

# INDIGENOUS IDENTITY AND ACTIVISM

*Edited by*  
**Priti Singh**

  
SHIPRA

I would like to acknowledge my gratitude to Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT) and Shastri Indo-Canadian Institute for their support which made it possible for me to partially work on this project in Vancouver and Montreal.

And to you Rupa, thank you for standing by me as a pillar of moral and even material support throughout these years and my family for boosting my morale.

I thank Mr. D. Kumar of Shipra Publications for his interest and willingness to take on the task of publishing the manuscript.

**Priti Singh**

## Contents

<i>Acknowledgements</i>	v
1. Introduction: Studying Indigenous Identity and Activism <i>Priti Singh</i>	1
2. The Return of the Native: The Indigenous Challenge in Latin America <i>Rodolfo Stavenhagen</i>	18
3. Identity, Indigenous Insurrections and 'A Different Equality' <i>Carlos Montemayor</i>	37
4. Crisis and Reinvention: The Redefinition of Indigenous Identities in Contemporary Mexico <i>Federico Navarrete Linares</i>	53
5. Contemporary Indigenous Politics in Brazil: Three Modes of Indigenous Political Performance <i>João Pacheco de Oliveira</i>	80
6. Indigenous Identity and Activism in Brazil After the Federal Constitution of 1988 <i>Stephen G. Baines</i>	104
7. Assimilation Agendas of the State: What Space Remains for Aboriginal Law and Culture? <i>Irene Watson</i>	124
8. Fear and Outrage: The 'Problem', the Politics, and the National Emergency in Australia <i>Peter Gale</i>	138

9. Changing Patterns of Language Socialization in Inuit Homes <i>Martha B. Crago, Betsy Annahatak and Lizzie Ningiuruvik</i>	154
10. Borders and Aboriginal Identity Construction in Canada: Everyday, Cultural, Legal, and Political Activisms <i>Margery Fee</i>	176
11. Indigenizing Human Rights: First Nations, Self-Determination, and Cultural Identity <i>Ashwani K. Peetush</i>	190
<i>Bibliography</i>	205
<i>Contributors</i>	223
<i>Index</i>	224

## Introduction: Studying Indigenous Identity and Activism

Priti Singh

Articulation and negotiation of individual and collective identities have gained considerable prominence in recent scholarly social science literature. Empirical analyses of identity politics, along with significant yet debatable theoretical studies are prolix on the subject. There is a lively ongoing debate on what constitutes identity between those who subscribe to the 'essentialist' approach and those who support the 'essentialist' view.<sup>1</sup> Arising out of these dichotomized approaches is the question whether identities are to be deemed as constructed or invented. Subtle distinctions are made between 'constructionism' and 'inventionism' to suggest that symbolic 'construction' may be largely unconscious and is an ongoing activity in all human societies whereas 'invention' emphasises creativity and implies a degree of conscious reflection about culture (Handler and Linnekin, 1984; Hanson, 1989; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983; Jackson, 1995; Linnekin, 1992; Mato, 1992).

Overall, there is general consensus that social actors taking part in social processes continually make representations of large societal identities. They participate in these processes by advancing their own representations—whether purposely 'invented' or 'non-deliberately elaborated'. However, such identities, it is acknowledged, are by no means fixed; they are formed and are transformed through participation in those processes. The (trans)formation of these representations obviously implies the (trans)formation of the very subjects—social actors—that these identities purport to define. Implicit in this formulation is that identities are without doubt matters of social dispute and contestations.

1. 'Essentialism' refers to discourses of enduring commonalities—common ethnic roots and historical pasts, and experiences that are seen as naturally binding people together. 'Essentialism' is defined in terms of a transcendent spirituality, ties to places, common descent, cultural practices and shared language. These are often asserted as foundational realities.

characterized by sharp cliffs and deep valleys, which are located inside the Lacandon jungles. These are called *Las Cañadas*, the principal scene of the Zapatista insurgency.

*Corregidor*: The *corregidor* is a local administrative functionary of the Crown. Although the *corregimiento* was borrowed from Iberia, the role of the *corregidor* in New Spain was different. He acted as magistrate, tribute collector and constable.

*Dísora*: This refers to the ritual baton symbolizing authority amongst the *Rarámuris*.

*Itzáes*: The *Itzáes* are one of the oldest Mayan subgroups. According to ancient legends, the *Itzáes* were amongst the first Mayas to reach Yucatán, and they established the city of Chichén Itzá.

*Mayordomos* and *principales*: These terms refer to two kinds of functionaries entrusted with the organization of important religious festivities in their respective indigenous communities.

*Reales de minas como el de Mapimi y Parral*: The term '*reales de minas*' refers to the concession of the Spanish Crown for founding settlements in and around the zones, where important minerals were being exploited. *Mapimi* and *Parral* are the names of such habitats in the mining areas of northern New Spain, those that remain relevant even today.

*Salinas*: These are coastal sites, where salt is produced.

## References

- Bricker, Victoria Reifler. 1989. *El cristo indígena, el rey nativo*, translated by Cristina Paschero. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Caso, Alfonso. 1958. 'La tierra de los indios' in *Indigenismo*. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.
- Lipschutz, A. 1956. *La comunidad indígena en América y en Chile*. Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria.
- May, Benito Aban et al., 1994. *Yum santísima Cruz tun*, (Collection Letras Mayas Contemporáneas), no. 26. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista.
- Montemayor, Carlos. 1996. *Chiapas, la rebelión indígena de México*. México City: Joaquín Mortiz.
- Montemayor, Carlos. 2000. *Los pueblos indios de México hoy*. México: Temas de Hoy Series, Planeta Mexicana.
- Ruiz, Margarito Xib and Araceli Burguete. 1996. "Comunidades en estados modernos", in Jesús Ortega Martínez ed., *La autonomía de los pueblos indios*, Grupo Parlamentario del Partido de la Revolución Democrática, LVI Legislatura de la Cámara de Diputados, México.
- Ruiz, Margarito Xib. 1996. "Los pueblos indios y la refundación del estado", in Jesús Ortega Martínez ed., *La autonomía de los pueblos indios*, Grupo Parlamentario del Partido de la Revolución Democrática, LVI Legislatura de la Cámara de Diputados, México.

## Crisis and Reinvention: The Redefinition of Indigenous Identities in Contemporary Mexico

Federico Navarrete Linares

### Mestizos and Indians

Officially, the population of Mexico is divided between two ethnic groups: Mestizos, who constitute a large majority of 90 per cent of Mexicans, and Indians, who constitute the remaining 10 per cent. Mestizo, an old Spanish term that means "mixed blood" or "mixed race", is applied to most Mexicans because they are held to be racially and culturally descended both from the Pre-Columbian Indigenous population of the country and from the Spanish conquerors and immigrants that have arrived since the Spanish conquest of the sixteenth century. The Indians, in contrast, are defined as the direct descendents of the Pre-Columbian inhabitants of the country and are supposed to have maintained a racial and cultural continuity with their ancestors.

