

**INDIANS AND INDIANISM IN REVOLUTIONARY MEXICO**

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## ABSTRACT

Although the mass participation of Mexican Indians in the Revolution of 1910-1920 is universally recognized, recent scholarship has tended to downplay—even to deny outright—the ethnic specificity of their involvement: i.e., their capacity to formulate goals and pursue projects distinct from those of Ladinos (non-Indians). This essay argues, to the contrary, that the revolution was a conflict not only of class against class but of culture against culture, of aboriginal identity against European identity; and, moreover, that given Mexico's legacy of colonialism and neocolonialism it could not have been otherwise.

After a brief introduction, a theoretical discussion undertakes to define Ladino and Indian ethnic groups as historical products of the colonizing process and the indigenous response to that process. The two main strands of Indianist ideology—elite and peasant Indianism—are likewise derived, it is argued, from the history of domination and resistance which followed upon the Spanish conquest. Historical sketches of these opposing ideological currents are then provided as background to the study of Indians and Indianism in the Mexican Revolution, which follows in sections V, VI, and VII (pp. 19-37).

While Indians throughout Mexico participated in the Revolution, this essay focuses on the most prominent instance of peasant Indianism in the twentieth century, the movement led by Emiliano Zapata. The widespread perception of Zapata as an Indian and of Zapatismo as a species of Indianism is demonstrated in a review of contemporary accounts; and the accuracy of that perception is confirmed by analyzing the discourse of two prominent Zapatista ideologues, Paulino Martínez and Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama. Finally, the character of Zapatismo as an Indian—more specifically a Nahuatl—revolution is investigated at the grassroots level, in a study of oral literature and other ethnohistorical materials reflecting the viewpoint of the peasant Zapatistas themselves.

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## I. Introduction

On a tree-lined plaza in Mexico City, atop a twelve-meter pedestal, stands an enormous statue of an Aztec warrior, clad in a flowing robe and a plumed head-dress, holding his spear aloft and striking a proud, defiant pose. The inscription reads: "In memory of Cuauhtémoc and his soldiers, who fought heroically in defense of their homeland" (see Figure 1). (The last of the Aztec emperors, Cuauhtémoc was defeated by the Spaniards and their native allies on 13 August 1521, in the decisive battle of the Conquest of Mexico.) Not far away, near the ruins of an ancient pyramid, another plaque has been erected, which reads: "Heroically defended by Cuauhtémoc, Tlatelolco [the Aztec capital] fell into the power of Hernán Cortés. It was neither triumph nor defeat, but the painful birth of the mixed people which is the Mexico of today."<sup>1</sup>

These monuments, along with innumerable other sculptures, inscriptions, paintings, and murals in honor of the precolumbian past, are testimony to a cultural phenomenon which has come to permeate the Mexican national consciousness to an extent which is difficult to appreciate north of the Río Bravo/Rio Grande. Such nationalist Indianism (*indigenismo*: the term will be defined in the following section) has not been entirely lacking in the United States and Canada, but it has never attained mainstream status there, nor has its promulgation ever been a serious object of state policy, as has been the case in Mexico since the Revolution of the 1910s. To suggest that a sentimental attachment to things Indian occupied any significant place in US or Canadian national identity would border on the ridiculous, whereas the same proposition applied to Mexico is a banality.

But if the aboriginal past is Mexico's official pride and glory, the aboriginal present surely remains an embarrassment. The recent insurrection in the southern state of Chiapas focused the world's attention, if only momentarily, upon the stark realities facing Mexico's indigenous peoples, who continue to occupy the bottom tier of the country's social pyramid. At the same time, it also exemplified another—and antithetical—variety of Indianism: that of the Indian peasants themselves. Descendants of the ancient Maya, the Chiapas rebels name their guerrilla army after the revolutionary hero Emiliano Zapata and have adopted his famous slogan, *¡Tierra y libertad!* ("Land and freedom!"). When their political leadership, a body which refers to itself as the Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee, holds rallies in its zone of control, speeches are delivered in Tzeltal ("but with frequent references in Spanish to the *cabron gobierno*—the son-of-a-bitch government").<sup>2</sup> It is true that the chief spokesperson for the Committee, a mysterious, masked figure known as Subcomandante Marcos, describes himself as a Mestizo.

Yet when interviewed by a Canadian reporter he did not hesitate to situate the current insurrection within a conceptual context derived from Mayan cosmology. According to regional traditions, Marcos explains, the prehispanic regime of the ancestors was not annihilated but only driven (literally) underground, where it has ever since bided its time, awaiting "the moment to rise up like the corn." In the view of Indian elders, the rebellion of 1 January 1994 constituted the realization of the myth:

When we began to fight, we put our guns underground. We were waiting for the army to go to the villages and look for guns. So these guns were underground until December 31st. On December 31st, our people took the guns out and rose up like the corn. So, the old men say that this prophecy is coming to pass....

When the old men talk, you don't know when they are talking before the Conquest or in the Independence fight or in the Revolution or three weeks ago. In the collective memory, all is richness. Each fact that passes has a record in the past and confirms the prophecy. The prophecy was that we would win, of course. And that is the truth, we will win.<sup>3</sup>

But if the Indianist character of contemporary Zapatismo is difficult to overlook, that of its original incarnation has been much contested. While a minority of recent authors consider Zapata and his followers to have represented more or less the ideal type of "insurrectionist indigenismo," holding that this was "manifested in the dress, demands, and orientation of the largely Indian Zapatistas,"<sup>4</sup> such an interpretation would be dismissed as outworn romanticism by many historians. Thus John Womack, whose *Zapata and the Mexican Revolution* is widely regarded as the definitive treatment of its subject, takes passing note of the distribution of two manifestos written in Nahuatl (to which we shall return) as "the one 'Indian' episode of the whole Zapatista revolution."<sup>5</sup> In a more polemical vein, Robert P. Millon claims that of various "misconceptions concerning Zapatista ideology ... the 'Indianist' concept can be disposed of most easily."<sup>6</sup> Trotskyist historian Adolfo Gilly does not see fit to include a single allusion to Indians in his discussion of Zapatismo, although this chapter of his influential history of the Revolution fairly bristles with references to peasants, agrarian rebels, and even the "petty-bourgeois ideology" of the peasantry.<sup>7</sup> Alan Knight, to cite but one further example, argues that Zapatista demands "were usually couched in class rather than caste terms; they pitted peasants against landlords, not Indians against whites or mestizos." As Knight sees it, the identification of Zapata's movement as a specifically Indian rebellion was made by outsiders: "first by outraged planters, who ... shrilled the dangers of caste war, and later by *indigenista* [Indianist] reformers ... who chose to see Zapatismo, in retrospect, as the awakening of the Indian people of Morelos."<sup>8</sup>

That Knight has added his voice to this chorus is especially noteworthy, since he has explicitly identified his magisterial, two-volume interpretation of *The Mexican Revolution* with that of the populist scholars of an earlier

generation, most notably Frank Tannenbaum. Setting his teeth against the fashionable revisionism which would reduce the revolution to "a series of chaotic, careerist episodes," Knight asserts categorically "that Tannenbaum and his generation grasped the basic character of the 1910 Revolution as a popular, agrarian movement ... and thus an example of those relatively rare episodes in history when the mass of the people profoundly influenced events."<sup>9</sup> What Knight does not mention, however, is that for Tannenbaum the basic character of the Mexican Revolution was not only popular and agrarian but also Indian: "*Small groups of Indians under anonymous leaders were the Revolution.*"<sup>10</sup> And he regarded Zapata's movement in particular as embodying the revolution's Indianist aspect:

Zapatismo and Indianism are closely identified. In fact the words *Agrarismo*, *Zapatismo* and *Indianismo* have almost a common significance in the annals of the Revolution.... The symbolism now attached to Zapata is true at least in the sense that he forced upon the people of Mexico, by the unbending simplicity of his demands, the belief in the redemption of the Indian.... In a deeper sense, the agrarian revolution was a spiritual one, a battle for social and cultural equality.... The rural Mexico, the primitive, the Indian, the peon world, which had lain hidden and obscure for so long a time, was now suddenly confronting a city civilization and demanding cognizance.<sup>11</sup>

In effect, then, Knight's reassertion of the populist interpretation of the revolution comes up rather short of the original, since it denies what for Tannenbaum was the revolution's "deeper sense": that it pitted not only class against class, but culture against culture, the "Indian world" against the European civilization which had theretofore dominated and marginalized it.

To demonstrate that the revolution had, indeed, such an Indianist aspect is the object of the present essay. In so doing, however, I shall not be concerned to argue that ethnicity is in any sense a "deeper" phenomenon than class. On the contrary, I accept the premise of Marxists and world-systems theorists that the division of labor is analytically fundamental, at least in the interpretation of secular processes on a world-historical scale. But if the materialist conception of history is to be sustained—especially in the current intellectual ambience, where it must tack a course against the prevailing deconstructionist winds—it needs to be handled gingerly, and applied with the caution recommended (if not always strictly observed) by its founders: as a "guide to study, not a lever for construction after the Hegelian manner."<sup>12</sup> To be more specific, it is necessary to acknowledge that there are several conspicuous phenomena of the modern world—among them colonialism, racism, nationalism, and ethnic conflict—which cannot readily be "deduced" from the relations of production.<sup>13</sup> But this is not to say that one must treat each such phenomenon in empiricist or poststructuralist fashion, as if it were an independent variable, related to other variables only externally and accidentally. In the history of imperialized countries like Mexico, colonialism, racism, nationalism,

and ethnocentricity have been articulated with one another and with the relations of production in determinate ways, and their interconnections have proven to be durable and consequential. Such being the case, it seems rather a hasty abstraction to conclude that "caste identity was supplanted by class identity" during the nineteenth century, or that Zapatismo "pitted peasants against landlords, not Indians against whites or mestizos." From the austere vantage of the economic structure, these propositions may appear logically impeccable; but in south-central Mexico in 1910, the peasants happened to display a strong tendency to be Indians, whereas the landlords displayed an even stronger tendency to be both genetically and culturally European. Is it not the historian's province to take stock of such a remarkable "coincidence," and if possible to explain it—without, however, explaining it away? Even if we argue, as does Immanuel Wallerstein, that class and ethnicity were "two sets of clothing for the same basic reality,"<sup>14</sup> it remains to inquire how and why socio-economic relations came to assume the "extra" dimension of cultural difference, and what this added twist has entailed for the actors involved in those relations. The peasant-Indian/landlord-European correlation did not, in any event, seem irrelevant or uninteresting to Emiliano Zapata and his followers—whose anthems and battle-cries included not only "Up with the villages, down with the plantations!" but also "Death to the Spaniards!" and "Long live the Aztecs!"—and in what follows I shall try to vindicate their opinion in the matter.

## II. Definitions

Before proceeding further, however, a bit of terminological clarification—and thus of conceptual analysis—is in order. In everyday usage the meaning of the word "Indian," as applied to the indigenous inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere, their language, art, religion, material culture, etc., may not appear to be problematic. Yet it has proven remarkably difficult to arrive at a precise definition of Indianness; or, for that matter, of ethnic identity in general. To begin with the obvious, aboriginal people in the Americas had no conception of themselves as "Indians" prior to the arrival of Europeans. Rather, it was a category applied to the inhabitants of the "Indies" by their conquerors—both terms, of course, being the consequence of Columbus's geographical misapprehension. Imperialism and its derivative, ethnocentrism, had existed in Mexico before the Spanish conquest: the Aztecs, for example, referred to certain groups to the south of them as *Populuca* (stutterers) and to the nomads on their empire's northern frontier as *Chichimeca* (sons of dogs). But the indigenous sense of group identity in Mexico generally extended no further than

the clan, the village, or at most the city-state. "Indianness" as such was not a possible construct, for want of an opposite pole in terms of which it might be imagined, a pole which appeared only with the Spanish conquest. Thus Guillermo Bonfil Batalla concludes that "it was the European who created the Indian," while Judith Friedlander argues that "being Indian" in contemporary Mexico is a "forced identity," indicating not the vitality of aboriginal culture, which in her opinion was destroyed centuries ago, but merely low socioeconomic status; and she takes considerable pains to illustrate that many of the cultural attributes now identified as "Indian" are actually of European origin.<sup>15</sup>

Yet Indianness need not be a primordial, metaphysical substance, handed down unaltered from one generation to another since the dawn of time, in order to constitute a salient fact of life for historical actors. Ethnic groups are products of history—of trade, warfare, conquest, enslavement, migration, colonization, etc. They are subject to continuous formation and dissolution, are repeatedly redefined, and often "change their forms at amazingly fast rates."<sup>16</sup> This presents obvious problems for the ethnologist—and, a fortiori, for the civil servant concerned with the administration of "Indian affairs"—who quite naturally would prefer a simple and exact test to determine who is and who is not an Indian. It is not surprising, then, that Mexican anthropologists and indigenistas have debated the definition of *lo indio* (Indianness) rather extensively.<sup>17</sup> Unsatisfied with the single criterion of language, which had been thought sufficient by census takers prior to the Revolution, Manuel Gamio—often regarded as the father of Mexican anthropology as well as of modern indigenismo in Mexico—listed a number of empirically observable cultural characteristics which he thought might be considered definitive, and succeeded in having questions about such characteristics included in the national census of 1940. Thus, eating white bread, sleeping in a bed, and wearing shoes were regarded as European traits, whereas eating tortillas, going barefoot or wearing *huaraches* (sandals), and sleeping on the floor or in a hammock were considered evidence of Indianness. The effort, however, proved inconclusive: "It would undoubtedly be premature to assume that these very few cultural characteristics would be sufficient to classify a person as belonging to the Indian culture, when he no longer speaks an aboriginal language and even possesses many European cultural traits."<sup>18</sup>

All such attempts to define ethnicity according to objective criteria rest, as Fredrik Barth notes, "on the premise that cultural variation is discontinuous": i.e., that cultural attributes are not distributed randomly but occur in certain discrete clumps, which are in turn associated with discrete units of population.<sup>19</sup> Should the premise turn out to be false, an objective definition of ethnicity clearly would be a will-o'-the-wisp. The pertinence of this observation is evident when we recall that in Mexico, especially in the densely populated central region of the country, centuries of

intermingling between European and aboriginal populations have given rise to populations whose cultural characteristics are mixed or blended in varying proportions: hence "the formation of a kind of cultural continuum, with enormous variations but without any dividing line, properly speaking."<sup>20</sup> It is not surprising, therefore, that another Mexican anthropologist, Alfonso Caso, sought to bypass Gamio's problem by opting for an essentially subjective definition of the Indian: "The Indian is any individual who feels that he or she belongs to an indigenous community."<sup>21</sup> Unfortunately, this formulation only pushes the difficulty onto another level, since it remains necessary to define the indigenous community. But even aside from its circularity, Caso's subjective definition is open to much the same criticism as Gamio's objective one, since feelings also may vary continuously; which is to say that a person is not obliged to feel *either* Indian *or* non-Indian, but may feel *more* or *less* Indian. Moreover, membership in a community does not depend solely on individual, subjective choice: a person may well feel that he belongs to an Indian community while his neighbors feel otherwise.<sup>22</sup>

But even though a continuum, whether of objective traits or subjective feelings, undoubtedly lacks "proper" dividing lines, it may still be assigned improper—which is to say, socially constructed—ones. Such a demarcation of borders along a spectrum is, of course, artificial, and will therefore reflect the purposes for which it is made. As Barth observes, "although ethnic categories take cultural differences into account, we can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of 'objective' differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant." This being the case, the critical object for analysis "becomes the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses."<sup>23</sup>

The persistence of ethnic boundaries, often over centuries, is remarkable in two respects. First, such boundaries are permeable; which is to say that there can be and often is a considerable flow of individuals, and even of entire communities, across them. Theoretically, this traffic might be in either direction or both; but in Mexico it has almost exclusively taken the form of "Ladinization": the assimilation of Indians to the dominant, European-derived, "national" culture, i.e., their transformation into Ladinos.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, an ethnic boundary is also mutable: i.e., the cultural markers which delineate it are themselves impermanent and are periodically replaced by others. Thus, for example, the "traditional Indian costume" for males, current in much of Mesoamerica until very recent times, consisted of a white cotton blouse and breeches, fashioned after those of sixteenth-century peasants in Andalucia; a broad straw hat, introduced from the Philippines; and a woolen poncho, brought to Mexico from the Andes. Only the huaraches were

based on a precolumbian design.<sup>25</sup> Nonetheless, however diverse the temporal and geographical origins of such items, their function as signals of Indian ethnicity is not impaired.

