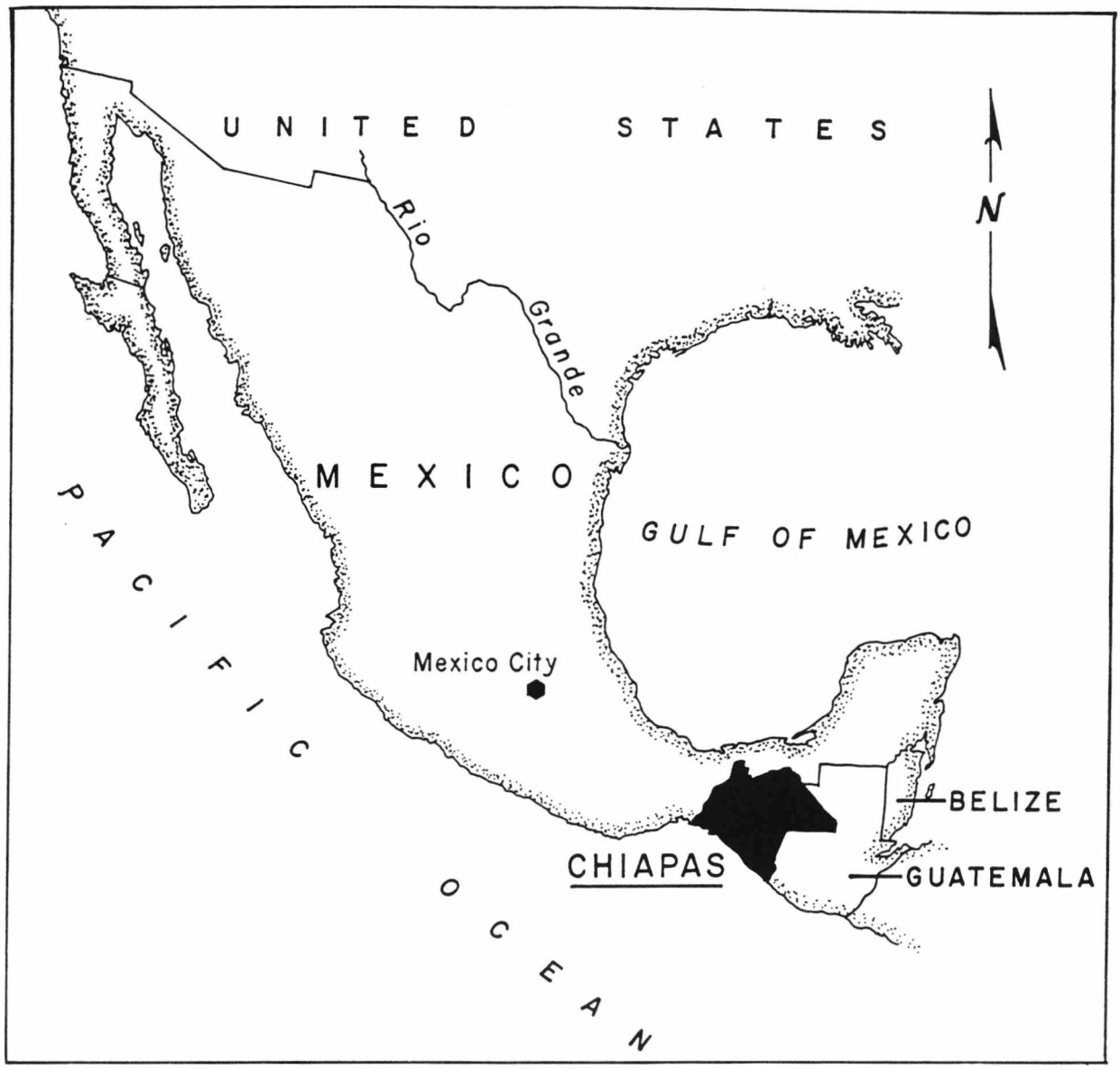
[60] See Hale, 'Alaman, Antunano y la continuidad del Liberalismo', op.cit.
[61] Hale, ibid., p. 239.
[62] See Miguel Leon Portilla, *Pueblos Originarios y Globalizacion*, (Mexico, El Colegio Nacional, 1997), p. 26-34, and Bartolome Clavero, *Derecho Indigena y Cultura Constitucional en America*, (Mexico, Siglo XXI editores, 1994).
[63] Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora*, op.cit., p. 221.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by the traditional encroachment of the large landowner."[64] In attacking the special juridical and societal privileges awarded the Indians by both Church and colonial Crown the liberals were adamant. "We must insist", said Jose Luis Mora, *the* leading liberal of the era, "that by law Indians no longer exist."[65]

Whilst Church wealth, and the relationship between Church and state would be one of the principal divisions between liberals and conservatives in the future, the truth of Mexico during the post-independence era was that even if a single coherent government policy could be agreed upon, the conditions of stability necessary for its fulfilment did not exist. In the twenty years that followed independence, the Mexican republic endured three constitutions, twenty governments, and more than a 100 cabinets. The era was dominated by generals who wanted to be Emperors if not presidents, and local bosses who wanted to be regional rulers. Debates surrounding federalism versus centralism were thus often more of a pragmatic sort, as Mexico sought to consolidate itself as a nation. In the words of José Luis Mora,

> *"In Mexico there is no established order; neither that of the ancien regime because its principles are now nullified and the interests that supported them practically destroyed; nor that of the new, although the doctrines upon which it is founded and the desires which they excite are already common throughout the country, still we have not hit upon the means to combine them with the remains of the old order, or to make such (remains) disappear; in sum, one cannot go back nor go forward without great difficulty."* [66]

## Conclusion

Finally, attempts to forge a liberal nation with their concomitant attempts to create the private subject of liberal national loyalty were to face fresh internal and external threats. The first serious external challenge came with the United States invasion of the northern Mexican states in 1847. In addition to losing half of its land

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[64] Hale, ibid., p. 225, also see Ivan Gomezcesar Hernandez, 'Los Liberales Mexicanos Frente al Problema Indigena: La Comunidad y La Integracion Nacional', in *Diversidad Etnica y Conflicto en America Latina: El Indio como metafora en la Identidad Nacional*, (eds.) Raquel Barcelo, Maria Ana Portal & Martha Judith Sanchez, (Mexico, Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, 1995), for a further elaboration of this governmental stance.

[65] Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora*, op.cit., p. 218.

[66] Jose Maria Luis Mora, *Mexico y sus revoluciones*, 1836, p. 472, quoted in Horcasitas op.cit., p. 274.

mass during this war, the trauma of defeat was compounded by the fact that the enemy had embodied the very model of liberal nationalism which at this time the Mexican themselves had been hoping to emulate. Just one year after the US act of aggression, the shallowness and sociological myopia of post-Independence Mexico was then further laid bare by Indian uprisings in both the Yucatan and the Sierra Gorda regions.[67] These rebellions became known as the Caste wars, and they ignited latent fears of social dissolution and ethnic division that liberal constitutionalism, after the violent excesses of the Independence struggle, was meant to prevent. Now that the liberals could no longer ignore the rebellious Indian base of Mexican society, their reaction made explicit the nature of their Mexican vision. Concerted colonisation of the troubled areas by Europeans settlers was proposed with the aim of the complete fusion of the Indians and "the total extinction of the castes".[68] The Indian himself was seen as obstinate and resigned to cling to former customs leaving all the hope for Mexico's future to reside in its white race.[69]

The issue of the caste wars, their genesis, and their means of settlement, also provided one the clearest moments of political rupture amongst the creole elite. In a series of articles published in Mexico City's *El Universal*, it is possible to see the articulate elucidation of the new conservative position. It was a position that defended the system of colonial paternalism, the Catholic Church and by extension the monarchy.[70] In doing so it also laid the foundations for the short period of monarchical rule presided over by the Austrian Duke Maximillian, and, in another sense, the caste wars and conservative reactionism to them, also led the liberals to resolve the inherent tension within their thinking, a resolution that led them to the seemingly contradictory conclusion of authoritarian rule.[71]

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[67] See Nelson Reed, *The Caste War of Yucatan*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1964), and Leticia Reina, 'La Rebellion campesina de Sierra Gorda', in *Sierra Gorda: Pasado y Presente*, (Mexico, Fondo Editorial de Queretaro, 1994).

[68] Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora*, op.cit., p. 223.

[69] Gomezcesar Hernandez, op.cit., p. 83.

[70] See Hale, *Mexican Liberalism*, op.cit., p. 234. In this regard we would do well to remember the manipulative use made of this creole fear of caste war in the state of Chiapas. See Jan Rus, 'Whose Caste War? Indians, Ladinos, and the Chiapas "Caste War" of 1869', in Kevin Gossner & Arij Ouweneel (eds.), *Indigenous Revolts in Chiapas and the Andean Highlands*, (Amsterdam, CEDLA, 1996).

[71] See Barbara Tenenbaum, 'Development and Sovereignty: Intellectuals and the Second Empire', in Roderic A. Camp, Charles A. Hale & Josefina Z. Vazquez (eds.), *Los Intelectuales y el Poder en Mexico*, (Mexico, El Colegio de Mexico/ UCLA Latin American Centre Publications, 1991).

# *Chapter Three*

# The Governmental State: Indian Labour, Liberal-Authoritarianism and Revolt

Whilst some commentators have interpreted the Mexican post-war compromise of the early independence years as a triumph of reactionism, others have considered the period a paradigm example of political chaos.[1] The first interpretation is certainly correct in that the initial uprising of the masses triggered by Hidalgo concluded with the deal-making of a creole elite, a scenario that although dressed in liberal rhetoric, led to little significant change for Mexico's millions of indigenous peoples. Nevertheless, and despite the common attachment to the legality of a constitution and other more pervasive ideas about liberal economics, the remaining vestiges of Hapsburg colonial privilege and vested interest effectively placed two powerful elite groups in opposition to one another, a predicament that in its vigour rendered any attempt at the creation of a unified nation-state unworkable. In fact, for Mexican historians like Daniel Cosio Villegas, it was not until the years 1867-1910, that the semblances of a modern Mexican nation-state could be clearly discerned.[2] For it was only then, it is argued, "that the bases of the modern administrative state were formulated, that the work of economic modernization began, and, lamentably, that a tradition for the abridgement of constitutional liberties became established."[3]

That the creation of this modern Mexican governmental state, as we shall call it, would involve the powerful meshing of science with politics, a process much like the earlier governmentality of the European Bourbon administration, is not mere coincidence. Neither, perhaps, is the fact that the establishment of a Mexican governmental state would require a '*mano duro*' (hard hand) of a Presidential dictator innocently unrelated to the previous eighteenth century understanding of an Enlightened despot. However, to appreciate just what becoming modern in name and structure meant for the indigenous of Mexico, first we shall turn our attention to the

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[1] Two examples of these interpretations are, respectively, Nancy Farris, *Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico 1759-1821: The Crisis of Ecclesiastical Privilege*, (London, Athlone Press, 1968), in particular the conclusion, and Jan Bazant, *A Concise History of Mexico: from Hidalgo to Cardenas 1805-1940*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[2] Daniel Cosio Villegas' own section in the mammoth collaborative project, *Historia Moderna de Mexico. El Porfiriato*, 7 vols. (Mexico -Buenos Aires, Hermes, 1957-72).

[3] Charles A. Hale, *Mexican Liberalism in the Age of Mora, 1821-1853*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968), p. 5.

more localised politics of Mexico's most recent province; Chiapas. In doing so we will hopefully better understand how government and independence came to impinge upon the life and culture of the Maya Indians of the region, an experience that continues to be negotiated to this day.

## A Brief Moment of Indian Florescence

On the 22nd day of December 1867 a young Indian girl, Agustina Gomez Checheb, was looking after her father's sheep near the hamlet of Tzajahemel, when three stones fell from the sky.[4] Collecting them up, she rushed back to her home and placed them on the small family alter. No sooner had she done so than she claimed the stones began to communicate with her. Having no reason to doubt this otherwise unexceptional little girl, word of the miraculous 'talking stones' of Tzajahemel soon spread. As worship at this new shrine began to attract Indians from throughout the highlands of Chiapas, one visitor in particular, Pedro Diaz Cuzcat, also declared his ability to 'talk' with the stones, and soon, in light of his intimate knowledge of Christian rituals, he became the self-appointed Indian 'priest' of this now sacred place.

With Cuzcat leading the rituals, the ceremonies and the local market that sprung up around them, all began to flourish, and, for a brief moment, Tzajahemel represented a unique and peaceful expression of Indian spirituality and cultural autonomy. By June of the same year however, the success of this cult had become too much for the local ladino (non-Indian) community to bear. Finding their social and economic position of superiority challenged, they issued condemnations against the 'barbarous' Indians and the threat they posed to 'civilization'. Quickly the rhetoric was followed by intervention, and as the Indians sought to protect Cuzcat and their holy relics, the ensuing clashes eventually led to what has become misleadingly known as the Chiapas 'caste war'.[5]

Unlike the caste war of Yucatan, although faced with similar pressures, the 1867 Indian conflict with the ladinos of Chiapas was in fact a tragic consequence of a

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[4] Jan de Vos, *Vivir en Frontera: la experiencia de los indios de Chiapas*, (Mexico, CIESAS & INI, 1994), p. 178.

[5] Jan Rus, 'Whose Caste War? Indians, *Ladinos*, and the Chiapas 'Caste War' of 1869', in *Indigenous Revolts in Chiapas and the Andean Highlands*, (eds.) Kevin Gossner & Arij Ouweneel, (Amsterdam, CEDLA, 1996), p. 64.

temporary period of Indian autonomy that arose between the incessant and divisive struggles of a regional elite that characterised the first 50 post-independence years of Chiapas' existence. To make matters worse, over time the story surrounding the conflict has become embellished to include the crucifixion of a young Indian boy, seemingly representative of an Indian Christ, an untrue detail that was meant to further emphasise the Indians' propensity for cruelty and inhumanity.[6] In light of the 1994 Zapatista uprising such stories have received renewed currency. Propagated by both supporters and detractors of the Zapatistas alike, the 'caste war' has sadly only served to further encourage a belief in the inherent divide between Indian society and non-Indian society, a distinction which, just as the 19th century ladino provocateurs had hoped, has only served to obscure a more detailed consideration of the skewered nature of the relations between the two groups. After all, the cynical manipulation of the Tzajahemel 'talking stones' was originally a means to unite a divided non-Indian elite and subsequently to reinforce its position of dominance over an emboldened Indian populace. It is thus to an analysis of these elite divisions and their relations with the Chiapan Indian that we shall now turn.

**Chiapas: National Conflict on a Local Level**

In the confused moments between the end of colonial rule and the establishment of independent republics, a group of influential merchants and ranchers from Chiapas sought temporary refuge in the establishment of the 'Free State of Chiapas'. Recognising the convergence of their economic and real estate investments, the group became known as, *la familia chiapaneca* - the Chiapas family.[7] Such unity however did not endure, and soon the *familia* began to fracture along geographical lines; with a group from the lowland, *tierra caliente*, preferring inclusion among the new republics of Central America and a group from the highlands, *tierra fria*, preferring annexation with Mexico. When the issue was eventually formalised with the annexation of Chiapas by Mexico on September 14, 1824, the settlement was viewed

[6] The invention seems to have first appeared in the account of Vincente Pineda, *Historia de las sublevaciones indigenas habidas en el estado de Chiapas*, (1888), as a means to once again ensure a tight grip on the Indian workforce some twenty years after the uprising, see Rus, ibid., p. 69-70.

as an arrangement engineered by the oligarchy of the highland capital of Ciudad Real, a group that very much mirrored the pre-independence interests of the Hapsburg colonial elite.[8]

To a certain extent the fortunes of the lowland members of the *familia chiapaneca* of the central valley were owed to the tax reforms of the Bourbon colonial administration. In reality though the 1797 abolition of tax on trade between Mexico and Guatemala was only the beginning for an entrepreneurial group that sought to avoid all taxation in their smuggling of cotton, cattle and sugarcane (for rum) in exchange for cloth and wine from international trading partners like Britain and France.[9] In the early years of Mexican rule the investments of this group, who clearly had embraced the logic of liberal economics, expanded considerably, and by 1838 no less than 96 plantations were established in the zone. "Ironically, however, although they soon laid claim to vast amounts of unused lands, they nonetheless faced one serious, indeed insurmountable, problem: a critical shortage of labour."[10] It is at this juncture that the Chiapan Indian as *the* principle source of regional labour enters the uncomfortable dynamic between the spheres of influence and control that define the division between the non-Indian lowland and highland elites.

Although affected by the Bourbon reforms, Ciudad Real (renamed San Cristobal in 1829) had, ever since the arrival of the first Spaniards, been the undisputed bastion of corporate colonial privilege in Chiapas. Church and Crown had ruled side by side, as both groups sought to promote their interests among the extensive indigenous populace that inhabit the highland zone. With annexation by Mexico, this clearly conservative group also found itself in an ironic position, whereby the liberal agrarian laws of 1826 and 1832, which defined the maximum legal extension of village *ejidos* (communal lands) according to population size, made it possible for highland *ladinos* to increase their land-holdings and consequently their control over the Indians themselves. This was because the laws "opened up the *terrenos baldios* (the 'vacant

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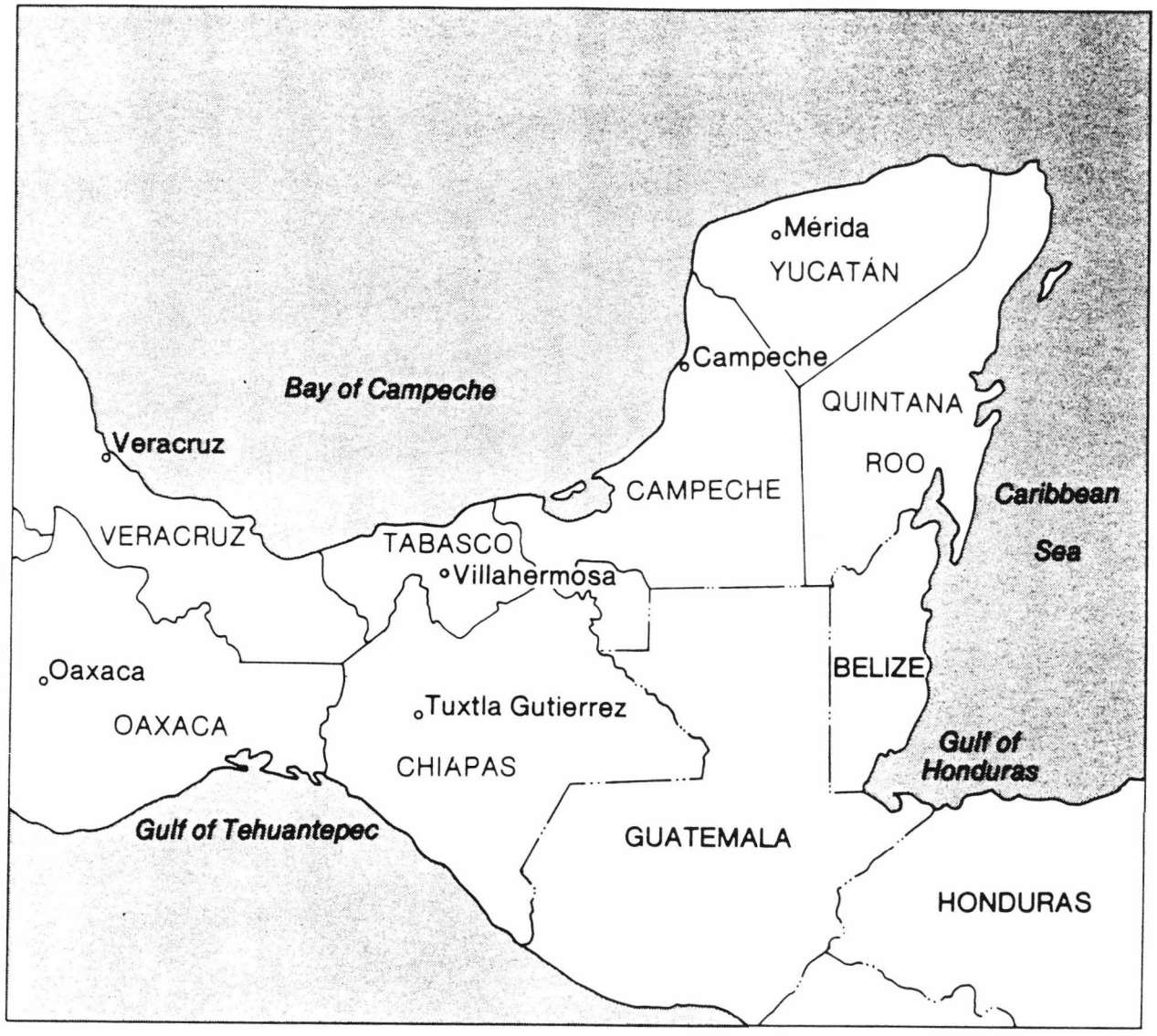
[7] See Antonio Garcia de Leon, *Resistencia y Utopia: Memorial de Agravios y Cronica de Revueltas y Profecias de Chiapas durante los ultimos quinientos anos de su historia*, (Mexico, ERA, 1998), p.150-151.

[8] Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land A Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas*, revised edition, (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1996), p. 11.

[9] See Robert Wasserstrom, *Class and Society in Central Chiapas*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1983), p. 108-112, and also Jan Rus and Robert Wasserstrom, 'Civil-Religious Hierarchies in Central Chiapas: a critical perspective', in *American Ethnologist*, (Vol. 7, No. 3, August 1980), p. 469.

[10] Rus & Wasserstrom, ibid., p. 469.




The State of Chiapas and
Southeastern Mexico

lands' that surrounded Indian communities and had been held in trust by the Crown to protect Indian land-holdings) to entitlement by private citizens."[11] The stripping of land from Indian communities was, however, only one aspect of what was effectively a three-pronged assault that the Indian communities suffered as the result of liberal reform, or rather the use to which it was put.

The second and most reprehensible aspect of this land reform was that very soon the Indians found that the parcels of land which they previously had farmed and lived off, were now the property of a *ladino* landlord, a fact that either led to their migration in search of a new means of subsistence or their effective enslavement to their new proprietor. Called '*baldios*', the Indians who remained on their land in return for the 'permission' to continue cultivating it, were required to provide between three and five days labour per week for their landlord without any payment whatsoever.[12] In addition to this the landlord could also periodically demand seven days further labour, usually as a servant in his household, an added indignity that led many to seek a living elsewhere.[13]

Those that left their communities were usually referred to as '*mozos*' and considered 'free workers'. Often these Indians sought work as seasonal labourers on the lowland farms. Tragically, those who had hoped to escape the servitude of highland peonage soon found themselves entrapped in an equally exploitative relationship with their *tierra caliente* employers. Payment for labour, although officially meant to consist of cash, was most often paid through the supply of food and other basic necessities which were supplied exclusively from the farm shop. Through the supply of more goods than the wage supposedly could cover the patron gradually began to indebt his seasonal worker. Soon 'fines' for a lack of productivity would also be added to such debts, and in this way the farmer ensured himself a permanent and cheap supply of labour.[14] As these Indians no longer returned home, and as their debts were hereditary, their suffering was doubly tragic leading not only to the loss of the limited freedom they had once known, but also resulting in a final severing of the cultural and community bonds that had once given meaning to their lives as 'Indians' up until that time.

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[11] Benjamin, op.cit., p. 13-14.
[12] See Wasserstrom, op.cit, p. 119, and de Vos, op.cit., p. 169.
[13] de Vos, op.cit., p. 169.
[14] de Vos, op.cit., p. 170.

For the indigenous who had remained in the highlands, those either lucky enough to still have some land, or those now known as *baldios*, the third aspect of the liberal assault was cultural. In colonial times, apart from a priest, Indians had lived in practically separate communities from their *ladino* neighbours. Little by little though, during the early independence years, as ladinos were able to claim or buy Indian lands, the communities began to experience the slow invasion of their villages by non-Indians. Usually men of modest resources, these newcomers set up stores or small land-holdings, nearly always taking the best lands for themselves. An indication of how the Indians felt about these legal incursions on their communities is probably best evinced by the discovery of a plot by a group of Tzeltal Indians in February 1848, to take the lives of the new *mestizo* settlers in their midst.[15] Apart from the pre-emptive discovery of the Tzeltal conspiracy, and the emigration of large numbers of male Indians from their native communities, one other reason why more Indians did not rise up against their oppressors may well have been due to what Jan de Vos has described as "the arrival of the most injurious agent of exploitation that that the Indians have had to endure until recent times;" the seller of aguardiente.[16]

Although long established as an integral part of Indian ceremonies, above all when petitions were being made or when healing rituals were being conducted, with the establishment of a community salesman, the consumption of alcohol began to take on the characteristics of a vice in which many Indians lamentably sought refuge from the deprivations that surrounded them. Tragically though, the temporary relief afforded by aguardiente usually only led to an increase in debts already accrued to non-Indian settlers, and consequently, the work to which the Indians would then have to supply in repayment also grew.[17] In sum, as Jan Rus writes, "through land denunciations, usurous loan practices, and sales of alcohol and over-priced commodities, such 'homesteaders' were able in the barely twenty five years from 1826 to the 1850's to transform more than a quarter of Chiapas' Indians from 'free' villagers into permanently - and legally - obligated peons and laborers."[18] By mid-century then, if

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[15] See Robert Wasserstrom, 'A Caste War That Never Was: The Tzeltal Conspiracy of 1848' in *Peasant Studies*, (No. 2, Vol. 7, 1978), p. 73-85, and see also the report by the priest of Ocosingo on the displacement of the Indians from the village of Chilon (1848), original document reproduced in de Vos, op.cit., p. 258-260.

[16] de Vos, op.cit, p. 166.

[17] See Wasserstrom, op.cit., p. 130 & 133.

[18] Rus, op.cit., p. 48.

you were to ask the Indians how they had benefited from Independence, the question would most likely have seemed perverse.

The questions that divided the *familia chiapaneca* however, were to whom and for how long were the Indians obligated to work. Obviously if a large body of Indians were tied to the *badiaje* practices in the highlands there would be insufficient numbers to work on the ever-expanding farms of the lowlands. Recognising a similar conflict on the national stage between an old order and a new, the *familia chiapaneca* soon found itself split into lowland liberals, keen for further reform, and highland conservatives, wary of further attacks on Church and still existing colonial and administrative privilege. "Conflict between these two factions", writes Jan Rus, "whatever the appearances, was never so much over ideals or future models of society as over division of the spoils left by the Spaniards."[19]

The key to the power of the conservatives was their control over the state capital, San Cristobal. Based in the highlands, San Cristobal served as the administrative centre for the region, a function that gave the conservatives a large degree of control over the tax revenues of the state and as a consequence over its Indian populace. In addition to these official bureaucratic functions, San Cristobal also served as the religious centre for the Catholic Church, who, ever since the 16th century, had built up significant land-holdings throughout the highlands and especially the Grijalva valley. Local priests also collected a religious tax from which they drew a salary and maintained their church. For extra masses, christenings, marriages, the registration of births, deaths, *cofradia* celebrations and wedding certificates the priest would also make additional charges. Just like the Bourbons before them the Liberals objected to this second tier of government that the Catholic Church effectively constituted. On the national level it was precisely this issue of Church wealth and power that brought the country to arms.

Ever since independence Mexico had been unable to consolidate itself as a nation. It had experimented with several piecemeal attempts at rule, usually presided over by a military figure, the most famous of which being General Santa Anna who assumed the position of President on no less than five separate occasions.[20] At each

[19] Rus, ibid., p. 46.
[20] See Will Fowler's article in *Authoritarianism in Latin America Since Independence*, (ed.) Will Fowler, (Westport; Conneticut, Greenwood Press, 1996).

juncture cabinets both liberal and conservative had been unable to overcome internal and external opposition to their policies. The country was split along regional lines, with each local elite manoeuvring for a liberal federal arrangement or a conservative centralist government according to their concerns. By 1848 though, after a two year war Mexico suffered the indignity of witnessing United States troops enter their capital. In the treaty that followed Mexico signed away nearly half its land mass, and six years later with the Gadsden Purchase it would sell more. Combined with the Indian uprisings of the Yucatan Maya, the Apaches of Sonora, and the Indians of the Sierra Gorda region, claims by any government to represent a 'Mexican nation' were illusionary to say the least.

So in 1855 when the liberals seized power they did so with a greater conviction to push through the reforms that they believed would eventually lead to the creation of a 'modern' Mexican nation. Central to this conviction was a belief that the constitutional and legal protection under which the Catholic Church had been able to operate would have to go. They achieved this with the creation of a new constitution in 1857. Catholicism then ceased to be the official state religion, marriages could be granted through a civil authority, and the clergy were now subject to the censure of civil courts. With the Lerdo law, the liberals also sought to undermine the level of influence, wealth and income that made the Church such a powerful force within Mexico. These reforms started a process of nationalisation of Church property and also aimed to remove the civil enforcement of religious taxes, thus they hoped, creating a new class of propertied citizens with an interest in the continuance of liberal rule.[21]

Predictably such reform was too much for the conservatives and the country once again went to war during the years 1860-61. Although the liberals won, their victory was short lived, as in 1862, under the pretence of collecting on debts unpaid, the French troops of Napoleon III intervened in Mexican politics. Welcomed by the defeated conservatives, the French provided the force under which the Austrian Count Maximillian Hapsburg was installed as Emperor of Mexico. Liberal troops, supported by US finance, fought a guerrilla war for the next four years, and with the retreat of the

[21] For more on this period see Richard Sinkin, *The Mexican Reform 1855-1876. A Study in Liberal Nation-Building*, (Austin; Texas, 1979), see also David Brading, 'Liberal Patriotism and the Mexican Reforma', in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, (No. 20, 1988), p. 27-48.


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French, hunted down and executed an unrepentant Maximillian in 1867.[22] In Chiapas all these convulsions within the central government of Mexico City found themselves played out in the armed confrontations between the two embittered local factions. For the Indians, in contrast, the short period during the liberal reforms was arguably their best years since independence. With commerce interrupted and tax left uncollected, the indigenous savoured a rare moment of peace. However, with the rise of the French Imperialist government, Indians once again found themselves drawn into a conflict which they not only were expected to help finance, but also on many occasions forced to give their own lives for.

Unpleasant though the post-independence years were, the Indians at least felt relatively certain as to where power lay in their relations with ladinos. What the liberal reforms and the subsequent wars that followed them also brought was a traumatic uncertainty surrounding just where and how the lines of power and authority were drawn. The structure of Indian communities seems to have suffered as a consequence with village school masters and municipal secretaries competing with priests and local landlords for the loyalty and support of the indigenous community. In 1863, in the highland village of San Juan Chamula this tension boiled over into inter-ethnic violence, leading to the death of twenty-three people in one day.[23] With the defeat of the conservatives in 1867, the Indian communities once again enjoyed a moment of peace. However, it was at this very time that the defeated highland conservatives played their last cynical card in the hope of recovering at least some of the control over Indian labour that had for so long been the primary source of their wealth, and in doing so, perhaps even restoring themselves to a position of influence in the soon to be re-united *familia chiapaneca.*

## The Chiapas *'caste war'*

In 1864, Pantaleon Dominguez was appointed military governor of the all but tamed state of Chiapas by the then commander of the liberal forces, General Porfirio Diaz. Three years later when the liberal victory was complete, Dominguez held his

[22] A good over view of this period is also provided by Jan Bazant, 'From Independence to the Liberal Republic, 1821-1867', in *Mexico since Independence*, (ed.) Leslie Bethell, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.1-48.
[23] Rus, op.cit., p. 54.

post, becoming the constitutional governor of the state. Having removed the capital from San Cristobal to Tuxtla during the war, Dominguez and his liberal compatriots were both disappointed and concerned when the announcement was made that not only were all state capitals to be returned to their pre-war locales, but that all except the highest ranking conservatives were to be granted an amnesty that left them free to re-enter government elected posts. In local terms such national 'conciliatory gestures', once again raised the spectre of a conservative elite gaining control over the temporarily untapped Indian labour force whose presence was soon to be required on the plantations of the lowland farmers.[24]

Recognising this threat, Dominguez only moved the capital half-way from Tuxtla to Chiapa, a town on the edge of the central lowland plain, and using all the liberal reform laws available to him, he set about undoing whatever remaining ties the conservatives had with the Indian communities of the highlands. His first act was to impress upon the Indians the claim to religious toleration included in the 1857 constitution. The main implication of this legislation for the Indian communities was the removal of any legal obligation to pay religious taxes to their priest. To ensure this reform would penetrate, he took the further step of abolishing the two key native religious offices of *mayordomo* and *alfarez*, effectively removing the means by which contributions were collected from the Indian congregations and further ensuring the collapse of an already declining *cofradia* system.[25] Central to the governor's strategy was the role of the municipal secretary and the village schoolmaster or *maestro*, whose task it was to inform the Indians of their new rights and even to go so far as to encourage them to "abandon the churches altogether" and "to practice Catholicism without the priests and temples!"[26]

It seems likely that the Indians, who had always given transplanted Spanish Catholicism its own distinctive Indian interpretation, had already taken advantage of earlier periods of clerical 'neglect' to re-introduce customs that previously had been prohibited. With the addition of the legal backing of the liberal government, it is not surprising therefore to find that native religiosity and culture enjoyed a brief period of florescence. So it was then that at this time, "the water sources, caves, forests, and

[24] See Rus, op.cit, p. 55.
[25] See Rus and Wasserstrom, op.cit.
[26] Rus, op.cit., p. 56.

maize fields - *milpas*, that had always been privileged sites at which to make petitions and bring offerings, underwent a welcome renaissance."[27] Although always present to a greater or lesser degree, the native tradition of oral story-telling was also believed to have flourished under these new conditions.[28] "It is important to highlight" writes Jan de Vos, "that we are dealing with a world that is truly rural, where the concern for the tenancy and the cultivation of the land never stopped holding a central position."[29] It is for this reason that de Vos believes the Indians have always maintained a devotion towards deities that are pre-Hispanic, revering objects and sites that have a more deeply related link to the forces of nature than that of the Christian god of European conception.

Within this context the animism granted to the three 'miraculous' stones that fell before a young Indian girl in Tzajahemel, and the manner in which this apparition was embraced by the surrounding communities and converted into an organised cult, becomes less fantastic and more understandable. In fact the ceremonies that took place and were attended at times by thousands, were similar to those conducted in the other traditional Indian centres, the only principle difference being that in Tzajahemel everything was presided over by a native clergy. Bells were rung, trumpets were blown, candles and incense were burnt, masses were conducted, and sacristans and acolytes led and organised the rituals. In the opinion of anthropologist Jan Rus, "having been mistreated by ladinos of all parties, especially during the preceding civil wars, many Indians seemed to find in the isolated shrine a kind of sanctuary, a place where they could not only pray in peace but could meet and trade with their neighbours without fear of ladino interference."[30]

Perhaps unable to grasp the peaceful nature of the Indian cult, and after having seen their initial attempts to break up the shrine rebuffed by liberals and Indians alike, the conservative highland elite, financially and socially challenged by Indian

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[27] de Vos, op.cit., p. 185.

[28] For examples of native oral history and story-telling from the highlands of Chiapas, see Robert Laughlin, *Of Cabbages and Kings: Tales from Zinacantan* (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1977), and *Cuentos de Chiapas*, published by the Sna' Htz'ibahom theatre and writing group, San Cristobal de las Casas, 1990, also Domingo Gomez Gutierrez, *Letras Mayas Contemporaneos*, (Mexico, INI, 1992), and on Cuzcat and the 'talking stones' in particular, see Victoria Bricker, *The Indian Christ, The Indian King: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), and G. H. Gossen, 'Translating Cuscat's War: Understanding Maya Oral History', in *Journal of Latin America Lore*, (No. 3, 1977).

[29] de Vos, op.cit, p. 185.