These definitions of ethnic identities are highly ideological, and they constitute a central element of the hegemonic definition of Mexican national identity. As such, they have legitimized State policies implemented through the twentieth century that aimed at achieving the racial and cultural homogenization of the population under the Mestizo category. The Indian "minority", which is constituted in fact by over 60 different ethno-linguistic groups, was defined as different and external to this homogeneous "majority" and the State sought ways to "integrate" it into the Nation. In the past 20 years, as we shall see in this chapter, these categories have entered a profound crisis and Indians have been creatively redefining their ethnic identities and their relation to the State and the rest of Mexican society.

However, before analyzing these transformations, it is necessary to retrace the history of the construction of the dominant ethnic categories.

*Who is an Indian?*

When the Spaniards conquered the territory that is now Mexico in the early sixteenth century, it was populated by hundreds of different peoples who spoke as many distinct languages, and who belonged to several different cultural traditions. The southern and central regions of the country, known by anthropologists as Mesoamerica, were inhabited by agricultural societies that had developed centralized forms of government and a highly complex religion and cultural tradition. The northern regions were occupied by hunter-gatherer and village societies with a very different cultural tradition, though they were in constant contact with the Mesoamericans.

The Spanish conquerors and colonizers grouped all these different ethnic groups under the category of "Indians", a name that was borne out of a geographical misconception. When he first arrived in the Americas, Christopher Columbus thought that he had arrived in the Indies, i.e. in Asia, and thus considered all the peoples he encountered to be Indians. Although this mistake was rapidly corrected, the name stuck, since the new continent was called the Western Indies, as opposed to the Eastern Indies of Asia, and its inhabitants continued to be called Indians. The term soon acquired a very clear political content, as the Indians were defined as heathens that had to be subjugated and Christianized and in the process turned into purveyors of forced labor and tributes to the Spanish colonizers and to the Spanish government. As Guillermo Bonfil has pointed out, it became a Colonial category that homogenized the highly diverse population of the Americas and defined it as intrinsically subservient to Spanish domination (Batalla, 1995).<sup>1</sup>

The Spanish colony of New Spain was built upon the exploitation of the work force and the agricultural production of the Indians, particularly in the regions of Mesoamerica. Therefore, it was fundamental for the Colonial regime to define and maintain clear ethnic boundaries between Indians and non-Indians. The former were given their own form of government, and were subject to specific laws; in some regions they were even forced to dress differently from the Spaniards, African slaves and other ethnic groups. These ethnic

1. In this chapter I shall refer to the Native population and its descendants as Indigenous peoples, using the term Indians, only when I am referring to the views held about these groups by Mestizos and the State.

boundaries were pretty flexible in practice, since many individuals and groups could change their ethnic affiliation, and there was constant intermarriage between Amerindians, Europeans, Africans and the few Asians who arrived in the country. However, the principle of ethnic differentiation and of the hierarchical superiority of the Spaniards was the foundation of the whole social order (Linares, 2004).

The Spanish conquest and colonization produced a radical transformation in Indigenous societies: the large Pre-Columbian states were dissolved and the traditional religious and political elites lost most of their powers; epidemics produced a "demographic collapse" in which up to 75 per cent of the population died, and the introduction of immigrants, foreign plants, animals and technologies irreversibly modified the landscape of Mexico. However, the Indigenous peoples reacted in creative and complex ways to the imposition of Spanish domination. Many of them collaborated actively with the colonizers and voluntarily assimilated key aspects of their culture, particularly the Catholic religion. This did not mean, however, that they renounced their ethnic identities, but rather that they redefined them in the new political context. As Steve Stern has proposed, Amerindians were able to "colonize from below" the Colonial state, appropriating Spanish culture and using Spanish institutions and laws to ensure their physical, political and cultural survival (Stern, 2000).

*Indians, Peasants and the Nation*

After the Independence of Mexico in 1821, all the laws discriminating against Indians and Afro-Americans were suppressed and Mexico became the only American country to proclaim the universal equality of its citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity.

In practice, however, ethnic inequality continued, as the *criollos*, i.e. persons of Spanish descent born in the Americas, became the dominant group of the new nation. They established Spanish as the official language of the nation, even though only a minority of the population spoke it, and they defined Mexico as a modern Western nation. Citizenship was made synonymous with Western culture and thus excluded Indians, Blacks and other non-European groups unless they renounced their supposedly "backward" and "inferior" cultures. The *criollos* hoped that the majority of Indians and Blacks in Mexico would eventually be dissolved by European immigration and the nation would be adequately whitened.

In this way, the principle of universal equality became a new tool for discriminating and subjugating the Indigenous groups. This was particularly clear in the matter of land tenure. Throughout the Colonial period, the Spanish government had recognized the collective property of Indigenous communities, since it was interested in extracting the surplus produced by Indian peasants. After Independence, individual property became the only legally recognized form of land tenure, according to the supposedly universal principle of Liberal individualism, and therefore Indigenous communities thus lost legal title to their holdings. The result was a massive land grab that left many communities landless and that sparked a cycle of peasant rebellions that lasted from the 1840s to the Mexican revolution of 1910 (Reina, 1986). For the new national elites, the dispossession of Indigenous and traditional peasant communities was a necessary step for the development of modern agriculture in Mexico and their resistance and rebellions were a sign of their backwardness and their unwillingness, or inability, to participate constructively in the life of the new nation.

However, Indigenous groups did participate actively in the political life of Mexico. As in Colonial times, they colonized the State from below, turning their communities into municipalities under the new constitutional order, and appropriating key elements of the Liberal ideology that was being employed against them. Florencia Mallon has proposed that they developed their own popular Liberalism, one that recognized communal institutions and property, and that defined citizenship in terms that did not exclude culturally different groups (Mallon, 1995). It should be remarked that the communities did not define themselves as Indians, distinct from the rest of the population, but as peasants and citizens who had the same rights as other Mexicans; therefore they did not seek to set themselves apart from the nation, but rather to participate on an equal footing in its construction. The ideology of popular Liberalism became a key rallying point for political mobilization by Indigenous communities through the nineteenth and into the twenty-first century, as we shall see below.

### *The Rise of the Mestizos*

In the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth, the consolidation of the State, the dissolution of communal landholdings, and the development of a capitalist economy, based on

the export of minerals and cash crops, such as coffee and sugar, the construction of railways and an incipient industrialization, produced a massive process of cultural and linguistic change: many members of Indigenous communities were forced to migrate to the cities, large farms, and mines, and in that process they adopted Spanish as their main language and abandoned their traditional sense of ethnic identity, shifting their allegiance to the national identity being constructed by the State. At the same time, entire communities also changed their language, and their ethnic self-definition, from Indian to Mestizo.