Despite its mutability and its one-way permeability, the Indian-Ladino boundary in Mexico has been reproduced, albeit in a succession of cultural forms, for nearly half a millennium, in the face of devastating epidemics, economic transformations, wars, revolutions, and finally, since the mid-nineteenth century, concerted efforts on the part of the state to integrate the Indians into "civilized"—i.e., Ladino—society. What has been the source of this surprising viability? For an answer, we must turn to Mexico's colonial heritage: its history of conquest and colonization, followed by political independence and continuing "internal colonialism."

For the sake of clarity, I shall use the term colonialism exclusively in reference to the kind of social relations which are set up in exploitation colonies like New Spain, as distinct from settlement colonies like New England or New France. In an exploitation colony, what the colonizers covet and endeavor to appropriate is not so much the natives' land as their labor, which can be applied in producing wealth from the soil and subsoil. As Cortés exclaimed in his inimitably forthcoming manner: "I came to get gold, not till the soil like a peasant." The conquistadors hailed from the lower orders of what remained largely a feudal society, and their object was to raise their status through the attainment of wealth and power, and thus to reproduce the social structure of the mother country with themselves cast in the role of aristocrats. That the peasants on the western side of the Atlantic Ocean happened to be "Indians" was a matter of relative indifference. Mexico's aboriginal heritage may have presented certain difficulties—the language problem, obviously, is one example; or the need to introduce unfamiliar technology, such as ploughs, draft animals, wheeled vehicles, etc.—but it also provided opportunities. Fortuitously, the Aztec and the Spanish empires had adopted rather similar modes of appropriating the surplus production of subject populations, and this shared economic foundation permitted a certain "continuity between precolonial and colonial society," as Enrique Semo observes: "The link between them was embodied in the survival of the agrarian community and the tributary system it supported."<sup>26</sup> The Spaniards were not slow in recognizing the similarity and the opportunity it presented. As a royal auditor wrote in 1525, Mesoamericans "are very reasonable and orderly and accustomed to contribute to Moctezuma and his lords *just like Spanish peasants*."<sup>27</sup> By inserting themselves into a redistributive system which they found already in place, the Spaniards established a number of historical patterns which were to prove highly durable: an articulation between the indigenous, communal mode of agricultural production and a series of introduced modes of European origin; a simplification and homogenization of Amerindian societies, brought about through the suppression of the native



nobility and its replacement by Spanish overlords; and, consequently, the delineation of an Indian-Ladino boundary separating entities that were at once economically, politically, socially, and culturally distinct.

This is not the place to recount the history of New Spain, or the succession of forms—*encomienda*, *repartimiento*, *hacienda*—assumed by the articulation of Indian and Ladino modes of production.<sup>28</sup> Suffice it to say that by the late colonial period an agrarian structure had been established whose general features would persist in rural Mexico until the Revolution of 1910. The countryside was covered by two interdependent but highly differentiated types of agricultural units. On one side, there were vast commercial enterprises, the *haciendas* (great country estates), usually situated on the most fertile and accessible land, owned and managed by Creoles, worked by Indian or Mestizo peons, sharecroppers, or hired laborers, and devoted to the production of livestock or cash crops, whether for export or for the domestic market. On the other side, occupying lands of lesser fertility or greater remoteness, there were the much smaller indigenous villages, displaying relatively little internal social stratification, and engaged largely, though not exclusively, in subsistence agriculture. These two distinct entities were separated by a profound cultural divide, the Indian-Ladino frontier; yet they also interacted, and their interactions were essential to both.<sup>29</sup> Precisely on account of the encroachment of the haciendas, Indian communities had seen their land base reduced to an extent which severely limited their capacity for self-sufficiency; stints of seasonal labor on the hacienda made up the shortfall. The presence of an indigenous, subsistence sector was, in turn, highly advantageous to the haciendas, as Eric Wolf explains:

Assured of seasonal laborers who would do its bidding at the critical periods in the process of production, the haciendas welcomed the presence of Indian communities on their fringes. For such a community constituted a convenient reservoir of laborers where men maintained their labor power until needed, at no additional cost to the entrepreneur. Suddenly we find, therefore, that the institution of the conquerors and the institution of the conquered were linked phenomena. Each was a self-limiting system, powered by antagonism to the other; and yet their coexistence produced a perpetual if hostile symbiosis, in which one was wedded to the other in a series of interlocking functions.<sup>30</sup>

The result of such economic interaction across the ethnic boundary was, as Wolf proceeded to emphasize, only "symbiosis," never "synthesis." Here, then, was a society whose process of economic reproduction was intimately connected to the reproduction of Indian and Ladino ethnic identities.

The achievement of political independence in the early nineteenth century severed the bond of dependence with Spain, but not that which had been established between Ladinos and indigenous communities. The latter phenomenon has been aptly described as "internal colonialism," defined by one Mexican writer as "a structure of social relations based on domination and exploitation among culturally heterogeneous, distinct groups. If it has a specific difference

with respect to other relations based on superordination, it inheres in the cultural heterogeneity which the conquest of some peoples by others historically produces."<sup>31</sup>

Nonetheless, the settler decolonization of Mexico did result in ideological changes affecting the perception, if not the reality, of ethnic antagonisms. When the first post-Independence Congress of the State of Mexico was convened in 1824, the prominent Liberal José María Luis Mora proposed that the word "*indio* [Indian], in common acceptance as a term of opprobrium for a large portion of our citizens, be abolished from public usage." The colonial *fueros* (royal dispensations establishing a separate juridical status for Indians) having been abolished, Mora declared that by law "Indians no longer exist."<sup>32</sup> Following the Liberal Revolution of 1857, the ideological project of nation-building, based on generalized, enforced Ladinization of the indigenous population, became a priority of the federal government. There was, however, an essential contradiction inherent in the program of Ladino nationalism, as Pierre Beaucage observes:

The state, in the hands of either the military or civilian "enlightened despots," tried to substitute "national identity" for ethnic and regional differences (through the school system, military service, and so forth). At the same time, the prevailing pattern of accumulation, export-oriented plantation agriculture, makes for the persistence of a large, ethnically stigmatized, rural labor force. Thus, at the economic level, an ethnic hierarchy is forced upon native workers, while at the political-ideological level, their distinctiveness is denied.<sup>33</sup>

Given this paradoxical situation, it is little wonder that Conservatives continued to acknowledge—indeed, to gloat upon—the ethnic dichotomy which Liberalism was attempting to suppress. As a frankly neocolonialist newspaper editorialized in 1852: "all activity, we might say almost all intelligence, resides in the Spanish race, with the result that the naturally docile Indian race becomes a kind of auxiliary mass which is invaluable if properly directed."<sup>34</sup>

In linking the construction of ethnic identities to Mexico's history of colonialism, I have not meant to imply that Indian identity is imposed in a unidirectional manner upon the subjugated by the dominant ethnic group. It may in equal measure be a response on the part of the colonized: a way of coping with subaltern status or of resisting the colonizers' efforts at forcible assimilation. As Alan Sandstrom observes, "by suppressing native populations and attempting to exercise total control over them, the Spaniards virtually guaranteed that Indian culture would survive. Ethnicity, to some extent, can be understood as an effective defense on the part of a subordinated group against social, political, economic, or military domination."<sup>35</sup>

For the purposes of the present essay, then, Indian ethnic identity is understood as the historical product of colonialism, both external and internal, and pertains to communities which have constituted themselves by retaining,

adopting, or inventing cultural attributes which set them apart from their colonizers, thereby increasing internal solidarity and facilitating the struggle for collective survival, whether these attributes are of precolumbian or later origin.

So much for "Indian," what of "Indianism"? If we allow that Indianness is not an eternal, Platonic Form, but rather arises through the historical conflict of classes and cultures, then neither can Indianism be treated as a unitary substance. There are, as will be illustrated below, both elite and peasant Indianisms; an official, state-sponsored Indianism and a subversive or insurrectionary Indianism; an Indianism of the Ladino nationalists and an Indianism of the indigenous villagers themselves; an Indianism of the colonizers and an Indianism of the colonized.<sup>36</sup> The former variety originated as the creature of Creole nationalism, and consisted in a purely rhetorical celebration of Aztec antiquity—in elevating dead Indians to the status of national symbols, while relegating living ones to that of an internal colony. For reasons to be noted below, this elite Indianism suffered something of an eclipse in the decades following Independence, but in the late nineteenth century, with the global dissemination of the ideology of nation-building, it began to re-emerge, this time promoting an assimilationist agenda: a process which came to fruition after the Revolution of 1910. Peasant Indianism, by contrast, has always constituted the main source of resistance to the processes of internal colonization, on the one hand, and of Ladino nation-building, on the other. Its minimum objective has been cultural survival at the community level, its maximum—on those comparatively rare occasions when circumstances have permitted the entertainment of more comprehensive goals—local or regional autonomy. I suggest that the Mexican Revolution provided such an opportunity, and that Zapatismo may properly be interpreted as the outstanding instance of peasant Indianism in twentieth-century Mexico.

### III. Elite Indianism

Official or ruling-class indigenismo has a long history in Mexico, which can be sketched here only in the broadest strokes. Many generations before independence from Spain, the divergence of interests between *criollos* and *peninsulares* had given rise to nationalist sentiments among the former, and this in turn prompted efforts to construct a heritage and a national identity distinct from that of the *peninsulares*.<sup>37</sup> An ideological project of this nature had, perforce, to make use of whatever symbols lay at hand, and the only symbols of suitable antiquity and venerability were those of the Indians. Hence the rise of "neo-Aztecism": i.e., the appropriation of Aztec myths and legends as

substitutes for those of Greco-Roman provenance in the shaping of a homegrown intellectual culture, an early example of what one writer has termed "literary strategies of decolonization."<sup>38</sup> Hence the invention of a bizarre tradition which identified St. Thomas the Apostle with the Mesoamerican divinity Quetzalcóatl, thus conveniently allowing pious Creoles to have their Christian cake (or, rather, wafer) while eating its aboriginal surrogate. And hence also the Creole enthusiasm for the brown-skinned Madonna known as the Virgin of Guadalupe, whose Amerindian visage would become the ubiquitous icon of Mexican nationality.<sup>39</sup>

The utility of Creole indigenismo, but also its limitations, were demonstrated when it became the ideological underpinning of the Independence movement. Mexican nationalists like Servando Teresa de Mier and Carlos María de Bustamante "gathered up the threads of colonial Indianism and fashioned out of them a rationale for Mexican separation from Spain. They ... formulated the thesis that the justice of independence lay in the injustice of the Conquest."<sup>40</sup> That is to say, they argued that the war against Spain would liberate "the Mexican nation" from three centuries of colonial subjugation, thereby implicitly recognizing the legitimacy of the Aztec state *vis-à-vis* Spanish imperialism, and depicting their own enterprise as a form of retribution for its destruction. However, no sooner did neo-Aztecism and the cult of Guadalupe become the war standards for the indigenous insurrection led by the revolutionary priests Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos, than it became apparent that indigenismo was a two-edged sword on which Creole nationalists might cut their hands; or rather, to return to the analytical terms set out above, that the limited objectives of elite Indianism were incompatible with the social revolution that peasant Indianism threatened to entail. The Creole patriots were not slow in absorbing the lesson and made common cause with the imperial authorities in quashing the aboriginal revolt. Their pursuit of justice for the Aztecs proved a decidedly less urgent concern than the task of resubjugating the Aztecs' descendants. Independence from Spain was thus delayed until a decade later, when Agustín de Iturbide—a royalist brigadier who had made his military career fighting against Morelos, whom he had captured and executed in 1815—proclaimed his Plan of Iguala. This neocolonial manifesto provided for the protection of Spanish rights and property, guaranteed the privileges of the Catholic Church, and proclaimed the unity of Spaniards and Mexicans (read: Creoles) in an independent monarchy to be ruled by a Spanish prince. When Ferdinand VII, smarting at the loss of New Spain, declined to appoint a monarch, Iturbide had himself crowned Emperor of Mexico on 18 May 1822, thereby aptly symbolizing the emergence of an internal-colonialist regime.

Independence from Spain unleashed a half-century of chaos and bloodletting in Mexico, but once the reshuffled deck had been sorted out again, the Liberal bourgeoisie was in power, although the landed gentry, or hacendado class, remained a force to be reckoned with. This was, as we have seen, a time when Mexican liberals were intent upon legislating the Indians out of existence, and elite indigenismo, in the sense of a deliberate celebration of things Indian, was therefore in remission<sup>41</sup>—although one might argue that Ladino Indianism attained a kind of archetypal, if unspoken, incarnation in the person of President Benito Juárez, a full-blooded Zapotec. His somatic characteristics notwithstanding, Juárez was, in effect, the quintessential Creole nationalist and his Indian policy, insofar as he had one, was thoroughly assimilationist. It was his Liberal administration which first decreed the disentailment of the system of corporate land tenures, whereby the colonial regime had recognized and legitimated the collective property rights of the indigenous village community (known in Spanish as the *ejido*, in Nahuatl—the language of the Aztecs and other central Mexican peoples—as the *altepetl*). In permitting the ejidos to be dissolved, the Liberals hoped to “civilize” the Indians by converting them into independent farmers, in accordance with the Jeffersonian ideal. In practice, however, this legal maneuver only led to a heyday for real estate swindlers, and the villagers’ common lands rapidly fell into the hands of *hacendados* (owners of haciendas). The land grab picked up additional steam as Liberalism degenerated into the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz after 1876. Naturally, the Indians resisted the process, which thus resulted in widespread riots and revolts.

But it was with the Mexican Revolution that bourgeois indigenismo truly came into its own, developing, as it were, from a cottage industry into a massive, bureaucratically organized apparatus for the production and distribution of nationalist, assimilationist ideology. Presently the cities, particularly the capital, would be lavishly emblazoned with murals on precolumbian themes; the countryside would be overrun by ethnographers recording—and archeologists digging up—the aboriginal heritage; all of Mexico would be inundated with propaganda extolling the past achievements, the present dignified stoicism, or the future renaissance of the Amerindians. So successfully, indeed, has the official indigenista message been propagated that the very existence of racism in Mexico is today widely disacknowledged. “The concept of race”, one writer has asserted, “has become almost totally alien to Mexican culture.”<sup>42</sup> On a similarly optimistic note, the leftist politician and labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano once declared: “Fortunately, on account of our origins and our historical development, there exists among us neither racial prejudice nor discrimination based on skin color or language, such as happens in other nations, which, however civilized in terms of their material development, remain barbaric in their consciousness.”<sup>43</sup>

A less rosy but more realistic assessment was offered by José Vasconcelos—philosopher, Ladino Indianist, and revolutionary politician—in his regionally famous essay *La Raza Cósmica* ("The Cosmic Race"):

Every race which seeks to elevate itself must construct its own philosophy, the *deus ex machina* of its success. We have been educated under the degrading influence of a philosophy devised by our enemies, perhaps innocently enough, but with the purpose of advancing their own objectives and nullifying ours. Consequently, we ourselves have come to believe in the inferiority of the Mestizo, the incorrigibility [*irredención*] of the Indian, the perdition of the Negro, the irreparable decadence of the Oriental. The armed rebellion [against Spanish rule] was not followed by a rebellion of consciousness.<sup>44</sup>

At the time (1925), Vasconcelos did not take too pessimistic a view of the prospects for the cultural decolonization which he envisaged, however. He believed that through education and the dissemination of indigenista thought—a process to which his book made an important contribution—Latin Americans of Indian or mixed blood would cast off their inferior status, "redeeming" themselves both ideologically and practically. During his tenure as Minister of Education in the revolutionary government of Alvaro Obregón (1920-1924), aside from commissioning the first of the great revolutionary murals mentioned above, he had managed to "light up the sky with his education policy ... launch[ing] a gigantic scheme to implant literacy among children and adults, integrate the Indian into the embryonic nation, validate manual labour, and endow the country with technical training facilities."<sup>45</sup> Within this comprehensive program, rural (and hence Indian) education in particular made great strides (some of them rather quixotic, to be sure, such as distributing the classics of Spanish-language literature among illiterate villagers). But while Vasconcelos's version of official indigenismo was characteristically integrationist, this did not, according to his metaphysical theories, imply the submergence or obliteration of specifically indigenous cultural traits. The Mestizos, he maintained, were representatives of an emergent "cosmic race," born in America through the fusion of all previous races and destined to supplant them. But in this ideal fusion, the identity of the component races and cultures would supposedly be preserved.<sup>46</sup>

The official indigenismo of the revolutionary state-in-formation found its principle exponent, however, in Manuel Gamio, the anthropologist and early director of the Interamerican Indianist Institute. His 1916 tract *Forjando patria* ("Forging the Fatherland"), written in the thick—and under the compelling influence—of the Zapatista revolution in Morelos, opened with these stirring words:

In the great forge of America, on the giant anvil of the Andes, virile races of bronze and iron have struggled, century after century.