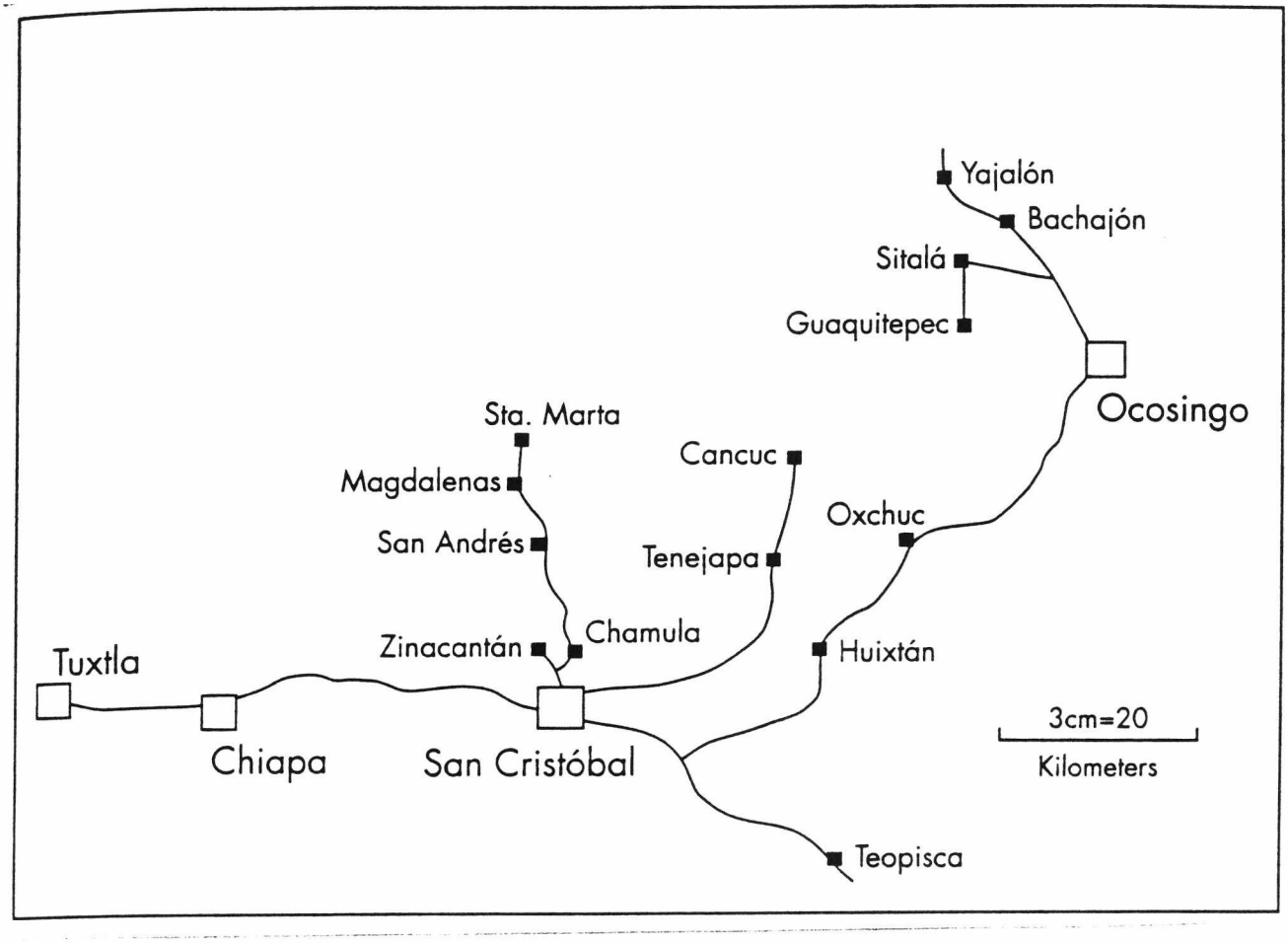
[30] Rus, op.cit., p. 59.

separatism, played the one card they had left; race. They began by circulating rumours that the Indians were planning to attack San Cristobal and that the long feared outbreak of a 'caste war' was imminent. In what was supposedly a pre-emptive strike, in December 1868, the leaders of San Cristobal sent a force of some fifty armed men to arrest Agustina Chebeb and the leader of the newly formed native clergy, Pedro Diaz Cuzcat. Faced with this small but well armed force, the Indians were unable to prevent the capture of their leaders. However in the temporary state capital of Chiapa, such a clear example of Cristobalense repression was not greeted with the immediate condemnation of earlier months. In fact the liberals themselves had begun to realise that whilst seeking to deny conservatives control over the Indians, they had failed to replace the bonds of servitude that they had been so keen to break asunder.

Indian separatism thus began to appear as a threat not only to the highland elite but to the commercial interests of the lowland farmers as well. What brought the issue into sharper focus was the attempt in early 1869 to enforce a state tax code amongst the Indian communities. Whilst the collectors were given generous financial incentives and extra-judicial powers with which to enforce collection, it soon became clear that the Indians had begun to avoid their 'official' village centres and had once again taken to the forests and the smaller hamlets like Tzajahemel to conduct their affairs away from government control. Commerce having been more greatly affected in San Cristobal than in the lowlands, the Indians' return to their separatist ways even after the arrest of their leaders, quickly led to calls for another armed intervention, only this time one that would teach them a serious 'lesson'. However, on learning of these plans, a liberal teacher, Ignacio Fernandez de Galindo, who had only recently moved to San Cristobal, set off with his wife and a student, to warn the Indians of the impending danger.[31]

Perhaps deterred by the knowledge that the Indians would have been forewarned, on the morning of June 13, rather than an armed force, a small group of local officials led by Father Martinez, the parish priest of Chamula, headed off to speak with the Indians. At Tzajahemel they found only a few pilgrims at the shrine and so compliant were they, that without any violence they were able to take possession of the remaining 'holy relics' of the cult. Before the priest and his companions could return

[31] Since the 1994 Zapatista uprising there have also been attempts to draw parallels between the ladino Galindo and the mestizo Marcos. These misplaced comparisons have been employed in an attempt to suggest that the Indians are in some way easily influenced by ideologically driven non-Indians.


Yajalón
Bachajón
Sitalá
Guaquitepec
Ocosingo
Sta. Marta
Magdalenas
San Andrés
Cancuc
Tenejapa
Oxchuc
Zinacantán
Chamula
Huixtán
Tuxtla
Chiapa
San Cristóbal
3cm=20
Kilometers
Teopisca

though, they were caught by another group of Indians, who on hearing of the removal of the sacred objects, had pursued them. It is understood that Martinez and his fellow ladinos refused to give back the sacred possessions and in the struggle that followed all four were killed. The news of the ladinos' murder sent panic throughout the zone, and in the days that followed other ladinos were also killed. Rus claims the killings were not indiscriminate and, "apparently most of the Indians' rage was directly at those with whom they had old scores to settle or who had in some way threatened them."[32]

Nevertheless the terror that must have engulfed the ladinos of San Cristobal, when on the 17th of June a force of several thousand Indians appeared on the outskirts of the city, can only be imagined. The Indians had not come to attack though, rather they came under a white flag offering Galindo, his wife and the student, in exchange for the jailed Cuzcat, Checheb and other Indians. The swap was duly made, and leaving a small force of some six hundred Indians on the hills around San Cristobal the rest returned to Tzajahemel to celebrate the release of their leaders. All the same, the continued vigilance of the Indian lookouts led the local newspapers to the conclusion that was perhaps inevitable all along. They now wrote that "there could *'no longer be any doubt that the Indians were sworn enemies of the whites,'* that their most fervent desire was to *'ravish and kill San Cristobal's tender wives and sisters, to mutilate the corpses of its children.'* The only solution, they wrote, was a *'war to the death between barbarism and civilization,'* a war in which -and here was the key- Chiapas's ladinos would for the first time in decades recognise their essential unity."[33]

It appears Dominguez was motivated to respond to the call of the whites of San Cristobal less from any belief in the dangers of a caste war, and more out of a recognition of the personal political ambitions such a campaign could serve. Either way he arrived in the highland city with a force of three hundred heavily armed men. The Indians that had remained on the outskirts of the city, armed with only sticks and machetes were quickly cut down, leaving some three hundred dead. As more reinforcements arrived the ladinos ranks eventually numbered over a thousand men. It was with this force behind him that on June 30th, Dominguez set out for Chamula to

[32] Rus, op.cit., p. 63.
[33] Originally printed in San Cristobal's conservative newspaper, *La Brujula* June 25. 1868, quoted in Rus, ibid., p. 64.

put down the Indian unrest once and for all. What followed is best explained by a lowland foot soldier present on the day;

*'When we first spied the Chamulas, hundreds of them were scattered in disordered groups on the hillsides, and before we were within rifle distance all, woman and children as well as men, knelt on their bare knees to beg forgiveness. In spite of the humble position they took to show submission, however, the government forces continued to advance, and they, undoubtedly hoping they would be granted the mercy they begged with tears of sorrow, remained on their knees. At a little less than 200 meters, the soldiers opened fire on their compact masses - and despite the carnage done to them by the bullets, despite their cries for mercy, continued firing for some time.*

*When the government forces finally reached the Chamulas, their thirst for the blood of that poor, abject race still not slaked, there were suddenly such strident yells that even knowing nothing of what they said one knew their meaning: with those shouts they threw themselves against the government forces with an almost inhuman valor. These poor men, unable to secure the clemency they implored with tears and prostration, charged with a barbaric bravery.'*[34]

As the campaign continued throughout the region the final death toll came to around 1000 Indians and 200 ladinos, but perhaps the most tragic aspect was that in the weeks and months that followed the Chamula attack, Indians were forced to join the ladino forces and hunt down their own people. By July 1870 all the final pockets of resistance were eventually suppressed and business, at least in ladino terms, began to return to normal. Distinctions between conservative and liberal soon lost their meaning, and whilst the Church never really regained the position it had once held, the organisation of Indian labour, once more fell under the control of a ladino highland elite. After all the wars of reform and the French intervention a certain stability was also beginning to reshape the structure of the Mexican state, initiating a process of 'modernization' that would effect the Indians of Chiapas in ways perhaps even more severe than the experience of independence.

[34] Pedro Jose Montesinos as reported to his nephew Jose Maria Montesinos (1870), original document reproduced in de Vos, op.cit., p. 271-274, quoted translation in Rus, ibid., p. 65-66.

**Porfirio Diaz and the Governmental State**

With the victory over Maximilian in 1867 and the imposition of the Laws of Reform by Juarez, what appeared like the triumph of liberalism was in fact its transformation "from an ideology in combat with an inherited set of institutions, social arrangements, and values into a unifying political myth".[35] Although classical or doctrinaire liberalism had begun as the dominant political vision in post-independence Mexico, faced with the vested colonial interests championed by an opposition conservative party, a country divided along regional lines and loyalties, and the humiliation of foreign military and monarchical intervention, liberalism's highest achievement remained limited to the successful drafting of the constitution of 1857. Amongst the post war liberal establishment the constitution thus took on an almost inviolate status, however, when confronted with the pressing problem of how to create a strong and peaceful nation, the new generation of liberals adopted policies and practices that took their inspiration from ideas and theories that were anything but liberal.[36]

Viewing Europe as a disorganised shambles, a mess in the main due to the dogmas of the French Revolution, and those 'metaphysicians and legists' who tried to make them a reality, it was Henri de Saint Simon who first sought out a strong principle of order to rescue the beleaguered European state. Although still wrapped in the rhetoric of the post-independence liberal state, the correctness of such a vision also struck deep and lasting cords among the new Mexican intellectual and political elite. It

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[35] Charles A. Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico*, (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1989), p. 3.

[36] Whilst it has become quite common amongst Mexican and non-Mexican historians to write of a liberal continuity throughout Mexican history, it is this author's belief that such a nomenclature is not a useful means of discussing the intellectual and practical continuities that certainly do exist. Making liberalism a catch all label merely obscures what might be called the essential tension within liberal thinking; that between a political idea that wishes to restrict government in the name of individual liberty and a liberalism that necessarily needs to strengthen government to bring about the conditions for that certain understanding of freedom to exist. The period of the Porfiriato dictatorship can thus be viewed as an unpleasant consequence of this tension. However, whilst some contemporary liberals would argue that liberalism is exactly the continued negotiation of this tension, the giving in to one aspect is to enter into an authoritarianism that should not then still be called liberalism. see Richard Rorty, 'Private Irony and Liberal Hope,' in *Contingency, Irony and Solidarity*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1989), p.73-95. I believe Hale's description of the period as one unified by a 'liberal myth' also suggests the lack of liberalism itself. The *cientificos* were of course aware of such a contradiction and attempted to resolve it by calling themselves 'conservative liberals'. See Hale, ibid., p. 20. For an alternative interpretation see Alan Knight, 'El Liberalism Mexicano Desde La Reforma Hasta La Revolucion', in *Historia Mexicana*, (Vol. XXXV, No. 1, 1985).

was Saint-Simon's idea that society should be administered and not governed that soon became the foundation of a style of Mexican politics that proudly called itself scientific.[37] "Managers and administrators, experts performing their functions, were to replace rulers and governors. Individual liberty, the social goal of the liberals was to be put aside in favour of association, based on functional specialisation".[38] After his death, the theories of Saint Simon were to find their most persuasive and articulate continuation in the work of Auguste Comte, and it was familiarity with Comte's ideas and the man himself that gave the greatest impetus to Mexico's new style of governmental thought.

Centred around the Mexico City daily newspaper, 'La Libertad', and headed by the figure of Justo Sierra, a group of young intellectuals began to consciously express the principal concepts of scientific politics. At heart the new politics contained the basic conviction that the methods of science could be applied to national problems. However, the growing support for the applicability of scientific methods to the Mexican predicament was also due to a new understanding of the Mexican nation. An understanding that was equally due to the influence of the historical school of law, made popular by Edouard Laboulaye, as to the evolutionary theories of Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, as it was to the positivist philosophy of Auguste Comte.[39] What all these theorists had in common was the central belief that society changed and developed over time and thus rather than being conceived as a static object, society was best understood as a living, growing and developing organism. Whilst each theorist drew his own conclusions from this perspective it was also generally agreed that history was the principal method by which such changes could be perceived and therefore either partially influenced or more overtly directed. Nonetheless, whilst the historical school in particular can be seen as having a direct influence over the creation of a Mexican senate, it was principally the work of Comte that led to such a move being welcomed as one more step towards the centralisation of power in the Mexican state.

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[37] See Alfonso de Maria y Campos, 'Los Cientificos: Actitudes de un Grupo de Intelectuales Porfirianos Frente al Positivismo y la Religion,' in Roderic A. Camp, Charles A. Hale & Josefina Z. Vazquez (eds.), *Los Intelectuales y el Poder en Mexico*, (Mexico, El Colegio de Mexico/ UCLA Latin American Centre Publications, 1991).

[38] Hale, op.cit., p. 31-32.

It was Comte's belief that the human mind naturally passes through three successive stages of development. Firstly, the theological, which is understood as a type of imaginary stage, then the metaphysical, which is understood as principally abstract, and finally it reaches the scientific or positive stage.[40] This Law of Three Stages as it is known, is also applicable by extension to the development of society in general. Even in light of the limited and necessarily schematic nature of Mexican pre- and post-colonial history that has been presented in the preceding chapters, it is entirely possible to recognise the appealing quality of a Comtean periodisation for the development of Mexican society as viewed from the closing decades of the 19th century. Coming after the earlier struggles, and combined with the deep rooted desire to create a modern Mexican state, the applicability of Cometean thought struck many in the political elite with a near millennial intensity.[41] For if Mexico had passed through the theological - colonial stage, and the metaphysical - liberal stage, it was now ready to realise the positive, or what I shall term the governmental stage.

The so called "prophet of positivism" in Mexico was Gabino Barreda, who had actually attended Comte's lectures in mid-19th century Paris. It was Barreda who in many ways did most to create an intellectual and governmental elite through his founding of the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria.[42] The positivist inspired curriculum was later to make its mark on the more widespread, yet not necessarily more influential, national curriculum, which would become the backbone for a campaign of obligatory schooling throughout Mexico. Arguably however, its main achievement was to supply the state with a generation of administrators convinced of the secular character of a modern state. It thus fell upon this new generation of bureaucrats to ensure that the vital statistics, fiscal processes, judicial procedure, education, even the calendar, births, marriages and deaths were all removed from remaining Church

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[39] See Hale, op.cit., and also Charles A. Hale, 'Political and Social Ideas in Latin America, 1870-1930', in (ed.) Leslie Bethall, *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. IV, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985-86) for the continent-wide influence of such theoretical innovation.

[40] Comte's theoretical stance was made public through the publication of his lectures under the title, *Course in Positive Philosophy*, (Paris, 1830-42), which appeared in six volumes. See volume 1 for the Law of Three Stages. For a revealing insight of just how positivist thought, and some of Comte's more spiritual conclusions are seen by a classic liberal, see John Stuart Mill, *Auguste Comte and Positivism*, (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1961).

[41] See for example, W. Dirk Raat, 'Agustin Aragon and Mexico's Religion of Humanity,' in the *Journal of InterAmerican Studies and World Affairs*, (Vol. 11, No. 3, July 1969), see also Raat, *El Positivismo durante el Porfiriato*, (Mexico, SepSetentas, 1975), for an interesting account of the more spiritual aspects of Comte's work and the consequent split between 'orthodox' and 'heterodox' positivists.

[42] See Hale, *The Transformation*, op.cit., Chapter 5, p. 139-168.

control. Citizens were no longer seen merely as the holders of rights, but rather as important parts of a civil organism needy of both regulation and administration. This sentiment was expressed more dramatically and revealingly by Francisco Cosmes when he stated, that society now rejects 'rights' for 'bread... security, order and peace'. Rights after all had only produced distress. "Now let us try a little tyranny, but honourable tyranny, and see what results it brings."[43]

The 'honourable tyranny' to which Cosmes referred, and to which *los cientificos* came to provide both intellectual and political support, was embodied in the 35 year dictatorship of President Don Emilio Porfirio Diaz. In their keenness to bring strength, peace, stability and order to Mexico, the advocates of scientific politics thus found themselves taking on the role of intellectual apologists for dictatorial government in much the same way that Comte had himself welcomed the "republican dictatorship" of Louis Napoleon's coup in 1851, and the physiocrats before him had rationalised the need for an "Enlightened despot". Probably the most extensive defence of the necessity for such an obviously anti-constitutionalist measure can be found in Emilio Rabasa's, *La Constitucion y la Dictadura.*[44] Rabasa's argument had a clearly Comtean genesis in that his criticism of the existing constitution was centred on its failure to concur with 'sociological laws'. Whilst the current implications of this constitutional disjuncture legitimised the strong authoritarian rule of Don Porfirio it was nonetheless considered a temporary step towards the day when society might have sufficiently developed to truly fulfil the liberal vision expressed in the 1857 constitution.[45] Quite what this was to mean for Mexico's indigenous population was to be made patently clear when the self same Emilio Rabasa was made governor of Chiapas in 1892, which at age 35, made him the youngest ever governor in the history of Mexico.[46]

At the core of this new order, and it was a belief that stood above all others, was the unquestioned view that the political future of the country depended entirely on the development of the economy. The whole nature of the Diaz system was based on a

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[43] Quoted in Hale, 'Political and Social Ideas in Latin America, 1870-1930', op.cit., p. 389.
[44] Emilio Rabasa, *La Constitucion y la Dictadura; estudio sobre la organizacion politica de Mexico*, (Mexico, 1952, 3rd edition).
[45] See Juan Felipe Leal, 'Positivismo y Liberalismo', in *El Porfiriato*, (ed.) Jose Alfredo Castellanos, (Mexico, Universidad de Chapingo, 1988), p. 211-224.
[46] For more on the prolific Rabasa see Carmen Ramos Escandon, 'Emilio Rabasa: su obra literaria como expresion politica,' in *Los Intelectuales y el Poder en Mexico*, p. 665-680.

deep understanding that stability was necessary first and foremost for economic reasons, and in particular for the attraction of foreign investment. Dismissing the Liberal idealism of the earlier reform period, with its emphasis on democratic institutions and individual equality as unrealistic, governmental revenue was instead channelled towards mechanisms of control and security. It has been claimed that Diaz in fact invested 55 percent of Mexico's revenue in military and police services, and another 30 percent to maintain his state bureaucracy.[47] The main instrument of the new Mexican governmental state was therefore a loyal and obedient urban and, more importantly, rural police force. '*Los Rurales*' as they were known, were equipped with a smart uniform, good horses, and a plentiful supply of arms and ammunition. As Diaz began to invest in railroads and telegraph systems, their effectiveness as a mobile and responsive arm of political power invited both internal fear and external admiration.

No longer a country of bandits or feuding regions, Diaz sought to woo investors from the United States and Europe with generous concessions and legislative reforms. In 1884 he changed the old Spanish code concerning mineral rights, allowing ownership of the land to be a sufficient right for the extraction of what lay below. Even this considerable concession was deemed insufficient by some *cientificos*, leading to a further amendment in 1892, whose objective in many ways summed up the aims of the Diaz reforms; "facility to acquire, liberty to exploit, and security to retain."[48] This new Mexican governmentality did not go unnoticed and soon some of the biggest names in U.S. industry began to extract ores from Mexico. With the importation of U.S. managers, technology, and the railroads built specifically for the purpose, the extraction of copper, zinc and lead, as well as traditional silver mining, became profitable. So profitable in fact that "by 1908, the *Wall Street Summary* could report that three-fourths of the dividend-paying mines in Mexico were owned by U.S. interests and that these 'paid a sum 24 percent in excess of the aggregate net earnings of all the National Banks in the United States, or about $95,000,000'."[49]

When in 1901 oil was first discovered, it was by a U.S. company, Doheny and Associates. By this time though Diaz and the *cientificos* were already feeling the

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[47] Paul J. Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress: Bandits Police and Mexican Development*, (Delaware, Scholarly Resources Inc., 1992), p. 67.

[48] Quoted in Robert Freeman Smith, 'The Diaz Era: Background to the Revolution of 1910', in *Mexico: From Independence to Revolution, 1810-1910*, (ed.) W. Dirk Raat, (Lincoln and London, University of Nebraska Press, 1982), p. 195.

pressure of so much U.S. investment and the administration attempted to counterbalance this influence with capital from Europe.[50] Hoping in this way to achieve some kind of neutrality among the major powers, a large part of the oil mining in Mexico was given over to a British company, *El Aguila* (Mexican Eagle, controlled by Weetman Pearson and Sons of London). German finance was also initially sought for assistance with loans, banking and, most controversially, arms sales. The French too were approached for loans and their expertise helped establish the Mexican National Bank. Citizens from all these countries came and lived in Mexico, often to manage and oversee their investments, but often also to seek out further opportunities in textiles (the French), agriculture (the Germans), public works (the British) and heavy industry (the Americans). The time of Diaz, as much of the architecture and trading houses of Mexico City can still attest, was a time of opulence and European inspired refinement.[51]

Far removed from the decadent lifestyle of the Mexico City elite however, were the millions of peasants who found themselves subject to the *mano duro* - heavy hand of the Diaz regime. After suffering under the mid-century liberal land reforms, whose stated intention was to create a class of small land-holders or yeoman farmers, peasants and the indigenous once again found themselves confronted with legislation and corrupt business practices aimed at removing what little land they had managed to keep. This time though there was no social ideal behind the Porfirian land grab. The question of society, particularly the place of the lower working classes, was approached in an instrumental manner. Just as every other natural resource in Mexico had come to transcend the importance of the people and communities that surrounded them, land was to be distributed in what was adjudged the most productive manner. In line with such a rationale, large estates or haciendas were created, and throughout the country considerable investment, often foreign, was put into the establishment of henequen (sisal), rubber, guayule, cochineal and coffee plantations. Often however, land was purchased for purely speculative reasons, either for its mineral rights or in view of

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[49] Ibid., p. 194.

[50] For more on the extent and influence of foreign investment see, Jose Luis Cecena, 'El Porfirismo' in *El Porfiriato*, op.cit., p. 49-64.

[51] For more on this see Moises Gonzalez Navarro, 'The Hours of Leisure', in *The Age of Porfirio Diaz*, (ed.) Carlos B. Gil, (Alburquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1977), p.123-128. A good counterbalance to this account of the *gente decente* -decent people, is William E. French, 'Prostitutes

possible future railroad construction. By 1911 only 5 percent remained in the hands of communal, i.e. Indian villages, and over 90 percent of Mexico's peasants had become landless.[52]

Nowhere was this governmentality more apparent than in the north of the country. Having more or less wiped out the Apache Indians, the states of Chihauhua and Sonora still boasted significant populations of Tarahumara and Yaqui Indians. Considered the most 'modern' region of Mexico, the northern border zone with the United States had witnessed the greatest number of immigrants both from the U.S. and from other more impoverished regions of the country. With the foundation of iron smelters, mines, cattle ranches and networks of communication and transport links, the landscape of the north and its people were transformed. Progress, if that's what it was, came at a price. As the government attempted to confiscate the best agricultural land of the Yaqui to hand over to the American Richardson Company, the Indians fought back. For years the Yaquis bravely resisted the onslaught of a modernity that wanted to remove from them their basic means of subsistence, and perhaps more importantly, the basis upon which their indigenous communal life had managed to survive thus far. However, when the full force of the governmental state came to bear down upon the Yaqui it was relentless in its adherence to the logic of positivist economics. Between 1903 and 1907, thousands of rebellious Yaquis were deported to the henequen plantations of the Yucatan, and sold into virtual slavery.[53]

Apart from the wealth of Mexico's natural resources, foreign investors were also attracted by the plentiful supply of cheap and obedient labour. Obedience in this instance usually resulted from the conditions of peonage that the Diaz reforms created, if not from the more overt interventionist tactics that led to the Yaquis' enslavement in the south. Estimates have ranged from anywhere between 750,000 to five million workers effectively existing in conditions of bondage[54], a topic to which we shall return shortly. Even those workers who might be more reasonably considered to have

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and Guardian Angels: Women, Work and the Family in Porfirian Mexico', in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, (Vol. 72, 1992).

[52] Friedrich Katz, 'The Liberal Republic and the Porfiriato, 1867-1910', in *Mexico Since Independence*, (ed.) Leslie Bethell, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 94.

[53] See Evelyn Hu-Dehart, 'Pacification of the Yaquis', in *The Age of Porfirio Diaz*, op.cit., p. 129-138, who considers some 15,000 Yaquis were deported. This concurs with Katz (see above), who cites 15,700. ibid., p. 92.

[54] Alan Knight, 'Mexican Peonage: What Was It and Why Was It?', in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, (No. 18, 1986), p. 43.

entered into a voluntary labour contract found that when any objections were raised to their working conditions, they were met with a harsh response. Unions were banned, as were strikes, and those that did occur were either broken up by the *Rurales* or, on occasions, U.S. officers would cross the border to protect the interests of their fellow country-men. With a mixture of repression and co-optation Diaz managed to keep a relative 'peace' in Mexico for some thirty years. Opposition newspapers were censored, as were opposition parties, infiltrators and spies were used both in his international business practices and domestic affairs. Those that refused the opportunity to join the system were often shot as they supposedly attempted to 'escape', a practice that famously became known as the *ley fuga.*

## '*Enlightened Caciquismo*' in Chiapas

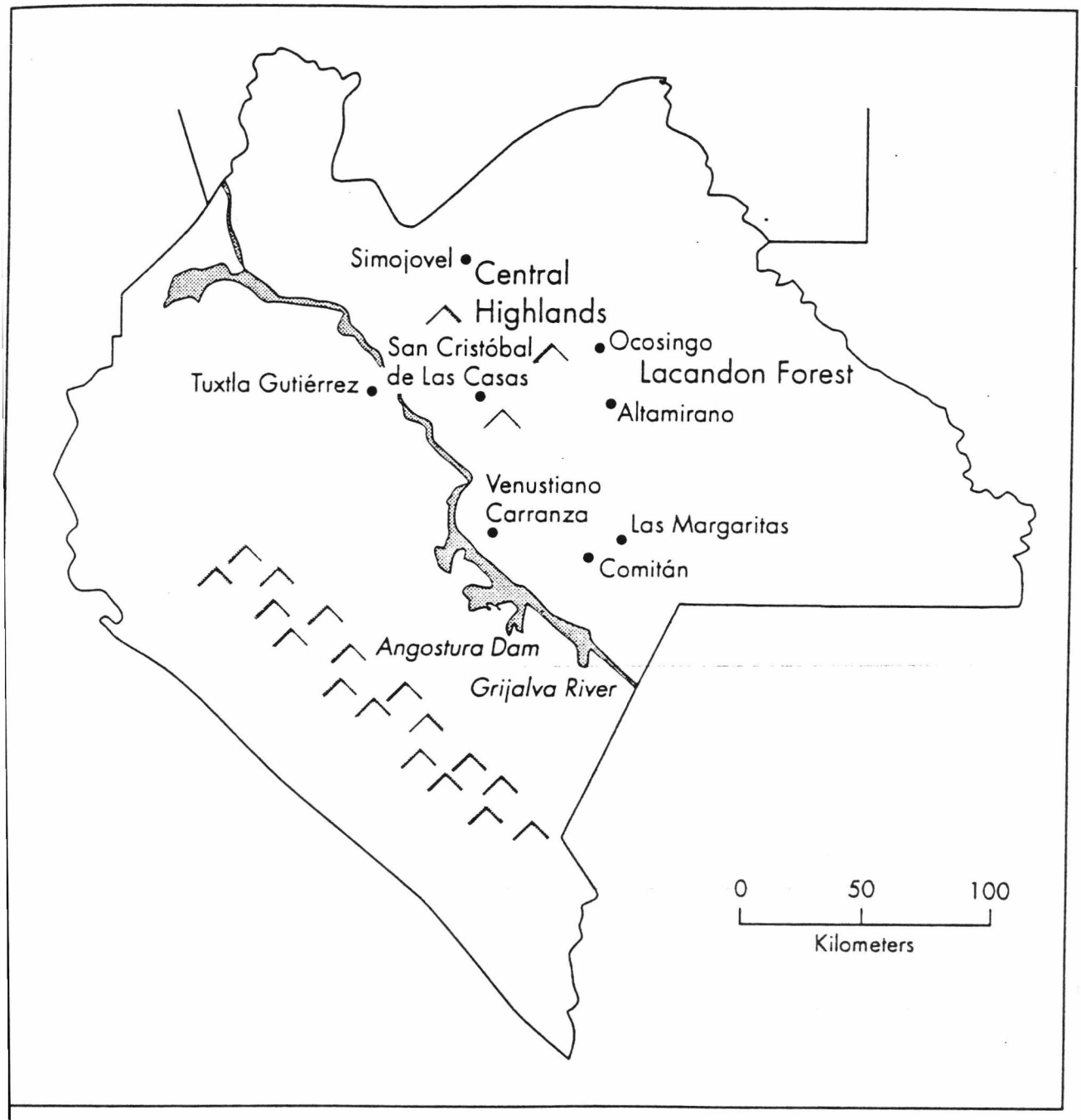
The arrival of the new governmental regime in Chiapas was no less radical than in other parts of the country, and in many respects perhaps even more so. In the figure of Emilio Rabasa, the young dictatorial apologist and *cientifico*, the theory of the governmental state found a zealous and committed practitioner, who although only officially governor of the region for three years, nevertheless introduced the reforms that would determine the state's development for decades to come. His modernization programme for local government was based on three inter-related spheres: finance, administration and police. One of his first decisions was therefore to remove the state capital from highland San Cristobal to lowland Tuxtla, where it currently remains. Although in many ways a symbolic gesture in recognition of the earlier liberal victory, it was also a move that heralded what most Mexican observers have come to interpret as the foundational period of modern Chiapas. Following a near identical rationale as the Mexican national capital, the new centre of Tuxtla was to be the stronghold of a centralising governmental tendency considered vital to ensure the local changes conducive to state and national development.

The system of local government that Rabasa had inherited was one dominated by local political bosses or *caciques* as they continue to be known. These men, like Sebatian Escobar of Soconusco, Julian Grajales of Chiapa de Corzo, and Miguel Utrilla of the Central Highlands, had effectively divided the state into private fiefdoms within which local bureaucratic appointments and questions of law and order fell under

their control. Rabasa sought to undermine such 'institutionalised' relationships by first founding a state rural police force, the Seguridad Publica, and secondly by transforming the structure and means of tax collection. In a move not at all unlike that of his Bourbon predecessors, Rabasa attempted to break the influence of local loyalties and vested interest through the imposition of men from Oaxaca, a neighbouring state, into decisive administrative and security positions. Furthermore, he reformed the position of *jefe politico*, a departmental level bureaucrat whose task it was to collect taxes, removing the post from 'democratic' election and instead making it subject to governmental appointment, ie. his own. He then founded the post of *visitador de jefaturas* or inspector general, as a means to better monitor the conduct and efficiency of these more localised *jefe politicos*.[55] In this way, Rabasa, in a manner very much reminiscent of the 'Enlightened despotism' of the Bourbons before him, began to bring local finances and community expenditures under greater governmental control and administrative surveillance.[56] In fact, even at the time, the transformations in local government became known as examples of a *caciquismo ilustrado* - an enlightened caciquismo.[57]

Rabasa also believed in the civilizing tendencies of modernization, introducing several public works programmes, including a telegraph network, a (limited) public education system, sanitation work and his favourite project, road construction. Their were no roads in Chiapas when he first arrived, but with Diaz's approval the Mexican army was mobilised to help construct a route that ran from San Cristobal, via Tuxtla to Oaxaca. As Thomas Benjamin notes, "since the road favoured the Central Valley more than the highlands, it became part of a discriminatory pattern of development, whose effect is apparent even today."[58] With a combination of land privatisation, improved communication and transport networks, including modernised port facilities at Tonala, the commercial agriculture of the lowlands experienced a boom. Like other parts of Mexico the commodity that fuelled such local expansion was the warm governmental reception given to foreign capital. According to Robert Wasserstrom, "between 1880

[55] See Benjamin, *A Rich Land A Poor People*, op.cit., p. 43.
[56] He also established a State Treasurers General Office, introducing state audits for the first time. See Benjamin, ibid., p. 43. For more on the Seguridad Publica, see Vanderwood, op.cit., p.119-130.
[57] See Leon, *Resistencia y Utopia*, op.cit., p. 219.
[58] Benjamin, ibid., p. 48.


Simojovel
Central
Highlands
San Cristóbal
de Las Casas
Ocosingo
Lacandon Forest
Tuxtla Gutiérrez
Altamirano
Venustiano
Carranza
Las Margaritas
Comitán
Angostura Dam
Grijalva River
0
50
100
Kilometers

and 1910, British, French, American, German, and Spanish businessmen invested 4.3 million pesos in Chiapas' burgeoning coffee industry, concentrated in Soconusco."[59]

Coffee was not the only crop that attracted international interest. Both rubber and tropical hardwoods also witnessed large scale investment from U.S. companies during the period, and on a smaller scale local creole *hacendados* turned their attention to cotton, cattle and cacao. Common to all these endeavours, however, was the need for cheap and regular labour. Unsurprisingly therefore, whereas the post-independence vision of the liberals had erased the Chiapan Indian in the attempt to create the juridical construct of the private citizen, the *cientificos* opted for a greater sectorial understanding of the native population. In-keeping with their understanding of the state as a developing organism, individual liberty, the professed telos of earlier liberal elites was ignored, as the imperative of functional specialisation was taken to its logical conclusion. Blind to the significance of cultural heritage and communal traditions, unless seen as bothersome obstacles, the governmental vision reduced the Chiapaneco Indians to the monolithic category of worker.[60] As a human resource rather than a human being, Chiapan Indians once again began to fall prey to the tactics and legislation designed to ensure a mobile yet consistent native workforce.

If not already tied to a particular finca under the *baldiaje* system which, if anything, only expanded under the *reparto* (privatisation) of lands initiated by the Rabasa administration, a policy that led to the end of village *ejidos* (communal lands), and one he would later regret, most Indians found themselves forced by economic necessity into migrant wage labour. 'Economic necessity', however, was often merely a more polite euphemism for describing the system of labour entrapment called the *enganche*, a recruitment strategy described, in less ambiguous terms, by one contemporary as "the commerce in human flesh."[61] The *enganchadores*, approximate translation - trappers, would employ a variety of tactics to ensnare their victims, most common among which was the creation of a debt, either through the lending of money, usually during or before an Indian feast day or celebration, or via the supply of large

[59] Wasserstrom, *Class and Society*, op.cit., p. 113.
[60] See T.G. Powell, 'Mexican Intellectuals and the Indian Question, 1876-1911,' in *Hispanic American Historical Review*, (Vol. 48, No. 1, 1968).
[61] Comment from an editorial in the Cristobalense newpaper, *El Tiempo* in 1907, quoted in Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land A Poor People*, op.cit., p. 77.

amounts of aguardiente liquor with the same end in mind.[62] Some types of labour were considerably worse than others however, and the *monterias*, mahogany lumber camps, held such an unsavoury notoriety that the *enganchadores* actually had to kidnap highland Indians to form labour gangs.[63] Conditions were in fact so dire that many of the workers were either criminals or deported rebellious Indians from Sonora and the Yucatan. Whether convict or not, all were chained up at night and watched over by armed guards during the day.[64]

One other aspect of Chiapan commerce that reveals the limited extent of the Diaz modernization project was the continued use of Indians as transport carriers, known as *tamanes*. It was a practice increasingly at odds with governmental ideas of progress, yet nonetheless the savage logic of the economic rationale that underpinned the work permitted its continuation. In a letter to President Diaz in 1898 from the then governor, Francisco Leon, we can read, in tones of muted outrage, the advantages for the local merchant of using Indian carriers rather than mules;

> '*he makes a contract that places all the responsibility on the carrier, he thus has faith that all the merchandise will be treated with care, needing no one else to supervise its transport, he need not worry about feeding the carrier, nor paying him in advance, he pays the carrier one peso per journey and charges three or four, gaining two or three pesos on every journey, if a mule dies or becomes useless; it monopolises the business, impeding competition, because it prevents the timely transport of the merchandise[...]*
>
> *For these merchants [...] it does not suit, nor can it suit, the opening of paved roads, even less the opening of railways, which would lead to the disappearance of this type of exploitation that leaves wounds on the bodies of many indigenous the same as those which the beasts of burden bear on their backs.*' [65]

Perhaps one of the most tragic aspects of these years of modernity for the Indians of Chiapas was that they initiated a new structure of civil and religious

[62] See Ricardo Pozas, 'El Trabajo en las Plantaciones de Cafe y el Cambio Sociocultural del Indio,' in *Revista Mexicana de Estudios Anthropologicos*, (Vol. XIII, 1952).
[63] See Benjamin, op.cit., p. 89.
[64] See Thomas Benjamin, 'El Trabajo en las monterias de Tabasco y Chiapas, 1870-1946', in *Historia Mexicana*, (Vol. 30, April-June 1981), and also consider B. Travern's provocative novels, e.g. *March to the Monteria*, (New York, Hill & Wang, 1971).

hierarchy within the communities themselves. Taking advantage of the new administrative roles with the communities, such as the *jefe politico*, it was possible for the non-Indian authorities to force native leaders to provide reluctant workers. As these administrators also had control over the sales of land and could call upon the Seguridad Publica to enforce their decisions, initially resistant Indian leaders often found themselves corrupted. It thus appears that it was during this period that for the first time the reorganisation of the native *cofradias* and religious *cargos* (responsibilities) began to take on the early characteristics of the civil-religious hierarchies that anthropologists would later suggest as being characteristic of an indigenous response to social stratification.[66]

**Conclusion**

The governmental vision and the drive for modernization that characterised both Chiapas and Mexico in the late 19th and early 20th centuries led in many ways towards a revolutionary change in conditions for the majority of the Indians of the region. The paper rights that had been so much a part of the liberal rhetoric of post-independence gave way to the interventionist tactics of a new scientific politics, a politics that merely gave intellectual credibility to a widespread restriction in social freedom. As one American who lived in Chiapas at the time noted, "as long as a man owed money to his patron, his freedom was only a meaningless technicality".[67] As the Porfiriato wore on the chasm that divided 'old' liberals from 'new' would eventually lead to a ten year social revolution whose battles, although momentous in other parts of Mexico, would not greatly effect the Indians of Chiapas, but whose later political and social results would be significant.