This linguistic and cultural shift was massive. As Table 4.1 shows, in the beginning of the nineteenth century Indians constituted around 60 per cent of the population, by 1885 they were 38 per cent and by 1921 they were just 29 per cent. Meanwhile the proportion of Mestizos grew from 23 per cent, to 43 per cent and to 59 per cent. In absolute terms it seems that around 3 million people experienced this cultural and ethnic transformation (Linares, 2004).

Table 4.1: Evolution of Indian and Mestizo population between 1808 and 1921.

	Indians	%	Mestizos	%	Europeans	%	TOTAL
1808	3,676,281	60	1,388,706	23	1,097,998	18	6,162,985
1885	3,970,234	38	4,492,633	43	1,985,117	19	10,447,984
1921	4,179,449	29	8,504,541	59	1,404,718	10	14,334,780

Such massive shifts in ethnic identity were not without parallel in the world during that period. In Poland and other European countries the processes of national consolidation and capitalist development produced similar effects among peasant communities. In the Americas however, Mexico's case is pretty exceptional. In other countries with large Indigenous populations, such as Guatemala and Peru, the State and the *criollo* elites have segregated them from national life and they have maintained their distinct ethnic identity until the present. In other nations, such as the United States, Argentina and Chile, the Indigenous populations were militarily subjugated and in many instances exterminated. The transformation of Indigenous culture and identity in Mexico was made possible by the fact that since Colonial times there had been successful channels of intercultural communication and the boundaries separating Indians from non-Indians had been fairly flexible, and were frequently transposed by Indigenous communities and individuals seeking to improve their

station in society. Besides, Indians had been long integrated into the economic system, and remained the main source of labor for the developing capitalist economy, and thus they were not regarded as alien enemies to be exterminated or segregated, but as a subaltern population that needed to be integrated in the labor market. Furthermore, Mexico did not receive massive inflows of immigrants that could serve as alternative sources of labor. Finally the Indigenous communities and individuals participated actively in the political and social life of the country: from its war of Independence to the continuous civil wars of the nineteenth century, and the fight against US and French invasions.

Although this was a process of social and cultural change, its contemporaries, who talked of the "mestizaje", or miscegenation, of the Indians, understood it in racial terms. Spanish speaking individuals were held to be racially different from those who spoke an Indian language, even though they may actually continue living in the same territory, engaging in the same kind of maize subsistence agriculture, performing the same rituals and dressing very similarly. Addressing the ambiguity of this characterization, Bonfil has baptized this ethnic transformation as the "de-Indianization" of Mexico, while stressing that there were significant cultural continuities in the communities that experienced them (Batalla, 1990).

The racial interpretation of this process became the basis of a nationalist ideology of "mestizaje" formulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, when this massive cultural shift was already well under way, by intellectuals closely linked to the State. This ideology holds that the Mexican national community should be composed of a single race of Mestizos and that national unity will only be achieved when all Mexicans of Indian or European descent intermix and dissolve into this unified race. Mestizos are supposed to inherit the best traits of these two races, with a clear predominance of the "superior" White European elements. They are supposed to be proud of their Indian "past", embodied in the massive constructions and the works of art of their Pre-Columbian "ancestors", while embracing the forward-looking and Modern culture of the White races of the world. Thus mestizaje should be a process of whitening of the Indians, but not of darkening of the Whites.

As formulated by authors such as Andrés Molina Enríquez (1909), Manuel Gamio (1916), and later Octavio Paz (1970), this ideology constructed a compelling historical narrative of how Mexico

had managed to overcome the contradictions between its different races, and to achieve harmony through miscegenation, as well as clear prescriptions for completing this process, hastening the integration and dissolution of the remaining Indian groups and the incorporation of European immigrants. Though this ideology was racially tolerant towards the Indians, it ignored the presence of large numbers of persons of African descent in the population, and rejected the incorporation of other immigrants into the racial mixture of Mestizo Mexicans, particularly the Chinese. Thus it helped to underpin blatantly racist policies against these groups (Knight, 1990).

### *Indigenismo*

The peasant uprisings produced by the despoliation of communal landholdings during the second half of the nineteenth century reached their climax in the massive rebellions of the Revolution that started in 1910. As a result, the constitution of 1917 officially recognized the legal title of Indian and Mestizo communities to their land, and in the following decades land reform restituted their traditional holdings or provided them with new lands. While these agrarian policies restored social peace to the countryside, the accelerating urbanization and industrial development of the country after the Revolution hastened the process of cultural change known as mestizaje. As can be seen in Table 4.2, the percentage of the Indian population in the total population of the country declined steadily through the twentieth century, even though its absolute numbers increased dramatically. Meanwhile, the State designed a complex set of policies aimed at achieving their definite "integration" to the nation, known as Indigenismo.

Indigenista policies used the latest advances in anthropological science: leading anthropologists such as Alfonso Caso (1958) and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán (1992) applied the principles of culturalist anthropology to devise scientific means of accelerating the cultural transformation of Indians into Mestizos. They identified the aspects of different Indigenous cultures that were most susceptible to change and implemented policies aimed at achieving that transformation, while at the same time looking for ways to preserve the most colorful aspects of Indigenous traditions, such as crafts, rituals and ways of dressing. The State provided Indigenous communities with basic health and education services and using them to foster the dissolution of their particular ethnic identities. Indigenismo also sought to educate a new

Indian elite of teachers, professionals and bureaucrats that would adopt the progressive Westernized values of Mestizos and instill them in the other members of their communities.

**Table 4.2:** Evolution of Indian Population in the Twentieth Century.

	<i>Indians</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Total</i>
1930	2,251,086	14	16,552,722
1940	2,490,909	12.7	19,653,552
1950	2,447,609	9.49	25,791,017
1960	3,030,254	8.68	34,923,129
1970	3,111,415	6.5	48,225,238
1980	5,181,038	7.8	66,846,833
1990	5,282,347	6.5	81,249,645
2000	6,725,900	7.05	95,429,600

NOTE: In the censuses of the twentieth century, Indians were defined as speakers of an Indian language over the age of 5, and thus these figures actually under-represent the size of the Indigenous population.

Estimates for 2000, place it at 12.7 million, that is 13 per cent of the population.

The defenders of Indigenismo point out that it was a generous policy that used peaceful means to improve the life of the Indians of Mexico and to incorporate them into the progress of the nation (Warman, 2003). However these were not its only objectives: Indigenista policies also sought to co-opt the Indigenous communities into the political networks of the authoritarian post-Revolutionary regime and its ruling party, and thus conditioned basic social services to political loyalty. Besides it was openly paternalistic and never imagined that the Indigenous cadres that it trained would be more than assistants to an elite of Mestizo anthropologists and politicians, and that the Indigenous communities ought to have any kind of voice in the matter of their integration into the nation.

