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TRANSFORMING THE TROPICS:
DEVELOPMENT, DISPLACEMENT, AND ANTHROPOLOGY
IN THE PAPALOAPAN, MEXICO, 1940s-1970s

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To Luis, Lucio & Joaquín

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PRINCIPAL ACRONYMS

CCIP	Papaloapan Indigenista Coordinating Center
CP	Papaloapan Comission
CNC	National Campesino Confederation
INI	National Indigenist Institute
PNR	National Revolutionary Party
PRI	Institutional Revolutionary Party
SEP	Ministry of Public Education
SRH	Hydraulic Resouces Ministry

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the ideas, practices, and effects of state-led development programs in indigenous communities of Mexico during the mid-twentieth century. Using Mexico's first experiment with integrated regional development as a case study, it centers on the relocation of over twenty thousand inhabitants of the Papaloapan River Basin, most of them indigenous, who were displaced by the construction of Latin America's largest hydroelectric dam. Leading the exodus of the indigenous population was a cadre of Mexican anthropologists, who drew from their reported expertise in indigenous culture and society to facilitate among the relocated indigenes a culturally-sensitive transition to modern life. By focusing on the interactions between the displaced population, anthropologists, agricultural engineers, local politicians and agrarian activists in the Papaloapan, the dissertation argues that development—as a process and not simply an a priori policy prescription—shaped social scientific ideas and practices, the consolidation of state power, and the very concept of "indigenous" as not merely an ethnic denotation but a salient political category to demand access to state resources in modern Mexico.

This is the first historical study of modern Mexico to connect the plans and practices of economic development to indigenous politics. It upends longstanding assumptions about the power and coherence of the Mexican state during the mid-twentieth century by examining how planners worked with the local people and landscape as they carried out a project for infrastructural, economic, and social improvement. Through an analysis of projects and politics as they played out on the ground during relocation and upon resettlement, the thesis challenges prevailing scholarship that presumes parity among actors executing the so-called will of the government, to reveal the limitations of state knowledge and power in 1950s Mexico, and the

malleability of the very social and political categories—among them the category "indigenous"—that justified calls for improvement. The dissertation represents a departure from not only literature on modern Mexican history, but also the history of Cold-War era development throughout the world.

Introduction

The pages that follow tell a story about a state-led improvement project in the Mexican tropics. The central focus of this story is a dam, a complex of turbines embedded in a cement curtain built to harness the prowess of one of Mexico's mightiest rivers, which comprised the centerpiece of a broader state intervention to improve the infrastructure of the vast Papaloapan River Basin. Extensive land communications and electrification together comprised one aspect of this experiment in regional development, but paired with the grand hydraulic engineering scheme was a social engineering project—one in which planners sought to transform both the place *and* its people.

At the time of the project's promulgation in 1947, it was estimated that some twenty thousand people would lose their lands as a result of the dam construction. Over ninety percent of these people were understood—by state experts and politicos—to be indigenous, a qualifier I will explain below in greater detail. The state agency created to carry out the river basin development projects, the Papaloapan Commission, was initially charged with relocating the population as well. Yet early into the planning phase, advocates successfully demanded that Mexican anthropologists—*not* the engineers who comprised the majority of Commission technicians— intervene on behalf of the people who would lose their lands to make way for the dam. These social scientists would both manage the relocation and shepherd the indigenes into a modern existence by designing and carrying out culturally-sensitive community development projects.

But why were anthropologists involved in the relocation? Anthropology as an academic discipline had developed in concert with government administration in the nineteenth century, often in the context of colonialism. From the late-nineteenth century, anthropology in Mexico—much like in the United States—professionalized as the study of indigenous peoples, and principally those living in the national territory. Yet because of the centrality of indigenous peoples to nation-building in Mexico, anthropologists in that country held a remarkable amount of political purchase. Thus in the twentieth century, as social scientists of various disciplines gained prominence in policymaking circles the world over, Mexican anthropologists positioned themselves as authorities on all matters indigenous. The historic marginalization and exploitation as well as contemporary culture of indigenous peoples, the anthropologists claimed, rendered them vulnerable to abrupt transitions to modernity. A tempered modernization plan for the relocated population was necessary, and anthropologists were the most qualified to fit the bill.

In telling the story of the Papaloapan Project—that is, the conglomeration of infrastructural, social, and economic improvement schemes in the Papaloapan River Basin— this dissertation sits at the crossroads of three historical trajectories: indigenous politics, social scientific thought and practice, and the power and development of the Mexican state. It argues that the development efforts in the Papaloapan propelled the transformation of the geographical landscape and economy, to be sure, but also the power and practices of the state alongside ideas about social improvement, culture change, and the very concept of indigeneity. Development in mid twentieth-century Mexico involved competing and overlapping epistemological projects about who and what was in need of improvement, and what that improvement should look like. By centering on the protagonists who planned, realized, and lived the social programs in the river

basin, the dissertation offers a textured analysis of one of Mexico's first experiments in what contemporaries called integrated development (*desarrollo integral*), when increasing state power, social scientific knowledge, and racial and ethnic integration policies converged.

As the first history of twentieth-century Mexico that weds the study of economic development to indigenous politics, the dissertation offers as much an analytical intervention as a methodological one. I contend that the story of the Papaloapan Project must be told as an integrated history of ideas *and* social processes. The involvement of social scientific actors in this crucible of rural development had long-term consequences for the theory, practice, and institutionalization of anthropology, I suggest, because anthropologists functioned as *social* actors when they worked in "the field"—among the denizens of the Papaloapan and other state bureaucrats. What is more, the ideas that informed the work of anthropologists in the Papaloapan were retooled when the rubber met the road: the relocated population collectively participated in knowledge production that circulated among intellectuals beyond the river basin. The theory-praxis dialectic of anthropology and development in action was a product of encounters in the Papaloapan.

As the anthropologists trudged through the humid tropics of the Papaloapan to commence ethnographic reconnaissance work in the late 1940s, they encountered a highly diverse region and people, the latter of which did not fit neatly into the cultural typologies typical of mid-century social anthropology. But the social scientists were not the only experts in the region with a limited handle on its realities. Hydraulic engineers and topographers miscalculated the speed, location, and timing at which the water would rise; agronomists from Mexico's agrarian

department struggled to ascertain what land was entitled to whom before the reservoir waters rose.

The result was a series of unplanned and chaotic waves of relocation, perennial land adjudication problems, and incomplete and unpaid indemnities over the course of the 1950s and early 1960s. Upon relocation, the promises of modern existence were delivered in half-baked form: public health and education campaigns were quite successful and met with limited resistance, but programs to improve the local economy among the relocated did little to furnish them with opportunities for upward mobility or adequate access to credit. Efforts to grow tropical commodities in the relocation communities were largely inadequate to break the control of local merchants and middlemen; price controls and staple crop procurement prevented residents from starving, but those with means often migrated elsewhere and some even returned to their old lands, now islands in a man-made freshwater sea.

To cast the fate of the Papaloapan Project strictly in terms of success or failure eschews the work that was done in its midst, as disorderly, unintentional, or unpredictable it may have been. In terms of the work of the anthropologists and relocated population, the social development and antipoverty projects carried out in the resettlement communities hardened the relationship between those communities labeled as indigenous and the indigenous affairs institute (Instituto Nacional Indigenista), and also implicated both anthropologists and the local population in the reconfiguration of indigenous as a hybrid ethnic/cultural *and* political denotation. But the Project also betrays the realities of the Mexican developmentalist state *in process*, as a conglomerate of multiple ministries and thousands of experts in various fields of both science and administration, when improvement programs as they were carried out on the

ground were more akin to experiments and reactions than a priori policy prescriptions. What is more, the applied experience of the Papaloapan Project reflected and impacted global ideas about economic development, modernization, and culture change.

The entangled social and intellectual histories of the Papaloapan Project reveal several new stories about post-1940 Mexico, the country's indigenous policy, the history of anthropology, and the history of state-led development. One of the enticing prospects of this research is the notion of indigeneity—the quality of identifying or being identified as indigenous—as a historical *process*. It is my contention that together, through the post-resettlement community development programs, anthropologists and the displaced reconfigured indigenous as not simply an ethnic classification but as a salient political category that could be marshaled to demand access to state resources. The transformation of indigeneity was a consequence of developmentalist intervention, made possible by the interaction between the (so-called) indigenous population, representatives of the Mexican state, and the anthropologists and staff of Mexico's institute of indigenous affairs, the Instituto Nacional Indigenista.

The remaking of indigeneity is part and parcel of another phenomenon this story reveals: that anthropologists construct their subjects over time, through a dynamic process of reconciling ideas with realities. Because the anthropologists in the Papaloapan acted as both producers of knowledge and workers, their fieldwork was a social and political practice as much as it was an intellectual exercise. It would be misleading, however, to claim that all social scientific work in the Papaloapan had consistently clear and direct social, political, as well as intellectual implications. The links between theory and practice, whether linear or circular, were often flimsy or unpredictable. And yet, the ideas, concerns, and actions of not only anthropologists, but also

the displaced population as well as local bureaucrats, informed the designs and practice of state development. Such social scientific experimentation in the Papaloapan also reveals that Mexican anthropologists were at the center of global debates about real-life processes of culture change and modernization.