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[65] Letter from Francisco Leon to Presidente Porfirio Diaz, 20 deciembre 1898, reprinted in Jan de Vos, op.cit., p. 278-281, quote from p. 279.
[66] See Rus and Wasserstrom, op.cit., p. 472-3, and Frank Cancian, *Economics and Prestige in a Maya Community*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1965).
[67] Karena Shields, *The Changing Wind*, (New York: Thomas Cromwell, 1959), p.40, quoted in Benjamin, *A Rich Land A Poor People*, op.cit., p. 88.

# *Chapter Four*

# Institutionalising the Indian: *Corporatismo, Indigenismo* and the creation of an Authoritarian Regime

First born of a legitimate campaign against the re-election of Porfirio Diaz, the Mexican Revolution became a combustible mixture of elite dissatisfaction, popular resentment, foreign interest and political ideology. Its greatest achievement was probably the 1917 constitution, with the inclusion of the all important Article 27, a legislative measure that restricted the ownership of Mexican land to Mexican nationals and in so doing provided for the redistribution of property so central to the agrarian demands of the rural masses. In the end though, the revolution was won by the members of an elite regional faction that had first sought to replace Diaz within his own system. Hailing mainly from the state of Sonora, in the Mexican north-west, the group fought under the Carrancista or Constitutionalist banner.[1] By 1920 their victory was all but secure, having already orchestrated the assassination of Emeliano Zapata, the popular leader of the rebel army of the south. In 1923 Pancho Villa, the charismatic general of the northern forces, was also murdered. So violent in fact was the new government's response to perceived threat, that by 1929, the year Diego Rivera was commissioned to paint an allegorical history of Mexico on the walls of the Palacio Nacional, nearly all the heroes of the ten year rebellion were dead, and the revolution itself was already well on the way to becoming that peculiar Mexican political creation, *la revolucion institucionalizada* - the institutionalised revolution.

Even after writing what is considered by many the definitive account of Emiliano Zapata, one of the revolution's greatest heroes and the figure most representative of the populist interests that came to be enshrined in article 27 of the 1917 constitution[2], it is John Womack's considered opinion that the real nature of the historical transformations of those 10 years of violence "is not so much social

[1] See Hector Aguilar, *La Frontera Nomada. Sonora y la revolucion Mexicana*, (Mexico, 1977).

[2] See John Womack Jr., *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution*, (New York, Vintage Books, 1968). The reform of article 27 was of course an important part of the neo-liberal reform program pursued by President Salinas during his *sexenio* (1988-1994), and subsequently also forms an important part of the contemporary Zapatista demands, and the obvious reason for their choice of Zapata as a unifying symbol for their struggle. Womack, not suprisingly, has recently written his own (much criticised) short account of the ongoing Chiapan conflict, *Chiapas, el Obispo de San Cristobal y la Revuelta Zapatista*, (Mexico,

revolution as political management."[3] It is a view also shared by Kevin Middlebrook, although for Middlebrook the resolution of the revolution embodies a more puzzling paradox. Thinking not only of the Mexican experience he explains, "the paradox of social revolution is that popular mobilization and socio-economic transformation most commonly eventuate in a new form of authoritarian rule."[4] Irrespective of whether such a broad generalisation is valid or not, in the case of Mexico it certainly appears to be true. Nevertheless, whilst agreeing with Middlebrook's characterisation of the outcome of the revolution we may well wish to question his description of this process as paradoxical.[5]

This is because it is entirely possible to view the conclusion of the Mexican revolution as a continuation, or a fulfilment of, rather than a radical departure from, the new 'governmentality' that came into being at the end of the 19th century. It could be argued that the policy reforms and classifications which exemplified the application of scientific methods to a 'social organism' in the time of Porfirio Diaz also paradoxically resulted in the creation of an agrarian and labour consciousness. The revolution can therefore be interpreted as a struggle to close the political gap between the industrial or agrarian worker and his or her political representation. Embracing the revolutionary potential inherent within their new governmental classifications the diverse regional and agrarian insurgent groups can be seen as rising up to contest the policies and practices that had come to alter their lives so radically, whilst nevertheless leaving the very governmental understandings that made such policies thinkable uncontested. For while the Mexican revolution undeniably represents a dramatic moment in Mexican history, it nonetheless does not represent a significant transformation in governmental understanding. Giving rise to the 'corporatism' which has come to characterise the Mexican political system, the revolution can be viewed as securing the

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Cal y Arena Editores, 1998). See the book review in *Proceso*, 16 Agosto, 1998, p. 64-65, for a typical Mexican reception.

[3] John Womack Jr., 'The Mexican Revolution, 1910-1920', reprinted in (ed.) Leslie Bethell, *Mexico Since Independence*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.129. For a survey of the varied interpretations of the revolution see Alan Knight, 'The Mexican Revolution: Bourgeois? Nationalist? or Just a "Great Rebellion"?', in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, (Vol.4, No. 2, 1985).

[4] Kevin J. Middlebrook, *The Paradox of Revolution: Labor, the State and Authoritarianism in Mexico*, (Baltimore, The John Hopkins University Press, 1995), p.1.

[5] Consider Ilene O'Malley, *The Myth of Revolution: Hero Cults and the Institutionalisation of the Mexican State, 1920-1940*, (Westport, Greenwood Press, 1986), and Luis Javier Garrido, *El Partido de la Revolucion Institucionalizada*, (Mexico, SEP, 1986).

institutionalisation of historically contingent classifications, that have determined the limits of legitimate political representation ever since.

Pursuing the idea of continuity we would do well to recall that key to the political thought of that late 19th century Mexican governmental period was of course the philosophy of positivism, and in particular the work of Auguste Comte. It is revealing therefore to think that "Comte's ideal was a hierarchically organised non-competitive collectivism in which state and society were one".[6] Some ten years after the revolution this ideal appeared to be close to fulfilment, having made the transition from the personalist rule of Diaz to the institutional rule of the official party, at that time the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR), later to become the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano (PRM) and eventually what is still the current ruling party; the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), the Mexican system of *corporatismo* seemed to embody the very method of which Comte had dreamt. This being so, because corporatism, as Charles Hale writes, "is defined as a system of interest representation by hierarchically organised and non-competitive groups, recognised and regulated (if not created) by the state".[7]

In fact it is Hale's opinion that this political continuity is only possible because the proponents of scientific politics in the Diaz era were in reality also a breed of liberal constitutionalists, not of course constitutionalists of an absolutist, doctrinaire, or metaphysical nature, but rather constitutionalists of an historical and sociological taint.[8] Hale's interpretation is given strength by the response of Andres Molina Enriquez, one of the architects of the post-revolution constitution of 1917, when facing criticism that the inclusion of article 27, concerning property, was 'radically communistic' and that the constitution itself gave too much power to the executive. Whilst Molina "acknowledged that the 'spirit' of the Constitution was 'collectivist' as opposed to the 'individualist' spirit of 1857, he claimed this change merely reflected the Comtean concept (unknown in 1857) that societies were 'living organisms'."[9]

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[6] Charles Hale, 'Political and Social Ideas in Latin America, 1870-1930', in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. IV, (Cambridge, CUP, 1985), p.397.
[7] Ibid., p.435.
[8] This being in fact the central argument of his book, see Hale, *Transformation*, op.cit., p. 245-261.
[9] Hale, 'Political and Social Ideas', op.cit., p. 436, and Hale, *Transformation*, op.cit., p. 260.

Hale is not the first to recognise the continuity of positivist thought both during the revolution itself and throughout the post revolutionary period[10], nonetheless his originality lies in his suggestion that in the same way that the liberal triumph of the 1870's came to take on the role of a unifying myth for the political community of the late 19th century, so too has the revolution come to play a similar part in the political configuration of Mexican politics post 1920.[11] In both cases the consequences of concrete historical experience have led to the creation of a consensus, a consensus that leaves little political space for real opposition or discord. Thus whilst positivism could claim to underpin a strong centralised political system, one that could support dictatorial rule in the short term and constitutional fulfilment in the long term[12], it was nonetheless the particular contingent historical experience of the Mexican nation that provided the broad legitimisation for the creation of a political leviathan that such a governmental rationale first theoretically advocated. This is not to deny the potential for radical social reform that can be introduced under such a system, it is however to highlight another possibility, one that whiggish retrospective history seems to uphold, that such unity in its negation of the necessity for any plural, critical, and oppositional political discourse lays the seeds for an oppressive and authoritarian political system.

### *Mestizaje* - the Revolutionary Ideal

After ten years of fighting, with a death toll somewhere between 1.5 and 2 million, post-revolutionary Mexico was a country needy of reconstruction and reunification. Whilst the vision that held sway among the new northern rulers was one of unremitting modernism, the realignment of social forces and the burden of expectation that the revolution had unleashed often threatened to unravel and return the country to the widespread violence of the *decena tragica* - the tragic decade. Dominated in the main by the Presidency of Plutarco Elias Calles (1924-28), the priority of those early years was one of national integration combined with

[10] See Arnoldo Cordova, 'Espiritualismo o Positivismo? La Filosophia de la Revolucion Mexicana', in *Avances de Investigacion* No. 14, (Mexico, Centro de Estudios Latinoamericanos UNAM, 1975) also consider what Alan Knight refers to as 'developmentalist liberalism' in 'El Liberalismo Mexicano Desde La Reforma Hasta La Revolucion', in *Historia Mexicana*, (Vol. XXXV, No. 1, 1985).
[11] Again see Hale, 'The Legacy' in *Transformation*, op.cit., p. 245-261.

governmental control. As far as ideology was concerned, apart from the rhetoric surrounding Presidential claims concerning a 'revolutionary nationalism', perhaps the most original moment of revolutionary reform was realised under the influence of Jose Vasconcelos, the idealistic minister of education from 1921-24.

The novelty of the Vasconcelos vision lay in his conception of the modern Mexican nation as a cultural entity that went far beyond the narrow power politics and economics of his fellow ministers. Along with Antonio Caso and Pedro Henriquez Urena, Vasconcelos was a product of the Ateneo de la Juventud, a study and lecture society created in 1909 in open opposition to the positivist dominated curriculum of the Escuela Nacional Preparatoria (ENP).[13] The Ateneistas sought inspiration in the aesthetic and philosophical texts of Kant, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche and above all Bergson. Their conception of modernity differed from the determinist views of the Diaz cientificos in so far as they allowed for an element of contingency to temper their own evolutionist beliefs and in so doing placed greater emphasis on the creative force and vital impetus (*elan vital*) that they argued is present in all nature. Their attempt to marry a version of metaphysics with positivism was not in-itself new, we need look no further than Comte's own positivist spiritualism for evidence of this, however, what made the Ateneistas distinctive was their self-conscious sense of Latinamericanism.

Influenced largely by the then famous essay *Ariel*, penned by the Uruguayan, José Rodo, Vasconcelos and his companions refused to accept the racial determinism and European superiority of writers such as Spencer and Comte.[14] A reinterpretation of Shakespeare's *Tempest* and Renan's *Caliban*, *Ariel* told the story of a wise teacher, Prospero, who calls upon the youth of America to re-embrace the ideals of spirituality, grace and intelligence that 'Ariel' embodies. The threat to Ariel's ascendancy was 'Caliban', the symbol of materialism, 'sensuality and torpor' that in Rodo's text was openly identified with the United States.[15] In their journal, *Revista Moderna*, the Ateneistas discussed Rodo's work and like their intellectual contemporaries in Argentina, Peru and Brazil, they contributed to the articulation of an optimistic and

[12] In this regard we would do well to remember Emilio Rabasa, the young governor of Chiapas and the author of *La Constitucion y La Dictadura*, whose influence can nevertheless be seen in the post revolutionary constitution of 1917.

[13] See Hale, 'Political and Social Ideas in Latin America, 1870-1930', op.cit., p. 419-421.

[14] Jose Enrique Rodo, *Ariel*, (1900) trans. Margret Sayers Peden, (Texas, The University of Texas Press, 1988).

consciously Latin American idealism. "Our America", Vasconcelos once proclaimed, "is the creation of *mestizos*, of two or three races by blood and of all cultures by spirit".[16] His philosophical and cultural beliefs would eventually lead him to write *La Raza Cosmica* - The Cosmic Race, a philosphical rather than a biological justification for the superiority of the Latin American *mestizaje*.[17] Whilst active in those early years of post-revolutionary Mexico it was thus Vasconcelos who strove hardest to raise from the ashes of a war-torn land a being that he believed worthy of the sacrifice that had been endured. This being he called - *el hombre nuevo* - the new man of the revolution.

Vasconcelos began, as it were, at the bottom, dispatching thousands of *maestros rurales* - rural teachers to some of the most remote parts of the republic.[18] His teachers were imbued with a missionary zeal and their objective to create a basic library and school in every Mexican village, although never achieved, was embarked upon with a true revolutionary vocation. Collected in their own disciplinary journal, *El Maestro Rural*, it is possible to read the incomprehension and, on occasion, the outright hostility with which these rural teachers were often met. In their promotion of a secular state and their sincere belief in a revolutionary nation the teachers confronted the entrenched loyalties and beliefs of a still predominantly regional and provincially focused populace. Keen to replace the social and educational role of the Church it was perhaps inevitable that the new state-backed rural schools would soon inflame the Catholic congregations of the countryside. The Cristero Rebellion of 1926-29, was the most significant result of this conflict, and although limited to the states of the mid-west, the relationship between Church and state remained fraught for decades to come.[19]

Whilst the rural schools of Vasconcelos laid the foundations for the later socialist educational programmes of the state, he will probably be better remembered internationally for his instrumental role in employing art in the service of the

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[15] For more on *Ariel* and the use of the *Tempest* in Latin America see Roberto Fernandez Retamar, *Caliban and Other Essays*, (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

[16] Quoted in Hale, Ideas, op.cit., p. 421.

[17] Jose Vasconcelos, *La Raza Cosmica/The Cosmic Race*, trans. Didier Jaen, (Los Angeles, California State University, 1979). In a contemporary light it is possible to see the attempt to continue such theories, or even claim that they have been realised, in both the work and title of Colin M. MacLachlan & Jaime E. Rodriguez O., *The Forging of The Cosmic Race*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1990).

[18] See Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880-1928*, (Dekalb, 1982) and *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico*, (Tuscon, 1997).

revolution. Through his belief in the monumental and didactic nature of art, Vasconcelos managed to excite the imaginations of muralists such as Diego Rivera, Jose Clemente Orozco, David Alfaro Siquieros and Rufino Tamayo. He financed trips to rural and indigenous parts of Mexico, constantly recalling the triumphs of pre-Columbian Indian heritage and urged the artists to paint the walls and entrances of major public buildings. In the 1923 Manifesto of the Union of Workers, Technicians, Painters and Sculptors, it is possible to hear the influence of the Vasconcelos vision on the artists of the day,

> *"The popular art of Mexico is the most important and healthiest of spiritual manifestations and its native tradition is the best of all traditions ... We repudiate the so-called studio art and all the art-forms of ultra intellectual coteries for their aristocratic elements and we extol the manifestations of monumental art as a public amenity. We proclaim that all forms of aesthetic expression which are foreign or contrary to popular feeling are bourgeois and should be eliminated, in as much as they contribute to the corruption of the taste of our race, which has already been almost completely corrupted in the towns."* [20]

Apart from Vasconcelos himself, nobody represents the successes and failures of the early metaphysical idealism of the revolution better than Diego Rivera. Ambitious and iconoclastic in equal measures Rivera sought at one point no less than to paint the whole of Mexican history. That he did so, should give an insight into the tenacity and confidence of the man, but it should also remind us of the very pliability of art, a quality that human beings do not so easily embody. In his mural *Man, Controller of the Universe*, we see a fair skinned male seated at the centre of the composition. In his hands he holds the control levers for a universe which surrounds him. The painting, in all its historical and political complexity, the least of which being its earlier cancelled commission for the Rockefeller Centre in New York, portrays better than any philosophical tract the central belief that the new man of the early twentieth century stood at the cross roads of science and history, and was, unlike his

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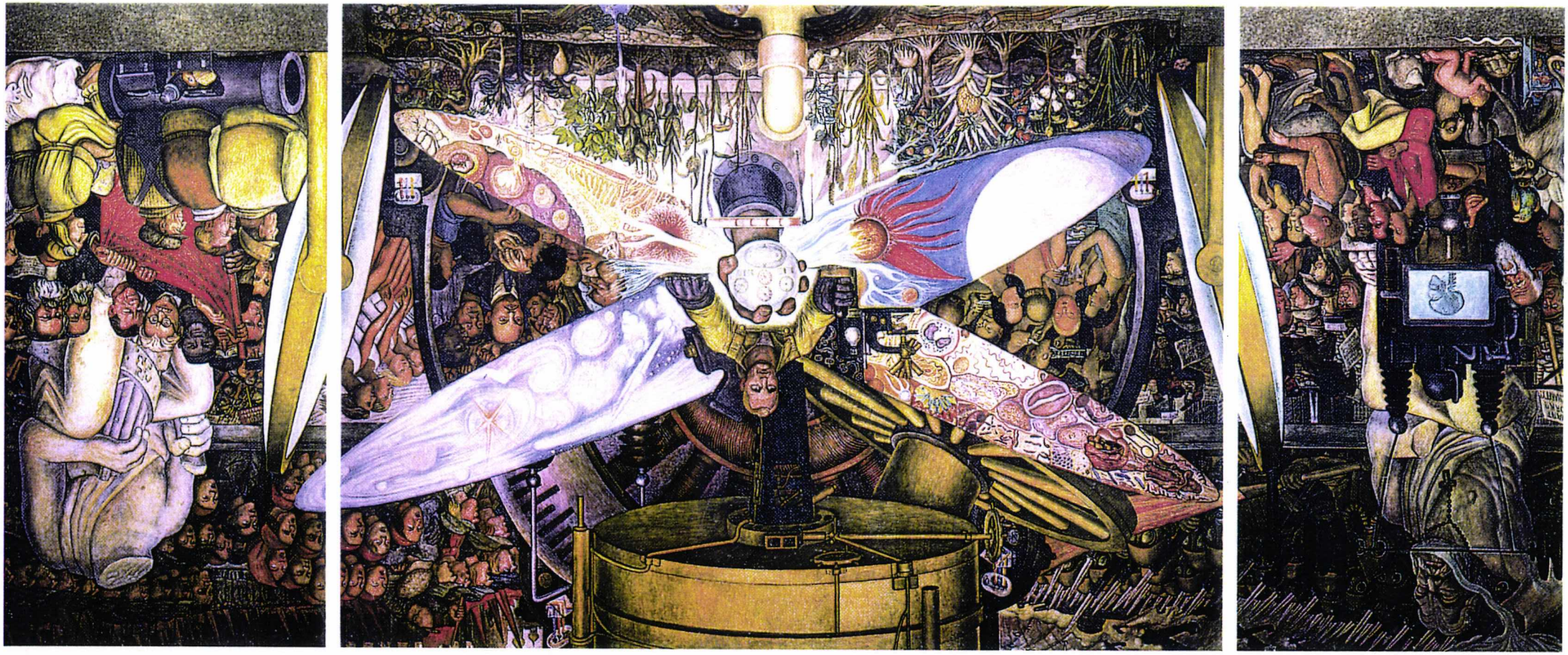
[19] See Jean Meyer, *Historia de Los Cristianos de America Latina. Siglos XIX yXX.*, (Mexico, Ed. Vuelta, 1989).

[20] From Jose Clemente Orozco, *Autobiografia*, (Mexico, 1970), quoted and translated in Jean Meyer, 'Revolution and Reconstruction in the 1920's', in *Mexico Since Independence*, (ed.) Leslie Bethell, op.cit., p. 209.



superstitious and oppressed predecessors, uniquely poised to direct these mechanisms of progress. It offers all the excitement and awe that such an idealised universal humanism commands, and in light of the Soviet revolution to which Mexican intellectuals increasingly sought solidarity, it also transformed Mexican mural art into international revolutionary art.

After the exile of Vasconcelos in 1924, this transformation or replacement of an always tentative revolutionary Mexican philosophy by an international revolutionary philosophy was, in the opinion of Octavio Paz, all but inevitable. He writes, "the inexistence of a large proletariat or a socialist movement of significance - that is to say: the lack of relation between the social and historic reality and the painting that attempted to represent it - gave the murals of Rivera, Siqueiros and others, a tragically inauthentic character."[21] Nowhere is this charge of inauthenticity more compelling than in Rivera's depiction of the indigenous of Mexico. Whilst his glorification of the pre-Columbian Indian past should be recognised as a loosely understood pro-Indian interpretation of Mexican history, in general his adoption of Indian cultural motifs should be seen as highly selective and subject to his own aesthetic and cultural biases. In the words of one commentator, "he presented a casually eclectic view of pre-Columbian history, often deriving his images from Colonial sources that manifest demonstrable European influence, and his strong preference for the exotically sophisticated culture of the Aztecs gave a skewed view of the Indian populace."[22]

Like the 'indigenistas' before him, in particular, those who employed images and histories of the Aztec past as a means to legitimise a post-colonial identity and political independence, Rivera had difficulty equating the contemporary Indian with that of his pre-Hispanic past.[23] In fact during those post-revolutionary years, towards what became officially termed "the indigenous problem", Rivera had a surprisingly orthodox Marxist approach. In his own contribution to what was then surfacing as a significant debate he wrote, "the 'indigenous problem' has been employed by the aristocratic-bourgeois politicians or *petit*-bourgoise to cover-up by means of an ethnological denomination that which is in reality nothing more than a question of

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[21] Octavio Paz, 'Re/Visiones: La Pintura Mural', in *Los Privilegios de la Vista*, (Mexico, Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1987), p. 260.
[22] Betty Ann Brown, 'The Past Idealized: Diego Rivera's Use of Pre-Columbian Imagery', in *Diego Rivera: A Retrospective*, (London, W. W. Norton & Co., 1986), p. 155.
[23] See chapter two.

class."[24] The 'Indian problem' was therefore no different from the problem of the poor *campesino* (field worker/peasant). The question of 'culture' which was increasingly becoming *the* question in the new social science of Anthropology, was thus dismissed by Rivera. He argued instead that poverty and oppression were the issues of priority and that the notion of 'culture' was best restricted to the domain of a new, national, modern, and revolutionary Mexican society that he hoped to encourage through his art. Rivera's opinions whilst popular in certain quarters, and although later finding echoes in the policies of Cardenas, would not however become "official" for long.

**Official *Indigenismo* or the story of Cultural Anthropology and the State**

Arguably the story of official indigenismo does not begin in Mexico at all, but in Germany. From Germany it would lead to the United States and from there, as with so much that is assumed to be modern, to Mexico. The reason for this geographic complexity lies with the personal and intellectual trajectory of the individual considered "the most important single force in shaping American anthropology in the first half of the twentieth century": Franz Boas.[25]

The singularity of Boas' achievement was to steer U.S. anthropology away from the evolutionist theories of Spencer and Darwin, spurning the concept of race, with all the perilous implications of hierarchy and superiority that it suggested, and instead proposing the 'new' concept of culture.[26] Having experienced and escaped the increasingly chauvinistic and nationalist tendencies of late 19th century Germany, Boas was nonetheless keen to bring what he considered the progressive aspects of the German scientific tradition to his adopted America. That this personal experience gave his 'cultural anthropology' an added political and ethical dimension has not gone unnoticed. Likened at times to both the *Nationalcharakter* of Alexander Von

[24] Diego Rivera, 'La lucha de clases y el problema indigena. Proyecto de tesis sobre el problema indigena en Mexico y America Latina con relacion a la cuestion agraria' (1938), in *Arte y Politica*, (Mexico, Grijalbo, 1979), p. 187.

[25] George W. Stocking Jr., 'The Basic Assumptions of Boasian Anthropology', in *A Franz Boas Reader: The Shaping of American Anthropology, 1883-1911*, (ed.) George W. Stocking Jr., (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1974), p. 1.

[26] British anthropology was of course particularily influenced by such race and evolutionary theories, which, placed in the context of British anthropology's relationship with British colonialism, should once again alert us to the highly political nature of 'objective' social science. See H. Kuklick, 'The Sins of the Fathers: British Anthropology and the African Colonial Administration', in *Research in the Sociology of*

Humboldt and the *Volksgeist* of the romantic Herder, the Boasian culture concept attempted to engender an academic respect and value for the 'primitive societies' that lay outside the U.S. and European sphere.[27] Believing that in these primitive societies, culture was located in the myths and folklore of their people, Boas promoted detailed ethnographic fieldwork in an attempt to "establish the facts" and ultimately to "find the eternal truth".[28] In this regard however, Boas' seemingly relativised culture concept embodied a central tension between the ethnographic particular and the scientific universal. That ultimately this tension would resolve itself in the creation of an enduring research methodology for the social science of anthropology reveals the inescapable influence of enlightenment thinking upon the Boasian project.

George Stocking, the most attentive interpreter of the Boasian legacy explains further,

> *'On the one hand, in defending the mental capacities of non-European peoples, he was defending their capacity to participate fully in "modern civilization"; on the other, in defending their cultural values, he was establishing a kind of Archimedian leverage point for the criticism of that civilization. The need for such an external reference point was one of the leitmotifs of Boas' career, and it tended to carry with it a double standard of cultural evaluation: a universalistic one in terms of which he criticised the society in which he lived and a relativistic one in terms of which he defended the cultural alternative. Whatever the emotional roots of this need, the external cultural alternative was for Boas an essential precondition for the achievement both of scientific knowledge in the social sphere and of the freedom of the individual in society. Just as the "scientific study of generalised social forms" required that the student "free himself from all valuations based on our [own] culture", so also did true freedom require that we be "able to rise above the fetters that the past imposes upon us". Without an external cultural reference point by which to bring these valuations to the level of consciousness, both scientific knowledge and true*

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*Knowledge, Science and Art*, (Vol 1, 1978), and *The Savage Within: The Social History of British Anthropology, 1885-1945*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991).

[27] See Matti Bunzl, 'Franz Boas and the Humboldtian Tradition: From *Volksgeist* and *Nationalcharakter* to an Anthropological Concept of Culture', in *Volksgeist as Method and Ethic: Essays on Boasian Ethnography and the German Anthropological Tradition*, (ed.) George W. Stocking Jr., (Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1996). See also the introduction to chapter 2 for Humboldt's earlier influence on elite Mexican science.

*freedom would be impossible. This then was the ultimate meaning of Boas' lifelong fight for culture.'*[29]

That the Boasian reification of science and academic study should find itself enmeshed within the *official* revolutionary nationalism of America's southern neighbour can be traced in the main to the institutional and intellectual influence of Manuel Gamio, the first Mexican to receive a doctorate in anthropology outside of Mexico. Gamio first went to Columbia University, New York, to study a Masters in 1909, there he became a protégé of Boas, eventually receiving his doctorate under his tutelage in 1921.[30] As early as 1916 however, Gamio had already published *Forjando Patria* - Forging the Nation, the book for which he is best known, and which first set out his belief in the instrumental utility of anthropology for the creation of a revolutionary Mexican nation. Arguing that the Mexican population around the time of the revolution was at least two-thirds 'Indian', Gamio, unlike Vasconcelos, believed the future of the *patria* rested with the country's indigenous population. Where Vasconcelos sought to realise his revolutionary future through the patriotic ministrations of his *maestro rurales*, Gamio, much like his more inquisitive and 'sensitive' missionary fore-fathers, sought first to 'understand' indigenous 'culture' before "forging" it into the new nationalist ideal of *mestizaje*.

*Mestizaje* was therefore not simply a case of racial intermixing, as at times articulated by Vasconcelos, but rather a process of social and, especially, cultural amalgamation. The 'Indian problem' and the Mexican post-revolutionary policies of *indigenismo* to which it gave birth was therefore a problematique born of white/mestizo elite intellectual analysis rather than the product of direct Indian pressure. As Alan Knight writes, "the Indians themselves were the objects, not the authors, of indigenismo," and, as he dryly notes, "perhaps for that very reason it could be safely adopted."[31] As early as 1917 such a culturalist approach to the 'Indian problem' found a place in the official bureaucracy with the founding of the Direccion

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[28] Ibid., p. 55, 68.

[29] George W. Stocking Jr., *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology*, (Wisconsin, The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), p. 112-3.

[30] That he should have done so at all was due to the influence of Zelia Nutall, an American archaeologist already at work in Mexico. For more on this see Helen Depler, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations between the United States and Mexico, 1920-1935*, (Alabama, University of Alabama Press, 1992), p. 96-97.

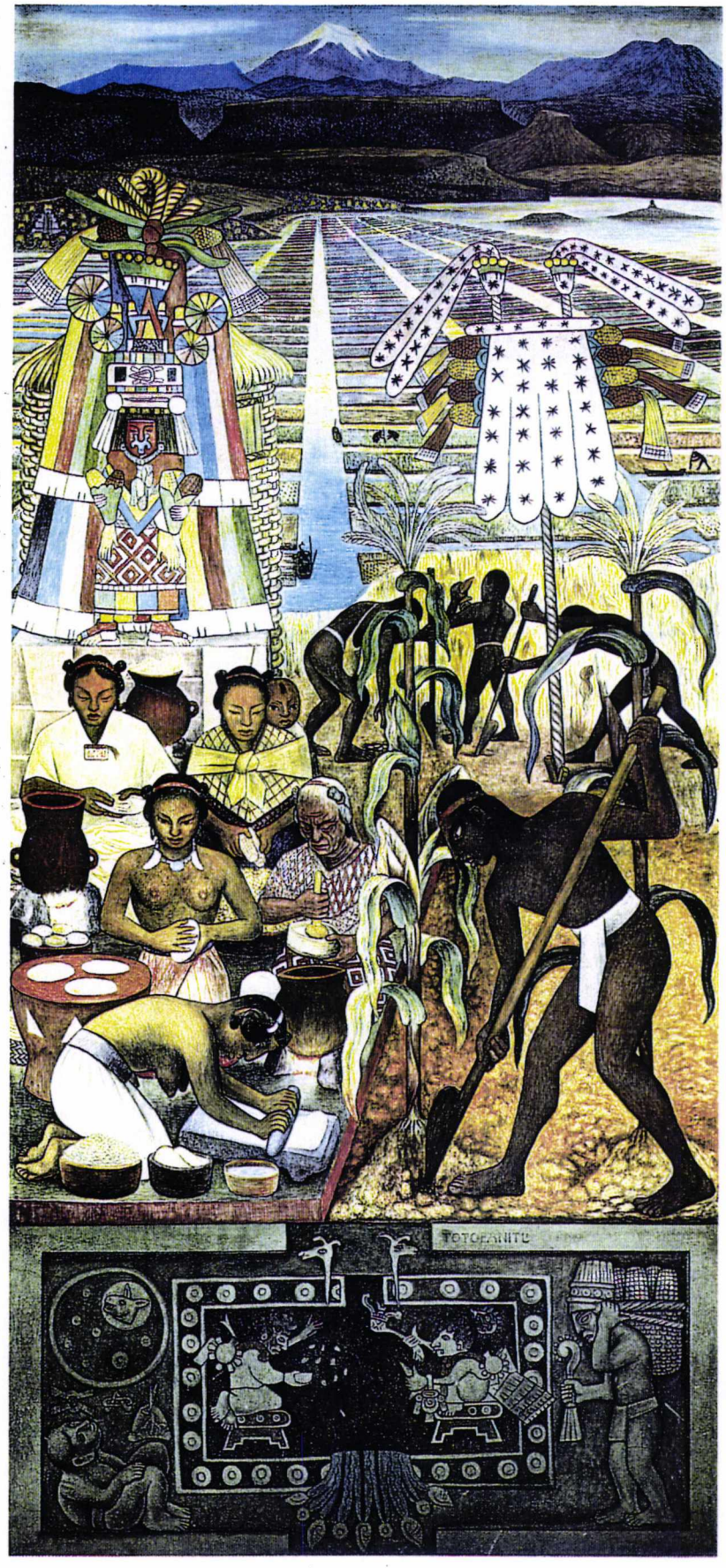
[31] Alan Knight, 'Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940', in *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1840-1940*, (ed.) Richard Graham, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1990), p. 77.

de Antropologia.[32] Over the next twenty years Gamio, alongside Lucio Mendieta y Nunez, Carlos Basuri and Moises Saenz, to name but a few, occupied the most prominent positions in a series of institutions created specifically to address the indigenous issue, including the Misiones Culturales (1922), the Casa del Estudiante Indigena (1926), Educacion Socialista (1934), the Departamento Autonomo de Asuntos Indigenas (1936), and the Instituto Nacional de Antropologia y Historia (1938).

In strictly academic terms Gamio was best known for his direction of a group of scholars working on the archaeological and anthropological reconstruction of the Aztec site of Teotihuacan. Apart from the physical excavations themselves, the result of this work was a two volumed survey entitled, *The Population of Teotihuacan* (1922). Previously the domain of U.S. academics, Gamio's attempts to link archaeology and ethnography were novel if not wholly successful. Whilst an adherent to the Boasian culture concept, Gamio's style of analysis tended more towards the positivistic collection of data, than the more social scientific method of ethnographic fieldwork.[33] For this reason, in academic terms at least, the work of the American Robert Redfield perhaps made a more lasting contribution to the understanding of contemporary Indian communities. His own version of "culturalism", in recognition of the significant historical upset presented by the Spanish conquest to the somewhat ahistorical theory of environmental adaptation as first adopted by researchers, came to consider the Mexican Indian as a special instance that he named "folk culture". [34]

Folk culture was defined as "the unwritten, verbally-transmitted knowledge and world-view that exists in small, relatively isolated societies like the provincial societies of Mesoamerica".[35] Folk was to be contrasted with urban, and the 'relative' isolation of such societies was to lead Redfield to make the further step towards a recognition of a process of 'acculturation', one that varied in degree depending on the proximity of folk societies to urban centres. It was a conceptual outline that was to have great influence and longevity amongst Anglo-American and Mexican anthropologists. Its effect on

[32] Initially the Direccion de Antropologia was a dependency of Secretariat of Agricultura.
[33] See David Brading, 'Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico', in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, (Vol. 7, No. 1, 1988), p. 75-89.
[34] See Robert Redfield, *Tepotzlan: A Mexican Village*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1930), and *The Folk Culture of Yucatan*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1940).
[35] See Rus, *Managing Mexico's Indians*, op.cit., p. 32, and Redfield, *Tepotzlan*, ibid.



Mexican Indian policy however, was due in the main to its claim that traditional native socio-political structures were at the heart of the difference between Indian communities and the wider national community.

The very concept of acculturation nonetheless suggested that this 'difference' of world-view could be altered, and thus the Indian could become more fully integrated into the Mexican national 'way of life'. The idea of development thus presented itself as the means by which all the positive aspects of the urban centres could be brought to the Indian communities, whilst avoiding all the undesirable effects of having the Indians move into the cities. Whilst this may have been the logical conclusion of the culturalist theory it was only through the inclusion of Mexican anthropologists in the domain of political policy that such an approach was to have significant human consequences. As one contemporary anthropologist laments,

> *"from initially suggesting that the process of development be humanised and the Indian's point of view be taken into account, anthropology had strayed into becoming the ideological justification for a policy that proposed to solve the Indian problem by gradually eliminating the Indian as such."* [36]

Whilst the implicit aim of *mestizaje* was only rarely publicly articulated, at least to the indigenous themselves, this new institutional and academic concentration on Indian culture became increasingly widespread throughout Latin America. In Mexico though, and in particular under the Presidency of Lazaro Cardenas, *Indigensimo* took on its most politically intrusive form, moving from culturalism to corporatism, as a means of state control.

