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Santa Barbara

Indian, Nation, and State in Guerrero, Mexico

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in Sociology

by

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September 2003

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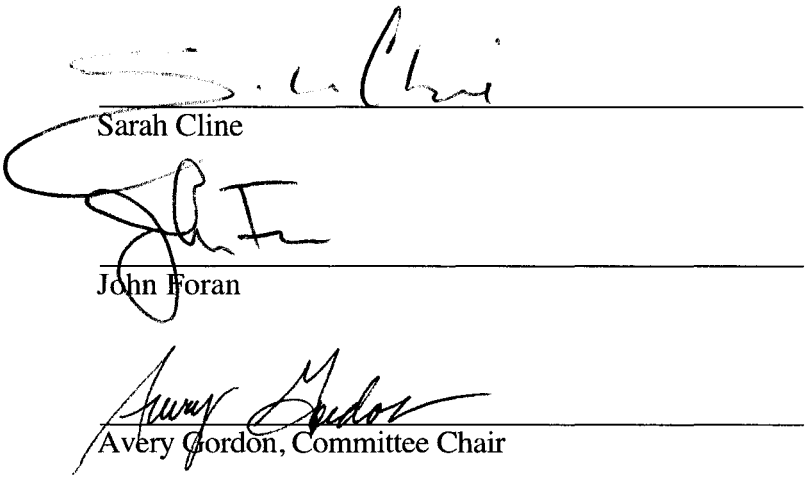

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Indian, Nation, and State in Guerrero, Mexico

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ABSTRACT

Indian, Nation, and State in Guerrero, Mexico

by

Rebecca Overmyer-Velázquez

Indigenous peoples in Mexico are in the midst of a political struggle for their integration into the nation-state. Unlike the earlier state-directed integration that was evolutionist and assumed the gradual disappearance of Indians, the indigenous movement I examine assumes that national integration includes respect for the autonomy and irreducible pluralism of indigenous cultures in Mexico. This is very clear. It not so clear, however, how such a new kind of indigenous integration takes actual form in practice and in the context of ideas about what the liberal nation-state represents. Ideas about the individual as the primary site of political agency; universal citizenship that transcends particularity and difference; and the state as representative of one nation, have long formed the basis of the liberal nation-state. These are ideas that indigenous peoples movements challenge today. In order to understand contemporary indigenous demands for national inclusion in Mexico, I used ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and historical research to collect data. Along with fieldwork in Guerrero in the state capital and in indigenous towns, and in Mexico City, I interviewed officials in the state government and in the state Indian affairs agency, the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI). I collected documentary data from the archives of the Consejo Guerrerense, the INI, and the National Agrarian Archives. I conducted this research over twelve months between 1998 and 2000. Like other indigenous rights movements in Latin America, the indigenous movement I examine—the Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena (the Guerreran Council 500 Years of Indigenous

Resistance)—demands the legal recognition of indigenous difference, affirming not the individual but the group as a primary site of political agency. It does so while also claiming a common citizenship intimately associated with Mexican revolutionary nationalism. Neither an ethnic separatist movement, nor a proponent of cultural assimilation, the Consejo works a middle or in-between ground that confounds strict notions of difference and sameness, and Indian versus Nation. As it does so, it challenges us to imagine new narratives of national belonging in which a sense of common citizenship prevails without the homogenizing imperatives of nationalism.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

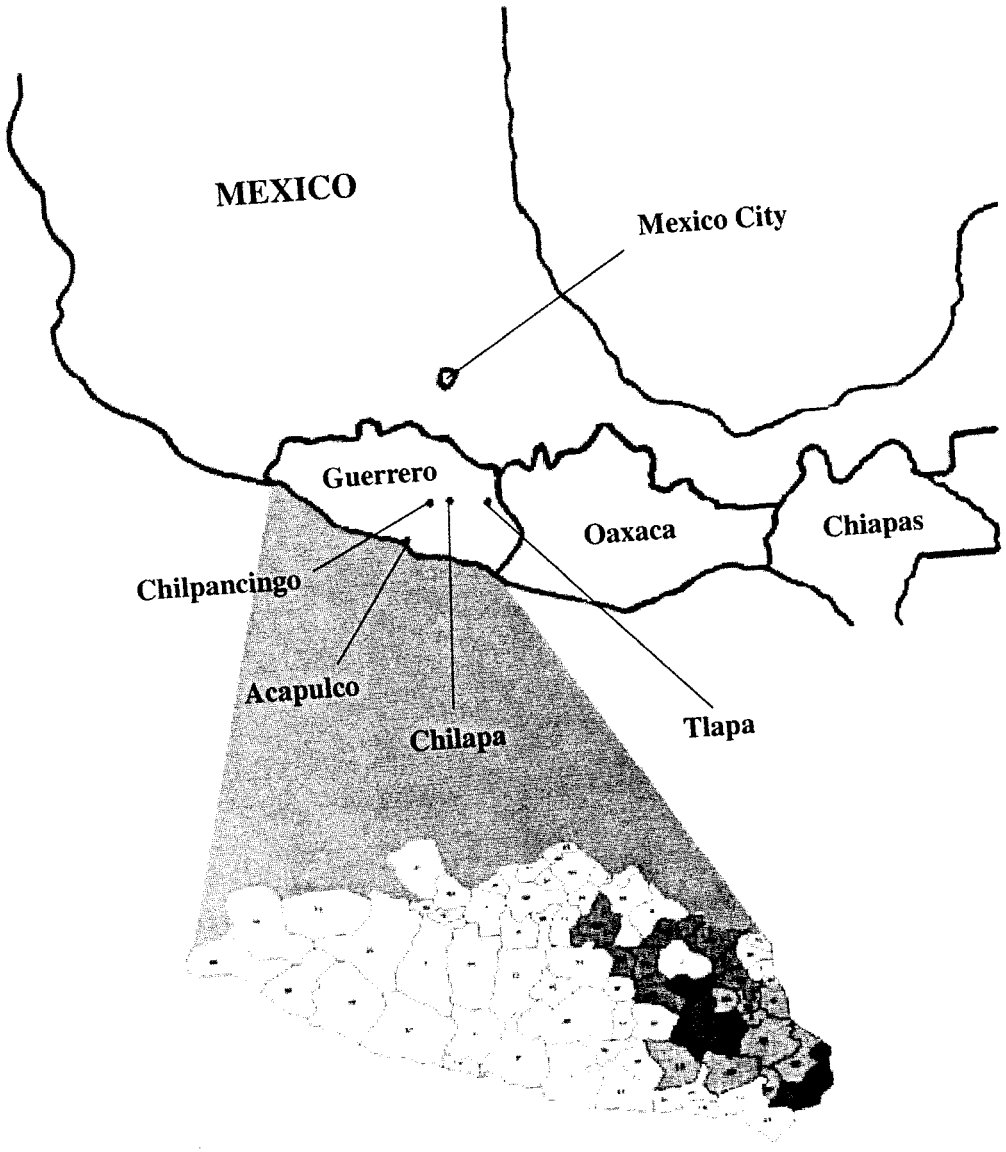
This dissertation would not have been possible without the kindness and assistance of many individuals. Above all, I must acknowledge the women and men of the Consejo Guerrerense who opened their homes and hearts to me. The repeated invitations they extended to spend time with them throughout the state of Guerrero formed the basis for my research. I offer the thoughts expressed here in the spirit of great respect and with the hope that they contribute in some measure to the thoughtful consideration of the rights of indigenous peoples.

I owe a great debt to my dissertation committee, which has been with me since the beginning of my graduate career. As my teachers and mentors, and as good human beings, Avery and John and Sarah have consistently balanced a ready acceptance of my own initiative and ideas with a constructive critique. Their support and encouragement got me through every rough part of the dissertation process.

My domestic partner, Pam, deserves—as all dissertation spouses do—her own degree awarded for enduring me and doing all the extra work that needed getting done when I was too swamped to help. Pam, and now my daughter Amara, remind me that the life of the mind is always nourished by the love and support of family. This thanks is extended to my parents, my brother, and my grandmother, too.

Finally, and very directly connected to nourishment, my research in Mexico was made possible thanks to fellowships from the University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation and the Institute for the Study of World Politics. The Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social in Mexico City kindly sponsored me as a Visiting Researcher during 1999-2000.

CONTENTS


MEXICO
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Chiapas
Chilpancingo
Acapulco
Chilapa
Tlapa

Introduction: Moving within and without the definition of "Indian"

Indigenous peoples in Mexico are in the midst of a political struggle for their integration into the nation-state. Unlike the earlier state-directed integration that was evolutionist and assumed the gradual disappearance of Indians, the indigenous movement I examine assumes that national integration includes respect for the dignity, autonomy, self-determination, and irreducible pluralism of indigenous cultures in Mexico. This is very clear. It not so clear, however, how such a new kind of indigenous integration takes actual form in practice and in the context of ideas about what the liberal nation-state represents. Ideas about the individual as the primary site of political agency; universal citizenship that transcends particularity and difference; and the state as representative of one nation, have long formed the basis of the liberal nation-state. These are ideas that ethnic movements in general and indigenous peoples movements in particular seriously challenge today. Like other indigenous rights movements in Latin America, the indigenous movement I examine—the Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena (the Guerreran Council 500 Years of Indigenous Resistance, or, simply, the Consejo)—demands the legal recognition of indigenous difference, thereby affirming not the individual but the group as a primary site of political agency. It does so, however, while also claiming a common citizenship intimately associated with Mexican revolutionary nationalism. As it simultaneously affirms particular and universal rights, this group uses a variety of strategies to engage the state—a mixture of clientelism, illegal demonstrations, and appeals to personal honor and international human rights. Neither an ethnic separatist movement, nor a proponent of cultural assimilation, the Consejo works a middle or in-between ground that confounds strict

notions of difference and sameness; Indian versus Nation; clientelism versus universalism; institutional versus personal authority.

In this dissertation I argue that the indigenous movement in Mexico is characterized by a cultural and political pragmatism that plays fast and loose with these modern dichotomies. It is this play, with its serious consequences, that so irritates and challenges the Mexican state, even as the state plays, too. The Consejo challenges dominant ideas about the Indian as the repository of tradition and all that tradition implies, all those "habits and beliefs inconvenient to virtually any innovation" (Williams 1983, 208, 320). The group's strong nationalism also puts the lie to the liberal belief that Indians threaten the unified construction of the Nation. While the Consejo critiques the premises of the modern nation-state and criticizes modernization, it simultaneously deploys nationalist imagery and embraces aspects of political and economic modernization in order to advance the goals of its constituent communities. Not now, nor ever, a simple foil for the modern and the civilized, Indians have a complex relationship with the state that refuses their "fixation" as traditional—and refuses our fixation with the traditional and all it represents.

Meanwhile, the Mexican state, insisting on its rationality and predictability, displays at various times and places its ability to be intimate and arbitrary and capricious. At crucial moments it can even disavow its "entrance into" modernity (García Canclini 1995), claiming an inability to innovate due to the drag of vicious traditions. The state—seen through an examination of its Indian policy, called *indigenismo*—can also insist on the modern, liberal ideal of an ethnically homogeneous and industrialized nation-state while simultaneously accepting and promoting ethnic difference and rural empowerment. The state chooses actions and policies that appear

contradictory and demonstrate a complexity that cannot be simplified as modern-opposed-to-tradition, or even modern-burdened-with-tradition.

Let me add here that even though the use of the term "state" throughout this dissertation has the unfortunate tendency to reify "it" as something static and immediately observable, I understand it as power dispersed among multiple sites, which contradict or reinforce each other depending on many different factors (i.e. economic conditions, personal charisma, popular unrest, international relations) not necessarily considered part of the state itself (Abrams 1988; Joseph and Nugent 1994). The state may appear coherent when in fact "it" is a constantly shifting force field of distinct ideologies and multiple practices, differently affecting and affected by a variety of social subjects—by peasants and Indians, or even state agents themselves, for example. In other words, "there is no binary and all-encompassing opposition between rulers and ruled at the root of power relations, and serving as a general matrix—no such duality extending from the top down" (Foucault 1980: 94). The Mexican state is fundamentally a liberal capitalist state, just as it was in the late nineteenth century, albeit with new politicized subjects with which to contend. The relationship between bourgeois elites and state power is very close, with the "popular classes" always just outside the doors and very often knocking loudly to get inside. The post-Revolutionary state has always had to maintain control over mass participation in politics in order to proceed with capitalist expansion, even as it has trumpeted the elements that make up the myth of the Revolution: nationalism, mestizaje, participation, economic redistribution, and social justice (Middlebrook 1995, 15). It is in this movement between regulation/repression and recognition that spaces opened up for peasant mobilization.

Recent writings on the Mexican state have challenged the idea of an all-encompassing, authoritarian corporatist regime that managed to suppress all dissent (Bartra 1985; Rubin 1996; Joseph and Nugent 1994; Aitken et al. 1996; Pansters 1997). These studies—products themselves of a time when popular dissent became more explicit than ever—demonstrate how the post-revolutionary Mexican state has always had to balance competing interests in the country, allowing for some amount of group autonomy at different times and in different places. As Jeffrey Rubin writes, earlier theorizing "overlooked the possibility of changing configurations, the possibility that mixtures of coercion and resistance in varying geographic and political locations might indeed create new identities, alliances, and political forces" (1996: 95). The state at various times has directly generated or made possible the conditions for the emergence of movements that oppose it, even as these movements share the language the state itself uses. Indigenous peoples are no exception. Indeed, those considered most different and most backward—the modern state's most necessary "other"—have consistently refused that definition by pragmatically adopting the language of modernity to defend themselves against its offenses, legal and otherwise. The movements that appear to be "pre-modern" in space and time have been very much a part of the liberal social and political order, while nevertheless always reserving the right to remain separate and maintain *their* sense of tradition.[1]

The Consejo Guerrerense

The Consejo Guerrerense is an organization of indigenous peoples with a significant political presence in Guerrero and in the national indigenous movement based in Mexico City (especially in the Asamblea Nacional Indígena por la Autonomía, or ANIPA). It represents the four major ethnic groups in the state: Amuzgo, Mixteco, Nahua, and Tlapaneco, who together make up 13% of the population of Guerrero and

who live in forty of the state's seventy-six municipalities (these municipalities are all located in the mountainous eastern part of the state, see map). Today, the Consejo has fourteen mostly young, mostly male directors, each representing a particular ethnic group from a different region in the state; all are indigenous.[2] While the offices of the Consejo are based in the state capital of Chilpancingo, directors spend a good deal of time in their regions participating in local politics and acting as liaisons between state development agencies and community members. When community leaders travel the long distances from their villages to the Consejo's offices in the state capital of Chilpancingo it is to obtain funding for very specific projects the communities need completed. These trips to the capital city are the Consejo's main connection to the indigenous communities it represents. While the Consejo's presence in the state capital serves to bring members from different communities into contact with each other, the emphasis of these trips is on the pueblo.

The bulk of the Consejo's work actually takes place at a middle level between the communities and the state government, channeling government funds to community projects like road repair, piped water systems, latrines, electrification, wood stoves, and cultural maintenance. It is eminently local work that attempts to take care of immediate necessities. The Consejo does not represent all of Guerrero's indigenous communities, but its ability to mobilize community members for highly visible congresses and marches in Chilpancingo and marches from Guerrero to Mexico City, as well as protest road blocks along the busy Mexico City-Acapulco highway, has won it the status of recognized interlocutor with the state. This status has paid off for the community members participating in the Consejo, several of whom told me that the Consejo's advocacy made it possible for them to obtain basic infrastructure like electricity and piped water they had never had in their villages before.

This is no romance: Indigenous people's pragmatic engagement with the State

The Consejo Guerrerense exists, above all, to defend indigenous peasant local economies and local government. This defense may mean that communities choose to produce cash crops and crafts destined for national and international markets, and it may mean that Consejo members choose to participate actively in national political parties, and at the United Nations. Or, it may mean making organic fertilizer to reduce dependency on chemical inputs, or the total rejection of political parties in a local government defined by consensus. A defense of indigenous autonomy means a defense of self-determination, which is the ability to make choices and decisions about the things that affect one's life. This is not autonomy understood as total separation from the state or other interests that influence the group's or community's actions. It is not an autonomy that mirrors the modern conception of the sovereign individual unfettered by communal traditions. It is an autonomy that is pragmatic and flexible, and authorized by a particular construction of the historical past. It is not the autonomy I thought I would find.

Do the Consejo, and other indigenous groups, offer an "alternative vision" for our world today? Yes, they do, but it is not one that is ideologically or culturally pristine, as a "clear" alternative to modernity and its troubles. When I was in Mexico acting the part of an empathetic modern social scientist studying Indians it troubled me to see this kind of alternative in action.[3] I believed I had arrived at my research site totally disabused of any romantic notions about Indian peoples; after all, one of the reasons I was excited about the indigenous movement in Mexico was the ways in which it participated knowledgeably and actively in modern institutions, using modern technologies. It turned out, however, that I still had certain ideas about how an indigenous movement ought to act, knowing that it engaged the modern state to make

demands, but always in a manner true to (my understanding of) an indigenous opposition movement that was ideologically "pure." My expectation, for example, was that the movement made universal and egalitarian appeals to human and citizenship rights and completely rejected the old (traditional) clientelist politics as usual. This was one of the ways the indigenous movement was really innovative and challenged the state, I thought, and another way it participated in modernity. It also, I believed, adhered to a strict definition of autonomy, in which it could be engaged but not entangled with the state and state agents. At the same time, it was consistently and authentically "indigenous" in its actions and worldview; meaning, it always reflected the interests of the "base" (*la base*), the "real" Indian people who lived in their small communities.

When it became increasingly obvious that the Consejo acted out of the character I had fixed for it, I did not know how to make sense of what I saw. In good part, this was due to the famous example of the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), which had first appeared to the world on 1 January 1994. There was a mystique that surrounded the Zapatistas—not unjustified—that touched the entire "indigenous movement" in Mexico in the years I did my fieldwork there. The Zapatista critique of authoritarian centralist politics in Mexico and their emphasis on the democratization of the political process throughout the country permeated the discourse of the indigenous movement. Drawing on Maya images and referring always to the importance of traditional, indigenous ideals like power through consensus (as in the slogan "mandar obediciendo"), the Zapatistas defended themselves against non-Indians who said the movement was entirely the product of mestizo agitators. In their uncompromising "traditionalism," the EZLN uncompromisingly espoused very modern ideals. It is the purity of this position that is especially appealing, I think. That is, the Zapatistas are Indians and do things the way Indians should (and we non-

Indians should, too), but they also appeal and adhere to the best ideals of modernity; both positions are very distinct. Indeed, the Zapatista movement has been so powerful for so many non-Indians worldwide precisely because both positions are constructed purely and distinctly.[4] In the process, we non-indigenous insist that indigenous peoples BE the romantic creation we make of them—and if they aren't, well, then they weren't really indigenous in the first place. The romance betrayed. To put it another way, as James Clifford (1988) suggests, witnessing "the pure products go crazy" causes a modern, Western despair because these "products" no longer retain a reliable authenticity to support a modern nostalgia for the traditional.

Supportive academics insist on this romance, too. In her latest book about the Zapatistas, for example, the eminent anthropologist June Nash, whose work in Chiapas dates back to the 1950s and who has written fine ethnographies of the region, writes that, "in the competition between the moral logic of indigenous people and rational logic of free market globalization, indigenous people are the protagonists for change who offer the greatest challenge to the New World Order defined by superpowers" (2001, 25). Here, Nash sets up yet another dichotomy that distinguishes clearly between the traditional and the modern. But the "moral logic" of indigenous peoples can be extremely pragmatic and quite rational, based on a calculus of costs and benefits for indigenous communities. And the "rational logic" of capitalism is often anything but rational, since it generates its own serious contradictions.

I argue that it is pragmatic engagement—evading conventional ideological definitions—and not a core indigenous difference, that is especially unsettling and even threatening to self-styled moderns, be they mestizo supporters, state functionaries, or a gringa-mestiza sociologist. Pragmatic engagement means that indigenous peoples, in all their variety, can choose how to act and how to identify themselves in whatever ways

best achieve their goal. If this means acting as a client of and broker for the government at one point and then supporting the creation of an autonomous municipality at another, then so be it. If it means supporting community demands for the elimination of political parties in local government, but then participating very actively in state and national electoral contests, then so be it. If it means acknowledging an essentially Mexican identity and citizenship while simultaneously claiming an indigenous identity based outside of the nation, then this is what is done.

Uniting all these apparent contradictions is a deeply felt sense of entitlement to a better life for indigenous communities. More than the expression of a peasant moral economy (Scott 1976; Nash 2001), this indigenous sense of entitlement is fundamentally nationalistic. It is the abiding belief that indigenous peasants, as Mexicans, have the right to a dignified life shared by *all* Mexicans. It is a right guaranteed them in the national Constitution. As we shall see, the Consejo attempts to achieve this goal of a better life by whatever peaceful means are necessary (it rejects any form of violent action). This pragmatic strategy is shared by other indigenous movements in Latin America:

> Activists' behavior can elicit impressions of savvy strategizing, innocence, contempt, resistance, complicity, or genuine perplexity that rapidly appear and disappear—all behavior difficult to characterize in categorical terms. Rarely are activists totally opposed (save for rhetorical purposes) or totally coopted. (Warren and Jackson, 2002, 21)

Pragmatic engagement is not unique to an indigenous peoples movement, of course. It is a strategy that makes sense for "any rural social movement that simultaneously strives for independence and representation in an authoritarian political system[;] that wants to be taken seriously by the existing political system, but that at the same time is aware of the risks involved in getting too close to it" (Nuijten and van der Haar, 2000, 90). There are many examples of peasant social movements facing this

kind of dilemma (i.e. Legorreta 1998; Escobar 1994; Harvey 1990; Rubin 1997). Because the state, too, is flexible and changeable, it behooves a social movement to adapt its strategies accordingly. This approach is common in Latin America, where the modern central state has always been stronger than civil society, and where "the state is seen as responsible for just about everything that happens to popular groups" (Munck 1990, n.8 p. 40). Indeed, as Munck points out, social movements in Latin America are forced to deal directly with the state from the first instance of their formation, so that to turn away from the state "à la 'self help,' is a ridiculous utopian notion" (1990, 30).

It is the long and especially conflictive relationship between Indians and the liberal state, however, that distinguishes the Consejo's pragmatic engagement from that of groups self-identified as peasants. At the core of the Indian relationship with the state are Euroamerican definitions of Indians used to keep Indians in their place, literally and figuratively marginalized within the nation. Among the more salient that I will discuss in the dissertation, is the definition of Indians as inherently traditional, isolated, community-bound, and poor. As I discuss in more detail in Chapters 2 and 4, the state has used this definition to justify its intervention in indigenous communities, and, more recently, to legitimize structural adjustment programs in the 1990s. As I suggest, this limited definition of the Indian is nationalist, in the sense that it defines not only an essential Indian, but the essential Indian that constitutes part of the essence of *Mexico*. When the Consejo acts pragmatically and refuses confinement to a particular place, it not only adapts to prevailing political conditions as any peasant group does, but it very seriously disrupts a nationalist idea about Indians that goes to the heart of what it means to be Mexican.

Nations and indigenous peoples in Latin America

From the beginning, Indian and settler have had an intimate relationship. It has been unequal and often brutal, but a relationship of mutual influence nevertheless, even though European settlers have long wanted to deny such influences. I first explored this relationship in my Master's thesis (Overmyer-Velázquez 1998). In it, I examine an early moment in the establishment of a colonial relationship in the Americas—in this instance, between elite indigenous men and Franciscan friars when they collaborated in the 16th century on the writing of A General History of the Things of New Spain, which is now also known as the Florentine Codex. What I came to understand about this book—that a real *dialogue* between unequals, no matter how imperfect, has existed from the beginning between Indians and Spanish settlers—is important for my work on the contemporary indigenous movement and its relationship to the Mexican nation-state. In other words, while indigenous peoples have always been oppressed by settlers and the state they established, they have nevertheless been able to exert their own influence beyond their own community boundaries. Today, this influence extends out to the United Nations, with important repercussions back at home that shape the evolving identity of indigenous peoples and the nation.

Nation-state building, as Will Kymlicka (2001) points out, is the larger context within which we need to understand claims for minority rights. These are claims, like the Consejo's, against restrictive definitions of "the Nation" that do not include the many peoples within its borders. Anthropologists writing in Urban and Sherzer (1991) were among the first social scientists to articulate the importance of the larger nation-state context for studies of indigenous peoples in Latin America. Today, the relationship between nation-states and Indians is the primary focus for researchers interested in indigenous peoples in the region. In 1991, there was "growing

recognition in the social sciences . . . that traditional and seemingly isolated communities of the world are no longer in fact isolated, that new webs are constantly being spun between such communities and broader national and international arenas, and that in many cases the assumption of community isolation seriously distorts research results" (Urban and Sherzer 1991, 1). In the twelve years since this first recognition, research and publication has shifted from an almost exclusive focus on indigenous communities and local culture to one on regional and national political movements for indigenous rights. This shift followed the widespread emergence of indigenous movements throughout Latin America in the 1990s that, like the Consejo, called for a new kind of state recognition of indigenous cultural difference. Contemporary scholars examine

> how indigenous peoples in Latin America struggle toward a myriad of goals: for the survival of their historically rooted yet constantly changing cultures; for title to and control over traditionally held territories; for the right to define themselves individually and collectively in relation to other groups in society; for the right to control images and representations of the "the Indian" that are offered by non-indigenousintellectuals, the state, or others; for access to economic resources . . .; for the right to participate in public decision-making as individual citizens and as collectively recognized "peoples" or "nations"; and for the right to be indigenous and a full and equal citizen of a Latin Amer-ican nation at the same time. (Van Cott 2003, 221)

The literature on indigenous movements can be considered as part of the very large body of scholarship on ethnicity and group rights, in which questions of autonomy and citizenship are most salient.[5] Within this larger literature there is no longer an argument against group rights; that is, theoretically and in a variety of actual practices, it has been demonstrated that, 1. granting minority or group rights is the just thing to do, and, 2. group rights do not necessarily contradict the idea or practice of equal citizenship. On the contrary, the recognition of group rights is more likely to enhance a common citizenship, bringing into the polity peoples formerly excluded from

democratic processes (Kymlicka and Norman 2000, 33; Kymlicka 2001, 6). Scholars of indigenous movements begin with these assumptions and examine the premises of indigenous rights movements in a variety of countries (see, for example, Hale 1994b; Assies, van der Haar, and Hoekema 1998; Ramos 1998; Brysk 2000; Warren 2001; Sieder 2002; Maybury-Lewis 2002). In general, the conclusion reached by this work is that indigenous movements challenge unitary or homogeneous conceptions of the nation-state. It is also acknowledged that the legal recognition of indigenous difference remains very unsettled (Stavenhagen 2002). In general, this literature asks the following questions: How do those formerly excluded get included? What are the premises underlying the official recognition of indigenous *peoples*? How do some groups achieve more legal recognition than others? What are the obstacles to formal inclusion in the structures of power?

The answers to these questions vary from country to country and depend on the history of state-Indian relations in a particular place. My work in Mexico analyzing the relationship between the Consejo and the state contributes directly to the literature on indigenous movements in Latin America, and provides provisional answers about the politics and practices of an indigenous movement in the state of Guerrero.

This dissertation also adds a component neglected in the literature I cite above, which is the study of the important role nationalism plays not only as a state ideology but as a legitimizing ideology or world view for an indigenous movement. Like the Zapatistas, the Consejo makes strong rhetorical appeals to nationalist imagery to emphasize the common Mexican citizenship of indigenous peoples. Unlike the Zapatistas, however, the Consejo's leadership maintains strong ties to the state and is deeply involved in local and national party politics—primarily in the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD). The PRD emerged in the late 1980s under the

leadership of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in response to the dominant party's (then the Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI) neoliberal shift. The Consejo's involvement in the PRD reflects this party's nationalistic message: to return to Mexico's revolutionary roots and save the nation from a corrupted state. This is one way the Consejo's indigenous politics are also nationalist politics; that is, the group consistently grounds its appeals to the state in the language of nationalism.

Another way the Consejo is nationalistic is through its focus on the community and peasantness, which mirrors a similar definition of the Indian (only peasant and poor) in the nationalist ideology of indigenismo. The Consejo's political pragmatism and obvious cosmopolitanism—its refusal to be "traditional"—exist in tension with the group's simultaneous acceptance of a definition of Indians that puts limits around who and what Indians can be, not just culturally, but politically, too. I begin to explore this tension in the dissertation, but it is a subject that I suggest needs further exploration in any discussion of indigenous peoples and nation-states.

Towards an explanation of the Consejo's position, an interesting analogy can be made between the Consejo's political project and the recent work of political philosophers like Kymlicka and others (see, for example, the authors in Kymlicka 1995, Kymlicka and Norman 2000, and Beiner 1995). These theorists have set out to reclaim liberalism from misinterpretation and misunderstanding. The goal is to make liberalism relevant to our multicultural and multinational world, and to inject it with a new kind of legitimacy (Kymlicka 1989). In a similar way, the Consejo, far from rejecting the liberal nation-state as inherently illegitimate as cultural nationalists might, consistently and pragmatically engages the state on the basis of a shared nationalism. While the group's immediate goal is local (community, regional) autonomy for indigenous peoples, a corresponding goal is the full integration of indigenous peoples

at all social, legal, and political levels in order to give the state the new kind of legitimacy it needs to govern a pluricultural nation. The example of the Consejo suggests that we need to clarify the role of nationalism in studies of indigenous movements in Latin America if we are to understand more precisely the kind of challenge these movements pose to established nation-states. An examination of the Consejo suggests this challenge is not at all blunt or straightforward.

A Brief Profile of the Situation on the Ground

Although less publicized than Chiapas, Guerrero figures prominently as a state with a history of a high level of state-sponsored violence against mestizo and indigenous peasants, and can be understood as a significant test case for the success or failure of democracy and human rights in Mexico (Gutiérrez 1998). There are no monographs in English about 20th-century Guerrero, however, which is surprising given the prominence of the state in national politics in the 19th century (Guardino 1996). This prominence continues today in the national indigenous movement, in which the leadership of the Consejo has been very visible and very vocal. Martha Sánchez, for example, one of the few women directors of the Consejo, is a spokeswoman for the national indigenous women's organization, the Coordinadora Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas. Another Consejo director, Marcelino Díaz de Jesus, was a federal congressman from 1997-2000 and continues to represent Mexican indigenous peoples at the United Nations. His cousin, Pedro de Jesus Alejandro, has been an indigenous delegate from Mexico to a variety of international forums and has worked in the federal Congress with Marcelino; in 2000, he was chosen to head the Guerrero delegation of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI). Another indigenous activist from Guerrero, Marcos Matias, was chosen in 2000 to head the INI in Mexico City.[6] Guerrero's close proximity to Mexico City—only two or three hours by car—puts it close to the

country's political and cultural center, and this has allowed indigenous activists to advance their cause while also making an impact on national politics. A study of the indigenous movement in Guerrero, then, allows us to understand something about the goals and strategies of the national movement for indigenous rights.

Despite its national profile, however, the indigenous leadership in Guerrero still struggles to improve the lives of indigenous communities in the state. While many of the Consejo's directors have a university education and several are well traveled—belying traditional definitions of Indians—most indigenous peoples in Guerrero live in small communities and are quite poor. Some of the poorer regions—especially in the far southeastern corner of the state where most Mixteco villages are located (see map)—routinely send migrant workers to other parts of Mexico and the U.S. Other regions, like San Luis Acatlan, have almost no outmigration; most communities experience some mixture of outmigration and permanent residency. These are all communities that for the most part own their land collectively, legally as *indigenous* communities under the agrarian reform regime called *bienes comunales*. Some indigenous communities also hold land under *ejido* title, which is more closely regulated by the government. They are places with long histories in Guerrero, many of them still with colonial titles to their land dating back a few centuries, while many others claim a similar history but without formal titles. They are defined as indigenous by this long history (formally recognized or not), by their language, and by their reliance on agriculture as their primary means of subsistence.

Agriculture and its yearly cycles predominates in all indigenous communities, and it is the basis for the continuation of sacred ceremonies devoted to natural forces. Corn is the main crop, and on the success or failure of the year's corn crop depends each family's basic survival; the family is the primary unit of labor, with children

helping out at crucial times of the year. In places where the soil is good and water is more plentiful families grow additional crops like beans, sweet potatoes, vegetables and even fruits. Most communities, however, have very limited lands of this quality, if they have any; instead they typically farm practically exhausted soil and depend entirely on rainfall to irrigate their crops. This puts most indigenous communities in a chronically precarious position year after year, and forces them to depend on migration and government support. The repeated crises faced by these communities are local expressions of a larger, ongoing crisis in the Mexican countryside, made worse by new competition with heavily subsidized U.S. farmers, thanks to the implementation of the North American Free Trade Accord.

Research methodology

I used research methods that would allow me to place the Consejo and its politics in the context of Guerrero's indigenous communities and their histories, and in relation to the state and state Indian policy. I used three different methods to gather my data: ethnographic fieldwork, interviews, and historical research. Along with extensive fieldwork in Guerrero in the state capital and in indigenous towns, as well as in Mexico City, I interviewed officials in the state government and in the state Indian affairs agency, the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI). I collected documentary data from the archives of the Consejo Guerrerense, the INI in Mexico City, and the National Agrarian Archives, also in Mexico City. I conducted this research over twelve months between 1998 and 2000.

The archival work I did is important because no one has studied the Consejo Guerrerense or the longer histories of the communities involved in the Consejo. There are also no histories of the INI or state Indian policy in general at a national or state level. The fieldwork I did was regional, not community-based, with repeated trips

between Mexico City and Guerrero that allowed me a repeated shift in perspective: from contemporary, rural, provincial, and Indian to historical, urban, national, and official—though these categories blur and merge. I would spend a couple of weeks in Guerrero, visiting Indian communities in the mountains, for example, and attending local meetings of groups that participate in the Consejo. Then, I would return to Mexico City to interview government officials and dig around in archives reading documents about indigenous communities in the 1930s and 1940s. Then I would return to Guerrero.

This is not a study in which the voices of indigenous community members predominate. In part, this is a result of my language limitations. While I am fluent in Spanish, I do not speak Nahuatl, Tlapaneco, Mixteco, or Amuzgo, and I often relied on bilingual speakers to translate for me; or, individuals deliberately switched to Spanish for my benefit. More importantly, however, I do not focus on any particular indigenous community or language group—as an anthropologist might, for example—because the focus of my study is the multiethnic leadership of the Consejo based in Chilpancingo, the state capital. My trips to the countryside were almost always as the guest of one of these leaders; only twice did I venture out on my own, though, again, as an invited guest of someone I had met in Chilpancingo. My home in Guerrero was the apartment Martha Sánchez shared with her brother Daniel and their three cousins in Chilpancingo. My conversations with Martha and Daniel, who is a lawyer, as well as my regular presence in the Consejo's offices speaking with other university-educated directors, shaped my perspective on the situation of indigenous peoples in Mexico.[7] Of course, I spoke with community members when they visited Chilpancingo and when I visited their towns. I spent time in the Nahua regions of the Alto Balsas and Chilapa; in the Mixteco town of Rancho Nuevo la Democracia; the Tlapaneco municipalities of

Acatepec and San Luis Acatlan (which is also Mixteco); the Nahua/Tlapaneco region of Tlapa; and the Amuzgo municipal seat of Xochistlahuaca. In all these places, I was able to speak with individuals and attend local meetings about local issues. But I use this information in the dissertation not to trace out the local in any detail, but to deepen my understanding of the Consejo's larger goals and strategies.

As a result of my status as a live-in guest of Martha and Daniel, and as a regular visitor to the Consejo's offices, the interviews I conducted in Chilpancingo typically took place in relaxed settings as conversations and without the use of a tape recorder.[8] I usually did the same in the communities I visited. I either took notes during these conversations, however, or took the time afterwards to write down what had been said. I was able to speak at length with eleven of the Consejo's fourteen directors. In Chilpancingo and in my travels throughout the state, I spoke at length with seventeen community members, in addition to attending eight different regional meetings (held in Spanish and in indigenous languages) about a variety of issues.

I took a different approach to my investigation of the INI. In order to speak with INI officials, I set up formal appointments and conducted structured interviews during my allotted time, which was typically an hour. My interviews of these officials always began with questions about their own departments and about their role within the larger institution. Then I would ask them about their opinions of, 1. the history and contemporary relevance of state Indian policy (*indigenismo)*; and, 2. the indigenous movement's demands for self-determination and autonomy. In total, I spoke with fifteen former or then-current INI officials—most in Mexico City, but also in Guerrero—from the national Director General to the directors of the INI's outposts in Chilapa and Tlapa, Guerrero.

The archival work I did at the Consejo's offices consisted of sorting through long-neglected and very dirty piles of documents dating back to 1990. Because the group has never systematically collected these documents, and the Consejo moved its offices at least twice in the past decade, my gleaning of these papers reveals only a very partial record of the group's history. I supplemented this documentary evidence with interviews of those directors who had been in the Consejo since the beginning, and of mestizo supporters who helped form the Consejo in 1991. But there are many details that will have been lost. For example, most of the documents date from 1991 to 1995, when the Consejo experienced its greatest growth as an organization. After 1995 there are far fewer documents, though most of these tend to repeat themes and ideas and proposals first developed in the early years of the movement.

At the INI's archives in Mexico City, I researched the Institute's official newsletter, *Acción Indigenista* (1953-1970), and unpublished sources documenting the INI's work in Guerrero, beginning in 1954. Most of the documentation from Guerrero I examined are annual reports sent to Mexico City from the directors of INI outposts, called Centros Coordinadores Indigenistas (CCIs). This is rich data on the daily work of indigenismo from 1965 to 1995 that I do not use in the dissertation, but which will deepen my discussion of indigenismo and its historical on-the-ground relationship to indigenous communities in the book that comes out of this project.

My research at the National Agrarian Archives on the histories of particular indigenous communities in Guerrero (currently involved in the Consejo) and their petitions for land from the government also details the relationship these communities have had with the state, long before the INI appeared. I use a piece of this data in Chapter One, but there is much more I can use in the book to provide a deeper

historical context for the contemporary discussion of indigenous community autonomy and self-determination.

Overview of the Dissertation

I begin by asking how the Consejo Guerrerense was able to form in 1991 out of several different peasant ethnic groups. Why at this time? The answer to this question is found in the crisis of the state's declining support for the peasantry over half a century, and in the opportunity presented to peasants of a new "indigenous" identity in the "500 Years" movement that opposed official celebrations of Columbus's arrival in the Americas. The story I tell demonstrates how much the state and its various agents facilitate the development of an indigenous identity—even as indigenous peasants use this innovative "traditional" identity to distinguish themselves not only from the state, but from the nation, too; all the while, they remain fervently nationalistic.

In Chapter 2, I turn to examine the state's ideological basis for its Indian policy, *indigenismo*. While indigenismo was officially concerned only with culture and economic development, I suggest that it also had an important political dimension that affirmed the self-determination of indigenous people. Acting as a serious limitation to the full expression of this political concern, however, was the modernization paradigm that dominated the work and writings of indigenistas. Within this paradigm, anthropologists remained committed to the modern-nation state project of homogeneous integration, despite their quiet doubts about the work they did.

The national indigenous movement emerges in the 1990s in response to the state's modernization agenda. I discuss the central goals and strategies of the Consejo Guerrerense in Chapter 3, after providing a national, political context for this regional movement. Like most of Mexico's indigenous movements, the group is both peasant

and indigenous, uniting a discourse of subsistence agriculture and international human rights. It is both Mexican and Indian. It declares its autonomy from the state but relies almost exclusively on state funding. And it insists that the state act as a modern state is supposed to, in a universal and egalitarian manner, with no distinction among groups; but it also makes very traditional, particularistic and personal appeals to agency heads, state governors, and national presidents. We will see, however, how the state encourages this apparently contradictory strategy. Throughout, the Consejo uses an extremely pragmatic approach to its relationship with the state and grounds its appeals in the language of citizenship.

I analyze this approach in Chapter 4, placing the Consejo's work in the context of state development policy in the 1990s. President Salinas de Gortari's "Solidarity" program is the inheritor of the indigenista self-criticism that finally emerged, loudly and in the open, after the government's 1968 repression. The integrationist and modernization imperatives I discuss in Chapter 2 do not go away by the 1990s, but they are joined now by language that openly favors a new state-indigenous relationship. The proliferation of this discourse gave the Consejo a legitimacy that it would not otherwise have had, though not without a cost: the "self-determination of indigenous peoples" was defined in a way that legitimated only a particular kind of indigenousness necessarily tied to the local, peasant community. I argue that this is a nationalist definition of the Indian that suits the state's need for legitimization during rapid and profound economic restructuring. The Consejo's use of nationalist rhetoric means that, inevitably, the group also accepted this state legitimization and the limits it placed on an indigenous politics.

Throughout the 1990s, the Consejo became increasingly involved at the United Nations, as another part of the group's strategy of pragmatic engagement with the state.

I analyze the promises and perils of the Consejo's transnational work in Chapter 5, placing it within the larger context of the development of international law related to indigenous peoples. Despite the obvious and unprecedented visibility of indigenous peoples at the UN, the persistence today of an international legal bias toward the sovereign nation-state, and a related, individualistic bias in the conception of human rights makes UN support for indigenous self-determination highly equivocal. Adding to this obstacle, the Mexican state demonstrates its own ability to play with a modern/traditional distinction to protect its autonomy and reject recommendations for change.

Moving within and without the definition of the traditional "Indian," the Consejo accepts and rejects a nationalist idea of Indians as isolated, community-bound, and poor. The group's pragmatic engagement with the state is the outward expression of this dual ideological position, which we can also understand as the simultaneous, if uneasy, assertion of sameness and difference. That is, when the Consejo says that it is both Mexican and Indian, it is saying that both identities can exist together in the same body. In the conclusion to this dissertation, I suggest that when we take this assertion seriously we can begin to imagine new narratives of national belonging in which a sense of common citizenship prevails without the homogenizing imperatives of nationalism.

Endnotes

[1] Tradition which may involve a good deal of innovation, of course. I'm thinking here of the traditional religious *cofradías* that are responsible for maintaining the village saints and organizing fiestas in their honor; of the *bandas de viento* (brass bands) that are a core part of Indian cultural traditions; and the *danzas* that commemorate religious events and play out sacred relationships. While definitely elements of *Indian* cultures, they are also very obviously European in their origins.

[2] Actually, the official number of directors I was told was 33, though from what I could tell there have never been that many actively participating in meetings and in committees in Chilpancingo. My archival work suggests that no more than 10 to 14 individuals have ever been consistently active as directors at any one time.

[3] Diane Nelson tells a humorous story about her close encounter with "remote" Guatemalan Mayan kids who were regular viewers of the latest U.S. sci-fi TV show, an example that prefaces an extended discussion of EuroAmerican "ethnostalgia" and how Maya intellectuals upset ladino understandings of Indians (1999, Ch. 7).

[4] Of course, like any social movement, the EZLN is much more complex than this. Interestingly, the only extended discussion of this complexity and its serious consequences for indigenous peoples in Chiapas is by a Mexican researcher, in Spanish (Legorreta 1998).

[5] This literature is too huge to cite in detail. See the bibliographies in Kymlicka 1995 and Kymlicka 2001.

[6] Not coincidentally, all four individuals I mention here are Nahua, even though Martha identifies as Amuzga, having grown up in Xochistlahuaca, a predominantly Amuzgo region (but with a Nahua name!). The Nahua of Guerrero continue a very long tradition of Mexica/Nahua dominance of the Tlapaneco, Mixteco and Amuzgo peoples that dates back to the Mexica conquest and settlement of the region beginning in the 1440s (Carrasco 1994).

[7] Pedro, for example, is trained as an engineer, while Marcelino is an accountant. Other Consejo directors have degrees in sociology, chemistry, horticulture, and education.

[8] Some individuals were clearly uncomfortable speaking into a tape recorder, so I did not use it in these cases. In many cases, though, conversations took place spontaneously and pulling out the tape recorder would interrupt and even stop discussion of interesting topics. As a result, I became less an interviewer and more a participant observer of the Consejo's directors and of community members connected to the group.

Chapter 1: The Anti-Quincentenary Campaign in Guerrero, Mexico: Indigenous Identity and the Dismantling of the Myth of the Revolution

The 1992 quincentennial marking the arrival of Christopher Columbus in the Americas was a process of discovery, not so much for Europeans this time, but for the Indian peoples who mobilized to oppose celebrations of the officially-titled "Encounter Between Two Worlds." A continental campaign of opposition to the quincentenary began in 1989 in South America and soon spread to Central and North America under the banner of "500 Years of Indigenous and Popular Resistance." In Mexico, the Consejo Mexicano 500 Años de Resistencia formed in 1990 to enlist state and regional indigenous, peasant, urban popular, labor, student, and academic groups to oppose the celebrations and participate in a cross-cultural dialogue about social justice in the Americas. The desire to include a variety of popular groups in the campaign emerged within a context of reaction not only to the quincentenary but also to the neoliberal economic policies of the previous decade that had only worsened already bad living conditions for the majority of Latin Americans. This was certainly true for Mexicans, especially for the indigenous peasantry living in the country's economically depressed regions. In other countries, different groups participated at different levels, with either self-identified peasant or indigenous or urban popular groups having more influence in a particular national campaign. While a general opposition to neoliberalism was a key element in the "500 Years" campaign in Mexico, it was the audacity of the planned European and mestizo elite *celebrations* of Columbus and his heirs that provided a focus for the movement here and privileged the historical and contemporary experience of indigenous peoples. In the state of Guerrero, the campaign was overwhelmingly peasant indigenous and constituted a key moment in the construction of a pan-indigenous identity among the varied groups of Indian peoples in the state. Five

hundred years after Columbus, the indigenous peoples of Guerrero discovered not only that they were all "indigenous," but that with this identity came a new kind of political power.