Scholars of Mexico have shown that anthropologists were critical actors in Mexican *nation* building during the twentieth century, but this dissertation also shows how their actions, together with those of the relocated population and local development bureaucrats, were constitutive of *state* building. As a bundle of plans and policies proffered as "development," this story is a concrete case study of the *practice* of economic development and state-making in Mexico. This research offers a new optic to examine the years between 1940 and 1970, a period of Mexican history commonly defined by the successful consolidation of one-party rule and an increasingly powerful state. While it was certainly the case that the Mexican state galvanized resources to carry out the Papaloapan Project, this research proposes that state-making happened *through* the development projects in the river basin. The limited scope of state power during the relocation and resettlement suggests that the political maneuvering of development work forged and hardened the reach of the state. Happenings in the Papaloapan River Basin during the mid-twentieth century were microcosmic, emblematic of broader political dynamics, economic development projects, and social relations at the national level in Mexico. Any and every state institution relevant to regional maintenance and improvement was active in the Papaloapan Project, and this micro scale of political maneuvering, economic development, and social change provides a window onto the on-the-ground effects of rural planning.

Improvement and Indigeneity

The dream of social progress and economic development had promise in the Papaloapan, where modern science promised to tame a region and teach its people the trappings of individualism, free markets, and the values of modern technology. Such a prospect required the twin pillars of a consolidated state and a pedagogy of national incorporation—two elements that came to fruition precisely during the mid-twentieth century in Mexico.

The era of the Papaloapan Project was one of global demographic, economic, and political transformations. Population growth and increased migration to urban centers informed centralized planning; governments increased spending on domestic economic development and fomented industrialization, often through the promotion of infant industries; while sweeping public health technologies and education initiatives comprised robust social programs. In large part a product of its time, the Papaloapan Project was conceived in this global moment of state-led schemes that entailed managed, large-scale transformations of rural space and livelihood.

The United States New Deal-era Tennessee Valley Authority, or TVA (created in 1933), is perhaps the most oft-cited initial foray into "unified development" carried out under the auspices of the state. The first of a number of emulations of the TVA, the Papaloapan Project was also one of the leading schemes to conceptualize the river basin as a geographic and economic region with great potential, identifying it as a site of intense infrastructural improvement, health and sanitation campaigns, and industrial production. Central to such experiments in rural planning was the involvement of state-commissioned experts: agronomists, land surveyors, engineers, and sanitary health professionals were present from the inception of

rural development plans through their realization. Following the Second World War, social scientists—as economists, sociologists, and increasingly, anthropologists—began to lend a hand in shaping planning schemes, but in the Papaloapan Mexican anthropologists were fundamental protagonists in carrying the project to fruition. It is precisely the involvement of these theorists and practitioners of the science of man that set the Papaloapan Project apart from the TVA and similar contemporaneous schemes around the globe.[1]

The Papaloapan Project to contemporary thinkers was a foretaste of the promise of development, or what the historian Luis Aboites Aguilar has called the pervasive "*optimismo nacional*" that guided rural improvement planning for a better Mexico during this era.[2] Purported as the country's "last frontier,"[3] and an object of massive state-led intervention, the tropical Papaloapan River Basin attracted writers, artists, engineers, and social scientists from around the globe who were eager to witness the transformative power of a so-called integrated development program that would wed infrastructural and social improvement while linking a peripheral region to the national center in economic, political, and social terms.

The Project was a first in several ways: It was the first hydraulic engineering feat of its kind in Mexico in terms of the dam's largesse, its location in the humid tropics, and its principal

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[1] On the internationalization of the TVA, see David Eli Lillienthal, *TVA: Democracy on the March* (New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1944); on the TVA in India, see Daniel Klingensmith, *"One Valley and a thousand": Dams, Nationalism, and Development* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2007). Some of the other hydraulic development schemes were roughly concurrent with the TVA, such as the Dneprostroi Dam in the USSR (ca. 1920-1940), though most were constructed decades after the end of World War II: the Aswan High Dam in Egypt (1954-60), the dam complex of the Dhamodar Valley Corporation in India (ca. early 1950s), and the Akosombo Hydroelectric Project of Ghana (1960s).

[2] Luis Aboites, "Optimismo nacional: geografía, ingeniería hidráulica y política en México (1926-1976)" in *Identidades, estado nacional y globalidad: México, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Brígida von Mentz (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología, 2000), 95-152.

[3] Thomas Poleman, *The Papaloapan Project; Agricultural Development in the Mexican Tropics* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964); William W. Winnie Jr., "The Papaloapan Project: An Experiment in Tropical Development" *Economic Geography* 34, (July 1958): 227-48.

purpose—the generation of electricity as opposed to irrigation provision. It was also the first instance in which social scientists, and specifically anthropologists, were protagonists in a regional improvement program. Yet the greatest novelty of the Papaloapan Project was the anthropologists' intention: to carry out culturally-sensitive community development programs among the resettled population. The quest to modernize a jungle backwater in economic terms met a mission to carefully modernize its inhabitants without drastically changing the qualities that marked them as quintessentially "indigenous."

As an endeavor in which development also meant displacement, population relocation provided an unparalleled opportunity to refashion the social and political organization of space in order to shepherd the denizens of the Papaloapan from a purportedly backward existence to modern life. It was the prerogative of anthropologists to develop a tailored indigenous modernization program in order to ensure the wellbeing and cultural integrity of the relocated residents. Yet it remained unclear what exactly "indigenous" meant, and how the population's essential indigenous traits could be isolated and subsequently preserved in the midst of change.

The presumption that the inhabitants to be displaced were a priori indigenous was the first problem. At mid-century, there was no clear-cut, consistent marker of indigeneity in the region within the ambit of the Papaloapan Project. Blurred lines of ethnic distinction were symptomatic of other entangled social, economic, and political relationships among the people of the basin, or *cuenqueños*, that perplexed even the most seasoned social scientific experts who descended on the region during the first decade of the project. This confusion had broader implications regarding the project administrators' desired ends as well as how to operationalize expertise, what (or whom) to improve, and what measures would bring about imagined changes.

But grand state interventions such as the Papaloapan Project are often hubristic in their ambitions and themselves state-generating. The improved administration of land and water, as well as commercial, political, or social relations, is and has been a perennial enterprise of the political centers of administration identified as "states." What Tanya Murray Li has called the will to improve, though not exclusively the domain of a nation-state, is fundamental in this regard: improvement has become a kind of unspoken raison d'être of statecraft.[4] Recent scholarship, much of which focuses on the twentieth century, has shown that improvement schemes—often in the name of development—are fraught with unintended consequences that reveal their variegated cultural meanings and social and political practices.[5]

Analyses of state-led improvement plans have provided rich narratives of processes and patterns in natural resource management and social engineering in Mexico from pre-Colombian times to the late-twentieth century. From the hydraulic management of rivers, lakes, and silver mines, to planned communities, scholars depict a region in which human alterations of the natural landscape effected deep changes in politics and social relations.[6] Since time immemorial, a dearth of navigable rivers and inland waterways as well as recurrent flooding and a highly variegated topography have together posed great challenges for planners seeking to maximize

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[4] Tanya Murray Li, *The Will to Improve: Governmentality, Development, and the Practice of Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007).

[5] This literature is vast, but some classics include Frederick Cooper & Randall M. Packard, eds., *International Development and the Social Sciences: Essays on the History and Politics of Knowledge* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and not least, James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).

[6] Vera Candiani, *Dreaming of Dry Land: Environmental Transformation in Colonial Mexico City* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014); D.A. Brading *Miners and Merchants in Bourbon Mexico, 1763-1810* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 1971); Nancy Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); William F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

regional production and economic integration. Once independent from the Spanish Empire, Mexican heads of state and political administrators, albeit with limited success given the rampant violence during the first five decades of the nineteenth century, wrestled with nature in order to foment national political and economic integration across the newfangled Mexican territory.

To be sure, the reconfiguring of space and nature in colonial Mexico was part and parcel of social reconfiguration. The best example of spatial and social reconfiguration in the immediate aftermath of Spanish conquest was *reducción*, also known as *congregación*. Stemming both from large-scale native population decline (in most cases up to ninety percent) and a desire for more efficacious political and religious administration, the Crown's policy of reducción grouped dispersed indigenous settlements into clusters, often on the Roman model of an urban grid, in which all commercial, political, and religious activity was meant to take place. Though reducción plans were not always effective and the settlements were not necessarily permanent, the security they ensured at times attracted outsiders. But most importantly for our purposes, the spatial reconfiguration inherent in reducción had deep and lasting social consequences. Entire Prehispanic political units or communities disappeared or relocated altogether, and the church or temple in the center became a new space of worship and veneration. As William Hanks has artfully shown, reducción, as a means of forcing indigenous people to act in accordance with Christian civility (*policía Cristiana*) in fact changed language practices as well.[7] This colonial improvement project intended to transform space while also integrate the newfound colonial subjects into the political, religious, economic, and cultural spheres of the Spanish Empire.

[7] Hanks, *Converting Words.*

Yet save early colonial experiments in indigenous population relocation in the form of reducción, it was not until the mid-nineteenth century that state-led plans imposed strict guidelines on the social uses of natural resources. By mid-century, the liberal ideals of private ownership and land use, inscribed in the 1857 constitution, structured debates over usufruct and attendant social relations. Lands held communally—mainly by rural peoples commonly identified as indigenous, or by the Catholic Church—were subject to privatization. The governments of General Porfirio Díaz (1876-1880, 1885-1911) were the most effective of the post-independence regimes in implementing infrastructural improvements and fomenting economic growth in select regions, not least the capital city. To varying degrees, such developments went hand in hand with land titling and privatization, with their success often attributed to the *pax porfiriana* that invited investors both foreign and domestic with the promise of relative political peace and security.