### *Cardenismo*

Despite the intellectual and institutional efforts of individuals such as Gamio and Vasconcelos, the majority of post-revolutionary Mexico remained governed by a style of politics which, whilst not autocratic to the same degree as the Porfirian era, was nevertheless highly personalistic at both local, regional and national levels. Admittedly the relations of power were under constant renegotiation after the 'revolutionary awakening' that had occurred among the masses, but nevertheless,

[36] Rus, ibid., p. 44.

whilst bosses changed, governmental style did not radically alter until after the ascension of Lazaro Cardenas to the Presidency in 1934.

Rarely credited with an intellectual master-plan, the rule of Cardenas has come to be recognised as a politico-symbolic phenomenon within its own right. Known as *Cardenismo*, the six year period of his presidency (1934-40), marks a moment when revolutionary politics took on a utopian air. Characterised by his Presidential tours of the country, Cardenas sought out the rural populace of Mexico, making a point of listening, eating and promising reforms to his humble hosts. That many of these peasants did in fact receive that for which they had petitioned, explains in large part the respect and political capital that the name Cardenismo can still elicit today.[37] However, Cardenas' role as rural benefactor cannot obscure his more openly nationalist and administrative political strategy. It was after all during his presidency that the political tentacles of the soon to be Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) were most deeply implanted among the working masses. Though unions had been organised prior to his rule, and the official party was itself founded by Calles in 1929, nonetheless it was with Cardenas that the adoption of corporatism as the state's principal system of interest representation created the mechanisms of control and surveillance that would become integral to the next 50 years of PRI rule.

In many ways Cardenas was the revolution. He took the piecemeal reforms of his predecessors and combined them in a manner that allowed him both to transform the nation whilst at the same time indelibly combining the future of this nation with that of the new official party. This double edged nature of the post-revolutionary Mexican political system would hold major implications for the indigenous populace.[38]

> *"Whatever the ratio of idealism to considerations of practical political gain in the actions of the government between 1934 and 1940, the facts remain that during this period the agrarian reform affected one third of all the lands it would touch from the adoption of the Constitution of 1917 until 1970, that there were more workers organised and strikes called than in any similar period of Mexican history, and that for the first time ever a Mexican government had actually*

[37] See Rob Atkien, *Localizing Politics: Cardenismo, the Mexican State and Local Politics in Contemporary Michoacán*, (Amsterdam, CEDLA, 1999).
[38] See Arnaldo Cordova, *La Politica del Masas del Cardenismo*, (Mexico, Ediciones Era, 1976), and Alan Knight, 'The Rise and Fall of Cardenismo', in Leslie Bethall (ed.), *Mexico Since Independence*, op.cit.

*attempted to introduce Indians into local and national politics as an organised force."* [39]

Initially within the Cardenista political vision however, the Indian was not seen in terms of his or her particular ethnic specificity, rather the Indian was to be subsumed under the more general conception of the proletarian class.

Breaking the Mexican nation down into four key sectors: the labour sector, the peasant and agrarian sector, the popular sector and the military, Cardenas sought to govern through the creation of mammoth centralised associations. In adopting this sectorial approach, the Cardenas political strategy, described by one commentator as a 'politics of the masses', realised to a very large degree the Comtean ideal of corporate rule.[40] Firstly in 1938, in an attempt to harness the political power of the *campesinos*, the Confederacion Nacional Campesina (CNC) was created. Then, under the positivist influenced tutelage of Vincente Lombardo Toledo, the Confederacion de Trabajadores de Mexico (CTM) was formed to direct the might of the labour sector.[41] The Indians, although certainly conceived of as part of the nation's work force were nevertheless also recognised as a special case. Whilst such organisations can fairly be viewed as a politics of the masses, nevertheless it was always vital during the Cardenas regime, and ever since, that the peasant and workers unions were kept apart, ensuring that the process of social reform remained under the control of the state and avoiding the creation of any one single proletariat mass movement.[42] In Cordova's own opinion, under Cardenas, "the party thus resurged as an *administrator* of coporations, more than as an administrator of masses."[43]

Alongside this governmental desire for administrative totalism came other aspects of the Cardenismo view of revolutionary nationalism that involved such controversial policies as the expropriation of oil and railways, that came closest to altering the country's external relations of power than at any other time. Furthermore, whilst sharing with his Sonorense predecessors a distrust of the Catholic Church,

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[39] Jan Rus, *Managing Mexico's Indians*, op.cit., p.20. His land reform alone saw the promise of article 27 reach the communities of some 726,000 ejidatarios (collective farmers) encompassing a land mass of some 20,137,000 hectares, a figure that has to this day never been surpassed.

[40] See Cordova, op.cit., especially chapter 6.

[41] For more on the complex relationship of the CTM with the federal government see Middlebrook, op.cit.

[42] See Rosa Elena Montes de Oca, 'The State and the Peasants', in *Authoritarianism in Mexico*, (eds.) José Luis Reyna & Richard G. Hellman, (New York, Centre for Inter-American Relations, 1978).

[43] Cordova, op.cit., p. 164.

Cardenas went further, identifying *hacendados* (large landowners) and *caciques* (local bosses) as among the most significant obstacles to revolutionary change. Following on from Vasconcelos, he thus gave increased financial and institutional support to rural education, heralding a period of 'socialist education' that differed from previous educational missions in that rural schools were also viewed as useful locales for educating peasants about their rights as workers as well as teaching the skills and habits necessary to create productive agricultural units. As Mary Kay Vaughan has noted, "whereas the pre-revolutionary school had etched itself into a restricted place in daily life, the revolutionary school presumed to overflow customary boundaries in order to transform community life".[44] Whilst Vaughan has correctly recognised certain affinities with the Porfirian education project we would do well also to note the earlier attempts of Bourbon reformers to break the Catholic Church's hold via the schoolmaster or *maestro*.[45]

Uniquely though, it was Cardenas who combined this socialist education programme with other interventionist policies seeking to radically transform rural community life, and in particular Indian rural life. Himself of Tarascan Indian descent, Cardenas hoped to break the "oppressive relations of power" within which the indigenous lived through the introduction of unionisation and community re-organisation. Furthermore, in an unprecedented move, Cardenas also provided governmental protection to the first Protestant evangelical movement in Mexico, clearly supporting a competitor to the Indian majority's devotion to Catholicism. The deceptively named Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) targeted the most rural communities, including the indigenous communities of Chiapas. Supposedly encouraged for their organisational abilities, their legacy of converts like much that was first born of Cardenismo has, however, led to a peculiar political passivity within increasingly stratified indigenous' collectivities.[46] It was thus Cardenas who gave to

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[44] Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930-1940*, (Tuscon, University of Arizona Press, 1997), p. 65. See also Engracia Loyo, 'Popular Reactions to the Educational Reforms of Cardenismo', in *Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico*, (eds.) William H. Beezley, Cheryl English Martin & William E, French, (Delaware, Scolarly Resources Inc., 1994).

[45] See chapter 2.

[46] See Jan Rus and Robert Wasserstrom, 'Evangelization and Political Control: the SIL in Mexico', in *Is God an American?: An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, (eds.) S. Hvalkof and P. Aaby, (Copenhagen: International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, 1981), p. 163-172.

*indigenismo* the very ethical and political ambiguity inherent in the post-revolutionary Mexican system.

In one of his final acts as President, Cardenas hosted the first ever Inter-American Indigenous Congress in Patzcauaro, Mexico 1940. Closer to Rivera than Gamio, Cardenas in his address to the academic and indigenous delegates made his suspicion towards an overly culturalist stance explicit, whilst nevertheless reclaiming the Indian for his own project of revolutionary nationalism,

> *"The formula of 'incorporating the Indian into civilization', still has remains of the old systems that tried to hide the inequality of the situation, because this incorporation has generally been understood with regard to de-Indianizing and making less strange, that is to say, of putting an end to primitive culture: to the uprooting of regional dialects, traditions, customs and even the profound sentiments of the man rooted to his land. On the other hand, nobody is suggesting a resurrection of pre-Cortesian indigenous systems, or a incompatible stagnation with the currents of contemporary life. What we must support is the incorporation of the universal culture of the Indian, that is to say, the full development of all the potential and natural abilities of the race, the improvement of their living conditions, adding to their resources of subsistence and work all the implements of technology, of science, and of the universal arts, but always based upon a respect for the conscience and society of the racial personality."* [47]

**Revolutionary Experiences in Chiapas**

Before the time of Cardenas though, a period that the Indians sometimes refer to as *la revolucion de los indios* - the revolution of the Indians, the experience and legacy of the tragic decade in Chiapas was a very different and altogether less idealistic matter. It is even a common refrain that the revolution never arrived in Chiapas. It of course did, only it was not the social and populist revolution of later nationalist and party myth. Rather, the experience of Chiapas was one similar to many regions outside of the northern and Zapatista zones; a partial, opportunistic and parochial conflict between often long established local rivals.

During the reforms of the Porfirian era (1891-1911) that had resulted in an era of *caciquismo illustrado* (enlightened bossism), Chiapas had experienced a period of uneven development with increased infrastructure and governmental investment being given over to the commercial agricultural projects of the central lowlands and coastal zones. This governmental policy of *positivismo modernizador* (modernizing positivism) was initiated by the young Emilio Rabasa, who, with his transferral of the state capital from highland San Cristobal to lowland Tuxtla, ensured that earlier liberal-lowland/conservative-highland divisions among the *familia chiapaneca* found themselves institutionally resolved in favour of the liberal lowland elite. Not surprisingly therefore the first 'revolutionaries' in Chiapas turned out to be "essentially elitist, clerical and conservative in orientation".[48]

Called *el mano negro* - the black hand, or sometimes the iron circle, this group of highland lawyers and landowners expressed their opposition to the Diaz regime and *los cientificos* as early as April 1911. Adopting the anti-reelectionist rhetoric of the Madero campaign, they raised an army of some 800 *ladinos* and, with both force and false promises, they 'recruited' several thousand mainly Chamulan Indians.[49] The rebellion was itself quickly quashed, and in light of the highlanders' fears of igniting another 'caste war', an unfavourable settlement was accepted. A more serious and prolonged rebellion began in 1914. After the victory of the revolutionary constitutionalist movement in central Mexico, Venustiano Carranza, in an effort to consolidate his government, dispatched a northern general and his troops to govern Chiapas. Having already experienced an increase in violence and banditry since the turmoil of national rule first began, Chiapas nevertheless had not witnessed the massive destruction and upheaval of other states. Conscious of this, military governor General Castro on his arrival in the state capital, addressed his somewhat startled Tuxtleco subjects in the following manner, "Chiapaneco cowards, while the north is struggling, you are enjoying peace but I will teach you to feel the effects of the

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[47] *Lazaro Cardenas, Ideario Politico*, (ed.) Leonel Duran, (Mexico, Era, 1972), p. 173.

[48] Thomas Benjamin, 'Primera Viva Chiapas ! Local Rebellions and the Mexican Revolution in Chiapas', in *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, (Vol. 49, December 1990), p. 33.

[49] On this rebellion see Antonio García de León, *Resistencia y Utopia: Memorial de Agravios y Cronica de Revueltas y Profecias de Chiapas durante los ultimos quinientos anos de su historia*, (Mexico, ERA, 1998), p. 223-237.

Revolution."[50] True to his word, over the next six years, both rural and urban Chiapas experienced the havoc, ambivalence and often arbitrary nature of 'revolutionary' and 'counter-revolutionary' violence.

Apart from Castro's renowned heavy hand: execution of opponents, burning of estates, theft of livestock and looting of churches, the reforms that mobilised a counter-revolution known as *la revolucion chiapaneca* were anti-clerical, agrarian and labour related. His *Ley de Obreros* legally ended the practice of debt-servitude that had shamed the state for so long. Imposing a minimum wage, he also cancelled workers' debts and with the backing of his troops, liberated often unsure servants and labourers. Suspicious of the northerners' claims and resistant to their saint-burning practices (*quemasantos*), most Indians avoided joining the *Carrancista* revolution, and, in light of the clearly ethnic division within the state, the General himself seemed reluctant to arm a disparate Indian force. In light of Carranaza's shaky hold on power after the occupation of Mexico City by Francisco Villa and Emiliano Zapata, an already incensed group of Chiapan *finqueros* (small estate owners) and *rancheros* (cattle farmers) formed their own revolutionary army that they named *Villista* after the rebel general of the north. Through forging a variety of alliances this group managed to hold the *Carrancista* forces to a fluctuating stalemate whereby the government could not control the countryside and the rebels could not hold the cities. Known as *los mapaches* (the racoons), "because they moved at night and ate uncooked maize in the fields like their namesakes", the Villistas inspired no more confidence in the rural and Indian masses than their Carrancista opponents.[51] By 1920 the conflict was over, and due to the astute response of the *Mapache* leader, Fernández Ruiz, to manoeuvres in the centre, notably the assassination of Carranza, the first post-revolutionary governorship of the state was his.

In the words of Thomas Benjamin, "Fernández Ruiz governed Chiapas as though the Mexican Revolution had never occurred."[52] He rescinded the *Ley de Obreros*, discouraged land reform and rigged elections. For that reason the 'revolutionary victory' of 1920, for Chiapas at least, was no revolution at all. Nevertheless some of the more radical aspects of the 'Revolution' did survive. In 1919

[50] Quoted in Benjamin, 'Primera Viva Chiapas', op.cit., p. 44.
[51] Ibid., p. 45.
[52] Ibid., p. 48.

the *Partido Socialista Chiapaneca* (Socialist Party of Chiapas) was formed, and, in combination with the remaining Carrancistas, many of the revolutionary social objectives surrounding land and labour reform continued to be championed, even if stymied by the local government of the official revolution. Whilst the government of Ruiz, himself a former student of the Porfirian governor Emilio Rabasa, did not endure past 1924, his Mapache collaborators continued to influence local rule, and in the moments when ex-Carrancistas found themselves in power, the limited concessions made to the rural masses rendered them seriously compromised by the stabilising influences of the evolving party system. As Carlos Vidal, Ruiz's successor, commented, "the complete organisation of our [labour] Confederation, gives us absolute and firm control of local politics."[53] Although Vidal himself would meet a nasty end, he was not mistaken about the new system of governmental politics that had begun under Calles and that laid its most sturdy foundation with the creation of the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR).

**Community Level Experience of 'Revolution'**

Depending on the village, Maya oral history tells a quite different story about the upheavals of the Mexican revolution from those recorded by the *ladino* elite or the historians of the 'official' revolution.[54] In Zinacantan for instance, little reference is made to the first uprising of 1911, known locally as the *Pajarito* rebellion. *El Pajarito* - Jacinto Perez, was an Indian of the department of San Juan Chamula, who became a General within the conservative 'revolutionary' movement orchestrated by the *ladino*, and in particular clerical, elite of San Cristobal - *el mano negro*, as already mentioned. To understand why so many Chamulans would side with their traditional highland oppressors takes some explaining. Apart from the cynical promises of land redistribution made by the *ladinos*, historian Antonio García de León suggests that *el pajarito* was an important individual in a new campaign of evangelization being undertaken among the Indians by the bishop of San Cristobal, Francisco Orozco y

[53] Thomas Benjamin, *A Rich Land A Poor People: Politics and Society in Modern Chiapas*, revised edition, (Albuquerque, University of New Mexico Press, 1996), p. 170.
[54] Andrés Aubry, *En La Escuela y en la milpa la pláctica no es la misma. Historia Tzotzil de la Revolución Mexicana en Chiapas*, (San Cristobal, INAREMAC, 1984). This article has also been

Jimenez.[55] Having once served in the federal army, *el pajarito* was both fluent in Spanish and Tzotzil, and as such became a useful middleman between the Church and the local native community. It seems Orozco y Jimenez was attempting once more to pull the Indians away from the more "idolatrous aspects" of their version of Catholicism and in so doing, hoping to regain control of the highland indigenous populace.

Ever since the events of the so called 'caste war' of 1867, the Indians of the highlands had lived outside of the influence of a powerful clergy. This lack of Church supervision, combined with the usurious labour recruiting practices of the Diaz years, had however effected the Indian communities in unexpected ways. In particular the cycle of migrant labour that travelled down to the coastal coffee fincas of the Soconusco had led the celebration of Indian public rituals, such as the *cofradia*, to adopt greater importance as a means of community identity and inter-communal prestige.[56] It appears paradoxically then, that as the Indian villages had increasingly become mere 'reserves of labour' for the lowland agriculturists, Indian life was given added structure and innovation by its attempts to incorporate both the new sources of income amongst some of the younger men and the fact that such men only had a limited physical presence within the community. Whatever the exact form of native government during this period, it is fair to say that whilst the role of the Catholic Church was limited, and faced with the constant abuses of the *jefes politicos*, highland Indians retreated into perhaps the only domain available to them; that of public ritual. In this way the 'traditions' of folk Catholicism or religious syncretism were once more open to reinterpretation and renewal, and it was exactly this tradition that Orozco y Jimenez appears to have been keen to undermine.

By no means successful in all communities, Zinacantan being particularly resistant, over time the bishop has been able to create a new faction amongst the Indians, with *el Pajarito* prominent among this new group of followers, pledging allegiance to the bishop rather than their traditional community. Thus when the conservative elite of San Cristobal declared open rebellion against the Porfiran

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partially translated in *Rebellion in Chiapas, an historical reader*, (ed.) John Womack Jr., (New York, The New York Press, 1999), see p. 97-104.

[55] García de León, op.cit., p. 226.

[56] See Jan Rus & Robert Wasserstrom, 'Civil-Religious Hierarchies in Central Chiapas: A Critical Perspective', in *American Ethnologist* (Vol. 7, no. 3, August 1980), p. 473.

government of the lowlands it was this 'loyalty' that was called upon. For this reason Zinacantecos did not join the Pajarito band, and even in Chamula he was refused by many, and more importantly, due to the rapid failure of the uprising itself, it appears that if anything the Indian communities of the highlands, including San Juan Chamula, took on an even greater suspicion towards any future revolutionary claims. With the expulsion of the followers of the Pajarito band, the 'traditional' community set about reinforcing their binds of allegiance, increasingly restricting contact with ladinos to the minimum possible.[57] This experience perhaps also explains why Indian villagers often hid not only themselves but their saints, when either *Carrancistas* or *Mapachistas* came to 'liberate' their villages. Furthermore, after 1914, when the Castro decrees were made for municipal freedom, it was the Chamulans who stipulated that the community's municipal president could not be bilingual but had to be a Tzotzil-speaking elder (principal) who had completed a career in the community's hierarchy of traditional civil and religious offices.[58]

The post revolutionary period of the 1920's to the 1930's therefore appears to have been a period when not only was traditional culture undergoing a retrenchment, but when the guardians of this culture, the elders or principales, were increasingly being given a more formal and structured role within the post-revolutionary organisation of village government. This limited degree of autonomy over internal Indian affairs led to what Jan Rus has described as a "profound revitilization of traditional culture".

> *"Fiestas that had not been celebrated since the late nineteenth century were revived and embellished; native curers were for the first time not only allowed but encouraged to conduct ceremonies in the community's church; even the dress of office-holders became more specialised."* [59]

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[57] In fact such was the insistence on community solidarity that a significant number of Chamulans were forced into exile, in a repeat of the expulsions that occurred after the 'caste war of 1867-1869, which lead to the creation of a new community in the north of the state called Rincón Chamula, for more on this see García de León, ibid., p. 235, and Gary Gossen, 'La Diaspora de San Juan Chamula: Los Indios en el Proyecto Nacional Mexicano' in *De Palabra y Obra en el Nuevo Mundo*, (eds.) M. Gutiérrez Estévez , M. León-Portilla & G. H. Gossen & J. J. Klor de Avala, (Madrid, Siglo XXI de España, 1992).

[58] See Jan Rus, 'The "Comunidad Revolucionario Institucional": The Subversion of Native Government in Highland Chiapas, 1936-1968', (San Cristobal de Las Casas, INAREMAC, 1992), p. 6. Now reprinted in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and The Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, (eds.) Gilbert M. Joseph & Daniel Nugent, (Durham, Duke University Press, 1994).

[59] Ibid., p. 6.

These acts of cultural renaissance must however be placed against the background of an all but non-existent agrarian reform, and the continued practices of *enganchedors* - labour recruiters, that whilst no longer privy to state support nevertheless continued to ensure that lowland fincas and jungle logging camps received a steady supply of native labour.[60] So it remained then, that as relations within the Indian community had increasingly become subject to greater self-rule, relations outside of the community, that is with non-Indian *ladinos*, remained highly exploitative and resistant to serious reform.

Several acts of resistance demonstrate the Indians' willingness to defend the new cultural freedom of their communities. Firstly it was claimed that in the early 1930's, Chamulans under the leadership of their *principales* (elders), murdered an *enganchador* and his two gun-totting companions as they sought to track down an Indian coffee labourer who owed them money. Then a year later one of the first post-revolutionary government schools was torched when it was built within a zone deemed to be 'residential' by the community elders, and finally, when rumours of anti-clerical *quemasantos* (saint-burners) reached Chamula, an armed guard was organised to protect the Indians' sacred religious artefacts.[61] This anti-clerical aspect of the revolution was noted by Graham Greene when he travelled through Chiapas in 1938. Whilst churches were closed and the Bishop of Chiapas was in exile, Greene came across many instances of native religiosity, in particular representations of saints who could supposedly talk.[62] In sharp contrast to the modernizing project of revolutionary nationalism that held a vision of a modern *mestizo* man at its centre, it should be noted that nearly two decades after the revolution, Indian life seemed to have carved an identity very much in opposition to *ladino* or *mestizo* national culture. Furthermore, as talk of party, progress, and class came to infuse the national discourse, Indian life continued to hold great respect for, and belief in, the transcendental, spiritual, or moral realm of daily and communal life.

Whilst indigenistas had long been arguing for the specificity of such cultural adaptations it was the *indigenismo* of Lazaro Cardenas that sought to go beyond the

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[60] See for instance the native testimony, 'Abtel ta pinka, Trabajo en las fincas', recorded in *Rebellion in Chiapas, an historical reader*, (ed.) John Womack Jr., op.cit., p. 111-118.
[61] Rus, op.cit., p. 7.
[62] Graham Greene, *The Lawless Roads*, (London, Penguin Books,1982), p. 184-192, originally published 1939.

level of community structure in a unique attempt to realise something of the indigenista agenda within the broader project of a national reconstruction of class relations. The arrival of Cardenismo in Chiapas, in part because of this unusual combination of culturalism with corporatism, was to lead to the deepest penetration, and finally corruption, of traditional Indian life of any Mexican governmentality.

**Indigenismo in Chiapas**

Well before Cardenas made his address to the Inter-American Indigenous conference in 1940, and even before he became President of the Republic, the failure of revolutionary labour and land reform to reach the Indians of Chiapas was well known.[63] Whilst the intellectual and academic debate surrounding the role of culture in the Indian's development was familiar to him, the uniqueness of Cardenas was to adopt *indigenismo* as another plank of his nationalist corporatist strategy to mobilise the rural masses within the structure of the revolutionary party. In Chiapas therefore, although the Indians were clearly recognised as a special case, the fact that the Tzotzils and Tzeltals of the central highlands represented one third of the population offered a significant political opportunity to direct the affairs of the state, via the combination of an Indian voting block with other loyal party sectors. However, as the state governorship was held by Victórico Grajales in 1934, a man strongly opposed to the labour unions and land reform, to the extent that he even encouraged the formation of *guardias blancas*, ranchers' private guards, the arrival of Cardenismo was never going to be straightforward.[64]

Cardenas' first move was to order a state labour commission which sought both to embarrass Grajales and to provide the excuse for federal intervention in state affairs. The report produced could not fail but record the obvious disparities in legislation and practice that were everyday practice within the state, and in particular as regards treatment of the indigenous population. For instance, although nationally the minimum wage stood at 1.30 pesos a day, the report stated, "Chamula workers labour for thirty centavos a day, and have to pay a twenty peso tax which state labour inspectors

[63] The Zinacantecos seem to be an exception to this, making claims as early as the 1920's. See Robert Wasserstrom, 'Land and Labour in Central Chiapas: A Regional Analysis', in *Development and Change*, (Vol. 8, No. 4, 1977), p. 449.
[64] For more on this see Benjamin, *A Rich Land*, op.cit., p.183-194.

demand for authorizing the hiring, as well as various excises charged by municipalities for passage through the area."[65] In this way the continued practice of *enganche* was exposed and accusations of conditions of "virtual slavery" owing to the complicity of state officials led to the sacking of several officials and eventually precipitated the downfall of Grajales in 1936. The new governor was a Cardenas man, loyal to the party and free from the compromising links to the local landed elite. One of his first acts was to name Erasto Urbina director of the freshly created state Departmento de Protección Indigena - Department of Indigenous Protection (DPI). Urbina had already distinguished himself through both his role within the earlier labour commission and his willingness and capacity to mobilise highland Indian communities in support of the party. Apart from his team of bilingual backwoods *ladinos* that formed a body guard and security measure for his visits to rural highland communities, Urbina also had the unusual talent to speak both Tzotzil and Tzeltal fluently; "not like a ladino, but like us" according to Chamulans.[66]

In Chiapas the creation of the DPI was closely followed by the founding of a Syndicate of Indian Labourers (STI). With these two institutions in place it soon became possible for the government to play the role of intermediate between the coastal coffee plantations, the *fincas*, and their Indian labour supply, a role, that at least in the short term, was to improve conditions for the Indians. To achieve this end however it was also necessary to penetrate the 'traditional' Indian political structure of the Tzotzil and Tzeltal Indian communities. Initially this was realised through changing the ladino (non-Indian) secretaries that normally dealt with the Indian villages, later though it involved the more direct disruption of 'native' political hierarchies. By demanding that young bilingual scribes be placed in the municipio presidency alongside the 'traditional' Indian elder, who had reached his post only after completing years of ceremonial and community duties (*cargos*), the Cardenista reforms laid the seeds of a state-Indian community complicity that although briefly successful in altering the oppressive local non-Indian power structures of the period, would soon result in the creation of a new style of Indian oppression. It would be an oppression all the more potent due to the co-option of the native traditional structure, a structure now

[65] Quoted in ibid., p. 191
[66] Quoted in Rus, op.cit., p. 10.

subverted but whose legitimacy, due to its continued claim to uphold 'tradition', would remain unquestioned for some time.

The influence of the young bilingual Indian men that Urbina had successfully negotiated within these communities, initially to perform the function of translators and go-betweens in place of *ladino* men who had previously fulfilled, and exploited, this role, became more complicated by their additional positions within organisations beyond the confines of the community. The new scribe co-president of the Indian municipio was also often the local labour union officer, the leader of the municipio's agrarian committee, the village representative to the regional committee of the Confederacion Nacional Campesina (CNC) and, perhaps most importantly, a leader of the local branch of the official party, the Partido Revolucionario Mexicano, the PRM (previously the PNR, soon to become the PRI). Whilst there were two municipio presidents, the power of these younger men via their role as the principal link with the exterior political world was always going to be subject to a degree of censorship by the traditional principal co-president. The traditional route to the presidency of the community had after all, always required the completion of a certain amount of obligations and responsibilities (*cargos*) that were partially created to prove the commitment and ability of an individual to serve his community. So in 1942, when a young Chamulan scribe president, Salvador López Tuxum, volunteered to serve an important - and expensive- religious office, the grounds for the unification of traditional village power with external state and government power were prepared.

Previously, the serving of a civil-religious position within the communities had been an expensive affair, often requiring the men to leave their *milpas* (corn fields), or absent themselves from migrant labour for a year, whilst they served the community. Rarely did men volunteer, and it was the community elders who chose candidates that they felt were capable and appropriate. It is reasonable therefore to be suspicious of a young man's willingness to volunteer and as Jan Rus has discovered, "during the same week that López Tuxum volunteered for religious office, [...] the DPI (Department of Indigenous Protection) quietly announced that it would permit liquor to be sold by current and *prospective* religious officials in Indian communities both out of respect for its ritual meaning, and to help defray the costs of the office".[67] This new aspect of wealth creation that had not existed previously within the native civil religious

hierarchy led to a wave of new volunteers and when Tuxum became sole municipal president the next year the process of subversion of tradition was complete.

Whilst Cardenas can therefore be seen as laying the institutional and social foundations of Mexico's *Indigenismo* policy, nonetheless, the distinctive character of his reforms were to be lost. "In other words", as Alan Knight writes of Cardenismo in general, "the jalopy was highjacked by new drivers; they retuned the engine, took on new passengers, and then drove it off in a quite different direction."[68] The new drivers were to be the conservative governments of the following years, and the new passengers, the "academic anthropological bureaucrats", who returned to a 'cultural' understanding of the 'Indian question' and its subsequent institutionalisation.

**The 'Comunidad Revolucionario Institucional'**

With the change of governmental emphasis post-Cardenas, the foundation of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) in 1948, and the opening of the first ever regional centre in San Cristobal de Las Casas (1951), the Indians of the Chiapan highlands began to find that their newly constituted 'traditional' hierarchies were also to become the official conduit for governmental development programmes.

> *"Between the mid-1950s and the late 1960s, then, the state had not only recognised the scribe-principales as sole leaders of their communities, but by enriching them and supporting them politically, had given them power over those communities beyond any of their predecessors."* [69]

In 1957 at the invitation of the INI, Evon Vogt, professor of anthropology at Harvard Univeristy, established a fieldwork centre in San Cristobal de Las Casas. Over the next twenty years more than one hundred and forty students would visit the Indian villages of the central highlands, Chamula and Zinacantan being the most consistently studied, with the express intention of "describing the inside of native structure".[70]

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[67] Rus, ibid., p. 17.

[68] Alan Knight, 'Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy?', in *The Journal of Latin American Studies*, (Vol. 26, no. 1, 1994), p.107.

[69] Rus, op.cit., p. 37. See also Luz Olivia Pineda, 'Maestros bilingues, burocracia y poder politico en Los Altos de Chiapas', in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de Otra Historia*, (eds.) Juan Pedro Viquiera & Mario Humberto Ruiz, (Mexico: UNAM, 1998).

[70] It is important to mention that Jan Rus and Robert Wasserstrom were among the last of these students, collectively however, the Harvard project produced twenty-one doctoral dissertations, twenty seven-monographs and edited volumes.

Their can be few ethnographic subjects that have received such intensive and consistent attention, and yet, in their exclusive adoption of the Boasian culturalist approach, the students of the Harvard project restricted themselves to representations that purposely ignored any external political dynamics.

This singularity of approach can in retrospect be seen as particularly unfortunate as, by the 1960's, and long after the reforming zeal of Cardenismo had been swallowed up by the Mexican single party system,

> *"the government had managed to co-opt not only the native leaders who were its direct collaborators, but ironically, the very community structures previously identified with resistance to outside intervention and exploitation: independent self-government, strict enforcement of community solidarity, and religious legitimation of political power. What anthropologists of the time were describing as 'closed corporate communities' had in fact become 'institutionalised revolutionary communities' harnessed to the state."* [71]

It has been this situation more than anything else, argues Rus, himself one of the last co-ordinators of the Harvard project, that "has led in recent years to the anomaly of the state enforcing 'native traditions' *against the natives themselves* to maintain order, and has forced many Maya peasants to search outside of their communities for alternative ways of organising themselves."[72]

Such power, however, was not to go uncontested, and by the late 1960's Indian communities all over the highlands were in conflict. At the centre of this conflict lay the contradiction of a government policy that has led to the education and training of a generation of younger men, equipped and keen, to realise their own business and personal plans without the requirement of 'traditional' sanction. Whilst the 'official' party of the state, the PRI, has continued to support 'traditional' Indian authority, the socio-cultural and political landscape of Chiapas has become increasingly complex with many Indians choosing the Church, both Protestant and Catholic, or oppositional political parties and independent unions as a means through which to explore what Jan Rus describes as "alternative ways of organising communities that would be truer to

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[71] Rus, op.cit., p. 2. See also Luz Olivia Pineda, 'Maestros bilingues, burocracia y poder politico en Los Altos de Chiapas', in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de Otra Historia*, eds. Juan Pedro Viquiera & Mario Humberto Ruiz, (Mexico: UNAM, 1998). On the idea of 'closed corporate communities' see Eric Wolf, 'Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java', *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* (Vol. 13, 1957), pp. 1-18.

their own sense of themselves".[73] In general terms, this has led to a large degree of migration away from the 'traditional' centres of Indian life and a multiplication of often competing non-state socio-political structures through which Indian grievances have found expression, although not necessarily solution.

[72] Rus, op.cit., p. 2,
[73] Rus, op.cit., p. 38.

# *Chapter Five*

# Neoliberal Governmentality: Social Change, Contested Identities and Rebellion

Ever since armed rebels attacked the military barracks of Ciudad Madera in Chihuahua, northern Mexico, on the 23rd of September 1965, successive Mexican governments have been aware of the existance of *guerrilleros* willing to contest the country's status quo by military means.[1] One long-time student of Mexican guerilla groups, Carlos Montemayor, identifies the Chihuahua attack as the beginning of a period of over three decades of near uninterrupted 'unofficial' warfare that continues to this day. Although figures never reached the horrific magnitude of state sanctioned campaigns in other Latin American nations such as Argentina and Chile, Mexico's own 'Dirty War' claimed the lives of thousands of suspected subversives[2] in operations which still remain virtually unknown outside of Mexico.[3] Whatever secrecy surrounded the government's stance towards dissident groups during this period was shattered however by an event that has become a landmark moment in the history of Mexican political activism and opposition. On the 2nd of October 1968, just as Mexico sought to promote itself as a developed and sophisticated nation-state, exemplified by its hosting of that year's Olympic games, a peaceful demonstration by thousands of students in Mexico city's Tlatelolco square was violently broken-up with gunfire from Mexican military troops. Some 350 demonstrators were murdered in all, and whilst the government attempted to supress media coverage of the massacre, a clear and unequivocable message was sent to all those citizens that wished to contest the rule of

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[1] Carlos Montemayor, *Chiapas, la rebelion indigena de Mexico*, (Mexico, Joaquin Mortiz, 1997), p.66-80. See also Daniel Pereyra, *Del Moncada a Chiapas: Historia de la lucha armada en América Latina*, (Madrid, Los libros de la Catarata, 1994), p. 181-191.

[2] To give some idea of the number of armed groups active throughout Mexico during this period, listed below are the names of ten out of an estimated 24: Movimiento Revolucionario del Pueblo, Partido de los Pobres, Asociacion Civica Nacional Revolucionaria, Comando Urbano Lacandones "Patria Nueva", Frente Urbano Zapatista, Partido Revolucionario Obrero Clandestino Union del Pueblo, Union Campesina Independiente, Movimiento 23 de Septiembre, Liga Communista Espartaco, Frente Revolucionario del Pueblo. See Monteymayor and Pereyra, ibid.

[3] A picture of these operations can nevertheless be garnered from the following: Gustavo Hirales, 'La Guerra Secreta, 1970-1978', in *Nexos*, (No. 54, Junio 1982), p. 20-35; Guillermo Boils, 'Los Militares en Mexico: 1965-1985', in *Revista Mexicana Socologia*, (No. 47, Enero-Febrero, 1985), p. 169-185; Lilia Bermudez Torres, *Guerra de Baja Intensidad: Regean contra Centroamerica*, (Mexico, Siglo 21, 1987); Martha Patricia Lopez Astrain, *La Guerra de Baja Intensidad en Mexico*, (Mexico, Universidad Iberoamericana and Plaza y Valdes Editores, 1996).

Mexico's Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI): that whether clandestine or public, opposition would only be tolerated within dictated limits. [4]

Being the only political party ever to rule Mexico since the 1920's, the PRI has amazed political analysts not merely because of its perceived stability and evident durability, but because of its continued international legitimacy, a status that has elluded other revolutionary regimes most notably Cuba and the ex-Soviet Union. It has been this ability to escape both international criticism and sanction that led the Peruvian novelist, Mario Vargas Llosa, to dub Mexico, "the perfect dictatorship". Ever since its creation in 1929 the PRI (then the PRM), as explained previously, has embodied a Comtean approach to society. Taking its inspiration from the positivism dominant at the end of the 19th century, the party has sought to realise the Comtean ideal of a "hierarchically organised non-competitive collectivism in which state and society were one".[5] By breaking society down into three main sectors; the labour sector, the agrarian sector, and the populist sector, and through creating the means for their political representation, the PRI's corporate approach to governance claimed a comprehensiveness that theoretically at least placed it above contestation.

In retrospect, some political analysts have sought to explain how it is that such a party has survived for so long. One suggestion has been the pendulum theory, which claims that it has been the PRI's political responsiveness that has ensured its longevity. On this analysis, the party itself has been astute enough to recognise shifts from left to right or vice versa amongst its electorate and subsequently has appointed both a President and a governmental package that has been able to swing as appropriate between the extremes of the traditional political spectrum. More convincingly, and empirically better sustained, has been the argument that it has been the PRI's institutionalised practices of clientism and corporatism that have ensured broad public support.[6] Ranging from the crude tactics of stuffing ballot boxes, vote rigging,

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[4] Whilst there was much written at the time, Elena Poniatowska, *Massacre in Mexico*, (Missouri, University of Missouri Press, 1978) still stands out for its transcription of first hand testimony. Only recently, however, has the full story of the massacre begun to be told, see Julio Scherer Garcia & Carlos Monsivias, *Parte de Guerra*, (Mexico, Aguilar, 1999), for the latest interpretation of events.

[5] Charles Hale, 'Political and Social Ideas in Latin America, 1870-1930', in *The Cambridge History of Latin America*, Vol. IV, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 397.