This chapter tells the story of the "500 Years" movement in Guerrero: how it emerged and who participated in its development. To tell this story about Guerrero, I trace the disjuncture between myth and reality in the Mexican countryside. The central government claimed to be the inheritor of a peasant revolutionary legacy, inspired by leaders like Emiliano Zapata to defend the campesino right to the land—but it was mostly concerned with the need for rapid industrialization and it supported big agribusiness interests, not small plot peasant farmers. The *idea* of the state as truly revolutionary, however, was real enough in its effects (facilitating land reform and providing crop subsidies, for example) that it could maintain the loyalty of peasants throughout most of the twentieth century. Officially recognizing the rights of a class of people—*campesinos*—the state nurtured the revolutionary idea, even if, in practice, these rights were often ignored. This recognition worked in tandem with regulation and occasional repression as disciplinary power in the Foucaultian sense, managing to keep a lid on widespread dissent until the 1970s. The allegiance of the peasantry, for the most part, was maintained so long as the state could provide it enough tangible benefits. With the severe economic and agricultural crises of the 70s and 80s, the state lost much of this regulatory strength and resorted to high levels of repression in the countryside, putting its revolutionary claims in serious doubt. The elitist, capitalist nature of the state—notwithstanding its professed social commitments to everyone—became still more obvious when the Mexican government announced the end of agrarian reform and implemented the structural adjustment measures mandated by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the late 1970s in order to secure larger foreign

loans. Simultaneously, peasant and peasant indigenous groups began to assert identities first recognized and regulated by the state, only now these were asserted as difference and exclusion from the state. For many peasants and Indians, the myth began to unravel. This provides the historical context for the emergence of a distinctly pan-indigenous movement at the end of the 1900s.

It is out of this ideological and economic unraveling that the Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena y Popular comes together in 1991, for the first time uniting the four ethnicities in the state as "indigenous peoples," along with a few urban popular groups like journalists and academics. The emergence of this movement is important for what it tells us about the changed political and economic landscape in Mexico, and because it helps to form the foundation for a broader indigenous movement that gathers strength and inspiration after the Zapatista uprising in 1994. More important still, the "500 Years" movement also allows us to examine how a pan-indigenous identity is constructed out of the interaction between the state, mestizo academics, and peasant ethnic groups. It reminds us of the way in which identity is always dependent on a specific historical conjuncture for its realization—and dependent especially, in the case of "indigenous peoples," on the modern liberal state itself. This is a story that ends up confusing the distinction between the "traditional" and the "modern," as we see how much the state and its various agents facilitate the development of an indigenous identity—even as indigenous peasants deploy this innovative traditional identity to distinguish themselves not only from the state, but from the nation, too (while remaining fervently loyal to the revolutionary nationalist project!). Pragmatically engaging the state, indigenous peoples come to appreciate a new source of their strength.

When the Consejo formed (on September 14, the anniversary of the Congress of Anáhuac convened in 1813 in Chilpancingo by the independence leader José María Morelos y Pavón) twenty-four different groups participated, most of them indigenous peasant groups that had varying histories of mobilization for resources and, to a lesser degree, for rights. It is important to emphasize here that the Consejo is fundamentally a peasant organization with peasant concerns—this identity is as strong (if not stronger in many communities) as an "indigenous" one. The "popular" groups consisted mostly of a local from the state teachers union, a group of academics from the University of Guerrero, and members of the local journalists union. The overwhelming majority of the groups, however, had their origins in two different movements that involved indigenous peasant issues and it was these groups that remained in the Consejo while the urban popular groups fell away. The older movement involved regional associations of peasant producer organizations of different ethnicities that had first appeared as part of a state development program in the early 1980s. By 1991, these associations had almost ten years of experience coordinating the warehousing and marketing of crops, and participating in rural stores selling basic goods at wholesale prices—all activities aimed at liberating communities from the monopoly on these services traditionally held by rural elites in cahoots with local government officials.

The other movement was more recent and involved only the Nahuas of the Balsas river region just to the north and east of Chilpancingo. This region had begun to mobilize in late 1990, when communities there discovered the federal government was secretly planning to build a dam along the Balsas that would inundate their homes and fields. The imminence of this project focused the actions of members from twenty-two villages, who united their efforts in an unprecedented regional organization that lobbied

state and federal governments and eventually appealed to international support to help stop the dam's construction. Unlike the peasant producer organizations, the Nahuas of the Balsas region self-consciously came to frame their movement as a fight for their cultural and territorial rights. When organizers from the Consejo Mexicano 500 Años de Resistencia looked to Guerrero to form a state council, it was no surprise that these two movements—one older and distinctly peasant-based, the other younger and also peasant-based, but using a new discourse of indigenous rights—would constitute the foundation of the new movement.

What is less obvious is why groups and regions that had never worked together before and certainly never as "indigenous peoples" would do so now, at the beginning of the 1990s. Why at this time? Why would groups long identified by their peasant status choose to claim their indigenous identity as a new kind of status? What were the larger social and political forces bringing these groups together? Which individuals, working at a local level, acted as catalysts to help create an "indigenous movement"? To answer these questions we need to examine the history of the state's relationship with the peasantry. The significant change in this relationship that comes in the 1970s and 1980s and that leads eventually to the formation of "indigenousness" has to be understood within the larger context of a revolutionary promise betrayed.

Liberal Indians

Indigenous participation in liberalism dates back two centuries. Indigenous peasant communities were active participants in the 19th-century conflicts between liberal federalists and conservative centralists, and were often found fighting on both sides depending on which particular faction was perceived to guarantee best the autonomy of indigenous communities. As Eric Van Young suggests for the earlier independence struggle, indigenous participation in national elite conflicts was motivated

above all by this desire for relative political autonomy from non-indigenous authorities, which communities had managed to preserve to a great extent during the colonial period (1993). In Guerrero, it was the federalism of liberal leaders like Juan Álvarez that many indigenous communities supported against the centralism of conservatives who were intent on superseding local community political structures (though many indigenous communities opposed liberal attempts to secularize community government—an opposition still based on the logic of autonomy [Flores Félix 1998, 60]) (Guardino 1996). Peter Guardino notes five related themes running through peasant discourse in the middle of the 1800s: control of local government; citizenship and its boundaries (contesting centralist income restrictions on citizenship); an explicit commitment to federalism (asserting the right to name local authorities); an opposition to the monarchy; and an opposition to the Spanish (163).

By mid-century (and earlier), liberal state and federal governments were passing laws that affected indigenous communal lands, abolishing the legal and political status of the community and therefore its right to possess property. Indigenous communities responded to attempts to privatize communal land very often with violence, obstructing the division of their land into private plots for many years. But they also responded by using the very tools and terms liberalism provided, referring to liberal land legislation itself to defend their communities (Mallon 1995, 123). Indeed, more than violence, it is the litigiousness of indigenous communities over the centuries that is most striking (see, for example, Gibson 1964 and Lockhart 1992 for evidence of this during the colonial period). With the goal always of maintaining intact their community's territory and autonomy—the basis for their survival—indigenous representatives constantly kept their fingers to the prevailing legal winds, learned the limits of their rights under the law, and pushed hard against them.

In the midst of 19th-century threats against their integrity, communities bought and sold land under a legal provision for joint ownership (*condueñazgo*), and as joint owners successfully defended their private property in court against claims by individuals or other communities (Escobar Ohmstede 1993, 184). Communities also designated particular individuals who purchased privatized plots carved out of communal lands as private landowners—a practice that complicated the restitution of former communal lands after the Revolution (Escobar Ohmstede and Gordillo 1998, 47). During my research in the National Agrarian Archive, I examined the agrarian reform records of Pueblo Hidalgo, an indigenous community in San Luis Acatlán, Guerrero that has played an important role in the Consejo Guerrerense. Pueblo Hidalgo had petitioned the federal government in the early 1940s to have its "communal" lands surveyed and boundaries drawn (and therefore secured), only to have federal engineers arrive in town to discover that all of the community land consisted of private holdings bought in 1895, but managed and farmed communally. Town representatives presented the government with their paperwork in order, including twenty-five land titles and the agreement of all the title holders to cede their titles to the town in order to constitute a communal title.[1] In this case, as in many others, an indigenous community had inserted itself within the prevailing national legal discourse to protect itself from outside encroachment, pragmatically using this discourse to its advantage.

An excellent example of the use of liberal legal discourse to protect an indigenous community from liberal laws comes from an 1884 court case in the state of Michoacán. The case involved several members of the indigenous town of Tarímbaro, which had had its communal lands divided by the state government beginning in 1878.[2] According to Zacarías Aburto, the community members's representative, several other

community members had initiated this division in order to be able to sell these parcels, and the plaintiffs in the 1884 case were attempting to have these sales annulled (such community conflicts were common and often resulted in the break up of communal lands—see, for example, Escobar Ohmstede and Gordillo 1998). Aburto's argument centers on the contradiction between liberal discourse and actual state practice, as well as the plaintiffs's desire to be considered full citizens, with all the rights and obligations attached to that status. Referring to Article 12 of the 1857 federal Constitution that established the equality of all Mexicans, he asserted that the government's support for land division, solicited by only some community members, violated the plaintiffs's individual guarantees. Indeed, in its violation of this article, the state government had converted the federal Confiscation Law (*Ley de Desamortización*) from a general into a special law aimed exclusively at Indians. Aburto, of course, was right: the purpose of the Confiscation Law had always been to break up indigenous communal lands in order to make Indians into productive private property-owning citizens. The law also gave the newly created states and municipalities their own public lands, since any land left over after the distribution of private plots went to them (the law was also targeted at the Church's vast landholdings). The state government denied that it had singled out Indians, asserting that federal laws sought to make all citizens and their property equal as stipulated in the Constitution. Thus, just as the law prohibiting the use of noble titles was not exclusive, neither was the law prohibiting communal lands. Furthermore, the law applied to indigenous communities was not a special law, just as laws applying to specific persons in special circumstances, like minors, businesspeople, or members of the military were not special laws.

For Aburto, the Confiscation Law created an "Indian" non-citizen class subject to special laws, while he expressed the plaintiffs's desire to be considered citizens with

all the guarantees established in the Constitution, in order to recuperate their communally-held lands. He reminded the judge that the law no longer recognized "Indians" but had converted them into citizens with the same rights as all Mexicans. As such, when the government had ordered the division of their lands without consulting them, it had also violated their right to due process expressed in Article 16 of the 1857 Constitution. Aburto concluded by asserting that the land division had in fact deprived the plaintiffs of their right to own their land. Moreover, he continued

> is is said that a law is general when its stipulations cover all the members of society found in the same essential conditions that motivate the law, and it is easy to understand that this is not the case with the laws dividing indigenous lands [which] are special [laws] because they do not include all Michoacanos, as they should. The practice of these laws not only attacks the equality of the indigenous before civil law, but it places the Government, in charge of applying said laws, in the predicament of acting as a special tribunal. (109)

Aburto not only places himself and the other indigenous plaintiffs squarely within liberal discourse in this case, but he makes explicit the contradiction within the modern liberal state between its pretension to universalism and its very particular application of the law to select groups. The logical implication of *laissez faire, laissez passer* would have been, as Aburto suggested, to allow a variety of land tenure forms, including communal—but this was impossible within a liberal capitalist scheme that privileged the individual entrepreneur (and foreign investors). The government's denial of the existence of "special" laws applied selectively rang false, especially when it acknowledged its legal recognition of "specific persons" and "special circumstances." The fact was that the liberal state recognized and regulated a variety of specific persons in the nineteenth century, just as it would in the twentieth. But such recognition was not explicitly political ("Indian communities," for example, were abolished). Instead, it attempted to limit indigenous peoples to a discourse of "individual rights" in which all citizens were ostensibly equal and equally represented

in the universal state—even when it was patently clear they were not. As we can see, this limitation did not stop indigenous communities from defending themselves within the very terms that threatened their existence, a practice they would continue in the 1990s with the use of another liberal discourse: human rights. During most of the twentieth century, though, indigenous communities used the language of a revolutionary peasantry, whose existence the state itself legitimized—with reservation.

The Myth of the Mexican Revolution

The Mexican Revolution was never an ideologically united force for change. From its beginning in 1910, rival factions represented by elite landowners, middle class professionals, and peasant community leaders all fought for control of the central government and for the benefit of their particular constituency (Knight 1986; O'Malley 1986). With the successive assassinations of prominent leaders by the early 1920s (Madero, Zapata, Carranza, Villa), however, state power began to consolidate under the leadership of General Obregón and other middle- and upper-class revolutionary commanders from northwestern Mexico. Obregón and his allies were able hold onto the central government in the 1920s in large part because they realized they could not ignore Mexico's overwhelmingly peasant population, as Carranza had by returning to landowners the properties seized by peasant armies (O'Malley 1986, 75). Zapata's and Villa's armies had been strong and organized enough to force bourgeois revolutionaries to accept the inclusion of radical agrarian reform provisions in the 1917 Constititution, and the peasant armies they had led remained a significant threat to the state after their deaths. The importance of at least appearing to support the campesino demand for rural reforms was clear. But it was also equally true that the new Mexican government could not alienate its support among the domestic bourgeoisie and in Washington, D.C. Irene O'Malley sums up the contradiction:

> In short, the Obregón administration needed to placate both the right and the left—a predicament shared by many—but with a crucial difference: to maintain domestic legitimacy it had to assume a "revolutionary" posture rather than a centrist one. In what could be parodied as a policy of speaking loudly and carrying a little stick, Obregón initiated the Mexican government's now standard practice of verbally championing the popular classes and the Revolution while neglecting the promised reforms and making deals with the "imperialists" it often denounced. The government's revolutionary appearance surpassed its practice [1986, 116]

Out of this predicament was born the myth that the government was revolutionary, popular, nationalist, and committed to social justice. State-sanctioned histories of the Revolution obfuscated the serious ideological and class conflicts between revolutionaries as different as Zapata and Carranza or Obregón and asserted that a united revolutionary front of homogeneous heroes had overthrown the venal and decadent Díaz regime (O'Malley 1986, 127). The class interests of those who had managed to survive assassination to form a new government were thus also obfuscated, especially as the myth of the Revolution took hold in popular consciousness and the government began to enact some of the reform measures in the Constitution. By 1946, the dominant party was named the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), and its close connections to state power made it the *de facto* state party in Mexico for decades. The identity of the state and the Revolution was now complete.

Agrarian reform and a revolutionary peasantry

An important foundation for real reform in the countryside was the *ejido*, a new legal entity created by the post-revolutionary state. The ejido consists of farmlands and village properties legally at the disposal of a community (i.e. "the ejido of Xalitla") but parceled out to individuals who have usufruct rights and who must obtain an usufruct title from the state. Ejido land was expropriated by the state from hacienda lands for which peasant families had long been paying rent to absentee landlords and which typically were of poor quality. (In many indigenous regions of the country, Indian

communities held title to lands historically and explicitly Indian, called *bienes comunales*. Technically, the possession of these lands was simply legally recognized by the new revolutionary government, since they were defined as lands that had been in the possession of an Indian community "since time immemorial," which meant that the community had an authentic colonial title for the land. Bienes comunales are owned by a community and parceled out to families according to local custom; these parcels are not registered by the state.) Ejidal title is by far the most common form of peasant land tenure, and indigenous and mestizo communities alike petitioned the state for these parcels. The importance for campesinos of the promise of this land cannot be overstated; *it is what made the government revolutionary.*

Nevertheless, in the 1920s the federal government was interested in land distribution only insofar as it could bring some amount of peace to the countryside. Both President Obregón (1920-24) and President Calles (1924-28) "would have preferred to contain agrarian reform within a political framework and to complete it quickly, in order to pass on to modernization and productivity—colonization, irrigation and large-scale capitalist agriculture—which interested [them] more than distribution" (Meyer 1991, 233). In 1930, Calles called agrarian reform a failure because "the ejido encouraged sloth; the future lay with private, capitalist farming" (Knight 1991, 247).

It is with President Cárdenas (1934-1940) that agrarian reform became tangible for tens of thousands of peasants for the first time. Cárdenas was concerned with modernization and productivity, but he understood that improving the Mexican countryside was a key part of the progress he envisioned for the nation. There was a particular urgency associated with rural reform in the early 1930s because the depression hurt the agricultural export sector privileged by the government at the same time that domestic production of corn and beans fell close to thirty percent; two-thirds

of the income from export crops had to go towards the importation of food (Bartra 1985, 58). The virtual halt to land redistribution under Calles, combined with the loss of peasant employment opportunities in the agricultural export sector (only exacerbated by the forced return of 300 000 Mexican laborers from the U.S.), meant the countryside was a very troubled place. Peasants seized lands from haciendas at an alarming rate, prompting Cárdenas to act speedily and extensively (Bartra 1985, 61).

During his presidency, the ejido was understood "not as a temporary way station on the road to agrarian capitalism nor as a mere political palliative, but as the key institution which would regenerate the countryside, liberate the campesino from exploitation and, given appropriate back-up, promote the development of the nation" (Knight 1991, 258). This new emphasis was reflected in numbers: in 1930, ejidos had held 15% of cultivated land; in 1940, they held 47%, and the ejidal population doubled from 668, 000 to 1.6 million persons during the same decade (258). The state created the National Peasant Federation (CNC) in 1938 and peasants were encouraged to organize. There was a huge growth in rural schools under Cárdenas, with teachers encouraged to support peasant demands for land, to supply practical help, and organize communities. But both agrarian reform and the activist ("socialist") education policy waned by the late 1930s as budgets got tighter and the right-wing opposition grew stronger (272). An ambitious Cardenista plan to integrate rural teacher training with a program of peasant agronomy in Escuelas Regionales Campesinas was completely abandoned at the end of his term. By 1941, the new Secretary of Education, wary of an association with communism, declared:

> The new Mexican school, essentially democratic, scientific and hard-working, does not have doctrines nor tendencies that are not those that constitute the same root of our nationality and the dearest-held ideals pursued by our people (Cassigoli Salamón 1990, 594)

Many right-wing organizations like the Union Nacional Sinarquista and the Partido Acción Nacional (PAN) had already appeared by the late 1930s and were strongly against the revolution or anything else that resembled "socialism." With Manuel Ávila Camacho as the new president (1940-1946), land distribution slowed to one-third the rate during the Cárdenas sexenio; what land was distributed was of inferior quality and the administration now took longer to complete land claims (Knight 1991, 312). Meanwhile, small property owners benefited the most from government investments in irrigation and public credit, as the result of a "profound ideological shift" away from the 1930s (313). Ejido members, faced with credit shortages, became even more dependent on patrons like the CNC, now firmly tied into the state apparatus but weakened by the competing demands from its varied constituency: ejidatorios, landless wage-laborers, and commercial owners (Smith 1991, 341). Already, the ejido was no longer the centerpiece of social and economic change, but "a productive adjunct of the booming urban, industrial economy, and the ejidatarios the most docile clients of the official party" (Knight 1991, 313). Most government agricultural investment went to northern haciendas and ranches, not to peasant-dominated southern and central states. President Alemán (1946-1952) and his group of young technocrats supported a constitutional amendment raising the allowable size of "small properties" to 100 hectares (approximately 250 acres), which made further land distribution more difficult, since small properties were exempt from expropriation by the government (Smith 1991, 340). Armando Bartra notes the irony of Cárdenas's reforms in the countryside:

> The miracle of domesticating the conflictive rural world of the two first post-revolutionary decades is the work of Cardenismo. Not only because the drastic land redistribution of the 30s considerably eased rural tensions, but also because the legitimacy acquired by the State, and the monopoly on peasant organization attained by the CNC, allowed post-Cárdenas governments to implement, without much friction, an agrarian counterreform that before Cárdenas would have been impossible. (1985, 66)

But despite the increasing regulatory power of the state, something significant had happened when the state supported agrarian reform and recognized the economic subjecthood of the peasantry. The institutionalization of land redistribution not only made the state the ultimate arbiter (and landowner) in rural areas, it also obligated the state to recognize the peasant right to the land, legalizing, Bartra notes, a kind of rural class struggle "that questioned nothing less than the sacred principle of capitalist private property" (1985, 27). The paradox is that state agarianism institutionalized the peasant movement while it also called into being the radical negation of the economic order privileged by the state. If the myth of the revolutionary state worked to mask the fundamental class interests behind state policies, it nevertheless also continued to nourish a peasant movement with a knowledge of its own legitimacy and special rights.

The State recognizes Indigenous Peoples

State recognition of indigenous peoples was less systematic and not as crucial to the maintenance of the political and economic order as was the recognition of peasants. The state first organized indigenous peoples as "indigenous" during the Cárdenas sexenio, in an attempt to keep movements of ethnic groups separate from movements led by peasants—just as the state had created the CNC as a movement separate from workers in the official labor union (Sarmiento and Mejía 1991, 39)[3]. There were eight Regional Congresses of Indigenous Races held from 1934 to 1940 under state auspices, and a Department of Indigenous Affairs created to facilitate the Mexicanization of Indians mostly through the establishment of rural schools. In 1948, the Alemán administration created the National Indigenist Institute (INI) as part of the continent-wide establishment of national offices for Indian affairs proposed in 1940 at the first Interamerican Indigenist Congress in Patzcuaro, Mexico. The INI was a small agency within the Secretary of Education, a location that testified to its integrationist

emphasis on cultural change through bilingual education in indigenous communities. Chronically underfunded from the start, the INI was nevertheless the only state agency that maintained regular contact—though this was very limited in scope—with Indian people *as* Indian people, and which attempted to understand Indian culture in its own terms despite a continuing policy of integration (Mexican anthropology was strongly influenced by the cultural relativism of Franz Boas). This was the important work that would have repercussions decades later: state Indian policy recognized a national "indigenous" subject formed out of the kaleidoscope of ethnic and community identities that make up Mexico's Indian population. This recognition served, of course, to elaborate particular state regulatory policies without consulting indigenous communities. But it also attracted many anthropologists who were concerned about improving indigenous lives, who lived in indigenous communities, and who learned to be critical of official policies. This kind of academic state agent, hired to carry out a government program limited in scope but who then took seriously its promise of social justice, would play a crucial role in the development of an indigenous movement in Guerrero.

There were a few indigenous organizations active in the 1950s and 1960s that claimed to be national in scope but were in fact formed by indigenous government workers and professionals sponsored by the Secretary of Public Education's Indigenous Affairs Office (Sarmiento and Mejía 1991, 43). Their principal demands were educational and cultural: for new schools, more scholarships for indigenous students, and state subsidies for their organizations—all of which would continue to be demands in the 1990s. In 1968, the Asociación Mexicana de Profesionistas e Intelectuales Indígenas formed and began to criticize state Indian policy; indigenous professionals or "acculturated Indians," the organization asserted, should implement

this policy (44). This, too, continues to be a demand of the indigenous movement today, fulfilled in part by the appointment of a Nahua anthropologist as INI Director General in 2001. There are certain continuities, then, between the demands of earlier indigenous organizations and their more contemporary expressions by the new indigenous movement since 1990. What is different about the movement in Guerrero that I examine, and about the contemporary indigenous movement more generally, is the mass participation by peasant communities as ethnic communities. While indigenous professionals continue to have prominent positions in national organizations, at a regional and local level indigenous peasants have crossed the ideological gap that attempted to keep these two subject categories separate. As they assert the unity of "peasant" and "indigenous" they use long-established and officially recognized identities to challenge the state's regulatory model. How indigenous peasants arrived at this point is the subject of the following section.

Underdeveloping the peasantry

For almost thirty years, from 1940 to 1965, Mexican agriculture had managed to grow faster than the national population, exporting enough agricultural products to pay for as much as 50% of imported industrial technology (Bartra 1985, 94). Food imports were low during this period, as were food prices, which kept the cost of living down in urban areas. But this prosperity had come at the expense of peasant farmers in the center and south, whom the government largely ignored in favor of an emphasis on federal aid to irrigate the northern and northwestern regions of Mexico dominated by the private sector (Hewitt de Alcantara 1976, 16). These northern farmers benefited above all from government irrigation districts that provided heavily subsidized water to their high-yielding (but also input- and capital-intensive) crops. The private sector had increased its control over capital since 1940, with private agricultural credit providing

69% of the national total in 1964 (ibid., 55). Meanwhile, state agricultural credit was targeted towards capital improvements on private farms and channeled in part through private credit unions and banks, putting large landowners in the best position to take advantage of the new technology associated with the "green revolution" (ibid., 57). By 1960,

> the lack of participation of non-irrigated agriculture in government-sponsored programmes of modernization thus left 83 per cent of all farmers of Mexico at a subsistence or below subsistence level . . . an almost unbelievable figure for a nation which fought a long and bloody revolution to redress the poverty of the countryside, went through a major agrarian reform, and was the early home of pioneering agricultural science. (ibid., 130)

When agricultural production and export prices fell in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and Mexico became a net importer of grains, the situation for peasants took a turn for the worse. Not only was soil fertility on peasant farms exhausted by this time, but the peasant agricultural products destined for the domestic market now had to compete against the massive importation of corn, wheat, rice, etc. (Bartra 1985, 97). The number of landless peasants had increased over the years, as the rural population almost doubled from 1940 to 1970 without a parallel increase in available arable lands (Hewitt de Alcantara 1976, 130). Employment opportunities for these peasants on large farms decreased over the years because of the mechanization of export agriculture—and jobs became still more scarce when the export sector contracted. Moreover, the average annual real income for agricultural workers had dropped from 700 pesos in 1960 to 499 in 1969 (ibid., 133). This was the crisis that faced the peasantry.

In a situation similar to the early 1930s, conflicts in rural areas over land, prices, and wages began to increase in 1970 and by 1973 had spread all over the country. Peasant communities, very often with the support of students, systematically invaded hacienda lands—and were systematically removed by the army; scores of peasants

were jailed or assassinated (Bartra 1985, 106-130; Canabal 1984). Two of the most important outcomes of the crisis and the subsequent unrest was the CNC's decreased ability to manipulate its members and the formation of many independent peasant organizations. President Echeverría (1970-1976) responded to the chaos in the countryside by attempting to organize ejidos into collectives, strengthen state agricultural agencies, distribute more land, and bring together three large peasant organizations that had proclaimed their independence from the state. He also drastically expanded the scope of the INI by ordering the establishment of 58 new regional offices and sponsored the First National Congress of Indigenous Peoples in 1975, during which indigenous communities expressed their shared identity as indigenous peasants, for whom the questions of land and culture were central. They also proclaimed the right to self-determination in their traditional government and organization, a right which they asserted did not imply their isolation but rather their conscious incorporation into the national community (Sarmiento and Mejía 1991, 162). Instead of better controlling peasants and Indians, however, Echeverría's policies—which failed to improve conditions in the countryside—encouraged peasant groups to expand their alliances with each other across communities and regions. The indigenous groups participating in the 1975 Congress formed the Consejo Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas (CNPI) and begin to pressure the state for changes in indigenous policy, beginning with the demand for the inclusion of the CNPI in a new indigenous affairs agency that would replace the INI.

The populist state policies under Echeverría were similar to those under Cárdenas forty years earlier and were undertaken in the same climate of rural crisis and peasant unrest. What was different in the 1970s was the power and organization of

large producers, an elite the state had helped to create through its modernization policies. Out of this cooperative relationship, writes Merilee Grindle,

> was an implicit or explicit bargain between the agricultural entrepreneurs and state elites to continue and even invigorate past support for capitalist expansion . . .Successful state policies did much to create a structure of power and influence that eventually limited the range of options available to the state for changing conditions in rural areas. (Grindle in Fox 1992, n. 32, p. 57)

With the new administration of López Portillo (1976-82), the state reaffirmed its close relationship with large landowners. The new secretary of agrarian reform, for example, was a northern landowner himself, and former representative of John Deere in Mexico. In 1979, he announced that land redistribution would end by 1982, and he placed a priority on the security of private property (Fox 1992, 62). The state's role in the countryside then changed, from ultimate arbiter between peasants and landowners when there was still the promise of land distribution, to chief creditor to those ejidos with medium to high productive potential. The emphasis was now on production, not redistribution, and the state initiated a new program to coordinate peasant communities that would end up facilitating not their submission but a new kind of indigenous peasant organization. After years of conflict and repression, the state had lost some of its power to manipulate the hopes of poor peasants and its pretension to populist legitimacy were "definitively" questioned (Bartra 1985, 130). To put it another way, in the heat of the struggle, many peasants discovered a "new face of the state, its class character, pro-business, and anti-democratic" (Flores Lúa, Paré and Sarmiento 1988, 210). This discovery would be an important part of a new kind of politicization of the countryside promoted (again) by state agents.

Out of the State. . .a new kind of movement

The López Portillo government initiated the National Plan for Depressed Zones and Marginal Groups (Coplamar) coordinated by the INI and targeting indigenous

groups early in the sexenio. Its larger purpose was to control peasant discontent and keep independent peasant organization within certain limits, while steering clear of any conflict with the agrarian oligarchy (Fox 1992, 155). One part of this program, however, a rural consumer food subsidy program (Conasupo-Coplamar), resulted in the organization of hundreds of indigenous villages into regional networks for the first time, based on the theory that only genuine community participation would guarantee the final destination and price of the food (157). In an earlier version of this program, individual entrepreneurs running the rural stores selling government-subsidized food products had often diverted the products to other stores or had sold them at market value, often three to four times the official prices. The goal of Conasupo-Coplamar was to sell basic foods at below the local market price, thereby weakening patron-client ties with rural bosses (caciques), who typically provided expensive informal credit to peasants to buy food in the months before harvest. By designing a structure for community participation, planners deliberately created "a political force for oversight that would counter the temptation for abuse at the operational level" (159). They carefully selected sites for warehouses, often choosing areas where grass-roots peasant organizations had recently appeared, with a clear intent to consolidate regional democratizing movements (160).

The political motivation of Conasupo-Coplamar planners mattered very much in the development of the program, and it helps to demonstrate how the state encouraged the formation of an indigenous identity that crossed community and ethnic boundaries. Many of these planners were products of the post-1968 student movement in Mexico City, who had entered government with a social justice and democratizing agenda, and had maintained friendships with radical activists working outside government institutions (Fox 1992, 163). They were particularly open to the recruitment of leftist

activists—including some former political prisoners—as promoters who would organize the initial community assemblies to choose members for the Village Food Committee. This committee managed the village store and sent representatives every month to meetings of the Consejo Comunitario de Abasto (CCA, the Community Food Council), which oversaw the warehouse supplying the region's villages. Jonathan Fox points out that socially committed anthropologists had designed these community participation structures to coincide with existing indigenous traditions, with the result that the program was most effective in areas where "indigenous traditions of cooperative labor and community decision making by consensus continued to evolve" (178). Not only was this a state program for peasant politicization, but it specifically encouraged the politicization of *indigenous* peasant communities within a regional space. Not surprisingly, Conasupo-Coplamar almost immediately encountered resistance from regional elites and their allies in the federal government. Purges of promoters and pressure on national-level policy makers to depoliticize program goals limited its scope, and by 1982 the new incoming administration completely scrapped Coplamar. Nevertheless, as with earlier government actions, the Conasupo-Coplamar experience set in motion community mobilization that would not end with a particular president's term. Instead, it would lay part of the foundation for a new kind of politicized indigenous peasant movement in Guerrero.[4]

One of the most important groups to form the Consejo Guerrerense in 1991 was an association of Nahua communities from the Chilapa region, about an hour to the east of the state capital. According to its own written history, this association began in 1980 as the region's Consejo Comunitario de Abasto, "the focus that brought peasants together" (Meza Castillo 1995, 4). The monthly meetings of village representatives to discuss problems regarding warehouse supplies were the catalyst for

thinking about other regional necessities that included production and marketing issues. Up until this time, government credit agencies were virtually non-existent and peasants were at the mercy of intermediaries and private creditors, who monopolized the sale of fertilizer and primary products (like the palm fiber used to make hats). The Conasupo-Coplamar program, with its village- and regional-level committees, along with the warehouse, stores, and vehicles it provided "were the bases on which the peasant organization developed . . . from the problems associated with supply, a habit of meeting and of discussion was generated among the producers in different communities" (7, 11). Thirteen village stores opened in 1980. By 1984 (after the end of Coplamar), there were thirty-four stores, in 1985 there were forty-eight, and in 1995 the region counted ninety stores in all. The corn and bean supply for the population improved during these years and the low prices the stores offered reduced the total cost of living. As the organization gained experience and began to take more control of the warehouse (though always working with managers hired by the state), members decided to buy and sell fertilizer collectively, which helped keep prices down throughout the region.

The need for a regional organization was made more imperative beginning in 1985. First, warehouse managers changed their position and revoked the use of warehouse vehicles to the CCA. Then a drought that lasted from 1985 to 1987 severely reduced corn supplies throughout Guerrero, exposing government corruption in the agency that oversaw the warehouses (where funds had been diverted) and incompetence in its efforts to relieve the crisis. The CCA responded in 1987 by establishing its own Direct Purchasing Program to complement the warehouse program. In order to raise the necessary capital for the new program, the CCA created community funds based in each village store, and a general fund that held all the money from the 56 participating

communities. They raised money through raffles, bazaars, and the sale of pork—and then went in search of suppliers in Mexico City's huge central wholesale market. With low operating costs (they were able to use warehouse vehicles during the first year) the CCA was actually able to make a profit even as they sold products at lower prices than those offered by the government or private businesses (Meza Castillo 1995, 27).

At the same time, the regional warehouse and the warehouse program in Guerrero more generally was suffering from a lack of supplies and funding, due in large part to the federal government's devolution of control of the program to the states, which had little money to keep it viable (Meza Castillo 1995, 30). In 1989, peasant communities went to Chilpancingo to protest the deterioration of the system of supply. In April 1990, the CCA based in Chilapa created a legal organization registered with the government and gave it a nahuatl name: "Zanzekan Tinemi," or "we continue together." The same organization of indigenous peasants via the CCA structure had also occurred in the municipality of San Luis Acatlán (south and east of Chilapa), where a registered association of fifty-eight Mixteco and Tlapaneco communities formed in 1988. A union of coffee growing communities, Luz de la Montaña ("light of the mountain region"), had already formed in 1985 in this region to provide production and marketing support; many of the communities involved in this organization were also involved in the San Luis Acatlán CCA. All of these associations in Chilapa and San Luis Acatlán formed a core group of the Consejo Guerrerense. In ten years, indigenous peasant associations begun under state auspices had evolved to exceed their original scope, becoming in the process more organized and more autonomous as the government withdrew from its supporting role. Thanks to the legacy of unrest during the 1970s and the state's abdication of its central mediating role in the countryside, indigenous peasants had achieved an unprecedented degree of independence from

direct state regulation.[5] The state's virtual renunciation of its mythical revolutionary populist role provided the space for a resurgence of campesino self-determination in Guerrero.

Building an ethnic coalition against a dam

In August 1990, the other core group in the Consejo was only just beginning to doubt the legitimacy of the state's revolutionary rhetoric. It was during this month that the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) hired anthropologists to carry out socio-economic studies of the Upper Balsas region north and east of Chilpancingo. The purpose of the studies was to fulfill a World Bank requirement for funding of a dam the Mexican government had been planning to build on the Balsas river since 1959 (Díaz de Jesus 1992, 13). Looking over the maps of the project, one of the anthropologists noticed that within the "reservoir area" the dam would create was not only his own home town, but twenty-one other towns as well—and not one had been informed by the state of these plans (Hindley 1999, 210). All these towns shared a Nahua identity and had maintained indigenous traditions of community governance, but there was no regional economic or political organization that united them, as the CCAs had brought communities together in Chilapa and San Luis Acatlán (ibid., 211).

Once he discovered these plans, the anthropologist set out to inform the town authorities, bypassing the mestizo municipal authorities who were most likely to cooperate with the federal government; town leaders then helped spread the news around the region (Hindley 1999, 212). He also enlisted the assistance of other indigenous professionals from the region—several of whom would go on to become prominent leaders in the Consejo Guerrerense—to find out more about the CFE's plan for the Balsas and about the construction of other large-scale dams in Mexico. These professionals (an engineering student, anthropologists, accountants) lived and worked

in Mexico City and returned home on the weekends to continue their local organization. As a result of this initial mobilization, the towns came together for their first joint assemblies in the fall of 1990 to discuss their plan of action and the structure of community participation. Present at the second assembly, along with community members and leaders, were invited academics from Mexico City and from the University of Guerrero. Also present—and uninvited—were 2 municipal presidents, both members of the PRI. Marcelino Díaz de Jesús relates how the assembly managed to exclude these men simply by asserting its shared cultural identity:

> Finally we left them out of the Constituent Assembly because, wisely, we changed the language in which we communicated: from Spanish that kept us exposed before the government agents we switched to nahuatl, which is understood exclusively by the Nahuas of the region. This is how, in front of these municipal presidents, the Council of Nahua Communities of the Upper Balsas [Consejo de Pueblos Nahuas del Alto Balsas, or CPNAB] was born. Without their being able to stop it. (Díaz de Jesús 1992, 21)

Early in the campaign against the dam, the CPNAB had mestizo allies—academics and journalists, mostly—who helped to frame the group's message. A key moment was the discovery by an INI anthropologist working in Chilpancingo of Mexico's ratification of International Labor Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in September 1990. The INI at this time, he told me, did not know about this convention, which is the first international instrument to define and outline the rights of indigenous peoples living within independent states. Convention 169 replaces the older ILO Convention 157 and its assimilationist premise, emphasizing instead elements of a new definition of indigenous self-determination. This INI anthropologist found out about it "purely by fluke" and presented it to CPNAB (author interview, 4 May 2000); it would become the group's rallying cry. As two of CPNAB's leaders write: "Our struggle was given another meaning when its

foundation became a demand for the indigenous rights protected by Convention 169 of the ILO" (Díaz de Jesús and de Jesús Alejandro 1999, 161).

The Mexican government's ratification of Convention 169 had been a quick response to the growing continental movement against the quincentennial, designed (along with the establishment that same year of the country's first national human rights commission) to polish the state's international and domestic image. The need for this image-maintenance was more important than ever, given the widespread allegations of massive fraud in the 1988 elections that kept the PRI in power at the federal level, combined with the new president's keen desire to sign a free trade agreement with the United States and open Mexico's economy to the world. The ratification of Convention 169 initially had little to do with real indigenous peoples in Mexico, since the state had not consulted indigenous peoples prior to the ratification (Hindley 1996). But the convention took on a life of its own once an indigenous peasant movement appropriated it as its own. Once again, the state's recognition of an identity helped bring into being the politicization of the identity as a claim against the state itself.[6] When the CPNAB marched on the state government building in November 1990, they brought with them a letter for the governor, a copy of Convention 169, and a copy of the CPNAB's letter to the ILO requesting its intervention on the Nahuas's behalf (Hindley 1999, 216). Already, indigenous culture was a political tool of resistance:

> In front of the state government building we finally spoke in our nahuatl language, which had been repressed so many times, but this time without shame—because education in Mexico is designed in such a way to make us feel inferior when we speak our Indian languages—discovering that the use of our language nahuatl-mexicano gave us greater unity and the respect of the non-Indian organizations that supported us. (Díaz de Jesús 1992, 22)

Meanwhile, by early 1991, several mestizo academics from Mexico City and Chilpancingo working on the "500 Years" campaign had begun to make contact with

different indigenous groups in Guerrero. Anthropologists for the most part, these were men and women who as students in the 1970s had worked as organizers with peasant groups around the country. Renato and Judith are a married couple living in Chilpancingo; he is a historian at the University of Guerrero and she works in government rural assistance programs. They both have a long history of involvement with indigenous peasant communities—her father was a Jaramillista in Morelos—and continue this work today. Both also have a long history of working with the state: Judith was a promoter in the Coplamar program and Renato worked off and on in the INI as a researcher (he is also a friend and colleague of the INI anthropologist in Chilpancingo who brought Convention 169 to the CPNAB's attention). By 1990, the couple was in contact with several indigenous groups in Guerrero. Judith knew several Amuzgos from the Costa Chica region through her interest in marketing the textiles made by women artisans; Renato knew Tlapanecos from his oral history work on the Luz de la Montaña organizaton; he also knew the Nahua anthropologists working in the Alto Balsas against the dam, as well as the Nahua municipal president in the Alto Balsas who had been elected on an opposition ticket (the PRT, Revolutionary Workers Party). Both Renato and Luisa were in close contact with Martín Equihua, a mestizo who had helped coordinate the CCAs in Chilapa. As they told me, "we had a strategic position from which to call all these different groups together," and in May 1991 they took several community leaders from Guerrero to a meeting of the Consejo Mexicano in Morelos, where they made contact with other indigenous groups from around the country (author interview, 5 April 2000). Renato and Equihua worked together to put the word out to the various indigenous organizations and set up the first meetings of the Consejo Guerrerense, including the constituent assembly of September 1991; they

were also responsible for drafting the Consejo's proposed organizational structure and political position.

Joaquín Flores Félix, a Mexico City-based anthropologist researching Guerrero's indigenous communities, had worked with unions and peasant groups in the 1970s and by the mid-1980s began to work with indigenous movements. He, too, would act to catalyze the formation of the Consejo Guerrerense through his contacts with indigenous peasant groups, and he affirms that "academics served as links between indigenous groups throughout the country" (author interview, 12 June 2000). In 1989 he participated with other academics and NGOs, along with many indigenous communities, at a meeting in Oaxaca to begin the "500 Years" campaign in Mexico.

Indigenous communities in Oaxaca, for specific historical reasons, had become aware earlier than many other indigenous peoples in Mexico of the international indigenous movement based at the United Nations (in the Working Group on Indigenous Populations, or WGIP) (Declaración...1989). The concept of specific indigenous rights had been discussed in the WGIP since its creation in 1982 and the "500 Years" campaign would incorporate a discourse of rights in its platform. Margarito Ruiz Hernández, an indigenous organizer from Chiapas who worked in the Consejo Mexicano, writes that the Mexican Academy of Human Rights also "played a relevant role in the formation of indigenous leaders who had a perspective of the knowledge and defense of their rights" (Ruiz Hernández 1999, 24). Beginning in 1987, the Academy implemented a training program for indigenous leaders from Mexico and Central America focusing on international and indigenous law. It was in this program that Ruiz first heard about the defense of indigenous rights based on international legal instruments, and where he began to form alliances with other

indigenous leaders in the region. This alliance-building and the new emphasis on human rights would be important for the indigenous movement later in the 1990s.

Much of the construction of a new kind of national and international pan-indigenous identity, then, took place in the interactions between Indians and mestizo intellectuals, in the context of a weak national peasant movement and with a new focus on international rights. The state's considerable withdrawal of its recognition of the "peasant sector" meant that the possibilities for *peasant* mediation with the state were weak (Zermeño 1997, 197). The state's loss of revolutionary legitimacy had also weakened its ability to regulate the subjects it had helped to create. Finally, the new national political party led by Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas that became the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD) had injected new life into popular groups and encouraged the political organization of the countryside in opposition to the ruling PRI—this was especially true in Guerrero. By 1991, it was clear to indigenous peasants that as "peasants" the government was not interested in them anymore, if it ever really had been. The declaration of the end of land redistribution in the 1970s was the first major indication of this lack of interest. Then the government stopped supporting the warehouse program in the late 1980s. The "500 Years" movement, on the other hand, offered peasants a new and politically more visible identity as "indigenous peoples" who apparently had this powerful right to self-determination. Given this historical conjuncture, the emergence of the anti-quincentennial campaign was a political opportunity that indigenous peasants—disabused of their former allegiance to the "revolutionary" state—were quick to embrace. Two of CPNAB's and the Consejo Guerrerense's leaders write about the process of identity formation among the Alto Balsas Nahuas:

> One of the most important effects of the resistance struggle against the dam was the construction of our regional collective identity as Nahuas

> from the Alto Balsas. Before this experience, the indigenous Nahuas felt they were "Copalillenses" from [the town of] Copalillo or "Huitzuqueños" from Huitzuco, among other restricted identities. The decisions about the fate of the Nahua people of the Alto Balsas did not come from a single decision, but from different decisions made in seven different municipal seats and not one of these said a single word in favor of [the Nahuas's] survival. These were years of faithfulness towards the system. The people were faithful and submissive towards the state party. Nevertheless, or maybe because of it, the resistance movement emerged when the people had more information about the government [dam] project. (Díaz de Jesús and de Jesús Alejandro 1999, 163)

Florencio (not his real name), a coffee grower with many years of work in the San Luis Acatlán warehouse committee and who is now very active in the Consejo Guerrerense as a director, told me it was his participation in a 1992 march on Mexico City to protest the quincentenary that "educated" him politically. We talked about his formation as an indigenous peasant while he flipped through the well-worn copy of the International Labor Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (published by the INI in 1995!) he always carries with him in his travels to Guerrero's indigenous communities. As Florencio told me, "I don't want power. I have all the work I need in my town, but I will organize the people, too, so that self-determination can be put into practice" (author interview, 9 February 2000). This new language of indigenous difference and rights is echoed by Díaz de Jesús and de Jesús Alejandro:

> Little by little the people in the resistance movement discovered that identifying themselves as indigenous Nahuas had various advantages. They differentiated themselves from the municipal seats, controlled by politicians and authorities indifferent or even opposed to the interests of the Nahuas and at the beck and call of the state. The other issue we came to perceive was that for the first time being indigenous was not harmful, but profitable, since as indigenous we could appeal to other international laws that gave us more prerogatives than the Constitution itself gave to the rest of Mexicans. (1999, 164)

There is a good deal of pragmatism in this description that is strongly reminiscent of 19th-century indigenous uses of prevailing legal and political discourse and that challenges claims to an "essential" indigenousness behind the indigenous movement.