If Díaz's iron fist heralded a new era of growth and improvement in Mexico, it was less the result of a state imposing its will to improve and more a conjuncture of government and capital interests. Both foreigners and nationals financed, built, and often managed railroads and ports; those with financial means also acquired swaths of lands with former corporate use rights and/or title. Yet by no means was the era of Díaz's tenure, also known as the *Porfiriato*, a simple instance of state-capital collusion at the expense of the masses. Recent scholarship has revealed that capitalists were not the only promoters, builders, and beneficiaries of improvements during the Porifiato, be they land titling and privatization or export-oriented commodity production. Smallholders in the countryside, including members of communities with ancestral claims to

indigenous lands, on their own volition sought private title and were deeply engaged in the global economy.[8]

What came after the end of Díaz's thirty-five-year term as head of state has set a thick historiographical mold that, despite its fissures, has yet to break. The movement that began in 1910 as a demand for the end to Díaz's perpetual re-election transformed into a violent social revolution with multiple factions representing a panoply of interests. To be sure, the Revolution in many ways deeply transformed Mexico's political and social landscape. Article 27 of the 1917 revolutionary constitution is one of the most radical legal examples of such change. It guaranteed land to rural populations and consecrated the state's mandate for the country's integrated development in both economic and social terms. And certainly the inclusion of organized labor and the demands of rural smallholders in the revolutionary state was a break from the Porfirian apparatus. The successive governments that laid claim as heirs to the Revolution cast Díaz's rule as decadent and excessive, the social and political antithesis of the revolutionary regime. Despite the recent findings at odds with a black legend of the Porfiriato, the plumb line marked by the revolution dominates both popular and scholarly narratives of modern Mexico.

Much the way the rule of Porfirio Díaz has become an iconic foil against which successive governments since 1920 have fashioned a defense of the Mexican Revolution and post-revolutionary rule as a single and coherent teleology, the period of rule that begins with the final year of President Lázaro Cárdenas's tenure (1940) and ends with what has come to be called the "democratic opening" of 1968 signifies for many the origins and greatest excesses of

[8] Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004); Casey Marina Lurtz, "Exporting from Eden: Coffee, Migration, and the Development of the Soconusco, Mexico, 1867-1920" (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2014).

post-revolutionary authoritarianism under a single ruling party.[9] Known as the era of the "Mexican Miracle," these years marked an unprecedented period of sustained growth and low inflation rates presumed to be possible through relative political peace and successful centralized development planning. As a matter of course, and much like other contemporaneous economic "miracles" around the world, Mexico's ascent could not last forever.[10] Exacerbating the increasingly unsustainable economic status quo, mounting discontent culminated as a wave of dissent mobilized in the capital city in the late 1960s. Public critiques of the ruling party and the Mexican state questioned their commitment to the promises of the Revolution. In both scholarship and the popular imaginary, the year 1968 marks the Miracle's end, poignantly sealed by the massacre of anti-government protesters in Mexico City's Tlatelolco Plaza in October of that year.

The decades between 1940 and 1970, then, in many ways comprise a black box. Narratives about Mexico during these years often serve to justify, explain, or glorify what happened before or came after; and scholars have drawn general, schematic conclusions about the nature of the Mexican state, the ruling party, and political actions during these years. But the logic and inner workings of these entities, actors, and phenomena remain obscure. Historians agree that Mexico's one-party state made its official debut as the harbinger of unprecedented

[9] Most long-term histories that include the twentieth-century skim over the period between 1940 and 1968, casting it in broad strokes—in John Tutino's words, as an era of "unprecedented commercial expansion and global incorporation" during which time demographic growth, mechanized agriculture, and the "regime's" push toward market crops at the expense of subsistence cultivation led rural families to sell their labor in industry or the fields of the U.S. "Ecological autonomy" became a vestige of the recent past. Tutino, "The Revolutionary Capacity of Rural Communities: Ecological Autonomy and its Demise," in *Cycles of Conflict, Centuries of Change*, ed. Elisa Servín, Leticia Reina, and John Tutino (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 246-253.

[10] Sustained growth after the Second World War abounded in a number of countries, including Germany under the Marshall Plan and Brazil to name just two. A number of industrializing countries imposed policies to develop and protect domestic infant industries, known widely as Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI). The unsustainability of Mexico's economic miracle was the result of monetary policies both domestic and international.

economic growth and sustained, relative political peace during these years. And it is largely indisputable that this was a time in which Mexico's early twentieth-century Revolution "institutionalized": extant bureaucracies were fortified, new government departments created, and a revamped political agenda was consecrated in the ruling party's new name: the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI, Institutional Revolutionary Party). The beginning and end of the Miracle seem to serve more as segues to or from moments in Mexican history with greater social or political significance.

In sum, the historic shift of 1968 has had historiographical consequences. The '68 generation's subsequent retelling of the PRI's heyday sanctified the Cárdenas administration as the last (prior to 1968) to promote social justice in the countryside, and cast the '68 movement as the protagonist of subsequent political change. Though historians still maintain that Mexico's economic transformation during the age of the Miracle is an indisputable fact, over the last decade pathbreaking revisionist scholarship has emphasized a more precarious underbelly of political dissent and violent conflict during this period.[11] Internal disputes over successor candidates within the ruling party at the local, state, and national levels; rural uprisings; and urban social movements all reflected disagreements over the legacy of the Mexican Revolution and what the "institutionalization" of the revolution would mean for the country's citizens. Yet this more recent literature echoes the '68-generation scholarship in one respect: both bodies of

[11] Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, eds., *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Aaron W. Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010); Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priísta, 1940-1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008); Jaime M. Pensado, *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture During the Long Sixties* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013); Benjamin T. Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009).

work presume the ruling party, and by extension the Mexican government and state, was a consistently coherent and increasingly well-oiled machine during these decades.

Curiously, then, the great rupture the Mexican Revolution represents both historically and historiographically has not changed the narrative of the power, economic development objectives, and depth of the state either before or after the revolution. From the perspective of the late twentieth or early twenty-first century, there appears a nearly seamless teleology of state-led improvement with a minor blip during the years of revolutionary fighting (1910-17). The global zeitgeist and policies that came to comprise "developmentalism" by the mid-twentieth century seem somehow emblematic of both the Porfiriato and the post-revolutionary Mexican state during the twentieth century. The long-term rule of a single individual (Porfirio Díaz) and a single political party (which ruled roughly from 1921 to 2000) have conspired to betray a modern Mexican state with both the will and capacity to plan and implement improvements at all cost. Such a narrative is commensurate with the classic treatise on state-led development and its problems: James C. Scott's *Seeing Like a State*. Scott's thesis—that the social engineering projects designed by states are hubristic, preoccupied with making nature and society "legible," and dismissive of local knowledge—has been challenged or nuanced by recent scholarship.[12] But despite the palpable parallels, historians of Mexico have yet to fully engage Scott's ideas, or his presumptions about states and improvement projects.[13]

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[12] Some examples include Timothy Mitchell, *Rule of Experts: Egypt, Techno-Politics, Modernity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Murray Li, *The Will to Improve*; Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

[13] Curiously, James C. Scott's Foreword to the edited volume on the construction of the Mexican state's hegemony, *Everyday Forms of State Formation,* notes that "The postrevolutionary Mexican state… was far less determined, it seems, than was Lenin to force a high-modernist, centralized, utopian grid on society at no matter what cost." Yet despite Scott's suggestion, the leviathanesque characterization of the Mexican state over the course of the twentieth century has continued to pervade scholarship. Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (eds) *Everyday Forms of State*

Experts and technicians, or *técnicos* in the Mexican context, are the lynchpins in the history of state-led development. And it is precisely the role of the expert that nuances the assumptions about how a state "sees" and how it acts. In the case of Mexico, since the mid-nineteenth century land surveyors, agronomists, and engineers have all done more than simply carry out the will of the state: they've acted as mediators, interstitial figures who navigate (not always successfully) politics at the local level as they work to define land boundaries or collect census data, often proposing changes at odds with mandates imposed from above.[14]

Expertise, of course, was never limited to those trained in the natural or physical sciences. Data collection of social custom, languages, and commercial exchange has been integral to statecraft in Mexico at least since the Spanish conquest, when clergy conducted ethnological studies to better evangelize the indigenous population.[15] Researches of this nature continued in the Mexican Republic, and as social scientific disciplines carved out their respective methods of inquiry, and institutions and academic societies were founded, ever deeper knowledge of the diversity of Mexican society proliferated. Scholars of other geographic regions of the world have richly detailed the rise of social scientists as state-commissioned experts, as well as their diverse and frustrated engagements with improvement projects.[16] Yet scholarship on social scientific expertise in Mexico and its relationship to the state is limited largely to the work

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Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994).

[14] See Holden, *Mexico and the Survey of Public Lands*; Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Mikael Wolfe, "Water and Revolution: The Politics, Ecology, and Technology of Agrarian Reform in 'La Laguna,' Mexico" (PhD Diss, University of Chicago, 2009); Michael A. Ervin, "The 1930 Agrarian Census in Mexico: Agronomists, Middle Politics, and the Negotiation of Data Collection" *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 87 (3) 2007: 537-570.

[15] The classic case in this regard is Franciscan Friar Bernardino de Sahagún, who worked with two generations of Nahua nobles to craft a series of dictionaries, grammars, and encyclopedias as well as a native account of the Spanish Conquest of Mexico-Tenochtitlán, which he entitled *Historia general de las Cosas de la Nueva España: fundada en la documentación en lengua mexicana recogida por los mismos naturales*.

[16] Immerwahr, *Thinking Small*; Amy C. Offner, forthcoming.

of economists and the realm of high politics, with sparse coverage of the years when the Mexican developmentalist state had reached its zenith.[17] If we consider that state-led development projects affect a great number of people—many of them with little access to the upper echelons of the political hierarchy—it follows that a full treatment of state-led improvement projects must consider how experts moved between the people on the ground and mandates from above, and how the general population may have impacted the genesis of expertise and the consolidation of the state.