### *Mestizos and Indians: Historical Realities and Ideological Constructions*

The aim of this historical synthesis was to clarify how the division of the Mexican population into a Mestizo "majority" and an Indian "minority" was historically achieved, and ideologically constructed.

In the past centuries Indigenous peoples have been turned into a demographic minority by State policies and capitalist development, and have been simultaneously relegated into a minority status by a

nationalist ideology that defines the identity of Mexico as opposed to the ethnic identities of Indigenous peoples. However to state that 10 per cent of Mexicans are Indians is a gross oversimplification.

On the one hand, there are many Mestizos living in traditional peasant communities whose culture is closer to that of the Indigenous peoples than to that of the modernized urban elites, despite the fact that they no longer speak an Indian language. This sector of the Mestizo population could very well "re-Indianize" itself if the legal and cultural circumstances changed. In fact, in many communities such processes of re-Indianization are already well under way.

On the other hand, outside the legal and ideological definitions concocted by the state and the intellectuals, there is really no such thing as an Indian in Mexico. Indigenous peoples speak over 60 different languages and have equally diverse cultures and identities. These identities have traditionally been defined around the local community and its territory, but are currently undergoing a profound redefinition. The only trait that is shared by all these groups is the fact that they are not considered Mestizo.

The ethnic category of Mestizo is even more problematic, since it purports to include groups as diverse as recent immigrants from Europe and the Middle East, westernized urban elites, traditional peasant communities, Catholic, Protestants, Jews and Atheists, and the widely varying regional cultures of Mexico. As in the case of the Indians, the only trait shared by all Mestizos is the fact that they do not consider themselves Indians.

In the twentieth century, artists and ideologues close to the Revolutionary regime sought to give a positive content to the identity of the Mestizos, equated with the national identity, and the State made a concerted effort to instill this identity in the population, through the school system, public art works, the media and other means of propaganda (Bartra, 1987). However, such attempts have been all but abandoned in the past three decades and the Mestizo identity has lost much of its content.

Finally, it must be stressed that the ideology of mestizaje, while overtly promoting the end of all racial differences, actually racialized the social and cultural diversity of Mexico, and has become the basis for a pervasive racism. Mexican racism is not public or overtly political, as in the United States, but it effectively discriminates against those with darker skins and a less Westernized culture in the social and economical realms, thus reinforcing and legitimizing the profound



economic inequalities that plague Mexican society. This discrimination has worsened in the past decades, as the momentum of hegemonic nationalism has weakened, and is particularly evident in the mass-media (Linares, n.d.).

### Indigenous Strategies of Accommodation and Their Limits

Throughout the twentieth century, most Indigenous communities reached a kind of *modus vivendi* with the Mexican state. The agrarian laws protected their communal holdings, and gave them the hope of recovering some of the land they had lost during the nineteenth century. This meant that their survival was not directly threatened, and they could negotiate accommodations with the State in the political terrain.

These negotiations usually implied accepting the supremacy of the regime, and of local State agents over community governments. In many instances, power centered on a "cacique" a political leader that had the support of the government and that ruled the community in an authoritarian fashion, with frequent resort to force. The acceptance of governmental authority, even in its most repressive forms, gave the communities access to services such as education, health, roads, electricity, etc.

On the other hand, the communities and their members were increasingly integrated to the developing capitalist economy, as they sold their surplus agricultural production, became producers of commercial crops, such as coffee, or migrated to work in the cities.

To preserve their ethnic identity in this context of increased political, social and economic integration, the Indigenous communities reinforced institutions that embodied and ritualized it. The most important were an elaborate ceremonial economy, centered on the rituals celebrating the Catholic saints, and a very complex system of government, consisting of an elaborate pyramid of hierarchically organized political and religious positions. These institutions absorbed much of the economic surpluses obtained by the members of the community in the capitalist economy, since they were expected to invest heavily in organizing the ritual festivities and in performing the duties involved in the government positions they occupied. In this way, they reasserted their allegiance to the community and to its ethnic identity (Hill, 1991). Similarly many communities have strengthened their systems of collective labour, in which all the members of the community contribute their work, or their money, to works for the general benefit.

In this way, many Indigenous communities achieved a kind of equilibrium in their relationship with the State. This situation was in no way advantageous to them, since it meant their subordination to the authoritarian regime. Besides the Indigenous population was usually the victim of political, social and economic discrimination and remained the poorest sector in Mexican society, since its agricultural economy was marginalized by the development policies of the government, and the services it received were usually substandard.

### The Current Transformations

In the past three decades the precarious equilibrium reached by Indigenous communities in their relationship with the State, and in their internal life, has been altered dramatically as Indigenous societies, the State, and the Mestizo "majority", have experienced profound crises and undergone deep transformations.

Since the late 1970s the nationalistic and inward-looking model of economic development adopted by the Mexican State entered into a deep crisis, and the subsequent liberalization has not been able to produce sustained economic growth. Simultaneously the State has abandoned most of the policies it had devised for achieving the national integration of Mexico, most notably Indigenismo, and has reduced its role to trying to alleviate the massive inequalities that plague Mexican society. Meanwhile the Mexican economy has been opened to foreign trade and investment, and Mexicans have migrated in increasing numbers to the United States.

These transformations in State policy have deeply affected the Indigenous communities, and their livelihood and traditional ways of life have entered into a profound crisis. It does not seem overly exaggerated to compare this contemporary crisis to the one faced by Indigenous societies in the sixteenth century, after the Spanish conquest. Indeed, the current transformations threaten the very foundations of the ethnic identities of most indigenous societies. Paradoxically, while the most dramatic aspect of the sixteenth century crisis was the precipitous decline in the Indigenous population, in the current, an important element of transformation has been the demographic explosion that has multiplied by three the Indigenous population from 1930 to the present, as can be seen in Table 4.2.

As they did five centuries ago, Indigenous societies are reacting to this dramatic situation by actively transforming their own cultures, by organizing politically, and by making their voices heard in the national and international arena. No doubt, this will lead to a radical definition of their identities and ways of life.

### *The Complexities of Community Life*

Beyond the diversity of Indigenous communities, which range from the small dispersed farms of the Tarahumara in the North, and the Huichol in the West, to the highly dense settlements of the Tzotzil in Chiapas, in the South, and to the town-dwelling communities of traders in Juchitán, Oaxaca, also in the South, the following general trends of transformation can be identified.

First, as Indigenous communities have grown in size, their internal conflicts have intensified. As competition for land and access to government positions has increased, the political systems that traditionally distributed these scarce goods have come under strain. In some instances, an élite has monopolized the best lands and the highest positions and has managed to disenfranchise large sectors of the community. These privileged groups have even distorted the ceremonial economy, and the systems of communal labour, to turn them into mechanisms of exploitation of the disenfranchised groups.