When the moment arrived for the swarthy hands of Atahualpa or Moctezuma to mix and mingle peoples, a miraculous alloy was beginning to emerge: the same blood swelled the veins of all Americans

and their intellectuality flowed along the same pathways. There were small nations: the Aztec, the Maya, the Inca ... which might perhaps have gathered together and fused, forming large indigenous homelands, as did China and Japan during the same era. It was not to be. With Columbus arrived different men with different blood and different ideas, and the crucible in which the race was being unified was overturned; the mold in which the Nation was forming and the Fatherland becoming crystallized, fell to pieces.<sup>47</sup>

What troubled Gamio, as it had previous generations of Mexican nationalists, was the country's racial, cultural, and linguistic "heterogeneity," resulting from European colonialism, which obstructed the formation of a modern nation-state. Like Vasconcelos, however, he saw in the process of *mestizaje*—the blending of races and cultures—a way out of the dilemma a fractured history had posed:

The time has come for Mexico's revolutionaries to take up the hammer and gird themselves with the blacksmith's apron, so as to bring forth from the miraculous anvil the new nation of fused bronze and iron. Here is the iron.... Here is the bronze.... Hammer, brothers, hammer!<sup>48</sup>

Such muscular imagery was not intended, putatively, to imply beating the Indians into submission. In common, once again, with Vasconcelos, Gamio contemplated a subtle amalgam of races and cultures, in which the unique characteristics of each would survive, but without effacing those of the other. Nonetheless, there is no doubt as to which of the fused elements would preponderate in the amalgam: it was clearly the iron rather than the bronze which was accorded the blacksmith's role. Gamio's project was to "incorporate" the Indian into "contemporary civilization," even if he hoped to rely on persuasion—on the allure of nationalist indigenismo, in fact—rather than on force: "We do not presume to 'Europeanize' him all at once. On the contrary, we shall 'Indianize' ourselves a little in order to show him our civilization already diluted with his own, so that he will no longer find it exotic, cruel, bitter, and incomprehensible." The operative term in this formulation, of course, is "a little." "Naturally," Gamio hastened to add, "the approach to the Indian should not be carried to ridiculous extremes"<sup>49</sup>—as would happen some years later, for example, when certain "raving Indianists" were to propose "that we should abandon Spanish and speak Nahuatl."<sup>50</sup>

At the ideological level, national indigenismo had the merit of formally repudiating racist conceptions and promoting equality-through-assimilation. Its contradictions however were inherent in this very ideal, which was conceived by Ladino intellectuals to serve their own purposes and had little resonance in the Indian communities themselves, from whose self-defined projects and aspirations it was, as we shall see, quite removed.

#### IV. Peasant Indianism

As in the case of Ladino Indianism, the indigenous variety can also be traced back to the immediate post-conquest period; this in spite of the initial successes of the so-called "spiritual conquest" effected by Dominican and Franciscan monks.<sup>51</sup> In central Mexico, the heartland of the Aztec empire as well as of the colonial viceroyalty, conversion to Christianity appeared to be rapid and widespread. To be sure, there was a certain amount of backsliding, which could on occasion elicit the cruelest punishments from overzealous friars,<sup>52</sup> but the "half-life," so to speak, of indigenous divinities was much shorter in Mexico than, for example, in colonial Peru. Mexican peasant indigenistas did occasionally resort to hiding their idols in mountain caves, but more commonly they adopted an alternative strategy, one which was virtually the mirror image of that pursued by their Creole counterparts: they appropriated the religious symbols of their conquerors and turned them to their own purposes. It was, after all, a baptized Aztec named Juan Diego whom the Virgin of Guadalupe honored with her miraculous visitation, a mere decade after the conquest. Nor can it be regarded as strictly coincidental that the Indian Madonna elected to put in her appearance on the site of a ruined temple which had formerly been the principal shrine of the goddess Tonantzin, the consort of Quetzalcóatl and in her own right one of the foremost deities in the Aztec pantheon. In short, the cult of Guadalupe began as an instance of peasant indigenismo; only later did the Creoles claim it for their own, and then not without certain misgivings, as the words of a sixteenth-century Franciscan friar attest:

Around the hills there are three or four places where [the Indians] used to make very solemn sacrifices and they came to these places from distant lands. One of these is here in Mexico, where there is a hill that is called [Tepeyac] and now is called Our Lady of Guadalupe; in this place they had a temple dedicated to the mother of the gods, whom they called Tonantzin, which means "our Mother"; ... and now that the Church of Our Lady of Guadalupe has been built, the Indians also call her Tonantzin, on the pretext that the preachers call Our Lady, the Mother of God, "Tonantzin" ... This is an abuse which should be stopped, for the true name of the Mother of God, Our Lady, is not Tonantzin but *Dios-nantzin* ["God's mother"]. To me this looks very much like a satanic invention to palliate idolatry by playing on the ambiguity of this name Tonantzin. The Indians today, as in the old days, come from afar to visit this Tonantzin, and to me this cult seems very suspect, for there are everywhere numerous churches consecrated to Our Lady, but they do not go there, preferring to come from afar to this Tonantzin, as in the past.<sup>53</sup>

Such nativist syncretism could pose more than a strictly ideological threat, as a series of colonial and postcolonial rebellions inspired by Indian Virgins and other saints attests.<sup>54</sup> Considerations of space, however, permit only a cursory examination of those few cases of insurgent Indianism which most clearly foreshadowed Zapata's agrarian revolution;



they occurred during Mexico's two earlier revolutions: the wars of Independence (1810-1821) and the wars of the Liberal Reform and the French Intervention (1855-1867).

I have already alluded to the role of indigenous troops in the Independence movement. Their war-cry—"Long live the Virgin of Guadalupe and death to the *gachupines* [derogatory term for Spaniards]!"—would be resumed by the Zapatistas a century later. In a proclamation issued on 11 March 1813, José María Morelos required each of his soldiers to wear on his hat "a device of ribbon, tape, linen, or paper on which he declared his devotion to the holy image of Guadalupe, soldier and defender of her cult."<sup>55</sup> Here again, as we shall see, Zapatista fighters would adopt the identical custom.

While Miguel Hidalgo first raised the banner of Guadalupe in the cause of independence, it was Morelos who most effectively appropriated the discourse of elite indigenismo and recycled it to suit his insurrectionary purposes. After liberating most of south-central Mexico—the same region that Zapata would control in the mid-1910s—Morelos summoned the Congress of Chilpancingo, which proclaimed independence and drafted a republican constitution. In his inaugural address he referred to the country neither as New Spain nor as Mexico, but by its precolumbian name, Anáhuac, and called upon the ghosts of Aztec warriors who had resisted Cortés to join in celebrating "the happy moment in which your illustrious sons have gathered to avenge your outrages and loss of privileges." Thus invoking folk memories of the Spanish conquest, he went on to declare that "August 12, 1521, was followed by September 14, 1813. In the former, the chains of our slavery were put on in México-Tenochtitlan, and in the latter, they are broken forever in the fortunate town of Chilpancingo."<sup>56</sup> What distinguished Morelos's discourse from that of his Creole Indianist contemporaries was that he and his mostly indigenous followers were intent upon the practical, as opposed to the purely imaginary, liberation of Indian Mexico; they were determined to liquidate internal colonialism along with the external variety; and they were prepared to match words with deeds.<sup>57</sup> Not only did Morelos decree the abolition of all forms of coerced labor, but he proposed a program of land redistribution which anticipated Zapata's in more than one particular. In a document entitled "Project for the Confiscation of the Interests of Europeans and Americans Affiliated with the Spanish Government," he stipulated that the property of "Creoles and *gachupines*" would be redistributed among the poor "in such a manner that no one is enriched individually, but all are provided for out of a general fund." An absolute limit, albeit a generous one, was to be placed on private property in land: "All haciendas whose lands exceed two leagues in size must be rendered inoperative, because the greatest benefit is derived from agriculture when many work small plots, which they can improve with their own industry and labor, and not when a

single individual owns vast tracts of uncultivated land, enslaving thousands of people and making them work that land as peons or slaves."<sup>58</sup>

Later in the nineteenth century, indigenous troops would play a significant role in the wars of the Liberal Reform and the French Intervention. The famous Sixth Battalion, which was instrumental in defeating the French at Puebla City on 5 May 1862, was comprised of Nahuas (Indians whose aboriginal tongue was either Nahuatl or any of several closely related languages: a more inclusive term than "Aztec") from the villages of Xochiapulco and Tetela de Ocampo in the northern highlands of Puebla state; their victory is commemorated annually in celebrations of the Cinco de Mayo, Mexico's National Day. While historians have commonly attributed little independent agency to such indigenous soldiers, assuming that they followed either Liberal, Conservative, or French Interventionist orders according to the inclination of local Ladino power brokers, Florencia Mallon has recently argued at some length that Amerindian villagers developed an agenda of their own during the wars of the mid-nineteenth century—an agenda which she notes was later to be resumed by the Zapatistas. "Ethnicity," Mallon contends, "divided Liberals over definitions of land and property rights." Indians in the highland communities, such as the Xochiapulcan schoolteacher Juan Francisco Lucas, worked out their own version of Liberal, republican ideals, distinct from that of Ladinos. The latter, having derived their conceptions of liberty and property from the ideology of the European bourgeoisie, regarded private property as absolute, stressing the individual's right to dispose of it freely, unconstrained by state or communal restrictions. Indigenous liberalism, by contrast, stressed the "need for ethnic and social justice—the redistribution of land and revenue and the accountability of political officials." For Nahua intellectuals like Lucas, property was imbued with a social dimension, the ultimate authority over its disposition being vested in the local community. Hence, the Indians of Xochiapulco agreed to fight on the Liberal side only on the condition that the government declare their town an independent municipality and recognize its claim to the lands of two adjoining haciendas.<sup>59</sup>

While Mallon's findings are persuasive, a more vivid sense of the nature of insurrectionary Indianism during these years can perhaps be derived from oral traditions. One such testimony is drawn from the town of Cuetzalán, Puebla, and concerns a Nahua Liberal named Francisco Agustín Dieguillo, or Palagosti, who had fought with Juan Francisco Lucas during the Intervention. The residents of Cuetzalán continue to honor his victory against the French, but they appear to be still more impressed with his ethnic accomplishments closer to home:

Palagosti won over the *analtecos* (foreigners), he pushed them back where they came from.... Juan Francisco Lucas named Palagosti mayor, yes, an Indian mayor for Cuetzalan so that he should rule. He

would tell the Mestizo to do this and that and he would tell the farmer [i.e., the Indian] to come and carry a message.... Palagosti made the first town hall and the first church; I still saw that church....

Palagosti threw the Mestizos out of Cuetzalan! But the man who came after him was a bastard! He let them in again, for some money, which he spent, and he ended his life cleaning the park with his hoe, for the Mestizos!<sup>60</sup>

Another indigenous leader of the period was Binu Gada, a Zapotec from Juchitán, Oaxaca, whose guerrilla band defeated a French Interventionist army near that town on 5 September 1866. His military career began, however, when he took up arms against the state government in Oaxaca, under circumstances described by his granddaughter Anastasia Martínez:

My grandpa, Binu Gada, became a revolutionary in the following manner. One day he was making oxcarts, his trade, when a group of men arrived commenting that they should take Saint Vincent [the patron saint of Juchitán] out for a procession so that the saint would make a miracle and have it rain. We needed the water then for the fields, and this was our belief. The men had gone to take Saint Vincent out but they returned unsuccessful because Chato Díaz [Félix Díaz, brother of Porfirio Díaz and governor of Oaxaca during the late 1860s and early 1870s] did not want them to. And my grandpa said, "How is this possible? We are the ones who should rule in this town!" And thanks to him for orienting the men, they were able to take out Saint Vincent.

After this the troops came to apprehend him for being the cause of the procession. The military man, leader of the soldiers, asked him, "Did you take the saint out into the street?" "Yes, I did," answered my grandpa, "and you can take care of and keep watch over the town [instead of butting into our affairs]."

The granddaughter adds that Binu Gada then knocked "Chato" Díaz to the ground and fled to the hills, where he later organized his rebel battalion in order to defend the autonomy of Juchitán, first against the state government and later against the French.<sup>61</sup>

Thus the Indian insurgents of the 1860s fought for a Liberal republic which could accommodate their ethnic agenda, one which would respect indigenous conceptions of property, restore lands expropriated by the hacendados, maintain a wide scope for village self-government, and permit the continuity of native customs. These were precisely the causes championed by the Zapatistas half a century later, and which attracted thousands of Nahuas, along with Zapotecs, Otomís, and other Amerindians, into their ranks.

## V. Revolutionary Indians

No general ethnohistory of the Mexican Revolution has yet appeared. It would necessarily be an ambitious undertaking, since indigenous people were among the first to begin fighting—indeed, there had been Indian agitation

for land reform, at times accompanied by violence, throughout the Porfiriato (the regime of Porfirio Díaz, 1876-1911)—and they persevered in the armed struggle well after most Ladinos had left the field. Thus some of the early armed actions undertaken by the Mexican Liberal Party in what has been termed the “precursor movement” to the revolution—for example, the attack on Acayucán, Veracruz, in 1906—relied on predominantly indigenous recruits,<sup>62</sup> while the revolt of Tarascan *agraristas* (agrarian rebels or activists) in Michoacán, led by Primo Tapia, did not get underway until 1920, when hostilities elsewhere had largely abated.<sup>63</sup>

The years of the Revolution proper, 1910-1920, witnessed the participation of Indians on numerous fronts and in a variety of capacities, ranging from rank-and-file cannon fodder to “generals” (naturally a somewhat flexible designation in a civil war fought by semi- or at times fully autonomous bands of guerrillas). While our primary concern is with the Zapatista movement centered in Morelos—Zapata’s home state, named after his illustrious predecessor—it is worth noting that aborigines took up arms independently in several other regions of Mexico. Examples include the Zapotec Che Gómez, who led a separatist rebellion in Juchitán in 1911; the Tarascan Joaquín de la Cruz, who organized agrarian militants in the indigenous town of Naranja, Michoacán, from 1909 to 1914, and later became a cavalry major under the agrarista chief Colonel Regalado; and the Nahua Nicolás Portes, better known as “El Indio Portes,” who recruited so many indigenous troops in the Huasteca of Hidalgo that Ladinos in the Spanish-speaking town of Atlapexco referred to his raids on their municipality as *la indiada* (the Indian rising).<sup>64</sup>

Another, more prominent Nahua leader was Gen. Domingo Arenas, an ally and later renegade from the Zapatista movement, whose mainly indigenous army controlled large areas of Tlaxcala and northern Puebla during much of the revolutionary decade (and whom we shall encounter again in Section VII below). Arenas was fluent in Nahuatl, and can be seen in photographs of the time barefoot, dressed in an Indian poncho and sombrero, with a rifle in his lap and an ammunition belt slung over his shoulder (see Figure 2). In Arenas’s case, moreover, we need not infer ethnic identity from such external signs, since we have his own testimony in a letter to another indigenous Tlaxcaltecan officer, Col. Porfirio del Castillo, written in February 1917:

I am very grateful that you have understood my attitude and my sincere intentions with regard to the people’s welfare. You belong to the indigenous race just as I do, and you have dedicated your efforts, as we all have, to the cause of justice ...

To defeat the landowner, that profiteer and slave-driver of peasant labor, who monopolizes all of nature’s wealth; to raise the Indian from his miserable condition as a hacienda slave to the status of citizen and small proprietor; to awaken that class, bringing it to the realization that it is the owner of the land on which it treads; to inspire in its soul the thirst for education; in a word, to form a nation of free men, ennobled by justly rewarded labor ... Such I conceive to be the lineaments of our future labors ...<sup>65</sup>

Written in Spanish, the letter in some measure adopts the discourse of Ladino liberalism, using such terms as "citizen" and "nation" which, as we shall see, were not readily translatable into Nahuatl. Nonetheless, in its agrarista conviction that the Indian "class" is the legitimate "owner of the land on which it treads," Arenas's rhetoric clearly provides an example of insurrectionist indigenismo, quite distinct from the elite edition of the day.