This dissertation argues for a conceptualization of the Mexican state *in* formation, as historical process, by shedding light on the clunky maneuvers of government officials and still adolescent institutions that are obscured in the prevailing narrative. It examines the relationship between Mexico's economic development projects and social change in the age of the Mexican Miracle. Perhaps best understood as a conglomerate of institutions comprised of government-paid experts, bureaucrats, and low-level employees, the "state" was in effect a space in which great experiments to transform social and economic life were undertaken. The broader implications of this dissertation suggest variegated instances of so-called state power during these years. That is, the men at the helm of the Mexican state and ruling party leadership did not necessarily *possess*, but rather *managed* power, and were often ineffective in wielding it for their desired ends.

In many ways the telling of both Mexico's indigenous policy and the history of anthropology over the course of the twentieth century mirrors the established narrative of one-

[17] Sarah K. Babb, *Managing Mexico: Economists from Nationalism to Neoliberalism* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); on agronomists as experts, still in the realm of high politics, see Joseph Cotter, *Troubled Harvest: Agronomy and Revolution in Mexico, 1880-2002* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

party rule and the rise of the Mexican state. The place of the indigenous population in the nation's journey toward progress had been the subject of debate since the end of colonial rule in the early nineteenth century. Social thinkers understood the nation's aboriginal peoples as both the figurative heart and soul of modern Mexico, on one hand, and as economically-backward impediments to national development, on the other.

By the twentieth century, indigenous as a social category easily mapped onto a longer tradition of the concept of the "*indio,*" above all a political category forged during the first generation of Spanish rule. The nascent Republic of Mexico abolished indio as a formal political and juridical category, rendering all former subjects of the Crown citizens of the Mexican Republic. Yet regime change did not immediately beget legal or political change. Over the course of the nineteenth century, the mass of people who had inherited the colonial appellation of "indios" figured centrally in debates about Mexico's course toward national economic and social progress. Though intellectuals broadly conceived of indios as backward, autarkic impediments to national unity and evolution, the overwhelming consensus by the century's end was that the indigenous problem was not racial but cultural. The country's indigenous and rural peoples—often conflated as one and the same—through education could be redeemed and civilized, and made proper members of Mexican society.[18]

The Mexican Revolution, in which the vast majority of those fighting hailed from the countryside, pushed both agrarian issues and the indigenous question to the forefront. Crafters of the 1917 revolutionary constitution confronted the diversity of rural grievances that contributed

[18] For the first seventy years or so of the nineteenth century, the so-called "Indian question" was less a subject of debate than it was in the latter quarter. A number of late nineteenth-century thinkers inspired by Comtean positivism and Darwinism but weary of scientific racism that seemed to condemn Mexico with its undeniably large population of indigenous or mixed-race ancestry, posited education as the means to Mexico's collective progress.

to the popular rejection of President Porfirio Díaz's rule in 1910 by presuming communal land rights—a supposed hallmark of indigenous life—would ensure peace in the countryside.[19] But the Revolution also inspired a more inclusive national project, one in which the indigenous population figured in nation-state consolidation. The government's rhetorical commitment to equality and social rights, enshrined in the revolutionary constitution and complemented by a state-sanctioned ideology of ethnic mixture, however loose and limited it may have been, provided the basis for subsequent policies intended to protect and uplift the indigenous population.

The perennial question of where and how the indigenous population fit in the national imaginary culminated in the first decades of the twentieth century as *indigenismo*, a hemisphere-wide intellectual current encompassing a diverse set of ideas, policies, and theories of acculturation, preoccupied with how to best situate the indigenous population within the confines of the nation state. Recent scholarship has shown that indigenismo (much like any intellectual current or policy prescription) was both multivalent and transformed over time.[20] In other words, there were many indigenismos in Mexico that manifested as art, literature, and policy. In its earliest iterations as policy, indigenismo made its greatest mark in indigenous education. Literacy, Spanish language acquisition, and Mexican socialization were understood as essential for indigenous uplift and integration.

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[19] Emilio Kourí, "Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands in Porfirian Mexico: The Unexamined Legacies of Andrés Molina Enríquez" *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, 1 (2002): 69-117.

[20] Daniela Gleizer Salzman and Paula López-Caballero (coords), *Nación y alteridad. Mestizos, indígenas y extranjeros en el proceso de formación nacion* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Cuajimalpa, 2015; Alan Shane Dillingham, "Indigenismo and its Discontents: Bilingual Teachers and the Democratic Opening in the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca, Mexico, 1954-1990*"* (PhD Diss, University of Maryland, 2011)

From the 1920s to the late 1940s, successive governments promulgated indigenous policies that continued the longstanding, nearly exclusive focus on indigenous education as a means to uplift and integrate that population. With the creation of the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista* (National Indianist Institute, or INI) in 1948, indigenous policy became a permanent fixture in the federal state apparatus, and anthropologists replaced educators as the foremost advocates for and authors of Mexico's indigenous policy. It was no coincidence that this particular group of social scientists made their mark as not only students of indigenous culture and society but as practitioners who applied their knowledge as they carried out policy prescriptions among populations they identified as indigenous. By the early 1950s anthropologists came to fulfill the roles of advocate and expert, and in the Papaloapan they had the double duty of carrying out both research and relocation. They were to investigate the social relations and cultural practices of the local population, draft relatively benign relocation plans based on their findings, and facilitate the resettlement as well as social and economic development programs among the relocated. All of this was necessary because indigenous peoples deserved a culturally-sensitive path to a new life.

To be sure, Indian (indio) and indigenous (indígena) began as labels affixed to certain peoples and only later used for self-identification. In their initial iterations, the two categories were rarely relevant to those individuals or communities identified by outsiders as indio or indígena. With time and across many regions of Latin America, people and communities began to self-identify as Indian over the course of Spanish rule, but large-scale identification as indígena did not take hold until the twentieth century. Similarly, indigenismo as a mélange of

ideas and policies was developed and imposed mainly by individuals not identified as indigenous.[21]

Many contemporary scholars consider indigenismo a capacious set of ideas, at times contradictory, that could be well-intentioned, paternalistic, and patronizing. Yet by and large, scholars tend to flatten indigenismo into a set of uniformly intentioned prescriptions. As enactors of such policies, *indigenistas* are lumped together as ideological brethren.[22] The lack of scholarship on indigenous policy from 1940 to 1968 has led historians to assume that the period was a time of stark political conservatism and forced indigenous incorporation. At the level of official political discourse this may indeed have been the case, and the Cold War certainly impacted the language officials used to present and proffer national development and integration programs. But the archival record of the Papaloapan Project does not support such a reading—perhaps because "subversive" anthropologists were trying to work within the system, or perhaps because employees of state institutions were less beholden to official rhetoric and plans than is often assumed.

The prevailing literature on indigenous policy (both as educational mandates and as institutionalized indigenismo) signals a clear breaking point in the wake of the 1968 crisis when indigenous policy acquired a multiethnic, pluricultural ethos as a result of increasing dissatisfaction with the policies and practices of Mexico's ruling party. Protagonists of the 1968

[21] This is not to imply that there were not indigenous language speakers or even self-identified indígenas among the ranks of indigenistas in Mexico or elsewhere, but to underline the fact that the intellectual currents, institutions, and policies affiliated with indigenismo were not initially projects founded at the indigenous grassroots.

[22] Notable exceptions to this trend are Paula López Caballero, "Las políticas indigenistas y la 'fábrica' de su sujeto de intervención en la creación del primer Centro Coordinador del Instituto Nacional Indigenista (1948-1952)" in *Nación y alteridad. Mestizos, indígenas y extranjeros en el proceso de formación nacional,* coord. Paula López Caballero, et al (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana Unidad Cuajimalpa, 2015); and Dillingham, "Indigenismo and Its Discontents."

movement tell us that institutionalized indigenismo, Mexican anthropologists, and anthropology as a national school were allied with the state and the ruling party; the 1968 denouement was a reaction to and break from the government's purportedly assimilationist approach to indigenous education and society. The most outspoken critics of the pre-68 era of indigenismo have accused the INI and affiliated anthropologists of promoting ethnocide.[23] But, perhaps unsurprisingly, this literature tends to elide the three decades between 1940 and 1970, thus reifying the presumed break at 1968.[24] This dissertation suggests a different periodization and explanation of the transformation of indigenous policy—one that emphasizes changes in the meaning of indigeneity during these crucial decades, and that disaggregates the work of anthropologists and employees of the INI from a unified "state." If indigenismo and the state share anything in common, it is that their meanings are equally messy, fluid, and adaptable to changing constituencies over time.

It may be clear by now that indigenous policy and anthropology in Mexico were intimately connected through the twentieth century. Anthropology in Mexico, both in terms of institutional stature and intellectual production, was from the outset an area of social scientific inquiry that had focused almost exclusively on the "Indian question." It was during the presidency of Porfirio Díaz that anthropology in Mexico cemented in the form of an official state institution under the auspices of the federal government. In the twentieth century and in

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[23] Arturo Warman, et al, *De eso que llaman la antropología mexicana* (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1970); Alicia Barabas makes this point specifically with respect to the Papaloapan Project: see *Hydraulic Development and Ethnocide: The Mazatec and Chinantec People of Oaxaca, Mexico* (Copenhagen: International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1973)

[24] Carlos García Mora & Andrés Medina, eds, *La quiebra política de la antropología social en México: antología de una polémica* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 1983); Sonia García Segura, "De la educación indígena a la educación bilingüe intercultural. La comunidad p'urhepecha, Michoacán, México" *Revista Méxicana de Investigación Educativa* 9 (January-March, 2004): 61-81; Carlos García Mora, ed *La antropología en México*, vol. 2 *Los hechos y los dichos, 1880-1986* (Mexico City.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1987).

particular after the Revolution (1910-17), the discipline of anthropology began to transform, in part as a reflection of global shifts in terms of both the professionalization of the discipline and theoretical tides. As Claudio Lomnitz writes, Mexican anthropology at this time was charged with "indgenizing modernity and modernizing Indians."[25] Beginning with the creation of the INI, the indigenous educational and advocacy work of teachers and social workers became almost exclusively the domain of anthropologists.