In fact, an indigenous identity in Guerrero comes as much from outside as within ethnic communities, and it is in the alchemy of this mixing that a pan-indigenous identity forms. Researchers have noted the importance of this identity formation process in other regions (e.g. Kearney 1996; Stephen 1996; Rubin 1997; Varese 1996). Recognition of the *process* of identity complicates distinctions between peasants and Indians and between Indians and mestizos, since at all times these identities depend on each other for their definition. Moreover, they depend on an intimate relationship with the state that helps call them into being. This close relationship between mestizo and Indian in state *indigenismo* is the subject of the next chapter.

Conclusion

Over the decades, state policies had moved away from recognition and eventually even regulation of a peasant sector, weakening peasant identity with the state and reducing the viability of "peasantness" as a subject position from which to make demands on the state (see Fox 1994a for a discussion of peasant organizational change and weakness by the late 1980s). At the same time, indigenous peasants in Guerrero had taken advantage of the spaces available to them—even those, like Coplamar, opened up by the state itself—to organize their communities into unprecedented regional associations. This was the situation in 1990 when a new kind of movement emerged with a new kind of international and domestic legitimacy that indigenous peasants in Guerrero needed in order to make demands on the state. The newness came from a shift in the state's recognition, which was closely related to developments at the United Nations that were expanding the terms of human rights to include indigenous peoples, a discussion to which I return in more detail in Chapter 5. When it ratified Convention 169, the state signaled its acceptance of these new terms. Contradictorily, after 1990, the

Mexican government reneged on its promise to put Convention 169 into practice, claiming that do so would give indigenous peoples special privileges not available to all Mexicans (which was true, of course!).

In their pragmatic engagement with the state, indigenous peoples unmask the lie of the modern liberal state's concern with equality. We saw in the 1884 Michoacán case how an Indian community argued *against* being singled out by the state for special treatment by the Confiscation Law and *for* equal treatment as citizens. The state responded that the law did not constitute "special" treatment at all, only its specific application to a particular case, just as there were laws that applied to other specific categories of persons. Just over one hundred years later, indigenous peoples in Mexico are now working for the passage of laws that acknowledge their specific status—while the state insists that such laws would violate the principle of equal treatment of all citizens. Bridging the century is a common truth: the state may espouse univeralism and egalitarianism as its liberal credo, but it has always given some groups preferential treatment, often to the grave detriment of others. Today, groups like the Consejo are merely acting on this political reality, using the very terms to defend their communal space that the state itself had used to deny indigenous peoples access to their lands in the nineteenth century. In the process, the modern/traditional, state/indigenous distinction becomes more unclear. Indigenous peoples today continue a struggle for community autonomy using whatever means are at its disposal to defend a cultural and territorial space. To a large extent, this is the core issue at stake, whether articulated by "peasants" or "indigenous peoples," in the nineteenth, twentieth, or twenty-first centuries.

Endnotes

[1] Archivo General Agrario, *Bienes Comunales*, exp. 276.1/818 (Pueblo Hidalgo). The irony is that in the 20th century government officials did not immediately recognize these private property titles as proof of communal land ownership. Instead, the required standard of proof was the same in the 1940s as it has been since the colonial period, that is, a "titulo primordial" that documents the royal grant of land to a village. The confirmation of Pueblo Hidalgo's communal land was finally completed in 1966, fifteen years after the town had presented the government with an 1804 document demonstrating its colonial existence. The frustration expressed by community representatives in their correspondence over the years with government agarian agencies is superseded only by their determination to see the process to its end.

[2] This example is taken from Chávez Chávez 1996, 108-113.

[3] Sarmiento and Mejia assert this but do not cite sources for their claim.

[4] The Coordinadora Nacional Plan de Ayala (CNPA) was also a precursor to this type of politicization. Formed in 1979 as an association of peasant groups, many of which were indigenous, the CNPA openly challenged the anti-agrarian reform policies of the López Portillo administration. While the government was switching from land reform to production programs, the CNPA's rallying cry was "Today we fight for the land and for power!" The CNPA made explicit the necessary connection between land and culture for indigenous peoples that, in the 1990s, the Zapatistas and other indigenous peasant groups like the Consejo Guerrerense would continue to emphasize. See Bartra 1985; Canabal 1984; Flores Lúa, Paré and Sarmiento 1988; Mejía and Sarmiento 1991.

[5] A certain amount of peasant economic autonomy fit within the neoliberal model of state withdrawl from social services, of course.

[6]As Wendy Brown puts it, the identity is "available for politicization because [it is] deployed for purposes of political regulation" (1995, 58).

Chapter 2: Indigenista Dreams of Integration

> The success of the plans [for integration] depends, to a high degree, on the attitude of aboriginal groups and their active and direct participation. A requirement of this participation [is] the substantial modification of the current feudal structure that maintains servile obligations for peasants and . . . the urgency of an integral agrarian reform that would include the restitution of lands taken from the indigenous, the abolition of all types of land tenure that produce human injustice, the formation of economic stimulants to elevate production, and the destruction of mechanisms of forced segregation and incommunication that impede the integration of these groups to the national society. Agrarian reform . . . implies . . . the equitable redistribution of power and the equitable redistribution of the status or social position of the indigenous in the national structure. . . The right to education, the right to health, the right to paid work and to the total complex of values that make up human rights can only be given within a democratic regime that grants to the indigenous complete equality of citizenship. So long as the oligarchic groups that enjoy wealth and power oppose the integration of the indigenous into national society and attempt to maintain them in the degredation of servitude and segregated in primary activities based on archaic technology, the economic development of the Latin American countries will not be possible. Economic development and the integration of the Indian are parallel processes.
>
> —Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Acción Indigenista*, April 1965

This chapter tells the story of the first anthropological study of indigenous peoples the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) commissioned in the state of Guerrero. The study, and the anthropologist who carried it out, illustrate the post-revolutionary state's relationship to indigenous people, as this relationship was expressed in *indigenismo,* the revolutionary nationalist ideology and praxis that was the basis for the Mexican government's Indian policy in the twentieth century. Now

largely superseded by the national movement of indigenous peoples and its own program for indigenous peoples, indigenismo in its day was internationally recognized and respected. Two contradictory impulses guided it: on the one hand, the desire for an ethnically, racially, and culturally homogeneous Mexico that, on the other hand, respected and promoted the diversity of indigenous peoples as integral parts of Mexican nationhood. Indigenistas—the anthropologists charged with implementing INI policy—could embody at once firm loyalty to the modern, nationalist project and radical critique of the status quo, in large part because both positions found reconciliation in the myth of "la Revolución."

The Revolution could be different things. For a national government concerned with modernization, the revolution came to represent urbanized industrialization, not agrarian reform and rural development. For peasants, the revolution entitled them to a privileged place in nationalist discourse and state practice. Indigenistas could embody both interpretations. They found themselves representing parts of the country and entire peoples, especially in the center and southern states, that the central government largely ignored, but they came to these areas with a modernizing agenda. The INI sent its agents to develop these areas, with a concentrated focus on small economic projects and local infrastructure for indigenous communities. The emphasis was always on economic development, which meant questions of politics and power affecting indigenous peoples were officially ignored.

As I discuss below, however, it is clear that politics and power were never entirely ignored by indigenistas. Beginning as early as the writing of Manuel Gamio (1916), there was a strain of indigenismo that respected indigenous culture and also affirmed the right of indigenous people to govern their own affairs. This can be seen clearly in the report from Guerrero, and it emerges in the official newspaper of the INI, *Acción Indigenista* (published 1953 to 1970), that I examine in order to glean statements about indigenista policy and programs. The epigraph taken from Aguirre Beltrán is obviously concerned with politics; interestingly, the language he uses mirrors much of the discourse the Consejo Guerrerense uses today. He points to the existence within Mexico of political structures that maintain indigenous peoples in a "servile" position within the nation; only by changing these fundamental structures would indigenous peoples be able to participate fully as Mexican citizens. Moreover, he suggests that the idea of integration is not always equal to involuntary assimilation and ethnocide, but can mean full participation by indigenous peoples in the political life of the country. We will see in Chapter 3 how the contemporary indigenous movement in Guerrero has made *this* kind of integration a key part of its demand for self-determination today.

The explicit affirmation of some kind of indigenous self-determination suggests that there has long been support from within the state itself for a different state-indigenous relationship. But it demonstrates, too, that the fundamental ideology for the integration of the Indian often appears incoherent and that this is related to an often incoherent interpretation of indigenismo's proper work. Ultimately, of course,

the modernization paradigm dominated the work and thoughts of indigenistas. It had to. These were anthropologists committed to the modern nation-state project of homogeneous integration. They expressed their serious doubts about many taken-for-granted things: the physical and cultural distance of the Indian from Mexican society; indigenous peoples's lack of economic integration; even the goodness of modernity. But their ultimate allegiance to the state's interpretation of the revolution meant that the critical insights of indigenistas would remain quietly spoken and mostly unheard. Only after the state attacked its own intelligentsia, in the brutal repression of the student movement in 1968, would indigenismo's latent self-criticisms emerge loudly and insistently. I examine the effects of this self-criticism on government Indian policy and on the indigenous movement in the 1990s in Chapter 4.

In Guerrero

With the rainy season ending in 1954, Alfonso Fabila made preparations to set out from Chilpancingo in the company of Cesar Tejeda, an anthropology student assigned as a research assistant. From the capital city of the state, the two would make their way, on foot and on horseback, through the Montaña region of Guerrero. They would spend four months walking 2000 kilometers, interviewing community leaders and residents, taking many notes and photos, and producing the first anthropological study of the region. The goal was to write a report—commissioned by Alfonso Caso himself, the Director General of the INI—that would serve as the basis for the first Centro Coordinador Indigenista (CCI) in Guerrero. There were

only four CCIs in Mexico at the time (in Chiapas, Chihuahua, Oaxaca and Veracruz), and the INI wanted to spread the economic and social programs pioneered there to other indigenous areas of the country. Each CCI would serve as an agency coordinating the government's development of a particular region, introducing small agricultural projects like fruit trees and community vegetable gardens, building roads and drinking water systems, providing basic health and veterinary care, and bilingual education for community members. The plan was an integrated development for indigenous regions based on the detailed knowledge of the cultural, economic, and social conditions of the peoples to be developed. Fabila's report was to be this knowledge.

The Montaña region located in northeastern Guerrero and bordering Oaxaca is home to almost half of the state's indigenous population and still one of the poorest regions in the country. As its name suggests, it is mountainous and provides very little flat land, making agriculture particularly difficult. The poverty of much of its land is an important factor in the poverty of its inhabitants, though it is by no means the only factor, as Fabila notes well in his report. Today, illiteracy rates in indigenous communities of the Montaña reach 68 per cent, while the state average is 24 per cent. Seventy-seven per cent of indigenous homes lack piped drinking water, a figure that is more than double the state average; ninety-seven per cent of indigenous homes are unconnected to a sewage system, and seventy-seven per cent do not have electricity, compared to only twelve per cent of homes that lack

electricity statewide (*Xinachtli* Oct-Nov. 1998, 8). Half a century after Fabila trekked through the Montaña, living conditions for indigenous peoples have changed little.

Fabila's report details the poverty, the systems of land tenure, the condition of the land, intercommunity relations, agricultural production, market and interethnic relations, cultural expressions, health and education, and even the political situation of the region. It is a report remarkable for Fabila's frankness, his empathy, and for his abiding hope that the dismal conditions he encountered could be remedied by a government that took seriously the problems of the countryside in general, and of indigenous peoples in particular. His own dream of development is most remarkable, however, because it reveals the persistence of indigenismo's revolutionary vision for social change, even during a time when the state had embraced very different revolutionary ideals that had little to do with rural development. Quixotic perhaps, Fabila nevertheless reveals the inherent contradictions within the post-Revolutionary Mexican state that boasted a social revolution in the countryside while maintaining a dependent, capitalist status quo that privileged urbanization and industrialization. Fabila's report represents the legacy of revolutionary, nationalist indigenismo in some of its most radical manifestations, as a practice that tried to approach indigenous people on their own terms, and as an ideology that tried to appreciate indigenous cultures as an important part of Mexican culture. While it failed in many ways at both attempts, indigenismo still informed the best efforts to improve indigenous lives in Mexico, and it is important to understand how it inspired work like Fabila's in Guerrero.

Inspired by Indigenistas

> Mexico is without doubt, in a very real sense, an indigenous country, not only because 10% of its population is, but because the presence of the indigenous—and of indigenousness—is apparent in many aspects of our life. Now, I believe that because we are indigenous we can defend ourselves from the penetration of stronger and more technically advanced nations than ourselves. That is to say, what Mexico has that is indigenous has made it possible to conserve its features, its idiosyncrasy, its own way of being.
>
> —Alfonso Caso, *Acción Indigenista*, July 1959

The idea of indigenismo in Mexico—an idea that includes an appreciation of and concern for indigenous people and their traditional cultures, while simultaneously and contradictorily believing that indigenous survival depends on their assimilation to European culture—has its origins in the early colonial period with the work of Spanish friars like Bernardino de Sahagún and Vasco de Quiroga. Its modern form, however, took shape with the advent of the 1910-20 revolution, during which period indigenismo became a revolutionary, nationalist ideology closely tied to the emerging post-revolutionary state.[1] The 1916 publication of Manuel Gamio's *Forjando Patria* (Forging the Fatherland) was the first articulation of this modern, statist indigenismo and it has served as a starting point for indigenistas ever since. In this book, Gamio is concerned above all with the problem of defining a single "Mexicanness," given the ethnic heterogeneity of the country. He sees three groups that make up Mexico: "pure" Indians, mestizos (an "intermediate culture" which is the culture of the future, a blend of the Indian and the European), and "pure" Europeans. The solution to the problem, for him, is the

construction of a racial and cultural unity based on mestizaje—the foundation of a new nation.

The preoccupation with mestizaje, or race/culture mixture, was strong in the 19th century among Latin American intellectuals concerned with the definition of their own national cultures and with the definition of what it meant to be American. In Argentina, Domingo F. Sarmiento, writing in 1845, hoped to avoid mestizaje and "advocated the extermination of the barbarous or savage races [Indians and Gauchos] as a necessary step for the progress of humanity" (Martínez-Echazábal 1998, 25). In 1858, the Cuban José Antonio Saco, fearing a population increase among blacks that would overrun whites on the island, promoted the union of white men and black women in order "to improve the African race" and create a class of mulattos under white, male control (29). Both Sarmiento's extreme position and Saco's modulated one found a common home in notions of racial hierarchy and racial purity, though Saco was more inclined to accept the possibility that a certain kind of race mixture could have a positive outcome for the nation (and for its European descendants). Given the reality of their multiracial social contexts, some Latin American elites saw miscegenation between Africans and Europeans as a means of "improving" and whitening their societies (27). Indians, however, were a more problematic population, since they were often characterized as "too distant" culturally, biologically, and spatially from Europeans to blend well with them. Even in Peru, where a nationalist indigenismo extolled the Inka legacy, elites understood mestizaje

as the moral degeneration of Indians who had abandoned their proper place in the countryside and moved to the city (De la Cadena 2001, 18).

In Mexico, mestizaje—in this case, the mixing of Indian and European—took on a unique meaning. As early as 1890 (contemporaneous with José Martí's glorification of a color-blind Cubanness), Justo Sierra defended the mestizo against European racialism, especially the ideas of the French writers Arthur de Gobineau and Gustave Le Bon, both of whom promoted the idea of racial purity and deplored the supposed degenerative effects of race mixture (Hannaford 1996, 266, 338). Sierra wrote that

> for some time, learned Europeans have accustomed us to dogmatic declarations on the antecedents and consequences of our political and social state, and these sentences are in this way disheartening, [and] if they were truly scientific conclusions we would despair of ourselves. (in Aguirre Beltrán 1976, 38)

The Mexican experience, especially in the 19th century, was one in which Indians and Europeans had long been mixing and in which mestizos and even an Indian (Juárez) had become celebrated presidents (President Porfirio Díaz being only the most prominent mestizo in the 1800s). Sierra wrote from within this context and also as an intellectual influenced by the Comtian idea of social improvement through the scientific ordering of society, an idea that enjoyed great prestige among Mexican elites.

Related to this idea was what Martínez-Echazábal calls the "culturalization of racialized discourse" that offered nationalist elites like Sierra, Gamio and later José Vasconselos a means to reject the fixed, biologized European notion of race in favor

of a historically contingent and malleable notion of culture—while nevertheless implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) retaining a strong sense of race in their writings.[2] The importance of embracing culture over race was not to reject race, but to make social improvement possible through education, for example, which was assumed could have no effect on biological inheritance but was assumed could positively influence a group's cultural condition. The emphasis was on the *goodness* of mixture as part of the total social improvement of Mexico and the Americas. In the nineteenth century, writers like Francisco Pimentel had elevated the status of the mestizo above the Indian and the criollo, extolling supposed mestizo virtues of generosity, happiness, and sociability (Villoro 1996 [1950], 215).

Writing in 1909, Andrés Molina Enríquez conflated the racial idea of "mestizo" with the concept of a class that was revolutionary and liberal, and which was destined to overthrow both conservative landowning criollos and the "new" capitalist criollos allied with English and U.S. interests. Unlike Pimentel, for whom the Indian was a hopeless race without a future, Molina Enríquez appreciated Indian resilience and adaptation and believed Indians had a future—through absorption into the mestizo. Only the mestizo would be capable of achieving the (racial/cultural) unity that was indispensable for the formation of a nationality and a nation. The Indian was not capable of this because of (his) isolation and lack of culture, while the criollo was conscious only of (his) group and its exclusive interests, much of which were strongly tied to foreign interests (Villoro 1996 [1950], 216). For Molina Enríquez, however, the mestizo presented

> a unity of customs and desires, a "community of feelings, acts, and ideas" that made him a great family. National unity would be achieved with the "dissolution" of the criollo classes and with the absorption of all social groups by the mestizo. "It is absolutely indispensable—proclaims Molina . . . that all of our population be recast in the mestizo character in order to transform ourselves into a real national population." And this would not be achieved until the "mestizo" was fully in power. It was indispensable for the creation of nationality" that the bourgeois "mestizo" class maintain power. (ibid., 217)

Entirely a chimera, the mestizo elaborated by Molina Enríquez (and later universalized by José Vasconselos as the "raza cósmica") became part of the myth of the Revolution. It would undergo some changes later in the writings of Manuel Gamio, Alfonso Caso and other indigenistas, who emphasized the greatness of Mexico's Indian past and claimed it as the nation's legacy while nevertheless insisting on the need to change the present-day Indian way of life.

The shift from race to culture in Mexican nationalist discourse was aimed at Indians, of course, whose assimilation to a mestizo ideal would complete the cultural homogenization needed for national unity. Mixture was by no means the equivalent of cultural heterogeneity or a celebration of difference. On the contrary, it was always assumed that mestizaje would be the result of the formation of the real, essential Mexican whose qualities combined the strengths of both Indians and Europeans. Ultimately, however, mestizaje—and indigenismo—was about modernization and progress, which necessarily meant the rejection of a rural, religious Indian identity in favor of the new urban, Europeanized Mexican.[3] The movement from countryside to town or city was explained as a cultural move, as the

Indian left behind his or her *traje* and native language to dress in the clothes of the mestizo and speak Spanish. Alfonso Caso, for example, the INI's first director, wrote in an article titled "The Indigenous Problem is not a Racial Problem" that the difference between indigenous communities and other communities in the country was not "of race, but of certain elements of social and cultural life that have remained stagnant, without progressing as the other peoples of the country have progressed" (*Acción Indigenista*, August 1953). He went on to explain the racial/cultural distinction in more detail:

> What we want to say is that if an individual leaves his community and learns Spanish and goes to work for example in a factory, or to live in a city, and acquires the customs and habits of the inhabitants of this city, he is no longer an indigenous, but forms part of the great mass of the Mexican population. (1)

Caso also pointed out that there were "thousands of Mexicans who have indigenous blood" and who were professionals and professors. Moreover, Caso suggested that the line between mestizo and Indian was not very clear when he praised the greatness of "our indigenous ancestors."

Luis Villoro discusses the modern mestizo ambivalence towards Indians that is present in Mexican mestizaje and in Mexican indigenismo. There is, on the one hand, an insistence on the radical isolation of indigenous communities in Mexico that serves to justify not only the work but the very existence of an agency like the INI. Antonio Caso wrote in 1939, for example, that "the archaeological race continues to live outside of general civilization; the language and the religion, the collective soul of the conquerors, is neither expressed nor understood by the Indians; creoles and

mestizos segregated from the rest of the demographic group, have not been able and have not known how to form a people with the indigenous" (in Villoro 1996 [1950], 232). Aguirre Beltrán echoed this almost 30 years later when he clarified indigenismo's uniquely mestizo origins: "The Indian, as such, cannot propose an indigenista policy because the scope of his world is reduced to the paroquial, homogeneous, and preclassical community that has only a vague sense and notion of nationality" (Aguirre Beltrán 1976, 25).[4] And the historian Miguel Othón de Mendizábal wrote that "the ideology of today's indigenous does not differ essentially from prehispanic, and occasionally prehistoric, ideas" (in Villoro 1996 [1950]: 232).

The idea of indigenous isolation was behind the INI's furious pace of road construction in the 1950s ("roads of penetration" proclaimed *Acción Indigenista* in 1954)[5] and its emphasis on the promotion of national civic ceremonies in indigenous communities: it was "indispensable that [the indigenous] feel they belong not to the small, isolated community, to their municipality or to their state, but to the great community that is the Mexican Fatherland and that is symbolized by its flag" (*Acción Indigenista*, Sept. 1953). In this same issue of *Acción Indigenista*, the caption under a photo of indigenous boys holding the national flag (which has the word "indigenista" printed under the eagle) reads:

> In order to integrate the indigenous of Chiapas into the body of the Mexican nationality the worship of the fatherland is given great importance during the course of study with ceremonies in which our national symbol is emphasized. (3)

The penetration of Indian isolation by INI's anthropologists was thus a patriotic duty furthering the consolidation of a national culture. Implied here was a process of modernization and mestizaje, in which "Indian" communities would become "Mexican"—with the understanding that to be an Indian was to remain a foreigner in Mexico.

On the other hand, indigenistas like Gamio asserted that the opposite was true: that the Indian was the essence of mestizo authenticity and belonging, an essence we can also see in Caso's quotation at the beginning of this section. The purest source, Gamio wrote, of Americanness, "the most vigorous connection that binds the men of this continent to the ground on which they live is the indigenous who breathes from Alaska to Patagonia" (in Villoro 1996 [1950], 235]. Moreover , Gamio proclaimed, "the indigenous culture is the true basis of nationality in almost all the American countries" (in ibid., 254). He looked to the future and suggested that the old Indian cultures would accommodate themselves to modern times and in "a transcendental consortium with Occidental civilization" would give the peoples of the continent, and especially the "Indo-Iberians, a new physiognomy of the most genuine Americanness" (in ibid., 256). A 1959 interview with Alfonso Caso expressed the apparent ambivalent position of the Indian in Mexico:

> Interviewer: Could we say that despite the fact that the Indian is Mexican, and in a certain sense the most Mexican that we have in Mexico, our indigenous communities are groups of foreigners in their own land?
> Caso: That is how they seem, in many ways. Of course as you say very well, the Indians cannot be more Mexican. They came much earlier than all those others who have come. But these groups have

> remained at the margins of the social, economic and political life of Mexico. (*Acción Indigenista* July 1959, 4)

Luis Villoro, writing from the mestizo point of view, sums up the oscillation between indigenous difference and sameness within mestizaje:

> Certainly, the indigenous continues to be seen as something separate and split off our life and culture . . .but to this is added a contrary characteristic of the indigenous. The indigenous is, at the same time, something belonging to oneself, that is within ourselves and constitutes our self as much biologically as spiritually. In Gamio, this idea comes to express itself with deep insistency. The indigenous culture, which we had seen totally separate from ourselves, appears at the same time as the indispensable root of our own specificity before the cultures of other countries. (1996 [1950]: 234)

The suggestion here is that Indians and Indian communities, too, are not so isolated from the nation after all, an idea that complicated the work INI had set out for itself. While Caso was careful to point out the "marginalization" of Indian communities in Mexico—thereby reinforcing the idea that there was a clear constituency for the INI's integrationist work—other observations in *Acción Indigenista* asserted something altogether different. In 1955, for example, the Mexican delegation at the meeting of the International Labor Conference expressed the official indigenista position on the issue of the identification of indigenous people. It was easy, said the delegation, to know who was indigenous when communities lived on reservations, isolated from the economic and cultural life of the nation and part of a reduced people. It was more difficult to label "indigenous" those who "in the majority of occasions do not live isolated from the mestizo or national population, but, on the contrary, there exists between both population

groups a symbiosis that allows them to live side by side" (*Acción Indigenista,* April 1957). This was the case in Mexico. The delegation went on to assert that, thanks to the INI's work in an indigenous region (Chiapas), they had discovered the form and mechanism of interaction, "that over the course of four centuries of contact, indigenous and mestizo communities had constructed to integrate a common life" (ibid., 6).

There had long been, in other words, strong economic and cultural links between mestizo towns and surrounding indigenous communities. Indeed, it was this mestizo-indigenous region that became the focus of INI's development discourse, while in practice indigenistas would continue to work only in discrete indigenous communities. The oscillation between indigenous closeness to and distance from the nation, then, was an important element not only of mestizo identity but also of indigenista policy and practice as these were elaborated by mestizo anthropologists.

There are similarities here with development policy in Africa. In his analysis of development discourse describing Lesotho, James Ferguson notes how this discourse characterizes the country's economy as an aboriginal one "virtually untouched" by the modern world (1990, 56). Isolation—physical and psychological—is the great problem to be solved by development agencies charged not only with building a network of roads to transform "traditional" subsistence agriculture into commercial production for export, but which must also change "traditional" attitudes and values to bring them into harmony with modernity (58). The emphasis on Lesotho's economic and psychological isolation persists in this

discourse despite the knowledge that the people of Lesotho had been marketing crops and livestock since the 1840s, and despite the current reality that Lesotho imports a great deal of food, so that the introduction of roads only made imported goods cheaper than those grown locally (57).

Ferguson writes about development policy in the late 1970s, but as early as 1958 the INI had outlined a similar approach to Mexico's Indian communities, describing, for example, the characteristics of the "Mexican indigenous economy." Among these were the low levels of production due to poor land and the rudimentary agricultural technology employed; subsistence consumption and a minimal level of economic necessity which meant indigenous communities did not buy things, limiting the possibility of economic stimulation; almost no paid work; and the predominance of the "cultural factor," a traditional conservatism that was resistant to change and dominated by a magico-religious world view (*Acción Indigenista,* February 1958). But the most important element of the indigenous economy was that, far from being isolated, it actually formed part of a regional economic system in which a mestizo center dominated surrounding communities economically and politically. As a result, the economy of the communities was "distorted" by the needs of the center, in the same way that developed countries distorted the economies of underdeveloped countries:

> In this way, the indigenous community is obligated to satisify, in the first place, the needs of urban supply, providing the governing center with foodstuffs . . . and, in the second place, the indigenous community provides, to a large extent, the manual labor for the satisfaction of the needs of the urban centers's economic activity;

> thus, the masculine indigenous population provides the peon carriers that are used in these centers; and the feminine indigenous population provides the great majority of domestic servants that satisfy the domestic demands of the urban centers. On the other hand, the indigenous community also has to satisfy the commercial demands of the metropolis; and this is how the governing centers realize the stockpiling of products that are objects of demand in the national market ... and whose prices in this market are so high that their adquisition in indigenous zones is cost-efficient, in spite of the high price of transportation. Such products are, for example, coffee, tobacco, eggs, butter, etc. . . The governing center also fulfills the task of satisfying the needs of indigenous consumption [selling goods of poor quality at inflated prices] and thereby contributing in this form not only to the impoverishment of the Indian, but also to the deformation of his aesthetic tastes. (*Acción Indigenista,* February 1958, 2)

While this description of indigenous communities well integrated into regional and national economies clearly contradicts the idea of indigenous isolation (Fabila also contradicts this idea—and himself—in his report on the Montaña, as I show below), the article persists in concluding that such a situation is somehow anomalous and anachronistic. Thus, the ideology of the local center is characterized by feudal relations, "fanaticism, racial discrimination, in a word, caste division"—which is to say they are remnants of the colonial past and "very distinct from the [principles and fundamental laws] that prevail in the capitalist system" (ibid.).

Here again is the expression of indigenista ambivalence about the closeness and strangeness of the Indian in Mexico. The conclusion that the regional indigenous-mestizo economy is foreign both to Mexico and to capitalism directly contradicts the evidence presented in the article that these regions provided the nation with its basic foodstuffs. In 1950, for example, the Montaña region grew

almost half of all of Guerrero's corn, most of which left the region as an export crop (Muñoz 1963, 68). Fabila noted in his 1953 report that indigenous producers sold up to 50% of their crops and received very little in return from the government, despite "the indigenous contribution to the nation's economy for decades, if not centuries" (Fabila 1955, 193). Moreover, it is clear that indigenous communities not only provided a significant amount of labor to the regional center (belying the assertion that there was almost no paid work among indigenous peoples) but that they were also important consumers of mestizo goods. Maurilio Muñoz, an anthropologist who studied the Montaña in the early 1960s, wrote that the indigenous peoples of the region "unquestionably" kept the local economy alive and mestizo merchants acted only as intermediaries, though "political predominance and commercial activity are strongly intertwined" (Muñoz 1963, 104). Then, as now, mestizos sold high-priced items manufactured in other regions of the country (shoes, clothes, fabrics, dry goods in general, plastic goods, cigarettes, etc.) while indigenous people sold produce like onions, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, plums, flowers, chiles, tamales, salt, cheese, eggs, etc.—all at very low prices. Large, weekly markets in mestizo towns like Chilapa and Tlapa continue to be the sites of this important commercial exchange.

The insistence, despite evidence to the contrary, that the "indigenous economy," like the "indigenous community" and "the Indian" in general, exists as a discrete entity separated from the national economy and the nation is revealing. As I suggested above, this assertion is due to a modernizing, integrationist indigenista agenda that required a proper traditional and unintegrated subject to justify its

existence. At a deeper level, the ambivalence about this traditional subject reveals the instability of a modern self-conception that relies on clear distinctions where there are none. So, while it was sometimes quietly asserted that the economic and cultural lines between indigenous and mestizo, tradition and modernity, subsistence consumption and capitalism, were blurry at best, indigenista discourse simultaneously stuck to a firm distinction between the terms in each pair. As Ferguson (1990) observes for development discourse on Lesotho,

> for an analysis to meet the needs of "development" institutions . . . it must make Lesotho out to be an enormously promising candidate for the only sort of intervention a "development" agency is capable of launching: the apolitical, technical "development" intervention. (69)

The INI's apolitical, technical discourse constructed indigenous communities as the perfect candidates for the agency's development work, and it did this for very political ends. Beyond the concern for its own existence, the INI acted as an agent of a federal government keen on consolidating its influence in Mexico's disparate regions. Ferguson (1990) calls this expansion of bureaucratic state power through the use of depoliticized development discourse and practice the "anti-politics machine" (xv). This characterization of "development" helps to make sense of the INI's consistent failure to make significant, positive changes in indigenous communities over the years of the agency's existence, while it nevertheless continued to propose more projects and build more centers.[6] The apparent "failure" to develop indigenous regions over time had its own effects of state power, not so much of the INI *per se*, but certainly power in the proliferating state discourses about poverty, indigenous

identity, and nationalism that the INI officially promoted. Noticeably absent from the INI's agenda is any discussion of the relationship between political power and indigenous poverty and status, though there are important occasional glimpses of this—in the Aguirre quote at the beginning of this chapter, and when Muñoz pointed out the relationship between politics and commerce in the Montaña (Fabila goes further than this in his report, as I show below). The emphasis is always on economic and cultural differences as causes of indigenous poverty, and it is these factors the INI set out to change, *not* the inherently unequal relationships of power between mestizo centers and surrounding indigenous communities that reflected the larger inequalities of power at the national level.

The tension within Mexican indigenismo and mestizaje between indigenous sameness and strangeness came to be expressed in contrary desires: on the one hand, the desire to preserve what is original and typical about "the Indian," while on the other, the desire to bring the Indian closer to "Us" and to allow Indians to progress so that they abandon their harmful separation.[7] The paradox here is only apparently resolved through the adoption of a *gradual* progress towards "civilization" that is ostensibly gentle and not abrupt. As a part of this progress, mestizo anthropologists learned indigenous languages and studied indigenous communal structures—always from an objective, scientific perspective—to understand how best to insert "national" culture into the indigenous community. A foundational text of indigenismo asserted:

> The development of the heterogeneous indigenous communities, behind in the progressive evolution of the country, is achieved today by exercising multilateral actions on the community and using, in

> order to carry them out effectively, the guiding elements extracted from the very heart of the community, so that they are trained in the methods and techniques whose introduction it is hoped will favorably modify local conditions. (Aguirre Beltrán and Pozas Arcienega 1991 [1954], 24)

Villoro aptly expressed the sentiment behind such a program as "we will choose for [the Indian], but he must at each moment ratify the choice we have made" (Villoro 1996 [1950], 243). A French writer in *Acción Indigenista* affirmed the colonialist spirit of such a sentiment when he proudly wrote in 1964 that Mexico's Indian policy was remarkably similar to that pursued by the French in Africa. France had nurtured the same intention to bring native peoples into the national community for 100 years and had called forth men who knew the African well to carry out this program: "European efforts have been considerable and have certainly born fruit, like the formation of intellectual elites, from among whom today's independent states recruit their leaders and diplomats" (*Acción Indigenista* May 1964, 8).[8]

But the assimilationist idea of "bringing into the nation" also needs to be understood within a uniquely Mexican/indigenista nationalist context that considered Mexico's racial situation more advanced than what was current in the United States in the 1950s and 1960s. A barely-veiled comment by Caso on this superiority during the same interview quoted above is notable for its equation of indigenous separation with the maintenance of indigenous (and Mexican) inferiority:

> This [separation] would be a great danger, a very grave danger into which even very advanced peoples have fallen. It isn't necessary to mention them, right sir? [The reporter answers:] No, sir. [Caso continues:] Countries that have taken the indigenous for a minor, have protected him, segregated him from the national community and have

> managed to convert him into a permanent incompetent. Our policy and our proposal are completely contrary [to this] . . . We do not want our indigenous [person] to continue being one for all time; on the contrary we want for him at a certain point to incorporate himself into the life of the country and be a Mexican. (*Acción Indigenista*, July 1959, 4)

The contrast between this statement and the one with which I opened this section where Caso calls himself indigenous is striking, especially given the fact that both comments were made during the same 1959 interview. In almost the same breath, indigenous identity and the *overcoming* of indigenous identity become the foundation of a Mexican nationalism set up in opposition to the "very advanced peoples" north of the border. The contrast epitomizes the instability within indigenista and mestizo identity I have discussed and highlights the nationalism inherent to this identity. Caso almost deliberately obfuscates the unique political history of Indian reservations in the United States—which are the hard-fought legacies of larger Indian territories jealously protected by Indian tribes themselves—to cast them as areas of forced segregation. When Caso gave this interview, the U.S. government was winding down tribal termination, but the integrationist policy remained official through the 1960s (Cornell 1988, 124). And the civil rights movement in the United States dedicated to the integration of African Americans into mainstream white society was gaining increasing prominence.

Caso's comments, then, actually came at a time when involuntary (in the case of Indians) and voluntary integration were taking place among the most marginalized groups in the United States as never before in the twentieth century. But the INI

director was determined to make the contrast between Mexico and the U.S. particularly stark. He even made it a point in this interview to mention the importance of the "one-drop rule" without mentioning the U.S: "There are countries in which race is considered the most important and permanent thing in the world; there are those, even, that think only one drop of blood converts into black the person who has it, no matter how white their skin may be" (*Acción Indigenista*, July 1959, 4). Mexico, in contrast, he asserted, was a "wonder," because only in Mexico could a person change their race through culture. The INI, Mexican life, and, most importantly, the Revolution made possible this transformation: "the Revolution, even in its most obvious aspects, so that even the simple fact of giving an indigenous [man] a horse, a rifle, and an ideal, and letting him go into the hills makes it possible that when this man returns he is no longer indigenous."

Revolutionary Indigenismo

Caso's nationalistic belief in the force of the Mexican revolution to make mestizos out of Indians was first exemplified in Gamio's *Forjando Patria*. The book's opening pages offer a striking visual image of the hard, masculinist work Mexico was now prepared to do to make a single nation in "the great forge of America." Gamio condenses the history of the Americas into a series of failed attempts to make great nations out of disparate peoples. He begins with the Aztecs and the Incas, whose empires were on the way to greatness and might have created one vast nation, he asserts, but whose future was cut short by the European invasion. The Spaniards did no better in forging a nation, however, because they "only valued

the steel of the Latin race, leaving aside as waste the strong indigenous bronze" (Gamio 1960, 5). Then came the great men of American independence—Bolívar, Morelos, Hidalgo, Sucre—who were going "to climb the mountain, to strike the divine anvil, to forge with blood and dust, with muscles and ideas, with hope and disenchantments, a strange statue made of all the metals, that would be all the races of America." But the time was still not right and these great men passed on without realizing their vision. With independence came a change of focus, and a new idea that instead of one, giant nation, there would be several, smaller nations corresponding to the former colonial political divisions. Unfortunately, writes Gamio,

> the task was not well understood; the attempt was made to sculpt the statue of these countries with racial elements of Latin origin and the indigenous race was abandoned to obscurity, dangerous obscurity, or in the name of mercy a humble bronze pedestal was built with this race, resulting in what had to happen: the statue, weak and fragile, fell repeated times, while the pedestal grew. And this struggle to create a fatherland and nationality that has continued for more than a century constitutes the fundamental basis of our civil conflicts. It is now up to the revolutionaries of Mexico to take the mallet and fasten on the smith's apron to make the the new fatherland of mixed iron and bronze rise up from the miraculous anvil. There is the iron . . . There is the bronze . . . Strike, brothers! (6)

Gamio means to inspire with this work, and *Forjando Patria* is both manifesto and plan of action for the new country the Revolution was creating as he wrote these lines. The force of "la Revolución" was removing the obtacles that were opposed to the well-being of the majority of population and to the creation of a future nationality. The radicalism we are experiencing now, he writes, "can come to be

greater, much greater, if it is provoked; we have to consider the Revolution, like a natural event, completely natural; we have to march with her and not against her. To put obstacles in her path is like striving to still the ocean or darken the day" (1960, 170).

This faith in the power of the Revolution to make a new Mexico was bound up with Gamio's vision of a nation in which indigenous peoples and their culture are included and respected; like his mythical blacksmith, to be a revolutionary and an indigenista is one in the same. The Revolution, for example, began the return to indigenous communities of lands stolen from them in the nineteenth century, Gamio writes, but much more still remained to be accomplished. In one of his more radical proposals, which is still debated in Mexico today, he supported the legal recognition of indigenous collective use of lands and resources, and proposed indigenous peoples govern themselves with their own systems and in accord with their necessities, "instead of imposing the systems of other national groups which, although more advanced, end up being cumbersome and complicated for [indigenous communities]" (Gamio 1960, 180). In other words, "men were not created to adapt themselves uniformly to laws, but the laws made to adapt to the necessities of men and as the groups in our country have different characteristics and needs, it is logical that the laws—economic or otherwise—be distinct" (180). Gamio repeats this proposal several times throughout the book, and even adds a suggestion to reform the constitutions and laws of all Latin American nations so that they would include the specific characteristics and needs of their indigenous populations. He points out that

the current constitutions are in fact modeled on European or U.S. examples that were good for European societies, but not for indigenous ones. Left out of the nation, the indigenous population "constitutes an obstacle because of its passivity, this being the cause of an unstable social equilibrium in which the Indian cannot or does not want—with complete justice—to collaborate with the efficiency of which he is capable, because the same strange and inappropriate constitutions and laws that forcibly govern him prohibit his involvement" (73).

These were proposals for the political and legal recognition of indigenous peoples far ahead of their time in Mexico, but even still they were not without their own contradictions. On the one hand, for example, Gamio rejects the notion of cultural and moral progress and perfection, which allows him to value what is specific to indigenous cultures:

> Now, it occurs to us to ask if it is true that the most cultured people is the one with most morality, the best esthetic criteria, with the most wide-ranging scientific knowledge, of the highest intellectualism—in sum, at once rich and powerful. And it must be frankly confessed that really a people with all these gifts harmoniously united would be the most cultured, but where is it? It does not exist. It is important to note that, in general, cultural manifestations are not produced according to fixed principles, but instead arbitrarily. Therefore it is not possible to establish authoritative qualitative comparisons based on [particular manifestations]. Perhaps the ideas expressed here scandalize those lacking imagination and they will blame us for not recognizing the integral progress of humanity, in which case they will be right, frankly we confess that from various points of view we don't believe it: Human morality has never advanced in a straight line. It has its ups and downs. (104-105)

This belief in cultural relativism allows Gamio to appreciate and advocate for what is positive in indigenous communities (like collective ownership and local

government) because he refuses to claim a single standard of law, behavior, etc. for European and indigenous alike. His desire, however, for "national unity" impels him to set standards for Mexicanness based on his belief in the undeniable progress of science (which belies his cultural relativism, as does his parenthetical statement above about "more advanced" cultural systems). The fact is, Gamio asserts, Indians remain "prehispanic" and backward when it comes to their religious beliefs, their "ethical forms," and the technologies they use (95). The Indian will continue to cultivate a more or less modified prehispanic culture "unless he is not incorporated gradually, logically and sensibly into contemporary civilization" (96). This is the basis for a new Mexico. It requires a gradual Europeanization of Indians—care must be taken not to impose cultural changes abruptly—that allows them "the spontaneous development of their genuine manifestations, while working discreetly towards their evolutionary fusion, not artificial, with the race that until now has predominated" (175). He even suggests in this process that "we will 'Indianize' ourselves somewhat in order to present to the Indian our culture diluted slightly by his, so that he will not find it exotic, cruel, bitter, and incomprehensible." Gamio adds a cautionary statement: "Naturally, this closeness with the Indian should not be exaggerated to a ridiculous extreme" (96).

This uncertainty about the Indian in Mexico and in mestizos (both a part of and apart from) acts like an energy to propel indigenismo and indigenistas like Gamio. His distance from Indian people makes it possible and imperative to study them as objects of science, who will then benefit from the knowledge generated by

scientists—in this case, anthropologists—about them. His closeness (but not too close!) allows him a certain amount of respect and passion for the Indian people he studies, because they must be included in the common nation he is working to build for all of them. Applied anthropology is the chosen scientific method of the new nation-*state*: It will serve as the "basic knowledge" for the functioning of good government, because only through anthropological studies will the government know the population it governs.

> Through Anthropology the abstract and physical nature of men and peoples is described and the appropriate means for their natural, evolutionary development arededuced. When our indigenous families have been incorporated into national life, the forces in the country that are now hiding in a latent and passive state will transform themselves into dynamic, immediately productive energies and will begin to strengthen the true feeling of nationality, that today barely exists dispersed among social groups that differ in ethnicity and language and diverge in their cultural tendencies. (Gamio 1960, 18)

From its beginnings, anthropology in Mexico was taught in a government institution, the Instituto and then Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH and ENAH). Anthropologist and former INI director Salomon Nahmad points out that, as a result, in Mexico "anthropology formed part of the state apparatus . . . [it was] coopted by the state" (author interview, 21 January 2000).[9] Gamio was instrumental in the establishment of a state-based social science. As early as 1917, President Venustiano Carranza had established the first Office of Anthropology within the Secretary of Agriculture, which Gamio directed until President Calles named him Subsecretary of Education. Gamio was fired from this post in 1925 after he denounced the fraud in the secretariat. He spent the next few

years in the U.S. at the University of Chicago and then returned to Mexico in 1929 to re-enter public administration. Gamio eventually became the head of the Interamerican Indigenist Institute based in Mexico City and remained in that position until his death in 1960. His life was framed by a strong connection to the state and to state projects of integration, even though there were significant discrepancies between this work and his advocacy for some form of indigenous self-determination. Nahmad writes that

> despite the profound contradictions and ambivalences in the theories and means of application in Gamio's work, his outline and his project of Applied Anthropology was coopted by the Mexican state to consolidate the nationalist system and reinforce the capitalist economic structure. For this reason, the state, in spite of the differences it sustained with Gamio during his life, recaptured him as its ideological hero and cast him as one of the most prominent figures of 20th century Mexico. (Nahmad Sitton 1999)

In 1922, Gamio wrote what is considered the first integral anthropological study (of the Teotihuacan Valley close to Mexico City), combining pre-colonial, colonial, and independence history with a contemporary examination of the social, cultural, and economic systems of the valley's indigenous people. It was this kind of work that would serve as a model for anthropologists like Fabila, many years later.