[6] See Bo Anderson & James D. Cockcroft, 'Control and Coöptation in Mexican Politics', in *Latin American Radicalism*, (eds.) Irving Louis Horowitz, Josué de Castro & John Gerassi, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1969), and Susan Kaufman Purcell, 'Mexico: Clientalism, Corporatism, and Political Stability', in *Political Clientism, Patronage, and Development*, (eds.) S. N. Eisenstadt & Rene Lemarchand, (Beverly Hills, Sage, 1981).

intimidation and even murder, to the more acceptable tactics of co-optation of political troublemakers with the creation of new governmental posts or the guarenteeing of their political acquiesence via the enticement of conditional rewards, the PRI have long been considered experts in the simulation and manufacture of electoral support. Calls of protest against such clearly anti-democratic practices have however, had little international resonance for one oft overlooked reason: Mexico's powerful northern neighbour.

Lying like a bridge between the economic and political goliath of the United States of America and the once revolution-raked republics of Central America, throughout the 1960's and 70's, Mexico was considered a vital security concern by consecutive US adminstrations. American involvement in counter-revolutionary activity in Central America (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Granada & Panama) has already been well documented, the full extent of US operations in Mexico still remains undisclosed.[7] Unlike their Central American neighbours though, Mexico at no time faced a united country wide revolutionary struggle. In fact in a report published in 1990 by General Mario Acosta Chaparro of the Mexican military, it has been claimed that whilst there have been at least some 24 subversive groups active in Mexico during this time, their various and competing leaders, in an ironic mirroring of PRI attitudes, often considered themselves "above the field of politics as the unique posessors of the true doctrine."[8] For the General this, and not the counter-revolutionary tactics of the Mexican state, has been the principal reason behind the "consequent fragmentation and failure of the left to deeply root itself among the population."[9] Unusually however, rather than reduce the existence of such subversive movements to the influence of ideology, even if widely contested amongst the groups themselves, the General instead posits an alternative list of reasons for the continued existence of revolutionary movements: unemployment, lack of services and social policies, illiteracy, lack of democracy, injustice, low buying power, high foreign investment, agrarian problems

[7] According to one CIA operative at the time, "Mexican security services are so effective in eradicating the extreme left that we don't have to worry about it. If the government was less effective, we would, of course, have to promote their repression.", from Philip Agee, *Inside the Company: CIA Diary*, (New York, Penguin, 1975), quoted in Roger Bartra, 'Revolutionary Nationalism and National Security in Mexico', in *Mexico: In Search of Security*, (eds.) Bruce Bagley & Sergio Aguayo Quezada, (New Brunswick, Transaction, 1993), p. 143.
[8] Quoted in Montemayor, op.cit., p. 70.
[9] Ibid., p. 70.

and corruption.[10] Whilst the politically weighted labeling of 'terrorists' or 'subversives' serves to gloss over such primary causes, both the General and analysts such as Montemayor recognise that whilst such conditions exist so too do the grounds upon which continued violent political opposition can take root.

It is perhaps unsurprising therefore, that it was in the early years of the 1980's that six revolutionary socialists went to the state of Chiapas on Mexico's south eastern border with Guatemala to found the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN). Social, economic and political conditions had afterall reached a particularily low ebb in 1982 as Miguel de la Madrid began his six year term as Mexico's latest PRI President. Faced with massive foreign debt, high inflation and an unstable currency, the adminstration of De la Madrid introduced the most radical changes in governmental style that Mexico has witnessed since the 1940's. Thus it was that at roughly the same time as the new Zapatista rebels were struggling to survive in the mountains of the southeast that the entire country once more experienced a transformation in governmentality that sought to reconfigure state-subject relations.

**'Traditional' Communities in Crisis**

By the mid 1970's there were an estimated 75,000 Chiapan Mayas working in migratory agricultural labour.[11] By the early 1990's however, this figure had dropped to as little as 40,000, whilst in the meantime the population of working age men in the highland region had grown from 150,000 to 320,000.[12] In straightforward economic terms during the 1980's, highland Chiapas began to suffer from a massive surplus of indigenous labour, which, much like the pressures and forces brought to bear upon the communities and their leadership to supply labour in previous decades, can also be traced to reforms within the centralised PRI federal government. For example, the adoption of neoliberal macroeconomic policies exposed the coffee producers to the ravages of the free market, and via the selective channelling of government funds and subsidies, increased support was given over to non-labour, but land intensive lowland

[10] Ibid., p. 70.
[11] Jan Rus, 'Local Adaption to Global Change: The Reordering of Native Society in Highland Chiapas, Mexico, 1974-1994', in *European Review of Latin American and Caribbean Studies*, no. 58 (June 1995), p. 82.
[12] Ibid., p. 81.

cattle farming.[13] As a result of a short lived oil boom some Indians found temporary work as day labourers in Tabasco, others on the construction sites of hotel complexes in the latest Mexican tourist centre of Cancun. Yet others attempted to eke out a meagre living from subsistence farming on small plots in and around their traditional community centre, whilst a small but growing number made the gruelling and dangerous journey north to work on the fruit plantations of southern California.[14] The majority of Indians in the late 80's and early 90's though, began to fall into a vicious cycle of debt and poverty. The principal long term effect of such radical economic restructuring however, has been the effect on "social stratification and polarization within communities that formerly thought of themselves as egalitarian".[15]

Traditional understandings of the Tzotzil and Tzeltal Maya Indians who live in the highlands of Chiapas have long placed a social and cultural emphasis on agricultural labour. One example of this is the Maya belief that education is best considered as the slow acquisition of the soul. Such an education is not however, to be found in the traditional locations of Western learning, the schoolroom or the university lecture hall, but rather the soul of a Maya Indian attains true maturity only through the careful tending of the corn field, more commonly referred to as the '*milpa*'. Whilst this has always remained something of an ideal, such a belief should nevertheless serve as a warning to all those who would reduce the cultural and spiritual relationship of the indigenous of Chiapas with the land to one of mere functionalism. In Indian lore therefore, the *milpa* can be seen to provide the tangible material location for what is probably best comprehended as the nurturing of a holistic understanding of what it might mean to be a Maya Indian, and furthermore what it might mean to be a Maya Indian that lives in harmony with the physical and spiritual world that surrounds him or her. For it is through working the *milpa*, through the watching and responding to the slow passing of the seasons, the learning of when is the right time to sow the seeds, of how to nurture their growth, and how best to harvest their produce that the Maya Indian also grows. Thus it is through the natural process of agricultural care and

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[13] Neil Harvey, 'Rebellion in Chiapas: Rural Reforms and popular struggle', in *Third World Quarterly*, (Vol.16, No.1, 1995), p. 42.

[14] See *Chamulas en California; el testimonio de Santos, Mariano y Juan Gomez Lopez*, (San Cristobal de Las Casas, INAREMAC, 1995).

[15] Rus, op.cit., p. 82, and Frank Cancian, *The Decline of Community in Zinacantan: Economy Public Life and Social Stratification, 1960-87*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1992).

attention that the *milpa* also teaches the Maya Indian the very human and social values of patience, gratitude, humility, and respect.[16]

For a long time anthropologists have been understandably enchanted by the types of stories the Maya like to tell about themselves and the world they inhabit. In particular they have been keen to see, and seek to find, similarities between the beliefs and rituals of contemporary Maya communities with the little that we know of their pre-Hispanic ancestors.[17] In this respect the Indian communities of highland Chiapas have been considered especially fitting. Municipalities such as San Juan Chamula and Zinacantan with their strict observance of community obligations known as *cargos*, their complex and elaborate ritual calendar aligned with the annual agricultural cycle (and in this regard and others linked to the ancient *Tzolkin* pre-Hispanic Maya calendar), and their belief in a world of supernatural spirits and animal co-essences have exercised the intellects and imaginations of mainly American anthropologists for generations. In fact, as mentioned in the previous chapter, so worthy of study were deemed the 'closed communities' of highland Chiapas that in the 1950's the universities of Harvard and Chicago set up field work centres in San Cristobal de las Casas so that both students and professors might better conduct prolonged periods of research.[18]

Through adopting a 'culturalist approach' such anthropological research has on the whole sought to show how 'isolated' Indian communities have maintained a 'simple' culture of belief and ritual that makes little or no distinction between the spiritual and the temporal. Highland Maya communities have been understood as organising themselves into civic-religious hierarchies that reflect their beliefs and that

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[16] This particular parable has been repeated to me several times, but never more emotively than when talking to the refugees from Chenalho, who have been unable to return to their communities for fear of attacks by paramilitaries. 'Las Abejas', the collective name of the refugee group, spoke longingly about their unattended *milpa* and their subsequent concerns for their children's upbringing. Interviews in Chiapas June 1998. On Mayan Indian folklore see Robert Laughlin, *Of Cabbages and Kings: Tales from Zinacantan*, (Washington, Smithsonian Institute, 1977), also see the collection *Cuentos de Chiapas*, published by the Sna' Htz'ibahom theatre and writing group, San Cristobal de las Casas.

[17] See Victoria Bricker, *The Indian Christ, The Indian King: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual*, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981).

[18] The study of Indian culture and anthropology in Chiapas and Mexico has a complex and highly political history beyond the scope of this article. For an informed insight see Jan Rus, 'Antropologia social en los altos de Chiapas: historia y bibliografia', in *Apuntes de Lectura*, (No. 3, June 1977, INAREMAC), and Juan Pedro Viquiera, 'La comunidad india en Mexico en los estudios antropologicos e historicos', in *Anuario 1994*, (Mexico, Universidad de Ciencias y Arte de Estado de Chiapas, 1995).

work towards the maintenance of community harmony and social equilibrium.[19] One aspect in particular that has attracted considerable academic attention, and appears to confirm the structural functionalist approach to Maya community, has been the Indian belief in co-essences, animal spirits or souls. Occassionally manifesting themselves as either animals or winds, the spirits are more generally described as being "naturally incorporeal or invisible, of 'pure air' as the natives say." [20] Anthropologists have identified such spirits as being either manifestations of a *nagual* or a *chanul*. As already explained in chapter one, a *nagual* is generally understood as a spirit that, whilst not visible to the human eye, is nonetheless capable of not only seeing, but listening, protecting or attacking. Its most feared act is its capacity to 'eat' the soul of those who have seriously erred. The soul that a *nagual* attacks quite often is the *chanul*, or spirit companion, animal soul, or co-essence that each Maya Indian is said to possess. Such "Mesoamerican souls" writes Gary Gossen, "are fragile essences that link individuals to the forces of the Earth, society, the cosmos, and the divine."[21]

As anthropologists have been keen to map a 'moral universe' or cosmology for the highland Maya that is separate and often opposed to the world of *Kaxlanes* (non-Indians), the concatenation of the transcendental and the temporal that Indian soul beliefs entail has been central.[22] Talk of the 'soul sickness' or 'soul loss' of an individual has thus been thought to symbolise a disharmony within the local community that must be rectified. With the help of a *curandero* (an Indian curer and shaman), the victim of such witchcraft or magic will reflect upon his past actions and dreams in an attempt to discover the act or omission that might have led to such sickness and to identify what course of action might best restore both his, and his

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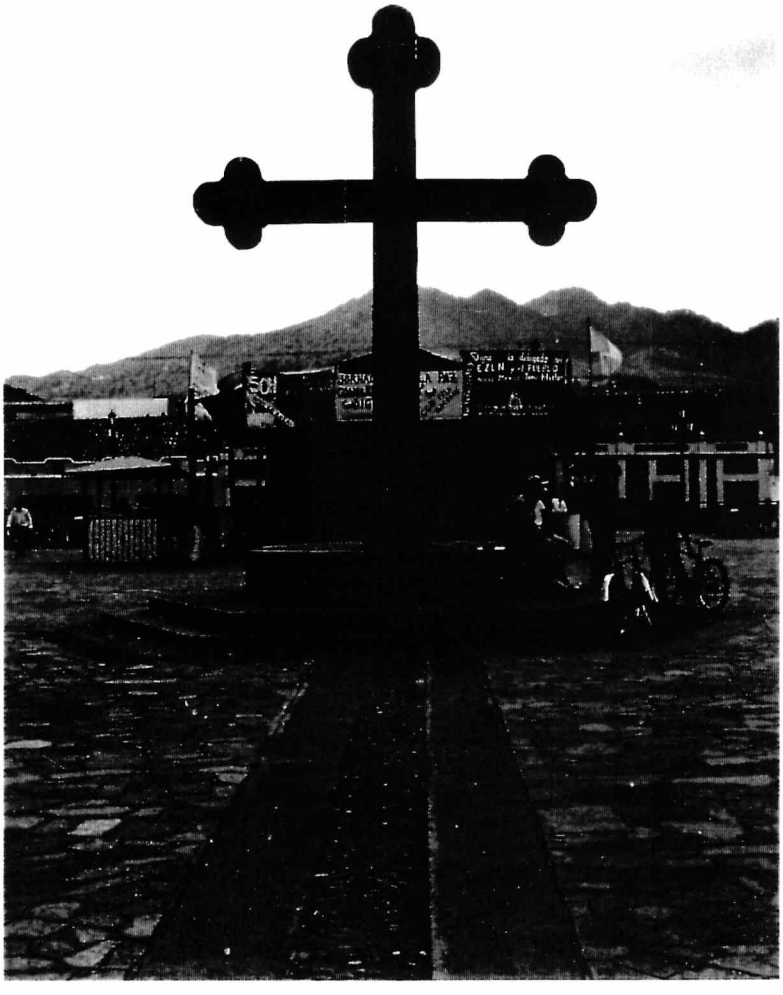
[19] The classic examples of this kind of work - typifying a structural functionalist mode of analysis- are Evon Vogt, *Zinacantan: A Maya Community in the Highlands of Chiapas*, (Cambridge MA, Belknap Press, 1969) and Frank Cancian, *Economics and Prestige in a Maya Community: The Religious Cargo System in Zinancantan*, (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1965).

[20] Alfonso Villa Rojas, 'El Nagualismo como recurso de control social entre los grupos Mayanses de Chiapas, Mexico', in *Estudios Etnologicos. Los Mayas*, (Mexico, UNAM, 1985), p. 536.

[21] Gary H. Gossen, 'From Olmec to Zapatistas: A Once and Future History of Souls', in *American Anthropologist*, (No. 96, Vol. 3, 1994), p. 555.

[22] The classic example is Calixta Gutieras-Holmes, *Perils of the Soul: The World View of A Tzotzil Indian*, (Illinois, Free Press of Glencoe, 1961). See also Gary Gossen, 'On the Human Condition and the Moral Order: A Testimony from the Chamula Tzotzil Maya of Chiapas, Mexico', in *South & MesoAmerican Native Spirituality*, (ed.) G. H. Gossen, (New York, Crossroad Publishing, 1993), and Priscilla Rachun Linn, 'Souls and Selves in Chamula: A Thought on Individuals, Fatalism, and Denial', in *Ethnographic Encounters in Southern Mesoamerica: Essays in honour of Evon Zartman Vogt Jr.*, (ed.) Victoria R. Bricker & G. H. Gossen, (New York, University at Albany, 1989).



community's, spiritual and temporal well-being.[23] By the early 1980's however, even shamans had begun to divide into political factions. As greater pressure has been brought to bear upon such communities the 'shared cosmological framework' of the Maya has begun to fragment.

Classic anthropological research however has proved particularily disenabling when it comes to explaining the conflicts that began to emerge in highland Chiapas throughout the 1970's and 80's. By concentrating exclusively on the ceremonies, rituals and spiritual aspects of communities, many anthropologists only succeded in continuing to perpetuate the myth that the Tzotzil and Tzeltal Maya existed in communities that had nothing or little to do with the non-Indian outside world, in particular the Mexican state. They failed to explore the communities' relations with government bodies, and how such relations impinged upon what was viewed as 'traditional custom'. As described in the previous chapter, during a period in the 1930's with the increased interventionism of the government as part of its policy of *indigenismo*, itself based upon the same spurious American anthropological analysis of 'Indian community', the leadership of Chiapan Indian communities underwent a significant transformation. Through negotiating the appointment of young bi-lingual Indians to the positions of highest authority within the communities, the government successfully co-opted both native leaders and previously autonomous indigenous religious and community structures.[24]

It has been this situation more than anything else, argues Jan Rus, that has led to a crisis in native community organisation. As Indians witnessed outside authorities being employed to both legitimise and enforce 'native rule', the priority of community loyalty that had been so vital in previous decades began to breakdown. As families and individuals began to look beyond their 'traditional community', a sincere search for alternative ways in which to be 'Indian' unfolded. In a very deep sense this was a search for a new self identity. It has been an experience all the more complicated, not

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[23] Also see George A. Collier, 'The New Politics of Exclusion: Antecedents to the Rebellion in Mexico', in *Dialectical Anthropology*, (Vol. 19, No. 1, May 1994), p. 27-30.

[24] see Jan Rus, 'The "Comunidad Revolucionario Institucional": The Subversion of Native Government in Highland Chiapas, 1936-1968', (San Cristobal de Las Casas, INAREMAC, 1992), reprinted in *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and The Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, (eds.) Gilbert M. Joseph & Daniel Nugent, (Durham, Duke University Press, 1994), and also his *Managing Mexico's Indians: The Historical Context and Consequences of Indigenismo*, unpublished manuscript, 1976. See also Luz Olivia Pineda, 'Maestros bilingues, burocracia y poder politico en Los Altos de

simply by the array of organisations that have come to involve themselves in Indian life in recent decades - opposition political parties, evangelical and Protestant groups, the Catholic Church, unions and new agrarian co-operatives - but by the fact that for so long the identification of what it was to be Indian for the highland Maya themselves has resided within the PRI dominated 'traditional' communities from which so many have since become marginalised.

Perhaps a short digression into the life of Miguel Kaxlan, a Chamula Tzotzil, might provide an insight into the complex reconfiguration of Indian life that has occurred over this period.[25] As one of the earliest converts to Protestantism in Chamula, a decision that would result in his expulsion from the community and finally in his assassination, Miguel's conversion and relocation to the non-Indian highland centre of San Cristobal de Las Casas represents the torturous and dangerous path of re-identification that has troubled many a 'traditional' Chiapan Indian soul. Losing both his parents to influenza shortly after his birth, Miguel was taken in by his paternal uncle. Although poor, Miguel excelled at school, but with little opportunity locally he had to leave the community to seek work. Labouring first on the coffee plantations of the lowlands and then on the construction of the Pan-American highway, finally Miguel returned to the Chamula community centre penniless. Disillusioned he turned to drink and grudgingly reverted to the traditional Chamula life style until one day he took a bath in the household *temescal*[26] and had an unexpected revelation. In his vision he was commanded to become a shaman or *curandero*. For several years Miguel lived off his income as a curer and interpreter of dreams. His life radically changed however as a consequence of an accusation of stealing, his reputation ruined, once again he was broke and began to drink. It was then that Miguel encountered the North American Presbyterian missionaries Kenneth and Elaine Jacobs.[27]

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Chiapas', in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de Otra Historia*, (eds.) Juan Pedro Viquiera & Mario Humberto Ruiz, (Mexico, UNAM, 1998).

[25] What follows is based upon Gary Gossen's 'Life, Death, and Apotheosis of a Chamula Protestant Leader: Biography as Social History', in *Ethnographic Encounters in Southern Mesoamerica: Essays in honour of Evon Zartman Vogt Jr.*, (ed.) Victoria R. Bricker & G. H. Gossen, (New York, University at Albany, 1989), p. 217-229.

[26] A *temescal* is an Indian sweathouse, used since pre-Hispanic times for cleansing and purification purposes. The author highly recommends, should the opportunity arise, that you have a go.

[27] On the arrival of Protestantism in Chiapas see Jan Rus & Robert Wasserstrom, 'Evangelization and Political Control: the SIL in Mexico', in *Is God an American?: An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, (eds.) Soren Hvalkof and Peter Aaby, (Copenhagen, International Work Group on Indigenous Affairs, 1981), p.163-172, and for its more specific effects on women see Susanna Rostas, 'A Grass Roots View of Religious Change Amongst

Not only was Miguel converted but soon he became an active and successful proselytiser himself. In a short time the number of Protestants in Chamula numbered 120, not a huge number admittedly, but convinced of their new calling the converts first began by refusing to pay the community tax mandatory to support the fiesta cycle. They also refused to participate in any way in the public religious life of the community, including the ritual consumption of alcohol. Although few in number such a stance sent shock waves throughout the traditional community. Their actions had after all set a worrying precedent for tax rebellion, but more seriously they had openly challenged the moral authority of the community hierarchy and in doing so they had also openly contested the cosy political arrangement with the PRI state and federal government with which Chamula had first become entangled back in the 1930's. The response was thus suitably severe. All the converts had their houses burnt to the ground, a few were killed but most managed to flee to the safety of San Cristobal de las Casas. By the mid to late 1970s Miguel Kaxlan was the outspoken leader of a group now numbering some 2000 expelled Protestants from San Juan Chamula. On behalf of this group he pursued property claims through the courts for abused land rights whilst also involving himself in wider state politics by allying himself with a national opposition party, the PAN (Partido de Accion Nacional). And then one day in 1982 some men from Chamula bundled him into a van, several days later his dismembered corpse was recovered and buried. To this day no charges have ever been brought for the murder of Miguel Kaxlan.

The life and death of Miguel Kaxlan, if nothing else, illustrates the serious and often violent influences of 'tradition', community, state, party, globalisation, economics, religious affiliation and perhaps even the supernatural, that play a part in what we might best call the new politics of indigenous identity that has engulfed Chiapas, if not Mexico, in this the later half of the twentieth century. Whilst Miguel's choices and experiences were of course peculiar to him, he nonetheless gives some insight into the agonies of the Indian soul, once thought to need little more than the *milpa* to ensure a future of righteous living. In another important respect his story also illustrates a fact fundamental for understanding at least one of the conditions that have

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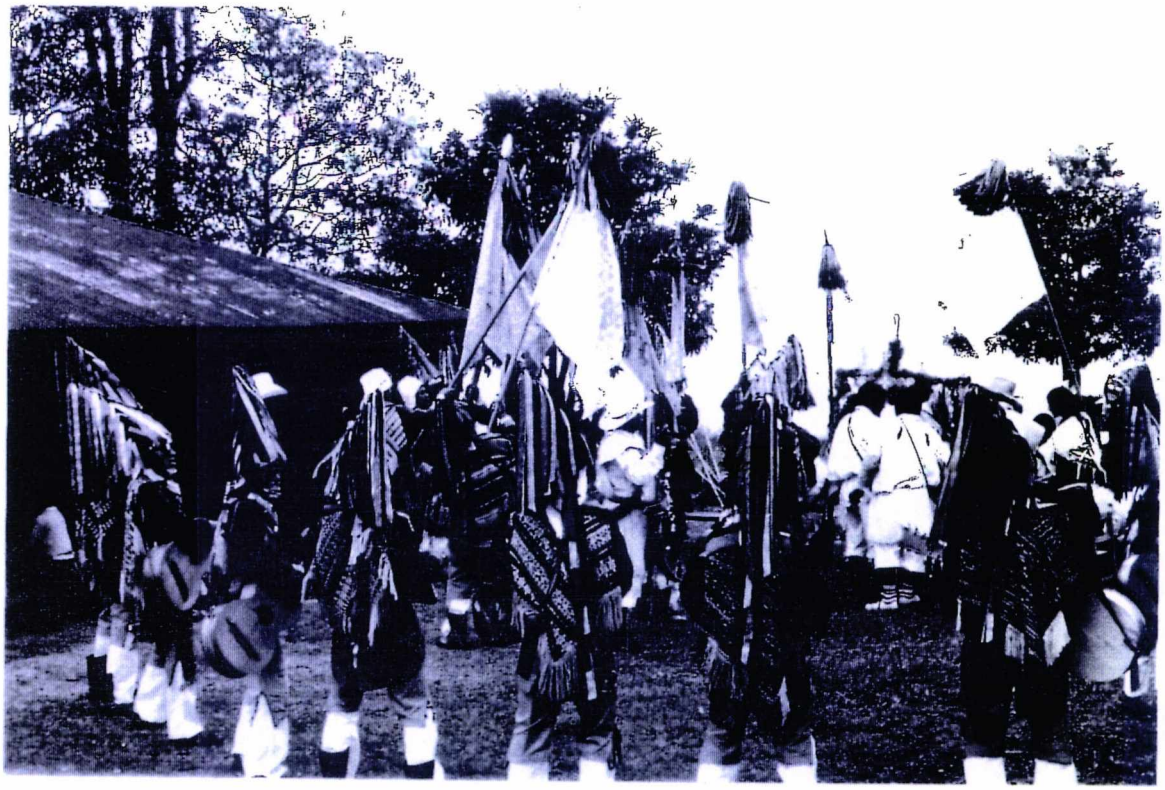
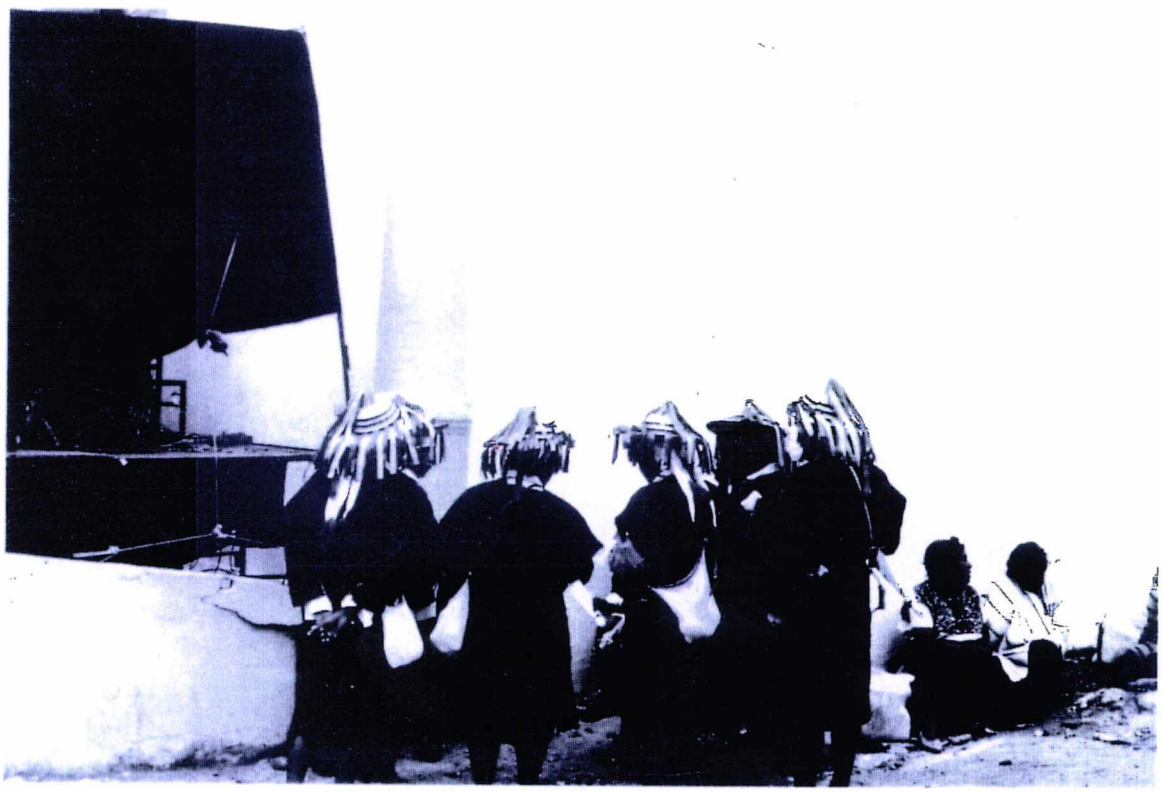
Women in an Indigenous Community in Chiapas, Mexico', in *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, (Vol. 18, No. 3, July 1999), p. 327-341.





made the Zapatista rebellion possible, that is "the crisis in the basic unit of native social organisation - and thus of state control - in Chiapas, the traditional community."[28] As the PRI government continued its package of neoliberal reforms throughout the 1980's and 90's, the number of indigenous leaving their highland communities continued to grow. Many, with the help of religious organisations, joined what was now an 'exodus' to the *selva lacandona* - the Lacandon jungle - where new experiments in the organisation of indigenous community were already taking place. One experiment however, would prove to be more radical than any other.

**The International Revival of (neo)Liberalism**

It is generally agreed that it was in 1982, under the Presidency of Miguel de la Madrid, that Mexico first entered the neoliberal stage of governmental rule. Although the necessity for structural adjustment was initially imposed by the soaring debt crisis and the consequent conditionality of IMF and World Bank loans, the breadth and scope of the reforms introduced have shown that Mexico's metamorphosis cannot simply be reduced to the imposition of an external economic vision, but rather it represents the conjuncture of a new breed of national rulers with a dominant international conception of how a modern nation-state should be run. A vital component then, in the Mexican neoliberal transformation, has been the role of its political elite. Unlike in previous national governments, the constitution of the political elite has increasingly been drawn from those equipped with a postgraduate education in disciplines such as economics and administration.[29]

The majority of these individuals who have made it to cabinet level throughout the 1980's and 90's had received their doctorates from universities in the United States; Harvard, MIT, Stanford, Yale and Chicago featuring prominently amongst them. All three Presidents - de la Madrid, Salinas and Zedillo - had studied economics or administration, and not coincidentally all had served in the budgeting and finance departments of the previous administration.[30] It is also revealing that all became

[28] Jan Rus, 'Local Adaption', op. cit., p. 73.
[29] See Peter H. Smith, 'Leadership and Change: Intellectuals and Technocrats in Mexico', in *Mexico's Political Stability: The Next Five Years*, (ed.) Roderic Ai Camp, (Boulder, Westview, 1986), p.101-117.
[30] See Miguel Ángel Centeno & Sylvia Maxfield, 'The Marriage of Finance and Order: Changes in the Mexican Political Elite', in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, (Vol. 24, 1992).

President without ever having held any previous elective office. Thus, as expertise becomes the route to government it also fulfils another important task in the exercise of power. "The elite's faith in the rationality of economics not only helped determine the kinds of policies adopted by it but also served to exclude rival claims to knowledge", writes Miguel Angel Centeno. Whatsmore, he continues, "these educational qualifications further increase the social exclusivity and homogeneity of the ruling elite by requiring financial and professional commitments to education that only a select few can make."[31] Dubbed the *tecnicos* by the press and public, and not at all unlike their *scientifico* predecessors, it was this new generation of rulers that set about dismantling the Mexican state.

Whilst Mexico quite clearly had been run according to a certain system ever since its central components were put in place by Lazaro Cardenas, legitimating changes to such a durable governing structure was always going to be a difficult task. The strategies of corporatism, clientism and patronage that have kept the same party in rule for seventy years, did not conform at all well to the new ideal of a streamlined minimal state, at least not in their pre-neoliberal guise. Removing subsidies, reducing union power, sacking hundreds of thousands of civil administration workers, and placing manufacturing goods and producers into an aggressive international market, were all neoliberal initiatives that disturbed, if not destroyed, the very ties that have linked the PRI to its traditional sectorial power bases in the past. Just how disruptive such policies have been for the ruling party was made startlingly apparent in the 1988 Presidential election, when Carlos Salinas, even with the assistance of a manufactured 'computer crash', only just scraped a victory with less than 50% of the vote, a result unheard of in PRI history.[32] What then, we must ask, made this new elite so determined to institute such radical change to a system of governance that had for so long been their sole guarantor of unquestioned national power?

The answer to this question, as with many of Mexico's major moments of governmental transformation, lies outside of the nation-state's borders, and in this instance can perhaps be traced to the conscious plotting of a group of European

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[31] Centeno, *Democracy within Reason*, op.cit., p. 122.

[32] See Wayne A. Cornelius, *Mexican Politics in Transition: The Breakdown of a One-Party-Dominant Regime*, (San Diego, Centre for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, Monograph Series No.41, 1996), p. 5, footnote 2, for evidence that the 'crash' was in fact a manufactured case of computer fraud.

intellectuals at the Swiss hotel of Mont Pèlerin in 1947.[33] At the centre of this group, stood the individual most often cited as responsible for a new international liberal revival, or new neoliberal order as it is more commonly known, that has come to dominate the international economic and political landscape from the late 1970's on. His name was Friedrich Von Hayek. In the 1950's, at a time when the relevancy of liberalism was viewed as in decline and the insights of Keynesian macro-economic planning had achieved the status of orthodoxy, Hayek's attempts to create a Liberal international were considered out of step. Nevertheless, in light of the totalitarian regimes that had brought Europe to war and the increasingly collectivist nature of state planning, it was Hayek's fervent belief that the seeds for new totalitarian orders were unconsciously being put in place. To counter this slide Hayek sought through the establishment of numerous think tanks such as the Mont Pèlerin Society, and later famously, the British Institute of Economic Affairs, to re-articulate the principles of classical liberalism and, in so doing, to influence the content of public policy.[34]

Key to Hayek's project, and in that of his similarly influential collaborators, Milton Friedman and Ludwig Von Mises, was a far greater and more passionate belief in the freedom of the individual than had been the case with their liberal predecessors.[35] In an important respect however this 'freedom' was constructed in opposition to the continued challenge of socialist and communist thought, for what both Keynes and Marx had in common, according to Hayek, was an overbearing and liberty-depriving conception of the role of the state.[36] True freedom, Hayek claimed, lay in the liberty to act and make choices without the intervention of state structures. It cannot be considered wholly coincidental then, that it was only in light of an increasing bi-polar social, military and economic relationship that developed during the Cold War between the European and North Atlantic states and the Soviet Union, that Hayek's liberals first began to find increasingly receptive audiences and increased influence.[37]

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[33] See Andrew Gamble, *Hayek: The Iron Cage of Liberty*, (Cambridge, Polity Press, 1996), p. 128-135.
[34] Ibid., p. 21.
[35] Their most famous and influential works are: Friedrich August Von Hayek, *The Road to Serfdom*, (London, Routledge, 1944); *Individualism and Economic Order*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1948), *The Fatal Conceit: the errors of socialism*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1988) & Milton Friedman, *Free to Choose*, (London, Secker & Warburg, 1980); *Capitalism and Freedom*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962) & Ludwig Von Mises, *The Free and Prosperous Commonwealth*, (New York, Van Nostrand, 1962).
[36] Hayek, *The Constitution of Liberty*, (London, Routledge, 1966), p. 12.
[37] See Nick Bosanquet, *After the New Right*, (London, Heinemann, 1983).

Begining with the retreat from the welfare state model of government that became widespread among the Western states in the 1970's, we can witness the moment when such neo-liberal theory first began to make the transition into a neoliberal formula of rule. Most clearly apparent in domestic terms, during the administrations of Ronald Reagan and Margret Thatcher, the removal of state structures became synonymous with the policies of privatisation, deregulation and 'rationalisation', and the political rhetoric of neo-liberal freedom began to take on an increasingly international and evangelical hue.[38] In one recorded instance at a British Conservative policy meeting in the 1970's, a member had prepared a paper arguing for a 'middle way'. Before the individual had finished his presentation however, the new party leader, Margret Thatcher, reached into her briefcase and took out a book. As one man present recalls, "it was Friedrich von Hayek's *The Constitution of Liberty*." Interrupting the presenter, she then held the book up for all to see. "'This,' she said sternly, 'is what we believe,' and banged Hayek down on the table."[39] Perhaps this insight into the notoriously autocratic nature of Thatcherite rule also suggests the manner in which such neo-liberal theory embodied a central contradiction.[40]

Despite the ubiquity of the term 'free' in the neoliberal political discourse - free-market, free-trade and free-choice - the very meaning of freedom has always been something of a philosophical chimera. To believe that a time has existed or will ever exist, when there are no claims upon our conduct, no restrictions upon our desires or no limits upon our options is to believe in such an empty and abstract conception of freedom as to rob the notion of any of the political and ethical content by which we might render the term meaningful. Conversely a situated 'freedom', that is to say the concept of freedom placed in an historical and political context, leads us to question the very concrete limits upon a person's conduct, and to ask in what ways and how our

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[38] See Elton Rayack, *Not so Free to Choose, The Political Economy of Milton Friedman and Ronald Reagan*, (New York, Praeger, 1987).

[39] From Ranelagh, *Thatcher's People*, quoted in Gamble, op.cit., p. 151.

[40] Nowhere of course was this more apparent than in Chile, where after the coup General Pinochet decided to rewrite and rename the constitution, 'The Constitution of Liberty', also after his beloved Hayek. See Phil O'Brien & Jackie Roddick, *Chile: The Pinochet Decade, The Rise and Fall of the Chicago Boys*, (London, Latin American Bureau, 1983), p. 86-7. For an insider's criticism of Friedman and the 'Chicago boys' who first implemented Chile's neoliberal experiment under the Pinochet regime see Andre Gunder Frank, *Economic Genocide in Chile: Monetarist Theory versus Humanity, two open letters to Milton Fiedman and Arnold Harberger*, (Nottingham, Spokesman books, 1976).

conduct is or has been governed.[41] Historically, as chapter two also demonstrates, it has been this apparently unencumbered and consequently empty vocabulary of freedom that has been both central to liberalism's appeal and key to understanding the contradiction that the governmentalisation of such a political vocabulary entails.