Like the history of indigenismo, the history of Mexican anthropology is mired in a historiographical problem. A generation of dissenting anthropologists, many of them protagonists of the '68 movement, represents the decades treated in this dissertation largely as the dark era of state collaboration and theory-devoid applied practice in which anthropologists proffered integration of the indigenous population at any cost. A closer look at the *work* of anthropologists, in addition to their academic writings, I suggest, tells us a distinct story.

As a sustained study of indigenous policy from the 1940s to 1970s, the dissertation shows how ideas of indigenous acculturation and integration translated in practice, and consequently how indigenista work—carried out by anthropologists, state employees, and citizens identified as indigenous—affected subsequent ideas and theories about indigenous society and socio-economic change. Relatedly, the dissertation documents an understudied historical moment in Mexican anthropology, situating the work of these anthropologists in a global intellectual milieu of social scientific expertise. It seeks to show what Mexico's indigenous policy was from 1940-1970 by analyzing how indigenista directives played out not only in official published discourse, but in practice. In fact, I suggest that "indigenismo" does little, if any work to explain the ideas

[25] Claudio Lomnitz Adler, "Bordering on Anthropology: Dialectics of a National Tradition," in *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001), 349.

and programs carried out as ancillaries to regional development schemes during the mid-twentieth century, or how ideas about culture, race and ethnicity, and development transformed during that time.

Ideas and Practice in the Papaloapan

Because the dissertation is a study of territorial, political, social, and ideational transformation during the initial decades of the Papaloapan Project, I also consider antecedents from the colonial period, nineteenth- and early twentieth-centuries to convey how political action, social and political categories, and social thought shifted, and even came full circle. In fact, I suggest, the concept of the "indio" as a political category dissolved, was reimagined as an ethnic category of "indígena" in the late-nineteenth century, which was in the mid-twentieth century reconfigured once again as a political category in a veritable throw-back to the era of colonial rule. For this reason, the dissertation is organized in two parts. The first, which includes Chapters One and Two, provides both a historical and conceptual background for the second part (Chapters Three through Six), which focuses on the planning and process of resettlement.

Chapter One, "Territory, *Indianidad*, and the State in the Papaloapan," introduces the creation of the category "*indio*" and a key conceptual contribution of the dissertation: the quality of being indigenous/Indian and the enduring relationship of that category to territory. In order to effectively analyze how meanings of indigeneity shifted over the course of the Papaloapan Project, the first chapter traces the links between land and political categories in the Papaloapan by analyzing the state-initiated relocation of Indian polities through the colonial regime of *reducción*. The similarities between forced relocation in the colonial era and twentieth century

are indicative not of an unchanging landscape or political category, the chapter suggests, but rather the extent to which the quality of being indio and indígena are linked to a particular place.

Chapter Two, "The Papaloapan Before the Project" builds on the concepts discussed in Chapter One to chart the changes in land use, title, and politics from the mid-nineteenth century to the inception of the Papaloapan Commission in 1947. Drawing from secondary literature on the region and its inhabitants, as well as land grant petitions, historical maps, secret police reports, and formal complaints culled from Mexico's Agrarian and National Archives, the chapter reveals the region as a dynamic cauldron of peasant and leftist activism and territorial mobility—far from contemporaneous and later conceptualizations of the place as a static, untouched heir to the colonial *pueblos de indios*. In this chapter I argue two related points. First, despite the relative geographic isolation from the political center of Mexico, those living in the basin who would be most affected by the dam were in fact highly integrated into Mexican politics and the formal political system before the inception of the Papaloapan Project, not as indigenous people but as rural workers--*campesinos*. Second, contrary to anthropologists' beliefs, these were not homogenous groups or enduring political units with common identities rooted in and bound by a particular place; rather, the population to be displaced was also highly mobile prior to the building of the dam. In short, the relocation program of the Papaloapan Project was premised on moving indigenous people disconnected from the political center of the country and deeply rooted in the land for generations. But they were neither disconnected nor necessarily deeply rooted, and indigeneity may not have been a relevant or useful category for the people that would be affected by the dam.

From 1948-52, anthropologists carried out ethnographic reconnaissance missions throughout the region, taking stock of social structure and cultural practices that would ideally inform relocation plans. Chapter Three, "Plotting and Planning in the Papaloapan, 1947-1953," analyzes these researches and plans for the transformation of the river basin. The chapter argues that these early years in the Papaloapan augured a transformation in the discipline of anthropology in Mexico, while anthropologists espoused contradictory typologies of indigeneity. I examine correspondence between Mexican anthropologists and their acclaimed University of Chicago mentors Robert Redfield and Sol Tax to show that, against the old guard of Mexican ethnologists who documented static cultural characteristics, anthropologists argued for anthropological methods that examined the social dynamics of communities. Yet their methods yielded results that both confirmed and contradicted enduring tropes of oppressed indigenous peasants under the yoke of non-indigenous lords. In their ethnographies (published and unpublished), field notes, and internal reports, anthropologists made divergent observations about Mazatecs as progressive and individualistic farmers and merchants, on the one hand; and as an oppressed, homogeneous group in need of the anthropologists' guidance, on the other. Thus, while these budding Mexican social scientists jostled over theories and methods within national anthropology institutions, they continued to proffer ideas about indigeneity that contradicted their own research.

The next three chapters are organized thematically and each covers roughly the same time period (ca. 1950s-early 1970s). Chapter Four, "From Babel to Eden: Relocation, 1952-1963," tells the story of displacement. It questions both the primacy and the power of the Mexican state during these years to efficaciously manage the human dimensions of a regional

development project. I employ geographic information systems methods to compare maps rendered in the early stages of the dam building process, thus revealing that the Papaloapan Commission's cartographic inaccuracies made for unpredictable flooding and a haphazard relocation scheme. I complement this data by analyzing a trove of reports from INI Coordinating Center intermediaries and anthropologists, and correspondence between Papaloapan Commission officials and engineers, to argue that the lack of organizing power among and between various state institutions and branches lays bare a Mexican state with less coherence and control than scholars often presume. The threat of sporadic political rebellions and insubordinate local police, conflicts among local leaders over land titles in the wake of relocation, and the Papaloapan Commission's inability to accurately predict the ebb and flow of the river—and reservoir's—currents rendered thousands of the basin's denizens suspicious of anyone who pretended to represent the state. Through relocation, the power of rumor, misinterpretation, and ecology, I suggest, drowned out what is otherwise often construed as a masterful government and one-party state.

Chapter Five, "Indigenous Modernization as Utopia: Life after Relocation," explores what transpired after the move, with a particular focus on the relocation communities. By tracing improvement programs in the areas of sanitary health, bilingual education, agricultural modernization and community economic development, I examine what development looked like on the ground. Resident anthropologists' field notes, INI staff reports, and oral histories from anthropologists, engineers, stevedores, and evacuees themselves who experienced the resettlement first-hand reveal how the limitations and hubris of anthropological study and action come to the fore upon relocation. Anthropologists' visions for a more egalitarian existence

among the displaced populations were both unrealizable and based on faulty assumptions about the nature of indigeneity and its connection to community social, political, and economic relations. And yet, I argue, indigeneity became a hardened, salient political category that both anthropologists and relocated residents employed through this windy experiment in tropical modernization.

The Papaloapan River Basin was a space in which theory and practice both informed and misinformed one another. Chapter Six, "The Papaloapan in the World: Regional Development, Internal Colonialism, and the Indigenous Question," widens the focus of the dissertation, relating the ideas and actions in the Papaloapan to broader debates about economic development, indigenous policy, and anthropology, as well as shifting categories of analysis, from the 1950s to the 1970s. I follow social scientists such as Rodolfo Stavenhagen, whose labor in the Papaloapan informed their subsequent publications and theoretical contributions to social scientific theories about and policy prescriptions for ethnic and racial integration. Chapter Six argues that the Papaloapan Project impacted not only the region and its people: anthropologists' experience in turn shaped subsequent ideas and policies concerning economic development and inequality. My analysis of social scientific publications demonstrates that Mexico's *indigenista* anthropologists who worked in the Papaloapan informed the concept of internal colonialism, one of Latin America's greatest contributions to theorizing inequality, development, marginalization, and ethnic and racial integration in the second half of the twentieth century.

The ever shifting concept of indigeneity moved with the plate tectonics of the Mexican state and the practice of economic development. But before we tour the developmentalist imperatives of the second half of the twentieth century, let us now turn to the Papaloapan River

Basin, and the encounters that shaped the characterization of the region and its people for centuries to come.