President Cárdenas created the Autonomous Department for Indigenous Affairs in 1934 to promote research and coordinate community mobilizations for democratic governance and against regional caciques (De la Peña 2002). It came up with ideas like an ethnolinguistic project in Michoacan that taught literacy and encouraged literary production among Tarascans. But this did not last long, and in

1940 President Ávila Camacho dismantled the Department because it was "dangerous for the new policy of national unity," necessary in the context of World War II (50). The INI's creation in 1948 was part of this renewed emphasis on capitalist industrialization and cultural homogeneity.

Politics and Modernization

Alfonso Fabila was the son of campesinos and had attended rural schools. He had entered government service early on, working in the Secretary of Education's peasant schools and its rural cultural missions. His revolutionary credentials, in the agrarian reform tradition, were impeccable. Walking through the Montaña, Fabila wrote about the "disagreeable feeling of finding oneself in a strange and absurd country, where little is known of our latest social revolution, and where not only is there poverty and ignorance, but colonial and even prehispanic remnants that fill one with anguish" (Fabila and Tejada 1955, ix). Forty years after Gamio announced the beginnings of a new nationhood, it appeared little had been done toward that end among the indigenous peoples of Guerrero. This was not a discouraging fact for the anthropologist, however. On the contrary, Fabila's sense of the injustices in the region inspired him to appeal in the strongest and most utopian terms for its development and the development of the country:

> Once we strive with seriousness in the task, these things will change the point where this place will become a paradise with the resources it still has, its climate, and its marvelous panoramas. To work with the Indians of this forgotten region is more than just, and cannot be postponed; it is a yearning to contribute to the integration and the greatness of a new Mexico. This is what we believe and we ask with the most deeply felt insistence that the governments, the Instituto

> Nacional Indigenista, scientific, civic, philanthropic and artistic institutions, as well as men who love Mexico, culture, and progress, work towards this, convinced that the fruits of this labor will be bountiful and will benefit everyone. (xi)

He writes repeatedly about the "attitude of frank resentment and bitterness" he encountered among indigenous peoples (Fabila often uses the old colonial term "naturales" to refer to Indians) towards the white and mestizo population—and the prejudiced attitudes of mestizos and whites toward Indians: "they believe the natives are lazy, dumb, and unrepentant, and they belittle them, exploit and humiliate them, with everything ending up in vulgar, negative situations" (ix). If the interethnic relations were bad between indigenous and non-indigenous, they were no less conflictive among indigenous communities themselves. Fabila encountered enough of this intercommunity violence that he often had to travel far out of his way in order to avoid it; it was due almost always to disputes over land that communities begged government officials to adjudicate, to little avail. The constant and copious communication between communities and state and federal government agencies about these conflicts contradicts Fabila's assertion that the indigenous peoples of the region were ignorant of the revolution. They often even knew—or at least the community scribe or teacher knew—the articles of agrarian law to which they could appeal for justice from the government.

The problem, Fabila wrote, was the physical isolation of many areas that allowed *cacicazgos* (small fiefdoms under boss-rule) to flourish "completely out of control"—that is, out of national political control. While never stated explicitly as a

goal of the agency, part of the INI's work was to centralize power in the national government by assimilating local and regional systems of power into the web of the federal government.[10] Cultural and political integration were part of the same state assimilationist program. Reflecting on the INI's work in its early years and his involvement in this work as a young anthropologist, Salomón Nahmad told me how the INI was often positioned against local powers:

> Those local powers appropriate all the production of the small localities. If you look, for example, at Tlapa, at hat production, everything is concentrated in Tlapa or in Chilapa, and from there it enters the national and international market. But these local elites control the market. And they pay miserable wages to the people. And moreover they controlled corn—it's a region with a corn deficit—and they brought corn and sold it very high to indigenous people, and bought hats. And the indigenous also didn't have a voice, nor the vote in local elections. The PRI would come—and still comes—and fill the ballot boxes and say that the indigenous had all voted. Like Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla. The local and federal representatives are the sons of these elites. And the indigenous are subjugated by these and these elites dominate the state government. (author interview, 21 January 2000)

Given the fact of the economic subordination of indigenous communities and the INI's mandate to improve their situation the conflict between the INI and local powers-that-be seemed inevitable—but there were complicating factors, as Nahmad explained:

> The INI wanted to confront this [situation], but not totally, because the INI also formed part of the PRI. But, as there was only one party . And the INI, what we anthropologists wanted to do, was to break this system. To change the economic and political conditions of the regions, so that indigenous people would participate in the national project.

In other words, the INI's work was always political, but it was proposed as social development— "the political part doesn't appear, but the political part is present all the time. But it doesn't appear as a program of the INI," said Nahmad. The INI was part of a continuing desire for the centralization of federal power over micro-regional elites who would be pulled in towards the center. "But this didn't work, because these [regions] became part of the center. These caciques had their houses in Mexico City, and were the governors of the states. The networks integrated nationally within the PRI. The INI was impotent" (Salomón Nahmad, author interview, 21 January 2000). Nahmad continues:

> If we had been good ethnologists we would have done an ethnography of the indigenista agency and we would have known better its real project: to denounce local caciques, but not as part of the organization of the system. In the hallways it was heard commented who would be the new presidential candidate, master Caso would dine with Corona del Rosal, president of the PRI, who was one of the caciques in the region of the Mezquital Valley. (Nahmad Sitton 1999)

In fact, power did become centralized, according to Nahmad, just not in the way that idealistic anthropologists had hoped it would. Instead of diminishing the power of the rural fiefdoms that subordinated indigenous communities, the federal government via the dominant political party accepted much of this local control in exchange for party support (Lomnitz-Adler 1992; Pansters 1997; Rubin 1997). The INI's political impact on local regions, then, was actually to facilitate, if naively, the consolidation of feudal relations, even if Gamio had equivocally declared in 1948 that the program for the material improvement of Indian life was apolitical, "although this work,

which is not political in itself, can or could be the object of political interpretation" (in Villoro (1996) [1950], 249).

In 1970, *Acción Indigenista* published a candid 1964 study of the INI's development work (having prudently waited until the selection of a new president to do so). The overall assessment was that the Institute had very limited authority in indigenous regions and was unable to to effect lasting changes in the mestizo/ladino-indigenous relationship, largely because of the ambivalent political position of the Institute. Under the current circumstances, it stated,

> that are imposed by the structures of political organization, in which INI remains reduced to the role of counselor without power as a compromise with the ladino sector, [the INI] also runs the risk that proposals accepted by the indigenous can have consequences contrary to the interests of the ladino group. (*Acción Indigenista,* February 1970, 5)

Local INI Centers dealt with their in-between position in different ways, according to the report, some maintaining a low profile, and others taking an active role in local affairs. In Chiapas, the CCI deliberately restricted its activity and attended only to its work in indigenous communities, mindful always of maintaining good relations with state and San Cristóbal de las Casa authorities. In Oaxaca, the CCI confronted mestizos responsible for exploiting indigenous coffee producers, while in Chihuahua, PRI members were in the majority of the CCI staff and they had influence on the local party organization, managing to get an INI school inspector hired as a municipal president (much to the chagrin of mestizo landowners, apparently). As an institution, the INI was weak compared to other government agencies working in the

same region that had set up programs earlier and "unilaterally" determined the direction of development. In terms of its policy, the report was surprisingly unequivocal about the INI's equivocal mandate:

> [INI] appears not to have a precise conception of the area and dimension of a possible survival of indigenous cultures. The frequent affirmation that the object of integration is "Mexicanization" and not assimilation has more the character of advertising or publicity. In spite of its lack of precision this image of the program is always of interest because it conveys a tendency towards the same idea of not obstructing integration. (*Acción Indigenista,* February 1970, 5)[11]

So, while Fabila may have wanted indigenistas and indigenismo to have a larger political impact in the countryside, the INI's inherent institutional weakness, the PRI's ability to integrate rural caciques, and the indigenista allegiance to modernization made any positive or profound effect unlikely. Indigenistas could not decide on how much assimilation could be balanced with indigenous difference, and the INI has always been caught between representing the interests of the state, of local powers, and of indigenous peoples. While there was within the INI and among indigenistas a very visible and constant discussion of the Institute's and of indigenismo's proper mission, the revolutionary nationalist ideology that favored capitalist industrialization continued to tie anthropologists to the very state apparatus they attempted to critque.

The same year Fabila entered the Montaña, the INI published an anthropological manifesto written by Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán and Ricardo Pozas Arciniega, both leading anthropologist-indigenistas of the time. This new book, *La política indigenista en México* (Indigenista policy in Mexico), framed the work that

anthropologists should do among indigenous peoples, in order "to turn into Mexicans this highly important indigenous minority that the eminent social pioneer wisely and incisively described as strangers in their own country" (Aguirre Beltrán and Pozas Arcienega 1991 [1954], 25). The "social pioneer" referred to is Gamio himself, whose ideas are emulated by these younger anthropologists in the name of the nation-state, but with a significant difference. While Gamio wrote unmistakably about the future legal and political recognition of indigenous land tenure and self-government, this new book dutifully details the importance of studying community structures, forms of community land tenure, economic activities, medicine and health, and education as Gamio proposed but it then turns around to criticize the indigenous self-government he advocated. The authors's reasoning is worth quoting at length. The Revolution, Aguirre and Pozas write,

> had as an unwavering goal the form of government it elected [for the people] and denied these [indigenous] communities the right to govern themselves according to their traditional standards. This policy can appear incongruous to those who are unaware that the revolutionary movement of Mexico pursues as its paramount objective the integration of one national community, in which all of its members partake of the benefits of a common culture. When it exposed the liberal fiction of the equality of Mexicans as a lie, the Revolution sacrificed in addition the principle of the self-determination of [indigenous] peoples to govern themselves according to their own standards, because it considered its most valuable goal to be the attainment of national unity, an unavoidable prerequisite for an effective progress and a better mode of coexistence. [224]

Well aware of Gamio's work, Aguirre and Pozas completely ignore the reasoning he used to advocate a specific set of laws to govern indigenous communities. It is a striking omission in a book that claims in its very first lines to

reproduce the ideas and program of action of the "social pioneer." Fabila's concern with interethnic enmity and the attention he devotes to the economy of the region are echoed by Aguirre and Pozas when they sum up the ultimate goals of indigenista policy:

> [It] is entrusted with the development of a vast plan that will permit, in the near future, the surpassing of the standard of living of the indigenous population, the harmonious elevation of its levels of acculturation and the structuring of an economic interdependence in which the elements that come together benefit mutually without creating situations of serious interethnic tension that impede the process of biological and cultural mestizaje and, with this, the final integration of the country in a great community sufficiently homogeneous so that regional variations will not obstruct the general march of the nation towards economic modernization, and the eventual industrialization that the Revolution has set as its goal . (240)

It is also striking that, given their work in the countryside, the concern expressed by Aguirre and Pozas with modernization and industrialization had little to do with improving living conditions for indigenous peasant farmers. Indeed, the INI was actively involved in the late 1940s relocating indigenous populations from their traditional lands in order to make way for hydroelectric projects in Veracruz and Oaxaca (Gutiérrez 1999: 103; *Acción Indigenista*, February 1954).[12] And, as we saw in Chapter 1, the Cárdenas reforms in the countryside that had privileged land redistribution and the creation of new ejidos were significantly slowed already by the early 1940s. World War II had disrupted international trade and provided Mexican entrepreneurs with new business opportunities the Mexican government was eager to promote through official protectionist policies, subsidies, and increased foreign investment (Hewitt de Alcantara 1976, 8). Federal spending on "social development"

in areas like public health and education decreased while physical infrastructure projects received increasing government investment (ibid., 9). And, after 1940, the budgets of the Agrarian Department, the National Ejido Credit Bank, rural schools, and clinics were "severely limited" (ibid., 12).

Modernization theory, with its emphasis on societal evolutionism and functionalism (the harmonious working of the social body), enjoyed great prestige worldwide when Fabila trekked through the Montaña. The INI's fixation with distinguishing the indigenous/traditional from the national/modern and the Mexican government's privileging of industrial and urban areas were part of a more general postwar development discourse dominated by modernization theorists like Neil Smelser and Walter Rostow and by Latin American economists working in the Economic Commission for Latin America (So 1990; Escobar 1995, 81). The goal was rapid economic growth through industrialization fostered by capital and technological investment, and the ways in which industrialization would take place "constituted the core of most development models of the 1950s" (Escobar 1995, 74). The targets of these models were the countries in the newly conceived "developing world," a reconfiguration of the former "colonial world," for which European nations had earlier devised imperial development schemes (Peet and Watts 1996, 20). While Mexico technically did not fit into these categories, having gained its independence from Spain early in the previous century, its relatively low levels of industrial growth and technological development (not to mention its proximity to the U.S.) made it a

good candidate for development by agencies within (the INI, of course) and outside of the country.

The Rockefeller Foundation, for example, took an early interest in developing modern Mexican agriculture along capital- and technological-intensive lines. It began sending U.S. experts to consult with Mexican government officials and scientists in the early 1940s and subsequently established the Mexican Agricultural Program, which would have lasting effects on the course of agricultural development not only in Mexico, but worldwide (Jennings 1988). The Foundation—through U.S. agronomists sent to Mexico, support for agricultural training programs in Mexico, and a fellowship program that sent Mexicans to study at U.S. colleges—was able to steer agricultural development in Mexico away from rural reform that would benefit peasant farmers and towards an emphasis on the introduction of new seeds and technologies among commercial farmers. This was a program that not only benefited U.S. interests,[13] but that fit very well within the dominant modernization paradigm, in which the "traditional" sector was largely abandoned because of a perception that it was hopelessly resistant to change (Escobar 1995, 79). The focus was on the capitalization of a certain form of agriculture for the generation of surpluses that would permit what Rostow characterized as a "take-off" into self-sustained growth (ibid., 76). The problem remained, however, that the Foundation's program deliberately ignored the political and social contexts in which development schemes were set up, with the result that existing social divisions within regions and in the country were only exacerbated

(Jennings 1988, 56). It was within this larger development landscape—so dominated by modernization discourse—that indigenistas like Fabila worked to improve indigenous lives.

Fabila inherits Gamio's legacy

Like Aguirre and Pozas, Fabila was concerned with economic and cultural assimilation in Guerrero, and he devoted most of his study to the economic relations of the Montaña. But in his account it becomes clear that there is an intimate relationship between the economic, political, and ethnic—all of which reveal a region in which indigenous peoples are very much assimilated to national and international market relations, even as they retain their own local structures of governance. It is this larger panorama of power that Aguirre and Pozas—and modernizing development discourse more generally—carefully ignore. Moreover, Fabila is not reluctant to criticize state and national governments. Regarding land conflicts, for example, Fabila notes how local leaders and *caciques* (bosses) thrive in the midst of an intercommunity violence they do nothing to stop, and which helps to maintain their own prestige before villagers and state authorities as they exact revenge in the name of their followers. Fabila blames this situation on agrarian officials, municipal authorities, caciques, local leaders, "and we do not know who else, because, as we said, at the bottom of all these questions lie outside interests" (Fabila and Tejeda 1955: 6). The outside interests Fabila mentions included monopolists based in Puebla who controlled the national and international trade in straw hats made by indigenous people, and the state government based in

Chilpancingo that unilaterally appointed local municipal officials. He does not implicate the national government directly, but he is clear about the negative effects of government neglect on the lives of people in the Montaña. Without specifying exactly who is to blame, Fabila nevertheless incisively describes the ways in which local, state, and national governments worked against the interests of indigenous people.

Race was an important element in this governance. Municipal authorities were almost exclusively mestizo and white, while indigenous communities retained some autonomous control of village affairs. Fabila writes that indigenous peoples appeared to be accustomed to this racial hierarchy of power, due in large part to their widespread illiteracy and to the fact that the state capital imposed municipal authorities. It is likely that, faced with a hostile political environment, indigenous communities withdrew into themselves and relied on village government to order their daily lives. To outsiders this looked like acquiescence. But as Jan Rus has written about highland Maya communities in Chiapas, a withdrawal from the mestizo/white power structure—to the extent that this was possible given the ongoing economic exploitation of indigenous labor—signified a strengthening of local village control over daily affairs (Rus 1994). Local village politics, structured by a complex system of political/religious offices and a council of principals or elders, was very much alive and well in the mid-1950s, and not at all on the verge of collapse. Fabila writes that in the small villages where most indigenous people lived

he hardly ever met any mestizos, and that here the authorities were "of the traditional type," in which the council of principals had the last word on all village matters.

Like Gamio, and unlike the "official" INI line expressed by Aguirre and Pozas, Fabila believed this indigenous self-government was good for indigenous peoples. In some majority-indigenous municipalities in the Montaña, a council of principals continued to govern, while in others political parties had made their appearance, and indigenous community members complained about their influence. They told Fabila that if they had been able to designate the municipal authorities they would have chosen individuals who were better suited for communities, but that with the party system they were subjected to impositions dictated from places that did not understand the problems people faced. The INI anthropologist even names the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI)—the national ruling party—as one of these meddlesome political parties and cites examples:

> According to the political officials, authorities in the municipal seats are elected by a majority of votes, but in reality they are designated by higher-ups. The political party that controls the great majority of municipalities is the PRI. In the municipality of Ahuacuotzingo there is still the tradition of [governance by] the Principals; they are upset that the [municipal] authorities are members of a political party (the PRI), instead of being designated by them, but they are not openly opposed [to this]. In the municipality of Xochihuehuetlan, the municipal council is also composed of PRI members; there, the Principals still have a lot of power and their opinions influence the decisions of the municipal president. In Atlixtac there was a municipal council made up of members of the same party, but it seems they committed various excesses and were replaced by a municipal council composed of PAN [Partido de Acción Nacional, a conservative, Catholic party] members, directed by the Catholic priest of the place. He is now the one who directs politics there. (420)

Fabila comments on this situation: "Thinking over the validity of this complaint [by indigenous people], we thought that the manner by which indigenous communities govern themselves is the one that best suits their own interests" (421). The duplication of authorities, constitutional and indigenous, was common in the region (i.e. municipal councils and a council of Principals in one municipality) and prompted Fabila to note that indigenous authorities "frequently were more effective" than their legally recognized counterparts (ix).

This is bold support for indigenous autonomy made during a time when the national government was consolidating its hold on popular sectors, especially through the national labor union and the national peasant federation. The National Peasant Federation (CNC) "fully backed government policies, even when they obviously favored large-scale businesses at the expense of medium- and small-scale farmers: the secretary-general of CNC expressed his support in 1953 thus 'Given this example of unquestionable and positive activity, peasants affiliated to the CNC have only to fulfill once again their patriotic duty'" (Smith 1991, 351). And in the Chiapas highlands, the INI was routinely meddling in local indigenous affairs by using its selective support for literate scribe-principals "to advance projects whose benefits were not primarily for Indians" (Rus 1994, 291).

Fabila would have found little support for his conclusions about indigenous government in official channels, but he saw good evidence for his reasoning in the working of the legal systems of the region. As he noted in his introduction, "justice for the poor, the ignorant, and the defenseless is a dead letter in the hands of corrupt

authorities" (Fabila and Tejeda 1955, xi). In the small villages, Fabila was told the principals decided what should be done with prisoners and how to deal with crime in general; he heard no complaints by community members about this form of justice. These local village leaders judged minor offenses and those that directly affected indigenous families according to customary, not written law, and sent the adjudication of more serious crimes to municipal judges located in the municipal seat. If these judges could not resolve an issue, it was sent up to the district seat (which oversaw several municipalities) where the Court of First Instance reviewed the case. The public prosecutors employed to take on these cases had rarely completed their legal training and often took bribes to promise to shorten or eliminate jail time for the accused. Fabila noted that "frequently, the public prosecutors work together with the state police to exploit the ignorance of the indigenous. In the city of Tlapa there is a lawyer with the Department of Indigenous Affairs, who told us that he has to protect indigenous individuals on a daily basis from the injustices inflicted on them by the Public Prosecutor and the Chief of Police. The indigenous are always asking him to defend them from unjust fines and other extortions. The problem is very serious" (433). Fabila encountered widespread complaints by indigenous peoples about corrupt public prosecutors; people were happy with their own system of justice, he noted, but as soon as the public prosecutor intervened "things changed." Well-informed persons told us, he wrote, "that the revolution has not come to the region, so far as justice and other aspects of modern culture and the benefits of economic well-being are concerned" (434).

Fabila's recommendation to remedy this situation was to train principals as auxiliaries in the application of justice, which seems like a minor effort. In effect, however, such training would have entailed literacy and legal training and would have been a step towards widening the scope of self-determination for indigenous communities, not to mention state recognition of indigenous leadership. One measure of its potentially significant effect can be found in the fact that the INI never implemented such training for local leaders; unlike basic literacy campaigns, legal training no doubt posed too much of a threat to the region's status quo (though indigenous literacy brought its own social change in later years).

Fabila's advocacy of a certain amount of indigenous self-determination, like Gamio's, was nevertheless tempered by his belief in the ultimate goodness of the Revolution and the national unity it would bring. An important foundation for this unity in the countryside was the *ejido*, of course, though in the Montaña, as in many indigenous regions of the country, Indian communities held title to lands called *bienes comunales*, which were historically and explicitly Indian. For Fabila, the existence of two different land tenure systems, one in which individuals registered before the state and the other in which they did not, presented an obstacle to national unity. As Aguirre and Pozas write, in the case of the ejido, the Revolution "reserved eminent domain over these lands for the nation and only gave the ejido usufruct rights . . . affirming that the rights population nuclei had over agricultural lands were irrevocable and inalienable and, thus, they could not in any case nor in any form, cede, transfer, rent, mortgage or sell them" (Aguirre Beltrán and Pozas Arcienega

1991, 89). Under the system of bienes comunales, on the other hand, the indigenous community and not the nation is the legal owner. This is an important distinction, since the possession of bienes comunales thus signifies community territorial and cultural rights not recognized under the ejido system.

Aguirre and Pozas (1991) write at length about the benefits of acculturation brought by the ejido, the primary one being the high level of individuation and secularization of the old indigenous communities, "destroying definitively the sacred and communal characteristics that had persisted in them" (93). The ejido made the indigenous community "permeable" to cultural change, because its establishment, maintenance, and expansion required constant contact with the state:

> This [contact] induces, in those groups that choose this social structure, an attitude favorable to cultural change and a notable indifference towards community and sacred norms, which facilitate the integration of Indian people. The acceptance by ejido members of the measures that government agencies implement for the progress of the indigenous population is notable among these communities, and it is in them that agencies have had the greatest success. (Aguirre Beltrán and Pozas Arcienega 1991 [1954]: 96)

Fabila also suggested that in order to eliminate the ethnic differences between indigenous people and mestizos (by making mestizos out of Indians), the INI should push for the "ejidotization" of indigenous communal lands. He liked the communal land system only because "it automatically disappears when the indigenous reach a level of culture similar to the national [mestizo]; it is not therefore a problem for the country's institutions because it can be a useful instrument for the improvement of the situation of indigenous [people]" (Fabila and Tejeda 1955, 95).

It is important to note, however, that while Fabila shared the assimilationist perspective of his colleagues in the INI, his reasoning in favor of the ejido was slightly different. In his travels through the Montaña he discovered that occasionally village principals sold off parcels of the bienes comunales (though never to non-indigenous buyers and only rarely to people from other communities), something that could not be done under the ejido system, where land could only be transferred with the permission of state agrarian authorities. The problem was, as Fabila saw it, that the performance of community civil and religious duties was expensive (they included paying for fiestas for the community) and often led a man to sell his parcel to another community member. Over time, some individuals within a community came to own far more than others, and many were left landless. Under the ejido system, a member could never lose his or her parcel so long as it was worked continuously. Fabila suggested that village members be informed of the benefits of the ejido, "and they will decide what fits better with their territorial self-determination, because to continue corrupting the traditional form of communal land tenure [as they do now by selling their parcels], it would be better to ejidotize their lands to place them in a legal situation that prevents them from corruption" (95). He supported the ejido, then, not only because it was an instrument of indigenous acculturation, but because it would in fact help to preserve the integrity of indigenous communities within a context of self-determination.

After Fabila

The INI established a CCI in the Montaña in 1965, after it sent out two more anthropologists to the region in 1963 to "complete" Fabila's 500-page report, which was never published as an INI monograph. The decision to locate a CCI in the Montaña at that time came because the Secretary of the Presidency under President Díaz Ordaz (1964-1970) and General Cárdenas himself were interested in developing the region. The Secretary was from Chilapa and presumably had a personal stake in the region's development, while Cárdenas was head of the Balsas River Commission and keen on developing the entire Balsas basin that included parts of Oaxaca and Puebla as well as the Montaña (Salomón Nahmad, author interview, January 2000). The INI was to attend to the "social part" of this project. Before the establishment of the CCI, "there wasn't anyone, no one worked [in the region]," so that, in contrast to many other regions in the country, here the INI was the first goverment agency on the scene (Nahmad interview, 21 January 2000). The new report would add little to Fabila's, however, except newer census figures for the region. More important was what it omitted: all of Fabila's frank support for indigenous political self-determination, and most of his critique of local power relations. When understood within the larger institutional and political context, the trimmed final version of Fabila's work in the Montaña was a logical conclusion. It was a reminder of what the government would tolerate within the definition of "development" for rural areas and indigenous peoples.

And yet, we need to make a distinction between this final, official version of the Montaña report and the intent of its primary author, Maurilio Muñoz (a then-young Salomón Nahmad was assigned to Muñoz as his assistant). As Nahmad told me, Muñoz was an Otomie (ñañhu) from the state of Hidalgo and had been a rural teacher, as had his father before him. He was monolingual as a child, speaking no Spanish until General Cárdenas (the connection is unclear to me) invited Maurilio's father to send his son to an indigenous school. From there, he went on to finish courses in anthropology without actually obtaining his degree (in Mexico, a degree is conferred only after completion of a written thesis). Cárdenas then recommended Muñoz to Alfonso Caso, suggesting he hire him at the INI—Nahmad said that Caso and Cárdenas were "very good friends"—at a time when "generally the high functionaries in the INI were not indigenous, or are not [still]" (Nahmad interview, 21 January 2000). Nahmad said that working with Muñoz he was able to understand a little more how indigenous intellectuals thought, and he observed how Muñoz questioned "the way functionaries looked at indigenous people, and how these functionaries looked at him." Muñoz had the hope that more indigenous people would be trained as he had been, to assume a more relevant role in Mexican society. His work in the Montaña (he was named the first director of the Tlapa CCI) was towards this end and it helps to illustrate the distinction between the INI as institution and the indigenistas who worked in indigenous communities. Nahmad relates that the

> the coexistence of the communities in the Tlapa region made us see the profoundly miserable conditions of the indigenous and the exploitation of their craft work. The unjust resale of corn and the conditions of malnutrition and hunger that oppressed the population especially children and women. Maurilio and I visited all the communities in the municipalities, he was untiring walking and jogging along the paths, we spoke with authorities and leaders, with school teachers. We took a sampling of houses in order to understand the living conditions of domestic family units and we edited the report hoping that our proposed projects would become reality. (Nahmad Sitton 1999)

Muñoz visited the INI's head offices in Mexico City with their report in hand but "returned disappointed and upset . . . nothing was decided" (ibid.). He found the offices divided between those knowledgeable about rural problems but without decision-making power, and a bureaucratic elite that "paralyzed" the institution. Nahmad continues:

> Maurilio had to invite [a bureaucrat] to breakfast in an elegant restaurant in order to obtain the funds for the work. Upon the arrival of "the master Caso," the bureaucratic courtesans waited in the doorway of the institution and upon his leaving the circle accompanied him to his car. The ritual was daily and important matters waited. Indians were not a part of this environment. Some photographs of them decorated the walls, however. We worked for two years and never saw a budget; both the reality of the countryside and the reality of the men who were in charge exasperated us. The wheeling and dealing of national, university, and internal politics dominated. One had to define with whom and with which group one was attached: with the utopians and leftists, or with the refined administrators. (ibid.)

When a staff member from one of the CCIs arrived at the head offices to lobby for a project or follow through on matters that were on occasion very serious given local conditions, he typically confronted those who had administrative power and who constituted a real barrier, who were also those to whom he had to relate the

facts of rural life. The urban industrial bias of the state and its projects clearly informed the INI, too, despite the Institute's overwhelmingly rural constituency. This bias acted as another serious obstacle to the institutional changes necessary for the "equitable redistribution of power and the equitable redistribution of the status or social position of the indigenous in the national structure" that Aguirre Beltrán mentions in the quotation with which I opened this chapter. The tension between the INI as institution and the individual indigenistas charged with carrying out the institution's work in the countryside was constant and would come to have political consequences for indigenous peoples that could only be hinted at before 1970. The incipient recognition of indigenous self-determination in the work of Gamio, Fabila, and Muñoz-Nahmad I have traced out here would take on a new kind of legitimacy from the late 1970s to the late 1980s, when soon-to-be President Salinas de Gortari developed and then introduced (in 1988) his "Solidarity" program for social development. The inheritor of a strong self-criticism that took place among INI anthropologists in the 1970s, the Solidarity program is the important state policy context within which the Consejo Guerrerense worked in the 1990s. I analyze Solidarity and the Consejo's work in Chapter 4.

Out of place, out of time

By the time Fabila entered the Montaña and *La política indigenista en México* was published—just when the work of the INI was beginning—the concerns of indigenistas were no longer the concerns of the national government. Mexico's own "great leap forward" in agrarian reform and state attention to rural areas had

taken place during the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas, while the following years saw a significant decline in state concern for peasant and indigenous affairs. Even the establishment of the INI in 1948 can be seen as part of this general trend, since it replaced the Autonomous Department of Indigenous Affairs that Cárdenas established in 1934. While the Department had operated independently of a larger government agency, the INI was from its start a dependency of the Secretary of Education. Like rural areas and the indigenous peoples who lived there, the INI played a minor part in the government's modernizing agenda. The national political and economic environment in which the INI was established and Fabila was conducting his research did not nurture radical visions of a self-determined indigenous integration.

But in spite of this, these anthropologists continued to believe in the possibilities of a different revolution, now more mythical than real. While Aguirre and Pozas kept clear of the too-radical suggestions of Gamio, they, too, shared his and Fabila's assumptions about modern Mexico's revolutionary foundation, the basis for all government policy. Fabila wrote eloquently about how rural teachers especially embodied this national ideal:

> Only because of them do we feel the living presence of Mexico and the Revolution; without them, one would feel in a strange and most absurd country. The fatherland lives on because of their daily toil and in the civic acts they carry out on their respective days. It seems like a lie that in these uncultivated, inhospitable lands, beings so humble speak with fervor to Indians, mestizos and whites about Mexico, about her aspirations, preoccupations and problems; about her history and her men; about the Revolution and the longings that fill each

> Mexican for the greatness of the nation. (Fabila and Tejeda 1955: 502)

Fabila seems to have cast himself in a similar role as these teachers, quixotically speaking about a revolutionary Mexico that did not exist in this place. Indigenistas also asserted, meanwhile, that Indians were strangers in their own country. There are two different countries here, named by different times: the premodern-Mexico (of the Indians) and the becoming-modern-Mexico (of the anthropologist). These are expressions of the tradition/modernity dualism in which the INI cast itself as crusader for progress and modernization, despite everything the Institution and its anthropologists knew about the intimate connections that made such a distinction irrelevant, if not unreal. But indigenistas clung tenaciously to the distinction, no matter how dubious and equivocal, because it justified what they did and who they were, even if the goodness of modernity was never entirely clear. Fabila moved in and out of time, though he was mostly out of place. He was a modernizing INI bureaucrat, and yet he was sympathetic to the indigenous traditions he witnessed. After all, he was a very good indigenista.

The push and pull between homogeneity and diversity, sameness and difference, the nation and peoples is constant in the writings of indigenistas. Gamio's masculine evocation of the birth of the Latin American nation may read like alchemist hyperbole, with its miraculous anvils and potent metals, but he was very right about the key role that the struggle for the recognition of indigenous peoples has played and continues to play in the formation of the Mexican nation. When we

read indigenista writings we can see this struggle played out all over again—searching for a resolution that always remains elusive within the indigenista paradigm. Yet the strange promise of indigenismo was its ability to articulate the push and pull within Mexican revolutionary nationalism. The ejido is a concrete example. On the one hand, the ejido is an important part of a state policy aimed very deliberately at the modernization and deculturation of indigenous communities. On the other, it is THE state-created entity that has most nurtured a peasant revolutionary consciousness, which later sustains a new indigenous peasant movement with the knowledge of its legitimacy.

When Aguirre Beltrán spoke in 1965 about the "active and direct participation" of indigenous peoples as the prerequisite for their real integration into the nation, he was speaking the legacy of a particular strain of revolutionary indigenismo. He was also giving voice to a future in which indigenous integration would mean their inclusion into the nation based on "the total complex of values that make up human rights." Looking back to the past and forward to the present, Aguirre Beltrán was able to articulate a vision of what "development" might mean for indigenous peoples and for Mexico before the indigenous movement itself would articulate it so forcefully several years later.

Endnotes

[1] Though it did not lose its religious roots. Alfonso Caso wrote in 1960, for example, that to be an indigenista "knowledge is not enough, in effect, but it is necessary to have an apostolic vocation to carry to the indigenous population the benefits already enjoyed by the other members of the Mexican community" (*Acción Indigenista*, July 1960).

[2] Omi and Winant (1994) discuss a similar maneuver in the United States, where the notion of fixed biological races gave way to a culturalist ethnicity paradigm during the first decades of the twentieth century in U.S. social science, which was similarly preoccupied with the assimilation and integration of "ethnic minorities." A center for this new thinking was the University of Chicago, where Manuel Gamio was in residence for a few years in the 1920s.

[3] Martínez-Echazábal suggests the same homogenizing process was at work in the construction of the mulatto in Latin America: "When reading mulatto fictions in conjunction with the various projects of nation building and state fashioning in Latin America, what surfaces . . . is not the recognition and proclamation of ethnic difference or of a heterogeneous identity but the Eurocentric glorification of a cultural sameness, of similarity in identity" (1998, 23).

[4] Aguirre Beltrán further asserted that "indigenista policy is not what the Indian formulates for his own community, but the manner in which the national group contemplates the treatment it should give to the groups named indigenous, according to national values and interests" (1976, 24). Here, the "national" is emphatically not "indigenous."

[5] From 1953 to 1960, INI had built 1200 kms. of roads in indigenous regions (*Acción Indigenista*, Nov. 1960).

[6]As late as 1966, the INI's budget was calculated to come to only 6 centavos spent each day for each indigenous person the Institute attended to in the country (*Acción Indigenista*, October 1966).

[7] Though it was also acknowledged that closer communication with "the nation" and modernity could actually have disastrous effects. The roads INI worked so hard to build, for example, brought not only medicine and education: "If our world arrives at the remote indigenous world, it subjugates it and sucks it dry. . .clearly and simply, it commits robbery while it also shatters the emotional stability of its beings. People foreign to them . . . can make them think that isolated they live better, attributing everything bad to outside forces difficult to overcome" (*Acción Indigenista* December 1960). This expresses the not-so-niceness and the brutality of the modern—and it helps to explain the INI's sometimes romantic desire for the traditional, the "pure products."

[8] It is certainly true that the Mexican state, through its educational system, similarly assisted the creation of an indigenous intellectual elite that has emerged as an important part of the national movement for autonomy and self-determination. See Gutiérrez 1999.

[9] "Under the theoretical schema of acculturation, which was the central tenet of the predominant school of anthropology set forth by Aguirre Beltrán and by the project of national integration—the dominant ideology under which we had been trained in the School of Anthropology—we couldn't perceive the ethnic phenomenon as an autonomous project [directed by Indians]. It was precisely our function as social scientists to work for the state project and not for ethnic groups" (Nahmad Sitton 1999).

[10] Ángel Palerm wrote that "the real problem . . . which is the central question of indigenista strategy, consists in attaining the integration of the regional system into the national one" (in Aguirre Beltrán 1976, 15). For him, this was a Marxist-informed strategy conceived in terms of the inevitable integration of these caste-based regions into a modern, national class-based system: "The process is of a dialectical nature, so that during its progress the regional system dissolves and the Indian and the mestizo are simultaneously liberated from their old ties of dependency and domination. This liberation, of course, must be understood as a passage from caste or quasi-caste relations to relations of social class."

[11] The frankness of this assessment, and its publication in the official newsletter (six years after the fact), says much about the changed political climate in Mexico in 1970 and how the INI, too, had begun to change, at least outwardly, in reaction to the larger changes taking place around the Institution. See my discussion in Chapter 4.

[12] The INI established a CCI in the Veracruz-Oaxaca region specifically for this relocation work, in order "to convince the peasants to abandon their towns, transfer the population and restructure the affected towns in zones of reaccommodation" (*Acción Indigenista*, April 1958).

[13] Increased production of Mexican beef for the U.S. market, for example, as well as barley production for U.S. breweries (Jennings 1988, 75-77). Neither beef nor barley figured as significant parts of the diet of most Mexicans.

Chapter 3: The Indigenous Movement and the Consejo Guerrerense, 1991-2000

> A large part of the contemporary political thinking of Mexico's indigenous peoples is focused on the right to autonomy. The separate demands for a rural road, a bilingual school, small loans, a health clinic, or piped water are articulated into a single proposal that is more and more broad and stable. Local village demands are now part of a national demand. Our organizations have insisted that the problems we have as Mexican indigenous peoples concern not only villages and communities but the entire Mexican nation. Autonomy and self-determination demand the consideration of a group of problems, in which the control of territory and land; resource management and production; self-government and the reorganization of national political power—all are necessarily related to each other and to human rights, ethics, and politics within a larger framework of the plurality of cultures, sensibilities, and cosmovisions. This is what the voices of autonomy are saying in Mexico.
>
> ---Marcos Matías Alonso, president of ALTEPETL Pueblos Nahuas de la Montaña de Guerrero, speaking in Geneva before the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations, July 1998
>
> Despite the fact that our grandmothers and grandfathers gave their blood to abolish slavery in the War of Independence, in the War of the Reform, in the Mexican Revolution at the side of our General Emiliano Zapata and, despite the blood offered by our Mayan brothers, those of the "for everyone everything, for us nothing," those of the hidden face of the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), in spite of all of this *our rights as indigenous peoples are still neither recognized nor respected.*
>
> ---Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena, February 2000

What I am calling the "indigenous movement" in Mexico is a loose network of community and regional organizations with disparate ethnic, social, and political backgrounds united by a few common positions I outline below. Mostly oppositional and critical of the state, the movement is nevertheless very heterogeneous (there are sixty-two different language groups among indigenous peoples in Mexico spread over a large country) and includes groups and individuals more closely connected to the

government. Because it is simultaneously nationalist and critical of the postrevolutionary nation-state project, the indigenous movement in Mexico occupies an apparently ambiguous position. It rejects old-style integrationist state policies, while it seeks greater inclusion in national political decision-making as Mexican citizens with full rights. The agenda is in fact integrationist—on Indian terms—and not separatist. Not just a demand for "different but equal," the indigenous movement in Mexico has more in common with the Black civil rights or the women's movement in the United States, than it does with high-profile indigenous movements in Nicaragua or Panama or Brazil. In these Latin American countries, indigenous peoples have a long history of isolation—physical and psychological—from the dominant mestizo or ladino culture, and a keen sense of their larger traditional territory (Díaz-Polanco 1997; Hale 1994; Urban and Sherzer 1991). The Yaqui in northern Mexico come closest to this type of indigenous experience (Hu-Dehart 1981). For most of Mexico's Indians nearer the center of the country, isolation from the dominant power was not possible and they became a part of the nation's story, though not often on their own terms.

Negotiating this sameness ("We are Mexicans") and difference ("We are Nahuas, Amuzgos, etc.") can be tricky. Indigenous movement discourse is careful to distinguish, for example, between "specific" and "special" rights for indigenous peoples. It argues that indigenous peoples deserve specific rights, just like workers and peasants have specific rights in Mexican law. This would not give indigenous peoples any special status, it would only acknowledge that Indians have qualitatively different lives from other kinds of Mexicans (Hernández Navarro 1998a). The distinction is difficult to maintain, however, because the definition of "Indian," as I have pointed out above, is not always as clear in the Mexican context as it is in other countries where an assimilationist nation-state project was weaker. Furthermore, in theory any individual

can become a worker or a peasant (satisfying the liberal criterion of equal rights) but not everyone can become an Indian. For those opposed to them, the idea of specific rights for indigenous peoples in Mexico seems too close to the colonial *fueros* (special group privileges) and the República de Indios—the official colonial racial hierarchy that kept Indian and Spaniard in separate jurisdictional regions—and too far from the post-Independence liberal idea of "equal rights" of the Mexican nation. As a result, the 1992 reform of article 4 of the constitution to recognize Mexico's "pluricultural" composition and protect indigenous culture has not yet led to any regulatory legislation. Meanwhile, in the San Andrés accords signed by the federal government and the Zapatistas in 1996, indigenous culture and identity is *national*: "It is necessary to elevate to constitutional status the right of all Mexicans to a pluricultural education that recognizes, disseminates, and promotes the history, customs, traditions and, in general, the culture of indigenous peoples, the root of our national identity" (Acuerdos sobre derechos. . . 1997: 17). From a modern, liberal perspective, the legal definition of indigenous sameness and difference thus remains as ambiguous as indigenous (and mestizo) identity in Mexico.

The San Andrés Accords occupy a central place in the indigenous movement because they are the product of an unprecedented national consultation, during which scores of indigenous and non-indigenous community members, movement leaders, academics, and politicians worked together to fashion a document on indigenous rights and culture that both the Zapatistas and the federal government signed.[1] The agreement is framed within the context of a "new relationship" between the state and indigenous peoples that recognizes and rejects the Mexican state's historical ideal of assimilation and cultural homogeneity (Acuerdos sobre derechos . . .1997: 4). Like the oppositional rhetoric of many indigenous organizations, the Accords are eminently nationalist while

also critical of the government's long-standing paternalism and corruption. They explicitly link the destiny of indigenous peoples with the destiny of the nation:

> The prospects for the development of Mexico are closely connected to the historical task of eliminating the poverty, marginalization, and the insufficient political participation of millions of indigenous Mexicans. The objective of constructing a more just and less unequal society is the keystone for achieving a more modern development and for building a more democratic society. These goals are the essential part of a national project that the people of Mexico desire, not only as a moral commitment by society and indigenous peoples and as the irrevocable responsibility of the Government of the Republic, but as the indispensable condition to assure the movement towards higher levels of development of the country. (Acuerdos sobre derechos. . .1997, 5)

Upon their approval by the government and the Zapatistas, the Accords went to the national legislature, where a select group of congresspeople from different political parties reworked them into a legislative proposal for constitutional change that incorporated Zapatista and government changes to the signed Accords. The Zapatistas approved the new proposal in December 1996, but the government of President Ernesto Zedillo stalled and then rejected it, citing constitutional conflicts that would make it unworkable. Ignoring the strong nationalistic tone of the Accords, the government asserted the proposed reforms would "balkanize" the country by setting up special privileges for indigenous peoples (Hernández Navarro 1998b, 226). In fact, by early 1997, the government was concerned about the congressional elections fast approaching that summer and had no interest in boosting the status of the Zapatistas in national life when it faced the real threat that the ruling party, the Partido Revolutionario Institucional (PRI), might lose its majority in Congress (ibid., 227). The declining national power of the PRI from 1997 until it ultimately lost the presidency in July 2000, meant that the proposed constitutional reforms in indigenous rights and culture were put on hold—until Mexico's new president, Vicente Fox, re-introduced the

original 1996 legislative proposal for constitutional reform to Congress in December 2000 (I discuss this briefly in Chapter 5).

It is important to note here that the language the indigenous movement uses to assert its unique position within the nation-state is the same language modern nation-states have always used: autonomy and self-determination. Far from being a throwback to colonial *fueros*,

> regional, ethnic, and religious groups of the Third World quite often appropriate the ideologies that had legitimized the modern states; these then appear to fuel the struggle for autonomy from central authority in those very states that were created *from* the collapse of the colonies.(Guidieri and Pellizzi 1988, 8)

No less threatening because it is familiar, the indigenous use of modern legitimizing ideologies in Mexico appears strange because it consistently speaks of a separatist self-determination of a new nation-in-the-making with an integrationist Mexican nationalism in the very same breath. These are ideological positions that are not supposed to go together.

"Autonomy" and "Self-determination"

The San Andrés Accords express the movement's primary demands of the state: indigenous autonomy and self-determination, which are transnational indigenous demands made at the UN and other intergovernmental fora. They are also very Mexican demands embraced by other social movements in the country that, at least since the 1970s, have attempted to work outside the control of the state (Foweraker and Craig 1990; Rubin 1997). The indigenous demands of autonomy and self-determination include this goal of independence but add a distinct cultural dimension: the right to exercise control over their language, religion, and customs. As Marcos Matías notes above, indigenous self-determination is also connected to a political space, as both government and territory. In many indigenous towns, community members

(almost always men) choose their leaders through open discussion and consensus, not by a majority decision determined by official secret ballot. Local leaders (almost always men) are valued for their long-term voluntary service to the community in traditional civil and religious positions called *cargos*. They act as important liaisons between the town and the larger municipality (the equivalent of a county in the United States). Their leadership is not officially recognized, however, and so it is often unrecognized in practice by municipalities that are often dominated by mestizos and which have the legal right to appoint village governments. The exercise of this municipal right often results in violence that can last for many years. The indigenous movement's insistence on self-determination is based on a desire to avoid this kind of conflict by recognizing the legitimacy and jurisdiction of indigenous local government. It is important to recognize, however, that like autonomy, self-determination at the level of the community fits comfortably within a Mexican federalist tradition historically defended by indigenous peoples (Guardino 1996; Mallon 1995). While they are now part of the pan-indigenous movement's slogan, these demands nevertheless are essentially part of the Mexican tradition, too. By no means do they suggest separation and radical difference from the rest of Mexico. This is made very clear in the San Andrés accords: "The exercise of autonomy by indigenous peoples will contribute to the unity and democratization of national life, and will strengthen the sovereignty of the country" (Acuerdos sobre derechos... 1997,13).