These leaders' ethnic backgrounds clearly were varied, as were their objectives and their motivations in deciding to take up arms. To speak of a unified "Indian program" in the revolution would be as misleading as to lump Francisco Madero, Venustiano Carranza, and Alvaro Obregón together as partisans of a single, integrated Ladino enterprise. On both sides of the Ladino-Indian boundary one finds, as might be expected, heterogeneous actors pursuing heterogeneous ends. Yet it would be specious to conclude that that boundary bore no determinate relation to factional or programmatic divisions in the conflict. Just as ethnicity correlated with class and with the distribution of political power in pre-revolutionary Mexico, so did it correlate with the varied objectives pursued during the revolution. Exceptional instances aside, most Indian fighters tended to favor local self-determination over a meddlesome, highly centralized government; a communitarian definition of property over an individualistic definition; a radical and massive redistribution of land over token reform or none at all; and, hence, a social rather than a narrowly political revolution. Those who fought for the contrary set of aims were almost always Ladinos.<sup>66</sup> Of all the belligerent factions, none better exemplified the localist, communitarian, agrarian, social revolution, nor more successfully embodied peasant Indianism, than did the Zapatista movement in Morelos, to which we now turn.

Agrarian unrest in Morelos did not, of course, require the campaign of Francisco Madero or the Plan of San Luis Potosí to manifest itself. In the late 1870s Mexico City was already astir with rumors that an Indian rebellion was imminent, as can be seen in a series of stories carried by the conservative newspaper *La Libertad*. One article, "Agitators Among the Indians," lamented the "maneuvers" of certain unnamed propagandists, who had instilled among native villagers "the absurd idea that the Indian is the natural lord of the land, and that all the property belonging to Whites is a usurpation"—a doctrine whose predictable outcome would be a "caste war," if not "a veritable social revolution."<sup>67</sup> A few months later the same theme was resumed in a piece entitled "Communism in Morelos": "A certain army colonel in Morelos, it seems, has made himself the hero of surveys and borders ... In some villages in the district of Jonatépéc this colonel has not only caused serious disturbances, but has promised a redivision of the lands and waters in favor of the deluded Indians, who are easily deceived by the first person who excites their instinct for pillage."<sup>68</sup>

Three decades later, another "hero of surveys and borders" was to appear in Morelos, upholding similar "absurd ideas." Not surprisingly, conservative *capitalinos* (residents of Mexico City) perceived Zapata in precisely the same light as the Porfirian editorialist had viewed the "communist" colonel. Those who regarded Zapatismo as an Indian rebellion—viewing the guerrilla chief as a new Atilla or Genghis Khan, marshaling "tribes" or "hordes" of primitive barbarians—included, to be sure, the hacendados to whom Alan Knight alludes, but also the *científicos* (technocrats, adherents of Spenserian social Darwinism), journalists, and parliamentarians of the old regime. On 19 and 20 June 1911, for example, the counter-revolutionary daily *El Imparcial* splashed banner headlines across its front page—"What Is Happening in the State of Morelos Is Shocking" and "Zapata Is the Modern Atilla"—and accused the Zapatistas of "innumerable atrocities," few of which it bothered to itemize, let alone verify. In a subsequent article, the paper viewed the agrarian insurgency as exemplifying the primitive fury of the savage against the civilized: "Zapata and his troglodytic hordes call for immediate and impossible reforms in the division of lands; they demand iniquitous reprisals of the poor against the rich, the illiterate against the lettered, the bad against the good.... They lack the integrity to seek justice, but display instead the black sediment of prehistoric hatred, which after long years of submission, today erupts in cruel and blind rebellion."<sup>69</sup>

Parliamentary language was no more restrained. On 25 October 1911—nine days after the capital had been thrown into a panic by a Zapatista raid on the suburb of Milpa Alta—the well-known lawyer and Porfirista legislator José María Lozano expressed the anxiety of many urbanites of his ilk in a speech to the Chamber of Deputies. Experienced orator though he was, such was Lozano's dread of Zapata that he seemed at a loss to find a bogey sufficiently loathsome for adequate comparison:

Mexico City faces the clear and present danger of becoming the mournful scene of the most horrendous and macabre blood-feast in our nation's history. It is not Catiline who stands at the gates of Rome, but someone darker and more sinister. It is the atavistic reincarnation of Manuel Lozada [indigenous peon who led a bloody rebellion in Nayarit] in the person of Emiliano Zapata, the bandit from Villa de Ayala.... Behind Emiliano Zapata's apparent calm, Atilla has arisen.... Zapata assumes the proportions of Spartacus: he champions old causes, he liberates the slaves, he promises riches for everyone. And he is no longer isolated, he has founded a school, he has innumerable proselytes [whom] he baits with anarchistic promises, with offers to divide the lands. And his preaching already begins to bear fruit: the Indians have rebelled.<sup>70</sup>

But sympathetic observers also described the Zapatistas as Indians, and Zapatismo as a form of Indianism. Rosa King, the plucky Englishwoman who refused to abandon her inn at Cuernavaca even when warned to do so in no uncertain terms—"Quickly close everything, Señora King! The fierce Zapata is coming, killing and destroying

everything in his path!"—admitted to feeling some trepidation during the first Zapatista occupation of the city: "We passed through streets lined with Zapata's soldiers, and accustomed as I had become to these Indians, my heart rather failed me at the sight of them all together, with their heavy armament and their look of wild men of the woods." Nonetheless, she remarked that the Zapatistas had "about them the splendor of devotion to a cause, a look of all the homespun patriots who, from time immemorial, have left the plough in the furrow when there was need to fight.... They rode in as heroes and conquerors, and," King noted attentively, "the pretty Indian girls met them with armfuls of bougainvillea and thrust the flaming flowers in their hats and belts."<sup>71</sup>

Francisco Ramirez Plancarte, who witnessed the entry of Zapatista troops into Mexico city on 24 November 1914, described them as follows:

They were far from reflecting the satisfaction and pride appropriate to victors ... Their sad, weary visages manifested instead the humility and resignation of pariahs, of the eternally oppressed and exploited. It scarcely seemed that these could be the tireless warriors who had often held the "bald-heads" [*pelones*, uncomplimentary term for Constitutionalist soldiers] at bay, heroically and fearlessly contesting the southern territory in hand-to-hand combat....

With their faces darkened by the sun and furrowed by inclement weather, with the true features of the aboriginal races, few among them were bearded although all were grimy and disheveled.... Many spoke the Mexicano [Nahuatl] tongue and other dialects [i.e., aboriginal languages], but already very impure [i.e., with Spanish borrowings], while the majority spoke an execrable Spanish.<sup>72</sup>

Notwithstanding the elemental fear they had inspired a few years earlier, the Zapatistas who did finally occupy the capital were remarkably well behaved. Far from initiating the blood bath Lozano had predicted, they milled about aimlessly on street corners, not quite sure what to do with themselves in the unfamiliar urban environment, or went from door to door begging meekly for a few tortillas.

Not only was Zapatismo thus characterized on all sides as an Indian movement, but Zapata himself was widely perceived by his contemporaries as an Indian. Again, this view was not restricted to those who dismissed him as a "bandit chieftain ... an illiterate Indian and a highly successful guerrilla, and nothing more."<sup>73</sup> Rosa King, who continued to admire Zapata even though his revolution "cost me all I had"—including her health as well as her hotel business—thought him "an Indian [with a] genius for leadership," and attributed his agrarian radicalism to "his personal experiences [which] had inspired in him an ideal—'Land and Liberty' for the downtrodden Indian."<sup>74</sup> Another foreigner who had observed the revolution in Morelos at first hand, traveling behind Zapatista lines in 1917, was the U.S. businessman, journalist, and amateur archeologist William Gates. Reporting his findings for a North American journal, he described Zapata as "an Indian whose sole object is to win back ... for his followers in his

native State ... the farms of which the Indians were by legal processes dispossessed in spite of primordial titles centuries old." Having interviewed during the course of his travels several of the leading politicians and guerrilla chiefs in revolutionary Mexico, sounding out their attitudes towards indigenous peoples, Gates had arrived at a critical analysis of indigenismo which—his racist manner of expression aside—broadly coincides with that adopted in this essay: "Zapata, Carranza, Alvarado, all proclaim agrarian revindication of the Indian. But the Indian, dispossessed, his race-brother, bulks first in Zapata's thoughts; [whereas to Alvarado] and Carranza, Indianism is something to be cultivated and exploited politically."<sup>75</sup>

For outsiders to regard Zapata as an Indian and Zapatismo as a species of Indianism, however, might be ascribed to romanticism or lack of familiarity with the movement as it was perceived from within. What is more remarkable, therefore, is that prominent Zapatistas expressed precisely the same views, and did so at length and with unimpeachable conviction. Before reviewing their testimony, it will be well to acquaint ourselves with the background of these individuals, the movement's intellectuals, or Zapata's "secretaries" as Womack calls them.

Although he was not the illiterate his opponents portrayed him as, Emiliano Zapata was a man of limited education: at best, "a few, fragmentary years of the limited kind of primary schooling that a village like Anenecuilco, Morelos, could offer during the reign of Porfirio Díaz."<sup>76</sup> A small-time horse dealer by occupation, reduced on one occasion to working as chief groom in the stables of a prominent hacendado, Zapata had a peasant's instinctive respect for the learned. He quickly realized, moreover, that his agrarian movement could not hope to succeed even on a local level without cultivating alliances with revolutionaries elsewhere; and it could do so only by articulating its goals within the forum of national public opinion.

Fortunately for Zapata, his reputation as a revolutionary warrior soon attracted the attention of urban intellectuals, beginning with members of various Maderista or anti-Díaz opposition groups. One of the latter, Rodolfo Magaña, arrived at Zapata's camp in April 1911, bearing a copy of the "Political-Social Plan, proclaimed by the States of Guerrero, Michoacán, Tlaxcala, Campeche, Puebla, and the Federal District," which had been drafted some weeks earlier in Mexico City and to which Magaña was a signatory. The plan contained, among others, the following provision: "All properties which have been usurped and given to favorites of the present administration will be returned to their former owners."<sup>77</sup> On being shown the document—several months before the framing of his own Plan of Ayala—Zapata read it over carefully and then exclaimed to the somewhat corpulent Magaña: "This is exactly what we are fighting for, Chubby, so that the lands we were robbed of shall be returned!" When Magaña informed



him that the manifesto was the work of "a very enthusiastic, cultivated, and revolutionary señorita"—the socialist schoolteacher Dolores Jiménez y Muro—the guerrilla chief wondered whether she and her group of revolutionary intellectuals might be persuaded to join his movement in Morelos. "It would be a good idea," he instructed Magaña, "for you to write to them in my name, inviting them to incorporate themselves into our ranks. Here in Morelos we have need of such elements."<sup>78</sup> Following Victoriano Huerta's counter-revolutionary *coup d'état* of 18 February 1913, Jiménez y Muro, Magaña, and other intellectuals did in fact enter the Zapatista ranks, serving the cause in a number of capacities. From the movement's various headquarters and mountain encampments, they drafted manifestos, communiqués, and agrarian decrees, oversaw the implementation of the Zapatista land reform program in Morelos and adjoining states, traveled as emissaries to negotiate with other revolutionary movements, represented Zapatismo as delegates to the Sovereign Revolutionary Convention in 1914-1916, and served in the Convention government during the Villa-Zapata alliance.

## VI. Revolutionary Indianism: The Zapatistas at the Convention

Among the most trusted of Zapata's secretaries was Paulino Martínez, whose help the agrarista leader had first enlisted on a visit to Mexico City in 1910, when as chairman of the village council of Anenecuilco he was still petitioning the Porfirian authorities for legal redress of his people's grievances against the neighboring hacienda of Hospital. In 1914, when the revolutionary Convention was in session at Aguascalientes, Martínez was appointed to head the Zapatista delegation, which consisted of twenty-six members, almost all of them recruited from the urban intelligentsia. Nonetheless, they all bore military titles ranging from colonel to major general, and they arrived at the Morelos Theater in Aguascalientes sporting the plain, rustic Indian garb worn by Zapatista troops in place of army uniforms: wide-brimmed sombreros, white *calzones* (breeches), and loose, white peasant blouses—a notable contrast to the snappy military attire, fine Texas hats, and expensive jewelry favored by many Northern delegates.<sup>79</sup> In his first major address to the assembly, delivered on 27 October, Martínez described his commander-in-chief as follows:

The energies of Titans, of this Homeric struggle which unfortunately is not yet over, were in the South and the North of the Republic: its genuine representatives were General Emiliano Zapata with all the forces that accompanied him in the South, and General Francisco Villa with his forces, there in the North. [Applause.]

Both of them Indians [*indios*], their faces marked with the features of that proud race to which they belong, feeling in their hearts the pain and bitterness of that downtrodden race, excluded from the banquet of our sham civilization, their nerves jolted into vibrations of rebellion by brutal outrages without number, by unspeakable injustices perpetrated against the person of the helpless Indian, of the slave of the haciendas, of the artisan exploited in the cities, of all the disinherited victims of the political bosses, soldiers, and priests—they could not accept an empty pretense of justice [*un simulacro de reivindicación*]<sup>80</sup> which failed to fulfill the people's aspirations, which did not satisfy any of their needs. [Applause.]

That Martínez was twice interrupted by an approving gallery, before and after his reference to the Indianness of Zapata and Villa, provides a degree of evidence that the characterization provoked neither offense nor incredulity. In any event, there was further Indianism to come. Martínez situated Zapatismo within a long history of colonial oppression, dating back to the Spanish conquest. The Plan of Ayala—the centerpiece of Zapatista ideology—he described as “the sacred pact, the new alliance between the Revolution and the people, whose pledge is to return to the latter their lands and liberties, which were wrested from them four centuries ago when Aztec sovereignty was smashed to pieces by the conqueror.” The Zapatistas, he assured the delegates, sought unity; they deplored the prospect of a “fratricidal struggle” among the various revolutionary factions; but they could only accept a principled unity, based on the adoption and prompt implementation of Zapata’s Plan of Ayala; which is to say, on a guarantee of fundamental agrarian reform. Failing such an agreement, further armed conflict was inevitable: “If today it is necessary, in order to redeem a race from the ignorance and misery brought about by four centuries of oppression, then, painful as it may be, let the struggle continue.”<sup>81</sup>

If Martínez’s speech was warmly received, the temperature in the hall was raised still further—indeed, to the boiling point—by the Zapatista who followed Martínez to the platform, Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama. A co-founder of the Mexican Liberal Party in 1899 and of the Socialist Party in 1912, Soto y Gama had been an admirer of Zapata from the early days of the revolution, but had remained in Mexico City until 1914, working for the Socialist Party and the Casa del Obrero Mundial (House of the World Worker), an anarcho-sindicalist federation affiliated with the US-based International Workers of the World. When the latter organization was repressed by Huerta in May of that year, he fled south along with other labor leaders to join the Zapatistas in Morelos. Within a few months of his arrival at the headquarters in Morelos, Soto y Gama had made himself the movement’s leading ideologue: as Womack notes, “the doctrine of agrarismo and the cult of the agraristas that emerged were chiefly his work.”<sup>82</sup>

A gifted word-smith both on paper and on the speaker’s platform, a fiery orator with a penchant for the theatrical gesture, Soto y Gama has with some justice been called the Danton of the Mexican Revolution. Certainly he was the Zapatistas’ chief tribune at the Convention and thereafter. There is ample reason, then, for citing his discourse at some

length. Let us begin with a passage from his memoirs, in which he recounts the thoughts that passed through his mind while Martínez was delivering the address we have just reviewed:

While Paulino was expanding upon his ideas, the panorama of our History unfolded itself in my imagination: four hundred years of exploitation for the Indians; the war of Independence—a failure on account of Iturbide's treachery; the ideals of Hidalgo and Morelos, betrayed; the Reform of 1857, sterile and fruitless for the Indian, since it led to the loss of his ejidos and common lands; then Don Porfirio's iron dictatorship, which sanctioned the spoliation of the villages and upheld the great landlords in their privileges; next, Madero's vacillations and half-measures; [Huerta's] ignominious *coup d'état*; ... and when one might have believed that the Revolution—the true Revolution—had at last triumphed, we were confronted with a new deception and a new danger: the installation in power of a man [Venustiano Carranza] who, basing himself on an amorphous and toothless program, has thus far refused to undertake a single reform of any social substance, and responds to those who ask that their agrarian needs be met with threats of war and demands for their unconditional surrender.