Chapter One

Territory, *Indianidad*, and the State in the Papaloapan

If not before, at least since the sixteenth-century encounter with Europeans, regions of the country today we know as Mexico—and the people therein—have been objects of improvement. The Papaloapan River Basin in Mexico's southeastern humid tropics is one example of such a place: long understood as a regional backwater and in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a paragon of social and economic backwardness, the region has been presumed to be perennially isolated from the national mainstream and its people stuck in a premodern past. That premodern past in the Mexican context has been and continues to be conflated with indigeneity or *indianidad*, the quality of being indigenous/Indian (*indio*). At the same time, indianidad—and indigeneity particularly in the last century—have been largely inseparable from a territorial identity. In other words, the meaning of indio or indigenous has long been tethered to the political and social idea of a particular place. As this dissertation will show, the particular boundedness of indianidad, territoriality, and improvement for purposes of state congealed in the mid-twentieth century, here exemplified in the Papaloapan Project. The initial iteration of that triad, however, was in the sixteenth century, when inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere were labeled indios and a colonial impetus for improvement emerged.

The present chapter historicizes the category "indio," its creation upon the colonial encounter, and its application, and introduces some of the main conceptual themes of the dissertation. In order to understand how the category indígena has developed and transformed in the twentieth century, and how as a political category it was (and is) bound to territory, we must first explain the genesis of its colonial predecessor. For this reason, the chapter cites examples

from the centuries preceding the construction of the Alemán dam in the mid-twentieth century to suggest that the habitual push for improvement led to policies that necessitated the displacement of aboriginal populations and thus warranted relocation as an opportune, if not necessary, means to impose correctives to perceived social and cultural problems. While in fact the Papaloapan has long been connected to the centers of political and economic power, the construction of the dam and the project's attendant infrastructural and social development programs were justified as necessary solutions to a problem of isolation and backwardness that plagued both the landscape and the population. To be sure, twentieth-century policy makers and social scientists characterized the majority of the inhabitants of the Papaloapan as peoples stuck in the past, and in some cases mired in colonial relationships of domination and subordination unchanged since Spanish rule. The historical tracing of indianidad and territory lays the groundwork for a deeper examination of both the legacies of colonial rule and the novelty of indigenous politics in the era of modern developmentalism.

The chapter begins with an introduction to the geography of the region and brief historical background of the peoples therein from the sixteenth century. It then explores the creation of the category indio and its relationship to territory, considering examples of policies including forced relocation in New Spain as well as the Papaloapan region more specifically. But before we turn to the conceptual discussion, let us introduce the territory itself.

The Papaloapan: Place and People

It begins on the western slope of the southern stretch of the Sierra Madre Oriental. Originating in the hills of Zapotitlán and the Mixteca Baja,[1] a number of creeks carve escarpments into the mountains as they descend, seeping into fertile riverbeds as they move from the semi-desert arid highlands into the humid tropical lowlands. Where these bodies of water join the Tonto, Santo Domingo, and Valle Nacional tributaries in the present-day state of Oaxaca, their union forms the Papaloapan—the river of butterflies.

Map 1.1 Papaloapan River Basin



Twelve rivers and attendant tributaries find their way to the Papaloapan, which in total extends 354 kilometers (220 miles) from its origin to the sea. At its final reach, the Papaloapan joins the Tesechoacan and San Juan Rivers in the modern state of Veracruz before it empties into the

[1] Present-day Puebla State.

Alvarado lagoon—named for the man who discovered the river for the Iberian world—and at last the Gulf of Mexico.[2] This joining of river, confluents, and lands in between comprises the Papaloapan River Basin.

Since the mid-twentieth century, technical experts have divided the river basin's 45,540 square kilometers (17,583 square miles) into four physical zones— the coastal savannah that runs from the city of Boca del Río through the sierras of Los Tuxtlas (both in present-day Veracruz state), the Laguna de Alvarado with its complex of wetlands, the flatlands with slight elevations that reach 100 meters above sea level, and the highland and mountainous zone which comprises roughly two thirds of the area. The high relief of the western portion of the basin transforms into a prairie of low, rolling hills to the gulf in the east. Where the river descends from the summit of the Sierra Madre the arid climes of that part of the Oaxaca-Puebla border quickly transform into cloud forest and humid tropics at the lower elevations. About half of the basin falls within the political boundaries of the modern state of Oaxaca, 39 percent in Veracruz, and the remaining portion in Puebla state. The variety of ecological zones and topographies complements the river's immense power. Average annual precipitation in the basin in the mid-twentieth century was 1,600 millimeters (roughly 63 inches), though in some areas around the present-day Papaloapan dam complex annual rainfall can reach 4,500 millimeters (177 inches), comparable to the precipitation range of tropical rainforests across the globe.[3] In 1954, just

[2] The Papaloapan tributaries include the following rivers: the río Salado, río Santa Rosa, río Valle Nacional, río Tonto, río Obispo, río Tesechoacan or Playa Vicente, and río San Juan Michapan (today Evangelista). The Creeks (arroyos) of Hondo, Tatayán (río de los Amates), Blanquillo, Coapan, and Acula are also confluents of the main river.

[3] Alfonso Villa Rojas, *Los mazatecos y el problema indígena de la Cuenca del Papaloapan* (México: Memorias del Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1955) 21; Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía, *Anuario estadístico y geográfico de Oaxaca 2013*, 20, accessed 25 June 2015, http://www.inegi.org.mx/prod_serv/contenidos/espanol/bvinegi/productos/integracion/pais/anuario_multi/2013/oax/Mapas_20.pdf.

before the river basin was dramatically transformed by the construction of the President Alemán dam, the annual volume through the Alvarado lagoon was 36.885 billion cubic meters—surpassed in Mexico only by the Usumacinta River in Chiapas.

The abundance in the basin of butterflies with wings that range in hue from iridescent blue to nearly translucent is perhaps an apt reason for the river's name, but the ecological and climatic diversity brings with it a cornucopia of plant, fungus, insect, and animal species as well. For millennia, the diversity of the region and its fecundity provided a rich and sustaining environment for human settlements. By the era of the first European encounter, the people living in the region had developed languages known in modern taxonomy by their Nahutal (Aztec) appellations: Mazateco, Chinanteco, Popolocan, Mixteco, and Zapoteco (of the Otomanguean-Popolocan family) and Mixe (of the Mixe-Zoquean languages). The two largest of these linguistic groups in the basin, the Mazatec and Chinantec, developed a whistle-speech that travels well over the rugged terrain, documented heavily by linguists beginning in the 1930s.[4] Today, the topographical and ecological diversity of the region is often credited as the reason for its sustained proliferation of linguistic and cultural variation: uneven topography and varied climates provided havens for unique languages and agricultural practices to develop.

While speakers of the Mazatec, Chinantec, and other aforementioned languages have lived in the Papaloapan region for at least a half millennium, the historical record reveals a river basin characterized by movement and exchange. Indeed, territorial boundaries have remained

[4] In the early twentieth century the bulk of Mazatec language research was conducted by missionaries who travelled to Mexico under the auspices of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), a Christian organization founded by Presbyterian minister and missionary William Cameron Townsend, invited to Mexico by president Lázaro Cárdenas after 1934 to promote indigenous language research and literacy. Some early texts documenting Mazatec speech and culture include Jean B. Johnson, *Some Notes on the Mazatec* (Mexico: Editorial Cultura, 1939), Eunice V. Pike and Florence H. Cowan were two more missionaries whose work in the highland Mazatec region began in the late 1930s.

anything but static since before the arrival of the Spanish. Relocation of human settlements was the result of both natural and social forces. Flooding and other environmental changes often compelled denizens to climb to higher ground or more fertile lands, while colonial policies, political conflict, and economic demand were also causes for resettlement. As an historically strategic conduit between the Mexican Valley highlands, the Central American isthmus, and the Gulf Coast, the Papaloapan River Basin has remained a site of economic and cultural interchange. Following the Spanish conquest of the Mexica (Aztecs) and their allies in Mexico-Tenochtitlán (present-day Mexico City), Iberian emissaries made their way south on conquistador Hernán Cortés's orders. Upon subsequent Spanish conquest of the Mexica garrison of Tuxtepec[5] in 1521, the area continued as a geographical link, but now between the political and religious center of authority of the land, and the Atlantic World via the Gulf of Mexico.

The first documented imperial encounter between inhabitants of the Papaloapan and the Mexica (Aztec) of the Valley of Mexico was in 1455, during the reign of Moctezuma Iluicamina. As the Aztecs spread their empire south and east during the mid-fifteenth century, they established the military garrison of Tuxtepec in the hotlands from which they launched the conquest of Central America, and established control of the *señorío* (estate) of Teotitlán in the sierra. Merchants also flocked to the rising regional capital of Tuxtepec during the prehispanic era, where they bought and sold slaves to be delivered to the Mexican Valley.[6] Tuxtepec's tributary district essentially encompassed what is today considered the entire Papaloapan River Basin—22 major towns, which included Tlacotalpan, Cosamaloapan, and Tuxtla in modern-day

[5] In the sixteenth century the orthographies were Tochtepeque or Tochtépec.
[6] Tomás García Hernández, *Tuxtepec ante la historia: apuntes monográficos de la ciudad y el municipio de Tuxtepec* (Tuxtepec, Mexico: Unidad Regional de Tuxtepec; Club Rotario de Tuxtepec, 1989), 38.

Veracruz.[7] But the region served to bridge trade between the tropical *tierra caliente* and the colder *tierra fría* of the *Altiplano* or highlands: many of the commodities harvested in the hotlands such as cacao, tobacco, rubber, and pineapple passed through the Papaloapan en route to the Mexican Valley, home to the capital of the Aztec empire.