In other communities, the political system has opened up and become more inclusive; therefore, communal assemblies, which include all male members of the town, have gained power over the traditional hierarchical system of positions. In other instances, the traditional system of government has been abandoned and electoral politics, involving the national political parties, have gained ground, usually with an opposition party representing the groups that had been excluded from power.

Since the traditional systems of government were, and still are, closely linked with the traditional religion, a highly modified version of Catholicism, political dissent has often taken the form of religious conversion to Protestant and Evangelical creeds. Disenfranchised groups, particularly women, who were traditionally excluded from all political and religious positions, have turned to Protestant religions in search of different forms of improving their personal and family situation. For instance, traditional religion is linked with high

consumption of alcohol among males, which in turn produces domestic violence against women. Thus, women use the new religions' ban of alcohol to improve their domestic situation.

In many communities, the conversions have been massive and have sparked serious conflicts. In Chiapas, and other states, the converts have been killed or expelled from the community. In other communities, however, creative accommodations have been reached, such as separating the political and the religious aspects of community government, so that Protestants can participate in the former. To many observers, religious conversions seem a threat to the unity of the communities; however, it must be stressed that in most instances they simply reflect tensions and divisions that already existed in them.

Gender relations have also become an important issue in the past decades. Traditionally, women were excluded from power and public life in the communities, but lately they have been demanding a greater voice and participation. The crisis of traditional agriculture, a male activity, has meant that in many instances women have become the most important providers for their families. In some cases they have been able to organize into cooperatives and thus have improved the marketing conditions of their traditional crafts; in others, they have found employment as domestic servants in towns, or in factories. Their increased economic weight has given them a greater say in family and community affairs. However, the struggle for female empowerment is far from complete: for instance Indigenous women have far higher rates of illiteracy and systematically receive less education than males.

### *The End of Subsistence Agriculture?*

Another highly significant transformation of the past decades has been the crisis in the traditional form of subsistence agriculture practiced by most Indigenous communities. For 5,000 years, peasants in Mexico subsisted from maize, squash, beans and other associated crops, and using basically the same agricultural technologies.

In the past decades the viability of this form of life has been eroded from inside the communities by the population explosion. As the Indigenous population boomed, their small mostly non-irrigated fields could not increase their production accordingly, particularly since the plots were atomized as they were subdivided among an ever more numerous offspring. Therefore the dependence of most communities

on food bought at the market increased, as did the time that their members had to spend working outside them in order to earn the money necessary to purchase them.

Meanwhile, the State considered subsistence agriculture as backward and unproductive and did not support it, while it actively sponsored the development of cash crops. The lack of credits, irrigation works and the artificially low prices imposed on maize made this form of agriculture increasingly unsustainable from an economic point of view. Erosion, deforestation, soil exhaustion and land fragmentation made it increasingly unsustainable from an ecological point of view.

The *coup de grâce* to subsistence agriculture was given by the legal and economic reforms of the early 1990s. The former legalized the fragmentation and sale of communal landholdings, and stopped the agrarian reform that had restituted land to many communities. The latter opened up the country's borders to maize and other agricultural products imported from the United States and other countries, at much lower prices.

These reforms, aimed at modernizing Mexican agriculture and making it internationally competitive, have radically altered the economic and social life of Indigenous and other traditional peasant communities.

Maize agriculture has basically ceased to be an economically viable activity: it is now much cheaper to buy maize than to produce it directly. Thus, many peasants have abandoned this crop, opting for other products; many more, between 5 and 10 million, have abandoned the land altogether and have migrated to seek work in the growing modern farms, in the cities and in the United States. However, maize agriculture has not disappeared entirely, since many peasants continue growing this plant, although in a more limited scale, as an insurance against the uncertainties of cash crop production and the labor market and as a source of better quality food than the one they can buy.

The experience of Indigenous and other peasant communities with cash crops has not been entirely satisfactory. The wild fluctuations in international prices, and the lack of effective compensatory measures from the government, have often led them to economic ruin. Besides the usually poor, eroded, atomized, and non-irrigated land plots of most Indigenous peasants do not allow them to compete with the large agribusinesses from the United States, Brazil, and other countries, nor do they receive the subsidies granted to farmers in the developed countries.

The shift away from the traditional maize subsistence agriculture has meant a dramatic transformation of the life and culture of most indigenous societies. This form of life implies a highly complex relationship with the web of life in and around their communities, one that involved what we would define as economic and technological, as well as religious and supernatural elements. Maize agriculture involves not just the peasants and their land, but also their entire households, the fallow lands that are used for grazing and plant collecting, the domestic animals that feed from the stalks and the corn cobs, the "monte", or wild lands that surround the milpas, the water sources, the weather, the gods and spirits of the maize, the rain and the plagues that afflict it, and other natural, animate, inanimate and supernatural beings. Therefore, its significance goes beyond the alimentary and the economic realms, as the identity of many indigenous people is defined around this plant, which is considered sacred and consubstantial with humankind. For instance, the Maya from Yucatan call themselves "people of maize" and define themselves as "milperos", those who work the maize fields (Burns, 1983).

Besides, being able to produce most, or at least a significant part, of their food provided Indigenous communities with a degree of autonomy from the capitalist economy, which is why they have persevered in planting this crop. Therefore, the erosion of "ecological autonomy", as John Tutino has defined it, has meant, an erosion of the capacity of the Indigenous communities to decide their own future and to openly challenge the State, as they did in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Tutino, 2000). This has upset the precarious equilibrium they had managed to construct in their relationship with the State and the rest of Mexican society, forcing them to seek new forms of relating with them, as we shall see below.

The legal reforms concerning land tenure, and the crisis of maize agriculture, have left Indigenous communities particularly vulnerable to new forms of dispossession by the State and capitalist enterprises in their endless quest for accumulating capital and resources (Harvey, 2005). Their territories, now apparently deprived of any economic usefulness, are however rich in mineral and forestry resources or are perfectly suited for building dams, or other infrastructure projects. Besides their exceptional biodiversity, among the highest in the planet, makes them the target for prospectors, and the traditional ecological knowledge of the communities has become one more resource to be

exploited. Even the genome of these populations has been opened up to dispossession.

### *Migration and Its Consequences*

The crisis in traditional agriculture has led many Indigenous peasants to abandon their land and seek employment elsewhere. By some estimates up to 30 per cent of the Indigenous population is now composed of migrants.

These men, women and children endure terrible work conditions as migrant laborers in the large agribusinesses in the Northwestern regions of the country: they work for more than 8 hours and are paid only by the amount of fruits or plants they harvest; children are made to work since a very early age and often do not have access to education; they are exposed to dangerous pesticides and live in insalubrious quarters.

Other migrants have moved to the city, where many have been forced to subsist in the informal sector of the economy, or as masons and in other underpaid professions. Many more have migrated to the US, to work in farms and in the cities.