There followed a highly dramatic episode. On being welcomed into the assembly the previous day, the Zapatistas had been shown the Mexican flag standing beside the speaker's platform, on which all the other delegates, including the Villistas and Carrancistas, had signed their names. This ostentation of patriotic sentiment had struck Soto y Gama as disingenuous, a cynical maneuver intended to forestall criticism and thereby to cement an alliance which was premature and unprincipled. His sense of indignation thus aroused, and then further heightened during Martínez's speech, the young revolutionary worked himself into a state of intense psychological agitation:

My head was seething, and I virtually exploded onto the podium. The association of ideas raced tumultuously through my brain. The use of the flag for purposes which profaned it brought to my mind the memory of that other historical subterfuge perpetrated by Iturbide, who, using as a decoy the union of Spaniards and Mexicans—symbolized by the red color of the flag—consolidated the privileges of the Spaniards, sanctioned the landlords' plundering, and prolonged the exploitation and misery of the indigenous race.<sup>83</sup>

Restraining himself long enough "to throw a few words together so as to rouse from their lethargy that group of revolutionaries, whose victory was beginning to put them to sleep," Soto y Gama soon lighted upon the topic that was foremost in his mind. The signing of the flag, he declared, had been "a farce, very reminiscent of the rituals of the church." For the Zapatistas, a revolutionary's word of honor was "worth more than the signatures inscribed on this banner, this banner which at the end of the day [represents] nothing but the victory of the clerical reaction headed by Iturbide." As he pronounced these words, Soto y Gama grasped the flag, crumpled it in his fist, and shook it at the audience—which responded with cries of "No! No!" But the speaker was undeterred: "I, gentlemen, will never sign this flag," he went on amid a growing commotion. "We are carrying out a great revolution expressly to demolish the lies of history, and we must expose the lie of history that is in this flag. What we are pleased to call our Independence

was no independence for the Indian, but only for the Creole race, the heirs of the conquest, so that they could go on cheating the oppressed, the indigenous ...” By this point his voice was drowned out in the general hubbub.

Soto y Gama had wanted the assembly’s undivided attention; he now had it. Not a soul remained seated. Half a dozen pistols were leveled at his chest. The hall was alive with hissing, punctuated by shouted threats and denunciations. Instead of calling for order, the president of the Convention, Constitutionalist Gen. Eulalio Gutiérrez, added his voice to the clamor: “More respect for the flag! You are a traitor!” Other delegates joined in: “Shameless! Bad Mexican! Get off the platform! Get him out of here! Down with the speaker! Down with traitors!” Through it all, Soto y Gama stood his ground calmly, waiting for the storm to abate. One witness to the fracas, José Vasconcelos, thought it “perhaps the most beautiful moment in Soto y Gama’s political life.”<sup>84</sup>

Although this incident has been recounted many times, no one—save perhaps Soto y Gama himself—has accorded due emphasis to the Indianism which pervaded his rhetoric from start to finish.<sup>85</sup> Eventually, the tumult in the hall subsided, calmer voices prevailed, and the Zapatista firebrand was permitted to continue. He resumed his address on a slightly apologetic note, saying that he had been misunderstood, that he had no intention of besmirching the national colors. Yet he soon returned to his earlier theme:

I say to you, gentlemen, that in the South no one marches under the tricolor flag. The tricolor flag is waiting to be sanctified, it is waiting to be paid homage in deeds, not in miserable words.... I want to see my country free of that band of rascals, those heirs of the conquistadors [who] invoke the flag or invoke the word “Patria” [homeland] ...

What we have been debating here is not a symbol but an idea. And, what is worse, we have been debating the History of our country, a History which has yet to be made ... Perhaps Señor Gutiérrez is still ignorant of his country’s history. He does not know that Iturbide denied independence to the indigenous race which had fought for it. Precisely for this reason, gentlemen, I remind this Assembly that its duty is to defend that oppressed race and not to forget that that race still awaits its emancipation, not to forget that the real revolution does not belong to the White race assembled here. We, with our fondness for politics, are only the dilettantes of the Revolution, while the men who have really made the Revolution and for whom the Revolution has been made remain as enslaved as they were before the Plan of Iguala.<sup>86</sup>

It was in this historical critique of Mexican nationalist ideology, this refusal to accept a merely symbolic exaltation of the country’s aboriginal heritage, that Soto y Gama’s Indianism diverged from that of Vasconcelos or Gamio. Without wholly rejecting the rhetoric of patriotism and nation-building, the Zapatista orator insisted that it was precisely that: a rhetoric—“miserable words” waiting “to be paid homage in deeds.” Moreover, the nation whose History remained to be made was no illusory cosmic race, no blended polity whose ethnic boundaries had been obliterated. For Soto y Gama, the myth of mestizaje—“symbolized by the red color of the flag”—was nothing but a deception, Iturbide’s “historical subterfuge.” His own concept of the Mexican nation was very different:

I am the first to concern myself above all with the Nation, with our Indians, with our class of Indians, with those Indians whose blood many of us do not bear, except in small part, yet cherish the part we bear more than if we were full-blooded—those Indians who are the true patriots. When those Indians are raised to the status of free men and have enough to eat and are our brothers, instead of being virtually our slaves, as they were the slaves of Hernán Cortés; when we are worthy to shake the hands of those men, when we can truly call them brothers and are not ashamed to embrace them, as many today are ashamed; when we know how to put on the work-blouse [*la blusa de trabajo*: i.e., the loose-fitting, homemade cotton shirt of the Indian peasant]; when we can say, "The Mexican Nation is a nation of free men, not of miserable wretches," then that flag will be holy.<sup>87</sup>

Here, then, was a nationalism directly counter to that of the bourgeois pedagogues, one which did not envisage a Ladino civilization "diluted" with a slight admixture of aboriginal culture, but instead recognized the Indians as "the true patriots," the real Mexican nation, even if theretofore suppressed and enslaved.

Soto y Gama must have cut a beguiling figure, dressed in his homespun, Indian work-clothes, berating the Northerners for failing to understand the country's indigenous roots—forgetting for the moment that he was something of a Northerner himself, being a native of San Luis Potosí. At one point he seemed almost to forget his own ethnic background, presuming to speak from the far side of the Ladino-Indian frontier: "We of the South have come to speak in the name of the true Revolution, and you, if you are not Indians [*indigenas*], if you are not identified with the Indians, cannot speak with their own ideas." It was in the South, after all, that José María Morelos had led his indigenous battalions in the war of Independence, and Zapatismo was the direct descendent of that venerable struggle. Thus, the "men of the South" had inherited the right to interpret the revolution for Northerners, "many of whom, since they belong to the White race and are incapable of feeling, lack any sympathy for the indigenous people's aspirations." What were those aspirations? The Indians wanted land, of course, but more than that, they hoped "to be elevated to the rank, not of citizens, but of free men who desire an independent life."<sup>88</sup>

Historians critical of Soto y Gama have pointed out that in so insulting and alienating the members of the Convention, the majority of whom were Northerners, he served his movement poorly. After all, the Zapatista delegation had not been dispatched to Aguascalientes in order to avail themselves of an opportunity for revolutionary posturing, but to rally the broadest possible support for the Plan of Ayala, and thus to consolidate an alliance strong enough to prevail at the national level. The criticism is certainly valid up to a point. What has been overlooked, however, is that in framing the indigenous agenda as he did—not citizenship but "an independent life"—Soto y Gama was calling the reality of a Mexican nation-state into question, on a more fundamental level than any other party was prepared to contemplate. Thereby, he also articulated, perhaps for the first time in a major public forum, a

variety of Indianism completely distinct from that of the bourgeois ideologues and politicians—an Indianism whose project was self-determination rather than assimilation. If Manuel Gamio proposed to forge a nation from bronze and iron, Soto y Gama protested that the bronze had other things in mind, that it was a candidate for nationhood in its own right, an oppressed nation which did not require to be forged, but liberated.

## VII. The Nahuatl Revolution in Morelos

Having thus established the ethnic specificity of Zapatismo, first, as viewed by outsiders, and, secondly, as represented by two of its most prominent intellectual advocates, we must now turn our attention to the Indianism of the movement's rank-and-file protagonists. It is far from easy, however, to reconstruct the aims and projects of the peasant Zapatistas themselves—their ideology, if one can use so grand a word. Being largely illiterate, they left no written record of their thoughts and experiences; and it was only decades after the event that it occurred to ethnographers to ask them. Unfortunately, moreover, the Nahuatl soldiers and villagers, thus tardily interviewed, turned out to be far less eloquent than Martínez or Soto y Gama. One anthropologist comments that he found it perplexing “and, in the beginning, irritating to speak with the veterans of the Zapatista movement,” since their memories were disconcertingly “simple and concrete.” The important battle of Cuautla, for example—regarded by scholars as a formative moment in the history of Zapatismo—“may be talked about as the confrontation between three pals crouched down in a stone corral and a federal soldier, who fired a shot every so often while entrenched in a house belonging to a rich man who used to lend corn and who had surely buried two big bags of gold . . .,” and so on and so forth.<sup>89</sup> Nonetheless, by piecing together existing ethnohistorical materials—oral histories, the two manifestos in Nahuatl mentioned above, and, for comparative purposes, the findings of more recent ethnographic research—we may arrive at a sketch, or at least an outline, of peasant Indianism in Morelos during the revolution.

Although Manuel Gamio wrote in 1916 that the Nahuas of Morelos, “as a result of continuous and intimate coexistence with Whites, are already incorporated into the life of the latter,”<sup>90</sup> it would be more accurate to characterize the relation between the two groups in Eric Wolf's terms, cited above, as one of “hostile symbiosis” rather than “synthesis.” In fact, the Ladino-Indian boundary was very much in evidence in Morelos during the early twentieth century, was acknowledged and even stressed by members of both groups, and was clearly delineated by a wide

range of cultural markers. In this section, I shall examine three of the most important such identifiers, which served to differentiate not only Indians from Ladinos, but Zapatistas from their enemies: language, clothing, and religion. All three attracted the attention of Doña Luz Jiménez, whose oral narrative was recorded in Nahuatl in the 1960s, when Zapata and his soldiers rode into her native village of Milpa Alta:

The first thing we heard of the Revolution was one day when *Tlatihuani*<sup>91</sup> Zapata came from Morelos. He wore fine clothes—a broad sombrero and spats. He was the first great man to speak to us in Nahuatl.<sup>92</sup> All his men arrived dressed in white: white shirts, white calzones, and huaraches. All these men spoke Nahuatl more or less as we spoke it. Tlatihuani Zapata also spoke Nahuatl. When all these men entered Milpa Alta, we understood what they said. Each of the Zapatistas carried pinned to his hat a picture of the saint he loved best, so that the saint would protect him. Each bore a saint in his hat.

Zapata stood at the head of his men and addressed the people of Milpa Alta in the following way: "Come join me! I have risen in arms, and I have brought my countrymen with me.... Join the Revolution with us since we are not satisfied with what the rich pay us. It isn't enough for us to eat or clothe ourselves. I also want all the people to have their own plots of land, so they can sow and reap corn, beans, and other grains. What do you people say? Will you join us?"<sup>93</sup>

Although the villagers' response to this appeal was noncommittal, according to Jiménez, the welcome accorded Zapata was nevertheless highly cordial: "Everyone in the village went out to receive him. Crowds of men and women came with flowers in their hands. A band played and fireworks burst; and when he had entered, the band played reveille."

Jiménez's description of the Constitutionalist army entering the town after a Zapatista retreat makes a striking contrast:

If you only knew all the things that happened to us when Zapata abandoned us! The people of the village will never forgive him for leaving us in the hands of the enemy. Strangers began to arrive, men wearing earrings. One wore a large golden ring in his nose. They spoke Spanish, I think, but we could hardly understand a word they said. They spoke with thick, brutish accents. They were the men of Carranza!<sup>94</sup>

**Language.** Let us begin our discussion of language by considering the words used to demarcate the ethnic frontier itself: the vocabulary of selfhood and otherness. When observing this distinction, as noted above, Ladinos customarily referred to themselves as *gente de razón* ("rational people")—a phrase that was scarcely used in any other context—and to the Nahuas as *indios* or *inditos*. These terms date from the sixteenth century, when the Crown established separate "republics" of Spaniards and Indians, whose rights and obligations at law diverged widely. On account of their imputed intellectual, cultural, and moral deficiencies, Indians were assigned a juridical status analogous to that of children: they could not own land privately, belong to a guild, or contract a debt in excess of five pesos, and were likewise prohibited from riding horses, bearing firearms, or wearing European dress. Not

surprisingly, "indio" became a term of abuse, and was therefore softened to "indito" on occasions when offense was not intended. The use of the diminutive suffix, however, introduced overtones of condescension and paternalism instead.

Understandably, the Nahuas preferred to employ a different, although equally loaded, vocabulary in observing the same distinction: the Nahuatl terms *macehualtin* and *coyume*. *Macehualtin*, which literally means "carriers," was used in precolumbian times in reference to commoners or peasants, the most numerous order of Mesoamerican society, as distinct from *pipiltin* (nobles) and a few smaller groups. After the conquest, as we have seen, the Spaniards suppressed the native aristocracy and imposed their own dominion in its place, thereby superimposing an ethnic boundary upon a class division. Hence, the word *pipiltin* gradually fell into disuse and *macehualtin* came denote Indians generally, irrespective of their particular ethnic group; the term translates roughly as "ordinary people" or "Indian peasants." The Nahuatl term for Ladinos in Morelos at the time of the Revolution was the highly derogatory *coyume*, a regional variant of *coyotl* (coyote: one of several Nahuatl loan words in English). The coyote, of course, is a predatory animal, but in Nahua folklore also a stupid one, who is regularly outwitted by his mythical nemesis, the rabbit.<sup>95</sup>

Retention of the aboriginal language was weaker in Morelos than in more remote regions of Mexico. Relatively few villages were exclusively Nahuatl-speaking, while bilingualism was common. The anthropologist Robert Redfield, for example, studying Tepoztlán in the late 1920s, found that while nearly everyone could still speak Nahuatl, all but a few of the oldest Tepoztecos spoke Spanish as well. Redfield took this as evidence of an "even balance of the culture between Indian and European elements; the culture is neither aboriginal nor Spanish, but a close integration of both"<sup>96</sup>—a conclusion which is certainly congenial to an assimilationist perspective such as Gamio's. Yet if we recall Fredrik Barth's advice to focus our attention on "the ethnic *boundary* that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses," it will be apparent that bilingualism can as readily lend itself to the construction of ethnicity as to its dissolution, to the maintenance rather than the erasure of an ethnic boundary. Such, according to ethnolinguist Jane H. Hill, is the case among contemporary Nahuas living on the slopes of the Malinche Volcano in Tlaxcala and Puebla:

Mexicano [Nahuatl] and Spanish have been given sharply differentiated symbolic significance. Spanish is the language of money and the market, of the city, of evil personages in myths, and of social distance. To speak Spanish to a fellow townsman can be an aggressive denial of intimacy; the use of Spanish to outsiders to the region, regardless of their ethnicity, registers social distance in that context as well....

In contrast ... Mexicano is par excellence the language of intimacy, solidarity, mutual respect, and identity as a *campesino*. Mexicano is required at major community rituals such as the sealing of the vows between new *compadres*, or the blessing of newlyweds. Obscene "inverted greetings" in Mexicano are used



by young men to test the ethnicity of strangers encountered on the roads; the return of the correct Mexicano comeback is a password allowing entrée into the town.<sup>97</sup>

When asked whether it was still really necessary to know Nahuatl, one of Hill's informants replied, "Ah, why not, in order for us to defend ourselves."<sup>98</sup>

It was to the grandparents of the Indians interviewed by Hill, the Tlaxcalan and Pueblan villagers who had fought with or supported Zapata's erstwhile ally Gen. Domingo Arenas, that the only significant documents written in Nahuatl during the Revolution were addressed: the two Zapatista manifestos mentioned in passing by Womack. They thus afford a unique glimpse at the manner in which the ideals of the agrarian revolution found expression in an aboriginal tongue.