The larger version of indigenous autonomy includes an expanded understanding of territory that goes beyond the community. This is more problematic, not only because Indian and mestizo share the same spaces, but also because Mexico's indigenous (and peasant) peoples identify most closely with their home community, their *pueblo*. Legally, it is the pueblo that holds title to communal or ejido land and,

culturally, the pueblo is who a people are. This identification with the community has not prevented indigenous peoples from forming regional associations united by a common language or cause, but the community is strong enough to make it the primary identification, before all else. Even in an indigenous movement like the Consejo Guerrerense with a decade of regional, national, and international experience a strong tendency remains to privilege one's own pueblo over the larger movement. (The organization of "Zapatistas" from many different pueblos and ethnic groups in Chiapas, and under very difficult conditions, is a remarkable accomplishment, given the status of the pueblo in Mexico).The concept of "indigenous territory" is more foreign to the Mexican context (though, again, the Yaqui in Sonora are an exception), and is vaguely defined in the San Andrés Accords: "All indigenous people are located in a territory that covers the total habitat that indigenous peoples occupy or use in some manner. The territory is the material base of their reproduction as a people and expresses the indissoluble union of man-land-nature" (Acuerdos sobre derechos 1997, 14).

I will back up a little at this point. I want to be clear about what I am calling "the indigenous movement," which really emerged in the wake of the Zapatista uprising in 1994 and came together most forcefully during and immediately after the consultations that led to the formulation and signing of the San Andrés Accords. Before these events, there existed (and continue to exist) various regional associations of indigenous peoples—like the one in Guerrero I will discuss in more detail below—that had successfully mobilized communities around economic and political demands. The demand for "autonomy" was not explicit, though it was always implied in the variety of projects these organizations advanced. In the municipality of Juchitán, for example, in the state of Oaxaca, a local Zapoteco political organization built an

alliance with workers and students to win control of the municipal government in 1981 (de Gyves 1999). In 1983, the Yaqui Tribe drew up its own tribal development plan and began to solicit funding for it from the federal government; by 1989, the tribe was in charge of administering federal resources according to tribal needs (Molina 1999). And in Guerrero in 1991, several Nahua towns united to oppose, successfully, a proposed dam that would have flooded their homes and lands and a 3-thousand-year-old Olmec site (Díaz de Jesús and de Jesús Alejandro 1999). These are only a few examples of the kind of indigenous mobilization that has long been a way of life in communities and regions across the country.

In a 1994 declaration, the emerging national indigenous movement called "autonomy" the basis of a new relationship between Indian peoples and Mexican society ("La autonomía como nueva relación . . ." 1994). Signed by thirteen indigenous organizations from the states of Guerrero, Chiapas, Michoacán, Sonora, Veracruz, and Oaxaca, the declaration asserted that Indian peoples needed to participate fully in public policy decisions in order to solve the problems of their communities: "We want to control the affairs of our communities and peoples, but we also want to to participate in the political, economic, social and cultural life of our regions, our states, and of the entire country." Acknowledging the lack of a concrete definition of autonomy, these groups called for a continuing discussion among indigenous peoples about what rights indigenous autonomy would include, and how autonomous governments in communities, municipalities, and regions might be organized and how authorities would be elected. They called, too, for constitutional changes that would recognize indigenous government at the local, municipal, and regional levels, and that would guarantee resources for these governments to design and implement

development projects. Above all, the declaration places indigenous autonomy squarely within the nation:

> Our great political project of autonomy is national. In the first place, it is national because it does not deny nor reject the unity that all of us Mexicans have built throughout our history. We are looking to find a political solution for all within the framework of the integrity of the great Mexican nation. But we believe the political, social, and economic regime that a small group has imposed weakens our unity, because it excludes the majority, devalues our roots, marginalizes the dispossessed, and divides the people. Our autonomy proposes that we establish forms of communal, municipal, and regional self-government, autonomous regions, within the framework of national unity. Therefore, our autonomy is not a separatist proposal, something Indian peoples consider a sterile idea. With autonomy, we want to feel and be real Mexicans, part of one living fatherland that is ours.

This declaration captured the definition of "autonomy" as the San Andrés Accords outlined it a year and a half later. In the Accords, indigenous autonomy includes local governance and the transfer of development moneys from state agencies to indigenous peoples (communities, community associations, municipalities) who will devise and implement the development programs they need. Autonomy also includes state recognition of the jurisdiction of indigenous authorities to settle disputes; community participation in the selection of teachers to oversee education; the promotion of a bilingual and intercultural education; and the guaranteed access to communications media, especially radio stations, by indigenous communities to promote their language and culture. The Accords also make special mention of indigenous women and propose political and constitutional reforms that recognize the right of indigenous women to participate in all levels of government. The application of these proposals, of course, requires political negotiations, legislative changes, new legal codes, institutional changes, and the elaboration of a long list of the specific instances in which indigenous autonomy will operate—none of which has yet taken place. As Rodolfo Stavenhagen (1999) points out, "the subject [of autonomy] has barely begun

to be outlined, and neither the San Andrés Accords [signed by] the EZLN and the federal government, nor the legislative initiative ... based on the Accords ... develop the particulars of a normative autonomy" (17).

The road toward the implementation of this normativity is long and twisting. It passes along its way the thousands of different indigenous communities that form the real and very heterogeneous basis for the indigenous movement in Mexico. In a forum held in Oaxaca in late August 2000, academics and indigenous leaders frankly discussed the status of the movement, its relationship to communities, and its future under a new presidential regime (Sarmiento 2000). What emerged from the discussion was an acknowledgement that the movement continued to be fragmented into regions that were largely isolated from one another. The "movement" was present, but it was in the communities, in community discussions and relations, where it could not always be seen by outsiders. The fact remained, said Francisco López Bárcenas of the Center for Human Rights and Indigenous Culture, that "the problem we will encounter in the local sphere is the strong community identity that favors community autonomy and creates problems for the creation of municipal autonomy and regional autonomy." Another serious problem related to this is conflicts between communities over land. While in Chiapas, because of the special circumstances there, indigenous people talk about regional autonomy, in a state like Oaxaca [and like Guerrero] "it is difficult to have this, since there are many agrarian problems, inter-community conflicts, and difficulties with political parties [which have divided community loyalties]." Reynaldo Miguel García of the University Human Rights Workshop of Oaxaca, insisted with others that organizations were not the answer but that "it will have to be the communities themselves that provide the solution to the problems [indigenous people face]."

The history of the cooptation of indigenous organization leaders by the state makes organizations sometimes act as obstacles to the exercise of local self-determination. Still, as Raúl Gatica of the Popular Indigenous Council of Oaxaca countered, the new political situation may make it possible "to build power that is more regional, state-wide ... it is necessary to transcend local politics" (Sarmiento 2000). All agreed that there was a lack of indigenous leadership at the state and national levels, but they asked how they could join forces to arrive at a national dialogue where distinct positions were voiced and respected, with the idea to conquer this space for indigenous peoples. For some, the hope lay in strengthening the community base, while for others it lay in the organizations that act as the vanguard of the movement, providing its leadership and many of its best strategies. There are risks involved at both the community and organizational level for the movement, but a strengthening of both levels appears to be crucial for the advancement of indigenous demands. In sum, the "indigenous movement" appeared fragmented and still incipient even in August 2000, not yet a national force—though with a solid foundation in the San Andrés Accords and in the varied leadership representing indigenous organizations. It remains fervently nationalistic, not separatist, but it advocates for the specific rights of Indians to maintain cultures and traditions that are different from, but also constitute the roots of, Mexican culture. It is a not an easy position in which to be.

Creating an Uneasy Place for Indians

> I think that autonomy is being done, whether we like it or not, this is being carried out. It's the only solution for the time to come, the way things are going, the era of community autonomy has to return, to do things according to [our] own custom.
>
> ---Bruno Plácido of the policía comunitaria, *El Sur*, 15 September 1997
>
> [The Consejo is] an organization that is not of the PRI, it's not a part of the government. It is an organization that has a certain amount of

> autonomy...no, not a certain amount, we have complete autonomy, an organization independent of the government.
>
> --- "Roberto," Consejo Guerrerense director (author interview, 27 January 2000)

The Consejo Guerrerense has created a space for itself within the political system that illustrates how the new indigenous peoples movement incorporates contraditory elements in a pragmatic approach to the state. The group brings together both a new indigenous identity politics and traditional peasant demands, uniting in one move a focus on international human rights discourse and local subsistence agriculture. It is a group that consistently refers to the past in order to make claims on the present. It declares its autonomy from the government while relying heavily on state funding for its basic operation. And it insists on the codification of a new state-Indian relationship in law while nevertheless making direct, personalistic appeals for assistance to presidents and state governors. In the rest of this chapter I will discuss the goals and actions of the Consejo, mostly from the perspective of its directors in Chilpancingo, but also from the perspective of some of the women and men who came to the Consejo for community support. While this chapter is largely descriptive, the following chapter provides an analysis of the group's strategies, placing them in the context of state development policy in the years of the PRI's gradual decline.

The 1991 Manifesto

The Consejo's constituent assembly on 14 September 1991 drew up the group's statement of purpose, which is a good place to start my own discussion of the Consejo's goals. The manifesto provides a touchstone for evaluating all that comes later, and it helps to frame the Consejo's fundamental reasons for being.

Indigenous peasant groups, as I discussed in Chapter Two, dominated the assembly. They listed their grievances and made proposals for change that the Consejo

would continue to emphasize in the following years. Among them were denunciations of "atrocities" committed by municipal presidents, as well as a lack of attention to the basic needs of communities; the exploitation of peasants by unscrupulous middlemen; the over-exploitation of forests; absentee teachers in remote communities; electoral fraud; and cholera epidemics ("Constitución del Consejo," 1991). In the spirit of opposition to the "500 Years" celebration, indigenous peasant representatives also called for a movement that would unite all Mexicans: workers, youth, women, union members, and political parties. But these other groups were not well represented at the assembly and never would participate in the Consejo Guerrerense, which would remain devoted to the needs of peasant communities.

The manifesto the constituent assembly wrote makes an explicit connection between these community needs and indigenous rights in its list of the Consejo's goals. At the top of the list is the self-determination of peoples, followed by respect for human rights; the rational use of natural resources; "an education in our languages, in accord with the contents and methods of our own culture"; "dignified housing and conditions of life"; "the appropriation of our production processes"; "the construction of roads that will allow Mixtecos and Tlapanecos, communities and ejidos of the Montaña Alta, until now isolated, to improve their communication and transport their agricultural products from the places of origin"; "the liberty of all our indigenous brothers: men, women and children, peasants imprisoned in the state without bail, and for the right we have to defend ourselves in our languages and according to our customs, a right recognized in ILO Convention 169 enacted by the federal executive in September 1990"; "a regional rural development with the effective participation of ejidatarios, comuneros and small producers that takes into consideration better guaranteed prices, technical support, financing, and respect for the possession, use and

expansion of their agricultural boundaries, as well as the diversity of cultivated crops in accord with their interests"; "no conditions placed on public assistance"; and "that the state legislature establish the necessary laws for the implementation of all parts of Convention 169."

The form of the list suggests that for the Consejo there has never been a distinction between basic peasant needs and indigenous rights. The definition of self-determination in the manifesto reinforces this impression. Self-determination, it reads, "implies the inalienable right to our territories and the exclusive use of resources, both those found outside and within [these territories]; the right we have to elect our legitimate representatives according to our customs and traditions; the right to the application of justice according to our customs; the right to conserve our own worldview, our language, our forms of social and labor organization, and educational processes and what we understand by development, understood as everyone's right, not just those privileged by wealth." This last point is emphasized by the promise that "we will also fight, organization by organization, town by town, region by region, so that the government will provide us the productive and social infrastructure it provides to mestizo towns and to those who supposedly generate wealth in this country, the rich." In other words, indigenous rights recognized in ILO Convention 169 (whose fulfillment is demanded again at the very end of the manifesto) are realized when basic peasant needs are met. A new claim to identity as indigenous in no way takes the place of older peasant claims, especially when we realize that both are literally grounded in a claim to land, or "territory," in indigenous movement discourse.

Martin Equihua, a founder and later director of the Consejo who was also a leader in a regional peasant organization (the Alianza de Organizaciones Campesinas Autonomas de Guerrero) stressed the compatibility of the two kinds of claims in a

report to the Alianza at the end of 1991 or beginning of 1992 ("Informe a la Asamblea," n.d.).[2] Equihua wanted to assure the Alianza's members that their participation in the Consejo Guerrerense in no way compromised their focus on peasant demands. It only added to what they already did: "Since the end of 1990, there was the insistence to take up again the indigenous element as one focus of the struggle and of our organization." The Alianza had to define its own position vis-á-vis the 1992 celebrations, Equihua writes, and towards this definition he participated in the formation of the Consejo Guerrerense. But, he writes, "it is not just an indigenous movement, but it aspires to be an open space for a democratic convergence of rural and urban sectors, taking advantage of the historical moment of '92, which is why it is called the Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena." He is careful to tell Alianza members why their participation in the Consejo is not a bad thing (which is different from telling them why it is a good thing):

> It is not about substituting either the procedures for negotiation nor the specific demands of the sectors. And much less to create structures above or parallel to those of the [Alianza's] organizations. Instead, it attempts to offer solidarity to those who need it and to take up again historical or general demands that many times we forget, like a rejection of the external debt, respect for indigenous cultures, self-determination of peoples, respect for human and political rights, etc.

Equihua's report is interesting for a couple of related reasons. It assures a peasant constituency that an "indigenous" movement is not to be feared, but welcomed, as a strategic option. And it suggests that this peasant constituency—which it is clear includes *indigenous* peasant groups—still considered itself peasant first and indigenous second, if it considered itself "indigenous" at all.[3] Equihua mentions the continuation of the Alianza's specific sectoral demands, for example, but he mentions "indigenous" only once and in a list of things "that many times we forget." According to Equihua, not only was an indigenous movement perfectly compatible with

a peasant organization, but it would subordinate itself to issues that were essentially peasant issues. While this characterization of the movement was not exactly true, as the Consejo's manifesto demonstrates with its repeated references to indigenous self-determination and ILO Convention 169, it does define the almost exclusively *peasant* demands the Consejo would bring before government officials in the following years. Nevertheless, indigenousness as a strategic group identity would always be important.

The Past in the Present

The Consejo's manifesto defines indigenous in historical terms that suggest a continuity with the past. It is a past that continues even in the modern state, characterized as the "colonial capitalist system that never brought respect for the culture of our peoples, nor respect for human rights" ("Constitución del Consejo," 1991). There is a message for contemporary political authorities that emphasizes a close connection with the past: "To the King of Spain and all the Latin American presidents: don't talk about us to make yourselves feel like humanitarians, just give us back what you haven't paid us for 500 years." In a later document, the Consejo emphasizes again how the historical continuity of oppression informs their movement today: "The movements of Independence, of Revolution, official indigenismo, have done little or nothing for the justice of Indian peoples; national states have wanted to "integrate" them, although the attempt to exterminate them hasn't been lacking, imposing on [Indians] the loss of their historical memory ("Consejo Guerrerense," 1992). And, this oppression of indigenous peoples has had economic consequences for *everyone* in Latin America, since "with the resources stolen from these vast territories was developed the material wealth of the current European powers, and the mechanisms of this theft continue today, with more "modern" methods like the external debt, that

rises in Latin America to the incredible figure of $450 billion dollars" ("Consejo Guerrerense," 1992).

This is language that exposes the lie of modernity's supposed break with a brutal past and suggests that while the state's means of exploitation may have changed over time, they have not changed very much. The Consejo's language of historical continuity has something in common with theories of internal colonialism that explain racial oppression as the result of the continuation of colonialist economic relations (Omi and Winant 1994, 44; Wade 1997, 64). But as Peter Wade points out, a theory of internal colonialism in Latin America reduced ethnic identities to "the mere products of economic relations; culture as a value in its own right, with which poeple might mobilize, define themselves and come into conflict, was not really embraced" (1997, 66). For the Consejo, the revitalization of an ethnic identity is as important as economic justice—the two actually go together: "The struggle for the right of [Indian] peoples to decide their own destiny, within the framework of their culture; to reinterpret their history and to strengthen their identity cannot be an isolated struggle from the one that involves the conquest of better living conditions" ("Consejo Guerrerense," 1992). Like the group's slogan, the idea of historical continuity includes not only the continuity of economic exploitation but also of an Indian identity, both of which have changed over time while retaining a core element from the past.[4] This "core element" includes a religious connection to the land and the indigenous languages that express a community's worldview. The Consejo's definition of this indigenous identity, however, is a very contemporary phenomenon, closely linked to the construction of a modern political movement.[5] The interpretation of Indian history and identity is a key part of making claims on the present, and for "the conquest of better living conditions."

A letter to President Carlos Salinas de Gortari from Tlapaneco communities in the Montaña, who participate in the Consejo Guerrerense, relies on such an interpretation of the past that includes the present. It is another example of what I am calling an indigenous pragmatism that plays fast and loose with definitions of Indians, the nation, and the state. At issue in the letter are the Salinas government's changes to agrarian reform Article 27 of the Constitution that went into effect in 1992 (the letter is dated 30 April 1992). For these communities, they write, the original Article 27 "protects and shelters us, the Indigenous, in our Land. [You] are going to end the right and the guarantees that we Indigenous have to defend our lands." The letter then makes reference to 500 years of continuous exploitation, with no distinction between colonial New Spain and independent Mexico: "We also want you to know about the 500 years of resistance against the Conquest of the Spaniards; there is no difference between this and the change made to Article 27." What's more, "our Government of the Republic already knows very well how the Spaniards acted, because You now want us like slaves again." In other words, according to this polemic, not only is the modern, Mexican government acting like an old colonial power, but the Mexican state remains a distant colonial power far removed from the nation it claims to represent. Still, these indigenous communities are writing to defend a Constitution intimately associated with the *Revolutionary* Mexican state (a very modern concept) and, tellingly, close the letter with the slogan used in all official correspondence since the Revolution: Sufragio Efectivo. No Reeleccion. Effective Suffrage. No Reelection.

So, the Tlapaneco writers of this letter suggest that the modern nation-state project is a failure because the so-called modern state continues to act like the Spanish king and his nobility, treating them like subjects and not citizens. At the same time, the writers portray themselves as defenders of the true nation-state, that really exists,

embodied in the highest law of the land (a modern constitution, no less), and they place their signatures and fingerprints under the power of the state's own slogan. Their interpretation of Article 27, however, defies the official phrasing, which has always mentioned protecting "the lands of indigenous groups," but never their "Land," which the Constitution makes clear belongs to the nation. The letter expresses allegiance to and identity with a modern nation-state and its revolutionary ideals, but then asserts difference from this nation-state by claiming a geographical space separate from it. Just as the modern nation-state appears to be both a failure and a success, indigenous peoples appear to be both physically apart from and a part of the same nation-state. The Tlapaneco communities represented in this letter are not just unhappy with the current government for betraying its revolutionary legacy. Like the national indigenous movement I discuss above, they are asserting an in-between status that is uncomfortable for modern ideas of nation and citizenship, *even though* the language indigenous peoples use to assert this status is distinctly modern.[6]

"No political conditions placed on public assistance": Negotiating a relationship with the State

By early 1992, the Consejo had sent funding proposals to the INI and SEDESOL (the Secretaría de Desarrollo Social, under which the INI was located) for a justice commission and for basic operating costs. It was already negotiating its position between autonomy and dependency on government assistance. It was also already acting as a broker between communities and the government by bringing community demands for services to the attention of a variety of federal and state agencies. This combined role of client and broker would continue to define the Consejo in the years to come.

Nineteen ninety-two was the year of the Consejo's national debut. The key moment of that year was a national march on Mexico City in October, in which the Consejo participated with groups from around the country. The public goal of the march was to protest the Columbus quincentennial, though the ultimate goal was to meet with the President to present their grievances to him in person. On 13 October, the marchers managed to have this personal meeting with Salinas, who promised that his government would consider their demands in a series of meetings with INI and SEDESOL held over the following two days. The Consejo listed their constituents's needs at these meetings: support for production (fishing, apiaries, corn, coffee); road construction (the government agreed to study the reasons for the suspension of construction, for example); and infrastructure (drinking water systems, electricity, roads, hospitals, homes). Government agencies promised more studies and agreed to continue to meet with the Consejo to resolve these issues ("Como resultado," 1992).

For the Consejo's directors, this series of meetings took on the status of a promise made to them by the President and his proxies. More than an institutional agreement, it was understood as a statement of personal honor by Salinas that his government would fulfill what it had said it would fulfill. The Consejo consistently favored this kind of direct appeal to high-level authorities that bypassed regular institutional and bureaucratic channels—a form of appeal characteristic of clientelism and quite "regular" in Latin America.[7] As part of this strategy, the Consejo appealed to the political leadership's sense of (manly) honor to fulfill its promises. When these promises went unfulfilled, as they did in many cases, the Consejo would mobilize its membership for another demonstration whose goal, again, was a personal meeting with the man in charge, either the President or, more often, the Governor of Guerrero.

This personalistic appeal, however, was always combined with an insistence that the government codify and institutionalize its relationship with indigenous peoples. Constant references to ILO Convention 169, Article 4 of the Constitution (which recognizes Mexico's pluricultural composition), and, later, to the San Andres Accords, demonstrate this. Like the indigenous movement in general, the Consejo has long insisted that these legal statements and agreements must be codified in Mexican law if a new state-indigenous relationship is to be made a reality. It is not that the Consejo has decided that until this new reality comes the group must continue to make extra-institutional appeals, as if a personalistic relationship precedes an institutionalized one in time (as in the modernist conception of the state). In the Consejo's documents and in my conversations with directors there is the assumption that both kinds of relationships exist together in time and, more importantly, that both serve the interests of the group's member communities without any contradiction between them. This is another way the Consejo confounds modern evolutionary assumptions about the state and its relationship to its citizens. The modern ideal of the universalist, dispassionate state is *not* at odds with the traditional, particularistic state relegated, supposedly, to the past. There is room for both in the Consejo's perspective.

For example, a 12 February 1993 letter from the Consejo to COPLADEG, the Planning Committee for Development in the State of Guerrero, follows proper institutional channels. COPLADEG is the agency in charge of distributing federal funds in Guerrero for all community projects and the Consejo wrote its letter to complain that, to date, nothing had been done to follow up on the agreement made with Salinas in October 1992. Meanwhile, another letter, dated 31 May 1993, is addressed to Salinas himself to protest the lack of institutional attention to their demands, and it emphasizes honor and trust:

> In October 1992 we expressed our needs (*carencias*) to you and we asked for your intervention to provide a solution. We are convinced you spoke to us truthfully. We didn't sign papers. We believed in your word.Don't betray our trust. We have acted and continue to act prudently, as you asked us to, in state politics; it is hard to expect more. (underlined in the original)

This letter continues with an invitation to the President to attend the Consejo's Congress in September, along with a request that he help with the Congress's costs.

From the beginning, financial webs connected the Consejo with the government and with the communities it served. An emphasis on personal ties to officials complemented the group's financial dependence on the agencies the officials represented. After the October 1992 march on Mexico City, the Consejo continued to meet with government agencies to follow up on the demands the group had presented to the President. It acquired an official status as an "asociación civil" in early 1993 (equivalent to non-profit status in the United States), which facilitated the transfer of government funds to the Consejo; already in 1992, though, the Consejo received grants from the INI to pay its eight or nine directors (about 400 pesos each, every two weeks—the equivalent of about $50 U.S.). And the Consejo in 1992 had already assumed the role of an administrative agency to channel the many demands community members brought on a daily basis to its office in Chilpancingo.

The group's role as a broker between the state and communities continued in 1993, with the INI promising in January to give the Consejo a total of $120 000.00 pesos for the year, which included salaries for directors and money to cover the rent of the office space. This money came with the condition that the Consejo would provide the INI with reports on all its activities, "so that INI can be informed and, if needed, provide an opinion on a possible reorientation of these activities" ("Convenio de concertación," 1993, 4).[8] The other condition was that the Consejo was responsible for finding alternative funding sources nationally and internationally, since the INI was

to "gradually reduce the financial support for the execution of its projects" ("Convenio de concertacíon, 1993, 4). Throughout 1993 the Consejo was especially anxious to secure funding for its State Congress of Indigenous Peoples in September. The 1992 Congress had been a success because attendance by community members had exceeded expectations and this show of support had helped to raise the political profile of the Consejo in Guerrero. Minutes from meetings of the directors in 1993 reveal their central concern with the upcoming Congress, even as they also continued to meet with government agencies regarding the demands made in Mexico City in 1992.

The trouble was that these meetings appeared to be endless and did not appear to achieve very much on the ground. Part of the trouble was due to the kaleidoscopic nature of the bureaucracy responsible for satisfying indigenous peoples needs, which included agencies as diverse as the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources (SARH), the Ministry of Planning, Budget and Urban Development (SEPPDU), the Ministry of Communications and Transportation (SCT), the State Health Service, the Ministry of Fisheries, and Pronasol, the federal government's umbrella program for development coordinated by SEDESOL. While there was coordination among them, and each one was responsible for a separate aspect of community development, there was also enough overlap to confuse responsibilities. So, for example, there was one agency in charge of building preschools, but another in charge of primary and secondary schools. One agency was in charge of road maintenance in one region, while another agency took responsibility for this work in another area, and Pronasol took charge in yet other cases.

In one meeting, the state branch of SARH reported that it had received 51 solicitations for support that required the participation of four different government agencies. Each of these solicitations was going to need community approval and

technical studies done that would confirm project viability (communities would need to contact yet another agency to fund these studies) ("Minuta de Acuerdos," 1993). Meanwhile, community petitions for services like health centers were held up because they had been filed incorrectly. And the Consejo was going to have draw up technical proposals for community electrification on its own, since the Federal Electricity Commission had neither money nor technicians to do this work.

"Give me what belongs to me": Reconciling dependence and autonomy, universalism and particularism

The Consejo's frustration with a situation in which the group had achieved some measure of success as an official "interlocutor" without therefore being able to move the government toward concrete action finally reached a breaking point at the end of August 1993, when the Consejo's directors and more than 150 members took over the INI's central offices in Mexico City. At eight in the morning of 30 August, the Consejo Guerrerense took over the INI building, locking out workers who arrived later that day and paralyzing the agency's regular operations. According to the minutes, the building was finally "liberated" at 6:30 that evening ("Minuta de la reunion," 1993). For those ten and a half hours, the Consejo aired its frustrations and made more demands on the government, while INI officials expressed their frustrations and insisted that the Consejo follow proper procedures. The Consejo's frustration with the government demonstrated the group's strong sense of entitlement to the services it demanded; it is this sense of entitlement that reconciles the group's dependence on government support with its assertion of autonomy. This sense of entitlement also reconciles simultaneous universalistic and particularistic appeals to the state. The takeover is a good example of how *both* the Consejo and the state insist on confusing universalistic and particularistic ideals, even though it is clear that, in the end, the

state—the INI—does not "get" indigenous peoples and their demands at all. My source for the following discussion is the INI minutes of the meeting that took place during the takeover between the Consejo's directors and INI officials, including Guillermo Espinosa Velasco, the Director General himself.

What is most remarkable about this meeting is the degree to which the Consejo and the INI did not understand each other. Martin Equihua informed the INI that the takeover was the result of the lack of response by federal and state agencies to the demands presented to the President on 13 October 1992. The Consejo's demands today, Equihua said, were for funds for the group's upcoming Congress, followed by the fulfillment of the 1992 obligations made to them. They wanted to meet with the governor of Guerrero and with the heads of the all the agencies in charge of development. They also wanted to discuss the establishment of a special fund for indigenous peoples in Guerrero. Marcelino Díaz de Jesus expressed his frustration that even simple requests for a typewriter were not heard, and another director said that "they have waited a long time, that the years pass and they don't have roads, that there aren't resources for social services, that they are tired of promises, and that they [the agencies] should abide by the President's word" ("Minuta de la reunion," 1993, 2).

Throughout the meeting, the Consejo's directors brought up "new" demands that were outside of the 1992 agreement they had come to discuss, something that Espinosa obviously found quite irritating. Equihua began the meeting by summarizing the projects currently in progress, stressing that they were not enough and that the Consejo had exhausted its appeals to all the government agencies in charge. When an INI official then read out loud the agreement reached with the President and the advances made since that meeting, the Consejo's directors told him to stop; they knew that document very well and that it was not why they were there, anyway. A Consejo

director admitted that they continued to add new demands, making it appear that nothing advanced, but he added that "government authorities have no sensitivity toward the demands of indigenous peoples, that there is discrimination and a paternalist attitude" ("Minuta de la reunion," 1993, p. 3). Another Consejo director emphasized that bringing up these additional demands was justified because they had been backlogged for decades. He added that a dam in Chilapa had not been completed because the community needed a geologist and technicians. The INI Director General responded by insisting that the Consejo not continue to add and discuss demands that were not part of the original agreement. In response, "Julieta" asked that a schoolhouse be built in Citlaltepetl, while "Ismael" asked that the road between San Miguel Tecuiziapan and San Francisco Ozomatlán be completed. Espinosa insisted that they stop adding additional demands, "since this way the agreements with different agencies are not consolidated, and there is the complaint that in each meeting different petitions are presented" ("Minuta de la reunion," 1993, p. 4).

For the INI, the Consejo's additional demands exceeded the scope of the meeting; they really were excessive. For the Consejo, they were statements of the facts of indigenous lives that the INI needed to address. The meeting minutes read like tragicomedy, with the Consejo presenting one excessive concrete demand after the other and Espinosa repeatedly insisting (with increasing insistence) that they needed to present "concrete proposals" and "concrete documents" (to which "Isaac" responded that Zacapexco and Ahuehuetic, two of the poorest towns in Guerrero, needed gas-powered corn mills). And, of course, the meeting took place under the threat of violence. At the beginning of the discussion, "Mauro" asserted that "the people who have taken possession of the INI building are likely to do anything, because the instructions of President Salinas de Gortari are not carried out" ("Minuta

de la reunion," 1993, 2). Throughout the day, Espinosa repeatedly asked the Consejo why they continued to hold the INI hostage when it was clear they were negotiating in good faith. The takeover was necessary, said the Consejo, as an act of strength—not to mention as a demonstration of the group's level of frustration, something Espinosa could not understand.

In conversations I had in 2000, two Consejo directors described the frustrating situation in which the Consejo has tried to work as a broker between terribly impoverished communities and a state that has selective hearing. After showing me a list of human rights violations he and others had compiled from his travels in the Montaña, "Roberto" explained that

> all of this, you can see, isn't easy...it isn't easy to work here as an organization to put all these cases in order, because it gives you a headache, because on one side there is indignation, and on the other the impotence you feel because the [government] agencies don't take responsibility for finding a solution. There are various cases, the case of Narciso, for example. He's also Tlapaneco. He's been arrested and his two children had to stop going to school. One was in second grade, the other in sixth. The boy and the girl had to stop going because their dad is in jail. And the mom is sick. And the other [child] is full of worms, of amoebas, malnourished. Just really awful conditions. And [because of this] we asked for a pardon, because they deserve it. As decent as the life of a high official is in this country, the indigenous deserve an equally decent treatment. But this doesn't happen. (Author interview, 27 January 2000)

Then he said that the Consejo was about to present a five-year funding plan to the Governor and the state Congress that would label and set aside resources in certain categories—that is, formalizing in law the relationship between the Consejo and the state. Getting this plan approved was not going to be easy, however:

> We know we are going to have to put on demonstrations to extract an agreement. The government doesn't want to make it easy. And we aren't used to asking for charity from the government. We are...we are accustomed to restoring and demanding the dignity of our grandparents. Many of our grandparents died, in a very dignified way. They preferred to die before being subjugated to the Spanish yoke, the Yanqui yoke.

Even as the Consejo attempts to formally institutionalize its role as broker, it needs to confront the state on an extra-institutional basis, taking to the streets to demand the fulfillment of government promises:

> Roberto: When we ask for resources they always tell us, "There isn't anything." They give us the run around, until we demonstrate. For example, in 1999 the governor had authorized the release of $2 750 000. pesos. And they didn't want to free this until we did...we blocked a street behind the Capitol to demand that the resources be handed over immediately.
> Rebecca: And they did it.
> Roberto: And they did it. And that very day. And the checks were ready, they had already been written. It was just caprice. And we put on a good demonstration. And really the proof of this is that the things we get, that the communities get, the organization gets, are not "give me, please." No. Give me what belongs to me, because the public budget for us in this country is ours, it's the people's. It belongs to the whole population. (Author interview, 27 January 2000)

"Néstor," a director who joined the Consejo in 1996 (and who happens to have a degree in sociology), echoed much of what Roberto told me about the difficult circumstances in which the Consejo works, but with more critical self-reflection about the Consejo's role as broker. His comments are worth quoting at length for what they tell us about the Consejo's self-consciously pragmatic relationship with the state:

> We aren't getting to the bottom of what development is...its basis. We are leaving behind something superficial, something visual, something, some visible things. Like the government does. A government likes to build an ejidal center, big, nice, painted all pretty. And with lightbulbs, fancy, see, and expensive. And this is the same thing that the Consejo has been doing for several...really, until now. They are mistakes. We are putting in roads, we're putting in electricity, we're putting in schools, we're asking for town halls, sports fields, and even stores. This, let's say, this isn't crazy, but it isn't development itself. [Author interview, 27 January 2000]

As Néstor pointed out, the Consejo's work has great value for the state:

> In any case, this is good for the government. It's good for the government that we ask for these kind of public works. Because we are doing them a favor. We are including...what it is their responsibility to do: build schools, build roads, build town halls. It is the government's responsibility to do this. And by doing it ourselves we're taking a

> weight off the state. And this is why we want to turn around, turn around our policy towards indigenous towns.

He then explained in more detail the five-year plan Robert had mentioned, telling me that the focus of the plan was on rural infrastructure, like irrigation canals and preparing organic fertilizer to replace dependence on commercial fertilizers. His main point was that in order to talk about development, "to talk about politics, to talk about rights, first the people need to be fed, so that they can think, so that they can have opinions, so that they can contribute ideas and contribue proposals" (Author interview, 27 January 2000). When I asked him where the money would come from to fund this plan, he did not hesitate:

> Well, the government has the responsibility to contribute the resources. It is its responsibility. The federal and state governments.

The Consejo needs state support to implement a development program beyond the state's definition of development. It is an autonomous program entirely dependent on government funding. The Consejo's affiliation with a government ideologically at odds with the movement's own goals is not a contradiction, nor is it an ambiguous position. It is what works.

For Roberto and for Néstor, what sustains and justifies the Consejo's work is their abiding belief that indigenous peoples are entitled to a better life. The constant petitioning of the government for money may be evidence of the Consejo's financial dependence, but it does not affect the Consejo's autonomy, since the group does not go begging; it *demands* what is rightfully theirs, to complete projects *they* have decided need completion. The distinction may seem fine, but it is a perception I encountered often in my discussions with Consejo directors and affiliated community members. Moreover, a sense of entitlement allows the Consejo to make particularistic and personal appeals to officials like Espinosa, the President, and the Governor while

simultaneously demanding the codification of their relationship to the state in law. High officials and political leaders *should* make personal promises to the Consejo that they then fulfill, just as indigenous peoples *should* have a clear, legal relationship to the state in general. Both kinds of relationships can benefit their member communities, and this, ultimately, is the final justification for the Consejo's work.

It is important to note that the state similarly assumes that both types of relationships—particularistic and universalistic—are not only possible, but efficacious. As Néstor noted, official insistence on following proper, institutional procedures acts as an obstacle to real social change, since groups like the Consejo are constantly in meetings with one agency or another, chasing paper along a particular trail. And when the President or the Governor or even the INI Director General personally meets with the Consejo, the ritual of these meetings works to strengthen the individual's central authority in a political system structured by hierarchy and deference. The state actually *encourages* both types of relationships with the Consejo, something that was illustrated during the 1993 INI takeover.

Throughout the meeting that took place during the INI takeover, Consejo directors asked for more flexibility with normative rules, so that their proposals might be accepted without necessarily complying with the INI's requirements. Director General Espinosa responded to these requests by repeating that the Institute was willing to help with their demands by interceding with the various agencies, "but always under the operative and normative scheme of the Institute, because it is not possible to give exceptional treatment to some indigenous peoples to the detriment of others" ("Minuta de la reunion," 1993, 2). Nevertheless, and in the very next sentence, he agreed to give the Consejo $30 000.00 pesos for its Congress. He also personally set up a meeting between the Consejo, the Governor of Guerrero, and the heads of six

different agencies, to be held in Chilpancingo upon the Consejo's return to the state. Clearly, the takeover had achieved something that could not be achieved by properly following institutional procedures. Roberto's story about blocking the street behind the Capitol in Chilpancingo to get development moneys released illustrates the same kind of power granted by the state itself to personalistic and extra-institutional actions by the Consejo. Both the state and the Consejo share an appreciation for a certain kind of political flexibility and pragmatism in their relationship with each other that *benefits* them both, albeit in different ways.

1994 and Beyond: The Consejo carries on

This relationship with the state did not change very much after 1 January 1994, when the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) appeared in Chiapas. What change there was largely came in the form of an increased visibility for all indigenous groups in Mexico, which they took advantage of in March 1994, for example, by marching en masse to Mexico City to meet with President Salinas. While the Consejo took up the EZLN's cause, it did not support its violent means and in fact used the EZLN armed uprising as a foil to legitimize the Consejo's peaceful pursuit of justice for indigenous peoples. The Consejo's focus on indigenous peoples predated the EZLN, of course, which not only appeared later in time, but which did not make the indigenous cause its focus until after many conversations with the long-active national indigenous movement (Ruiz Hernández 1999). The EZLN's high profile made possible the negotiations that led to the signing of the San Andrés Accords, but these agreements were based on demands the indigenous movement—and the Consejo Guerrerense—had been making for several years. The Accords helped to legitimize these demands as the Consejo continued to pursue the program it first outlined in its 1991 Manifesto.

By early February 1994, the Consejo was making plans for another march on Mexico City, whose slogan was: "For Peace and the Dignity of Indigenous Peoples: They are Not Alone!" The reference here was to the EZLN in Chiapas, though the Consejo's public announcement of the march foregrounds old grievances as the main reason for this latest group mobilization: since 1992, the government had not fulfilled its promises to them. This was a march

> for the solution of our demands, and for the recognition of the struggle of the indigenous brothers and sisters of Chiapas, it is a just struggle, because they [are fighting] for the same causes for which we fight. (n.d.)

That the Consejo shared the same causes with the EZLN did not mean, however, that the group shared the same means. The announcement makes this clear:

> In a letter that the brothers and sisters of Chiapas have sent us, they ask us not to leave them alone. We tell them that they are not alone, and that we will continue to organize in a peaceful and legal form, but pressing [our demands] with a good deal of energy.

This same kind of assertion was made later in 1994, in a letter to President Salinas, in which the Consejo's directors reiterate their decision

> to keep our actions within the letter of the law; and that these do not respond to outside interests, but to our own, decided in our regional and state governing bodies. (letter dated 5 September 1994)

The Consejo had always proclaimed its respect for the law, so these assertions were not new, but they meant something different in a situation of armed conflict with an indigenous guerrilla group. Given the Mexican government's long history of violent repression of even peaceful groups (the 1968 Tlatelolco massacre of students being only the most well known national example), the Consejo's declarations of legality were especially prudent in a climate in which the state really was under siege. But they did not protect the group. On 14 September 1994, as the Consejo's directors and more than one hundred community members were marching in central Chilpancingo to

demand the release of government funds, mounted and riot police surrounded the marchers, running their horses into the crowd, hitting people with their clubs, and kicking them with their spurs. The attack left up to 50 people injured, some very badly (Monge 1995).[9] Even the Consejo's obvious signs of patriotism could not protect them:

> They fell on us savagely, even as we found ourselves totally unarmed, singing our National Anthem with our brass bands, and raising, as a last resort, our Mexican Flag. ("Declaración del Consejo," n.d.)

After all of the Consejo's protests in the capital that had proceeded without incident, this explosion of state violence was a reminder that the government was edgier than usual now that the Zapatistas had appeared. In a deeper way, it was a reminder of the savagery of the modern state, something the Consejo could see clearly.[10] This violence was also one of the more obvious signs that the state could not make sense of an indigenous movement that simultaneously declared its allegiance to Mexico and its right to express its difference from Mexicans.[11] In response, the Consejo would continue to be very clear that it worked within the law, and it demanded that the state work within the law, too.

The Consejo would also, however, continue to make personal appeals to the President. Indeed, the 1994 march on Mexico City had as its central goal a meeting with Salinas ("Boletin de Prensa No.2," 1994). After meeting first with INI Director General Espinosa to resolve several issues, including federal approval of a state development fund for indigenous peoples and 23 million pesos to the Consejo for disbursement to communities, the Consejo met with the President himself. According to Marcelino Díaz de Jesús, the Consejo needed the President's signed blessing of the deal reached with the INI as a form of protection against the governor of Guerrero. They would not leave Mexico City without it (Hernández 1994). Salinas met with the

Consejo on 9 March and signed the agreements reached with the INI. The Consejo returned to Guerrero and a few months later, of course, the governor would send out his police to beat them up.

Not only did Salinas's signature NOT protect the Consejo from Governor Figueroa (whose father, as governor of Guerrero in the 1970s, had presided over the "dirty war" in the state against supposed guerilla sympathisers), but it did not guarantee the fulfillment of the agreement reached with the INI. By October 1994, the Consejo was back in Mexico City, this time on a hunger strike to demand the release of promised funds. Cirino Plácido wrote a letter to President Salinas during the strike, to remind him of the agreement he had signed. It is a letter that speaks about the Consejo's sense of respect, honor, and its frustration with personal promises that go unfulfilled:

> Mr. President,
> We send you greetings of hunger from our strike inside the United Nations offices. It is a hunger strike because they beat us on 14 September. Because the agreements you signed on 9 March go unfulfilled. Do you remember? It was the time you said again that your compatriots the Indians, that is, ourselves, could not continue to be marginalized and that we deserved respect. Do you remember? Because respect is what we want; respect for what we signed, respect for our organization, for our rights, for our integrity. You in front of us, we in front of you, talking in our languages and in yours about water, clinics, about roads, our right, and about democracy. You came down. Hugged Rosa and Doña Alicia, with their beautiful embroidered skirts, for the photo, and then you said that about respect and the rest. Do you remember?
>
> No, Mr. President! This is wrong. If you don't abide by your word to us, which lesser functionary would feel obliged to do so? Perhaps the functionaries of the useless INI? (letter dated 14 October 1994)

Cirino's letter demonstrates, again, the Consejo's consistent return to personalistic appeals, but it does so with a clear consciousness of how such an appeal can be used more often for the benefit of the state's authority than for the group's

constituent communities.[12] The Consejo *knows* the President uses Indians for photo opportunities and flowery discourses on democracy. The Consejo *knows* how marginalized the INI is within the state bureaucracy. This is the situation in which the group has always found itself and in which it has attemped to make the state do what a state ought to do for its citizens. After 72 hours, the strike was called off because the government had agreed to meet again and sign yet another agreement with the Consejo to disburse funds to the group and to get the state development fund for indigenous peoples started. But, of course, by this late date Salinas was already on the way out (and soon would not even be in the country), and Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León would take over as President in January. Zedillo would not honor Salinas's signature and as a result the state development fund the Consejo was especially anxious to see put in place would remain a part of the movement's demands, never put into practice.

The Consejo wrote an angry declaration to the Zedillo government, reminding the new president of Salinas's promise to them. This time, however, the group framed the betrayal of this promise not in personal terms of dishonor and the disrespect *of the Consejo,* but in terms of a violation of international human rights. According to the Consejo, the government signed the 9 March agreements "based on the international treaties in effect in Mexico—Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization and the Fund for the Development of Indigenous Peoples in Latin American and the Caribbean" ("Por incumplimiento," n.d., 1). Essentially, they wrote, ignoring Salinas's promise to set up a state development fund stipulating the participation of indigenous peoples violated their right to be consulted in any development projects that affected them, a right that both Convention 169 and the Indigenous Fund (as they refer to it) upheld.