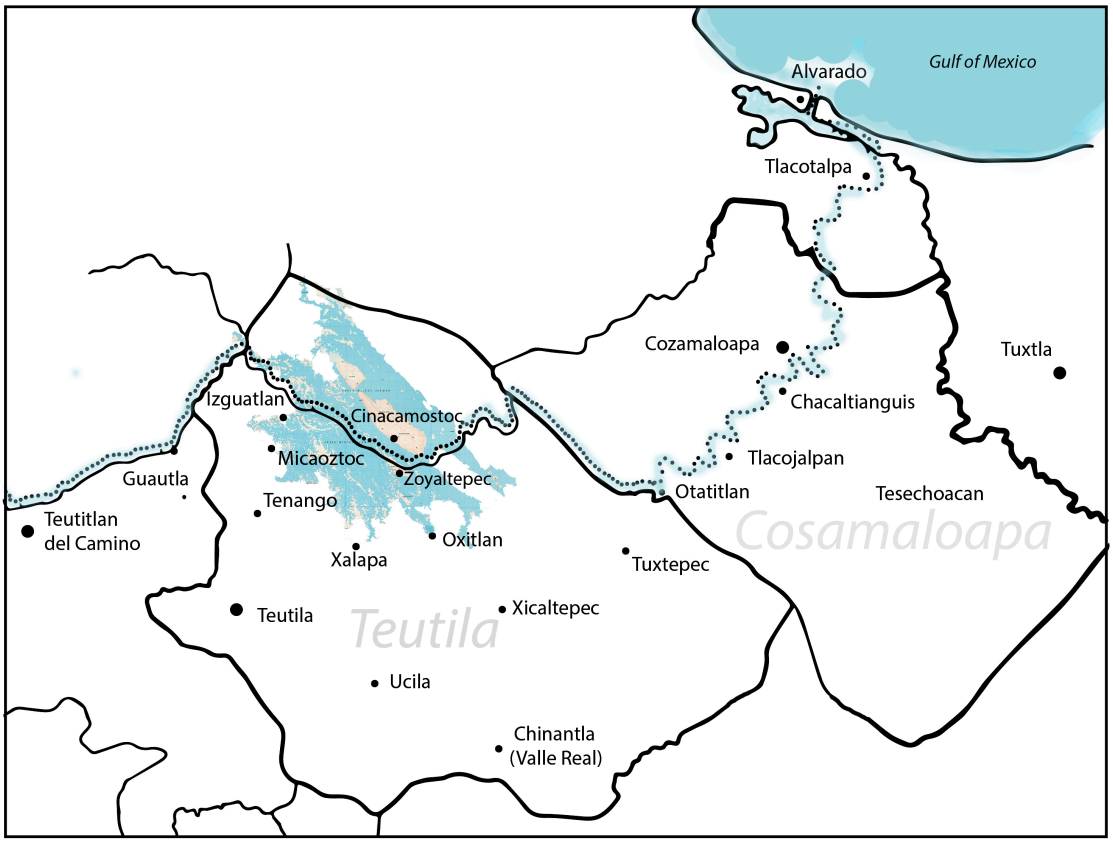
The Papaloapan River, then, and the proximate region of Tuxtepec, formed a historic gateway. As Pedro de Alvarado and his entourage made their way inland from the Gulf of Mexico in 1518, they sailed through a section of the Papaloapan River that remained navigable well into the latter part of the nineteenth century. Chinantec alliance with the Spanish following battle between the latter and Aztec forces at Tuxtepec in the early 1520s relieved Mazatecs and Chinantecs of Mexica domination, and authority of that stronghold as well as the señorío of Teotitlán was quickly supplanted by the Spanish Crown. The conquest of Tuxtepec was to the Spanish conquistadors also an entrance to the *Provincia de los Zapotecas* to the southwest, and thus augured the Spanish capture of the Zapotec and Mixtec domains of Oaxaca.[8]

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[7] France V. Scholes & Dave Warren, "The Olmec Region at Spanish Contact," in *The Handbook of Middle American Indians* ed. Robert Wauchope vol 3 (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 781. Scholes and Warren identified these place names among the glyphs of the *Codex Mendoza*, and culled tributary information from Fray Bernardino de Sahagún's classic *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España,* Book 10, Chapter 29.

[8] Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 301; John Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra: Spaniards and Indians in Colonial Oaxaca* (Norman: University of Oklahoma, 1989), 16.

Map 1.2 Colonial Jurisdiction of Teutila and Cosamaloapa with Alemán Dam Superimposed



Based on data from Peter Gerhard, *A Guide to the Historical Geography of New Spain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 301.

The people of the river basin lived in landed jurisdictions of broader political states or semi-autonomous tributary communities of the Aztec-led Triple Alliance, the Nahautl-speaking triumvirate that ruled the Mexican Valley when the Europeans arrived. Teutitlan (Teotitlán) was a pre-Hispanic province that may have been conquered by the Triple Alliance before the arrival of the Spanish, and appears to have been a Nahuatl-speaking community with influence over several Mazatec and Nahua states that maintained varying degrees of political autonomy. The Chinantec communities included Chinantla (modern-day Valle Nacional) and Oxitlan (Ojitlán),

and the Mazatec Ichcatlan (Ixcatlán), Xallapan (Jalapa), and Zoyatépec (Soyaltepec). These last four communities maintained their Nahua names through the four centuries that followed Spanish conquest, and were at least partially flooded by the President Alemán dam in the 1950s.[9] The tropical rainforests of the Papaloapan flatlands that included the New Spanish provinces of Cozamaloapa (Cosamaloapan) and the southern portion of Vera Cruz along the coast were densely populated and comprised communities of Mixtec, Mixe-Zoquean ("Popolucan") and Nahuatl speakers. Portions of the coast were frequently ravaged by disease, which led the Mexica emperor to send thousands of colonists hailing from the Mexican Valley to populate the area. In return, colonists would take lands and receive temporary tribute exemptions.[10]

The political and economic connections with the imperial centers of power that characterized the century before initial encounter with Europeans continued after conquest. The Spanish took advantage of established trade routes, with commercial exchange extending from Teotitlán to Chiapas and Guatemala. But Spanish colonization in the Papaloapan was a mixed package of policies and practices that intended to maintain certain aspects of pre-Hispanic life and custom while changing others. As in much of the Spanish colonial world, the pre-Hispanic populations of the Papaloapan Basin provided the baseline for colonization.[11] The newly Christened Port of Alvarado continued its long held importance as a site of commerce for canoes that in pre-Hispanic times traveled to Mayan territory along the Central American isthmus.[12] The

[9] Teuhtillan, the central-western portion of the Papaloapan basin, was a populous pre-Hispanic Cuicatecan state of seven Chinantec and a number of Mazatec communities, as well as the Mexica garrison at Tochtépec (Tuxtepec). Gerhard, *Historical Geography*, 300. 305.
[10] Gerhard, *Historical Geography*, 360.
[11] Together with Tuxtepec, various Aztec centers along the main river were important early colonial settlements: moving upstream from the coast were Tlalixcoyan, Tllcotalpan, Acula, Amatlán, Ixmatlahuacan, Cosamaloapan, Chacaltianguis, Tlacojalpan, Otatitlán, Tesechoacan, and Sochiapa.
[12] García Hernández, *Tuxtepec ante la historia*, 35, 113.

labor regime of free commoners (*macehuales* in Nahuatl) and serfs (*mayeques*) who had worked the lands of the local lord or *cacique* (*tlatoani*) was easily legible to the Spanish, whose initial colonial policies intended to maintain pre-Hispanic hierarchies.[13]

Indianidad and Territory

Under Spanish rule, linkages between the Papaloapan and centers of power were not simply about commercial exchange or political jurisdiction. The regulation of space in terms of land use and juridical practice in the New World also linked the label "*indio*" (Indian)—the category Iberians used to denote the original inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere— to particular places, particular political functions, and particular social practices. The justification for a distinct set of juridical practices pertaining to the indios was that their particular civilization and social practices rendered them political minors in need of special care by the Spanish Crown.[14] Thus the meaning of indio was as much about political personhood (or community belonging) as it was about geographical place. In the Papaloapan, as in the Hispanic American world more broadly, these meanings shifted slightly over the centuries.

While modern indígenas, as late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century thinkers often argued, may have inherited some economic, social, political, and cultural norms and relations from colonial-era indios, the two political categories are not synonymous, nor are they transhistorical. Such categories are made, and as we will see, the making of the category indígena bears many resemblances to that of indio. Yet one key difference, I suggest, is a particular contingency of history: twentieth-century attempts to modernize places and peoples, as

[13] Cacique was an Arawak term added to the Spanish lexicon in the early years of conquest.
[14] Kourí, "Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands," 80.

the example of Papaloapan Project shows, hardened and cemented indígena as a political category where previously it was principally an ethnological term.

The historical relationship between indianidad and territory persisted through the mid-twentieth century, though the meaning of the category indio shifted from a political identity to a social and later sociological category in the late-nineteenth century. In the mid-twentieth century, when the construction of the President Alemán hydroelectric dam and its attendant projects in the Papaloapan River Basin required the relocation of Mazatecs, Chinantecs, and other indigenous ethnolinguistic groups, indígena would become the official nomenclature.[15] The management of twentieth-century indigenous resettlement in the Papaloapan would in many ways mirror patterns of the colonial past, perhaps most conspicuously in the special treatment of indigenous peoples displaced for state improvement. The connection between indianidad, or later indigeneity, and territory informed ideas and policies about how to best acculturate and thus incorporate the indigenous population into the state from the time of the colony through the twentieth century. The practices of the modern Mexican state, of course, were in no small way a departure from those of the Spanish Empire, but the similarities between colonial and modern displacements, and colonial and modern categories of difference—be they political, social, racial—underscore a longstanding relationship between territory and what it means to be indio or indigenous. In order to comprehend the meanings of indigeneity and its boundedness to territory in the twentieth century, it is necessary to briefly trace its origins in Spanish colonization—in terms of both political administration and evangelization.