Although Arenas's agrarian goals were virtually identical to Zapata's, his movement was organizationally independent, and when Carranza offered him an amnesty along with land reform in his home territory, Arenas opted to switch sides, a decision which led to his death in an encounter with some Zapatista officers on 30 August 1917. In an effort to repair the damage and recapture the support of the mostly Nahua Arenistas, Zapata and his secretaries drafted the two epistles, one addressed to Arenas's soldiers and officers, the other to his civilian followers. The documents were originally composed in Spanish, and then translated into the language of the Aztecs. Although the identity of the translator or translators remains unknown, the command of Nahuatl evinced in the manifestos is excellent, according to one of the leading authorities in contemporary Nahua studies, Miguel León-Portilla.<sup>99</sup>

The letters, both dated 27 April 1918, recapitulate the essential message of the Plan of Ayala, the vision of "land and freedom". It is the small liberties which the translator was obliged to take in an effort to capture the meaning of Spanish words and phrases lacking ready equivalents in Nahuatl that are of particular interest here. One of the manifestos, for example, was addressed in Spanish to *esos pueblos que se mantienen erguidos contra hacendados y caciques* ("those communities that stand up to the landlords and political bosses"). The phrase used to render *hacendados y caciques* was *lalpialohuame-quixtianos*, literally "possessors-of-lands—Christians." One may surmise that this was intended to evoke folk memories of conquest and colonization; it likewise presumes that the Nahuas being addressed were only nominally Catholic, if that, and that the word "Christian" could therefore carry pejorative connotations. The document continues:

To all those communities, to those who work the soil, we invite them to reunite with us. Thus we will give life to a single struggle, so that we may go forth in mutual support, confronting those who mock the people, those who support the property rights of the landlord-Christians ...

Let us go on fighting, let us not rest, and the land will be our property, the people's property, the land which belonged to our grandparents and which vicious paws have seized from us, under the protection of passing rulers. Let us hold high, with raised hands and strong hearts, this beautiful *tlachicanaloni* [literally, "something taken up so as to be seen": a neologism introduced by the translator to render the Spanish *estandarte*, "standard"], called an *estandarte*, of our dignity and freedom [*maquixtīhcayotl*], as workers of the soil. Let us continue fighting and defeat those who have lately become haughty, who help the ones who take away other people's lands, ... those scoffers in the haciendas: this is our debt of honor, if we want to be called men who lead good lives and in truth good members of the community.<sup>100</sup>

The closing phrase, "men who lead good lives and in truth good members of the community," translated into the more explicitly communitarian language of Nahuatl peasants what in the original had been "free men and conscientious citizens." Similarly *maquixtīhcayotl*, evidently the closest approximation the translator was able to find for the Spanish *libertad* (freedom), is an abstract noun formed from the verb *maquixtia*, "to free or save another," and hence implies a social rather than an individual definition of liberty.

The manifesto addressed to "the chiefs, officers, and soldiers of the Arenas Division" presented still greater difficulties of translation, since it invoked the Revolution's more abstract ideals: those of duty and honor, of flag and country; which is to say, the very concepts Soto y Gama had dismissed as "miserable words" and "lies of history." The translator was faced with a particular challenge in endeavoring to render the Spanish *patria*, which means "homeland" or, more literally, "fatherland," and from which are derived such terms as "patriotic" and "patriotism." As in preconquest times, so in the twentieth century, Nahuas' primary loyalty has always been to the *altepetl*, the village community; Mexican nationalism, the province of Ladino power brokers, has exercised only a very limited appeal. There exists a general veneration of the land, but in Mesoamerican cosmologies the land is never a father but invariably a female deity. Thus where the original Spanish version enjoins the Tlascaltecos to "enlist under our flags, which are those of the people [*pueblo*], and work with us for the unification of the revolutionary forces, which is today our greatest duty to the fatherland," the Nahuatl text reads as follows: *nan mo poazque itlampa to bandera, ca huel yéhua ihuaxca in altepetl ihuan to nahuac nan tequitizque ipampa nezetil-netehuialoni, yehuan nan axcan y huan axcan, in cachi huei tequitl tlen ticchihuazque ixpan to tlalticpac-nantzi, mihtoa Patria* ("put yourselves beside our flag [*bandera*—untranslated from the Spanish], because it belongs to the community [*altepetl*], and work for unity in the struggle, for this at present is to some extent the great work which we shall perform on behalf of our dear mother the earth, called *Patria*").<sup>101</sup> The closest approach to an appeal to national patriotism which the Zapatista translator could muster was thus to invoke the traditional Nahuatl reverence for the earth, conceived as a feminine spirit.

**Clothing.** If language was a clear demarcator of the Ladino-Indian divide, a still more obvious advertisement of ethnicity—and one that identified Spanish-speaking Nahuas as well as those who retained their ancestral tongue—was costume. “Coyotes” habitually dressed in store-bought clothes, the men in trousers and the women in dresses. Macehualtin garments were by contrast homemade, women wearing long, sleeveless tops and a woven, wrap-around skirt, men the white blouses and breeches mentioned above. The difference in attire remains sufficiently notable that even today Ladinos “will frequently say, as a shorthand way to identify someone ethnically: ‘Es de calzón’ (‘He wears breeches’) or ‘Es de pantalón’ (‘He wears pants’).”<sup>102</sup> In times of open ethnic conflict, the wrong clothing could make one a target of violence. Thus, when rebellion broke out in 1896 among the Chatino Indians of Oaxaca (following the introduction of a new tax by the state government), the indigenous rebels “attempted to wipe out the literate mestizos (the new landowners and merchants) whom they identified as ‘wearing pants’ as opposed to native dress.” To this day, the Chatino refer to the rising as the War Against the Pants.<sup>103</sup>

The Nahua revolution in Morelos presented precisely the same aspect, not only “pitting peasants against landlords” (as Alan Knight admits) and Indians against Ladinos (as he denies), but breeches against trousers as well. It is hardly surprising that soldiers of the Liberation Army of the South dressed as macehualtin; so they were. We have seen, further, that even the urban intellectuals who joined the movement were impelled to adopt Indian dress, but omitted to mention what it was that so impelled them. They put on their calzones, as Womack remarks, “not only through affectation but also because they were safer in them. On visits to Cuernavaca allied revolutionaries from the north doffed their khakis; otherwise they courted insults and even assaults if they wandered far from the central plaza.” In the Zapatista liberated zone—the Nahua utopia—indigenous clothing was *de rigueur*. A number of city dwellers were indeed killed for failing to keep up, so to speak, with the fashion of the day. “Anyone in trousers, a shirt, and boots was a *catrín*, a dandy.”<sup>104</sup> But those who dressed Indian-style faced an equal or greater danger from the other side. During their various scorched-earth campaigns in Morelos, Rosa King observed, federal troops shot on sight “anyone wearing the white calzones of the peon.”<sup>105</sup>

**Religion.** While the Zapatistas could thus be distinguished from Ladino revolutionaries by sartorial as well as linguistic criteria, the difference dearest to many of their hearts was probably to be found in the realm of the spirits. “No one in the South,” Soto y Gama had insisted, “marches under the tricolor flag.” He ought to have added that the standard most frequently hoisted by the soldiers of the Liberation Army of the South—as they rode into Cuernavaca or Mexico City, for example, or simply while relaxing at a country fair in Morelos—was that of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

When a lull in the fighting allowed them the luxury, moreover, they journeyed along with other pilgrims to pay homage at her shrine at Tepeyac (see Figures 3 and 4).<sup>106</sup> More often than not, the icons they wore on their sombreros were also images of the Nahua Madonna, as recorded in a revolutionary *corrido* (folk ballad) from Tepoztlán:

Soy rebelde del Estado de Morelos ...  
 Soy rebelde y lucharé contra el gobierno  
 Porque al fin nada llegada a cumplir.  
 Con mi guincher, mi caballo y tres canañas—  
 Y descubro la virgen de Tepeyac—  
 Así que haré que respete el Plan de Ayala  
 O que sucumba cual valiente liberal.

I'm a rebel from the state of Morelos ...  
 I'm a rebel and I'll fight against the government  
 Because in the end it has not fulfilled its promises.  
 With my Winchester, my horse and three cartridge belts—  
 And I display the Virgin of Tepeyac—  
 So I will win respect for the Plan of Ayala  
 Or perish as a valiant liberal.<sup>107</sup>

There is little evidence that Zapata was himself an especially pious individual, but it is certain that he respected the syncretic, folk religion of his followers. Once while camped in Zacualpán, a Nahua village, the caudillo devoted time to receiving groups of villagers and hearing their problems and complaints. When approached about a lack of sponsorship for the upcoming festival of the Virgin of the Rosary, he appointed a commission to look after the matter, entrusting them with funds and with a document providing that a portion of land from a nearby hacienda be set aside for the purpose, with its harvest going each year to support the celebration. The villagers thereafter counted Zapata among the Virgin's *mayordomos* (office-holders in the traditional "civil-religious hierarchy" of Mesoamerican Indian communities); when interviewed in the 1970s, residents of Zacualpán still referred to the plot as "the Virgin's land."<sup>108</sup>

For Morelos's Ladino elite, on the other hand, religious festivals and their accompanying *mayordomías* (offices) had been objects of ridicule since the latter part of the nineteenth century. Like other "modern" Mexicans, they had come to think of worship as "a personal affair, associated with inner experience rather than with collective symbols.... Fiestas were only for the 'Indians'—and this term was more than ever derogatory; their celebration often deepened the cleavages between classes."<sup>109</sup> The Zapatistas' more serious antagonists, however, in the spiritual arena as on the battlefield, were the Constitutionalist soldiers from the North—Carranza's "devils," as Luz Jiménez called them.

Although Jiménez records a number of atrocities committed by the Northerners—the worst being a massacre in which all the men of Milpa Alta, including her father and uncles, were rounded up and killed in the town square—she found nothing more offensive, if one may judge by the relative amount of space accorded it in her narrative, than the Carrancistas' iconoclasm. For unlike the Zapatistas, who shared the villagers' folk Catholicism, the intruders from

the North subscribed to the anticlerical ideology of nineteenth-century Ladino liberalism, seeing in the Nahuas' spiritual beliefs and practices nothing but malignant superstitions, hated obstacles to progress and national development, which could only have been foisted upon the benighted Indians by contemptible and venal priests. In her usual unaffected, matter-of-fact tone, Jiménez recounts scenes reminiscent of the Spanish conquest four centuries earlier, or of Binu Gada's confrontation with Felix Díaz in the 1860s, as she describes the Northerners' sacrilegious antics: dressing up in vestments stolen from the village church, playing with figures of the saints pulled down from the altar, even threatening to turn the church into a stable for their horses. In equally sober language, she goes on to describe the supernatural punishments, usually fatal, which were unfailingly visited upon the offenders. One such incident, for example, saw the Carrancistas' blasphemy directed against Saint Matthew, patron of the quarter in which Jiménez lived—"and an angry saint he was!"

"This dirty Carrancista!" a man from our district said. "He has climbed up to the altar where Saint Matthew stands. He wants to put on the saint's mantle! And the robes of Saint Mark, too, the robes of Matthew's son!"

When they heard these words, the men of the village spoke up. "Do not worry. No one can take anything away from Saint Matthew. He who dares to touch him will be killed."

"How can he slay us?" one of Carranza's men asked. "How can he beat us up or shoot us with bullets?"

"You are going to get sick with a sickness called fever," the men of the village said. "And you won't be able to get rid of it, even if you tried walking on your head! For our Saint Matthew is a terrible saint!"

But the Carrancista took the mantle of Saint Matthew and brought it down with him from the altar. He tore the cape to bits, and then he began to shake with fever....

The sick man lived about two weeks. He shook all over, and no medicine helped him. Because those were times of war, our witch doctors would not attend him. So it was that this soldier of Carranza died.<sup>110</sup>

As a final anticlerical outrage, the Carrancistas seized and tortured the village priest: "They slit open the soles of his feet. And then they forced him to walk that way." This crime, however, elicited not divine but human retribution. Jiménez relates that the Zapatistas, hearing of the incident, raided the occupied village specifically in order to rescue the priest, killing many Constitutionalist troops in the process.<sup>111</sup>

## VIII. Conclusion

Let us briefly review the argument developed above. We have observed that the ethnic boundary between Indians and Ladinos was a product of European imperialism, which tended to bring cultural differences and class

divisions into historical alignment. By the late colonial era, this double bifurcation of Mexican society had assumed the form of an unequal, "hostile symbiosis" between the indigenous *altepetl* and the Ladino-owned *hacienda*: a precarious balance linking two interconnected modes of production, which permitted the villagers a modicum of economic and cultural autonomy, while providing the *hacendados* with a convenient source of labor-power, available on a seasonal basis at a wage considerably below its cost of reproduction. Independence in 1821 brought only cosmetic changes to the established agrarian regime: both the aboriginals and their European colonizers were rechristened as citizens of a putative Mexican nation-state, while the exploitation of the former by the latter continued unabated. Although indigenous soldiers fought for an ethnically specific, Amerindian Liberalism in the wars of the mid-nineteenth century, premised on local self-government and an increased land base subject to municipal control, in practice the Liberal Reform advantaged the *haciendas* at the villages' expense, and the uneven playing field became still more precipitously tilted during the Porfiriato. The hostile symbiosis was growing ever more hostile and less symbiotic.

With the outbreak of revolution in 1910, two conflicting solutions to the dilemma of internal colonialism were put on the table. On one side, elite Indianists like Vasconcelos and Gamio proposed to dissolve the Ladino-Indian boundary by assimilating Mexico's indigenous peoples to the "national" (read: Ladino) culture, while slightly "diluting" the latter with a dose of indigenista propaganda. On the other side, peasant Indianists like Arenas and Zapata called for the liquidation, not of ethnic identities per se, but of the agrarian structure which occasioned and perpetuated the antagonism between villages and *haciendas*, Indians and Ladinos. Their program was economic, political, and cultural self-determination for the indigenous villages. In a manifesto dated 25 April 1918, a year before his death, Zapata inquired rhetorically: "Where is the Revolution going? What do the sons of the people risen in arms propose for themselves?" At the head of a long inventory of answers, pride of place was given to the following: "to redeem the indigenous race, giving it back its lands and by that its liberty."<sup>112</sup> The initial phrase about redeeming the Indians might have been copied out of any of dozens of tracts and speeches by bourgeois indigenistas. The following clause, however, specifying the manner in which such a redemption was to be accomplished, expressed the epitome of peasant Indianism in revolutionary Mexico.