"The freedom upon which such modes of government depend", writes Nikolas Rose, "and which they instrumentalize in so many diverse ways, is no 'natural' property of political subjects, awaiting only the removal of constraints for it to flower forth in forms that will ensure the maximisation of economic and social well-being."[42] Quite the contrary, for the withdrawal of the state as owner, director and financier of the public sector in areas such as industry, health and administration, has not so much released the individual from an overbearing centralising influence as it has witnessed the increased intervention of newly 'liberalised techniques of government', for example: medical advisors, psychologists, marital guidance counsellors, business, marketing and management consultants, etc.. All such newly privatised mechanisms for self-government have also had the further consequence of reducing the level of accountability that can be leveled at a government, and perhaps tragically in some cases, has led to a reconceptualisation of notions of need, sickness, normalcy and success, leading to what some analysts have identified as an increasing internalisation of notions of the 'good' and in turn heralding a consequent decline in communitarian understandings of society.[43]

That this neo-liberal style of governmental rule should become internationally dominant can therefore only be explained in reference to three inter-related factors. Firstly, powerful states such as Britian and the U.S.A. adopted such neoliberal rhetoric and policies in the highly charged international environment of the Cold War, adding an increased geopolitical aspect to what is already a highly international approach to domestic policy. Secondly, the international liberal institutions such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the GATT, all of which had been in existence since the end of the Second World War, in the late 1970's and early 80's

[41] This is in fact the very principle upon which such monumental projects as the history of private life are based. See Georges Duby, (ed.), *A History of Private Life*, 5 Vols. (Cambridge Mass., Belknap Press, 1987).

[42] Nikolas Rose, 'Government, authority and expertise in advanced liberalism', in *Economy and Society*, (Vol. 22, No. 3, August 1993), p.29.

[43] 'Society' was of course a concept that Margret Thatcher famously announced no longer existed in neoliberal Britain of the 1980's.

began to take on an increasingly instrumental and interventionist approach to the realisation of neoliberalism among debtor nations.[44] Finally, the institutionalisation and implementation of this neoliberal governmental style could only be made possible with the 'understanding' and belief of a new breed of national leaders, the creation of which can be traced to the foundation of think tanks and international scholarships between the universities and research institutes of the north atlantic states and those of the south.

**Neoliberal Governmentality in Mexico**

After the dramatic decision of Lopez Portillo to nationalise the banks in 1982, and his personel influence in the choice of his sucessor, international financial institutions such as the World Bank and their donor nations were clearly nervous about Mexico's political and economic future. However, from the very start, new president Miguel de la Madrid expressed himself in the vocabulary of the neoliberal right, reassuring those with an interest in the nation's direction. "To rationalize" he declared, "is not to state-ize (*estatizar*)", and then, so as to leave nobody in doubt, he underlined the approach of his new adminstration, "we shall not state-ize society."[45] Furthermore, in his inaugural speech he made uncharitable reference to his predecessor's 'financial populism' and attacked the creation of a 'fictional economy', giving a warning and an insight into the 'new realism' of neoliberalism when he admitted that, "the first months of the government will be arduous and difficult". He explained the necessity for cuts with the curt justification, "the situation requires it. The austerity is obligatory."[46]

As the Eighties wore on, de la Madrid set about reversing many of Portillo's policies, in particular, opening up the national banking system to partial ownership by the private sector. In his addresses to the nation he went out of his way to complement the activities of a 'growing enterprise culture' and to emphasise the importance of an 'efficient' governmental system. With drastic cuts to public expenditure, excepting the military, and the closing of many of the para-estatals first founded with Echeverria, Madrid marked a watershed in Mexican governmental style leaving large social sectors

[44] See David Williams, 'Constructing the Economic Space: The World Bank and the Making of *Homo Oeconomicus*', in *Millennium: Journal of International Studies*, (Vol. 28, No. 1, 1999).
[45] Quoted in Smith, 'Mexico since 1946', op.cit., p. 384.
[46] Ibid., p. 383-4.

of traditional PRI management, such as labour and agriculture increasingly exposed. As one Mexican technocrat of the time explained, "the decision-making process relies more on the indirect scientific-economic rationale for the social construction of reality than on the direct political/ideological commitment to a given class".[47] However, such examples of self-reflection upon the constitutive nature of neoliberal economic discourse were rare, and as Madrid's term came to a close, and the process of selecting his successor began, there was a heightened sense of consenus among the technocratic elite. In a clear abjuration of moral responsibility, the elite claimed that it was not them, nor their education that was responsible for the inevitability of socio-economic policy but rather, it was "the *reality* of the global economic system [that] forced Mexico to abandon its protectist isolation and accept the limits of its role as a supplier of cheap labour and as a mendicant in the world financial market."[48]

This 'reality' nearly resulted in a historic defeat for the PRI, when in 1988 Cuatemhoc Cardenas, son of the famous ex-PRI president Lazaro Cardenas, defected from the party and led a leftist coalition against the offical PRI candidate, Carlos Salinas de Gortari. Thanks to a (now debunked) 'computer crash', Salinas was voted in by the narrowest of electoral margins, clearly illustrating that theories viewing electoral liberalisation as a 'natural' effect of market liberalisation, at least in Mexico, did not concur with experience.[49] Perhaps in view of this electoral 'shock', Salinas, although certainly the most neoliberal of President's was also the first to incorporate a 'social' aspect into Mexican neoliberalism.[50] Although previous PRI administrations had also introduced large scale development programmes, one of the features that was new about Carlos Salinas' National Solidarity Programme (PRONASOL), and in an important sense integral to realising something of the rhetoric of 'social liberalism' that

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[47] Quoted in Centeno, *Democracy Within Reason*, op.cit., p. 191.
[48] Ibid., p. 198, (my emphasis).
[49] See Laurence Whitehead, 'Prospects for a "Transition" from Authoritarian Rule in Mexico', in *The Politics of Economic Restructuring: State-Society Relations and Regime Change in Mexico*, (eds.) Maria Lorena Cook, Kevin J. Middlebrook & Juan Molinar Horcasitas, (San Diego, Centre for U.S.-Mexican Studies, 1994).
[50] The means by which this was done are explained in Denise Dresser, *Neo-populist Solutions to Neoliberal Problems: Mexico's National Solidarity Program*, (San Diego, Centre for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, Monograph Series No. 24, 1991), and her contribution, 'Bringing the Poor Back In: National Solidarity as a Strategy of Regime Legitimacy', in *Transforming State Society Relations in Mexico*, (eds.) Wayne. A Cornelius, Ann L. Craig, & Jonathan Fox, (San Diego, Centre for U.S-Mexican Studies, University of California, 1994), p. 143-165. Also see Ann Varley, 'Delivering the Goods: Solidarity, Land Regularisation and Urban Services', in *Dismantling the Mexican State?*, (eds.) Rob Aitken, Nikki Craske, Gareth A. Jones & David E. Stansfield, (London, Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 204-224.

accompanied it, was that its programmes and available credit were directed either at freshly created Solidarity committees or at individuals.[51] In fact, the concentration on the role of *autogestion*, that is self-help, and the civic construction of autonomous groups fits extremely neatly into more general ideas about the aims of neoliberal government.

Whilst analysts such as Denise Dresser are correct to point out that the program created another means by which popular groups can be incorporated into a newly structured party machine, and therefore concludes that the program is political in a traditional Mexican clientist sense, there is still a more subtle sense in which Salinas is partially right about creating 'a new relationship between the people and the State'.[52] This relationship, irrespective of how un/convincing it appears, can be seen in the attempt to present PRONASOL as an 'apolitical political project'. For example, the roles of business advisors who attempt to council agricultural producers on the best means to commercialise their product, or of technical advisors who recommend more scientific farming practice, are presented as instances of independent expertise, and as such they attempt to transform the relations of authority and subjectivity as they have previously been understood to have been linked to government in the past.[53]

To a certain extent this is *the* aim of neoliberalism, that expertise both among the political elite and amongst the 'independent' advisors that help institute its programs should come to be the central means through which citizens relate to the state, to their society and to themselves. This is because, writes Rose, such expertise both, "depoliticizes and technicizes a whole swathe of questions by promising that this machinery (that of the knowledge of the expert) will operate according to a logic in which technical calculations - as to the best way to economic growth, industrial organisation, social harmony and individual well-being - will overrule a logic of contestation between opposing interests."[54] Not wishing to leave such faith in the technologies and mechanisms of neoliberal governmental expertise to chance, the

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[51] See Alan Knight, 'Solidarity: Historical Continuities and contemporary implications', in Cornelius et al. (eds.), *Transforming State-Society Relations*, ibid., p.29-45.
[52] Dresser, 'Bringing the Poor Back In', op.cit., p. 163-165, also Nikki Craske, 'Dismantling or Retrenchment? Salinas and Corporatism', in *Dismantling the Mexican State?*, op.cit., p. 89.
[53] Judith Teichman, 'Neoliberalism and the Transformation of Mexican Authoritarianism', in *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, (Vol.13, No. 1, Winter 1997), p. 145. See also Robert Kaufman & Guillermo Trejo, 'Regionalism, Regime Transformation, and PRONASOL: The Politics of the National Solidarity Programme in Four Mexican States', in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, (Vol. 29, 1997).
[54] Rose, 'Advanced liberalism', op.cit., p. 294.

Salinas programmes also involved the additional requirement for newly created social and popular movements to sign *convenios de concertación* - agreements of concertation. This strategy appears to have first been created during the Mexican earthquake in 1985, but was widely deployed by Salinas, as one ex-government minister explains to achieve very traditional ends.

> *"In signing the agreement, groups agreed, in effect, to work with and not against the state. The accord therefore cleverly brought groups 'into line', and put an end to 'popular protests'. In this way, the convenio is consistent with long-standing inclusionary corporatist state-society relations in Mexico."* [55]

However, in light of the combined emphasis on personal responsibility and identification with the state, Princeton sociologist Miguel Angel Centeno makes the more radical claim that,

> *"PRONASOL could even be seen as moving the regime away from its traditional authoritarian willingness to accept passive acquiescence, by now requiring a more active mobilization and voicing of support more akin to totalitarian systems."* [56]

Certainly in Mexico the legitimisation of the neoliberal program has been dressed in nationalistic terms, and as a consequence criticisms of the PRI have been treated as "offences against the integrity of the nation", as one observer has written.[57] This contempt with which dissenting opinion has been greeted, reveals not only the presumption of the transcendental nature of neoliberal politics, a politics that is conducted above and beyond the squabbling of national party politics, but also that such an apolitical politics can only be understood as demoncratic under the most narrow of definitions.

Like the Bourbon reforms of the late 18th century, and the positivists' authoritarianism of the late 19th century, Mexico seems in the late 20th century to have returned to a style of governmental rule that is so convinced of its correctness that little attempt is made to accomodate the popular, representative and responsive aspect supposedly characteristic of democratic politics. Where once the PRI party sought to unite and control the nation through a sectorial system of corporate representation, the

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[55] Neil Harvey, 'The Difficult Transition: Neoliberalism and Neocorporatism in Mexico', in *Mexico: Dilemmas of Transition*, (ed.) Neil Harvey, (London, Institute of Latin American Studies, 1993), p.18.
[56] Centeno, op.cit., p. 224.
[57] Kathy Powell, 'Neoliberalism and Nationalism', in *Dismantling the Mexican State?*, op.cit., p. 43.

neoliberal style of rule seems to suggest that sectorial understandings must be broken and replaced with stronger individualistic political and social understandings upon which new techiques of governance, principally scientific and economic expertise, will provide the social binding that labour, agricultural and union officials used to provide. At their cost early liberals in 19th century Mexico assumed that such a *homo economicus* existed, later 'scientific' liberals in contrast recognised the need to create such subjects, and late 20th century neoliberals seem struck once again with the need to create subjects that will effect a control upon themselves and thus leave the government of politics to culturally recognised experts.

By the early 1990's, in a publication not noted for its promotion of conspiracy theories, the extent of the adoption of the new neoliberal elitist governmental style was acknowledged.

> *"A continental network of Harvard, Chicago, and Stanford grads are back [in Latin America] atop businesses and ministries spreading the new market mind-set. They're using old school ties to reach across Latin America's borders, signing joint ventures and free trade agreements with fellow alumni."* [58]

Whilst neoliberalism had become the dominant governmentality in Latin American, few other nations matched the dramatic nature of Mexico's transformation or ambition. Having already signed up to the GATT in 1986, in the late 1990's Mexico sought to secure its international status through negotiating an entry into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).[59] Once again this process was conducted at an elite level and debate as to the implications or benefits of entry into both agreements was never seriously entertained. The country as a whole was never consulted. [60] By late 1993, the government's policies of privatisation and deregulation had created a new generation of billionaires, 24 of whom now featured in the Forbes World's 100 rich list. On the eve of 1994, as Mexico sought to promote itself as an international model of development, the highly partial, coercive and elite nature of Mexico's neoliberal revolution was about to be stripped bare.

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[58] Bussiness Week, June 15, 1992, p. 52, quoted in Centeno, *Democracy Within Reason*, op.cit., p. 24.
[59] Duncan Green, *Silent Revolution: The Rise of Market Economics in Latin America*, (London, Cassell, 1995), p.13-32 & 77-8.
[60] See Francisco Javier Guerro Aguirre, 'The North American Free Trade Agreement: An Analysis of the process of pre-negotiation in Mexico', in *Paradigms*, (Vol.9, No.2, Winter 1995).

## The 'New' Communities of the Lacandon Jungle

With few contacts and no experience of living in jungle conditions, the six rebels that went to Chiapas' *selva lacandona* to forment revolution in November 1983 very soon learnt a lesson that would become central to their transformation from a vanguardist revolutionary movement to an indigenous revolutionary movement.[61] Humbled by the harshness of life in the mountains, lacking both food and supplies, and occupied principally with the fighting of disease and illness rather than state oppressors, the original Zapatistas came to respect, value and rely upon the advice and generosity of the indigenous communities for their continued existence as a clandestine organisation. However, whilst the Indians did not betray the rebels, neither did they immediately embrace the idea of an armed struggle, especially one that was to be led by 'outsiders' who knew little or nothing of life within the communities. After all, the Indians, although long since marginalised from the political process, had recently been the subject of significant cultural, demographic and community transformations, changes that were in effect, nothing less than the re-organisation of Chiapas' native society.

The fact that this re-organisation did not follow 'traditional' lines can in large part be explained by the growing rejection of the corrupted civil-religious hierarchies of the highland communities, but what also made the *selva* "a unique space of social construction", was the diversity of ethnic groups that migrated there and the number of religious organisations with which such groups have become involved.[62] Thus, apart from the Tzeltal and Tzotzil speakers from the highlands, there are chol, tojolabal, mame, kanjobal, chuj, jacalteco, mocho, and cakchiquel speakers, alongside small groups of Spanish speaking *mestizos* and other Guatemalan Maya refugees that also began to arrive in the early 1980s. Furthermore, within this ethnic mosaic we find not only Catholics, followers of liberation theology as well as 'traditionalists', but also Adventists living alongside Presbyterians, Pentecostals, Baptists, Jehovah's witnesses,

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[61] The story of the formation of the Zapatistas has been repeated in several sources, one of the best accounts is by Subcommandante Marcos himself, retold in Carlos Montemayor, *Chiapas, la rebelion indigena de Mexico*, (Mexico, Joaquin Mortiz, 1997), p. 135-140. Also see Yvon Le Bot, *Subcomandante Marcos: El Sueno Zapatista*, (Barcelona, Plaza & Janes, 1997), and for a more controversial and locally contested account of the Zapatistas see, Carlos Tello Díaz, *La Rebelión de las Cañadas*, (Mexico, Cal y Arena, 1995).

Nazarenes, members of the New Rising of Christ, of the Column of the Living God, of the Light of the Good Shepherd, of the Light of the World, of the Church of God the Prophesier, and various other minor Pentecostal sects.[63] The combined effect of this intermixing of ethnicities and religions has been the creation of hybrid cultures that resist easy classification.

Whilst 'traditional' Catholic missionaries were the first to visit the new communities of the Lacandon, it was the Protestant missionaries who initially began to attract converts and transform the organisation of native community.[64] In theory at least, the Protestant emphasis on the individual and the personal, above and beyond the collectivity, alongside their belief in a salvation through God that ignores the flagrant inequities of the temporal *status quo* and prepares instead for a life to come, would all seem to suggest a deeply conservative influence upon Indian life.[65] However, in just one of many contradictions, Protestant missionaries also promoted the right to cultural difference, and true to this belief they initiated programmes of Bible translation into the indigenous languages. Having been taught to read and write and encouraged into the habits of Christian reflection, many Indians soon put their newly created organisational skills to more political effect, aligning themselves with oppositional agricultural unions and federal political parties.[66]

Neverthless the most potent instrument of change in Chiapas has undoubtedly been the more overtly political activism of the 'new' Catholic church that became active throughout the region in the early 1970's. For this reason, some historians consider the pivotal date in Chiapan history to be 1974, the date when the Catholic dioceses of San Cristobal de Las Casas held its first Indian Congress, ostensibly to commemorate the quincentenary of the death of Fray Bartolome de Las Casas, but

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[62] Andres Aubry, *La Historia de Chiapas Identifica a Los Zapatistas*, (INAREMAC, Doc. 043-VI, 1994), p. 9.

[63] Rosalva Aida Hernandez-Castillo, 'De la Sierra a la Selva: Identidades Etnicas y Religiosas en la Frontera Sur', in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de Otra Historia*, op.cit., p. 408-411.

[64] See Jan Rus & Robert Wasserstrom, 'Evangelization and Political Control: the SIL in Mexico', in *Is God an American?: An Anthropological Perspective on the Missionary Work of the Summer Institute of Linguistics*, op.cit.

[65] Aida Hernandez-Castillo, op.cit., p. 411-415.

[66] Ibid., p. 411-414. See also David D. Scotchmer, 'Life of the Heart: A Maya Protestant Spirituality', in *South & Meso-American Native Spirituality*, op. cit.


CHIAPAS
Huistán
Oxchuc
Ocosingo
Altamirano
Tuxtla
Gutiérrez
San
Cristóbal
Chanal
AREA OF
REBELLION
Las Margaritas
Usumacinta River
Grijalva River
Soconusco Coast
GUATEMALA
Mexico
City
Chiapas
KM
20
60
100

more importantly to facilitate the realisation of a pastoral approach known as "the preferential option for the poor".[67] Based in the theology of liberation that surfaced throughout Latin America in the 1970's and propelled by the very personal conversion of the Bishop of San Cristobal de las Casas, Samuel Ruiz, the change in diocesan policy was explained to me by one local priest as the transformation from "a church of the cult, to a church of service".[68] Just what this service was to include, could be seen reflected in the topics discussed by community level groups at the Congress, themes such as land tenure, marketing, education, housing and health. The Church also invited students and lecturers of Mexican history, economics and agrarian law to address local Indians, and arguably it was at this conference that the indigenous themselves became cogniscent of their shared plight, a plight that went above and beyond their local municipalities and involved wider state and federal governmental structures.

A key element in the transformation of the Church, and in an important respect similar and yet in advance of the creed of their Protestant 'brothers', is the commitment to apply the Christian liturgy to Indian culture and to attempt to create an indigenous Church that has an awareness of the socio-economic situation of its members. Through a network of Indian catequists, and later deacons, the Catholic Church not only was able to instruct a significant number of the 150,000 Indians who inhabit the Lacandon, but also to assist in the creation of production and transport co-operatives, co-operative shops, education of women, and the training and implementation of community health projects. However, perhaps one of the most lasting and influential initiatives by the Catholic Church was to invite members of the Maoist movement Linea Proletaria and

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[67] See Leonardo Boff, *When Theology listens to the Poor*, (San Francisco, Harper & Row, 1988), and Manuel Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation*, (New York, Orbis Books, 1971).

[68] Present at both Vatican II and the Medellin Council of Latin American Bishops in 1968, Mgr. Samuel Ruiz, Bishop of the Diocese of San Cristobal since 1960, had initially come to Chiapas with the intention of converting the Indians but ended up himself, like Salvadorian Archbishop Oscar Romero with whom he is often compared, "being converted by the Indians". For the full story see Carlos Fazio, *Samuel Ruiz: El Caminante*, (Mexico, Espasa Calpe, 1994), and in abbreviated form, Andres Aubry, 'El 1968 de la Iglesia latinoamericana', in the supplement Masiosare of *La Jornada*, (Domingo 25 de Octubre de 1998). More generally on the relationship between revolutionaries and the liberation theologists see Mary Christine Morkovsky, '*Guerrilleros*, Political Saints, and the Theology of Liberation', in *South & Meso-American Native Spirituality*, op.cit. Undoubtedly however, the clearest statement of Ruiz's Diocesan policy is to be found in his open pastoral letter to Pope John Paul II, *En esta hora de Gracia, Carta Pastoral con motivo del saludo de S.S. el papa Juan Pablo II a los indigenas del continente*, (Mexico, Ediciones Dabar, 1993).

their leader, Adolfo Orive, to Chiapas.[69] Although it was a relationship that did not last, Linea Proletaria, in-keeping with their Maoist constructivist line set about assisting the indigenous communities of the *selva* into organised unions that could better present their demands to the state government.[70] Their creation of the union, *Quiptic ta Lecubtesel*, laid the foundations for the uniting of numerous smaller organisations into the first non-governmental Chiapan supra-regional organisation, the Asociacion Rural de Interes Colectivo (ARIC), commonly known as "the Union of Unions".[71]

By the late 1980's, life in the Indian communities had changed radically. Unlike in the highlands, the number of positions of responsibility (*cargos*) within the community had multiplied. In-keeping with the Catholic Church's belief in the sanctity of community and their commitment to serve that community, public servants were made directly responsible to the members of the Indian collectivity. It is an ethos best reflected in the phrase 'mandar obediciendo' - command obeying, a principle of local organisation since elevated to the level of national debate by the Zapatista rebels.[72] The aim of the catequists and *tu'uneles* (deacons) has always been to break down the hierarchies and vertical networks of power as practised in the corrupted traditional communities. Being Indian themselves, and educated to act as a *de facto* indigenous priest class, the catequists have sought to encourage community dialogue, involving all

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[69] See Carlos Tello Díaz, *La Rebelión de las Cañadas*, opcit., p. 73-78, for an account of the consequences of Ruiz's chance meeting with Orive in Torreon. See also *Proceso*, (No. 1107, 18 de enero de 1998), p. 12- 17.

[70] The machiavellian character of Adolfo Orive is perhaps worthy of an article in itself. Firstly, his role as Economics professor at the National University during the period when a group of wealthy students known as 'los toficos', amongst whom featured a young Carlos Salinas de Gortari, can be seen as influential in the creation of a governing mentality premised upon economics. Secondly, and in light of his activism in Chiapas throughout the 1970's and 80's, his appointment as chief advisor to the Mexican minister of the Interior in January 1998 has been viewed by many to be a sinister betrayal of the grassroots union which he helped found. Some have even gone further suggesting that through judicious use of his Chiapan contacts Orive, with the full support of the interior ministry, has been actively creating the political matrix that can support the ever growing groups of paramilitary squads that conduct what has widely become known as a low intensity war against the Zapatistas and the communities that form their civilian support base. See Masiosare in *La Jornada*, (No. 9, domingo 18 de enero de 1998), p. 3-6 & (No. 21, domingo 19 de abril de 1998), p. 3-5.

[71] Jan de Vos, 'El Lacandon: Una Introduccion Historica' in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de Otra Historia*, op.cit., p. 358. See also Xochitl Leyva Solano, 'Militancia politico-religiousa e identidad en la Lacandona' in *Espiral. Estudios sobre Estado y Sociedad*, (Universidad de Guadalajara, Vol. 2, 1995), p. 59-88, and Neil Harvey, 'La Union de Uniones de Chiapas y los retos politicos del desarrollo de base', in *Autonomia y nuevos sujetos en el desarrollo social*, (eds.) J. Moguel, C. Botey & L. Hernandez, (Mexico, Siglo XXI y CEHAM, 1992), p. 219-232.

[72] See Nicholas Higgins & Marta Duran de Huerta, 'An interview with Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, spokesperson and military commander of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)' in *International Affairs*, (Volume 75, No. 2, April 1999), p. 269-279.

sectors and age groups of the community in decisions and appointments. Their position after all is only tenable with the support of the collectivity. In this way catequists often find themselves assigned to other posts, and with the involvement of children and elders in the process, the community works by consensus, considered by the missionaries to be the best preparation of the people for the practice of democracy.[73]

The realm of the Indian supernatural is still present in the communities, and the Maya of the *selva* can still be heard to talk of the *nahual*, but the role of the *curandero* no longer carries a monopoly within the collectivity, and religion be it Protestant or Catholic has encouraged greater critical reflection by the Indigenous towards their own rituals and customs. As the Indian communities have established themselves and their new forms of organisation throughout the *selva*, it has become clear that whilst being 'Indian' can evidently be lived in multiple forms at an individual level, the social cohesion and political unity that has come to characterise the Lacandon communities is based on a belief in, and mobilisation of, a re-invented understanding of ethnic identity. "These processes of re-invention", writes Aida Hernandez, "have not been voluntary strategies to create 'fictitious identities', but historical processes of social construction through which the indigenous peoples of the frontier have re-defined their sense of belonging to a collectivity in a dialectic of resistance and adaption to external ideologies."[74]

Religious conversion should therefore not be seen as a straightforward process of acculturation, for to do so would be to fail to see the indigenous as complex social subjects in their own right, subjects with the capacity to contest and restructure their new religious beliefs, and subjects imbued with the agency to opt for change should they so choose. To fail to recognise this capacity within the indigenous would be to run the risk of objectifying and reifying a particular notion of Indigenous culture, 'tradition' and identity and thus to deny the indigenous the very real and hazardous possibility of being the subjects of their own history.[75] Whilst most Indians initially

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[73] See Xochitl Leyva Solano, 'Catequistas, Misioneros y Tradiciones en las Canadas', in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de Otra Historia*, op.cit., p. 395.

[74] Aida Hernandez-Castillo, op.cit., p. 422, on the implications of such cultural change for the role of women in the Indian community. Also see Hernandez, 'Cultura, genero y poder en Chiapas: Las voces de las mujeres en el analisis antropologico', in *Anuario 1996*, (Mexico, Universidad de Ciencias y Artes del Estado de Chiapas, 1997), p. 220-242. See also June Nash, 'The Reassertion of Indigenous Identity: Mayan Responses to State Intervention in Chiapas', in *Latin American Research Review*, (Vol. 30, No. 3, 1995), p. 7-41.

[75] Hernandez-Castillo, ibid., p. 419.

restricted their choices to the churches, the unions, and the village councils, soon however the option of armed insurrection that had long existed in the clandestine began to attract greater support.

**Political Violence**

To understand the radicalisation of the indigenous communities of Chiapas that has resulted in the ongoing Zapatista rebellion of today, it is thus important to recognise that the reassertion of indigenous identity that it represents is an identity that to a very large extent has been carved in opposition. Whilst opposition was initially directed towards the repressive tendencies of corrupted local Indian hierarchies (*caciques*), with the exodus to the *selva* came greater wrangles with government run bodies over land rights. Prior to the Zapatistas, the most famous dispute in Chiapas surrounded an attempt by the government to partition the Lacandon into clearly defined sectors irrespective of the number of newly founded colonies that might be located within a particular zone.[76] Known as the battle for '*la brecha*', it was a conflict that at times involved the creation of human barriers to stop eviction and bulldozing of communities. Intimately related to the demands of logging concerns, oil drilling, the legal rights of the Indian *ejidos* (co-operative parcels of land sanctioned by the Mexican constitution) and the socio-economic plans of the PRI administration, it was through fighting the proposals of '*la brecha*' that many of the diverse ethnic communities recognised the need to present a unified front.[77]

Prospects for cross community, inter-religious, and most significantly, pluri-ethnic unity were however severely challenged by the appointment of General Absalón Castellanos Domínguez to the governorship of Chiapas in 1982. In light of the revolutions that affected the Central American states to the south of the Chiapas frontier, the choice of a military man for the post should not be considered coincidental. Already an established cattle rancher and large land owner in the Lacandon, the General set about ensuring the 'integrity of national security' in a manner that brought to bear an unprecedented level of repression on the new

[76] de Vos, op.cit., p. 353.
[77] Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy*, (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1998), p. 79-80.

independent peasant organisations of the state. One of his first acts was to reform the state's penal code, both increasing his own powers and the nature of liability for "crimes against internal security". It was also during this time that Chiapas began to receive greater numbers of Guatemalan Maya refugees fleeing the civil-war. Camps had been created close to the border to house the refugees but as a result of bombing raids and a helicopter attack by the Guatemalan military in 1984 it was decided to transfer the refugees to 'less sensitive areas'.

Ricardo, a Mexican camp worker at the time, confirms this neccesity but also adds another interpretation for the relocation of the increasing Maya populace. In reference to the Tzotzil and Tzeltal Indians, who are also Maya, that had begun to settle the Lacandon zone some years ealier, Ricardo explains how the different groups of Indians began to help each other.

*"It was a sort of Maya reunion, something very beautiful to see. They began sharing their languages, their textiles - it was a Maya cultural interaction. In one little camp where we worked there were people from six language groups, and the children were learning to speak all six, as well as Spanish. The powers-that-be didn't like this solidarity between indios of Mexico and Guatemala. Not long afterward I was at the United Nations. I happened to see a reccomendation from the United States government to our government demanding that even local Mexican Indians be cleared from the border area to create a 'clean zone', a kind of - what did they call it in Vietnam?"*

*"DMZ?"*

*"Yes a DMZ! The U.S. wanted a line of defense against 'communist subversion.'"* [78]

It is perhaps not surprising then, that as conservative elements within the Mexican government began to worry over "guerrilla infiltrations on the southern border", the growing militancy of the new social movements of the Lacandon jungle was met with an increasingly violent response.[79] Indian protagonists in land invasions, public demonstrations and even official negotiations, often found themselves attacked, imprisoned or killed. Such was the scale of the repression that by 1987 a report by the Mexican Academy of Human Rights claimed that since the appointment of General

[78] Interview conducted by Ronald Wright, *Time Among the Maya*, (London, Abacus, 1989), p. 275.
[79] Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion*, op.cit., p. 149.

Castellanos Domínguez in 1982, Chiapas had witnessed an average of two politically motivated killings per month.[80]

This, combined with the policies of President de la Madrid and the beginning of the neoliberal period of rule, also meant the communities of the Lacandon began to witness the withdrawal of the little state support their agricultural lifestyle had so far received. Initially the PRI government attempted to manipulate the communities and their land use by removing subsidies and credit for 'traditional crops' such as coffee and corn, increasing support instead for cash crops and cattle ranching. However, by the late 1980's as Carlos Salinas de Gortari began his term as Mexican president, government cuts and reform became increasingly drastic.

> *"By the end of 1989 it was clear that the future of the agricultural sector would be subordinated to the economic goals of the Salinas administration: the reduction of inflation via wage and price controls, privatisation of state enterprises and trade liberalisation."* [81]

As the Indians of Chiapas saw the prices of their crops plummet they knew that the opening of the market to competition from cheaper US grains had direct links to the decisions of international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank. After all, writes Neil Harvey,

> *"the Bank conditioned the disbursement of new structural adjustment loans to a radical overhaul of the agricultural sector, recommending the privatisation of state-owned enterprises and the gradual elimination of price supports and other input subsidies."* [82]

Increasingly sucked into a cycle of debt and poverty, with all the incumbent illness and death that that implies in rural Mexico, thousands of growers had to abandon crop production. Not surprisingly the number of protests and demonstrations by Indian communities and peasant unions grew. The reaction of local government bodies was fierce. Indian leaders were arrested or 'disappeared', the government invested in the construction of new jails and the use of violent armed teams (*guardas blancas*) by local land owners to evict families from land wanted for cattle ranching

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[80] Harvey, ibid., p. 160, also see Tello Díaz, *La Rebelión de las Cañadas*, p. 102. for the claim that Castellanos was responsible for 153 politically motivated killings during his term.
[81] Neil Harvey, 'Rebellion in Chiapas: Rural Reforms and popular struggle', op.cit. p. 45.
[82] Ibid., p. 45

was given implicit state sanction.[83] As Human Rights abuses such as arbitrary arrest and even torture became increasingly commonplace, under a new governor Chiapas experienced a further reform in its penal code that effectively outlawed protest and dissent, allowing for the detention of all those seen to be disturbing of public order.[84] The reform was attacked throughout the country as a violation of civil and human rights, "eventually forcing its repeal in law, if not in practice".[85] It has now been documented that "between 1988 and 1993, Chiapas's Indians suffered 8,109 reported human rights violations, out of a national total 11,608 violations against the country's native population."[86] Such repressive tactics on the part of the government effectively forced opposition underground and it was at this time that the Zapatistas' long-standing offer to act as the Indigenous communities army began to receive ever greater numbers of recruits.

Nevertheless, far removed from the local reality of the Chiapan Indians, decisions concerning Mexico's continued 'transition' to a free market economy continued apace. In a seemingly logical extension of the neoliberal rationale, the Salinas administration sought to realise the 'potential' of Mexico as an emerging market through entering into the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) with the United States and Canada. For the realm of agriculture, the life stay of the majority of Mexico's 10 million indigenous population, ratification of the NAFTA held serious implications. The first step was the reform of article 27, a political decision that effectively ended any hopes for the new communities to legalise their *ejidos* (agricultural co-operatives) in which they had worked and lived for decades now. Neil Harvey explains,

*"the rationale for NAFTA is that each country and region should produce goods and services in which they have comparative advantages. This argument*

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[83] Such tactics were not however limited to Chiapas, see Neil Harvey, 'The Limits of Concertation in Rural Mexico', in *Mexico: Dilemmas of Transition*, op.cit., p. 206, where he writes, "according to human rights monitors in Mexico, 14 leaders of regional peasant organisations were killed between December 1988 and November 1990."

[84] It was as a direct result of such reform that the diocesis of San Cristobal set up the human rights centre, the Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolome de las Casas in 1990. For more on the reform itself see 'Governor Gonzalez's Penal Code: Tuxtla Gutierrez, 1990', in *Rebellion in Chiapas, an historical reader*, (ed.) John Womack, Jr., (New York, The New Press, 1999), p. 227-233.

[85] Collier, op.cit., p.18.

[86] James F. Rochlin, *Redefining Mexican 'Security': Society, State and Region Under NAFTA*, (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1997), p. 61.

*implied that over two million small producers in Mexico could not continue to survive as maize (corn) producers."* [87]

Irrespective of the disparities in technology, infrastructure, climate and subsidies that clearly placed Mexico at a considerable disadvantage, it was agreed that the NAFTA would come into being on the 1st of January 1994. New Years Day 1994 however, witnessed the dramatic manifestation of the rebel army that had for so long existed in the clandestine. Those Indians made invisible by the modernist image and practice of a neoliberal Mexico for the first time made themselves visible under the banner of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN).

From the balcony of the municipal presidency of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, a masked Commander Marcos, speaking on behalf of the rebel army, declared,

*"Today the North American Free Trade Agreement begins, which is nothing more than a death sentence for the indigenous ethnicities of Mexico, who are perfectly dispensable in the modernization program of Salinas de Gortari. Thus the companeros decided to rise up on this same day to respond to the decree of death that the Free Trade Agreement gives them, with the decree of life that is given by rising up in arms to demand liberty and democracy, which will provide them with the solution to their problems. This is the reason we have risen up today."* [88]

Before leaving the balcony and in front of a still stunned Chiapaneco populace, Marcos issued a historic reminder, "Don't forget this: This is an ethnic movement!"[89]

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[87] Harvey, 'Rebellion in Chiapas', op.cit., p. 46.
[88] Testimonies from the First day, *La Jornada*, 19/1/1994, reprinted and translated in, *Zapatistas; Documents of the New Mexican Revolution*, p. 62.
[89] Early reports, *Macropolis,* 10/1/1994, reprinted and translated in ibid., p. 71.

# *Chapter Six*

# Visible Indians:
# Subcomandante Marcos and the 'Indianization' of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN)

**The Zapatista Uprising .....**

And so it was on the morning of January 1st, 1994, that Mexico was once more dramatically and violently awakened to the all but obscured social reality of an incensed indigenous populace that had once again reached the limits of human endurance. With the armed occupation of seven of the main towns in the south-eastern state of Chiapas, the soldiers of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN), provided the world and Mexico with a palpable reminder, lest they had been completely convinced by the Mexican government's insistent claims to first world status, that here in Mexico, despite all claims to the contrary, there still existed levels of malnutrition, discrimination and exploitation that betray any claim to the feverously coveted title of 'developed nation'.

The fighting did not last long, principally due to the indignation provoked by the media coverage of captured Zapatistas with their hands tied behind their backs and bullet holes through their heads. A cease-fire was called, the Catholic Church and Mgr. Samuel Ruiz offered to act as mediators, and the government offered the rebels, or 'professionals in violence' as they were then referred to, an 'official pardon'. This was the Zapatista response:

"What do we have to ask forgiveness for?
What are they going to "pardon" us for?
For not dying of hunger?
For not accepting our misery in silence?
For not humbly accepting the huge historic burden of disdain and abandonment?
For having risen up in arms when we found all other paths closed?
For not heeding Chiapas's penal code, the most absurd and repressive in history?
For having shown the country and the whole world that human dignity
still exists and is in the hearts of the most impoverished inhabitants?
For having made careful preparations before beginning our fight?