This was the first time the Consejo mentioned international law as the basis of its many agreements with the government. Convention 169 has always had an important place in the Consejo's discourse, of course—and it has served to legitimize the Consejo's work, strengthening the group's sense of entitlement. But it was almost never mentioned in the correspondence with the state or civil society. More common are references to citizenship rights held by all Mexicans, as in this letter to editor of the newspaper, *La Jornada*:

> We went [to Mexico City] to exercise our constitutional rights to public assembly and free expression. We went with the Constitution in our hand and our feet solidly placed on the asphalt. (15 March 1994)

In the declaration, it is telling that the Consejo makes reference to international law—a universalistic concept—in order to have a very particularistic decision upheld, which the Consejo mentions was "an act of good faith and consent" ("Por incumplimiento," n.d., 2). At the same time, the international law to which the Consejo refers bestows on indigenous peoples a distinct set of rights not available to other Mexicans. This declaration helps to illustrate the "in-between" place occupied by the Consejo. Both the abstracted law and the president's person (at one point the reference is to his *hand*, which *held* the Consejo's list of demands) are equally potent here. And both Mexicanness and something-other-than-Mexicanness are potent identities, existing simultaneously in the same place (which is both a national space and something outside of the nation). This in-betweeness would continue to characterize the Consejo's position through 2000.

From the client's/broker's point of view[13]

From 1995 to 2000, the Consejo Guerrense continued to act as a client and a broker, as it always had. Important new regional movements for autonomy that were connected to the Consejo, like the community police and justice system in San Luis

Acatlán and the declaration of an "autonomous" municipality in Rancho Nuevo de la Democracia, got started in 1995 and remained works-in-progress in 2000, subject to continuing repression by the state. But the group's core work in Chilpancingo—getting government moneys to the communities that needed them—remained unchanged. In this respect, the EZLN had no effect on the group whatsoever. As the Zapatistas increasingly promoted a version of autonomy radically in opposition to the state, rejecting government support, the Consejo continued to mobilize its members to press the government to fulfill its obligations to them. What did members of the Consejo think of this work? Documents, meetings I attended, and conversations I had with individuals suggest that, like the group's public discourse, community members shared similar pragmatic approaches to organizing and to conceptions of autonomy.

A report written by the Organización Campesina Independiente de Comunidades Indígenas(OCICI), a member of the Consejo based in the predominantly Nahua region of Chilapa, helps us to see how members viewed the Consejo's work of shuttling back and forth between presidents and governors and agencies. The report focuses on the marches to Mexico City, beginning in 1992 and ending with the hunger strike in 1994, but also mentions the rallies, the Consejos's state assemblies, and the police brutality suffered in September 1994. They were

> tired of coming and going to government offices carrying papers and more papers, so that they would give us a concrete response to our petitions for drinking water, the opening and maintenance of roads, community electrification, construction of town halls, municipal fields, brass bands, and irrigation canals for productive projects,

but they did it over and over again ("Balance del Primer Informe," n.d.). Triumphant, the report concludes this fatiguing list of interminable bureaucracies and shocking violence, by proclaiming that

> This is how we managed to get our demands met; the infrastructure projects and the services that our towns now have, made possible through the work of the Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena, carry blood, sweat, and tears. It wasn't easy! But we did it!

Given the basic subsistence and survival needs of many indigenous communities that Roberto and Nestor discussed with me (and that I saw), and given the government's long history of neglect in the countryside, the OCICI's feeling of triumph—even after all the run-around—makes a lot of sense. This was the first time they had seen any kind of improvement in their towns.

One day while I was hanging around the Consejo's offices in Chilpancingo, I witnessed the state's ability to make life very hard for those whose life is already hard. It was also an occasion to witness how the Consejo can ease, without solving, the difficulty for peasants navigating a complicated bureaucracy to get projects completed at home. I could see why, despite its obviously vulnerable position as state client and broker forced to "carry papers and more papers," the Consejo really *worked* for people. Two Tlapaneco men had arrived from Las Palmas, about 9 hours away in the municipality of Tlacoapa, to present an accounting for a project they had completed with money the Consejo had secured from the state. Accompanied by "Adan," a Consejo director (also Tlapaneco), we all went to the County Courthouse, where a woman in an office reviewed their paperwork; Adan said she had a reputation for being strict. One of the problems for communities under state review like this is that they cannot present bills for materials they have used; they can present receipts, but these are not the same as bills, or *facturas*, which are official documents used only by certain licensed businesses (and there are not many of these in remote rural areas). Communities must also have all signatures and fingerprints in order. It turned out that there were two or three signatures missing from the salary reporting forms. Worse still, the state government had in its records that the project was related to road improvement,

when, in fact, the community had used the funds to bring piped water to their homes. Luis checked his own records and saw that the funds had been issued explicitly for road work.

The trouble was that Las Palmas had proposed the road improvement project a year earlier, in February, during the dry season, but had not received the money until half a year later, when it was already raining. Not able to work on the road when it was under water, they decided to use the money to put in pipes to carry water, for the first time ever, to their homes (and there was a lot of water to pipe in during the rainy season). The state, in this case not being as flexible as Las Palmas (though we have seen that the state can be very flexible), was not going to accept this situation and, moreover, it could get the Consejo in trouble. So, Adan and the men decided that what they needed to do was prove somehow that Las Palmas had really used the state's money to improve a road (they could easily take care of the problem with the signatures).

Coincidentally, in the Consejo's office that same day was another man who was in Chilpancingo to give an accounting of his community's project, which happened to be for road improvement. He had photos. Could the men from Las Palmas buy his photos from him? The man looked nervous. What if he needed the photos to show the government how his community had used the money? Luis told him that since he had the negatives, he could develop more photos here in Chilpancingo and they would give him money to do this. But the man did not understand how he could do this, or he just did not want to give up his photos, and he refused to hand them over. As a result, the men from Las Palmas had to leave Chilpancingo to go back home, get everyone organized to start work on the road, find someone with a camera to take their photo, and then come back to Chilpancingo to hand over their revised documents to the state. It

was going to cost them more time and money (something the Consejo's directors sometimes help out with), but in the end it would work out for Las Palmas and for the Consejo. Without Adan acting to shepherd their case through the appropriate office, speaking and reading Spanish fluently and knowing how the process worked, Las Palmas would probably not have been able to get a second chance to revise its paperwork. More importantly, the community would never have received the funding it did to complete its piped water project in the first place.

It is this kind of practical, very on-the-ground work that draws communities to the Consejo and keeps them within the organization. Directors like Adan and Roberto and Néstor come from the same kind of communities that need projects completed and they travel the regions to tell people how the Consejo can benefit their towns. Or, individuals travel to Chilpancingo to see what kind of help they might get for an urgent need. I heard this story of "first contact" from several men and women I met in the Consejo's offices. "Hermina," for example, had come from Metlapilapa, also in the municipality of Tlacoapa, to give an accounting of monies spent on a stove project. She showed me photos of the adobe stoves, which men in the community had learned to make after attending a workshop in San Luis Acatlán. Sixteen families now had these new, closed stoves with pipes for smoke and places for a pot and a *comal* to cook tortillas—a real improvement on the typical arrangement of three rocks over an open fire.

When I asked Hermina how she had applied for funds for this project, the story she told me reminded me of the eminently pragmatic relationship many community members have with the "indigenous movement." She told me how her husband had fallen down a hill—had almost died, in fact—and had to be in the hospital in Ayutla for two months (author interview, 25 January 2000). The hospital bills had totalled three

thousand pesos (about $300 U.S.), an astronomical sum for most Mexicans. Fortunately, her husband had always helped out "el Partido," so they went to Chilpancingo to see the Partido (she was referring to the Consejo itself) and ask for money to pay his bills. They met with Néstor, who told him the Consejo could not get money for him as an individual, but they could get money for his community. Why didn't he solicit moneys for a canal irrigation project, and why didn't she solicit a stove making project? They followed Néstor's advice and did so. Soon after their return home, they received an "urgent" letter from Néstor on Consejo letterhead requesting their presence in Chilpancingo to pick up the checks for their projects. They had initially come to Chilpancingo asking for $3000. for one man and they left with $42 000. for an entire community. As a result, said Hermina, her entire community "was now with *this* party."

These are projects closely related to a flexible notion of autonomy. Yes, this is an autonomy circumscribed by many external factors, not the least of which is the state's control of essential funding. But for the Consejo—directors and community members—there is autonomy when there is the power to make decisions about (some of) those things that impact a community's life. Given the history of indigenismo and the state's inclination to make decisions for indigenous peoples, the power to make these decisions today for themselves is well appreciated. As "José," a Consejo director, told me, the INI "began because indigenous peoples were being harmed: 'those poor Indians.' And then it decided what indigenous communities needed and should have. This is indigenista policy. The Consejo Guerrerense is an example of an 'indigenous policy,' in which indigenous peoples decide for themselves what they need and how they will carry out their own policies" (author interview, 24 January 2000).

"Isidro" echoed this idea when I asked him what 'autonomy' meant to him. He is one of the leaders of an organization of Nahua towns close to Chilapa that came together in 1999 to form an asociación civil called Seojtli Llankuik ("a new path").[14] Seojtli has participated in the Consejo since then to get projects completed, though individual communities benefited earlier from their participation (Cuamanotepec, for example, was able to build a basketball court in 1994 and electrification in 1995, thanks to support from the Consejo). For Isidro, "autonomy is deciding for yourself what you want to do, as an individual, as a community, and not doing what others, like political parties, tell you to do" (author interview, 10 April 2000). I had met Isidro on a trip to the Mixteco community of Rancho Nuevo de la Democrácia (see below) in December 1999, and then again in Cuamanotepec, at his invitation, to attend a meeting of Seojtli.

At this meeting I heard about the issues these Nahua communities considered most pressing, and I saw what they called *autonomía* in action. High on their list of priorities was the recuperation of their culture and customs, especially the *bandas de viento* (brass bands) and dances (author notes, 7 February 2000).[15] The bands are expensive to equip, dancers need costumes, and for many years now these cultural expressions have not existed. The community members at this meeting also spoke of the importance of continuing to put on fiestas and make offerings at hilltops to honor and propitiate both Catholic saints and the natural forces their tradition recognizes. There was a long and impassioned discussion of these communities's shared history, which they recognized as being at least 500 years old, and of how that history united all of them and should *keep* them united to benefit them all. Their shared culture and history formed the basis for the group's political work, pressuring the municipal government to make funds available for their projects and participating in the Consejo Guerrerense, "the mother of all the organizations" (author notes, 7 February 2000).

It was at this point that the meeting shifted from the poetic language the participants used to discuss their past and their customs, to a concrete language of bureaucracy and forms, as Isidro spoke of the various requirements each community needed to fulfill in order to solicit funding. He reminded them how important it was to know and follow bureaucratic procedures; that this knowledge was as much about their rights as about the projects the communities wanted completed. Isidro is an ambitious man: in a later conversation, he told me that he hoped to increase the size of Seojtli so that in ten years, he guessed, it would be strong and represent most of the Chilapa region. "Little by little," he said (author interview 10 April 2000).

The logic of this kind of regional organization, based as it is on the shared strength of communities to confront a distant and unresponsive municipal government, often leads to the conclusion that what indigenous peoples need are their own municipalities. This is not a new demand, of course, but dates back to the colonial period when different communites vied for *cabecera* status to avoid paying tribute and to be in charge of their adminstrative affairs (Lockhart 1992; Gibson 1964).[16] For Danielle Dehouve, a French ethnohistorian who has been working in Guerrero since 1967, the contemporary indigenous demand for remunicipalization is an interesting repeat of the redefinition of territory that took place in Guerrero in the eighteenth century, when many indigenous towns first petitioned to become *cabeceras* (public lecture, Chilapancingo, 10 february 2000).

The issue of new municipalities dominated community discussions during the Consejo's "Encuentro Intercultural," held in Chilpancingo in April 2000. My conversation with "Librado" helps to illustrate this. He was attending the Encuentro as part of a delegation of Seojtli Llankuik (I had met him earlier in February) and he had just participated in the discussions held in the Nahua tent (different tents for each of the

four ethnicities were set up in Chilpancingo's main square over a long weekend, in front of the Capitol building). I asked Librado what they had talked about and the first thing he told me was about the creation of new municipios, because "municipal presidents don't follow through on what they say they will do" (author interview, 9 April 2000). His community, he said, had been waiting for three years for the municipality to build a road and so far only one kilometer had been completed. Librado showed me the paper and the card the municipal engineer had signed (3 different times!), along with the accompanying signatures and fingerprints of community members in charge of the project—all as proof of the community's responsibility and the municipality's lack of responsibility. Communities wanted more responsive governments and were talking about forming a new municipality in every Communal Lands Commission, each of which is typically located in an old *cabecera*. This was a lot of new municipalities! Oaxaca, of course, has hundreds of municipalities compared to Guerrero's seventy-seven, so there was certainly a precendent to follow, though no one mentioned Oaxaca as an example.

More important for this discussion was knowing that the municipal governments currently in place did not attend to indigenous communities, and that when they did pay attention, it was only very briefly, typically just before an election. Examples of municipal and regional autonomy closer to home that were mentioned at the Encuentro included the "municipality in rebellion" of Rancho Nuevo de la Democracia and the Policia Comunitaria in San Luis Acatlán. Both of these movements actually encompass communities from more than one existing municipality, and they have declared their independence from these existing municipal seats. Rancho Nuevo encompasses communities from the mostly Mixteco and Amuzgo (and some Nahua) municipalities of Tlacoachistlahuaca, Xochistlahuaca, and Metlantonoc. The Policia

Comunitaria is based in the municipality of San Luis Acatlan, but includes communities from Malinaltepec; these are mostly Tlapaneco and Mixteco municipalities, though there are Nahuas here, too (there are Nahuas everywhere in Guerrero, actually, thanks to the Mexica and then Spanish colonization of the region).

Rancho Nuevo declared its independence in 1995 after the municipal president of Tlacoachistlahuaca refused to recognize indigenous community leaders elected by community assemblies and then imposed its own choices; actually, a long list of electoral and economic problems prompted the declaration (Rodríguez W. 1998). For the Policia Comunitaria, which is a regional indigenous justice system based on the reeducation and reintegration of criminals into their communities, the overwhelming issue was the violence that the state did nothing to stop, and that in many cases it actually incited. Banditry was regular and rampant, and the municipal and state governments did not respond to repeated community requests for public security; the communities responded by forming their own regional police force and justice system in 1995 (Gutiérrez 1997; field notes, 31 May 2000).

"A point of equilibrium"

Both the Rancho Nuevo and Policia Comunitaria movements refer to Convention 169 and to the Constitution to legitimize their autonomy from existing state structures. But, like Seojtli Llankuik, these are also movements that respond pragmatically to indigenous communities's long-standing experiences of government neglect. The formation of the Consejo Guerrerense is itself a response to many years of this neglect. As Néstor put it,

> We know that it is the state's responsibility to provide the resources for development, [but] all the resources it provides go to the municipal government and the municipal governments don't attend to [the people]. And that's why it was necessary to create the Consejo Guerrerense. Otherwise, there wouldn't have been any basis for [its]

> creation . . . So, this is why the Consejo Guerrerense emerges, let's say, as point of equilibrium, really.(author interview, 27 January 2000)

A representative of the Policia Comunitaria put it this way:

> The Policia Comunitaria is not about ideology, advisers, or the EZLN. It came out of the needs of the people. It comes from the people, as allowed for in article 39 of the Constitution.[17] (field notes, San Luis Acatlán, 31 May 2000)

Within an environment of long-standing government neglect, the Consejo has used the resources it has available to press for a more responsible state. It makes personal and universal appeals, to presidents and to international law, while following institutional procedures and simultaneously breaking the law by blockading a street or holding a government agency hostage. Resolving these apparent contradictions (which are more apparent than real) is a strong sense of entitlement that runs through the Consejo's documents and in the conversations I have had with the group's directors. Of course, as I discuss in Chapter One, the revolutionary state itself nurtured this sense of entitlement among campesinos, and the Consejo Guerrerense has inherited that legacy—as a *peasant* group—to call the state to account for its treatment of *indigenous peoples.*

The Consejo is a "point of equilibrium," said Néstor. In another place, he referred to the Consejo also as a "bridge for the people with the government." These are images that describe the group's—and the national indigenous movement's—in-between place in Mexico. Both the *essential* Mexican and something-other-than-Mexican, a part of and apart from the nation, revolutionary peasant and post-revolutionary Indian, the Consejo expresses a kind of identity that is difficult to grasp within an ideology (now very out-of-date) of the modern nation-state that emphasizes strict allegiance to and identity with one state and one nation. The Consejo uses a discourse of historical continuity to emphasize an indigenous identity that has roots

deep in the past; this is the basis of an indigenous *difference* from national society today. But even in its strongest challenge to state--claiming 'territory' or the right to their own form of government and justice--the indigenous movement uses nationalistic language shared by the very state the movement challenges. The Consejo, in other words, works with and around, inside and outside, of the old modern/traditional dichotomy that attempts to fix Indians in one place.

At the same time, the state demonstrates its own flexible identity in its relationship with the Consejo, allowing for the intimacy of personal promises at one moment, and then insisting that the group follow institutional procedures in the next. When the Consejo follows these bureaucratic rules, the state drags its feet. When the Consejo erupts in frustration and stages political drama that refuses to be institutionalized, the state responds speedily. And even as the state demands a staid respect for the rule of law, without preferences, it shows its own penchant for political drama that is sometimes cloying (with hugs for Indian women), sometimes brutal. The modern state, in other words, is characterized by multiple and apparently contradictory strategies, too, that are coercive but also permissive.

It is within this context of state action and state policy that the Consejo's strategies must be analyzed, since the group's strategies are necessarily a response to the political environment in which it finds itself. Conversely, the state's strategies in the 1990s are responses to the demands of the increasingly visible indigenous people's movement in Mexico and at the United Nations (see Chapter 5). In the next chapter, I examine critiques of the Consejo by directors and by those outside of the movement, within the context of changing state policies toward peasants and Indians. We can see in these critiques that what I am calling "the Consejo" is, of course, not always a unified movement—just as "the state" is a fictional unity, itself divided by multiple

strategies and goals. But even a fictional unity has real effects on people's lives, and it is these effects ('indigenous movement effects' and 'state effects') that we need to clarify.

Endnotes

[1] The language in the Accords draws primarily on the language in the International Labor Organization Convention 169, on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, which Mexico ratified in 1990. I discuss this convention in Chapter 6.

[2] I believe this document dates from late 1991 or early 1992 because in it Equihua makes reference to the recent formation of the Consejo Guerrerense as well as the 1992 celebrations that have yet to take place.

[3] For example, Equihua specifically names Zanzekan Tinemi and San Luis Acatlan later in the report as active members of the Alianza.

[4] The Consejo's slogan, which is prominent on the group's letterhead and other documents, is: "Arrancaron nuestros frutos...cortaron nuestras ramas...quemaron nuestro tronco...pero no pudieron matar nuestras raices." Translated: "They tore off our fruit, they cut off our branches, they burned our trunk, but they couldn't kill our roots."

[5] Kay Warren (1998) describes a similar process of indigenous identity construction among the Maya in Guatemala.

[6] Repeated in the Consejo's documents are also references to Mexican Independence heroes and phrases, like Morelos's slogan that "real power arises out of the people" ("el poder real dimana del pueblo"), used to justify indigenous autonomy from the state (which uses the same slogans). The indigenous movement and the nation-state speak the same nationalist language.

[7] I discuss this clientelist relationship with the state in more detail in the next chapter.

[8] There is no evidence in the documentation, nor in my conversations with the Consejo's leadership, that this condition was ever taken seriously, however. The INI did gradually stop funding the Consejo's basic operations (salaries, rent, stationery, etc.) soon after 1993, with the result that the agency had even less say in the Consejo's direction (if it ever had much to say). By the end of 1994, Martin Equihua became a PRD federal congressman and gave part of his salary to the group over the next couple of years. In 1997, Marcelino Díaz de Jesús, a Consejo founder from the Alto Balsas region, took Equihua's place as a federal congressman and also gave a substantial part of his salary to fund the group's operations.

[9] The major in command of this police force was never prosecuted for this attack, and he turned up several months later as the officer in command of forces that massacred peaseants at Aguas Blancas in June 1995.

[10] Michael Taussig's discussion of this kind of modern savagery, especially against those imagined to be "savages," inspires this observation (Taussig 1987).

[11] For example, in an announcement of the 1994 march, the Consejo writes that, "We are clear that we want to continue being ourselves, we want to continue being Mexicans, Mexicans but with our own specificities, that is, with autonomy we are not proposing to create a totally independent state within another state" ("Marcha por la paz," n.d.).

[12] That he wrote this appeal while in the United Nations building in Mexico City, indicates Cirino's simultaneous acknowledgement of the importance of international law to protect indigenous peoples from the personal whims of presidents.

[13] I borrow this title from Javier Auyero's essay on client/broker relations in Buenos Aires (1999).

[14] Fourteen communities participate in Seojtli Llankuik. All are satellite communities (*anexos*) of a larger, "head" community (*cabecera*), San Jeronimo Palantla, from which families left to settle its outlying lands.

[15] Participants at this meeting spoke Nahuatl and Spanish, so I could understand. Isidro acted as my Nahuatl translator, too. The *bandas* and *danzas* traditions are shared by Guerrero's four ethnic groups, and each group considers these to be indigenous traditions, which they are, though in their

origins there is a good deal of European tradition, too. They have become indigenous, however, and are another example of the ways in which the distinction between modernity and tradition, indigenous and non-indigenous is not so distinct. In other words, it is a distinction that tells us more about a kind of European wishful thinking than it does about indigenous peoples's lives.

[16] A *cabecera* then was roughly equivalent to a municipal seat now, though there were many more *cabeceras* then than there are municipal seats today. As we saw with San Jeronimo above, however, communities still remember the old *cabecera* status and it continues to have cultural and political relevance.

[17] Article 39 reads: National sovereignty resides essentially and originally in the people. All public power arises out of the people and is instituted for [their] benefit. The people at all times have the inalienable right to alter or modify the form of their government.

Chapter 4: Opportunities and Obstacles: Contextualizing the Consejo Guerrerense's work in the 1990s

The Consejo Guerrerense gained strength and national presence at a time when the PRI was in decline. This was no coincidence. As we saw in Chapter 1, the PRI government's withdrawal from the countryside—a result of the party's strong shift to neoliberal economic policies in the 1980s—meant that peasant groups could no longer appeal to the state for economic assistance as they had before. Indigenous peasant groups like the Consejo turned to the new, international discourse of indigenous rights that emerged in Mexico in the early 1990s to make economic and political demands on the government. Facilitating this turn was the state's own discourse of rights—the result of 20 years of change—that provided an unprecedented opportunity for the Consejo. This new policy was directly connected to neoliberal economics and justified the state's withdrawal from the large social assistance programs that had long characterized it as "revolutionary." The policy represented, too, the serious divisions within the PRI between reformist neoliberals connected to President Carlos Salinas de Gortari (1988-1994) and old-line party officials who benefited from the political use of state welfare programs. But the government's new discourse was also an explicit affirmation of the popular self-determination the Consejo had early on made one of its central goals. From affirmation to real respect was, of course, not usually the path government officials took when it came to the self-determination of popular groups. Nevertheless, I argue that the proliferation of the discourse gave the Consejo a legitimacy that it would not otherwise have had—though not without a cost.

In effect, the "self-determination of indigenous peoples" was defined in a way that legitimated only a particular kind of indigenousness necessarily tied to the local, peasant community. This was the kind of Indian indirectly defined in the criticism by

INI officials, but also by indigenous activists inside and outside of the Consejo, that the Consejo's directors were not representative of indigenous peoples. They were out of touch with an indigenous reality, said the critics, and were more concerned with personal political power than they were with *las bases*. I argue that the basis for this criticism is a preoccupation with keeping Indians in their place. When an indigenous leadership moves easily between the local and the national/global, it disrupts the accepted notion that Indians "really" and exclusively represent only the local. Because this conception of place is intimately connected to a modern/traditional distinction, its disruption demonstrates again how the Consejo's actions *can* challenge the reality of the distinction, even if it does not always do so. But the distinction persists—in part because the Consejo's attention to peasant and cultural issues cannot help but reinforce it—and, as I discuss below, it acts as a serious obstacle to the advancement of a broad indigenous political project.

The Consejo faces a related challenge that a few of its directors openly acknowledge is a real obstacle to the advancement of this larger political vision. While the group's directors may hold on to this vision as a long-term goal pragmatically facilitated by a patron-client/broker relationship, at the local level the pragmatism of a clientelist relationship often is *not* accompanied by a such a long-term political goal. Instead, the pragmatism of community members often means that they see the Consejo as just another patron, like any political party, that hands out favors in exchange for loyalty. This is an issue of the *concientización de las bases* (political consciousness-raising), and it is the hard work that lies ahead still.

The PRI loses power

The first, significant sign that the PRI was in serious trouble on a national scale was when it unofficially lost the presidency in 1988. The internal division within the party that led to the formation of a new opposition party, the Frente Democrático Nacional (FDN, later the PRD), resulted in the most serious challenge to the PRI's control of the presidency since 1952. Both the FDN and the PAN accused the government of fraud when the election commission declared Salinas the winner. With only 50.4 percent of the vote, Salinas "could not claim the traditionally overwhelming popular mandate of previous presidents . . . and in view of the disputed returns, he could not claim victory in a totally clean election" (Smith 1991, 396).

The worst was yet to come. The EZLN uprising in 1994; the assassination that same year of Luis Donaldo Colosio, chosen to succeed Salinas as president; and Salinas's disgraceful departure from Mexico, in the middle of a severe economic crisis, were further signs that the PRI was no longer the strong party it had once been. A succession of murders of peasants by the state and its paramilitary proxies confirmed the defensive position of the PRI during this decade. In 1995, the state police in Guerrero, under orders from the governor (a close friend of President Ernesto Zedillo), ambushed members of the Peasant Organization of the Southern Sierra (OCSS), killing seventeen men and wounding twenty-four at Aguas Blancas (Gutiérrez 1998). This massacre preceded at least 30 more assassinations in the same municipality up through 1998, all directly related to Aguas Blancas, and most the result of government repression of the OCSS (Gutiérrez 1998, 187). On the anniversary of Aguas Blancas, a new guerrilla group, the Ejército Popular Revolucionario (EPR) debuted in the very place where the massacre had occurred. The appearance of this group provided the excuse for the 1998 army attack on Mixteco peasants in El Charco, killing eleven men

and wounding five. Later that same year, paramilitary groups in Chiapas killed forty-five men and women in Acteal.

This state-sponsored brutality accompanied new government social programs that encouraged popular participation reminiscent of the Coplamar years in the early 1980s. The difference in the 1990s was that the president himself was the architect of these new programs and it was with the president that popular groups were supposed to have a direct relationship, bypassing traditional PRI patronage structures. President Salinas's social development program *Solidaridad*, which I discuss below, represented his administration's "new relationship" with society, a relationship that encouraged presidentialism—the president as the exclusive locus of national power—and discouraged federalism. As such, it was a policy that threatened the power of local officials and party members, who saw it "as a competitive network to traditional corporatist relationships" (Braig 1997: 266). While Solidarity ended with Salinas's term in office, its language of participation and several of its programs continued through Zedillo's sexenio. In retrospect, seeing the political violence together with the social development policy of that decade, it is clear, as Sergio Ortiz puts it, that this was "a regime that retained a good part of the authoritarian inertias of the past and that generated new conditions for participation and competition in order to buy time before succumbing" (2001: 119).

But while "Solidarity" represented and facilitated internal PRI divisions, its emphasis on "personal responsibility" encouraged popular organization by groups like the Consejo Guerrerense. Moreover, the government's definition of participation emphasized the cultural practices of Mexicans, especially indigenous peoples, as inherently positive elements in Mexico's journey toward modernization.

Participatory Solidaridad

When President Carlos Salinas de Gortari announced his new plan for development at the end of 1988, he characterized it as a new kind of relationship between the state and civil society. Salinas had done field research in rural Mexico in the 1970s and had seen the effects of government development policies on peasant communities. He learned from this experience that government spending in the countryside was not nurturing support for the political system among the poorest of the poor (Cornelius, Craig, and Fox 1994, 6). What was needed was a new kind of government program that *could* nurture this support, and this is where *Solidaridad* came in. Here was a program that would finally take into consideration the needs of the people whom it was supposed to help, by actively soliciting their participation in the implementation of local development projects.

Solidarity emphasized the idea of "participation" in three of the program's four fundamental principles: respect for community initiatives; full and effective participation by community members; and joint responsibility for activities related to financing and implementation (Cornelius, Craig and Fox 1994, 7). The fourth principle emphasized the honest and efficient management of resources. Participation was not a new idea in Mexican development policy; the government had implemented similar programs in the late 1970s and early 1980s that encouraged community involvement, as we saw in Chapter 1. The difference in the late 1980s was that the state faced a new combination of internal and external pressures to change. On the one hand, the PRI faced a formidable electoral challenge for the first time. On the other, the International Monetary Fund required the federal government to cut back or eliminate its system of global subsidies and replace this with more targeted programs of poverty alleviation (not elimination). The response to these pressures was a program that would attempt to

"achieve more with less" (Braig 1997, 252). Promoting community participation was one way to do this, because it would demonstrate the government's desire to be more inclusive and flexible while saving money by effectively contracting out labor costs.

Solidarity thus made a virtue out of a necessity. And it had many virtues, according to the government. Because it was a program whose funding was tied entirely to Solidarity's central offices in Mexico City, it worked to strengthen the central government and administration vis-à-vis the states. Because President Salinas himself had inaugurated Solidarity in the early days of his administration, and this direct connection to the president was constantly emphasized in program materials, Solidarity further helped to strengthen a Mexican tradition of presidentialism (Bailey 1994, 107). The president and "the people" were at the center of Solidarity's rhetoric, united against an old-fashioned and ineffective bureaucracy; that is, the old welfare state (Braig 1997, 263).

But it was the way in which *participación* was defined by the government that made the concept appear to be especially virtuous. This definition focused on the positive cultural attributes of Mexicans, particularly indigenous peoples (also called "the poorest" or those with the "greatest needs"). In a distinct contrast to the prevailing view of the poor and indigenous as stuck in "tradition" and living at the margins of the nation, Salinas and Solidarity officials spoke of these groups's cultural cohesiveness and resilience as emblematic of *Mexican* strength. Salinas, for example, said that the "solidary Mexico" had "its origins in the forms of labor and cooperation that we Mexicans have practiced, in the natural course of events, to solve our basic problems" (quoted in Braig 1997, 253). Echoing Mexican anthropologist Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's notion of a "deep Mexico," Solidarity officials asserted that "it is the original Mexico, the other Mexico with the great culture of its people, the

communitarian Mexico, with which Solidarity is working" (quoted in Braig 1997, 253). As another official stated, "Solidarity has found a method (co-responsible participation) for channeling Mexico's vast cultural knowledge in ways that can overcome bureaucratic-administrative barriers . . . In sum, Solidarity is betting on an alternative development strategy that is participatory and co-responsible" (González Tiburcio 1994, 68, 76). In other words, the "solidary Mexico" was to replace the old, clientelistic, paternalistic Mexico "with one based on participation, transparency, and reciprocity" (Braig 1997, 253).

In this definition, the "modern" and the "traditional" came together in a way that was unusual, given this moment in history when neoliberal formulas promoting urban industrialization held sway. Indeed, one Solidarity official went so far as to assert that full recognition of Mexico's traditional cultures was "the only valid basis for national integration. This situation places the historical tension between tradition and modernity in a new context" (González Tiburcio 1994, 69). Indigenous cultures were to act as a kind of bridge to a modernity that was to be uniquely Mexican, resting "less on simple mimicry of developed Western models and more on respect for and inclusion of the strengths of traditional cultures" (González Tiburcio 1994, 69). And yet, at the same time, Salinas's modernization project deliberately disparaged the "revolutionary tradition" that valued Mexico's peasant culture. His reform of Article 27 of the Constitution, eliminating land redistribution to the peasantry, was a clear indication of this disparagement, as was his government's single-minded promotion of NAFTA. As Luis Hernández Navarro comments,

> NAFTA was designed and negotiated explicitly to reinforce a complex of reforms destined to drain the rural population. It was the lock that would seal these changes. Luis Tellez, a man who played a key role in the Salinas agriculture reforms, announced [in 1991] that the treaty would expel around half the rural population from its lands in a period of 10 or 20 years. (2003)

Was the use of a "culture of participation" in Solidarity's development discourse just a cynical ploy to soften the blow of neoliberal restructuring? This is a question we need to keep in mind, though the potentially cynical intent of Solidarity's planners is not very important for my discussion. More important is the fact that these officials found it necessary to make an appeal to an indigenous Mexican identity in the face of a major economic restructuring. Given the history of indigenismo in Mexico, we should not be surprised at this appeal. It looks identical to statements Alfonso Caso made back in the 1950s that proclaimed the indigenous roots of Mexican culture. This was nationalist language that emphasized, in particular, how Mexico was *not* like its bullying northern neighbor. Given Salinas's Harvard education and his administration's overriding desire to connect Mexico to the U.S. more closely than ever before through NAFTA, a nationalist appeal to indigenous difference made even more sense: Maybe it *looked* like the government wanted to be just like the United States, but, really, it was completely Mexican/Indian (but only a certain kind of Indian, a "traditional" Indian, as I discuss below). In the 1990s, an appeal to the strength of an indigenous identity was now a part of an official policy that devolved a good deal of decision-making power to indigenous groups.[1] Indigenismo had endured two decades of criticism, as part of a widespread critique of government authoritarianism after the Tlatelolco massacre in 1968. Solidarity was the inheritor of this critique, which we saw in an incipient form in Chapter 2 with an indigenista like Alfonso Fabila.

Policy Change in the INI and Indigenismo in the 1970s

A sign of indigenismo's continuity and change under Salinas was his appointment of Arturo Warman as INI Director General. Warman is a distinguished anthropologist who was a leader of the young cohort of indigenistas that criticized the fundamental premises of their profession, beginning in earnest in 1970 with the

publication of *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* (Warman et al. 1970). Luis Villoro specifically names Warman, along with Guillermo Bonfil, as someone whose work epitomized this critique (1996 [1950], 12). That Warman was Director General of the INI in 1990 was a sign that the government really was committed to a new relationship with indigenous peoples. Because Warman was a respected anthropologist, and not a career bureaucrat, also signaled that the government would take indigenous issues seriously.[2]

The basic criticism of indigenismo was that its emphasis on integration would lead to the "ethnocide" of Indian peoples in Mexico. There was no respect in the INI for preserving the cultural traditions of indigenous peoples, said critics, and even less respect for an indigenous ability to make decisions about the things that affected them most. Félix Báez-Jorge, for example, INI Chief of Planning, Evaluation, and Research, characterized the relationship between anthropologists and Indians as one in which "the anthropologist investigates, plans, orders and charges [for his time]; the "Indian" informs, collaborates, obeys" (1977, 51). Galdino Perfecto Carmona, an indigenous Amuzgo leader, put the criticism this way: "The time has come to speak strongly and clearly about the indigenous problem, putting in the garbage heap all the ideas and procedures of the paternalism of some institutions that, behind the hypocrisy of charity, hide their real intention to exploit us because they consider us irrational and incapable of resolving our own problems" (quoted in Báez-Jorge 1977, 64). That the INI published these critiques in its own name tells us that by 1977 already, the institution had begun to take seriously the challenge to its old approach.

The inclusion of Carmona's voice in an INI publication is a reminder that by this time an indigenous movement had emerged along with peasant and popular organizations across the country during the rural crisis I discuss in Chapter 1. This

indigenous movement influenced the direction of INI's policies as never before, a point Baéz-Jorge strongly makes in the essay I cite above: "In effect, indigenous reactions beg[a]n to seriously concern the State, which in response . . . decided to channel them institutionally" (1977, 54). One of the ways the government did this was to organize the First National Indigenous Congress in 1975, held, symbolically, in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, where President Cárdenas had convened the first Interamerican Indigenist Congress in 1940. The 1975 Congress was a response to an Indian Congress held in San Cristóbal the year before that was the idea of the state government of Chiapas but that the Catholic Church actually organized. The Maya who attended this Congress concluded with strong resolutions denouncing stolen lands, official corruption, and the exploitative conditions in which they lived (Baéz-Jorge 1977, 54). The INI, the CNC, and the Ministry of Agrarian Reform sent out a national invitation to indigenous peoples to attend the 1975 Congress, where the government created the Consejo Nacional de Pueblos Indígenas and 56 Supreme Councils for each ethnicity. A Second Congress was held in 1976. Despite the presence of the heavy hand of the state, all these congresses were forums for indigenous critiques of the regime and represented "a strong current that challenge[d] and expresse[d] fundamental contradictions to the theoretical positions and concrete actions of indigenismo" (Baéz-Jorge 1977, 55).[3]

Included in this challenge was the language of participation:

> We will formulate a development program for our towns (*pueblos*), in which will be present, in all aspects, indigenous participation, since we have the very painful experience that everything that has been attempted towards this end, besides being motivated by a paternalist policy, has not corresponded with an examination of our reality and desires. (announcement of the Second Congress of Indigenous Peoples, written by the presidents of the Supreme Indigenous Councils, quoted in Baéz-Jorge 1977, 61)

The first significant policy change within indigenismo occurred during President López Portillo's term (1976-1982), and its key word, not surprisingly, was "participation."

In Chapter 1, we saw how López Portillo's social program, Coplamar, deliberately promoted a new kind of regional participation in rural warehouses among indigenous communities. This was part of a larger shift towards incorporating critics and criticisms of the government within the state apparatus and in state policy. In the INI's *Report of Activities, 1976-1982*, "la nueva política indigenista" is the title of its first chapter, which begins by acknowledging the impact of indigenous organization on government policy: "To the advance in the awareness of these [ethnic] groups corresponds the determination of the current government to rethink indigenista policy from the premise of the organized participation of the Indian peoples themselves" (*memoria* 1982, 17). Moreover, the INI also acknowledged that this participation depended on the defense of indigenous lands and rights, and the strengthening of their economies—all of which would "sustain their free determination oriented toward conserving and developing their ethnic identity that invigorates the diverse profile of Mexico's personality in the concert of nations" (*memoria* 1982, 19).

The opportunity, with strings attached

The more things change, the more they stay the same. While "indigenous participation" was certainly a new phrase for the INI and it offered a new opportunity to indigenous groups like the Consejo, it was framed within the government's nationalistic conception of indigenous culture as "tradition-bound." I call it nationalistic, because the conception worked to legitimize a social program and a government that in fact was not interested in solving the fundamental inequalities that structure indigenous and peasant lives. We saw in Chapter 3 how the government could continue to play on a theme of participation while incrementally handing out small concessions to the Consejo. The repeated meetings with President Salinas (hugging appropriately dressed Indian women), as the Consejo's directors well understood, were

not about participation but about promoting the centralization of federal power that was an important part of Solidarity's strategy. The condition for the Consejo's participation in indigenous economic development was the group's support of presidential power.

The "new" indigenism the INI promoted recognized the elitism and cultural bias of the "old" ideology and claimed to have superseded it. Solidarity's flagship program set up specifically for indigenous economic development, the Fondos Regionales de Solidaridad (Regional Solidarity Funds), was supposed to epitomize this ideological shift. Like other community-based Solidarity development programs, the Fondos comprised community groups and government officials working together on a variety of local development projects—mostly agricultural but also infrastructural—conceived and directed by community members themselves. The goals of the Fondos Regionales included more autonomy for groups and communities in the management of funds; the diversification of and increase in production; and the establishment of projects that made money and created jobs for communities. The INI's publications stressed the importance of community decision-making and the "new relationship" in all aspects of the Institute's programs, but especially within the Fondos Regionales, which even in 2000 continued to be the focus of the INI's regional work.[4] A 1993 publication, for example, explains that

> the eradication of poverty in Indian regions requires a change in the distribution and assignment of government resources, in the rules, mechanisms and norms for the assignment of these resources, besides a profound modification of the structural relationships that the state has had until now with indigenous peoples. This signifies a modification of the economic, cultural and political bases so that this part of the population can gain access to justice and equality. (*Fondos* 1993, 6)

While this is ambitious language, the cover of this INI publication tells us something about the kind of indigenous projects the government supported. It is a drawing of a man, middle aged, in full Indian regalia, with white cotton pants and white

shirt, and wearing sandals, but not the ones typically worn today—these look more "traditional." There is no indication of what ethnicity he represents. He is standing in a corn field, one hand on his hip, one foot raised on rock and he is looking straight out at the viewer with a slight smile. He looks very confident. Another Fondos publication cover shows a drawing of an older man in the background, and a young man in the foreground, both looking off-center and both dressed as "indigenous," hats beribboned as they are in Chiapas. The young man has one hand on his hip and looks very serious; there is no smile. A stone carving of a face...is this Maya, too?...is prominent in the lower right corner. The strong suggestion in these drawings is that the Fondos Regionales support traditional, rural, peasant indigenous culture; indeed, that all these terms are interchangeable. The 1993 operations manual reinforces this suggestion when it states that indigenous peoples are poor because of agrarian problems, the overexploitation of natural resources, migration, and "the exploitation to which they have been subjected" (Fondos 1993, 6).

The identity of Indian and peasant and poor is certainly grounded in the reality of the great majority of indigenous peoples in Mexico, if not most of Latin America. It is an equation of terms the Consejo itself quite rightly emphasizes. The problem with this identity arises when the terms, taken together, become the *only possible* definition of indigenousness; outside of these terms, there are no Indians, only impostors. It is a nationalist identity promoted by the state to legitimize a regressive economic policy, but it is a nationalist identity used also by mestizo and indigenous activists to disparage an indigenous leadership within the Consejo that is no longer peasant and no longer poor. In other words, nationalism defines the traditional as that which supports an image of the real Mexico, the real Indian, the real indigenous activist.

Traitors

> What we're talking about here is a structural abyss created by the West to destroy all forms for building an indigenous leadership of individuals, on an equal level, with whom we can argue. There is no dialogic equality.
>
> ---José Del Val Blanco, Director of the Interamerican Indigenist Institute (author interview, 12 June 2000).

Who legitimately represents Indians? What level of organization is legitimately indigenous? The answers to these questions will determine much of the future of the state-indigenous relationship. They are crucial questions for a sprawling organization like the Consejo that incorporates different kinds of leadership at a variety of organizational levels, from the barrio, to the region, to a federal legislative district. At every point along the way, the group encounters critics who insist that only the peasant community truly defines what is properly Indian. Framed often as a sincere concern for *las bases*—who are considered the most real of all—the reduced definition of indigenous leadership and organization easily translates politically into a reduced scope for change in indigenous lives. This is a pervasive discourse shared even by indigenous activists who constantly justify their position in the movement by referring to the connection they continue to have with their pueblo, their home community—while simultaneously suggesting that others who no longer have such a connection can speak for no one. To speak for no one really means to say nothing that needs to be taken seriously. And this is a serious problem for a movement that needs a well-educated and well-trained leadership to represent it in state and national institutions, and at transnational fora. The insistence on a narrow definition of the legitimate Indian is a key part of the "structural abyss" that José Del Val insists acts to limit the creation of an effective indigenous leadership.[5]

The association of place and authenticity has dominated anthropological discourse from its beginnings; that this discourse remains dominant in the INI should come as no surprise. We saw in Chapter 2 how the INI's official discourse struggled to force "the Indian" into a local and isolated place, despite abundant knowledge to the contrary. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson argue that this kind of thinking continues and "often haunts contemporary anthropological approaches to local communities, where "the local" is understood as the original, the centered, the natural, the authentic, and opposed to "the global," understood as new, external, artificially imposed, and inauthentic" (1997a, 7). My conversations with INI officials illustrate the political implications of such an approach.

Agustin Ávila, INI's Director of Justice Programs, made the connection between place and authentic representation immediately clear. He is an anthropologist who has done fieldwork throughout Mexico and who has served as a consultant to the World Bank and the Indigenous Fund. He is also an historian who studied the evolution of Mexico City's oldest colonias from the sixteenth through the nineteenth centuries. When I spoke with him on 29 March 2000, he had been in his position as director for almost a year and a half, though he had worked for the INI off and on for many years. As Director of Justice Programs, Ávila was in a key position to comment on and promote new legislation that could potentially recognize new forms of indigenous self-government. He began the interview with the premise that "the great majority of indigenous peoples from Mesoamerica to South America—it is different in the North—are structured by a pattern of community organization. Meanwhile, on a higher level there aren't organisms that represent the group [of communities]." He continued: "There are organizations that say they represent everyone, but, well, every day here I get three or four that tell me, 'I represent all the Indians in Mexico'."

Then he explained with a concrete example he thought I'd understand: a proposal to create a Pluriethnic Autonomous Region (RAP) in the Alto Balsas. I had heard about this proposal from the Consejo, but it always seemed like one of those ideas that, like the State Fund for Indigenous Peoples, the government would very passively resist. I knew the region's indigenous groups did not work together harmoniously and that political parties played a role in maintaining divisions among the Nahuas there. But I also knew it was one of the most organized and well-funded indigenous regions in Guerrero, with its own Fondo Regional de Solidaridad, a legacy of the mobilization against the dam in the early 1990s. Nahuas in the Consejo were very active in this Fondo, and it was they who proposed the Pluriethnic Region. If there was anywhere a RAP would work well in Guerrero, it would have to be in the Alto Balsas. For Ávila, however, the history of division meant a RAP there was impossible: "It could be good, but it doesn't correspond to today's reality." When I asked him why it did not correspond, he answered with a question:

> Because, what are its bases? Of representation, for example. Be careful now, because we can fall into a dynamic of "Of course, I'm conscious of and clear on the issues, so I can assume the representation of all the rest. And I do what I feel like because I am a leader and representative of everyone because I name myself representative." To the extent that there is an effective process of representation, and an effective leadership, and an effective accounting, it will work. But without this, it will only be a nice idea. I don't believe them, when there are these artificial processes.