As peasant Indianists, the Zapatistas contemplated—and, more importantly, carried out—a transformation which was both economic and cultural. Within their liberated zone in Morelos and neighboring states, they proceeded vigorously to implement the agrarian revolution envisioned in the Plan of Ayala. A decree issued in September 1914

provided for full local autonomy in determining the allocation of lands reclaimed from the haciendas: according to "the custom and usages of each pueblo," land could either be granted to individual small-holders as private property or else held by the village under a common title, with usufruct rights being distributed to each household.<sup>113</sup> In their Agrarian Law, issued on 26 October 1915, the Zapatistas declared: "The Nation recognizes the traditional and historic right which the pueblos, ranchos, and communities of the Republic have of possessing and administering their fields of communal distribution and communal use in the form which they judge proper." Once again, there was also provision for the establishment of individual small-holdings, but the law went on to stipulate that all revolutionary land grants, communal or private, were to be non-transferable, and that the extent of individual allotments would not exceed a specified number of hectares (which varied according to the quality of the land).<sup>114</sup>

As is clear in the light of these considerations, the Zapatista conception of the ejido was far removed from the bourgeois ideal of absolute, freely alienable property; yet neither did it coincide with the Bolshevik doctrine of collectivism, as Soto y Gama explains:

Property belongs in common to the collectivity. Why? Because the collectivity has the right to dispose of an allotment, for example, on the death of the ejidatario. Why? Because it has the right to impose regulations on that property or, rather, on that usufruct. The enjoyment is private, because the lot is given so that it may be enjoyed in all its products, in its full harvest, by the person who receives it. But does the latter have private property in the sense of Roman law, the property typical of the capitalist? Clearly he does not. Can he dispose of that lot? No. Can he mortgage it? No. Neither can he alienate or subdivide it.... And neither does he have the terrible right of the latifundista, the right to leave the land idle, to leave it uncultivated. Rather has he the obligation to work it. He receives the land, then, as a social function; he has no right to abuse it.<sup>115</sup>

What is striking about this agrarian regime is that it corresponds, point by point, with the Nahuatl system of land tenure which prevailed in Mexico before the Spanish conquest. As James Lockhart notes: "in preconquest times, the keeping of land records was in the hands of *altepetl* and *calpulli* [*sic*] authorities, and so to a large extent was allocation." The *calpulli* (as it is more commonly spelled)—a village or neighborhood community based on real or fictive kinship and on a mythical common origin—was "the primary land-distributing unit for the general population." This did not mean that the land was worked communally, however: "as far as arable land is concerned, in actual practice individuals and households worked it, held it on a long-term basis, and inherited it." Nonetheless, the possessors of a plot of land—normally a standard measure, except in the case of unusually large households or those of important *calpulli* officials—held it in usufruct only, not in fee simple. They could not alienate their holdings, and were obliged to perform annual duties assigned by the *calpulli* in order to keep their membership in good standing. Lockhart concludes that "the authorities could not or did not interfere with inheritance as long as there were

living heirs and the land continued to be worked, [but] when a household died out or land was left abandoned for some other reason," the village council, normally made up of elders of the *calpulli*, would intervene and reallocate the plot to another household.<sup>116</sup>

The resemblance between the Zapatista ejido and the aboriginal *calpulli* is brought into still greater relief when we consider a law enacted on 3 February 1917, stipulating that every village was to elect an agrarian representative, whose duties included defending the community's lands against outsiders, safeguarding its maps and deeds, and overseeing the periodic redistribution of land to needy families—precisely as did the *calpuleques* (chiefs of *calpullis*) of prehispanic Anáhuac.<sup>117</sup> Jesús Sotelo Inclán has argued that Zapata was himself a plausible claimant to that ancient title, citing an incident which occurred early in 1914, when his headquarters had received some emissaries from a guerrilla commander in Michoacán. The visitors had come to test Zapata's sincerity, asking what his real objectives were and how he could demonstrate his fidelity to the people's cause. In response, Zapata opened a strongbox and produced some old colonial documents: the land deeds issued by the Spanish crown to the Indians of his native village of Anenecuilco and entrusted to his care by the village elders in 1909. After years of warfare, having been obliged to move his headquarters repeatedly from town to town and across state borders, he had carefully protected the papers, which he regarded as a sacred trust. Showing them to his visitors, he said simply, "*Por esto peleo*" ("This is what I am fighting for").<sup>118</sup>

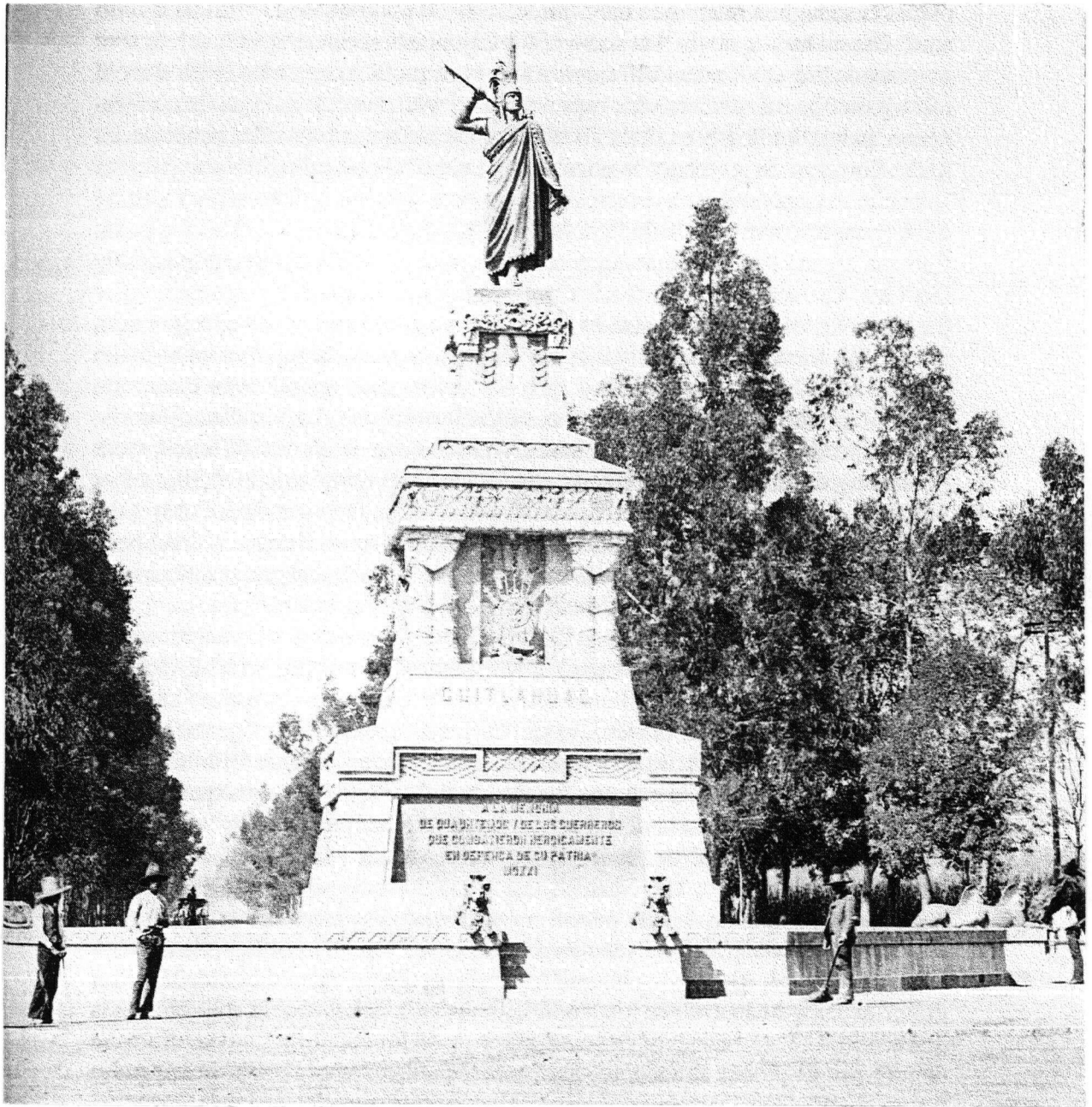
Although there was literal truth in these words, Zapata's gesture was, of course, also meant to encompass wider struggles, to invoke deeper continuities, perhaps to conjure up the whole sorry "panorama" of Mexico's colonial and neocolonial history, to which Soto y Gama would allude at the Convention later that year. These long-term resonances of "what I am fighting for" continue to be felt throughout Mexico's indigenous South, where Zapata's memory is still venerated and inspires renewed struggles for "land and freedom," such as that of today's rebels in Chiapas. Perhaps no one has captured this underlying interconnectedness, the Indianist essence of Zapatismo, better than Rosa King, with whose words it is therefore appropriate to close. Upon returning to Cuernavaca after an absence of some years, King recalls a conversation she had with her servants, "these quiet Indians," who had remained at her beloved Bella Vista even after the Zapatistas sacked the hotel during their second occupation of the city:

I asked them about Zapata, and then, for the first time, I felt an eagerness, a kind of expectation stirring behind their guarded words. Little by little they brought out the tales of Zapata's prowess in battle, of his terrible just anger, and his goodness to the weak ... And all the while it seemed to me that we were getting further away from our own affairs, from the conditions that faced us in Cuernavaca. They used the same words I did—"Revolution, Zapata, government"—but it seemed to me they meant something different by



them. I remember old Pepe's wrinkled face, creased with silent laughter, as she spoke of the snares laid by our general [Pablo González] to trap the cunning fox, Zapata—"as though the *jefe* [chief] were to be caught with snares like a common man, or killed by a bullet like anyone else!" ...

And then I caught the rhythm of their feeling, and understood that to them *la revolución* was infinitely more than the Revolution of 1910. It was the long continuous movement of resistance, like a rolling wave, that had swelled against Cortez and his conquistadores, and the greedy Aztec war lords before them; that had engulfed the armies of Spain and the armies of France as it now engulfed the hacendados. It was the struggle of these people for a birthright, to develop in their own way, in spite of strangers who came greedily to skim the cream, and, ignorantly, to make the people over.<sup>119</sup>



**Figure 1: Official Indianism.** Statue of Cuicláhuac, the penultimate Aztec emperor, defending his capital against Cortés, with inscription commemorating Cuicláhuac's successor Cuautémoc. Source: Knight 1990, p. 91.



**Figure 2: Nahua Revolutionary.** General Domingo Arenas of Tlaxcala. Source: León-Portilla 1978, p. 15.



**Figure 3: Bourgeois and Peasant Indianism Juxtaposed.** Zapatista troops pass a hotel named after an Aztec emperor, while entering Cuernavaca under the banner of Tonantzin-Guadalupe. Source: Pompa y Pompa 1938, p. 173.





**Figure 4: Peasant Indianism.** Zapatistas visiting the shrine of Tonantzin-Guadalupe at Tepeyac. Source: Pompa y Pompa 1938, p. 174.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>Cited in Wright 1984, p. 5.
- <sup>2</sup>Guillermoprieto 1994, p. 61.
- <sup>3</sup>Marcos, cited in Diebel 1994, p. 1.
- <sup>4</sup>Bollinger and Lund 1982, p. 19.
- <sup>5</sup>Womack 1969, p. 302.
- <sup>6</sup>Millon 1969, p. 83. In support of this bold assertion the author advances the following considerations: Zapata was not an Indian but a Mestizo; he did not dress like an Indian; and his favorite amusement "was the *charreada* or rodeo, the typical sport of the mestizo *ranchero*" (pp. 83-84). By virtue of such compelling evidence as this, a good many arguments might indeed "be disposed of most easily."
- <sup>7</sup>Gilly 1983. The author does have occasion to mention the Nahuatl language in passing—only to assure his readers that less than ten percent of the population in Morelos could speak it as of 1910 (p. 66). Although Gilly cites no source of this dubious statistic, he likely relied on Womack (1969, p. 71, n. 9), who gives the figure as 9.29 percent. Miguel León-Portilla (1978, pp. 43-44) has demonstrated that this can only be regarded as a gross underestimate. John Hart's (1987, p. 7) estimate that "over 20 percent of the rural population [of Morelos] in 1910 still spoke only Nahuatl and even more were bilingual" is probably closer to the truth.
- <sup>8</sup>Knight 1990, pp. 76, 77.
- <sup>9</sup>Knight 1986, vol. 1, p. xi.
- <sup>10</sup>Tannenbaum 1933, p. 119, emphasis in original.
- <sup>11</sup>Tannenbaum 1933, pp. 176, 266.
- <sup>12</sup>Frederick Engels, letter to Conrad Schmidt, 5 August 1890, in Marx and Engels 1975, p. 393; cf. Marx's warning against "transforming my historical sketch [of primitive accumulation in *Capital*] into ... a general historico-philosophical theory, whose supreme virtue consists in being supra-historical": letter to the Russian journal *Otechestvennyye Zapiski*, written in 1877 or 1878, in Shanin 1984, p. 136.
- <sup>13</sup>Cf. Balibar 1990, p. 89.
- <sup>14</sup>Wallerstein 1979, p. 224.
- <sup>15</sup>Bonfil Batalla, cited in Knight 1990, p. 75; Friedlander 1975.
- <sup>16</sup>Wallerstein 1979, p. 185.
- <sup>17</sup>See Aguirre Beltrán 1957 and 1969; Gamio 1916, 1942, and 1945; Caso 1948. For a historical survey of anthropological debates on Mexico, see Hewitt de Alcántara 1984.
- <sup>18</sup>Gamio 1945, quotes on pp. 407, 413.
- <sup>19</sup>Barth 1969, p. 9.
- <sup>20</sup>León-Portilla 1978, p. 41.
- <sup>21</sup>Caso 1948, p. 245.
- <sup>22</sup>Consider, for example, the case of "Pedro Martínez": "When I was in Yauhtepec, I was called 'Indian,' and now in Azteca they called me *ladino* [White or Mestizo]. They would say in *Mexicano* [Nahuatl: the language spoken by the Aztecs and other central Mexican groups], 'This one here has turned into a *ladino*. He is a *xicolo* now.' They would call me '*xicolo* ... *xicolo*' and that would make me mad and I would hit them": Lewis 1964, p. 21 ("Azteca" is a fictitious name for Martínez's native village of Tepoztlán, Morelos, a predominantly Nahuatl-speaking community at the time referred to in the quotation; "Pedro Martínez" is also a pseudonym).
- <sup>23</sup>Barth 1969, pp. 14-15, emphasis in original; cf. Beaucage 1994, p. 153: "Culture provides the raw materials, so to speak, for the elaboration of ethnicity."
- <sup>24</sup>Although *mestizo* and *mestizaje* (Spanish for "mixed" and "mixture," respectively) are more common terms in some parts of Mexico, I have preferred "Ladino" and "Ladinization" for the following reasons: (a) "Ladinization," a scholarly rather than a popular word, clearly suggests cultural assimilation, whereas *mestizaje* more commonly refers to cross-breeding; and (b) "Ladino" is the more inclusive term, since it is applicable to Creoles (i.e., persons of unmixed European descent), as well as to acculturated individuals of mixed or even purely aboriginal descent; in short, Ladinos are "those who speak Spanish as their main language and pursue a Spanish-derived way of life": Siverts 1969, p. 103.
- <sup>25</sup>Beaucage 1994, p. 164-165; the author notes, however, that female costume has kept closer to the prehispanic mode.
- <sup>26</sup>Semo 1973, p. 23.
- <sup>27</sup>Rodrigo de Albornoz, cited in Semo 1973, p. 28, emphasis added.
- <sup>28</sup>See Semo 1973.
- <sup>29</sup>As Barth (1969, p. 10) notes: "stable, persisting, and often vitally important social relations are maintained across [ethnic] boundaries, and are frequently based precisely on the dichotomized ethnic statuses."
- <sup>30</sup>Wolf 1959, p. 230; we must forgive the author, who was writing in the 1950s, for the inappropriately gendered phrasing: today, of course, one would be careful to avoid implying that "men" bear an exclusive or even primary responsibility for the reproduction of labor power in a peasant (or any) community. For a succinct account of the mechanisms whereby capital accumulation can be facilitated by the presence of a subsistence sector, see Wallerstein 1979, pp. 126-127.
- <sup>31</sup>González Casanova 1965, p. 33: the author also provides an inventory of the characteristics of internal colonialism in post-revolutionary Mexico. For further discussions of internal colonialism in Mexico, see Stavenhagen 1965; and González Casanova 1970, pp. 71-103. For comparative cases, see Guzmán Böckler and Herbert 1972, esp. pp. 165-190 (Guatemala); Wolpe 1975 (South Africa): the latter text also offers a critical analysis, from a structural Marxist perspective, of the concept of internal colonialism.
- <sup>32</sup>Cited in Hale 1968, p. 218.
- <sup>33</sup>Beaucage 1994, p. 157; the comment refers to nineteenth-century Latin America in general, but is especially applicable to Mexico.

<sup>34</sup> *El Universal*, 17 June 1852, cited in Hale 1968, p. 244.

<sup>35</sup> Sandstrom 1991, p. xviii.

<sup>36</sup> In a useful article analyzing "minority oppression" in Latin America, William Bollinger and Daniel Manny Lund (1982) discuss these two varieties under the headings of (1) "bourgeois or officialist indigenismo," and (2) "peasant or insurrectionist indigenismo." These authors also postulate a third variety of Indianism—"radical or petty-bourgeois indigenismo"—but I have preferred to define intermediate forms in terms of the two essential types, the Ladino and the Indian, which result from the colonizing process: intermediate cases may be interpreted as examples of interpenetration between these primary forms of Indianism.

<sup>37</sup> *Criollos*: Creoles; i.e., persons of Spanish descent born in the American colonies; *peninsulares*: Spaniards freshly arrived from the Iberian Peninsula, who enjoyed exclusive access to the upper echelons of the colonial administration.

<sup>38</sup> Nunes 1987, p. xi. The term "neo-Aztecism" was coined by John Phelan (1960).

<sup>39</sup> For an account of the latter two traditions and their place in the history of Mexican nationalism, see Lafaye 1976; but cf. Brading 1984, pp. 28-31. For more general treatments of the origins and development of Ladino Indianism, see Villoro 1950; Brading 1973 and 1991, *passim*.

<sup>40</sup> Phelan 1960, p. 767.

<sup>41</sup> Hale 1968, p. 215 ff.

<sup>42</sup> Pierre van den Berghe, cited in Knight 1990, p. 112, n. 126.

<sup>43</sup> Lombardo Toledano 1973: 161 (this and all subsequent translations from Spanish-language sources are my own, unless otherwise noted). One need not look too far afield to surmise the identity of at least one of those "other nations" Lombardo, a tireless campaigner against *el imperialismo yanqui*, had in mind.