While some Indigenous groups, such as the Mixtec, have been migrating for almost a century, other groups have only recently begun doing so. In both cases, the outflow of men, women and children has radically altered the life of their communities.

The absence of males has allowed women to assume many roles from which they had been previously excluded, such as planting the land and participating in the community government. This has produced a redefinition of gender relations. Meanwhile, the migrant laborers' remittances have kept their communities afloat, allowing Indigenous households to acquire consumer goods such as televisions and refrigerators that were previously inaccessible to them.

The migrants have developed highly complex and dynamic networks of communication and travel to keep in touch with their original communities. Many try to go back to participate in the main religious festivals and in important family occasions. Others continue participating in the community government, sending money to purchase their positions and to fulfill their communal obligations. In some instances, the money and the influence of the migrants have managed to topple oppressive "caciques" and have democratized community life.

In their host communities, the migrants seek to reproduce key elements of their community life and their ethnic identities. They celebrate their religious festivals, and try to establish a ritual relationship with their new territory, while preserving and revitalizing their native tongues. However, the pervasive racism against Indians in Mexican towns often forces them to hide their ethnic affiliation and to dress, speak, and act like Mestizos.

Nevertheless, migration has increased the national visibility of Indigenous persons all around Mexico: before the 1970s the Indigenous population of Mexico was concentrated in their traditional territories, but it is now distributed throughout the country, and cities and regions that had no significant Indigenous presence now have growing communities of immigrants.

### **Indigenous Voices**

#### *Political Mobilizations*

In the past 20 years the State has abandoned Indigenista policies and has not substituted them by any alternative. As Héctor Díaz Polanco has proposed, Indigenismo has been substituted by "ethnophagy" a kind of *laissez-faire* that abandons any policies of nation-building or social integration and leaves Indigenous communities at the mercy of the forces of globalized capitalism (Díaz Polanco 2006).

The abandonment of Indigenismo, however, was also the result of the mobilization of Indigenous communities, which denounced its authoritarian and paternalistic elements, and demanded a greater say in the definition of government policies directed towards them. This political mobilization was spearheaded by the cadres of teachers and professionals that had been formed under Indigenismo and who were supposed to lead the final and definite integration of their communities into the Mestizo majority. Instead, they became leaders of a new kind of Indigenous political and social movements.

The Indigenous mobilizations of the past thirty years have continued and revived the tradition of peasant mobilization around the central demands of popular Liberalism, as defined in the nineteenth century: political democracy, security in community land tenure, and social justice.

However, the new Indigenous movements have introduced a new set of demands centered on the respect of their cultural particularities

and their ethnic identities. Through the recognition of the ethnic particularity of Indigenous communities they seek to establish a new kind of relationship between them and the State, centered on their legal autonomy. These demands have challenged the hegemony of the ideology of mestizaje, and its definitions of Mexico as a culturally and racially unified nation.

The new Indigenous movements have taken many different forms. Some have been centered on the defense of communal lands against dispossession by development projects, such as dams or roads, or by forestry and mining companies. Others have centered on economic demands, particularly for the marketing of the cash crops now produced by many communities. Political mobilization around these apparently narrow issues has had a significant impact on the Indigenous communities involved, leading often to a revitalization of their ethnic identity and their cultural particularities, and new feelings of empowerment.

The best known of the Indigenous movements is the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN), a guerrilla army from the Southern state of Chiapas, that took arms against the State in January 1994 and that has been in an uneasy truce, and protracted negotiations with it, ever since. The Zapatistas, as they are generally known, used the name of the most prominent peasant leader of the 1910 revolution, Emiliano Zapata, thus establishing their link with the popular Liberal tradition. Besides they presented a set of demands centered on the recognition of Indigenous cultures and the granting of legal autonomy to their communities. Their rebellion was publicized all over the world, and they managed to mobilize supporters from many countries.

For many Mexicans, and most foreigners, the Zapatista uprising was the first evidence of Indigenous mobilization and of the demand for a new relation between these groups and the rest of Mexican society. However, it was the result of over 20 years of political experimentation and mobilization in which the different Indigenous societies have managed to find new voices and new strategies for defining and defending their ethnic identities.

### *The Conflict around Autonomy*

Since 1994, the demands of most Indigenous movements have centered on the recognition of legal and political autonomy for Indigenous communities and peoples.

For the Indigenous movements, autonomy means self-government for their communities, with the legal recognition of its traditional authorities and the traditional methods of electing them; it also implies respect for the customary law of the community and for its jurisdiction within its boundaries; it should include too respect and recognition of the cultural particularities of the different Indigenous peoples, which should be reflected in a bilingual and bicultural education, in respect for local medical practices, and in greater access to the mass media. Simultaneously, autonomy would mean that Indigenous communities would have a decisive say in the definition and implementation of government policies aimed at them, including the exploitation of natural resources found in their territories. More generally, the demand for autonomy is a demand for a new kind of relationship between Indigenous communities and the Mexican State and society: one in which Indigenous peoples are recognized as an integral part of the national community, and no longer as an alien minority, and as full legal and political subjects, and no longer as objects of government policies, thus enjoying equal rights to the rest of Mexicans without having to renounce their cultural particularities.

There has been much debate about the limits and forms that this form of autonomy may take. Although all Indigenous movements agree that self-government would not mean independence or sovereignty, non-Indigenous critics have argued that even a limited form of autonomy would threaten the national unity of Mexico and would impinge on the sovereignty of its government. As regards the application of customary law, the defenders of autonomy agree that it would be subordinated to the Mexican laws, particularly in serious crimes, but its critics argue that it would create fiefs within the State, and that many of its precepts are contrary to national laws and human rights. The definition of the territorial rights of the communities is also highly controversial: Indigenous movements demand the recognition of community "territories" that would go beyond the land used for cultivation and include uncultivated zones, such as mountains, forests and rivers, as well as the mineral and oil resources found underground; the State and the critics of autonomy reject such a broad definition, arguing that it limits national sovereignty.

Another theme of debate is the definition of the subjects of autonomy. As we have seen, in Mexico, there are no clear-cut distinctions between Indians and non-Indians, and therefore it would

be difficult to decide which specific peoples and communities would have right to autonomy. Indeed the possibility of obtaining autonomy would lead many Mestizo peasant communities, as well as some urban ones, to redefine themselves as Indigenous, something that they have already started to do.

On the other hand, most Indigenous movements argue that autonomy should be granted to individual communities, which have traditionally been the seats of Indigenous government; other observers, however contend that this would atomize the autonomous entities and make them economically and politically unviable, and that autonomy should be granted to Indigenous "peoples", that is whole ethnic groups that share the same language and culture and live in a relative large region; others propose the creation of multi-ethnic regions, whose autonomous governments would include several Indigenous groups as well as the Mestizos living in them.