For having brought guns to battle instead of bows and arrows?
For having learned to fight before having done it?
For being Mexicans, every one of us?
For being mostly Indigenous?
For calling the Mexican people to fight, through whatever means,
for what rightfully belongs to them?
For fighting for freedom, democracy, and justice?
For not following the leaders of previous wars?
For refusing to surrender?
For refusing to sell ourselves?
For not betraying one another?

Who should ask for forgiveness and who can grant it?
Those who, for years and years, sat before a full table and satiated themselves while we sat with death, as such a daily factor in our lives that we stopped even fearing it? Those that filled our pockets and souls with declarations and promises?
The dead, our dead, who mortally died "natural" deaths, that is, of measles, whooping cough, dengue, cholera, typhoid, mononucleosis, tetanus, bronchitis, malaria, and other gastrointestinal and pulmonary diseases?
Our dead, who die so undemocratically of grief because nobody did anything to help them, because all the dead, our dead, would simply disappear without anyone paying the bill, without anyone finally saying, "ENOUGH!"
Those who give feeling back to these dead, our dead, who refuse to ask
them to die over again, but now instead ask them to live?
Those that denied us the right to govern ourselves?
Those who treat us as foreigners in our own land
and ask us for papers and to obey a law whose existence we ignore?
Those that torture, seize, and assassinate us for the great crime
of wanting a piece of land,
not a big piece,
not a small one,
just one on which we could grow something with which to fill our stomachs?

Who should ask forgiveness and who can grant it?

The president of the republic?
The secretaries of state? The senators? The deputies? The governors?
The municipal presidents? The police? The Federal Army?
Powerful businessmen, bankers, industrialists, and landowners?
Political parties? Intellectuals? Galio and Nexos?
The media? Students? Teachers? Our neighbours?
Workers? Campesinos? Indigenous people?
Those who died useless deaths?

Who should ask forgiveness and who can grant it?"[1]

With the cease-fire the Zapatistas repeated their demands, and slowly a process of negotiation began. Their central demands were threefold; freedom, democracy and justice. When the time arrived for face to face talks with the government these demands were elaborated into 34 concrete proposals, amongst which featured calls for agrarian reform, improvements in education, health, indigenous autonomy and the recognition of the Zapatistas as a belligerent force[2], a recognition that was never to be granted.[3] Although certain accords on Indigenous rights and culture had been signed, the talks broke down in August 1996 when it became clear that the government lacked both the political will and intention to fulfil its word. Since 1996 therefore Chiapas has been embroiled in what has been termed "low intensity warfare". In concrete terms this means pro-Zapatista communities have had to confront the terror of paramilitaries, the classic governmental tactics of using aid to divide and conquer, and the more constant intimidation that has come with the continued military encroachment of their villages. Monologue has replaced dialogue and the government strategy for 'peace' has become unilateral.

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[1] Sub-commondante Marcos, January 18, 1994, letter to the national and international press, reprinted in, *Zapatistas; documents of the new Mexican Revolution*, (Automedia, New York, 1994), p.108-9.
[2] See 'Demands submitted during the Dialogue', in ibid., p. 238-243.
[3] Recognising the Zapatistas as a belligerent force would imply the recognition of international treaties regulating armed conflicts, a recognition with which the Mexican government clearly does not wish to comply. See Carlos Montemayor for a succinct explanation of why this is, 'Administrando la Guerra', *Processo*, (No. 1113, 1 Marzo, 1998), p. 40-41.

During this time however, the masked figure of Subcommandante Marcos has emerged as the chief spokesperson and interlocutor of the rebel movement. Through publication of his press releases and letters to the nation, we have come to learn more about how the Zapatista Army of National Liberation came into being, and in doing so we can also learn what it is that is distinctive about the nature of Zapatista politics.

**Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos**

Marcos, or *el sup* as he is better known, was born on the 1st of January 1994, or so the legend goes. There are of course those that deny this, not least among them the Mexican government and their national intelligence service (CISEN). They instead would have us believe that the masked figure who is both military commander and spokesperson for the rebel Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), is none other than one Rafael Guillen, a Jesuit educated, ex-University lecturer born in 1957 in Tampico, northern Mexico.[4] The story they wish to tell, is of a man corrupted by the texts of Marx and Mao, a man so frustrated with the apathy of metropolitan campus life that he allowed himself to become embroiled in the more radical politics of violent subversion.[5] And to some extent they may in fact be right, but only, as academics might say, within the terms of their own discourse.[6] And it is with this discourse - the discourse of Mexican officialdom, the discourse of government knows best, of government has the legitimacy to represent, the discourse of fact over fiction - that Marcos, and the Zapatista rebels with whom his life is now so inextricably linked, take issue.

It is not so much that Marcos never came from the city to the countryside to preach the revolutionary doctrines of Marxist-Leninism, for this he freely admits,

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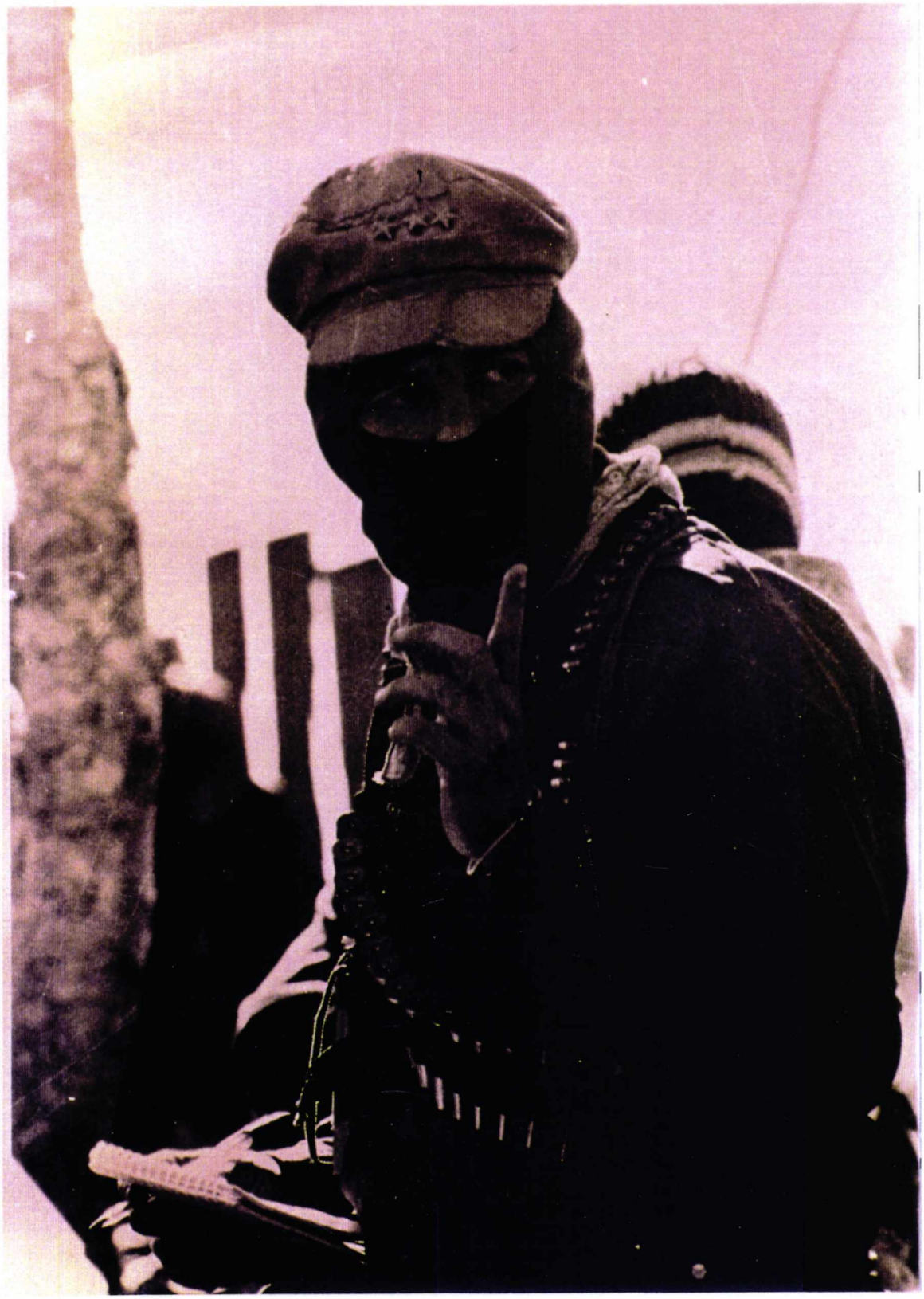
[4] See Bertrand de la Grange & Maite Rico, *Marcos, La Genial Impostura*, (Mexico, Aguilar, 1997), p. 24-28.

[5] See Carlos Tello Diaz, *La Rebelion de las Canadas*, (Mexico, Cal y Arena, 1995), who tells the story of the Fuerzas de Liberacion Nacional (FLN) and their transformation into the EZLN. Marcos refers to Diaz as a historian that has studied history with el CISEN (Centro de Investigacion y Seguridad Nacional ). For academic responses that support such an accusation of Diaz's work see *Proceso*, No. 977, 24 July 1995.

[6] In particular see Michel Foucault, 'Politics and the Study of Discourse', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (eds.) G. Burchill, C. Gorden & P. Miller, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1991), p. 53-72; Ian Hacking, 'Language, Truth and Reason', in *Rationality and Relativism* (eds.) Martin Hollis and Steven Lukes, (Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1982), p. 48-66, and Paul Rabinow, 'Representations are Social Facts', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, eds. J. Clifford & G. Marcus, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986), p. 234-261.



whilst still refusing to confirm his governmental identity. His own story however, places greater emphasis on his encounter with Indian culture, an encounter that he claims changed him and the very principles upon which the thousands of Zapatista soldiers thought it necessary to fight. The nature of this change, and consequently the nature of the revolutionary movement to which Zapatismo gives its name, has thus become *the* principle focus of the speeches and texts to which he has dedicated himself ever since. That Marcos should often choose the narrative form of the short story, usually employing the 'literary' creation of a pipe smoking beetle, *Don Durito*, as his alter ego, or the wise parables of the Indian elder, *el viejo Antonio*, or sometimes simply the direct inquiries of Mayan children, as his preferred means to illustrate the motives behind the 1994 New Years day uprising, should not be mistaken as the signs of a purely literary indulgence, a vice to which he is by no means immune.[7] Equally, his less copious but similarly telling choice of poetry as a favoured form of expression, should not be acknowledged simply on the grounds of literary merit, but instead should be recognised as a conscious and *political* statement concerned with just how, and by whom, the realm of experience can best be communicated.[8]

His now famous *communiqués* to the national and international press are thus in-and-of themselves an attempt to disrupt and disturb the government's monopoly on truth and fact.[9] His texts seek to reveal everything that has been excluded from the realm of official discourse in a way every bit as vital to the Zapatista revolution as the unexpected physical apparition of thousands of armed Indians that first made public the thin veneer of an inclusionary and developmentalist rhetoric upon which governmental claims to legitimacy had previously been based. What follows is essentially Marcos' version of the 'slow accumulation of forces' that resulted in the January 1994 uprising and the continued Zapatista rebellion of today.

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[7] See Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, *Cuentos para una soledad desvelada*, (Mexico, Ediciones del Frente Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional, 1998); *La historia de las preguntas*, (Mexico, Offset Industrial, 1998); *La historia de los colores*, (Mexico, Offset Industrial, 1997); and, *Relatos de El Viejo Antonio*, prologo de Armando Bartra, (Mexico, Centro de Informacion y Analysis de Chiapas, 1998).

[8] See 'Resistir con poesia', p. 169, in *Cuentos para una soledad desvelada*, ibid.

[9] See for example the collections translated in *Zapatistas!:Documents of the New Mexican Revolution*, (Automedia, New York, 1994), and in *Shadows of Tender Fury: The Letters and Communiques of Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1995).

### *la palabra dura* - the hard word

Even now, few people live in the deepest, most dense parts of the Lacandon jungle.[10] Not even the Indians. So on the 17th of November 1983 when six individuals arrived in Chiapas to found the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) they knew that in the terms of the clandestine, few places could compete with the seclusion of the Chiapan jungle.[11] Buoyed up on the intellectual opiates of Marxist-Leninist theory, the group were poorly armed, badly equipped, deficient in the practice of political conversion and lacking in anything but the most skeletal of local indigenous contacts upon which to base a guerrilla movement. Faced with the sheer severity of the jungle environment, their first battles were with the mountains, with hunger, with sickness and with the cold. In view of this, they named their first camp, *la pesadilla* - the nightmare, and ironically the area in which it was located, in contrast to the intense volume of its vegetation, had long since been known as, *el desierto* - the desert.[12] By all accounts it was not an audacious beginning.

In 1984, Marcos himself arrived. At this time the group consisted of only 3 Indians and 3 *mestizos* (non-Indians). The Indians already had a long experience of political movements, they had also seen the inside of prison, suffered torture, and were only too familiar with the internal squabbles of the Mexican left. As a teacher Marcos was set the task to instruct them to read and write, and to school them in what it was they most demanded; *la palabra politica* - the political word. The word in this instance was history; history in general, and in particular the history of Mexico and its struggles. Still, for all the bookish knowledge Marcos may have had of the triumphs and failures of Mexican history, it soon became evident that his role as teacher would be limited only to the informal classroom of the camp. Outside, it was the Indians who taught him how to negotiate the jungle, how to walk so as not to exhaust himself, how to hunt and

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[10] This situation may soon change however, as a new road is currently being constructed in the zone under the auspices of a government backed 'development programme'. See Neil Harvey, 'Balas de Azucar' in *La Jornada*, (29 August, 1999), for a more revealing analysis of the project.

[11] The story told here is principally based upon Marcos' own version of events as they have been recorded in interviews. See *Yo Marcos*, compilador Marta Duran de Huerta, (Mexico, Ediciones del Milenio, 1994); Yvon Le Bot, *Subcomandante Marcos: El sueno Zapatista*, (Barcelona, Plaza y Janes Editores, 1997); and an interview with Carmen Castillo & Tessa Brisac published in Adolfo Gilly, Carlo Ginzburg, & Subcomandante Marcos, *Discusion sobre la historia*, (Mexico, Taurus, 1995), p. 131-142.

[12] Le Bot, ibid., p. 133


HERMANAS
AGRADECEMOS
QUEREMOS DEMOCRACIA
NO TANQUES DE
GUERRA
HASTA
GOBIER

how to prepare and cook what he caught, how to make himself, as they put it, "part of the mountain". Even for the Indians though, it was not an easy time, it was unusual for them to spend such a long period away from their communities, and whilst the jungle was completely alien to the urban dwelling *mestizos*, for the indigenous, the fact that they were living in an uninhabited sector of the mountains had an added cultural significance.

Slowly Marcos realised that this desert of solitude was, for the Indians, a place far more culturally potent than he had ever imagined. It was, in his own words,

*"the home of the dead, a place of spirits, and of all the histories that they populate, and that still populate the night in the Lacandon jungle, and of which the Indians of the region have much respect. Much respect and much fear."* [13]

For Marcos, it was his first experience of an indigenous world of phantasms, of gods reborn, and of spirits that took the form of animals or objects. As he began to listen to the myths and stories of his Indian companions, it was, he will later reflect, the slow beginning of a process that he now calls the 'Indianization' of the Zapatista National Liberation Army.[14] First however, there were more harsh lessons to be learnt.

Both the importance and the amorphous nature of Indian culture was to make itself painfully felt when the group made its first attempts to proselytise among the communities that lived closest to the jungle interior. In retrospect Marcos talks of entering these communities and trying to teach

*"the absurdities that we had been taught; of imperialism, social crisis, the correlation of forces and their coming together, things that nobody understands, and of course neither did they."*

Their response was honest and when he would ask if they understood they would tell him straight.

*"They would tell you that they had understood nothing, that your words were not understandable, that you had to look for other words (they would say,) 'tu palabra es muy dura, no la entendemos... - [literally translated] your word is very tough, we don't understand it.'"* [15]

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[13] Gilly et al. op.cit., p. 133. On this period also Duran de Huerta, op.cit., p. 83-98.
[14] Le Bot, op.cit., p. 150.
[15] Gilly et al. op.cit., p. 137-8.

It became clear that the rhetoric of Marxist-Leninism did not ring true to the Indians of *la selva* and so the search for 'the words with which to say it' began in earnest.

It was around this time that Marcos wrote one of his first few published poems, it is a piece that perhaps reflects the frustration he felt in trying to communicate his sincere belief in the necessity for revolution, and the fact that he should have chosen the poetic form should by no means be considered accidental. We might also approach his constant search for examples as further proof of a teacher still unsure as to whom it is he addresses. Appropriately enough it is entitled,

*Problems:*

This thing that is one's country is somewhat difficult to explain
But more difficult still is to understand what it is to love one's country.
For example
they taught us that to love one's country is, for example,
to salute the flag
to rise upon hearing the National Anthem
To get as drunk as we please when the national soccer team loses
To get as drunk as we please when the national soccer team wins
and a few etceteras that don't change much from one presidency to the next...

And, for example,
they didn't teach us that to love one's country can be
for example,
to whistle like one who's becoming evermore distant, but
behind that mountain there is also a part of our country where nobody see's us
and where we open our hearts
(because one always open's one's heart when no one see's them)
And we tell this country,
for example,
everything we hate about it
and everything we love about it

and how it is always better to say it,
for example,
with gunshots and smiling.

And, for example,
they taught us that to love one's country is,
for example,
to wear a big sombrero,
to know the names of the Boy Heroes of Chapultepec,
to shout "Viva-arriba Mexico!",
even though Mexico is down and dead.
and other etceteras that change little from one Presidency to the next ...

And, for example,
they did not teach us that
to love one's country
could be,
for example,
to be as quiet as one who dies,
but no,
for beneath this earth there is also a country
where no one hears us
and where we open our hearts
(because one always opens one's heart when no one is listening)
and we tell our country,
the short and hard history
of those who went on dying to love her,
and who are no longer here to give us their reasons why,
but who give them all the same without being here,
those who taught us
that one can love one's country,
for example,

with gunshots and smiling.[16]

### *lunas escondidas* - hidden moons

Any difficulties the Zapatistas may have had in explaining their notion of revolution to the Indians were of course only compounded by the seemingly simple barrier of language. Speaking only Spanish, it was unavoidable that the original Indian Zapatistas would have to act as translators on behalf of their urban educated non-Indian companions. Keen to spread *la palabra politica* - the political word, the grounds of an engagement were nearly always centred around the question of history. However, as these initial conversations became increasingly marked by misunderstanding and incomprehension, it became clear that the indigenous held a different, and to the non-Indian, a curious conception of time. As Marcos recalls,

> *"you weren't always sure about which era they were speaking, when they spoke they could be talking about a story that happened that very week, or that happened 500 years earlier or even when the world began."* [17]

Initially, the *mestizo* Zapatistas paid scant attention to the importance of such cultural differences, their outlook was fixed. From their perspective, that of educated urban guerrillas, they saw themselves as the vanguard, and the Indians were simply "the exploited people - those that had to be organised and shown the path."[18] The universalism of their Marxist analysis and reading of history, precluded any meaningful differentiation between sectors in society, and the notion of culture held little purchase out-with the realm of the disdained elite bourgeoisie. To their mind, "it was the same to talk to a proletariat, a peasant, an employee or a student. All would understand the word of the revolution."[19] So when the Indians told them they didn't, it was a profound blow.

Marcos explains,

> *"It's very difficult when you have a theoretical scheme that explains the whole of a society and then you arrive in that society and you realise that your*

[16] Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, written in 1987, published on March 15, 1994, as part of a communique to the press. Author's own translation based on the original, reprinted in *Documentos y Comunicados del EZLN*, (Mexico, Era, 1995), Vol. 2, p. 198-200.
[17] Gilly et al. op.cit., p. 133.
[18] Le Bot, op.cit., p. 146-7.

*scheme explains nothing. It's difficult to accept; to recognise that you have dedicated all of your life to a project, and that this project is fundamentally warped. It can't even explain the reality into which you are trying to integrate yourself. It was something truly serious".* [20]

It was at this point then, that the *mestizo* Zapatistas realised that their problems were not simply ones of translation. They became aware that the Indian language had its own referents, its own cultural markers, which were different, and that if they hoped to have any further or successful contact with the indigenous communities these were differences that had to be understood.

These initial difficult conversations thus started what Marcos calls "a process of cultural contamination, in the sense of seeing the world, one that obliged us to reconsider our politics and the way in which we viewed our own historical process and the historical process of the nation."[21] It was during this period, as Marcos would later admit, that the non-Indian Zapatistas learnt to listen. What previously had been purely an object of passing curiosity now became an issue of central importance. As they sat round the fire at night the Indians' stories of Sombreron, of Votan, of Ik'al, of the Black Lord, the stories of the talking boxes and of Ix'paquinte, became not simply a form of entertainment but also the primary means through which the *mestizos* became aware of the cultural richness and otherness of the Indians of the south-east of Mexico.[22] And so when they inquired further, and asked where they had learnt these stories, they were told that they in turn had been told them by *los viejos* - the community elders.

They learnt that *los viejos* were in themselves a central source of legitimacy within the communities, and that in fact, the Indians who were at that time their companions in the jungle camp, were only there on account of the approval of the elders. Still unsettled by the seeming confusion of temporalities that littered the indigenous histories, the *mestizos* found it difficult to understand the legitimacy and respect with which such stories and the elders who told them were held. Slowly

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[19] Le Bot, ibid., p. 147-8.
[20] Le Bot, ibid., p. 149-50.
[21] Gilly et al. op.cit., p. 138.
[22] Gilly et al. ibid., p. 134. In this regard also see Gary Gossen's somewhat overly structural approach to a nevertheless interesting question, 'Who is the Comandante of Subcomandante Marcos?' in *Indigenous Revolts in Chiapas and the Andean Highlands*, eds. Kevin Gosner & Arij Ouweneel, (Amsterdam, CEDLA, 1996), p. 107-20.

however, they came to recognise that outside of the schoolroom and the university this was how history worked; that in light of the levels of illiteracy within the communities, it had become necessary to choose someone whose task it would be to memorise the history of that community, someone who could act as it were like a "walking book".[23]

It was this experience of history, and the constant invocation of inherited oral history, that provided the basis upon which the language of Zapatismo was constructed. By listening to the Indians' own experience and history of exploitation, of humiliation and of racism, the Zapatistas found the key-stones upon which to build a new politics. The local history revealed just how partial non-Indian claims to a national history were, and to a large extent the Zapatistas learnt first hand what it meant to be erased from the history books. Placed in this context we would do well to ponder on the political consequences of an academic knowledge that claims a comprehensiveness and transparency that does not exist. For scholars of international relations in particular we could do worse than accept a poem by Marcos appropriately entitled;

*a gift and a lesson in politics*:

A little piece of the moon.....
though really it's not one at all,
but two:
A piece from the dark side,
and one from the bright.
And what must be understood
is that the little piece of the moon
that shines
shines because there is a dark side too.
The dark side of the moon
makes possible the bright.

Us too.
When we are the dark side,
(and we must take turns)

[23] Gilly et al. ibid., p. 134.

it doesn't mean we are less,
only that it's time
to be the dark side,
so that everyone can see the moon
(to tell the truth,
when it comes down to it, the dark side
is more important,
because it shines in other skies,
and because to see it
you have to learn to fly
very high).

And so it is,
only a few
are willing to suffer so
others won't,
and die
so others live.
And this is so,
given that boots and moon and et cetera
are there.[24]

***El viejo Antonio - old man Antonio***

As these founding Zapatistas experienced a transformation of their role, from one of teachers to one of pupils, one Indian village elder in particular took on the mantle of cultural compass for Marcos especially. His name was *el viejo Antonio*, and it was he who in large part gave legitimacy to the Zapatista's early and tentative presence in the Indian communities. He was, in the words of Marcos, the one "who explained us; who we were and who we should be".[25] As Marcos will later admit it was the time spent with *el viejo Antonio* - old man Antonio, that had the most profound influence on the unconscious transformation of the quasi-Marxist guerrilla army into

[24] Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, March 24, 1994, translated in *Shadows of Tender Fury*, op.cit., p. 188.

an Indian rebel army. He was for the Zapatistas a vital bridge, and for Marcos in particular, a mirror from within which to reconsider and recreate the nature of the revolutionary struggle to which he had chosen to dedicate his life.

Typically *el viejo Antonio* would appear in a quiet moment when Marcos or his companions had cause to visit his community. Without greeting he would sit alongside Marcos and begin to roll one of his home made tobacco cigars whilst Marcos himself would take the opportunity to repack and re-light his own pipe. After these moments of individual preparation, and after both had savoured their first draws of smoke, it was nearly always incumbent upon Marcos to break the now heavy silence that hung amidst them and their respective fumes. Most often Marcos would begin with a question and, after a dignified pause, *el viejo Antonio* would characteristically and enigmatically respond with a story.

They were stories of gods who sacrificed themselves to make the sun and the moon, of why carbon is black and yet nonetheless produces light, of lions and mirrors, of night and stars, of colours, of clouds and rain, of questions, of trees, stones, ants and water, and of rainbows.[26] Each story was in its own right a parable, and although Marcos probably never did receive a straight answer to his questions, he came to consider *el viejo Antonio* his teacher, perhaps even his mentor. And the most important lesson he learnt was patience.

With only a short wave radio as their principle means to receive news from the outside world, the guerrillas often felt isolated and out of step with the wider changes that were taking place on the international arena. As Radio Havana, Voice of the United States and Radio France Internationale informed them, the Soviet Union was collapsing, peace deals and elections were taking place in Central America, and Reaganism was becoming the ideology of preference among the developed and lesser developed nation states. In fact, their decision to come to the mountains of the south-east of Mexico to foment revolution at times looked increasingly anachronistic. It was during these moments of tempered despair and doubt however, that *el viejo Antonio's*

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[25] Le Bot, op.cit., p. 154.

[26] These stories have been collected and retold by Subcomandante Marcos in *Relatos de El Viejo Antonio*, prologo de Armando Bartra, (Mexico, Centro de Informacion y Analysis de Chiapas, 1998); *La historia de las preguntas*, (Mexico, Offset Industrial, 1998) and *La historia de los colores*, (Mexico, Offset Industrial, 1997).

parables directed Marcos back to the environment around him. Rather than looking outwards for signs of confirmation, *el viejo Antonio* taught him to look within.

As Marcos has said,

> *"you come from the city accustomed to managing time with relative autonomy. You can extend the day with a light well into the night, to read, to study, to do many activities after dark. But not in the mountain. The mountain says to you from here on in, its the turn of another world, and we enter effectively another world, other animals, other sounds, another time, other air and another form of being with people, that includes the indigenous that were with us. In the night you are made truly more timid, more introspective, more close, as if looking for a handle on something that has always been prohibited; a night in the mountain."* [27]

For Marcos it was during this period that a lasting transformation took place among the Zapatistas.

> *"The idea of a more just world, everything that was socialism in broad brushstrokes, but redirected, enriched with humanitarian elements, ethics, morals, more than simply indigenous. Suddenly the revolution transformed itself into something essentially moral. Ethical. More than the redistribution of the wealth or the expropriation of the means of production, the revolution began to be the possibility for a human being to have a space for dignity. Dignity started to be a word with much strength. It wasn't our contribution, it didn't come from the urban element, this was the contribution of the (Indian) communities. In such a way that the revolution would be the guarantee for dignity, so that it might be respected."* [28]

In more intimate terms he has written:

There is in the world a mirror.
It allows us to know who we are,
who we were and who we can be.

The first image is not always so agreeable,
the second explains why,

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[27] Gilly et al. op.cit., p. 135.
[28] Le Bot, op.cit., p. 145-6.

and with the third we show our promise.

The problem is in knowing how to find the mirror.
It's not so easy.
But the really dangerous part
is to dare oneself to look inside.
A little distance from oneself,
assisted by a smile, will help things.[29]

### *el lento despertar* - the slow awakening

Whilst Chiapas itself has been home to Mayan Indian groups for over a thousand years, the indigenous with whom Marcos and the Zapatistas made their initial contact were, as explained in the previous chapter, relative newcomers to the Lacandona jungle zone. Beginning in the 1940's, small numbers of Indians mainly from the highland areas of Chiapas were encouraged by the federal government to colonise the uncultivated land in the southern parts of the state, close to the border with Guatemala. Although the numbers of communities originally established were few, their creation laid the foundations for a later and substantially larger period of migration that some, in conscious invocation of its biblical connotations, have described as an exodus.[30] By 1980 the migrant population had risen to around 100,000 from an estimated 10,000 in 1960, and the current figure of 150,000 is expected to reach 200,000 by the year 2000.[31]

Apart from the sheer magnitude of numbers that such an upheaval and resettlement involved, the factor that gave the Lacandon jungle its distinctive cultural identity was that within this body of migrants, existed differences in language, ethnicity, religion and political affiliation that when combined, resulted in what has

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[29] Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, 16 december 1995, dedicated to Olivier Cyran, translation based on the original published in *Cuentos*, op.cit., p. 24.
[30] X. Leyva Solano, 'Lacandonia Babilonia en las postrimerias del siglo', in *Ojarasca*, (Vol. 24, Sept. 1993), p. 23-28. Rosalva Aida Hernandez-Castillo, 'De la Sierra a la Selva: Identidades Etnicas y Religiosas en la Frontera Sur', in *Chiapas: Los Rumbos de Otra Historia*, (eds.) Juan Pedro Viquiera & Mario Humberto Ruiz, (Mexico, UNAM, 1998), p. 408-411
[31] Jan de Vos, ' El Lacandon: Una introduccion historica', in *Rumbos*, ibid., p. 335.

already been described as a "unique space of social construction".[32] In light of these already well established influences - such as the Church, both Protestant evangelical and Catholic liberation theologist, as well as the long active Maoist inspired political unions of the communities - the indigenous 'culture' that the Zapatistas came to encounter was one both resistant to easy definition and recalcitrant to external political control.[33] Placed in this context it is perhaps not surprising then, that when the indigenous eventually came to embrace the Zapatista politics of clandestine subversion they did so under conditions of severe economic hardship, and only after the exhaustion of various legal attempts at political expression.[34]

The true extent of the 'Indianization' of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation was however, only finally formalised after the communities themselves had decided to go to war. With the creation of the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee (CCRI) in 1993, the Zapatista general command became completely Indian, and the organisational structure at last reflected the earlier ideological change that had taken place amongst its non-Indian members.[35] Consisting of representatives of the four main ethnic groups (Tzeltal, Chol, Tzotzil and Tojolabal) from the three central regions of Zapatista influence in the state (the north, the highlands and the jungle), the CCRI became the central means of co-ordination and dissemination necessary in the preparation for the planned rebel offensive.[36] It was around this time also, that Marcos was appointed chief military commander for the rebel forces.

Nobody was really sure how the 1994 New Years day rebellion would go. It had the potential to be a disaster, a horrific bloodbath. As it was, the rebel force of some 6000 successfully occupied seven of Chiapas' main towns with little bloodshed. In the days that followed, however, and once the Mexican military had recovered from the surprise, many hundreds of lives, both Zapatista, military and civilian would be lost. The government were not slow to employ Swiss and US manufactured planes and helicopters to bomb the rebel positions, although their superior fire power was to be

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[32] Andres Aubry, *La Historia de Chiapas Identifica a Los Zapatistas*, (INAREMAC, Doc. 043-VI, 1994), p. 9. This was especially the case for Indian women, see Rosalva Aida Hernandez Castillo, 'Reinventing Tradition, The Women's Law', in *Akwe:kon Journal*, (Vol. XI, No. 2, Summer 1994), p. 67-70.

[33] See previous chapter.

[34] See Neil Harvey, *The Chiapas Rebellion: The Struggle for Land and Democracy*, (Durham and London, Duke University Press, 1998).

[35] Le Bot, op.cit., p. 195-196.

quickly tempered, not so much by the guerrilla tactics of the Zapatistas themselves, as by the national and international media attention that they had unleashed with their dramatic declaration of war in San Cristobal some days earlier. By January the 12th the government had declared a cease-fire and the possibility for a peaceful resolution to the conflict seemed hopeful.

### *la lucha sigue*- the fight continues

It has been over six years since those first days of violent insurrection in Chiapas and still to this day blood is shed in the defence of *Zapatismo*. The Mexican federal government has been accused of attempting to 'administer' the war rather than sincerely seek its resolution.[37] Their strategy, both domestic and international, has combined the showmanship of rhetorical and gestural politics, common to much of late-twentieth century statecraft, with the more classical tactics of counter subversion already tried and tested in the mountain villages of their central American neighbours. It is a battle fought on two fronts. Locally in Chiapas, the Indian communities have found themselves surrounded by a military force estimated to be some 80,000 strong.[38] Whilst their constant patrolling and increasingly regular incursions leave the communities intimidated and tense, it has been the training and arming of 'unofficial' para-military groups throughout the region that has given rise to a refugee population of some 16,000, and most horrifically resulted in the December 1997 massacre of 46 mainly women and children in the community of Acteal.[39]

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[36] 'An interview with the CCRI-CG' in *Zapatistas!:Documents of the New Mexican Revolution*, op.cit., p. 131-139.

[37] This expression belongs to Carlos Montemayor whose analysis of the Mexican government strategy is incisive. See his regular contributions to *Proceso*, especially No. 1113, March 1, 1998 & No. 1126, May 31 1998, as well as his useful monograph *Chiapas, La rebelion indigena de Mexico*, (Mexico, Joaquin Mortiz, 1997).

[38] See Jesus Ramirez Cuevas, 'Un Soldado por Familia' in *La Jornada* supplement *Masiosare*, (25 January 1998), p. 8-10, who claims there is now a soldier for each family in the jungle region.

[39] On the para-military groups see Andres Aubry & Angelica Inda, 'La paramilitarizacion en el nuevo paisaje social de las guerras campesinas', in *La Jornada* supplement *del Campo*, (No. 64, 25 Febrero 1998), p. 1-4, and the special reports in the Mexican weekly *Proceso*, especially No. 1104, (December 28 1997) and No. 1104, (January 4 1998). Also see Marta Duran de Huerta y Massimo Boldrini, *Acteal, Navidad en el Infierno*, (Mexico, Times Editores, 1998), and the special report published by the Fray Bartolome de Las Casas Centre for Human Rights, *Camino a la masacre*, (Mexico, Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolome de las Casas A. C., 1998), for detailed accounts of the paramilitary role in the Acteal massacre.


ZEDILLO: CCP
¡RESPETA
A TU MADRE...!
¡PATRIA!
BANPAIS
CASA DE CAMBIO CATORCE

In contrast to this painful realism of low intensity warfare under which large parts of Chiapas continue to suffer today, the other aspect of the governmental response has been directed towards the more nebulous frontier of public and international opinion. It has been in this connected realm where the politics of representation and discourse have been most fiercely contested, that we must locate and understand the governmental obsession with the unmasking of Marcos. For ever since the first declaration of the Lacandon Jungle was proclaimed on New Years day 1994 it has fallen upon Marcos as both product and expression of the Zapatista struggle to communicate just why it is the indigenous chose to fight and why it is they continue to fight to this day.

After so many secretive years of survival in the mountains, the sudden arrival of journalists, photographers and camera crews in the Lacandon communities has, instead of making the struggle seem more real, often made the world of national and international politics appear increasingly *sur*-real. At times Marcos has drawn the analogy of his and the Zapatistas apparition into this new world, with that of Lewis Carrol's Alice when she too stepped through a looking glass.[40] At other times he has compared his actions and that of his companions, to those heroic moments of madness immortalised in Cervantes' tale of the exploits of Don Quixote de la Mancha and his loyal footman Sancho Panza. For Marcos the saddest part of Don Quixote was always the moment when he was returned to a life of normality, the moment when he would say of himself, 'I was mad, and now I am sane'. It has been Marcos' belief that the Zapatistas have to continue battling in the madness until the very last.[41] To this end Marcos has created his own Sancho Panza in the literary character of a tough little beetle, known as *don durito*.[42]

All this might appear too much, too playful, too lightweight in contrast to the daily plight of Indian life in Chiapas were it not for the fact that such stories, such literary allusions and poems have at their core one key message. For the Mexican governmental administration so determined to follow the schematic rules of neo-liberal reform, a government whose only recourse is to call upon the cold and at times savage

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[40] For example see 'De aca a alla, y volvemos a empezar', comunicado del 8 de marzo de 1997, in *Cuentos*, op.cit., p. 205-209.
[41] Duran de Huerta, *Yo Marcos*, op.cit., p. 21-22.
[42] See the examples collected in *Cuentos*, op.cit., or at the internet site, http://www.civila.com/hispania/autonomia/durito.htm .

rationalism of economic analysis in sterile defence of their contested legitimacy, the Zapatista message is difficult to counter. Not directed to the head, because the Zapatistas believe they have little to add to existing analyses of Mexico's continued economic crisis, their message aims for "the heart, the part most often forgotten".[43] It is not that they simply hope to elicit sympathy, for as Marcos says,

> *"we are not saying that we want to create a sentimental discourse, one that's a-political, or a-theoretical, or anti-theoretical, but what we want is to bring theory down to the level of the human being, to what is lived, to share with the people the experiences that make it possible to continue living."* [44]

It is precisely this appeal to the 'human', a human-ness not articulated in any theory, ideology or doctrine, but one that is only reflected within the literature and speeches of Zapatismo and made intimate through the jungle 'encounters' that have attracted thousands to Chiapas since the conflict first began, that makes the Zapatistas unique.[45] It has led some to term the struggle the "first post-modern revolution of the twenty-first century"[46], and whilst remaining sensitive to the hyperbolic appropriation such a claim entails, might there not also be some truth here. Mexican history afterall seems to show us that the Indians of Chiapas have fallen under one modernist vision after another, leaving an Indian invisible in Mexican and world politics, a situation that the Zapatista rebels seem uniquely to contest. As we enter the twentyfirst century however the result of such contestation must remain open ended.