<sup>44</sup> Vasconcelos 1925, p. 45.

<sup>45</sup> Meyer 1991, pp. 204, 208.

<sup>46</sup> It may be indicative of the ambiguities inherent in his version of *indigenismo* that towards the end of his life a disillusioned Vasconcelos, having traversed the political spectrum from left to right, dismissed *La Raza Cósmica* as "that erroneous little book" and quipped that he might have done better to describe Mexicans as a *raza cómica* (Vasconcelos, cited in Crawford 1963, p. 9; and in Haddox 1967, p. 57).

<sup>47</sup> Gamio 1916, p. 5. It is perhaps unnecessary to highlight the gendered and racialized terms in which Gamio constructs his nationalist ideal, since these characteristics are common to all variants of nineteenth-century nationalism, American, European, or otherwise. That he should describe the Mesoamerican and Andean civilizations as "small nations" unworthy of comparison with contemporary China or Japan is more surprising. In fact, at a time when Europe was a patchwork of city-states, peasant villages, and shifting, evanescent empires, political entities which equaled the Aztec and Inca empires in either population or geographical extent were few and far between. The global average was, in fact, not much more than one per continent, which is to say that in this respect the New World was roughly equivalent to the Old.

<sup>48</sup> Gamio 1916, p. 6; the ellipses are the author's own punctuation. For the remarks on Mexico's lamentable heterogeneity, see Gamio 1935, excerpted in Gamio 1972, p. 152 ff.

<sup>49</sup> Gamio 1916, p. 96.

<sup>50</sup> Alfonso Caso, cited in Knight 1990, p. 81.

<sup>51</sup> See Ricard 1966.

<sup>52</sup> See Clendinnen 1982.

<sup>53</sup> Sahagún, cited in Florescano 1994, p. 133; Lafaye 1976, p. 216. While Sahagún's testimony appears highly credible to the present writer, coming as it does from the greatest scholar among the sixteenth-century monks, and one who devoted most of a long lifetime to Nahuatl ethnography, there have nevertheless been some recent efforts to cast doubt on the Guadalupe-Tonantzin connection. E.g., Burkhardt 1993, pp. 297-208, suggests that Sahagún fell prey to an overactive imagination and questions whether an indigenous goddess by the name of Tonantzin even existed. Lockhart 1992, p. 252, on the other hand, does not contest the existence of the goddess, but maintains that her name does not occur in Nahuatl sources in reference to the Virgin. The term *totlaçonantzin* ("our precious mother") was used instead, he suggests, possibly in order to avoid conflating the two figures, but more likely because Nahuatl speakers found the term suitably "affectionate yet respectful" (p. 253 n.); but cf. ethnographer William Madsen (1960, pp. viii-ix), who found relatively unacculturated Nahuatl villagers referring to the Virgin of Guadalupe as Tonantzin in the 1950s. More globally, Lockhart (1992, p. 247) is even skeptical that there was anything specifically indigenous about the Guadalupe cult, at least before the seventeenth century. David Brading (1991, p. 354), however, cites many of the same materials as Lockhart but concludes, contrarily, that "grounds exist for tracing the entire [Guadalupe legend] back to native sources." Barring the appearance of fresh evidence, there appears little prospect of laying such controversies to rest.

<sup>54</sup> See Bricker 1981; Gow 1979; Rus 1983.

<sup>55</sup> Morelos, cited in Florescano 1994, p. 214.

<sup>56</sup> Morelos, cited in Florescano 1994, p. 220.

<sup>57</sup> If it is true, as is reputed, that Bustamante drafted the speech which Morelos delivered at the Congress, this would provide still clearer evidence for the cross-fertilization between elite and peasant Indianism which is argued here. As Enrique Florescano notes, Bustamante's authorship "does not invalidate the fact that Morelos was the first rebel chieftain to accept these ideas and put them into practice" (Florescano 1994, p. 250 n. 56, emphasis added).

<sup>58</sup> The text of this document is reproduced in Magaña and Pérez Guerrero 1985, vol. 1, pp. 37-40.

<sup>59</sup> Mallon 1995, pp. 23-62, 137-175; the quotations are on pp. 33, 41.

<sup>60</sup> Beaucage 1994, p. 174.

<sup>61</sup> Martínez 1993; the quotation is on p. 84. Binu Gada's Spanish name was Albino Jiménez. Felix Díaz, incidentally, eventually met his end at the hands of a group of Juchitecos outraged at his desecration of their patron saint.

- <sup>62</sup>Cockcroft 1968, p. 148.
- <sup>63</sup>Friedrich 1970.
- <sup>64</sup>On Che Gómez, see Campbell, et al. 1993, p. 81; on Joaquín de la Cruz, Friedrich 1970, pp. 50-55; on Nicolás Portes, Schryer 1990, pp. 118-119; and for the reaction of one outraged Ladino following an encounter with Portes's band, see Mendoza Vargas 1960, p. 83.
- <sup>65</sup>Del Castillo 1953, p. 251.
- <sup>66</sup>Another clear line of division, to which I shall return in Section VII of the text, was that Indian revolutionaries clung to their syncretic, folk religion, while Ladinos were often virulently anticlerical and iconoclastic.
- <sup>67</sup>*La Libertad*, 20 November 1878, p. 2.
- <sup>68</sup>*La Libertad*, 21 March 1879, p. 3.
- <sup>69</sup>*El Imparcial*, 19 June 1911, 20 June 1911, and 5 February 1912; the latter article is reproduced in Magaña and Pérez Guerrero 1985, vol. 2, pp. 258-263; the quotation is on p. 260.
- <sup>70</sup>The text of Lozano's speech is reproduced in Magaña and Pérez Guerrero 1985, vol. 2, pp. 29-33.
- <sup>71</sup>King 1935, pp. 62, 63, 70. It is diverting to compare King's memoir with the account in *El Imparcial* (20 June 1911, p. 8), where it is claimed that not a single young woman remained in Cuernavaca during this period, all the city's señoritas having fled in terror of being raped by the Zapatistas; the paper's unidentified source accused Zapata himself of having violated no less than three. The report is almost certainly fictitious: metropolitan journalists had reputedly been bribed by the hacendados of Morelos to slander the Zapatistas, and in any event it is hardly likely that such a state of terror in her home town would have escaped King's notice. This is not to say, however, that Zapatista soldiers were always blameless in their treatment of women: instances of rape or abduction committed by them elsewhere are mentioned in the oral histories of two Nahuatl women: see Jiménez 1968b, p. 135; Lewis 1964, pp. 92-93. Both Luz Jiménez and "Esperanza," however, learned to fear government troops more than the rebels. In Esperanza's words: "The Zapatistas were well liked in the village, because although it is true they sometimes carried off young girls, they left the majority of women in peace. And after all, everyone knew what kind of girls they took. The ones who liked that sort of thing!"
- <sup>72</sup>Ramírez Plancarte 1940, cited in León-Portilla 1978 p. 45.
- <sup>73</sup>Strother 1915, p. 648. The common allegation that Zapata was illiterate, incidentally, is almost certainly unfounded: see Brunk 1993, p. 33, n. 1.
- <sup>74</sup>King 1935, pp. 77, 311.
- <sup>75</sup>Gates 1919, pp. 69, 73.
- <sup>76</sup>Brunk 1993, p. 33.
- <sup>77</sup>The text of this Plan is reproduced in González Ramírez 1954, pp. 68-70, and in Magaña and Pérez Guerrero 1985, vol. 1, pp. 121-124.
- <sup>78</sup>Macías 1980, pp. 61-62; McNeely 1966, pp. 158-159; Magaña and Pérez Guerrero 1985, vol. 1, pp. 125-126.
- <sup>79</sup>Quirk 1960, p. 107; Magaña and Pérez Guerrero 1985, vol. 5, p. 217.
- <sup>80</sup>Antonio Díaz Soto y Gama (1961, p. 188) notes that Martínez "was referring to merely political reforms."
- <sup>81</sup>The transcript of Martínez's speech is reprinted in Barrera Fuentes 1964, pp. 505-509; the passages cited are on pp. 506 and 508. Díaz Soto y Gama (1961, p. 188) reproduces the second paragraph almost word for word, but has Martínez calling Villa and Zapata "Mestizos" rather than "Indians"—a "correction" which patently makes nonsense of the sentence in which it occurs.
- <sup>82</sup>Womack 1969, p. 194.
- <sup>83</sup>Díaz Soto y Gama 1961, pp. 188-189.
- <sup>84</sup>Vasconcelos, cited in Amaya C. 1966, p. 134.
- <sup>85</sup>See Quirk 1960, pp. 109-112; Amaya C. 1966, pp. 132-136; Brunk 1993, pp. 54-55; Magaña and Pérez Guerrero 1985, vol. 5, pp. 217-227; and for Soto y Gama's own version, Díaz Soto y Gama 1961, pp. 187-191. A full transcript of the proceedings, including Soto y Gama's speech, the exclamations which interrupted it, the numerous interventions denouncing or (in one or two instances) supporting him, and his rejoinder, is reproduced in Barrera Fuentes 1964, pp. 509-532.
- <sup>86</sup>Barrera Fuentes 1964, p. 512.
- <sup>87</sup>Barrera Fuentes 1964, pp. 525-526.
- <sup>88</sup>Barrera Fuentes 1964, p. 513.
- <sup>89</sup>Warman 1980, p. 91.
- <sup>90</sup>Gamio 1916, p. 177.
- <sup>91</sup>An honorific roughly equivalent to "Sir," this modern Nahuatl term derives from *Tlatoani*, literally "Speaker," the official title of the Aztec emperors.
- <sup>92</sup>Jiménez did not, of course, use the term *Nahuatl*—a scholarly neologism introduced by French linguists in the late nineteenth century (see Hill 1991, p. 78)—to refer to her language. Rather she used forms derived from the root *macehual-*, i.e., "the language of the *macehualtin* (ordinary people)."
- <sup>93</sup>Jiménez 1968b, p. 127; I have modified the translation based on the Spanish version in Jiménez 1968a, p. 105, and the version in Wright 1992, p. 248. Womack, on the other hand, asserts that Zapata "knew nothing of" the Nahuatl language (1969, p. 71 n. 9.). He arrives at this conclusion rather precipitously, however, predicated a good deal of inference on a single, not very apposite citation. It may be impossible to resolve the question in a definitive manner, but the balance of evidence seems to weigh in Jiménez's favor: see León-Portilla 1978, pp. 41-46.
- <sup>94</sup>Jiménez 1968b, p. 145.



<sup>95</sup>Semo 1973, p. 30; Warman 1980, p. 87; ; Beaucage 1994, pp. 161, 183 n. 8. All these usages remain current in the Nahuatl zone of contemporary Mexico: see, e.g., Schryer 1990, p. 59; Sandstrom 1991, p. 69. So entrenched is the association of *coyotl* with Ladinos that the mammalian species *Canis latrans* is usually referred to as *coyotecuani* (coyote-wild-beast) so as to avoid confusion with its human counterpart. Still less complimentary animal associations are current elsewhere; thus, in the Maya village of San Bartolomé, Chiapas, legend has it that the Ladinos were created from horse dung, while Indians are *bac'il winik* (true men): Siverts 1969, pp. 111-112.

<sup>96</sup>Redfield 1930, p. 30.

<sup>97</sup>Hill 1985, p. 727. One example of such an "inverted greeting" is recorded by another ethnographer, Pierre Beaucage (1994, p. 183 n. 11): *¡Xinechtaneuj mouelti!* ("Lend me your sister!"); the author notes that "there are also much coarser ones."

<sup>98</sup>Hill 1991, p. 79.

<sup>99</sup>The texts of the two manifestos in both Spanish and Nahuatl, along with reproductions of the original documents and León-Portilla's Spanish retranslation of the Nahuatl, are available in León-Portilla 1978, pp. 59-97; for an abridged English rendition, see León-Portilla 1992, pp. 165-168.

<sup>100</sup>León-Portilla 1978, pp. 82-84, 95. Being unable to read Nahuatl, I have been obliged to translate León-Portilla's Spanish version of the Nahuatl text into English. The dangers inherent in this procedure are, I hope, minimized by the extreme literalness of León-Portilla's line-by-line rendition; all comments in my text concerning the Nahuatl vocabulary used in the manifestos are derived from his notes.

<sup>101</sup>León-Portilla 1978, pp. 75, 88-89.

<sup>102</sup>Beaucage 1994, p. 165.

<sup>103</sup>Greenberg 1981, p. 50. Such episodes were not confined to Mesoamerica: E.J. Hobsbawm (1973, p. 6) notes a similar rising in Bolivia in 1899, wherein indigenous rebels "attacked all those 'wearing trousers' and imposed the costume of the peasants (i.e. Indian dress) on the townsmen."

<sup>104</sup>Womack 1969, pp. 241-242; Warman 1980, p. 113.

<sup>105</sup>King 1935, p. 89.

<sup>106</sup>See Ramírez Melgarejo 1974, pp. 202-203.

<sup>107</sup>Redfield 1930, p. 187; and see Ramírez Melgarejo 1974, p. 203.

<sup>108</sup>Ramírez Melgarejo 1974, p. 203; on the civil-religious hierarchy, see Carrasco 1961. In consecrating land to a saint, Zapata was, consciously or otherwise, revivifying a time-honored tradition. Indian communities during the colonial era had frequently maintained "saints' lands," fields which were cultivated by informal religious fraternities and whose proceeds were reserved for ceremonial purposes. These lands were understood to be the property of the saints themselves, who were in turn identified with their icons, so that a villager might speak of "the lands held by the holy images that are within the church." Each such property was a few hectares in size and was under the charge of a mayordomo, who was responsible for marketing its produce, usually corn, hay, or *pulque* (aboriginal beer made from the juice of the maguey cactus), in order to finance the annual celebration for the saint. The custom had prehispanic roots in the *teotlalli* ("land of the gods"), a portion of communal land set aside by each calpulli to be worked in common, with the proceeds dedicated exclusively to religious purposes. Lockhart suggests that "in postconquest times, the Nahuas viewed the saints, the successors to the gods, as the residual owners of the land": Gibson 1964, pp. 129-131, 258 (villager cited on p. 130); Lockhart 1992, pp. 156-157, 239-242 (quotation on p. 157).

<sup>109</sup>De la Peña 1981, pp. 57-67.

<sup>110</sup>Jiménez 1968b, pp. 147-149. By way of contrast, wounded Zapatista soldiers regularly received the ministrations of Nahuatl shamans: see Ramírez Melgarejo 1974, p. 202.

<sup>111</sup>Jiménez 1968b, pp. 153-157. Milpa Alta was by no means an isolated target of Carrancista sacrilege. The elders of Tepoztlán, for example, recount similar tales of Carrancistas riding their horses into the church, mocking the saints, and masquerading in the Virgin's golden mantle and other holy objects. "They have no fear of God," one scandalized Zapatista commented: cited in Chevalier 1960, p. 173.

<sup>112</sup>Cited in Womack 1969, p. 303.

<sup>113</sup>Womack 1969, p. 234.

<sup>114</sup>This document is reproduced in English translation in Womack 1969, appendix C, pp. 405-411; the quotation is on p. 406.

<sup>115</sup>Soto y Gama, cited in Córdova 1973, pp. 339-340, n. 63.

<sup>116</sup>Lockhart 1992, pp. 142-143, 146-147.

<sup>117</sup>Chevalier 1960, p. 184. Alonso de Zorita, the sixteenth-century author of *A Brief and Summary Account of the Lords of New Spain*, describes the calpuleques as follows: "The communities of these districts, known as calpullis, always have a headman and never want to be without one, and he has to be one of their own and not from another calpulli, since they will not suffer a foreigner, and he must be a prominent person and able to protect and defend them; and they choose and elect him from among themselves ... and not by succession, but when one dies they elect another, the most honorable, wise, and able ... This chief has the duty of looking after the calpulli's lands and defending them, and he has paintings showing the categories of lands and the boundaries, and where and between whom borders are shared, and who it is that farms them, and which fields each one has and which are vacant and which have been given to Spaniards ...; and they revise their paintings in accordance with succeeding events, and are very well informed on account of them; and they are also charged, it is said, with giving land to those who have no fields to sow, or if they have too little, according to [the size of] their families, they give them more; and it is their duty to protect the people of the calpulli and to represent them before the magistrates and governors": cited in Sotelo Inclán 1943, p. 193.

<sup>118</sup>Sotelo Inclán 1943, p. 203.

<sup>119</sup>King 1935, pp. 293-295.

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