Ávila's caricature of the RAP proposal for the Alto Balsas essentially disparages the Nahua leadership that has years of experience negotiating at all levels of the government, and which is ideally prepared to attempt this new organizational form. He also dismisses out of hand the region's ability to keep the leadership accountable for its actions. The whole idea of an extra-local organization is, for him, artificial. To emphasize its artificiality, Ávila claimed that this Nahua proposal was exactly the same

as the Supreme Councils the government organized in the 1970s to channel indigenous dissent. "With the best of intentions they wanted the indigenous to have their own structures, broader structures of representation. What happened? Again, the problem of representation is fundamental. Without this, we're talking about fantasies or manipulation." Of course, the analogy with official creations is spurious at best, but he extended it by equating the Nahua proposal for the Alto Balsas with the worst tendencies of indigenismo:

> It ended up by imposing on indigenous peoples what we thought was best for them: "We think it is best to have a broader-based organization." "We think you have to wear shoes instead of sandals." "We think you need to go to school." This is indigenismo's historic problem.

If a RAP is artificial, then the community is real. As a historian, though, Ávila should know that the fragmentation of larger indigenous political units into discrete communities, especially in the Central Plain, is itself an "artificial" process that began with the Spanish conquest (Díaz Polanco 1997). He ignores this to focus on the reality the community supposedly represents—with clear political implications. To the extent that the level of the community can be incorporated into new legislation, he asserted, then "the real bond between the law and the population will be more effective and will achieve an impact. I believe that customary law, before everything, and the structures of community organization, only these allow the people to attend to and resolve their problems, manage their coexistence, defend themselves against the exterior." Ávila used an image of an inherently fragmented indigenous Mexico to emphasize how much fantasy was involved in proposals for indigenous organizations that transcend the local: "Figure it: in Mexico there are around 60 000 indigenous localities distributed among 62 languages—not to mention the issue of situating the languages according to their morphological structure." There was, in other words, something *necessarily* centrifugal

about indigenous communities that kept them apart; it did not matter that throughout history these communities had always found ways to organize together. Today just in Guerrero and Chiapas there are obvious examples of communities reaching out to each other to form regional organizations. But Ávila focused on the community alone, concluding that "an adequate policy would strengthen and constitute the communities, strengthen the self-reconstitution of communities. In this sense, the essential element is that a policy allows communities to select their future path. It has to be built in relation to the reality of indigenous peoples. Any other way generates artificial options."

It follows from this logic that an indigenous leader of an extra-local organization is unreal and unrepresentative. Even José O. Ávila, or Don Pepe as he is also known (no relation to Agustin Ávila), an INI official who has worked closely and sympathizes strongly with the Consejo Guerrerense, followed this logic when we spoke on 5 April 2000. Don Pepe is the only anthropologist working in the INI's Chilpancingo offices, and he is the one who worked with Renato Ravelo to help organize the Consejo in 1991. He was very critical of the Consejo's leadership, contrasting it with the good leadership found in indigenous communities. The obligatory and prestige-oriented cargo system, in which community leadership positions rotate every year was the example Don Pepe believed the Consejo's leaders needed to follow. He chastised them for living a good part of the time in Chilpancingo and for not being elected directly by the communities on a yearly basis: "The leadership that was in charge at the beginning has not changed and they live here [in the city], not in their communities. There's a lack of democracy because they don't change positions." Moreover, he said, "they're mixed up in politics."[6]

My conversations with Don Pepe almost always turned to the subject of indigenismo's failures and his disillusionment with the INI, where he had worked since

1978. He wanted to quit, but he was close to retirement, so he would stay. His critique of the Consejo closely resembled his critique of the INI, since, according to him, both were out of touch with traditional indigenous communities. Like Agustin Ávila, Don Pepe believed that indigenous representation was the most real and most uncorrupted at this level. To believe this, however, he needed to ignore how the community is hardly an ideal place from which to launch and sustain a sophisticated indigenous leadership capable of pushing for changes at all political levels. The lack of information about the outside world in many, many communities is obvious to visitors, for example, as I saw when I visited Totomixtlahuaca, an important town on a central route that connects the Montaña with the coast. I was in "Toto" during Semana Santa when the celebrations and a market transformed the town into a crowded and festive place. But Toto's only phone was broken and I never saw a single newspaper for sale, not even with the big market in town. There was radio and television reception, but not everyone could afford to own these; moreover, the cost of electricity in rural areas is relatively high. Many areas in a mountainous region do not have this access to broadcast stations.

In San Luis Acatlán, the Unión de Ejidos y Comunidades Luz de la Montaña has organized coffee producing communities in a region that is not that remote, but that still presents serious obstacles. The group's description of the situation its leaders face is common in Guerrero's indigenous regions (Ravelo and Ávila 1994):

> In this zone of the Montaña there are no communications media as there are in the city, where one can become easily informed through the television, radio, or the press. In this zone there is no possibility that people, even if they'd want to, could be informed. In order to inform people, the Union's delegates have had to wait until the community holds an assembly, and when it does, only a minority of producers, who besides live very dispersed, attend. (92)

They emphasize the limitations of community participation:

> Communication is an indispensable issue for an organization that wants to be democratic, but in this region there is no infrastructure to take

> advantage of. The conventional means for transmitting information are the community assemblies but these are insufficient because of the quantity and frequency of information that is generated in the Union. In the Union, in one or two months many things can happen. The Union advances quickly but the people in general very slowly. (92)

Another issue is that community government is not always democratic, as I heard when I attended a workshop organized by Tlachinollan, a human rights NGO in Tlapa. Indigenous community members analyzed the human rights situation of their communities through role plays and small group discussion. When the women and men in attendance were asked to describe "traditional democracy" in their towns, they listed the names of various cargos (*comisarias, fiscales, topiles, principales,* etc.) and affirmed that in the best of cases the leadership was honest and fulfilled its duties (field notes, 2 June 2000). In other communities, however, only the *principales* decided, without community participation; while in others, this lack of democracy had prevailed until a younger, educated generation took charge and changed it to include the community. A related issue is the exclusion of women from formal community governance structures, though this sexism is often replicated in regional organizations like the Consejo.

In sum, the community remains a romantic place of origin for the real Indian, but it is a place with inherent limitations for nurturing a well-informed and agile leadership. In this context, Don Pepe's insistence that the Consejo's leadership rotate on a yearly basis makes little sense, especially given the kind of knowledge that this leadership needs in order to make demands on the government, or at the UN. Community leaders have a certain kind of knowledge appropriate for the issues their communities face, but these issues are qualitatively and quantitatively different at a regional and national level, as the leaders of Luz de la Montaña note above. Suggesting that the Consejo's leaders should remain in their communities is a way of keeping

Indians in their place politically and economically, as well as spatially. As Gupta and Ferguson note, "the enforced 'difference' of places becomes . . . part and parcel of a global system of domination" (1997b, 47). The need to denaturalize cultural and spatial divisions, they suggest, is part of "the political task of combating a very literal 'spatial incarceration of the native' within economic spaces zoned, as it were, for poverty" (1997b, 47).

José Del Val had the most incisive critique of this "spatial incarceration." He is also an anthropologist who had worked at the INI as Director of Research and Cultural Promotion under Warman. When I spoke with him he was Director of the Interamerican Indigenist Institute, part of the Organization of American States system devoted to indigenous issues. He came highly recommended by both Pedro de Jesus Alejandro and Marcelino Díaz de Jesus, the Consejo's directors who were most involved in national and international affairs, because he strongly supported the formation of an indigenous leadership. Del Val began our conversation by pointing out the aesthetic of poverty that dominates images of Indians, which he called "an aesthetic cult of indigenous misery" and "the folkloric scenography of poverty" (author interview 12 June 2000). So, he said, "you have the sandal, the colorful skirt (*huipil*), the white cotton cloth, the braid, the hat. The religiosity, of course; the marvelous fiestas. And this is what the indigenous are." Indians cannot legitimately define for themselves a different way to be Indian.

> But do Mexicans think that the Catalans [for example] don't define their culture and their identity? Well, more strongly than Mexicans do! But it turns out that they're not poor. And yet when an Indian puts on a tie, he stops being Indian. And this is a discourse in the world. If a Tojolobal puts on a tie and hat and a Hugo Boss suit, he's no longer an Indian. He's a traitor.

This identity with poverty means, in structural terms, that governments do not create the conditions that allow indigenous leaders to occupy official posts. Education programs for indigenous students are limited at high levels; what are emphasized instead are training programs like those Solidarity offered. The logic, said Del Val, is "to train them to make their survival a little better, but they'll remain poor peasants." And, as poor peasants, what they only represent are other peasants, not ideas as such:

> This is a structural abyss that we're imposing on them here. When an Indian speaks, we don't listen to what he says, but to whom he represents. "This one doesn't represent many." Indigenous peoples are not recognized for their words, but for their representativity that is determined by how many people they can bring to a demonstration.

Del Val reframed Agustin Avila's concern with so-called artificiality:

> So, the problem in this sense is that if an indigenous leader develops himself and no longer depends exclusively on his base to become an indigenous thinker about the indigenous problem, we make him into a traitor, we don't trust him—and we end up destroying him.

There is a dilemma here that Carlos Zolla, INI Director of Research and Cultural Promotion, outlined very clearly from his perspective as a government official. On the one hand, he told me,

> the legitimate leaders of communities or organizations are leaders with a partial representation in terms of territory or population. And so an honest indigenous leader can go to a meeting in Geneva and, of course, voices emerge that say, "Well, you represent the Mayas of Campeche, but I'm Cora, or I'm Paypay. I didn't elect you." (author interview, 23 February 2000).

On the other hand,

> a kind of "jet-set" indigenous person is created, no? Bureaucratized, that only aspires to shine in the international field, with trips and hotels, things like this. Something that also weakens any movement, any indigenous movement. This is a problem...this is a problem that needs work. And the <u>indigenous</u> need to work on it a lot.

In other words, within the dilemma that has been constructed there is no way an indigenous leadership can ever have much of an impact in forums dominated by non-

indigenous. In both cases Zolla outlines, indigenous peoples do not represent ideas or positions, only other indigenous, which means they cannot represent anything of consequence—both sides of the dilemma are defined by their limited representativeness. Worse, Zolla says that it is up to indigenous peoples to solve this dilemma, when it exists as such because officials like Zolla and Avila perpetuate it.

The trouble is that indigenous groups and leaders also perpetuate the complex of terms—local, peasant, poor—that defines a legitimate Indian. They do so, of course, while they also continue to push against the barriers that maintain a strict definition of indigenousness, by acting at all political levels; and they do so because most indigenous peoples in Mexico are poor peasants. But the discourse of Mexican nationalism that still equates the real Mexico with the countryside—including brown peasants but also the white charros of Jalisco—means that the Consejo frames the legitimacy of its claims around a nationalistic discourse of peasantness. The Consejo's leaders (there were only three like this) who were no longer strongly connected to this peasantness Pedro de Jesus and Marcelino Díaz and Martha Sánchez, I heard called, by other indigenous leaders, "Indios naylons"—synthetic like nylon (and, really, synthetic in the original sense of the word). Even Pedro, despite his impeccable, national and international credentials as an indigenous activist with an invaluable store of knowledge derived from his long experience, felt compelled to defend himself in a public forum against charges coming from a Yaqui activist that he did not represent anyone and was just an intellectual (field notes, 29 October 1999). "I don't consider myself an 'intellectual,'" he answered. "My community elected me to represent them and that is what I do."

When Pedro asserted this, he denied the possibility that an indigenous activist might be an intellectual who no longer lives primarily in her community, but for whom

the cause of that community remains paramount in all she does. Given the masculinist assumptions of nationalism, it makes sense that it would be a woman who would more effectively challenge the complex of terms that constitute the spatial incarceration of the native. Martha Sánchez is the best example of this kind of activist in the Consejo; her work in the National Organizing Committee for Indigenous Women has brought her out of her home town to advocate for indigenous women all over Mexico. Her ethnicity alone subverts ideas of an essential Indian: Martha is Nahua by birth, but Amuzga by choice, since she grew up in Xochistlahuaca, in the heart of Amuzgo territory. She is always traveling between Chilpancingo and Mexico City, and often travels abroad to speak about the issues indigenous women face in Mexico. She maintains close ties to home and has participated in local community politics to oust a corrupt municipal president, but most of her work is in the state and national capitals. She has no "base" at home—she does not represent anyone—and this is how other activists attempt to dismiss her contributions to the Consejo. Martha's concern, meanwhile, was the regionalization of the group that was a direct result of the emphasis on representativity:

> Everyone is in their region and no one is in the office coordinating the group's work. If someone is always in the office then she or he is criticized for losing touch, for not doing the work in the region. No one is really in charge of the *group's* direction. (author interview, 5 May 2000)

The need to be truly representative means that the Consejo's directors tend to overlook larger issues of coordination and consciousness-raising that transcend the community, the region, or even the nation. The imperative to represent the local is dangerous for the political reasons to which Agustin Avila inadvertently alluded above. It acts to limit a broad-based indigenous organization and it acts to limit the creation of a cosmopolitan leadership that is best equipped to deal with a complex of issues impacting indigenous peoples: regional and national development; constitutional and

international law; and human rights. Contrary to what Agustin Avila asserted, and in accordance with what indigenous peoples know, the community alone cannot protect itself. A multi-regional association like the Consejo can act as an important intermediary and protector, so long as the leadership keeps this larger, inclusive project—of development, of law, of rights—always in view. The leadership based in Chilpancingo tries mightily to translate the terms of this project for local community members, so that they can appreciate the long-term goals of the organization and more equally participate in their realization. Making the translation effective, however, is itself a long-term goal, with more work ahead to make it a reality.

Overcoming localism in order to protect it

At the Encuentro Intercultural de Pueblos Indigenas that the Consejo staged in the middle of Chilpancingo in April 2000, about 500 people representing Guerrero's four different ethnicities participated in discussions about the meaning of autonomy and self-determination. They also came to share their culture with each other, to play music, and to dance. It was a lot of fun. But it was also quite serious, with the Consejo's directors devoting an entire weekend to explanations of international and national law in five different languages, including Spanish. An event like this is the only time in the year that community members can hear about and discuss this law and their rights as indigenous peoples, so what they take away from this brief moment is crucial. My conversations with participants, perusal of meeting minutes, and general observations suggest that the work of *concientización* is just beginning. Without consistent and constant work to educate communities about their rights, meetings like this one, while important, are not enough.

The form of the Encuentro included four different tents representing each ethnicity. The subjects of the discussions rotated throughout the weekend and a

Consejo director was in charge of explaining the issues and soliciting feedback from community members. Directors talked mostly about Convention 169, the changes to Articles 4 and 27 of the Constitution, the San Andrés Accords, environmental issues, the autonomy movements in Rancho Nuevo, and the Policia Comunitaria in San Luis Acatlán. These were to be discussions in the language corresponding to an ethnicity. But when I asked Benito, a member of Seojtli Llankuik, what had transpired under the Nahua tent, he told me that a good part of it he had not understood because it had been presented in Spanish. He was not sure, for example, what the Policia Comunitaria really was. He asserted that the government had to fulfill its obligations to indigenous peoples "because of the law they were talking about...the Constitution" (author interview, 9 April 2000). When I asked him what he meant, he admitted he did not really understand what they had discussed, so I said, "Oh, the fourth constitutional article?" He answered, "Yeah, that's it. The government needs to listen to us." Isidro, however, whose Spanish is better, told me that the Nahua tent liked hearing about the Policia Comunitaria and wanted something like this for the Chilapa region. And he was fully prepared to hold more workshops back in their communities: "We'll take back what we have learned to sow ideas" (author interview 9 April 2000).

Benito, meanwhile, confirmed what I had observed, that there was little, if any, interethnic dialogue that had taken place. "We don't understand each other and each group prefers to speak their own language," he said, even though he had spoken fine Spanish with me. All while we talked, Pedro de Jesus was making an impassioned speech on the main stage, peppering it with references to national heroes like "nuestro generalisimo José Maria Morelos y Pavon." I asked Benito what he thought of the speech and he told me he thought few people understood what Pedro was saying. Nevertheless, during their discussion period Nahua attendees clearly articulated the

issues they believed were important and these were duly noted by Consejo directors. From the minutes I read from the Amuzgo tent, they were issues shared with other ethnicities. The practical absence of the municipal government, for example, and its broken promises—an issue that made the idea of an autonomous municipality like Rancho Nuevo very appealing. The rejection of political parties, for the same reasons, because they did not help. The desire to implement and have respected indigenous law and custom. The Amuzgo representatives also liked the idea of the Policia Comunitaria, because they could not trust the state police. They liked Convention 169, too.

This consensus across ethnic groups that did not speak to each other came from the nature of the attendees at the Encuentro: most, if not all, were members of organizations within the Consejo. The Mixtecos were largely from the municipality in rebellion, Rancho Nuevo, while the Nahua were from the Alto Balsas and from groups like Seojtli Llankuik that had years of organizing experience within the Consejo. The Tlapanecos had a similar experience, including within the Policia Comunitaria itself. The Amuzgos alone were relatively new to the Consejo, but were strong traditionalists; even Amuzgo men, for example, continue to wear "traditional" clothing, when that is not the case among the other ethnicities. I suspect this trait made them very receptive to discussions about autonomy and self-determination, a suspicion confirmed by my conversation with Doña Florencia, an Amuzga master artist. "I know longer believe in political parties," she told me, "but the Consejo Guerrerense supports traditional ways like organic fertilizer and traditional authorities, which I like" (author interview, 8 April 2000). On the one hand, then, the Consejo's directors were preaching to the choir. On the other hand, these groups were in a particularly good position to take this information home and disseminate it.

This was not the case, however, in the day-to-day work the Consejo did out of its central office, or in the regions. The conversations I had with community members who were in Chilpancingo to get help with local projects suggested that *concientización* was not a regular part of what the group did. Instead, community members often commented that for them the Consejo was a political "party," like any other party, and it did not have anything special to say to them about a project for indigenous self-determination. Hermina's story in Chapter 3 about how she and her husband ended up in *this* party (the Consejo) because they needed money and the Consejo provided it, is a good example of this narrow vision of the Consejo's mission. Hermina told me another story of a man who was with the PRI and came to Chilpancingo to ask the PRI to pay $100. to cover the cost of his passage to the city. The PRI did not pay him a thing. "So, he came here, to this party, and Roberto gave him $100. He switched parties!" (author interview, 25 January 2000). According to Martha Sánchez, the great challenge for the Consejo Guerrerense is overcoming a community focus on the money the Consejo can channel towards a local project. The problem is, she said,

> that without a political consciousness of indigenous rights, communities will just go to whichever group will give them what they most need at that moment. A consciousness of rights can go beyond the party system. (author interview, 26 January 2000)

The Consejo derives its legitimacy among communities from its ability to deliver the goods, however. While Consejo directors may see their participation in a clientelist relationship with the state in the context of a national project for indigenous rights, community members with immediate needs may not see this larger context. A client/broker relationship is familiar and often works in a community's favor, after all. Martha's concern, shared by other directors, is that a client/broker is *all* the Consejo might be in practice. A consciousness of rights can work to strengthen the entire movement, because individuals and communities will have the confidence to speak out

against abuses; they may also then be able to balance their short-term needs with long-term goals. Cirino Plácido Valerio, a Consejo director who helped found the Policia Comunitaria, spoke at length with me, for example, about the pressing need to raise the consciousness of communities around the issue of the privatization of ejido land. The reform to Article 27 allows ejidatarios to sell their plots, and many in the San Luis Acatlán region were doing so. Cirino made the connection between this problem and the need for a larger project of economic self-sufficiency:

> Six or seven ejidos rejected privatization, but the others accepted because they lacked information. Ninety percent of peasants are very poor and they are going to sell their land to ranchers. But then these peasants will need to work and they will become renters on their own land. Now, the policia comunitaria are paid by the communities, and if the communities don't have money, neither will the police, so we need a new proposal to guarantee self-sufficiency in the region. (author I interview, 16 May 2000)

The consciousness-raising campaign Cirino had in mind was still only a proposal, but it had the following vague elements:

> We need a consciousness-raising campaign about ecology and health. We need regional meetings where the leaders will meet and explain to others why we need change. Do you want change? Well, begin to change yourselves first. Stop being egoists, stop being greedy. Each one needs to go back to your pueblo and tell people about what's happening. People need information first in order to analyze their options.

Cirino's proposal reminded me of the *concientización* that took place at the Encuentro Intercultural. It was highly suggestive and obviously grounded in the indigenous peasant reality, but it had no concrete ideas for its actual implementation so that knowledge could lead to action. This demonstrates how the Consejo's consciousness-raising project is still incipient. And it demonstrates, too, how the local/global split divides the leadership from communities, which is not to say that the leadership is unrepresentative. On the contrary, the cultural distance between the two

shows how much most indigenous people are still forced into a place of poverty, as an effect of the "structural abyss" José Del Val described. The government's programs for poverty alleviation, especially Solidarity, may have extolled the virtues of indigenous participation, but they were never meant to eliminate the poverty that defines Indians; in effect, indigenismo has remained the same, the more it has changed. The state offers only so much before it closes down again in order to maintain the inherently unequal relation of power it has with indigenous peoples. In an attempt to move outside of this closed system, the Consejo has appealed to the support of the United Nations, placing its hopes on the growing international recognition of indigenous self-determination. As we will see in the next chapter, however, the United Nations only reproduces on a larger scale the structural disadvantages indigenous peoples face at home.

Endnotes

[1] Nelson (1999, Chs. 8 and 9) discusses a similar convergence in Guatemala of neoliberal economic restructuring, decentralization of state functions, the government's official recognition of Maya difference, and Maya demands for autonomy.

[2] By 1992, however, Warman supported Salinas's privatization of the land-reform system and, as the new agrarian attorney general, oversaw its implementation in the countryside (Fox 1994b).

[3] These meetings, however, appear to have had no direct effect on the indigenous organizing that led to the formation of the Consejo Guerrerense. In all of my conversations with activists and supporters, no one ever mentioned the Congresses held in the 1970s. I suspect in part this has to do with the relatively conservative nature of the Catholic Church in Guerrero, which has no tradition of liberation theology comparable to the one in Chiapas, for example.

[4] All through my stay in 2000, however, I heard from INI officials that the Fondos were to be replaced with a program of micro-credits targeting communities, not regions. In other words, the focus of the INI's work would return to the earlier idea of the closed, corporate community. To date, the Fondos remain in place, probably because by 2000 they had ten years of relatively autonomous existence all over the country that would not be easy to end abruptly, especially by a new president keen on establishing his credibility early on with the indigenous movement—as Fox was.

[5] Kay Warren (1998) shows how Guatemalan ladinos use a similar discourse to delegitimize the leadership of the pan-Maya movement in that country. David Stoll's examination of Rigoberta Menchú's personal testimony, and his attempt to cast doubt on her leadership because of the inconsistencies he found there, also draws on notions of an authentic Indian properly placed in the local community. See Arias 2001. Also, Stefano Varese (1996) reminds us that Indian elites have long articulated the needs of Indian peasants, in a relationship that has sometimes been "distant, ideologized, paternalistic, and even arrogant" (60). Historically, however, the interests of "intelligentsia and masses" have coincided at different moments, as they do today.

[6] Renato Ravelo and Judith Rodríguez were blunt when I interviewed them about their involvement in the Consejo's formation. Both were disappointed that the Consejo's leadership had strayed from the *bases* and they pointed to Pedro de Jesus and Marcelino Díaz as examples of this: "They're both fat now, with a nice new truck, a new lifestyle" (author interview, 5 April 2000).

Chapter 5: The Self-determination of Indigenous Peoples and the Limits of United Nations Advocacy in Guerrero, Mexico (1998-2000)

This chapter examines the Consejo Guerrerense's participation in the United Nations human rights system, as an example of indigenous peoples's pragmatic use of a distinctly modern discourse to defend their autonomy and sense of tradition. I look in particular at the visit to Mexico in February 2000 by Erica-Irene Daes, then Chairperson of the United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Populations. I use the occasion of this visit to analyze the relationship between the Consejo Guerrerense, the Mexican state, and the United Nations within the larger context of the development of international law related to indigenous peoples. I argue that the persistence today of a centuries-old bias in international law that privileges the sovereign "nation-state," and a related, individualistic bias in the conception of human rights makes UN support for indigenous self-determination highly equivocal.

The Mexican state demonstrates its desire to be considered a full-fledged member of the modern state system at the United Nations by inviting UN observers like Daes and others to visit the country. But it does so mostly because it is concerned with Mexico's international image, not because it is eager to implement changes the observers recommend. The state invokes its modern sovereignty, on the one hand, to justify ignoring these recommendations, while it asserts, on the other, that Mexico has yet to become modern, and this explains why human rights abuses continue in the country. Like the Consejo, the state, too, is adept at playing with the modern/traditional distinction to protect its conception of autonomy. This play, however, only barely masks a high level of state violence against human rights that continues with impunity.

Daes's trip to Mexico lasted two weeks and she arrived in Guerrero near the end of her stay, so there was a good deal of anticipation among members of the

Consejo Guerrerense about her arrival, not to mention a general sense that the government was trying to hide the truth from her. The hope was that once Daes knew the truth of their situation, she would be a stronger advocate for indigenous peoples in Mexico and would even recommend that the UN send a human rights observer to monitor the situation in Mexico more closely, just as the UN had done in Guatemala.

But truth is not easily carried across the institutional-legalistic divide that separates Mexican indigenous people's lives from UN functionaries based in Geneva. What is true for members of the Consejo Guerrerense, such as the systematic sterilization of indigenous women and men in state hospitals, for example, which I discuss below, is not automatically true for someone like Daes if it is not framed in the context of clear individual victims and perpetrators. The insistence on these individualistic criteria inevitably flattens out the complexity of the social world in which human rights violations occur, and it makes it more difficult for victims to make their case before human rights organizations like the UN. Erica Daes's visit to Guerrero was a high point for the Consejo, but it revealed the risks of appealing to the United Nations for support in the attempt to secure a self-determined and autonomous position for indigenous peoples vis-á-vis the state. The discourse of international human rights and the ways in which these rights are defined and advocated by the UN has serious limitations for Indians in Mexico.

The focus in human rights law on the individual largely excludes from consideration the rights of peoples, like indigenous peoples, in sovereign states. To be sure, an important reason for the focus on the individual is the difficulty of defining discrete "peoples" entitled to collective rights —though in the case of indigenous peoples in the Americas this is not always so difficult to define, since many indigenous peoples share not only a language but a territorial space. The more important reason is

that most UN member states continue to advocate for themselves. That is, they continue to invoke the long-standing bias in international law granting the nation-state privileges over and above those granted to any other collectivity. The UN focus on individual rights complements this nation-state privilege, because cases of discrete individuals do not threaten the territorial rights of nation-states in the same way that do cases of whole peoples occupying areas within a nation-state. There are clear precedents at the UN and in the modern world more generally for recognizing collective rights, of course: the Enlightenment revolutions in the U.S. and France—and Mexico, later—were based on a notion of *popular* sovereignty, and former European colonies gained their independence in the 20th century thanks to the same idea. The modern conception of human rights recognizes the individual above all, but it recognizes that the group, too, may also have certain rights. However, independent states now jealously guard their hard-won territorial authority and almost universally refuse to allow the idea that brought them into being apply as well to groups that find themselves within these states.

I am not asserting that UN rights advocates like Daes work at the bidding of member states; in fact, Daes is a strong supporter of self-determination for indigenous peoples. My assertion is that the larger legal and institutional context of the United Nations inevitably acts to limit the effectiveness of the work of Daes and others who advocate for indigenous peoples. As I discuss below, Daes's inablity to assess rights violations in their *group* dimension (as the systematic violation of the rights of an identifiable people) results in the inability to see violations at all.

Human rights in Guerrero

Like much of Mexico, Guerrero was long dominated by the patronage politics of the ruling PRI, which through force and fraud won elections at the municipal and state level—a situation that helped to facilitate the growth of a guerrilla movement there in the late 1960s and early 1970s (Bartra 1996; Montemayor 1997). The close relationship between the PRI and the military grew closer still especially in Guerrero during the "dirty war" in the 1970s, when the state governor, the state police, and the army coordinated the disappearances of several hundred suspected guerrilla sympathisers (*Proceso Sur*, 16 Sept. 2000; *La Jornada*, 15 Sept. 2000). No one in the army, police or government has ever been arrested in connection with the disappearances.

A similar situation persists today, even though the PRI's loss of the presidency in 2000, along with the increased mobilization by opposition parties and by indigenous peoples, resulted in an unprecedented win for opposition candidates at all levels and throughout Guerrero in the fall 2002 elections (though the PRI still holds onto the governorship). Still, human rights abuses by the military, state police, and government agents continue to go unpunished. One of the more egregious examples of this continuing impunity is the lack of a federal investigation into the false arrest and subsequent torture of Teodoro Cabrera and Rodolfo Montiel, leaders of a peasant-based environmental organization that has fought illegal logging in the state. The Mexican Army and local PRI bosses—with the consent of peasant groups—were working together with logging companies (including U.S.-based Boise Cascade) to clearcut the remaining forests in Guerrero's western Sierra, when Cabrera and Montiel's group successfully blocked logging roads to stop the trucks from hauling out trees (*La Jornada El Sur*, 8 April 2000). Soldiers subsequently arrested Cabrera

and Montiel on charges of drug trafficking and tortured them to confess their guilt.[1] Another example involves the state government's patronage system that continues to condition individual access to public goods and services based on a vote for the PRI (*La Jornada El Sur*, 7 October 2002). This is the local political context in which the Consejo makes its appeals to the UN and international human rights law.

The Consejo, as we have seen, makes a point of including Convention 169's recognition of self-determination in its rhetoric. During the Consejo's seventh anniversary in 1998, for example, four of five roundtable discussions focused on issues integral to Convention 169: human rights, autonomy and self-determination, culture, and territory. The fifth roundtable focused on indigenous women, who are not specified in the Convention, indicating a heightened consciousness of gender issues promoted by the few young women in the Consejo's directorate. The Consejo's directors used the discussions to explain to the mostly monolingual and illiterate indigenous audience that the Convention respects and protects Indian languages, customs, and institutions; that it requires the government to consult indigenous peoples on matters that affect them; and that it recognizes the special relationship indigenous peoples have with the land, and with the larger concept of "territory". They stressed the importance of knowing their rights, as they are elaborated in the Convention, in order to effect change in indigenous communities.

The Consejo has appealed to human rights standards that transcend the local and national context in order to secure allies against the state and to legitimize the group's assertion of a special status for indigenous peoples in Mexico. Such an

assertion nevertheless remains subject to debate in international law. I turn now to a brief history of that law.

The State, International law, and Indigenous peoples' rights

Before proceeding with a discussion of the UN and its relationship with indigenous peoples, it is important to understand the historical and philosophical basis of this relationship. The development of international law over the past four centuries has at various points depended on the interaction between Europeans and Indians. In the 16th century, Francisco de Vitoria gave a series of lectures on Indian lands in the Americas that contributed to the formation of a system of rules and principles governing international encounters between different peoples. He conceived of a higher authority (God or Nature) above positive, written law and temporal authorities—a "natural law" that took precedent over these authorities and encompassed all levels of human interaction (Anaya 1996, 10). Here was an incipient concept of human rights, in which an extra-legal moral code acts as a standard of conduct for leaders and subjects alike. Still, Vitoria, like many of his contemporaries, asserted that Europeans could legitimately claim ultimate authority over (pagan, backward) Indians for the Indians' own benefit. The theory of the "just war" in the name of Christianity (or any other "just cause") justified a denial of indigenous authority and autonomous existence.

At about the same time, the concept of state sovereignty was emerging in Western Europe as it experienced the disintegration of the Holy Roman Empire, the practical end of which was marked by the 1648 Peace of Westphalia. The acknowledgment of state sovereignty at Westphalia—that is, the claim to be immune from external involvement in the exercise of domestic power—was then further developed to include the concept of "nation," which the state claimed to represent. The idea of the nation-state—the mostly homogeneous people, or nation, living within the

jurisdictionally and territorially integral state—became the acknowledged subject of certain rights and was joined by its conceptual complement, the individual. Communities had to be regarded as nations or states if they wanted to enjoy rights as *distinct* communities. When Thomas Hobbes described the "state of nature" in terms of "the savage people of the Americas" it became more clear still that indigenous peoples, as the necessary foil for the civilized nation-state, were excluded from the rights to which nation-states were entitled: "The very idea of the nation-state would always make it difficult for non-European aboriginal peoples to qualify as such" (Anaya 1996, 15). Moreover, for three hundred years after the Peace of Westphalia only certain nation-states were truly considered sovereign and it was these European, Christian states that developed an international law among themselves. As late as 1924, an exclusive definition of the sovereign state prevailed in European legal thought:

> The family of nations is an aggregate of states, which as a result of their historical antecedents, have inherited a common civilization, and are at a similar level of moral and political opinion. The term may be said to include the Christian nations of Europe and their offshoots in America, with the addition of the Ottoman empire, which was declared by the Treaty of Paris of 1856 to be admitted to the "Concert Européen." Within this charmed circle, to which Japan also, some time since, fully established her claim to be admitted, all states, according to the theory of international law, are equal. Outside of it, no state, be it as powerful and as civilized as China or Persia, can be regarded as a wholly normal person. (T.E. Holland, *Elements of Jurisprudence*, as quoted in Eide 1990, n. 19, p. 30)

Holland's characterization of an "admitted" state as a wholly normal person is apt, given the European conception of the sovereign individual and individual human rights, which acts to complement the state and nation-state sovereignty in the (as yet) known universe of rights. Between the individual and the nation-state in this universe is, literally, a no-man's land, or, more accurately stated, a no-peoples land. In the early-modern Western idea of the individual, the medieval understanding of personhood constructed in relation to others in society was gradually replaced with a conception of

discrete and complete individuals, who "by nature" existed prior to community life (VanderWal 1990, 89). Raymond Williams reminds us that "individual originally meant indivisible," a connection with others, not a distinction from them (Williams 1983, 161). As the idea of a distinct individual began to develop (at least in the English language) in the early 17th century, it took on meaning as a "vain or eccentric departure" from the common ground of human nature (ibid., 162). An explicit relationship between the individual and the group was still assumed in the 18th century, with the individual as representative of the group. But by the late 18th century Williams notes a "crucial shift in attitudes" in the use of the word (ibid., 164). The end of the medieval social order brought a new emphasis on the independence of one's personal existence from any assigned place in a rigidly stratified society; the Protestant movement similarly stressed a personal and direct relationship to God unmediated by the Church.

Williams (1983) points to developments in mathematics and logic, however, as the precursors to Enlightenment social and political thought, which assumed the individual and not the group had primary existence (164). From this postulate came the idea about the fundamental "market relations" agreed upon by separate individuals in pursuit of their own interests, as well as the idea of rational individuals always calculating the varying utility of particular actions they might take. According to John Locke, secular society was formed through a "contract" agreed to by individuals and existed solely to protect individual freedom. Collectivities are thus understood only as the sum total of individuals. They (with the exception of the nation-state) have no standing of their own and thus have no claim to rights. The legal construction of "non-natural" persons like corporations is the construction of fictions which cannot qualify for the "natural" and "inalienable" rights of individuals (VanderWal 1990, 89).

The development of rights is thus in an intimate relation with the development of the notions of sovereignty and autonomy, and a conception of who or what can enjoy the recognition of a "natural" existence (and therefore exist as a sovereign and autonomous entity entitled to certain rights). Social solidarity amongst monadic individuals is hard to imagine in such a theory; instead, individuals relate to each other in a market society, each with "an unrestricted right to an unlimited quantity of any goods they may accumulate by exercising their personal capacities" (Gledhill 1997, 80). As Gledhill notes, "the long-term effects of this transformation [from the medieval social hierarchy to the new conception of the individual] were to turn the emancipatory and counter-hegemonic discourse of bourgeois rights versus the absolutism of the old regimes into a new model for naturalising and depoliticising social power based on private property" (Gledhill 1997, 81).

Even within classical theories of the individual, however, there is a place for the recognition of a particular kind of collectivity: the people, or the nation. We have seen above how the idea of the sovereign nation-state and the idea of the sovereign individual developed in parallel through the modern period in Western Europe. These ideas are not in contradiction in classical liberal thought, since a strong sovereign state is in a better position to protect the individual and their property. Locke (1960) went further than this, though, when he based the strong state in popular sovereignty; the idea that the legislative power, chosen by the people, is the supreme power of a nation-state. This idea, of course, would be adopted by revolutionaries in France and in the Americas to abolish governments that did not recognize the people or nation as the source of power and legitimacy. There is a strong "intuition" in modern, Western thought, then, that a people may unite and share particular goals in common; that simply, in other words, "the individual has always been socially constituted" (VanderWal 1990, 92). But there

is a catch, because it turns out that the only peoples currently recognized as possessing sovereignty and legitimacy are nations, that is, the total population living within a state's boundaries. While there is no precise definition of what constitutes "peoples," international law makes special mention of peoples' right to self-determination. The Charter of the United Nations makes two references to the "principle" of self-determination. Article 1, paragraph 2 states that one purpose of the United Nations is

> To develop friendly relations among nations based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace.

And both international convenants on human rights, adopted in 1966, share a common article 1 that states: "All peoples have the right of self-determination." Most states are unwilling to concede this right to others not already represented by a state. India's interpretation of article 1 of the international convenants is illustrative of this position: "The Republic of India declares that the 'right to self-determination' . . . apply only to the peoples under foreign domination and that these words do not apply to sovereign independent states or to a section of a people or nation—which is the essence of national integrity" (Eide 1990, n. 27, p. 31). The Declaration on the Principles of International Law concerning Cooperation among States in Accordance with the Charter of the United Nations (1970) makes the Indian position official and confirms the equivalence of nation, state, and people—just as this equivalence was first established in the early modern period:

> all peoples have the right freely to determine, without external interference, their political status and pursue their economic, social and cultural development . . . subjection of peoples to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation constitutes a violation of this principle . . . nothing in the foregoing paragraphs shall be construed as authorizing or encouraging any action which would dismember or impair, wholly or in part, the territorial integrity of sovereign and independent States conducting themselves in compliance with the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples and thus possessed of a government

> representing the whole people belonging to the territory without distinction as to race, creed or color.

The implication of these statements is that the right to self-determination disappears once colonialism is ended. In reality, this right depends more on politics and power than on a precise definition of international law, as Peter Baehr demonstrates with a comparison of the Biafran and East Pakistan (now Bangladesh) independence movements. The Biafran movement failed after a declaration of independence in 1967 because it was violently suppressed by Nigeria's military and received relatively little international support (only 5 states, all African, recognized its independence). East Pakistan, however, had the political and military support of India, was not located within West Pakistan, and was viable as a separate entity (Baehr 1990, 103). Its proclamation as an independent Bangladesh in 1971 was followed by its recognition as a new state. An argument could quite easily be made for the "alien subjugation" of many other peoples, like the Palestinians, Kurds, and Basques, to name but three. Political considerations make the full recognition of their right to self-determination unlikely, at least for the near future.

No matter how contrived or "imaginary," the nation-state remains the privileged representative of a people (Anderson 1991). The presumed integrity of the nation-state so strenuously, and repeatedly, defended at the UN sounds compensatory, as if through repetition of this "fact" we can more easily forget the turbulent history of all nation-states created out of the blood of many peoples. More importantly, through the discourse of integrity we are encouraged to ignore the ongoing struggles within nation-states that constantly threaten to tear apart whatever national unity may (temporarily) exist. This threat is real in many countries today, from Canada and Turkey, to Spain and Russia, India and Indonesia. The "nation-state" is actually, of course, an ongoing process of negotiation and coercion—a hegemonic process without

end—but the United Nations and international law more generally elide this process to focus on and reify the sovereign state, to the exclusion of other important actors.

Indigenous peoples occupy an ambiguous position in international law. In International Labor Organization Convention 169 on the Rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples, there is explicit reference made to the "peoplehood" of indigenous peoples, though with the important qualification in article 1 that the use of the word "peoples" should not be interpreted "as having any implications as regards the rights which may attach to the term under international law."[2] In 1993, the United Nations declared the first International Decade of the World's Indigenous *People* (not *Peoples*), thereby avoiding any legal implications. The world's foremost body dealing with indigenous affairs, the UN's Working Group on Indigenous Populations, does not even use the word people in its title (though indigenous groups often informally substitute "Peoples" for "Populations"). In 1993, the Working Group completed a Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which UN member states have yet to approve. Since 1995, a special inter-sessional working group composed of representatives of member states, NGOs, and indigenous organizations has met to finalize the draft declaration for consideration and adoption by the General Assembly. Consensus has not been reached on several articles, most significantly on article 3 on the right of self-determination[3], because government representatives continue to introduce new language that limits the draft's original wording, which indigenous groups strongly support (United Nations 2001).

The strong state reluctance to approve the declaration after seven years of discussion is all the more remarkable when one considers that as a declaration it is statement of values and not legally binding; states apparently recognize its power to set future precedent. As a result, states like Australia and New Zealand are less interested

in creating new international standards for the recognition of indigenous peoples than they are in restricting the scope of international law to the laws and policies already in place at the domestic level. Indigenous representatives are strongly against such strategies. But indigenous representatives are not always in agreement with each other, even though the indigenous groups represented at the UN usually present a united position on a variety of issues. Defining the scope of self-determination, for example—whether it includes the right to control a territory (which most states oppose) and therefore the right to secede—remains an ongoing process among indigenous representatives at the UN. At the meeting to discuss the draft declaration in November 2000, indigenous groups "noted that territorial integrity was not a principle tied solely to the State, and that the integrity of indigenous peoples' territories also had to be taken into account" (United Nations 2001). Other indigenous representatives, however, "said that States' concerns about secession were misplaced and that these concerns were already taken care of in existing international law" (ibid.) How much are indigenous peoples actually entitled to the full rights of peoples as defined in international law? This is the question at the center of debates at the UN, and despite their many years of lobbying at the UN as acknowledged "indigenous peoples" their status remains unclear.

The recent creation of a Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues at the UN appears to have brought little clarity to the situation. The Forum is unprecedented at the UN because its executive committee will comprise state and indigenous representatives in equal numbers (16 members in total, on a rotating basis) presiding over meetings at which indigenous groups, state representatives, and non-governmental organizations will participate equally as observers. Nevertheless, the title and composition of the Forum testify to the inherently unequal relationship between states and indigenous

groups, since indigenous groups had lobbied for a forum for Indigenous *Peoples* and had suggested a total of approximately 30 members, in order to include indigenous peoples from 12 different regions of the world (United Nations 2000b). In a joint statement, indigenous representatives criticized the process leading up to the creation of the Forum while expressing some satisfaction that it represents the partial achievement of a goal: "Although the commission [on Human Rights] resolution does not fully capture the aspirations of indigenous peoples, as it is a compromised document reached between states themselves, we do feel that it does approach the promise of a direct voice for indigenous peoples within the United Nations system" (*UN Wire* 01 Aug. 2000).

While spaces are opening up for indigenous peoples at the UN to voice their concerns and make important transnational connections with each other—and this opening represents a challenge to a centuries-long understanding of state-based international law—the fundamental state-based privilege operating at the UN continues. Erica Daes has emphasized the primacy of the state and state governments, saying that "where there is an existing state, constituent peoples must act through that state's political system and government unless the system is so exclusive and non-democratic that it no longer can be said to represent the whole population . . .The international community discourages secession as a remedy for the abuse of fundamental rights" (cited in Nelson 1999, 297). Moreover, within the UN the Security Council eclipses the Economic and Social Council, to which the Permanent Forum is attached (against the wishes of many indigenous representatives who wanted the Forum located at a higher level, in the office of the Secretary-General). Diane Nelson (1999, 301) adds that "UN observers argue that the speeches and position papers of NGOs, and of many countries, are easily ignored, because global inequalities are recapitulated within the General Assembly." The UN's weapons to secure indigenous rights are censure and

public shaming, which can be assumed to work (without material sanctions) only in a situation where state governments actually care about such measures taken against them. As we will see in the Mexican case below, a government may indeed appear care but only enough to restore its good image on the international stage.

Indigenous peoples, in the context of international law, are not a nation, which means they are not recognized as peoples who have a collective right "to pursue their economic, social and cultural development." However, some national constitutions, most notably those of Bolivia, Colombia, and Ecuador do recognize this right of indigenous peoples as peoples. Mexico has stated before the UN that it also recognizes the collective rights of indigenous peoples, which in fact it does not (United Nations 2001). In most other countries, including the United States, indigenous peoples as peoples have no constitutional recognition and are treated instead as individuals under the law (though in the U.S. in some cases they may be considered collectively, as when they form a federally-recognized "tribe," which has no explicit constitutional protection). Nonetheless, at the United Nations indigenous peoples have achieved *de facto* recognition of their existence as "peoples," and this recognition, despite its limitations, cannot easily be dismissed. It is not dismissed by indigenous peoples themselves. There are fertile debates taking place at the UN that have potential repercussions at the national level, something states themselves understand and that helps to explain the slow progress made on finalizing the draft declaration. Looking at the international arena, we can understand better the promise the Consejo sees in UN lobbying as well as the serious limitations involved in this transnational work.