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[43] Le Bot, op.cit., p. 356.
[44] Le Bot, ibid., p. 356.
[45] See Nicholas Higgins & Marta Duran de Huerta, 'An interview with Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, spokesperson and military commander of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)' in *International Affairs*, (Vol. 75, No. 2, April 1999), especially p. 275.
[46] First quoted in the *New York Times*, January 1994.

# *Conclusion*

# Modernist Visions and the Invisible Indian

It would be easy and understandable to characterise the Zapatista movement as romantic. To a certain extent it is. But what the seemingly romantic elements of the rebellion invite is not criticism for their perceived lack of 'realism', but self-reflection upon our own received expectations of 'real politics'. We, as International Relations scholars, must ask ourselves how it is that we have come to presume that the true nature of politics involves instrumental and structural proposals. As we are forced to look away from the official and traditionally recognised centres of power so too should we be forced to question how we understand the nature of such power as it is lived and not merely prescribed. In International Relations, this failure to de-couple politics from its institutional and theoretical locale has centred mainly on an over-evaluation of the role and function of the modern sovereign state.

Outside of what are often considered to be the traditional boundaries of the discipline, scholars like Quentin Skinner have looked to the history of political thought as it was understood prior to our distinctly modern understanding of the state, "as the sole source of law and legitimate force within its own territory, and as the sole appropriate object of its citizens' allegiances."[1] Within the transformations and dynamics of Renaissance political thought and their later influence upon the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Skinner has sought to explain how a "decisive shift was made from the idea of the ruler 'maintaining his state' - where this simply meant upholding his own position - to the idea that there is a separate legal and constitutional order, that of the state, which the ruler has a duty to maintain."[2] The curious legacy of modern International Relations theorising has been its studied indifference to the implications of such historical research for contemporary political analyses of the state. It is as if once the existence of the state had been identified little more thought needed be given over to how the body politic itself continued to exist. Its actions, its relations, and its very agency have as a consequence been attributed a

[1] The definition is of course Webers. See Max Weber, *Economy and Society*, (ed.) Guenther Roth & Claus Wittich, 3 Vols., (New York, 1968), Vol. 1, p. 56.
[2] Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, 2. Vols, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1978) Vol. 1, p. x.

coherence, a logic and a reified position that provides the primary foundation for the theorising that then followed.

One thinker who could be read as picking up where Skinner left off, is Michel Foucault. Only too well aware of the shackles such state-centric thinking can impose, in a passage not directly aimed at the discipline of International Relations, but nonetheless expressive of a similar problematic, Foucault makes a critique and a suggestion.

> *"The excessive value attributed to the problem of the state is expressed, basically, in two ways: the one form, immediate, effective and tragic, is the lyricism of the monstre froid we see confronting us; but there is a second way of overvaluing the problem of the state, one which is paradoxical because apparently reductionist: it is the form of analysis that consists in reducing the state to a certain number of functions, such as the development of productive forces and the reproduction of relations of production, and yet this reductionist vision of the relative importance of the state's role nevertheless invariably renders it absolutely essential as a target needing to be attacked and a privileged position needing to be occupied. But the state, no more probably today than at any other time in its history, does not have this unity, this individuality, this rigorous functionality, nor, to speak frankly, this importance; maybe after all, the state is no more than a composite reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think. Maybe what is really important for our modernity - that is, for our present - is not so much the étatisation of society, as the 'governmentalisation' of the state."* [3]

In the chapters that have preceded this conclusion I have taken inspiration from such a suggestion. I have thus attempted to provide not so much a history of the Mexican state *per se* as a history of the 'governmentalisation' of the Mexican state. Whilst Foucault began writing about the history of thought and practice involved in the creation of the modern Western European state, I have been surprised to discover how Western and European the models of Mexican governance have been in their basis. However, although there has been a notable overlap of political thought and governmental rationale within this history, my thesis has also sought to chart a

[3] Michel Foucault, 'Governmentality', in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, (eds.) Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, (London, Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), p. 103.

distinctively Mexican dynamic that the genesis of the Western state did not involve. This additional dynamic, of course, has been the existence of a native culture and society prior to the arrival of the Spanish colonists, which since that time has been known as 'Indian'. Within this history of Mexican governmental thought, therefore, there has also been intertwined a dual narrative of Indian subjugation, what might best be described as a necessarily partial and subjugated history of Indian resistance.

As the event that first triggered this study was the Zapatista uprising of 1994, this attempt to tell a story concerning the relations between governmental thought and Indian subjectivity should by no means be considered accidental. In fact it has been the intention of this thesis to approach the Zapatista rebellion as a window of opportunity from within which we would be led back through Mexican history to consider the different manners in which the Indian has been thought and treated. In doing so we have been able to consider the effects of the adoption of diverse mentalities of rule, effects which have led to the Indian being made both invisible and visible in very particular ways. As the traditional approach in International Relations has been to treat the state as a monolithic actor in its own right, this approach hopefully acts as a necessary corrective to the erasure of the all too human and contested subjectivities that constitute the living modern polis. In this way I have sought to work from a deep seated ontological viewpoint, that is to say the entry point chosen for the study of international relations is not the modern state and its institutions, but the human and social subject upon which such political rationales have come to be inscribed.[4]

Concentrating upon the Maya Indians of Chiapas in particular, I have attempted to fuse both histories as a means to provide a context and a perspective from within which it becomes possible to better understand the current condition of Mexican governmental politics and Zapatista Indian rebellion at this the beginning of the twenty-first century. As the chapters will have indicated, history is both complex and multilayered, and much that might have been of significance and interest remains outside this particular narrative. Just as every narrative of historical life always remains hostage to the limits of representation, this thesis is no exception. Nevertheless whilst

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[4] This approach might better be described in William E. Connolly's terms as an 'ont*a*logy', to call attention to the ambiguities, incomensurabilities, and play of *difference* that lie beneath our practices of coherence at any one time. See William E. Connolly, *The Augustinian Imperative*, (London, Sage, 1993), p. 150, and my own 'A Question of Style: The Politics and Ethics of Cultural Conversation in Rorty and Connolly', in *Global Society*, (Vol. 10, No. 1, 1996).

such chapters have tried to be been sensitive to the routes not travelled, this conclusion shall now turn its attention to a necessarily more schematic and perhaps useful summary of the political and social history recounted so far. On the basis of this summary I shall then draw my conclusions.

**A History of Mexican Governmental Thought**

The first chapter concerned itself with the impact both European and native of the discovery, and described the system of government imposed by the colonists. It argued that whilst Europe may well be understood to have begun a period of modernity at this time, for the American natives and the government of the colony, the periodisation 'medieval' is more appropriate. This is to argue that a) modernity has distinct trajectories depending on concrete historical conditions, and b) that Mexico (then New Spain) experienced little of the Reformation/Counter-Reformation dynamic that would prove so divisive in Europe, and, as a consequence, maintained a system of 'order' which, owing to its religious and feudal forms, is best described as medieval.

It was not until the end of the Hapsburg dynasty, and the establishment of the Bourbon line, that the transformations in the European 'art of government' began to make themselves felt in the Americas. Chapter 2 set out what the thesis argues is the first moment of modernity in Mexican history, the period of 'Enlightened despotism', that began in the late 18th century and ended with the wars of independence, creating the governmental entity that we now know as Mexico. Ethno-historians, like Serge Gruzinski, describe this period as a 'second acculturation' for the Indians of New Spain. Whilst the first period of acculturation came with the discovery and colonisation of the Americas, this second encounter with European culture involved an attempt to remove the natives from both the influence of the Church and the local *encomenderos* (plantation owners). It was in fact the first attempt to bring the Indian under the administrative and bureaucratic control of what was now becoming recognisable as the techniques of governance of the modern European nation-state. It is perhaps not surprising that the external imposition of such a novel system of government should conflict with the prior Hapsburg *modus operandi* which had been functioning for hundreds of years. However, the role of the indigenous population in the ensuing wars needs explaining.

**Table One:**

| Problem | System | Expertise | Techniques |
|---|---|---|---|
| order/legitimacy | Colonial - | theologians<br>courtiers | encomienda<br>repartimiento<br>reduccion<br>religion |
| efficiency/productivity | Bourbon - | physiocrats | statistics<br>tax/adminstration<br>hispanicisation<br>Church censorship |
| order/legitimacy/unity (sovereignty) | Liberal - | 'hombres de bien' | constitution<br>land privatisation |
| order/strength /productivity | Liberal Authoritarian - | positivists | police<br>foreign investment<br>infrastructure<br>sectorial understanding |
| order/unity | Corporatist - | positivists | sectorial representation<br>education<br>church censorship<br>unions |
| efficiency/productivity | Neoliberal - | economists | privatisation<br>finance<br>foreign investment<br>specialisation<br>Pronasol<br>concertacion |

Whilst disagreeing with historians Jacques Lafaye and David Brading that the Indian rebellion supporting Hidalgo and the battle to defend the dark skinned Virgin of Guadelupe, presents *the* founding moment of a 'Mexican national consciousness', nevertheless I suggest that once again the religious form which such rebellion adopted should alert us to the continued significance of a native religiosity which was at odds with the modernism of a governmental elite. Independence, when it eventually came, has been widely acknowledged to have embodied a compromise among diverse creole

(non-Indian native born American) elites. The choice of a loosely defined liberal constitutionalism as the preferred basis of government was clearly not the creation of the Indian masses, and when the constitution effectively rendered the Indian juridically invisible, the few remaining rights that being subject to a foreign monarchy had afforded disappeared. Post-independence Mexico was a country that neither functioned well as a state nor constituted a nation. It would not be until the late 19th century that Mexico could fairly be judged to have adopted a coherent and effective governmental rationale.

In the third chapter, the establishment of the Mexican governmental state was discussed. The importance of science in the creation of a governmental politics was explicitly addressed. In particular the work of Auguste Comte and Saint Simon was highlighted for the influence it played upon a group of government officials known as '*los cientificos*'. With an increasingly instrumental and interventionist style of politics, analogies cannot fail to be drawn with the earlier period of 'Enlightened despotism'. This thirty year period presided over by the dictator Porfirio Diaz was Mexico's self consciously 'modern' moment. That it was also one of the darkest periods for the country's native population should not be considered an innocent coincidence. The chapter considered how the prominence of a liberal economic logic led to an understanding of the indigenous as a resource rather than a distinct people or culture, and, in doing so, legitimised some of the worst treatment and conditions that Mexican history has bestowed upon its Indian inhabitants.

The social revolution of 1910-1920 put an end to some of the more flagrant excesses of the Mexican governmental state, but in significant respects the post-revolutionary establishment of a single party (initially the PNR- now PRI) that claimed to represent all sectors of society, perpetuated an instrumental and sectorial understanding of the indigenous that, whilst for the first time offering some form of representation, did so under the monolithic category of 'worker'. Chapter 4 demonstrated how this new form of corporatism came to impinge upon the life of the indigenous. In particular, employing the work of anthropologist Jan Rus, it described how the national project of 'indigenismo' eventually led to the subversion of tradition within the highland Indian communities of Chiapas, resulting in a situation whereby 'culture', governmentally understood, became an object of political control.

Chapter 5 brings us to the present high-modern period of Mexican governmental rule. Here I discussed the role of international financial structures (World Bank, IMF) and Mexican elite education (U.S. & European) in the introduction of the neoliberal method of governmental rule. Specific attention was paid to the effects of this latest Mexican governmentality on the indigenous of Chiapas. The arrival of other social actors, including protestant evangelicals, liberation theologists and mestizo (non-Indian) revolutionaries in the state was also described. The chapter concluded with an analysis of the nation as it was on the eve of 1994.

In light of this analysis, and whilst the history of Mexico's modernity cannot be considered as purely analogous to that of the European state, it is now possible to claim that the forms of government which Mexican political elites have come to choose are all of European inspiration. Appreciating that every society is burdened with the task, under its concrete condition, of creating a socio-political order, we can now ask, what has been distinctive about the Mexican 'governmentality'? This thesis claims that Mexico has experienced three distinct moments of governmentality: the early modern period of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the modern period of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and the high modern period of the late 20th century. On this analysis, globalisation, or the late twentieth century project of neoliberalism, becomes merely the latest, even if by far the most pervasive, of a series of governmentalities that the Mexican Indian has come to experience. This brings us back to the second dynamic of the thesis.

**A History of Subjugated Indian Identity and Resistance**

As we have already seen governmental power and practice does not necessarily produce the results it desires. Colonial Indians took on much of hispanic Christian practice without becoming Spanish. They neither subsumed the religious beliefs of Catholicism to their own culture, nor synchronised the two, rather they lived and experienced something new. In chapter 1 we witnessed in dramatic fashion how an indigenous religiosity was capable of re-appropriating the symbols of conquest in a short lived reversal of supernatural and temporal power known as the Cancuc rebellion of 1712. The Hapsburg colonial system, for all its barbarity and abuse, seems by its very promotion of a duality between the Christian transcendental and the monarchical

to have avoided the psychological and symbolic rupture that would have left no space for a pre-existing Indian imaginary.

In chapter 2 the permanently suspect question of conversion was made increasingly apparent. As enlightened Bourbon rule sought to reform the role of the Catholic Church within the Spanish Empire, public displays of native religiosity faced censure. As priests were encouraged to fulfil increasingly bureaucratic and policing tasks, Indian culture, which had always been more than its public expression, appears to have grudgingly reverted to the clandestine. The disruption of this new governmentality, with its imposition of peninsular Spaniards in place of the colonial born locals, created the unrest that led to the Hidalgo revolt of 1810. The Indian role in the subsequent battles, as already mentioned, remains questionable, but the work of Eric Van Young on the Bajío Indians suggests that any claims to a Mexican nationalism were partial and limited to the creole elite at most. Millenarian beliefs and the opportunity to route the *gachupines* (peninsular Spanish), whilst claiming the brown Virgin of Guadelupe for themselves, again point to the indigenous persistence of mythical, transcendental and spiritual elements that do not sit at all comfortably with notions of a modern nation-state.

Whilst attempts had been made by both European and Mexican intellectuals to appropriate the 'civilisation' of the ancient Mexica, or Aztec as they have since come to be known, as a means to legitimise independence and create a national identity, any suggestions that the existing Indian populace might have a more legitimate claim to such a cultural heritage were dismissed. Post independence legislation in fact sought to juridically eradicate the living Indian as a subject with an identity separate from the abstract liberal citizen that now theoretically populated the ex-colony of New Spain. Such an act clearly reveals the inability of the liberal governmentality to accept the pluri-ethnic constitution of the Mexican territory. Chapter 3 demonstrates how this liberal myopia permitted rival *mestizo* (non-Indian) groups to carve up the countryside of Chiapas, indebting the Indians whilst excluding them from any aspect of public life.

What has since come to be misnamed the 'caste war' of 1867 effectively illustrated how the persistent and understandable native devotion to autonomous acts of spiritual and supernatural worship could be presented as threats to the new order. Empty constitutional formalism, combined with the continued sanction of Indian exploitation, led indigenous communities to once again animate the only refuge in

which they had some control: the divine. The 'talking stones' of Tzajahemel, and the autonomous culture that briefly flourished around them, provide powerful testimony to the vital and energising presence of non-material, transcendental and spiritual realms within the lives of native culture. The vicious manner with which the public display of such beliefs was met should remind us once again of both the incapacity of Mexican liberalism to allow such non-national allegiances to exist and its failure to replace Indian religiosity and ethics with its own means of cultural governance. This lack at the heart of Mexican rule was of course recognised by the *cientificos* of the Diaz era.

Informed by a conscious developmentalism, the *cientificos* made little attempt to uphold the constitutional liberties so keenly defended only decades earlier. Internal security instead took on an increasingly repressive role as individual rights were openly subsumed under more general nationalist economic priorities. The Indians as a group were no longer governmentally overlooked but neither was their condition eased. In fact their economic potential became subject to more systematic and regularised forms of exploitation; e.g. the *enganche*, seasonal plantation labour. Once more, Indian identity seems to have found expression in public village ritual. With the relaxing of Church censorship and the new economic opportunity offered via the sale of aguardiente, the *cofradia* re-established a central role in community life. The national revolution that Diaz's authoritarianism eventually triggered saw only limited participation by the Maya of Chiapas. In chapter 4, however, the story of *los pajaritos* is recounted. Nevertheless, this short lived foray into (counter) revolutionary activity only served to confirm the more dominant Indian stance of non-involvement.

The immediate post-revolutionary years appear to have involved something of a renaissance in Indian cultural life, allowing for the elaboration of village rituals and *cofradia* celebrations. Nationalist revolutionary victory was thus locally supported on the basis of this unusual period of non-interference. Sadly, as the chapter demonstrated, when the revolution eventually adopted its lasting institutional form, the corporate inclusion of Indian hierarchies into a party alliance led to a corruption of the very Indian cultural structures of self-defence that had nourished the populace for so long. The eventual weariness, frustration and fragmentation that such elite co-option created led in large part to the acceptance and adoption of diverse creeds, mobilisations and community experiments that finally resulted in the Zapatista rebellion of 1994.

**Table Two:**

| State-building History or History of Governmentality | System | Subjugated Indian History |
|---|---|---|
| Colonial | medieval/Christian | Cancuc rebellion 1712 |
| Bourbon | Enlightenment | Hidalgo Indian uprising 1810 |
| Liberal | constitutionalist | 'Caste war' 1867 |
| Liberal-Authoritarian | *cientifico* | *los pajaritos*/ post revolutionary renaissance |
| Post Revolution | corporatist | corruption of Indian communities |
| Neoliberal | free market self-enterprise | Zapatista Rebellion 1994- |

**Modernist Visions...**

Viewed from this historical perspective, the Maya Indians experience of modernity has been one characterised by struggle and repression. The notion however that the modern Mexican state has become in Weberian terms, "the sole source of law and legitimate force within its own territory, and the sole appropriate object of its citizens' allegiances", does not appear to hold.[5] If anything the Maya of Chiapas have fought continually to maintain an ongoing allegiance to a culture of their own making, a historical trend only understood with reference to the scant opportunity to participate and benefit from the legitimised practices of the modern state. These practices and the political rationales within which they are mobilised are what give modernity its distinctive nature.

It is quite clear that whilst the early colonial period of Hapsburg rule permitted numerous abuses to occur, the dual nature of Spanish Imperial rule also involved a Christian pastoral aspect that provided a system of self-government that not only granted legitimacy through association with the divine, but permitted each and every royal subject an equal opportunity to create a relationship with this higher power through the practices and rituals that individuals and communities could conduct upon

[5] Op. cit., note 1.

themselves. In retrospect the modern moment could be said to occur precisely when religious practice is redeployed within the realm of government. Certainly in Europe this was no overnight process and the transformation of the theocratic state into the modern state relied heavily on the reorientation of such Christian pastoral practices within newly understood governmental practices. The creation of a new 'governmentality', however, involved not only the ability of rulers to 'see' their subjects differently, but for such subjects themselves to become active participants in this vision.[6]

It is also relatively obvious in our historical narrative of governmental thought, that it was with the new practices of the physiocrats and the beginnings of a tabulation of population and its particular specificities that we witness the first modernist vision settle on Mexican soil and subjectivity. When the Bourbon Empire collapsed this vision remained limited to the '*hombres de bien*' of the newly independent Mexican state. These, often Jesuit educated, Enlightenment men formed a governmental elite that confronted a rebellious nation that fell victim to a predatory US neighbour and sought legitimacy through a constitutionalism that was both abstract and lacking the institutional means to enforce it. The second modernist vision that might best be understood in the more holistic terms of a governmentality thus appears with the ascension of '*los cientificos*' to power. Their employal of a rural police force and their support for the dictatorial authoritarianism of Porfirio Diaz, should be seen as a recognition of the 'unnatural' character of the modern state and consequently the necessity to adopt violent internal security measures to create the cohesion that the 'nation' so obviously lacked. Again, assisted by the evolutionist and linear concepts of Comtean progress, these experts were able to 'see' Mexico as an object needy of strong guardianship.

This paternalism at first sight seems paradoxical given the modern state's reliance on institutional government and expertise. In fact, as the Mexican revolution dramatically underscored, the lack of legitimacy and the weariness of top down governance eventually generated significant resistance. That many of the positivists'

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[6] For more on this process see Colin Gordon, 'Governmental Rationality: an introduction', in *The Foucault Effect*, op.cit. pp. 1-51. Foucault himself called this process a 'daemonic' coupling of 'city game' and 'shepherd game' to form what he called 'secular political pastorate'. See also Michel Foucault, '*Omnes et singulatim*: towards a criticism of "political reason"', in *The Tanner Lectures on Human Values, Vol. 2*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981).

ideas and even the personnel themselves, were able to survive the revolution and return to positions of power, should only confirm the transformation not of the institution of government but of the people in the practice of government that the heavy hand of Diaz did indeed produce. The post-revolutionary choice of a corporate system as a means to bind the citizen to the state was seen as an effective way of overcoming the elite/masses division that had been so much part of Mexican rule previously. The educational projects, the experimental introduction of Protestantism, and the nationalist character of the cultural projects of this period all reflect a massive effort to unite the territory and the people behind the modern state endeavour and to a large extent the myth of the revolution. That this system lasted seventy one years should be seen as sufficient proof to the effectiveness of its (often coercive) practices of loyalty enforcement.

Recently with the July 2000 elections, Mexico has for the first time voted in a Presidential candidate from an opposition party. Although in 1988 Cuauhtémoc Cardenas of the left-wing Partido Revolucionario Democratico (PRD) was denied victory by a manufactured computer crash, the success of Vincente Quesada Fox of the right-wing Partido Accion Nacional (PAN) should be recognised as the latest development in the neoliberal governmental rationale that has dominated Mexico since the early 1980's. This final and current modernist vision, although introduced by the long running Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), necessitated the breakdown of the traditional corporate power structure of the one party state. Attempts to replace the old system of clientism and bossism with new networks of power led to a period of unprecedented corruption, enrichment and human rights abuse. Again, the alienation characteristic of failed or radical governmentalities could only be mediated through the highly coercive use of internal security measures.[7] The paradoxical element of neoliberalism, however, was its consciously international nature. With the attempts to reorganise national practices in line with international financial perogatives came increased international media and non-governmental attention. Also the eruption and significance of the Zapatista rebellion in 1994 and the scrutiny it commanded should be seen as contributive to the eventual cleaning up of the electoral process.

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[7] See John Gledhill, 'Neoliberalism and Ungovernability: Caciquismo, Militarisation and Popular Mobilisation in Zedillo's Mexico', in *Encuentros Antropologicos: Power, Identity and Mobility*, (eds.) Valentina Napolitano & Xochitl Leyva Solano, (London, ILAS, 1998), and James F. Rochlin, *Redefining Mexican 'Security': Society, State and Region Under NAFTA*, (Boulder, Lynne Rienner, 1997).

The success of the PAN, however, should also alert us to the establishment of a new sector of the Mexican populace that the Zapatistas do not represent. The small businesses and entrepreneurs that neoliberalism has created are seen to be the major supporters of the PAN. That they are predominantly from the north of Mexico, and have experienced greater industrialisation and urbanisation than the rural citizens of the south, is also vital for understanding their allegiance to an economic governmentality, and not to a 'traditional' party that tried to encompass all sectors. Many international commentators would like to believe that Mexico's 'democratic transition' will be the means to contain and give expression to the diversity of allegiances that exist within the contemporary modern Mexican state. The temptation to adopt such an optimistic conclusion would however be to overlook the central contention of this thesis, and to perhaps miss the historic opportunity that the Zapatista rebellion has presented.

**.... and the Invisible Indian**

As globalisation, understood as an international process of harmonisation in terms economic, cultural and political, raises the perhaps worrying spectre of a modernity untamed, events such as the ongoing Zapatista rebellion act as an untimely reminder of what is at stake in such processes. Through seeking to uncover a genealogy of Maya Indian subjectivity this thesis hopes to have contributed to an understanding of governmentality as a historical process that seeks both to create internal changes within an individual's self-understanding, as well as large scale external change within institutional and political structures. Whilst in the West such change is understood to have been less dramatic, owing to a shared history of political subjectivity, in the case of southern countries such as Mexico the strength and unpredictability of a prior cultural, spiritual and self-understanding leads to a very particular disruption of the totalising and individualising aspects at work within the modern governmentalised state project.

Recently International Relations has become more attuned to the implicit normative aspects present within world politics. Much of what has been termed normative International Relations, however, has been concerned with the purely abstract and philosophical construction of what might be best understood as the moral basis for engagement. This thesis in contrast seeks to contribute to another (yet related)

strand of scholarship that finds itself more loosely preoccupied with both the ethical and the political.[8] This is to situate the thesis within a body of work that labours to a large extent to create a novel insight into, and awareness of, political change through an attentive analysis of its costs and consequences as experienced at the margins of traditional political or moral preoccupation.[9] Clearly Michel Foucault has been one major influence in this type of scholarship, and whilst much of his later work sought to uncover the increasingly internalised nature of governmentality within the modern Western political subject, this thesis hopes to illustrate the contrasting dynamic of indigenous subjectivity that in itself seeks justification for its resistance not in terms of large metatheoretical or institutional terms but in the personal, individual and human terms that modern Mexican governmental politics appears so ill equipped to provide.

The deep seated conflict in Mexico is therefore one between divided historical and cultural self-understandings, and the power embodied within them. With the outbreak of the Zapatista uprising, Mexico for the first time faced a historical opportunity to re-orientate and reconsider its national and cultural constitution. The originality of the Zapatistas therefore, has been their attempt to make nationally and internationally visible what had been made invisible: an Indian populace that both had political opinions and socio-cultural visions. Starting as it were from the bottom, the story of Zapatista politics appears to be one of an encounter that sought not only to put difference at the heart of Mexican citizenship but that perhaps also suggested a politics constructed upon the basis of diverse cultural ontologies. This is to suggest that the Zapatistas' lack of a clearly discernible large scale governmental strategy or policy was not a failure of political vision on their part but rather the result of an alternative historical and political perspective that clashes, and continues to clash, with the modernist governmentalities of the orthodox political elite.

If we allow ourselves therefore, to consider the Zapatista uprising as a post-modern rupture in an otherwise modernist history, in what then, might we consider

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[8] Chris Brown, 'Cultural diversity and international political theory: from the *Requirement* to 'Mutual Respect'?', in *Review of International Studies*, (Vol. 26, No. 2, 2000), and the introduction to *Moral Spaces: Rethinking Ethics and World Politics*, (eds.) David Campbell & Michael J. Shapiro, (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

[9] Much of this work in International Relations is labelled postmodern or poststructuralist. However, the label obscures more than it reveals. Consider instead the variety of enagements embodied in the work of Richard Ashley, R. B. J. Walker, Michael Shapiro, David Campbell, Roland Bleiker, Christine Sylvester, Cynthia Enloe and Vivienne Jabri - where a critical concern for the power invested in language,

Mexican modern governmental rule to lie? I believe we can now attempt a generalisation of sorts. For all the Mexican modernist visions that have come to make themselves methods of rule have all had one thing in common, that thing could be called a 'gaze'. This gaze has either come to view all humans as the same or all humans as sharing the same evolution, even if differing in their relative positioning and role within such a hierarchy. Either way the gaze is totalising, allowing for little contestation of context nor of individual particularity. It should be of little surprise that, as this gaze has made itself governmentally felt through various practices, human conduct has not necessarily fulfilled its ascribed role. That power also breeds resistance is not new. However, what is novel about Mexico is that the subjective experience of power should breed such an inclusive vision of government. In this regard, rather than reduce the Zapatista movement to an instance of realisation of a contemporary socio-political theory such as postmodernism, I believe it is more convincing to view the socio-cultural practices and experience of Chiapan Indians themselves as producing another modernist vision, one that we might productively call a 'cultural humanism'.

After the experience of the exclusionary practices of 'traditional' political bosses, and in light of the often multiple mix of ethnicities that could be counted in just one village, the Indians of the Selva have 'naturally' come to adopt democratic methods of community rule. That some are Catholic, some are Protestant, that some are union members, some not, some woman, some Chol, Tojolobal, and Tzeltal, and yet nearly all are indigenous, has also led to a more flexible construction of what it is that can be called 'Indian culture'. In light of this, rather than the static, ahistorical conception of anthropological culture that has been so damaging to Mexican Indians in the past, culture in this context should be understood as a constantly moving, changing and evolving psycho-symbolic realm. Whilst not being the only motivating factor in an individual or community's life, culture nevertheless has an important ethical and political influence on relations towards the self and others. Equally therefore, humanism cannot be considered in essentialist terms either, but rather through an awareness of its own historicity and the importance such history plays in the life of any one human being, humanism takes on a self-ironic perspective that remains open-ended in its conception of in just what being human consists.

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subjectivity, political practice and ethics remains a more common problematique than the loyalty to any one approach or theory.

As the Zapatistas themselves have written,

"Behind our black mask,
behind our armed voice,
behind our unnameable name,
behind what you see of us,
behind this we are you.
behind this, we are the same simple and ordinary men and women who are repeated in all races, painted in all colours, speak in all languages and live in all places.

Behind this, we are the same forgotten men and women,
the same excluded, the same untolerated,
the same persecuted, the same as you.

Behind this, we are you."[10]

Perhaps not surprisingly in light of this, as Zapatista cultural humanism confronts the question of government, its response is necessarily democratic. However in recognition of the diversity of the Mexican populace, and of the multiplicity of socio-political identities that exist, the Zapatistas do not look for a complete political consensus. Rather, their conception of democracy is probably closest to what Judith Shklar calls 'agonistic democracy'.[11] It is for this reason as well that the question of indigenous autonomy has been raised, for the Zapatistas do not want to rule the country, they do not want to impose their 'ideology', rather they hope for a more plural, active and understanding political culture that need not reduce all its diverse political constituents to the same faceless, voiceless category. This amplification of the political space and vision has thus looked to that strata of the national populace, most often referred to as civil society, that are not party-politically linked but from within which the democratic impulse might best be nurtured. And just as the strategy of rule with which it conflicts has an international character, so too does the Zapatista vision encompass that transnational community of individuals, human rights and solidarity

[10] Excerpt from the opening ceremony of the Zapatista Encuentro in, *Documents from the 1996 Encounter for Humanity and Against Neoliberalism*, ( New York, Seven Sotires Press, 1998), p. 24.
[11] See Judith Shklar, *After Utopia: The Decline of Political Faith*, (Princeton, Princeton Univeristy Press, 1969). Also consider David Owen, *Nietzsche, Politics & Modernity: A Critique of Liberal Reason*, (London, Sage, 1995). Whose notion of 'agonistic perspectivism' is better suited to the general sweep of this thesis than Shklar.


LOS CONFLICTOS DE SAN
Y DE ZONA NORTE.
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TADO, YA BASTA


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TLAPOA VIVE!


POR LA PAZ EN CHIAPA
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groups, that is also often called international civil society.[12]

In local terms, rural Chiapas, and the Indians and non-Indians who live there, have seen their lives dramatically transformed since the Zapatista uprising. There have also been significant national cultural changes as well, but what perhaps remains beyond the purview of political analysis, although not outwith the ambition of modernist governmentalities, is that most intangible element of indigenous life - the Indian soul. As Indians in Chiapas continue to talk of the powerful *ch'ulel* of Marcos[13], as the local retelling of history resituates the events of 1994 in less academically defined narratives of myth and counter myth[14], as new reports of 'miraculous apparitions' emanate from Chiapas[15] - there must remain factors that defy, not only the neat conclusions of academic theses but also the desired transparency of governmental decree. Cultural humanism, at least as an ethos, should remain sensitive to this invisible aspect of Indian and human life, and thus leave open the future of Mexico's Indian/government dynamic whilst all the time pointing to the elements within our latest modernist visions that seek to deny this presence that is also an absence.

It was the 1992 Maya Indian Nobel Peace Prize laureate who wrote in her now famous, if recently contested, autobiography, *I, Rigoberta Menchú*, "we Indians have always hidden our identity and kept our secrets to ourselves. This is why we are

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[12] See ' Organizing the Zapatista Front: Principles, Proposals, and Virtual Force, August 1997', in *Rebellion in Chiapas, an historical reader*, (ed.) John Womack, Jr., (New York, The New Press, 1999), p. 327-339, and Nicholas Higgins & Marta Duran de Huerta, 'An interview with Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, spokesperson and military commander of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN)', in *International Affairs*, (Vol. 75, No. 2, April 1999).

[13] Marcos's *ch'ulel* - twin animal spirit or soul- is said to be a 'culebra' or cobra snake, which it is claimed is so frightening that it keeps the Mexican troops confined to their barracks and leads them to defy their officers when ordered to enter the jungle to track down the EZLN commander. See the testimony of Mariano Pérez Tzu, 'Conversaciones ininterrumpidas: Los voces indigenas del mercado de San Cristobal', translated from the Tzotzil by Jan Rus, in *Democracia an Tierras Indigenas: Las Elecciones en Los Altos de Chiapas, 1991-1998*, (eds.) J. P. Viqueira & W. Sonnleitner, (Colmex/CIESAS, forthcoming).

[14] Again consider the Indian testimony of Mariano Pérez Tzu, 'The First Two Months of the Zapatistas: a Tzotzil Chronicle', trans. Jan Rus, in *Indigenous Revolts in Chiapas and the Andean Highlands*, (eds.) Kevin Gosner & Arij Ouweneel, (Amsterdam, CEDLA, 1996), and also the suggested interpretation of Marcos as the reincarnation of Juan Lopéz - the 'king' of the Indians in the 1712 Cancuc rebellion - in Jan de Vos, *Vivir en Frontera: la experiencia de los indios de Chiapas*, (Mexico, CIESAS & INI, 1994), p. 186-88, and Carlos Montemayor, *Chiapas: La Rebellion Indigena de Mexico*, (Mexico, Editorial Joaquin Mortiz, 1997), p. 117-130. Also consider the claim that the original Emiliano Zapata escaped his assasins in 1915 and continues to roam the Chiapan mountains, see Enrique Rajchenberg & Catherine Héau-Lambert, 'History and Symbolism in the Zapatista Movement', in *Zapatista! Reinventing Revolution in Mexico*, (eds.) John Holloway & Eloína Peláez, (London, Pluto Press, 1998), p. 20.

[15] Consider for example the appearance of the 'Holy child of Lomantán' in January 1994, see John Ross, 'The EZLN, a history: Miracles, Coyunturas, Communiqués', in *Shadows of Tender Fury: The Letters*

discriminated against. We often find it hard to talk about ourselves because we know we must hide so much in order to preserve our Indian culture and prevent it from being taken away from us. So I can tell you only very general things about the *nahual*. I can't tell you what my *nahual* is because that is one of our secrets."[16] In her more recent book she also writes that identity "is what cannot be seen or touched but is lived and experienced." It is that, she claims, which "is invisible to the human eye".[17] Whilst anthropologists like Gary Gossen would seek to take such testimony further and argue on behalf of something as structural as a Maya cosmology[18], I would instead like to argue that the indigenous of Chiapas have shown, both in their pluralistic manner of living in local communities, and their willingness to defend such collectivities, that indigenous 'culture' has no essential quality.

In light of this I believe the indigenous who have become Zapatista rebels can perhaps teach us an important lesson; that people, be they Indians or not, as *the* central subject of politics both local and global, are more than the sum of economic or social reductionism, and that sometimes the expression of that analytically invisible self can be worth dying for. International Relations as a discipline so long defined by both war and peace can hopefully learn from such all too human rebel lives and deaths, and hopefully too, this thesis in its very telling has contributed to a deeper understanding of both political subjectivity and the critique of its essentially contested habitus: the modern governmental state.

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*and Communiqués of Subcomandante Marcos and the Zapatista Army of National Liberation*, (New York, Monthly Review Press, 1995), p. 7-8.

[16] The *nahual* is defined as "the word given to the double, the alter-ego, be it an animal or any other living thing , which according to Indian belief, all human beings possess. There is a relationship between the *nahual* and a person's personality. The designation of the *nahual* means the new-born child is recognised as a member of the community." See *I, Rigoberta Menchú, an Indian Woman in Guatemala*, (ed.) Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, trans. Ann Wright, (London, Verso, 1984), p. 20. See Latin American Perspectives Special Issue.

[17] *Crossing Borders*, Rigoberta Menchú, translated and edited by Ann Wright, (London, Verso, 1998), p. 226-227.

[18] Gary H. Gossen, 'From Olmecs to Zapatistas: A Once and Future History of Souls', in *American Anthropologist*, (Vol. 96, No. 3, 1994), p. 553-570.

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# *Interviews & Bibliography*

# Interviews

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| January 1998 | Rodolfo Stavenhagen, chairman of the official peace accords implementation-observer group (COSEVER), Mexico City. |
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