The debate about Indigenous autonomy started in earnest in 1995 within the framework of peace negotiations between the government and the EZLN, which was backed in this issue by a large number of Indigenous organizations. An early agreement between the parties granted a relatively far-reaching autonomy to Indigenous communities, recognizing them as a fourth level of government, below municipalities. However, it was never made into law and finally in 2001, Congress approved a law that granted a much more limited autonomy and that was rejected by both the Zapatistas and most Indigenous organizations. Since then the issue has been in a stalemate: autonomy exists formally but it has not been implemented.

What has been at stake in this protracted debate is a new definition of Mexico as a nation. There is no doubt that the definition of national identity centered on the ideology of "mestizaje" that espoused the racial unification of the population of the country and the disappearance of Indigenous groups, can no longer be sustained. Indeed, since 1992 the Mexican constitution recognizes that Mexico is a "pluricultural" society. However, the shape that this new definition will take is not clear at all.

The State and many non-Indigenous Mexicans favor a limited form of autonomy according to the Anglo-American model of multiculturalism. This would mean that Indians would be recognized as a "minority", distinct from the "majority" of Mestizos, and would be granted some special rights that would not threaten the sovereignty of the majority and of the State that supposedly represents it. As Slavoj

Zizek has argued, this form of multiculturalism is highly functional for the working of globalized capitalism, since it reduces differences to a meaningless "cultural" realm and precludes any kind of contestation of the system as a whole (Zizek, 1998). In Mexico, this brand of multiculturalism would simply reinvigorate the racialist definitions of national identity proposed by the ideology of mestizaje while entrenching the discrimination against Indians.

In contrast, the more far-reaching form of autonomy proposed by the Indigenous movements and some of its supporters could lead to a true redefinition of the nation, and impose effective limits on the expansion of globalized capitalism into the communities. The recognition of Indigenous territories and of a fuller jurisdiction for Indigenous legal systems, would allow the communities to defend themselves against the dispossession brought on them by the government and the corporations, and would create new *loci* of sovereignty beyond the centralized State. If coupled with other measures, such as the recognition of traditional forms of intellectual property, which we shall discuss below, this would mean a radical redefinition of the relationship between the State and the Indigenous peoples and perhaps allow them to finally surmount the poverty and marginalization that they have endured for centuries.

### *Indigenous Cultures in the National and Global Arena*

In the past 30 years, Indigenous cultures have been profoundly affected by the transformations that we have discussed. As a result of the spread of education, of the crisis in traditional agriculture and of the rise in migration, many of the traditional identifiers of Indigenous identity seem to be disappearing: many Indigenous children are no longer learning the language of their parents; Indigenous men and women are abandoning their traditional occupations as peasants and producers of crafts as well as their traditional communities and moving to the cities to engage in new activities; traditional Indian costumes are being substituted by industrially-produced clothes.

In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries similar cultural transformations led to the abandonment of Indigenous ethnic identities and to the adoption of the National identity by large groups of the formerly Indigenous population within the process of "de-Indianization" brought about by mestizaje. Today, many observers fear, or celebrate, that the contemporary transformations will lead to

... themselves  
... mestizaje. Many Indigenous persons  
... have migrated to the cities, learned Spanish and received  
education, even up to university level, have not renounced their ethnic  
affiliation to their communities, but have instead sought new ways to  
express it in the cultural and political realms. Thus the process of  
cultural change and social transformation that produced the Mestizo  
majority in Mexico seems to be no longer working in the way it used  
to work, and in the future may not lead to the dissolution of Indigenous  
identities, but rather to their redefinition and even revitalization.

In fact, urban-dwelling, educated and articulate Indigenous  
intellectuals have become important actors in the political and cultural  
scene of Mexico. These intellectuals, ranging from artists like  
Francisco Toledo and Saúl Villa, writers like Natalio Hernández and  
Juan Gregorio Regino, to lawyers like Adelfo Regino, Francisco López  
Barcenas and Floriberto Díaz Gómez, and academics like Victor de  
la Cruz, have given a new projection and visibility to Indigenous  
cultures, transforming their image in the Mestizo imaginary, from a  
traditional and static reality, to a dynamic and creative force.

They have also articulated the demands of indigenous movements.  
Regino and Díaz Gómez, for instance, have formulated a cogent vision  
of the communal values of traditional Indigenous communities,  
formulating a political program for the defense of their autonomy and  
their cultural particularities. The figure and writings of Subcomandante  
Marcos, the Zapatista spokesman, have also contributed significantly  
to giving new visibility and vitality to Indigenous culture in the national  
and international realms.

Besides, thousands of teachers, scientists, engineers, doctors,  
political activists, and other Indigenous professionals are working in  
their fields, and within the Indigenous movements, to improve the  
living conditions of their communities and to redefine their culture  
and their identity in the changing national and international context.

The role of these new Indigenous élites is fraught with  
contradictions. Some have reproduced the authoritarian practices of  
caciques they have replaced; others have distanced themselves  
from them. Some critics question the relevance of the

... of them published by the State. They argue that most speakers of  
these languages do not know how to read in them, and that the literary  
works do not correspond to traditional oral genres, such as prayers,  
ritual songs, myths, and folk tales, and thus have no relevance for  
them. However, precisely because these works go beyond traditional  
culture, they are modifying and enriching Indigenous cultures.

But educated elites are not the only ones involved in the  
redefinitions of Indigenous identities and cultures. Women who fight  
for their rights within their communities, religious converts who seek  
new ways of defining their individual and ethnic identities, crafts  
producers and artists who modify their wares to sell them in new  
markets, political movements that seek to modify community  
governments, as well as cooperatives and other productive enterprises,  
all these groups are seeking new ways of defining who they are, and  
their relationship to their communities, their ethnic identities, the State  
and national and world society.

Some migrant communities, such as the Mixtecs originally from  
Oaxaca who now live in California, have also engaged in processes  
of ethnic revitalization. As undocumented workers in the US, they  
discovered that they had much more in common with migrants from  
neighboring communities than they had previously thought. Thus, they  
have been building a new Mixteco identity that transcends the  
traditional community rivalries that divided them in their native  
Oaxaca. They have founded a radio station that broadcasts in Mixteco,  
and they have also incorporated into their movement members of other  
Indigenous groups also from Oaxaca. In this process of political  
mobilization and ethnic redefinition they have actively collaborated  
with American and Mexican intellectuals and activists (Escárcega,  
2002).

Lately Indigenous artists, producers and activists have taken  
advantage of another phenomenon of globalization: the growing  
nostalgia for cultural difference and authenticity. Groups like the Maya,  
particularly the Zapatistas, and the Huichol have been able to reach  
global audiences that support their political demands and also to find  
global markets for their agricultural and artistic productions (Nash,  
2001). While some critics have derided the lack of authenticity of  
these globally marketable products and discourses, these opportunities  
have been extremely valuable for these groups, protecting the

products and artists a degree of prestige and respect that they could not easily obtain in the national arena, given the deep-seated prejudices against Indians among Mestizo Mexicans.