"La Abuelita" goes to Guerrero

In an attempt to find a transnational ally against the state, the most educated members of the Consejo's directorate, who also have had the most exposure to mestizo

society, have focused their global efforts at the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations. It is a logical place, since the Working Group has become "the center of an emerging indigenous rights regime" linking networks of international organizations and nongovernmental activists (Brysk 2000, 129). It is at the United Nations where indigenous peoples from around the world can meet each other and be in close contact with government representatives. The forum of the Working Group, supported by the UN's Voluntary Fund for Indigenous Peoples and by several international NGOs, has a well-known and relatively accessible structure into which a variety of indigenous groups can fit. And it is in Geneva that indigenous peoples can participate in the development of new international law and standards regarding indigenous peoples. As a place for Indians to meet, exchange ideas, and speak directly to governments, the UN is unique. Erica-Irene Daes was the Chair of the Working Group from when it was first established in 1982 until her retirement in 2000. Among the indigenous delegates from Latin American countries, Daes was affectionately known as "Abuelita," or little grandmother, because of her age, her long experience, and her reputation for plain speaking. She was also known for her strong support of indigenous peoples and their rights. Her two-week tour of Mexico in February 2000 was unprecedented—she had never visited the country in an official capacity—and intensely anticipated by the Consejo Guerrerense, which had inadvertently helped make the visit possible.

The events leading up to Daes's visit began in 1998. Marcelino Díaz de Jesús, a Nahua member of the Consejo's directorate who was then a federal congressman from Guerrero in the opposition Revolutionary Democratic Party (PRD), went to Geneva that summer as part of a delegation of indigenous peoples from Mexico. He attended the meeting of the Working Group on Indigenous Populations at the end of July and then stayed on through August for the 50th session of the Sub-Commission on

Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities (renamed in 1999 as the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights). Eleven people in the Mexican indigenous delegation spent this month lobbying (Díaz de Jesús says they "sensitized") the twenty-six experts that make up the Sub-Commission, speaking to them about specific human rights abuses committed by the military and police against indigenous peoples. Among NGO support, they counted on technical support from Guatemalan indigenous peoples who had spent fourteen years at the UN lobbying for a special rapporteur for Guatemala. The first goal of the Mexican delegation was to have a resolution passed against Mexico. The second goal was the appointment of a special rapporteur for Mexico, who would verify the Mexican government's compliance with the human rights instruments it has ratified; both goals were said to be impossible. Said Díaz de Jesús: "The experts thought we were crazy trying to get a resolution passed against Mexico. The Mexican government has a very good diplomatic corps working in Geneva, and Mexico is considered by many still to be a champion of democracy and human rights, a place of refuge for those fleeing repression. No one would believe us that Mexico really was violating human rights . . . They told us 'you can't touch Mexico at the UN'" (taped interview, 12 February 2000). Despite this resistance, the indigenous delegates were able to convince five experts to co-sponsor a resolution that singled out Mexico for human rights abuses. The resolution also requested that the Commission on Human Rights "in the interest of prevention" consider the developments in the human rights situation in Mexico at its next session. If the Commission could not do so, the Sub-Commission decided it would consider the situation during its next session the following year.

Díaz de Jesús and other indigenous representatives were happy with the results of their lobbying and hoped it would lead to an even stronger resolution against

Mexico and appointment of a special rapporteur to investigate human rights in Mexico. The Human Rights Commission did not take up the case of Mexico in its 1999 session, so the Sub-Commission put Mexico on its agenda in August 1999 and Díaz de Jesús was back in Geneva again. It turned out, however, that the five experts who had co-sponsored the first resolution would not support another one against Mexico, which meant the issue might be dropped. But Daes was in attendance at this session of the Sub-Commission, so Díaz de Jesús and others went to speak with her about continuing human rights violations, hoping to get her support (Daes calls Díaz de Jesús "my friend Marcelino" and pinches the thirty-four-year-old man's cheeks). She was concerned that despite the 1998 resolution abuses still occurred and she wanted more information so that she could co-sponsor a resolution herself. She also began speaking with other experts to rally support for a more strongly-worded resolution against Mexico to be sent to the Human Rights Commission. This was about to be issued, when, according to Díaz de Jesús, Mexico's diplomatic corps intervened to head it off at the pass.

Accounts of these events told to me (on tape) by officials at the government's agency for indigenous affairs, the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI), lack the detail of Díaz de Jesús's story. Carlos Zolla, then INI's Director of Research and Cultural Promotion, said that "delicate cases" in which Mexico was involved at the UN prompted invitations to Daes and to special rapporteurs to visit the country (special rapporteurs visited Mexico between 1998 and 1999 to investigate the use of torture and extrajudicial executions, among other human rights isssues). According to Díaz de Jesús, Daes had received a verbal, informal invitation by Melba Pría, then INI Director General, in April 1999 (Pría and Zolla confirmed this in my separate interviews with them). Also according to Díaz de Jesús, once a resolution against Mexico looked

imminent in August, the INI sent the Director of its Department of Justice, the anthropologist Agustín Ávila, to Geneva to formally invite Daes to visit Mexico and to see for herself that Díaz de Jesús and others were not telling the truth about the situation of indigenous peoples. Daes accepted the invitation and the resolution was deferred. When I interviewed Ávila after Daes's visit, he mentioned the invitation the INI had extended to her but he would not answer my questions about the role he played. Like Zolla, his comments about the circumstances of the invitation were vague.

Indigenous organizations and NGOs in Mexico did not know when Daes would arrive nor where she would go while in the country. Díaz de Jesús says their "friends in the UN" alerted them days in advance that Daes was on her way, but neither the UN representative in Mexico nor the government made her itinerary public. Nevertheless, Daes did meet with Bishop Samuel Ruíz of Chiapas, one of the country's strongest critics of government Indian policies. In Oaxaca, indigenous organizations urged Daes to press the government to fulfill the San Andrés Accords, to begin a real dialogue with the EZLN and indigenous peoples, and to order the soldiers to return to their barracks. Daes came out publicly supporting all three positions (*El Universal*, 13 February 2000). She also expressed disappointment that the Mexican government, among others, had tried to obstruct the creation of the Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues at the UN. One week later, Mexico was one of a handful of states that decided to support the Forum.

In Guerrero, Daes met with several indigenous organizations and government officials at a two-hour meeting in Chilpancingo, and afterwards met separately with the Consejo Guerrerense, thanks to Díaz de Jesús's personal appeals. I attended both meetings. Their tone was polite, but insistent. The groups told her that indigenous peoples in Guerrero were vulnerable, their rights as peoples were consistently violated,

and they needed her support. Daes listened carefully, taking pages of notes on the proceedings, and asking for clarification. She repeated the strong indictment of government policies she had made throughout her trip, but she was also quick to point out weaknesses in the cases brought before her by the Consejo as examples of human rights violations in Guerrero. During her meeting with the Consejo, for example, Daes listened as the group's directors spoke about alleged forced sterilizations of indigenous women and men. They highlighted the case of an indigenous woman who was taken to the hospital for her operation, but who ended up paralyzed because of a mistake in the admistration of anaesthesia. Photos of the woman taken after her surgery show "operations performed on her that have nothing to do with family planning . . . they operated on her head and here [on her stomach]. So, it appears that they were practicing on indigenous women as if they were animals. They are experimenting" (taped meeting with Daes, 12 February 2000). The woman was promised goods and money from the state health service in exchange for her sterilization, but these promises were not fulfilled, and the Consejo had taken up her case before the state. There had been no response from the state government, however, which had made an investigation of the case more difficult by withholding the surgeon's name and the woman's clinical file from Consejo members.

Daes asked the Consejo's directors if the sterilization had been performed with the woman's consent. The answer she received made it clear that "consent" was difficult to define in the context of the extreme poverty of indigenous peoples in Guerrero. A director answered:

> It wasn't conscious. They offered her goods in exchange for sterilizing her, because they give bonuses—they give merit awards in the government [for health workers]. We have many cases, in the case of Acatepec, more than twenty women sterilized, who have not come forth with denunciations because they are afraid, they are offered goods. Those who work in government social service agencies are

> given bonuses for promoting this [sterilization]. But it is not done consciously. It isn't done with the consent of the indigenous women. It is not done with adequate information. (taped meeting with Daes 12 February 2000)

Another director added:

> This is an extreme case. But there have been other cases where they have performed operations without the woman's consent by offering financial incentives that never arrive. Or in exchange for programs like Progesa, in which the government gives them some money. In the case of men, in Ayutla de los Libres, seventeen men were given vasectomies in exchange for a pair of shoes. In various communities in Ayutla they were given a pair of shoes, 200 to 500 pesos [approx. U.S. $20-$50]. They were told they would always, for their whole life, be paid this amount if they accepted the vasectomy. But they were never given what they were promised. And this happened in Guerrero. We document this, [we] collected the testimonies from the affected men.

A newspaper report later that spring confirmed the Consejo's denunciations. By March 2000, the state human rights commission had filed a demand on behalf of the seventeen men from Ayutla with the state Secretary of Health. According to the human rights commission, medical personnel from the department of health services approached community members, telling them that if they would consent to be sterilized they would be given 1500 pesos, clothing, shoes, and supplies every two months. But once given their vasectomy, the men received only 25 pesos. They also complained of feeling pain when they lifted heavy things. A Mixteco man testified:

> They said it was an order to operate on people so they wouldn't have more children. They told me that if I didn't get operated on, Progresa and Procampo [government cash assistance programs for rural areas] wouldn't arrive. (*El Sur*, 23 March 2000)

The human rights commission concluded that the health brigades used "illicit means" to obtain the consent of the peasant men, and it recommended that the terms of the initial agreement be fulfilled (*El Sur*, March 23, 2000).

Daes indirectly acknowledged the problem of consent by commenting on her long-standing opposition to all family planning programs. She went on at length,

however, to focus on the case of the woman mentioned above, dismissing the Consejo's concerns about systematic abuse by suggesting the botched operation was an accident:

> This sterilization, these accidents, have occurred in many countries in the world. Perhaps in the case of this poor woman, for whom I feel great sympathy, maybe this was also an accident with the anaesthesia. It is difficult for me to believe that the doctor can [sic] intentionally harm to this extent a woman. (taped meeting with Daes, 12 February 2000)

Admonishing the Consejo's leaders for highlighting a single case that was not, by itself, evidence of systematic abuse, Daes acted like the tough-minded but well-meaning grandmother for which she is known. But she ignored the larger social context in which this case and the other sterilization cases occurred. Her refusal to take this context into account was obviously frustrating to the Consejo's leadership, who alternately blamed themselves for not being clear enough in their presentation, and blamed Daes for suggesting that such things were "difficult to believe" (personal communication with author, 12 February 2000).

To be fair to Daes, these were difficult cases to understand in the clear terms required to document human rights violations. The central problem here was the issue of "consent." The Consejo's directors repeated that these women and men had not given their consent, but it was nevertheless clear that they *had* consented in some measure because now they were waiting for the goods they were promised, and that still had not arrived: "They have performed operations without the woman's consent by offering financial incentives that never arrive. Or in exchange for programs like Progesa, in which the government gives them some money." There was strong evidence here that these individuals had deliberately entered a contractual relationship with the state, and yet the Consejo insisted that they had done so unwillingly: "But it is not done consciously. It isn't done with the consent of the indigenous women. It is not

done with adequate information." Even the state human rights commission's recommendation assumed there was a contractual relationship involved when it recommended, as a remedy, that the original terms of the "deal" be honored. How could individuals obviously consent and yet not know they had consented, as the Consejo suggested?

The threat of withholding government assistance is used regularly to coerce people to act in ways that benefit local power structures, especially during elections when PRI party officials made it clear that assistance would continue only for those who voted for PRI candidates. This state strategy is well documented and continues up to the present (*La Jornada El Sur* 7 October 2002; *La Jornada*, 18 June 2000; *Proceso*, 14 May 2000; Cornelius et al. 1994). Such coercion is effective among indigenous peasants because of their extreme economic insecurity. There is a high level of violence in the Mexican countryside that the state ignores or incites, and there is more systematic harassment of indigenous people now as part of the military's counterinsurgency campaigns and the "war on drugs." Indigenous people in rural areas are especially vulnerable to arbitrary detention and the routine use of torture, and are consistently denied legal representation (Tlachinollan 1998, 1999). They also have the highest illiteracy rates in the country and are the poorest of the poor: in 1990, illiteracy among indigenous people reached 46% (the national average is 12%), and 29% of the economically active indigenous population did not have an income (relying solely on subsistence agriculture), while nationally only 7% of the economically active population received no income (Instituto Nacional Indigenista 1994: 22).[4] Within this environment of violence and poverty, a state family planning campaign targeting indigenous women and men for sterilization and possibly even medical experimentation is not unthinkable; it fits the logic of a system of power in which the state has long

denied indigenous peoples a say in health and development programs. For the Consejo, then, the question of consent was dismissed outright and the group considered the sterilizations "forced"—despite evidence of a contractual relationship—because the idea that these women and men had real choices to make in this situation made no sense.

Daes was unable to accept the Consejo's assertions that an entire people was being targeted for this abuse; that the sterilized indigenous men and women, including those who were afraid to come forward, represent the poverty and marginalization of the Mexican countryside, the long history of political violence committed against Indians. Even the testimony of seventeen indigenous men from different communities about the repeated abuses by government health workers could thus be dismissed.

Daes' Report

It is important to keep in mind that the Mexican government invited Daes and that at all times, even speaking with dissident groups, she was officially a guest of the state. This is an obvious fact, but it bears emphasis because it reveals the inherent limitation of the UN's role as an ally to indigenous peoples. The invitation extended to Daes was a concession the Mexican government made in order to prevent a stronger condemnation from being issued by the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. As Díaz de Jesús told the story, it was a concession worked out between Daes and Mexican diplomats without the participation of indigenous delegates. Without Daes' sponsorship, the condemnation would likely not have been drafted at all—and this says much about the level of support for indigenous rights among UN functionaries, let alone UN member states. Furthermore, compared to countries like Guatemala or Colombia, Mexico has a very good image because of invitations like the ones extended to Daes and to the UN High

Commissioner for Human Rights, Mary Robinson, who visited Mexico in the fall of 1999. Unlike many UN member states, the Mexican government has also asked for UN technical assistance. To a large extent, then, the Daes visit was a diplomatic and public relations success for the Mexican government.

Daes presented the report of her visit in early August 2000, repeating the same statements she had made during her stay in Mexico: on militarization, the resumption of peace talks with the EZLN, and the offer of UN mediation in the conflict in Chiapas (United Nations 2000a). It suffers from numerous typographical errors and was included only as an agenda item of the Sub-Commission's meeting that month (it can now be accessed on the Sub-Commission's web site: www.unhchr.ch/html/menu2/2/sc.htm). Twenty-eight pages long, the report makes concrete references to several violations of the rights of indigenous persons by the army, police, and paramilitary groups. Notably, the references here are to violations of individual rights. It also mentions, abstractly, that the

> sterilization of indigenous women, as a result of enforced practices or due to misinformation is not only a serious violation of the right to health and of women's reproductive health, but also of the right to physical integrity. The Government is sincerely encouraged to investigate allegations of such practices and to eliminate them, wherever they may exist. (United Nations 2000a, 5)

Daes refers only to the cases of sterilization of indigenous women, despite the strong evidence presented her that men, too, are the targets of government family planning campaigns. It is unclear why she omits the cases of the men, though it may be because issues of reproductive health are most often considered "women's issues," and because in the context of reproductive rights indigenous women are considered most victimized. Indeed, her report is devoted to cases in which there are specific victims and perpetrators. Where such a distinction is less obvious, or where the situation is too complex to report in any detail, Daes writes that it is "beyond the scope" of the report

(18). In the case of the illegal logging of indigenous lands in Oaxaca by a company supported by the police and the local indigenous leadership (to whom she refers incorrectly as "tribal chiefs"), Daes simply acknowledges the "complexity" of the situation. The relationship between the governing party, the PRI, and indigenous communities is not mentioned here, even though this relationship is typically, as it is in Guerrero, at the heart of political conflicts in the countryside. But Daes avoids a pointed discussion of the political system in her report (she does mention the problem of corruption in the legal system). Left unmentioned are political corruption in general, the complicated cooperation of some indigenous leaders and groups with the government, and the political use of development and health programs by the government. Reading Daes's report one has the strange sensation of being in the presence of something left unspoken but invoked abstractly as "the police," "the military," or "paramilitary groups"—as if there is no political structure supporting these entities.

State responses: Defining the violation of rights

The report received very little press coverage and state response to it was muted (there was nothing reported in the national press). It was released in the aftermath of the momentous national elections on 2 July—when the ruling party lost power and was preoccupied with its own internal conflicts—and its potential impact was lost in the post-election euphoria. In contrast, the government's reactions to other UN observers, including Daes when she was in the country, tell us something about the potential effects of UN advocacy on the state. Asma Jahangir, the special rapporteur on extrajudicial killings, visited Mexico in July 1999 at the invitation of the Mexican government. Numerous denunciations by NGOs of the situation in Mexico, focusing especially on massacres in which there is evidence the military was involved, put

pressure on the government to invite Jahangir (*El Universal*, 19 February 2000). The release in February 2000 of her report—a strong indictment of federal and local authorities, the army, paramilitary groups, and guerrillas—prompted immediate criticism from the government. Mexico's Secretary for External Relations, Rosario Green, asserted Jahangir's report lacked "objectivity and balance." Green accused the rapporteuse of overstepping her mandate, first when she recommended that the army not be used to fight organized crime, and then when she suggested the need for international elections observers (*El Universal*, 19 February 2000). Green's accusation is the same one leveled against Daes when she called on the Mexican army to return to its barracks. Mary Robinson was more circumspect in her visit in November 1999, refusing to comment on the military situation, though criticizing the continuing problems of impunity, poor administration of justice, and attacks on defenders of human rights.

In response to these criticisms, the Mexican government invokes its sovereignty—as Green did when she made it clear to Daes and Jahangir that no one can tell Mexico what to do with its military—but it also admits to the existence of problems, albeit without taking responsibility for them. Mexican state representatives, for example, explain human rights abuses in evolutionary terms, as Green did during Robinson's visit. The Secretary for External Relations told the press that Mexico is in "transition" with respect to human rights, and that while there have been advances there is still much that needs to be done. Mexico has a culture of violation of individual guarantees that has lasted centuries, she said, which it now has to overcome. But this cannot be done, she emphasized, "by blaming each other and politicizing the subject." According to Green, civil society and the government have to "walk the distance together," because if they do not Mexico will be a "divorced" culture, in which some

are bad and others are good. This is a lie, she said, "because the bad aren't so bad and the good aren't so good" (*La Jornada*, 22 November 1999).

Roberto Albores, governor of Chiapas, echoed Green's comments when he explained that the poverty and misery in his state are the result of "thousands of years" of underdevelopment and the centuries-long neglect of "thousands of compatriots who have had their hopes and dreams canceled" (*La Jornada*, 5 February 2000). Meanwhile, the attorney general of Chiapas, responding to Jahangir's report, asserted that individuals and not institutions commit crimes (ibid.) And Jorge Madrazo, Mexico's Attorney General, dismissed Jahangir's conclusions, saying there is no impunity in Mexico and that Jahangir has no proof to claim otherwise (*La Jornada*, 20 February 2000). Throughout this period, and appealing to its sovereignty, the Mexican government denied visas to human rights observers who wanted to visit Chiapas and deported foreigners who managed to enter the conflict zone. It even deported foreign priests who were long-time legal residents of Chiapas.

At the same time, the Mexican state uses the rhetoric of human rights, in the limited sense of individual rights, as a political weapon against indigenous communities who apply customary law to the settlement of disputes. This has happened in Chiapas, where the state government has jailed traditional indigenous authorities on the grounds that they have violated the rights of accused criminals by arbitrarily detaining them and denying the accused the right to a "fair and public hearing" to assess evidence against them (Speed and Collier 2000, 897). While indigenous communities across the state (and throughout Mexico) rely on traditional authorities to restore harmony between families and individuals, national and state laws do not recognize their jurisdiction. Many indigenous communities, however, enjoy a certain amount of de facto autonomy when it comes to governance and conflict resolution, and they are largely allowed to

decide these matters for themselves (883). But when indigenous authorities also happen to be supporters of the Zapatista army (EZLN)—as they are in many communities in Chiapas—the state government has jailed them for the "violation of human rights," while letting pro-government indigenous authorities continue to apply customary law in their communities (903). The selective application of particular international human rights standards to political opponents of the government is a reminder that indigenous customary law is vulnerable to prevailing political winds so long as it is not protected by national laws (as it is not in Mexico). More importantly, it reminds us that the language of human rights—because of its individualist bias—is easily appropriated by the state to deny collective rights to indigenous peoples. This is not to assert that indigenous authorities do not also abuse their positions of power. But even if some authorities do act abusively, this fact in itself should not make the entire practice of customary law incompatible with national and international human rights law (just as the crimes of officials in the larger society do not lead to the dismantling of a national legal system).

So long as the UN is careful about where it assigns blame—as Daes is in her report—the government can invite the assistance of UN experts and continue to sign international human rights instruments without necessarily admitting that it is at fault. The economic rewards for such actions include the European Union's acceptance of Mexico as a trading partner in November 1999, on the condition that Mexico continue to demonstrate improvements in human rights. Rosario Green happened to be in Europe promoting economic and political ties between Mexico and the EU when Daes was in Mexico. At a press conference in Belgium, she stressed the importance of human rights for the Mexican government, repeating the advances Mexico has made while admitting there is much work ahead (*La Jornada*, 9 February 2000). The open

admission by government officials, including President Zedillo, of the human rights problems in Mexico impressed UN observers like Robinson and Daes.

These admissions, however, are part of the language the government uses to cast the problems in Mexico as traditional, not modern (and thus more clearly subject to state-initiated remedies). The government's rhetoric blurs its own responsibility for the human rights abuses committed by the military and police forces while simultaneously acknowledging the existence of real problems. This kind of rhetoric is a clever use of the modern/traditional distinction that blames a necessarily vague "tradition" for Mexico's political violence; it is a clear case of the obfuscating nature of the distinction. The government characterizes Mexico as a developing nation-state anxious to be included within the modern First World as a full member with all the rights and responsibility that such membership confers. In the "transition" towards acquiring this membership, state representatives invoke the burden in the present of a pre-modern past that weighs heavily on any progressive measures the state might take. In this scheme, human rights abuses are a cultural issue (and an old issue!), not a political one, and thus the concerted efforts of *all Mexicans* are needed in order to eradicate them.

Conclusions

Mexico's domestic reforms (especially the 1990 creation of a National Human Rights Commission), treaty signing (ILO Convention 169), and UN diplomacy are state responses to actual and potential international criticism; they appear to be steps in the right direction. Indigenous peoples continue to appeal to the UN to be their ally against the state, but the odds are against them in an international system where member state interests and their diplomacy rule the day. The Consejo Guerrerense's UN experience shows how diplomatic maneuvering and state image maintenance take

the place of work towards substantive reform at home. The United Nations is the inheritor of the state-based and individualistic bias in international and human rights law, and is therefore in an unlikely position to support indigenous peoples' self-determination.

Even a UN functionary known for her support of indigenous rights is inherently constrained in her role as an advocate. Daes's report of her visit to Mexico, never meant for widespread circulation even within the UN, lacks a coherent discussion of the social context in which indigenous *peoples* live, an omission that explains how Daes can gloss over the detailed cases of indigenous men's sterilization presented to her by the Consejo. These men were targeted because they were part of an identifiable and vulnerable collectivity without specific rights. Daes's insistence on determining whether an *individual* consented to sterilization demonstrates the inability to see systematic abuse that is based on an individual's membership in a particular group. Recognition of these men's collective identity would allow for an appreciation of the sum total of social, political, and economic factors that operate to oppress indigenous peoples. Such recognition, in other words, would have led to a very different report.

Today, the status of indigenous rights in Mexico has apparently improved, thanks to recent constitutional reforms. President Fox introduced the original 1996 legislative proposal for constitutional reform to Congress for discussion in December 2000. But instead of passing the COCOPA law unchanged, Congress made a series of unanticipated amendments to it that weakened or rejected sections recognizing the collective rights of indigenous peoples. The Zapatistas and indigenous groups felt this as a serious blow. The national indigenous movement had made a strong showing of unity in March 2001 at the third Congreso Nacional Indígena in Nurio, Michoacán, where more than 6000 participants, representing 42 different ethnicities, affirmed their

support for the COCOPA law and urged Congress to pass it. Confronted with the new law that required the approval of a majority of state legislatures for the constitutional amendments to take effect, indigenous groups across the country lobbied state representatives and demonstrated in state capitals urging that the new law be rejected. The Consejo Guerrerense, working with other indigenous groups, successfully lobbied the state legislature in Guerrero to reject it; other states with large indigenous populations like Oaxaca, Puebla, and Chiapas also rejected the new law. Most states approved it, however, and the amendments were made despite further attempts by indigenous communities to have it nullified by the Supreme Court on procedural grounds. Nevertheless, this national, coordinated indigenous lobbying of elected lawmakers and the Supreme Court was unprecedented and demonstrated again the deeply felt belief that official recognition of indigenous self-determination is key to reforming the unequal status of Indians in Mexico.

For indigenous groups like the Consejo, the fact that Mexico ratified Convention 169 is more important in legal terms than is passage of the COCOPA law. Article 133 of Mexico's constitution stipulates that international treaties signed by Mexico have the status of "Supreme Law of the Union," meaning that all laws in Mexico must conform to the terms of those treaties. Because the COCOPA law does conform, and the new law does not conform, to the terms of Convention 169—especially those sections regarding recognition of indigenous customary law, the collective use of natural resources within a given "territory," and the collective participation by indigenous peoples in policy decisions that affect them—the indigenous movement considers the COCOPA law "legal" and the new one "illegal." When President Fox signed the new law, however, he signalled the Mexican government's disregard for such a distinction, despite the fact that it is a distinction

well appreciated by lawyers not in the indigenous movement (see, for example, Gomez 2001; "La ley," 2001). Strict adherence to the terms of the COCOPA law would mean that sterilization campaigns like the one in Guerrero would be less likely to occur, since any government policies or programs affecting indigenous peoples would require the consultation of indigenous peoples before the government could implement them. Such adherence would also require the official acknowledgment of *de facto* indigenous self-government and support for indigenous-directed development projects. Ultimately, the implementation of the COCOPA law would demonstrate that a new state-indigenous relationship is possible even in the midst of the unsettled relationship that continues at the United Nations. But for now, indigenous communities are pursuing their self-determination in small and large projects, as they have always done: without anyone's blessing.

Endnotes

[1] While President Fox pardoned the two men in November 2001, just before Mexico was to present its report on their case before the Interamerican Commission on Human Rights—the case before the court was subsequently dropped—he has not ordered an investigation into their arrest. The human rights lawyer who represented them at one point during their incarceration, Digna Ochoa, received several anonymous death threats and in October 2001 was found shot dead in her Mexico City office. Days before her death, Ochoa had been in Guerrero with the peasant environmental group and was threatened by soldiers ("La liberación," 2001). As of this writing, the investigation into Ochoa's death has not led to the arrest of suspects. The highly-respected Centro de Derechos Humanos Miguel Agustín Pro, where Ochoa once worked, accuses the Mexico City prosecutor's office of dragging its feet and has called for an independent investigation (www.sjsocial.org/PRODH).

[2] Convention 169 defines peoples as indigenous when they are descendants of populations that lived in the country or in a geographical region that belonged to the country before the conquest or colonization or the establishment of contemporary state boundaries and who, whatever their legal status, conserve all their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions, or part of them. This definition fits the American context best, while it is difficult to apply in the Asian and African contexts. Convention 169 also allows for the self-definition of indigenous peoples.

[3] Article 3 reads: "Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development." Other, apparently less controversial articles, also remain under discussion. Government representatives have not adopted article 45, for example, though they have not proposed alternative language for it, either. Article 45 reads: "Nothing in this Declaration may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or to perform any act contrary to the Charter of the United Nations." Governments argue that this article "qualifies" the entire declaration and needs to be reviewed "at a later stage" (United Nations 2001).

[4] The 2000 census indicates conditions for indigenous people have worsened in the past decade. Now, 62% of indigenous people are illiterate, compared with 10% nationally. Illiteracy and school attendance rates are good measures of the extent to which children need to be taken out of school to migrate with the family in search of work and to help during harvest time at home. Only 36% of indigenous children complete primary school, compared with 75% nationally. (*Los Angeles Times*, Feb. 23, 2001, p. A13)

Conclusion: Mexican nationalism *with* the self-determination of indigenous peoples? What we can learn from the Consejo Guerrerense

From its varied perpectives, this dissertation suggests several immediate and interconnected conclusions. Fundamentally, indigenous peoples in Mexico today continue a long history of engagement with the settler state that is pragmatic and focused on the restoration and maintenance of the community. The Consejo Guerrerense has this central focus. The group is peasant-based and emerges out of the interaction with the state and mestizo academics. It is not, in other words, an ethnic separatist movement. On the contrary, the Consejo is fundamentally nationalistic and grounds its appeals to the state in the language of a common citizenship. We have seen that it appeals to an international discourse of human rights, but this appeal is always framed by the more prominent nationalist discourse of Mexican citizenship. This case, therefore, strongly suggests that an indigenous movement for self-determination can fit very comfortably within a liberal democracy.

This "fit" exists, however, because the Consejo's focus on the community and peasantness mirrors a similar focus within indigenismo. The definition of Indians as only peasant and poor is a nationalist definition that prevails today, despite increased indigenous urbanization, migration, and the cosmopolitanism of the Consejo's own directors. It is nationalist because it defines the ideal *Mexican* Indian, who essentially represents *Mexico's* Indian identity. It is a definition that puts limits around who and what Indians can be, not just culturally, but politically, too. The United Nations system, like the Mexican state, is also closed ideologically to a redefinition of indigenous peoples that might transcend community boundaries. As a result, while this case provides a good example of how a movement for ethnic rights can locate itself squarely within the language of common citizenship, it also suggests that an appropriation of a

nationalist language can be very problematic for the ethnic movement itself. The pull of nationalism is strong in Mexico and it provides the Consejo a potent legitimacy that the group uses effectively to make its demands on the state. But the homogenizing imperative of nationalism remains strong, too, and puts limits around who Indians can be and how they may properly act in the world. Furthermore, the state itself uses this limited, nationalist definition of the Indian to legitimate limited economic assistance programs in the countryside. Fitting comfortably within a liberal democracy may not be such a good thing, it seems.

An alternative reading

I don't want to end on a pessimistic note, however. The Consejo's nationalism suggests more than that it is simply the effect of a hegemonic discourse the state promotes. More generally, the subject of an indigenous movement's nationalism deserves attention because it is distinct from the cultural nationalism of indigenous separatist movements in countries like Guatemala or Ecuador or Nicaragua. The "nation-state nationalism" of the Consejo suggests the possibility of a distinct and significant challenge to contemporary notions of liberal citizenship in multiethnic societies.

The role of nation-state nationalism in the formation and in the programs of indigenous groups is, from my reading of the literature, completely absent except as a hegemonic discourse *against which* indigenous movements struggle. Given my pessimistic conclusions about the Consejo and the history of state-Indian relations more generally, this perspective makes sense. Yet there are cases outside of Mexico where that suggest indigenous movements might use nation-state nationalism as a legitimating discourse, as in Colombia (Van Cott 2000) and Bolivia (Albó 2002), though this is only hinted at.[1] Even in the United States, where the language of "tribal

sovereignty" is predominant among indigenous cultural nationalists, there is nevertheless a strong tradition of military service among American Indians that is far out of proportion to their numbers in the population (and more than the result of poverty) and that helped to create a national Indian rights movement (Holm 1996).

It seems counterintuitive to claim that groups historically marginalized and brutally repressed by states in the name of a homogenizing nationalism actually embrace this nationalism as part of a political movement; perhaps this is why such an embrace is rarely discussed in detail. Charles Hale (1994b), for example, ignores this option in his discussion of ethnic movements. Adapting Brackette Williams's (1989) typology of the class/ethnic groups within any given nation-state to the Latin American context, Hale suggests that there are "four class/ethnic groups whose boundaries and relations are constituted by the political interactions nation building entails" (213). These groups are an elite political-economic bloc, essentially creoles and elite mestizos; subordinate mestizos; ethnics; and proto-nationalists. Ethnics include Indians who do not completely assimilate as mestizos, but who also do not assert radical cultural difference as an oppositional position. As a result, writes Hale, they "languish in the middle ground" because they are different but powerless (214). Applied to Mexico, the category of "ethnics" could best apply to most Mexican Indians before the 500 Years movement helped to change Indian self-perception. There were certainly movements of indigenous peoples in Mexico before 1990, but the generalized connection of Indian cultural difference with political action did not occur until the 1990s.

By contrast, Hale's fourth group, the proto-nationalists, include strongly self-identified Indians who approach politics "from a space culturally defined as outside and in opposition to the nation" (214). Hale's own case of the Miskitu in Nicaragua obviously fits in this category, as does the movement for Hawaiian sovereignty in the

U.S. These are movements where the demand for indigenous self-determination is tied to a clearly demarcated territory that is physically separated from the dominant nation-state. The Amazonian rainforest also has a long history of physical distance from the nation-state and the demands for indigenous self-determination there are closely connected to claims of territorial and cultural difference (Van Cott 2002).

The Consejo Guerrerense does not fit into Hale's schema, because it asserts an Indian difference firmly situated inside and as part of the larger nation. It is in this way that the Consejo's cultural/political position more closely approximates the politics of the early Civil Rights movement in the United States than it does the politics of an indigenous "proto-nationalism." But it is not in the category of "ethnics," either, because it is very self-consciously indigenous and bases its politics on this identity. If we imagine a continuum of the degree of nation-state nationalism embraced by an indigenous group, the Consejo Guerrerense would be at one end of this continuum and a movement like the one for Hawaiian sovereignty at the other. The Hawaiian sovereignty movement repudiates U.S. nationalism as colonialist and imperialist; the United States can have no legitimate claim to the Hawaiian Islands, which were stolen from the Kingdom of Hawaii.[2] As a cultural nationalist movement, the sovereignty movement uses the same language of nationalism as any liberal nation-state to demand secession from the nation-state in which the indigenous group has its traditional territory. Furthermore, this cultural nationalism harkens back to the nineteenth-century ideal of a culturally homogeneous nation-state--an ideal rejected by a group like the Consejo.

On the other end of the continuum, the Consejo's nationalism does not question the legitimacy of the dominant nation-state and its claims to the larger territory. It may question the legitimacy of a particular regime in power, but even still

the group has worked closely with such a regime in Guerrero, and it does so in the name of nationalism and a common citizenship, as we have seen. In essence, the Consejo pushes on the boundaries of the old, liberal nation-state, wanting to make it more inclusive and therefore *more* legitimate. The group's nationalism is closely connected to its project for the national integration of indigenous peoples into positions of power, at the local and national level. It is also a product of the difficulty in Central Mexico (and in a good deal of the nation) of clearly determining the boundaries of an autonomous indigenous territory.

I would locate near the middle of the continuum the cultural nationalism of CONAIE in Ecuador and the Mayanists in Guatemala, who combine cultural self-determination with active participation in national political life. In these countries indigenous territories are more closely connected to the center of the nation than they are in the case of Hawaii or Nicaragua. Nevertheless, in both countries indigenous peoples do take strong cultural nationalist positions (though these positions are still contested within an indigenous movement). In Ecuador, CONAIE, the largest national indigenous organization, has long demanded that the constitution recognize the "plurinational" character of the country, in which indigenous peoples would have jurisdictional autonomy "as collective subjects corresponding to a territory" (Van Cott 2002, 59). In Guatemala, Pan-Mayanists also imagine a multinational state where different Maya and mestizo nations could co-exist while remaining separate (Warren 1998). How such plurinational states would work in practice in Ecuador and Guatemala is still in debate, with competing ideas coming from different groups and individuals.

New narratives of national belonging

On the surface, plurinationalism and cultural secession appear to present the boldest challenges to dominant nation-states. Where nation-states assert national cultural unity, ethnic groups like the Miskitu or the native Hawaiians or the Maya assert national cultural fragmentation; reconciling such different ideas about the nation is difficult and accounts for the reluctance to implement them in practice. Nevertheless, there are ready examples of national cultural federations, in which distinct cultures have a high degree of political autonomy from each other and from the national center. Spain is the most obvious case of this kind of federation, with its separate cultural and territorial jurisdictions. Russia and Canada provide other examples, as does Great Britain. In other words, the proposals of indigenous cultural nationalists are not as strange to our contemporary thinking about the nation-state as they might seem at first glance, since there are clear precedents that the U.S. and Latin America could follow.

More challenging, perhaps, is the Consejo's discursive and practical synthesis of national belonging and cultural difference. How can we think both at the same time? To think both difference and sameness simultaneously poses much more difficulty than simply keeping difference separate, as in a cultural federation. John Borrows (2000) attempts to think both in a short but powerful essay that clearly articulates the Consejo's position, though Borrows writes from the perspective of a Canadian Aboriginal. Because of this unique perspective, his ideas do not exactly match the Consejo's Mexican perspective, but there is nevertheless a striking convergence of views that makes me think of the possibilities for a general discussion of citizenship and national belonging that the Consejo's example makes possible. Borrows's central concern in the essay is to incorporate Aboriginal conceptions of the land into a Canadian idea of citizenship. That is, just as Aboriginal peoples imagine a "citizenship

with the land" that nurtures a sense of obligation to the land and the natural world it represents, Canadians can incorporate this imagining into national affairs. Borrows argues that the land cannot enjoy this elevated status so long as Aboriginal people remain separate from the larger world of national political life. He advocates continuing Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs *with* Aboriginal control of Canadian affairs.

Fundamental to Borrows's position is the fact of Aboriginal national belonging:

> After all, this is *our* country. Aboriginal people have a right and a legal obligation as a prior but ongoing indigenous citizenship to participate in its changes. We will continue to influence the land's resource utilization, govern its human relationships, participate in trade, and be involved in all of its relations—as we have done for millennia. Fuller citizenship requires that this be done in concert with other Canadians—as well as on our own, in our own communities. (329)

Aboriginal control of Aboriginal affairs is a "good message," writes Borrows, but "it is not consistent with holistic notions of citizenship that must include the land, and all the beings upon it" (329). Besides, he continues, "an autonomous Aboriginal nation would encounter a geography, history, economics, and politics that requires participation with Canada and the world to secure its objectives" (330). Aboriginal control of Canadian affairs will only strengthen the Aborginal community and the expanded definition of "landed" citizenship Aboriginal peoples sustained for thousands of years. What would this Aboriginal control mean for Canada? It could, he suggests,

> change contemporary notions of Canadian citizenship. Citizenship under Aboriginal influence may generate a greater attentiveness to land uses and cultural practices that are preferred by many Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal values and traditions could help shape these changes and reframe the relationships within our polity. Aboriginal peoples would resist assimilation . . . because their values concerning land could be entrenched in Canada's governing ideas and institutions, and help to reconfigure Canada in an important way. (332)

This is Borrows's revolutionary message. Real attention to cultural differences in Canada could result in a new definition of what it means to be Canadian. In other words, what is different could reconfigure what is held in common: the idea of Canada and Canadian citizenship. Both difference, or autonomy, and sameness, or interdependence, can live together in the same human and political body. As Borrow points out, autonomy already exists with interdependence in a political system like Canada's that allows for participation in local or provincial communities as well as the larger national community. But, "Aboriginal peoples have never participated with other Canadians this way. At the local level their position has been largely ignored, and at the national level their interests have been repressed by centuries-long colonial control" (339). Thus, he writes, "the notion that Aboriginal peoples should control Canadian affairs is . . . a claim for Aboriginal peoples to enjoy the same rights as other Canadians, and participate as citizens in the country with appropriate federal structures and representation" (339).

It is here that Borrows most clearly echoes the 1994 declaration of Mexican indigenous autonomy the Consejo signed and that I include in Chapter 3. The indigenous political project of autonomy, the declaration states, is "national."

> In the first place, it is national because it does not deny nor reject the unity that all of us Mexicans have built throughout our history. We are looking to find a political solution for all within the framework of the integrity of the great Mexican nation. But we believe the political, social, and economic regime that a small group has imposed weakens our unity, because it excludes the majority, devalues our roots, marginalizes the dispossessed, and divides the people. Our autonomy proposes that we establish forms of communal, municipal, and regional self-government, autonomous regions, within the framework of national unity. Therefore, our autonomy is not a separatist proposal, something Indian peoples consider a sterile idea. With autonomy, we want to feel and be real Mexicans, part of one living fatherland that is ours.

The Consejo legitimates its claims to inclusion based on a shared history in the nation. More profoundly, the Consejo appeals to blood—the blood spilled by citizens—as the ultimate ground for inclusion. This idea of blood is not racist and exclusive. It suggests instead an interdependence that made possible the historical formation of Mexico. To paraphrase Borrows, the Consejo asserts that Mexico is *their* country and that they have a right and a legal obligation as a prior but ongoing indigenous citizenship to participate in its changes. This position, and the one Borrows outlines, suggests that narratives of national belonging can be productive and even liberating for an ethnic rights movement. As it pushes against the limits of a dominant national narrative about the role of mestizos in the formation of Mexico, the Consejo and the larger indigenous rights movement in Mexico could, perhaps, change mestizo conceptions of Mexican citizenship. This might mean, for example, that citizens adopt indigenous customs like decision-making by consensus in community assemblies. The formal acknowledgment of interdependence would, at the very least, encourage new thinking about how to be Mexican in the most inclusive way.

But we have to be careful here with the terminology we use. Any discussion of interdependence, for example, suggests that some *things* are in a special relationship, and we have to be clear about what exactly these things are. In the Mexican case, this means distinguishing "indigenous" from "mestizo," and that is not always easily done (we have to be suspicious when the distinction is made too easily). We also need to proceed carefully when it comes to "nationalism" and "citizenship," which are distinct terms. The first term is about a preoccupation with an essential national identity, while the second is about citizenship rights and obligations. Will Kymlicka and Wayne Norman (2000) make a similar distinction between "citizenship identity" and "motivation to act as a citizen." Their formulation does not take nationalism into

consideration, however, and how it can influence the idea of citizenship. Nationalist narratives help to determine who gets to be a citizen. Borrows, for example, writes from a citizenship perspective in which an idea of Canadian nationalism is totally absent. What is most important for Borrows is the fact of a shared land space and a responsibility to that space; this shared responsibility and participation is what makes a Canadian, not any essential Canadian identity. The Consejo, on the other hand, appeals to nationalism in order to claim a common citizenship: "we want to feel and be *real* Mexicans." This is where the Consejo's perspective differs significantly from Borrows's, and it points to the group's weakness, even as its citizenship claims are strong and positive, as I have suggested by analogy with Borrows.

Disentangling nationalism and citizenship is difficult in many cases, and it is especially difficult in the Consejo's case, in which the appeal to a common citizenship is based on the claim of a long history of being "real Mexicans." The ideology and cultural practice of indigenismo further complicates matters in Mexico. Nationalist and homogenizing, indigenismo has also made possible a legitimate Indian difference within the nation--but legitimate only so long as this difference is poor and rural. In the end, nationalism provides a group like the Consejo a limited language of rights. The Consejo's push for political inclusion and integration might help to redefine nationalism in Mexico, expanding a limited identity to include many differences, all of them real Mexicans. But even then the essentialist core of nationalism remains, which means someone is still bound to be left out of the nation.

The alternative is to abandon nationalist language altogether and replace it with the idea of a common citizenship based on rights and duties, but without any essential cultural identity attached. The Consejo's appeals to a common citizenship, combined with a culturally and spatially heterogeneous leadership, and its pragmatic approaches

that constantly engage the state, suggest that indigenous peoples can identify themselves and act *in a variety of ways* while still identifying strongly as Mexican citizens. The real heterogeneity of the group belies the Consejo's own assertions that it represents only a limited, nationalist definition of the Indian. The Consejo's identification with a transnational movement for indigenous rights suggests still another way in which the group can resist both the homogenizing pull of nationalism and nationalism's almost inevitable chauvinism.

The great promise of the group's pragmatic engagement with the state is its potential transformation of the terms of national belonging, from exclusive to inclusive, and from nationalist to citizenship-based. Today, the terms of this belonging continue to exact a high cost for Mexican Indians and their ability to organize an effective political movement for indigenous rights. At the same time, indigenous peoples, especially in Guerrero, face the militarization of the countryside and Mexico's severe disadvantage in a globalized economy. I cannot overstate the great discursive and material obstacles the Consejo Guerrerense and the indigenous movement in general confront as they attempt to change conceptions of Mexican citizenship by integrating Indians at all levels and throughout the country. But indigenous peoples have faced similar obstacles in the past and they survived to create an unprecedented movement in the 1990s, uniquely suited to that particular time. As times change, so too will Indians. And, as I believe the Consejo does, they will help to make change possible. My story may end here, but theirs is only beginning.

Endnotes

[1] Van Cott (2000), for example, points out that in Colombia "Indians have always held a distinguished place in the national imagination, and they have enjoyed the most extensive individual and collective rights of any identified group in society. It is widely perceived that their protection is a fundamental responsibility of the state" (45). In Bolivia, indigenous people make up 66 percent of the total population and for decades this population, as in Mexico, had a close relationship with a revolutionary state that encouraged indigenous peasant organizing (as peasants and not as Indians) (Van Cott 2000, 126).

[2] See the following web site for more information about this position and the variety of groups promoting versions of sovereignty for Hawaii: http://hawaii-nation.org/index.html.

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