Despite their vibrancy and vitality, Indigenous cultures still face massive disadvantages in their relation with the hegemonic forces of capitalism, institutionalized science and mass culture. This is particularly evident, in the way in which traditional knowledge of Indigenous community, produced by an intimate and a deeply-rooted relationship with the web of life, has been exposed to dispossession by pharmaceutical, agricultural and chemical companies who then recast it into the hegemonic language of modern science and obtain highly lucrative patents. This form of dispossession, known as bio-piracy, is facilitated by the fact that Mexican law offers no protection for traditional knowledge, and the existing international system of intellectual property is stacked in favor of corporations and against traditional communities.

Similarly, the networks of communication that can be built by and for Indigenous cultures, languages and arts, are no match to the mass media, which in Mexico give no space to Indigenous themes and voices and perpetuate many of the racist attitudes towards them.

### Towards the Future

There is no doubt that Indigenous societies are adapting to the new realities of world capitalism and the crisis of the Mexican nation-state, that Indigenous intellectuals and artists, producers and activists have been able to redefine their identities and to project them into new cultural and economic arenas. In this way they have emulated their ancestors who in the sixteenth century reinvented Indigenous cultures under Spanish domination and thus ensured their survival after the dramatic crisis produced by the conquest.

However, Mexican indigenous societies face the same dilemmas faced by local cultures all over the world. As the global networks of capitalism incorporate them, as their traditional ways of living and relating to the web of life enter in crisis, and as they are subject to a new wave of dispossession of their territories, their knowledge and even their genomes, the traditional roots of their cultures and identities are being upturned, and they are being forced, as much of mankind has been over the past centuries, to adapt and take part in the economic web of the global market. As a result, their cultures and identities

face the risk of becoming merely another brand of picturesque diversity in the marketplace of multiculturalism, as criticized by Zizek. In this new context they could become what Zygmunt Bauman has defined as mere "identifications", rootless definitions of identity that can be discarded and bought and sold in the market (Bauman, 2006).

This is why Indigenous movements defend their communities, and their communal life, which are intimately linked to their territories and to the relationship they have established with the web of life through maize agriculture. In this realm it will be fundamental to recognize that "Nature" as it exists in Indigenous territories is actually a cultural product, the result of hundreds of years of interaction and co-evolution between mankind and other species, and that the "natural resources" contained in such territories, which are among the richest in the world in biodiversity, are part of the patrimony of the Indigenous communities, and must be treated and respected as such. Similarly, maize agriculture should be recognized as an activity that must be revitalized because of its very important cultural and ecological dimensions, beside its economic value.

Indigenous movements have been the most important and visible social movements in Mexico in the past 20 years, and their impact has been felt throughout Mexican society: they contributed to democratization of political life, and they have questioned the nationalist ideologies that marginalized Indians, as well as large groups of Mestizos. However, their adversaries managed to insert them in the straitjacket of multiculturalism, thus casting their demands as minority revindications, dampening their subversive effects for the whole of society. Thirteen years after the Zapatista uprising, and after the fiasco of the autonomy law of 2001, it appears clear that the Indigenous movements alone will not be able to modify the political and social situation of Mexico, and that their fight should not be defined as a minority struggle but as a wider one, aimed at transforming Mexican society as a whole. Since the nineteenth century, Indigenous movements have played a key role in the construction of the Mexican nation, and they should continue doing so into the twenty-first century.

### References

- Aguirre Beltrán, Gonzalo. 1992. *El proceso de aculturación y el cambio socio-cultural en México*. México, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica (Obra Antropológica, 6).



- Bartra, Roger. 1987. *La jaula de la melancolía. Identidad y metamorfosis del mexicano*. México, D.F.: Editorial Grijalbo.
- Bauman, Zygmunt. 2006. *Modernidad líquida*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Bonfil Batalla, Guillermo. 1995 [1972]. "El concepto de indio en América: una categoría de la situación colonial", in *Obras escogidas de Guillermo Bonfil*, vol. 1, pp. 337-357. México: INI-INAH.
- Bonfil Batalla, Guillermo, 1990. *México Profundo. Una civilización negada*. México, D.F.: Editorial Grijalbo/Conaculta (Los Noventa).
- Burns, Allan F. 1983. *An Epoch of Miracles. Oral Literature of the Yucatec Maya*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Caso, Alfonso. 1958. *Indigenismo*. México: Instituto Nacional Indigenista (Culturas indígenas).
- Díaz Polanco, Héctor. 2006. *Elogio de la diversidad: globalización, multiculturalidad y etnofagia*. México: Siglo XXI Editores.
- Escárcega, Silvia y Stefano Varese, eds. 2002. *La ruta mixteca*. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México-Programa México Nación Multicultural.
- Gamio, Manuel. 1960 [1916]. *Forjando Patria*. México: Editorial Porrúa.
- Harvey, David. 2005. *The New Imperialism*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Knight, Alan. 1990. "Racism, Revolution and Indigenismo: México, 1910-1940", in Richard Graham, ed. *The Idea of Race in Latin America*. Austin: University of Texas Press, pp. 71-113.
- Mallon, Florencia E. 1995. *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Molina Enriquez, Andrés. 1909. *Los grandes problemas nacionales*. México: A. Carranza.
- Nash, June C. 2001. *Mayan Visions. The Quest for Autonomy in an Age of Globalization*. New York: Routledge.
- Navarrete Linares, Federico. 2004. *Las relaciones interétnicas en México*. Méxicocity: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- n.d. "Discriminación étnica y desigualdades en México: una reflexión histórica". In *La desigualdad en México: perspectivas interdisciplinarias*. Elisabetta di Castro, ed. México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México.
- Paz, Octavio 1970 [1950-59] *El laberinto de la soledad*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Reina, Leticia. 1986. *Las rebeliones campesinas en México (1819-1906)*. México: Siglo XXI Editores (Colección América Nuestra, Caminos de liberación).
- Stern, Steve. 2001. "La contracorriente histórica: los indígenas como colonizadores del Estado, siglos XVI a XX", in *Los retos de la etnicidad en los estados-nación del siglo XXI*. Leticia Reina, coord. pp. 73-92. México: CIESAS.
- Tutino, John. 2001. "Comunidad, independencia y nación: las participaciones populares en las historias de México, Guatemala y Perú", in Leticia Reina ed., *Los retos de la etnicidad en los estados-nación del siglo XXI*. México: CIESAS, pp. 125-151.

- Warman, Arturo. 2001. *Los indios mexicanos en el umbral del milenio*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica.
- Zizek, Slavoj. 1998. "El multiculturalismo o la lógica cultural del capitalismo multinacional," in Fredric Jameson and Slavoj Zizek, *Estudios culturales: reflexiones sobre el multiculturalismo*. Buenos Aires: Paidós, pp. 137-188.