[15] Precise dates are difficult to ascertain here, but suffice it to say that sometime in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century, with the rise of the social sciences and in particular anthropology, indígena comes to replace indio as the preferred term in official policy and intellectual circles. I use "indigenous" in this chapter not as a political category but to designate the peoples who populated the Western Hemisphere upon the European enconter in the fifteenth century.

In the Americas, the Spanish Crown's resettlement of indigenous peoples into newfangled political, civil, and religious units called *congregaciones* or *reducciones* attempted to make concrete the location of indigenous *pueblos*—a term denoting both a spatial, political unit and a people—and by extension the political and juridical category indio.[16] If indio (Indian) was a denotation that existed for reasons of state, the movement of *pueblos indios* for administrative and geo-political purposes was also a state enterprise. Reducción and congregación were colonial iterations of historical state refashionings (and renderings) of Indian or indigenous political geography, albeit couched both rhetorically and practically in varying degrees of state paternalism.

Indios as such, then, did not exist until Spaniards created the political category that grouped all aboriginal inhabitants of the Western Hemisphere. As a matter of course, the political category, through its use in engagement with the colonial state, also conjured social meanings and cultural understandings.[17] The legacies of the colonial social and cultural connotations of indio would be felt long after the category was officially eliminated—upon independence in the early nineteenth century—as a means to distinguish one group of people from the national body of Mexican citizens. Indian territoriality cemented through state-led relocation and reformation from the onset of Spanish colonialism into the nineteenth century. While political jurisdiction shifted over the course of Spanish rule, what remained virtually unchanged was the relationship

[16] Emilio Kourí explains the ambiguity of the meaning of "pueblo" and its origin as a juridical concept and the particular legal denotations attached to it in Spanish colonial law in the Americas. As Kourí argues, citing historian Bernardo García Martínez, "pueblo" was from the early days of the colony a designation synonymous with "pueblos de indios." Emilio H. Kourí, "Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands in Porfirian Mexico: The Unexamined Legacies of Andrés Molina Enríquez," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82 no. 2 (2002): 77-78. Bernardo García Martínez*, Los pueblos de la sierra: El poder y el espacio entre los indios del norte de Puebla hasta 1700* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1987).

[17] From roughly the seventeenth century until the end of colonial rule, the Spanish Crown developed a complex caste system (*sistema de castas*) for its overseas colonies that attempted to categorize and rank—socially, but also politically— the various mixtures of peoples of Spanish, indigenous, and African ancestry.

of *indianidad,* or the quality of being indio, to land. Those identified as indio indeed may have maintained a deep and lasting affiliation with their ethnic group, but Indianness in the Spanish empire was initially imposed upon peoples and inherently tied to land and the rules that governed its use.[18]

Relocation and Indianidad

Political boundaries within the Papaloapan, never static before Spanish conquest, transformed over the course of colonial rule. While early colonial policy simply superimposed Spanish administration onto extant political and economic hierarchies, within a generation after conquest the political geography of the basin reflected Mediterranean ideals of civility and administrative priorities.[19] Spatial boundaries paralleled and often overlapped with colonial boundaries that distinguished *españoles* from indios as not simply the original inhabitants of the continent but as members of a particular corporate group that merited distinct laws, taxation schedules in the form of tribute, tribunals, and religious indoctrination as neophytes of the Christian faith. Separate juridical regimes governed life in the Spanish Empire of the Western Hemisphere, where all subjects of the Spanish Crown were governed under the purview of the *república de indios* or the *república de españoles*. The differentiation of juridical personhood

[18] Jonathan Amith finds that those living in present-day Guerrero state found the most effective idiom was to define themselves as "naturales." Jonathan D. Amith, Place Making and Place Breaking: Migration and the Development Cycle of Community in Colonial Mexico," *American Ethnologist* 32 (1) Feb., 2005: 159-179.

[19] The early colonial *encomienda* linked natives to both colonists and the Crown through a grant system that entitled Spanish *encomenderos* to the services and tribute of a native lord and his subjects—that is to say, it was a labor and not a land grant. The first *Real Audiencia,* or Royal Court of New Spain implemented in 1531 the initial encomiendas of the Papaloapan region, some of which quickly failed due to both a lack of goods deemed valuable by the Spanish (such as gold) and the area's difficult access to ports or centers of economic and political power. But some encomiendas managed to ensure families the inputs and economic and political capital necessary to acquire adjacent lands and establish sugar mills (*ingenios*) or other capital-intensive enterprises. See José Velasco Toro, *Tierra y conflicto social en los pueblos del Papaloapan veracruzano (1521-1917)* (Xalapa, Mexico: Universidad Veracruzana, 2003), 53-55.

had broader social and cultural implications as well. Iterations of racial formation, forged in part through the application of early modern Iberian ideas of blood purity, religion, and gender, became increasingly salient as the scientization of human difference expanded globally during the age of Enlightenment.[20]

The spatial separation of the two republics begat a differentiation at the local level between pueblos de indios and pueblos de españoles. As mentioned above, the Spanish word *pueblo* carried a dual meaning, as a people or community in the social sense, and a spatial-political unit in the geographic sense. The distinction between indios and españoles underlined what was at times a paradoxical assumption of colonial policy: Spaniards had the potential to both civilize and corrupt the indios. Official policy meant to separate Indian settlements from those of non-Indians, yet in the valley that surrounded the former Aztec capital of Tenochtitlán, españoles quickly made their way into pueblos de indios (as did Afro-descendant *negros* and *mulatos*). Passers-by were to spend a maximum of three days in an Indian pueblo, though in regions distant from the political center in Mexico City, the extent to which this policy was enforced is debatable.[21]

In turn, a separate juridical framework and isolation from members of the república de españoles did not preclude an imposition of Iberian spatial and political organization. Administrative jurisdiction was divided into departments under the auspices of a designated urban nucleus, and lands were parceled into village subunits (*villas* and *aldeas*), also under the purview of an urban center. The Spanish implemented an administrative hierarchy whereby

[20] María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).
[21] Alfonso Caso et. al, *La política indigenista de México. Métodos y resultados* (Mexico City: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes; Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1991), 57-58.

pueblos sujetos, or hamlets, were designated dependents of a head town—the *cabecera*. Initially this designation was intended to map onto pre-Hispanic spatial-political units, though Spanish policies to relocate or congregate extant indigenous communities or families—at times hailing from distant lands and speaking different languages— often reconfigured the political and spatial orders. In the twentieth century, conflict over boundaries and jurisdiction in the Papaloapan were commonplace as well, whether they were the result of land reform policies or resettlement programs.

Colonial administration, perhaps unsurprisingly, altered existing political hierarchies, within and among both territorial communities and individuals. According to Francisco de Solano, the presence of Indian-elected authorities in the *cabildo*, or town council, explains the general acceptance of the institution among the indigenous population.[22] Despite the heterogeneity of the newfangled indigenous political communities, the institution of pueblo both created cohesive identity rooted in the land—that is, the rights to land use corresponding to the pueblo—and gave all indios the same juridical and political designation. Yet in effect, the consolidation of a pueblo directly caused conflict: The Spanish designation of cabecera and sujeto could be arbitrary and was often hotly contested by indigenous constituents. It also contributed to the decline of indigenous authority and socio-political systems, and their substitution by Spanish institutions.[23] At the same time, linguistic differences among some indios grouped in pueblos also facilitated the use of the Spanish language.[24]

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[22] Francisco de Solano, *Ciudades hispanoamericanas y pueblos de indios* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1990), 49.
[23] Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs Under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519-1810.* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1964), 55-57.
[24] de Solano, *Ciudades,* 24-25.

Despite the great compatibility between Mesoamerican and Iberian religious and political structures, the distribution and use of space between the two was quite different. For those hailing from the Mediterranean, even at the micro level spatial organization begat civilization: an urban footprint should take the form of a grid in which residents lived in close proximity to the centers of political and religious power. As the locus of civilized life in the Airstotlean tradition, the city was, in the words of Richard Kagan, both *urbs* (place) and *civitas* (community).[25] In the Central Mexican plateau, the locus of political and religious power was also centered in Mexico-Tenochititlán, but everyday life was a bit more distant. Family and neighborhood units for the most part lived where they labored, around their floating garden *chinampa* or farming plots.

Part and parcel of the changes in economic, political, and juridical organization upon Spanish conquest of the Papaloapan was a catastrophic, almost total collapse of the population. Epidemics were the main culprit: smallpox and the measles caused a severe demographic decline among Mazatecs and Chinantecs as it did in other regions of New Spain. Ravenous mosquitos transmitted malaria, and by 1536 a plague that swept the Gulf Coast cut Cosamaloapa's tribute list in half. [26] By the decade's end, such rapid depopulation exempted residents from tribute payment entirely, and Chinantec and Mazatec populations in the lowlands declined by as much as 90 percent.[27] From 1570 to 1630 only half of the 850 Mazatec tributaries had survived, and

[25] Richard L. Kagan, *Urban Images of the Hispanic World, 1493-1793* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 10.

[26] To be sure, Mexica campaigns to populate the coast sufficiently demonstrate that the tropics of the Papaloapan easily harbored disease. Conquest chronicler Bernal Díaz complained of the swarms of mosquitos when he spent a night in Tuxtepec after a battle with the Aztecs in 1521. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España (*México: Porrúa, 1998), 260-61.

[27] Gerhard, *Historical Geography*, 87. According to Cook and Simpson, in 1565 the population of the entire province of Oaxaca was 693,680; in 1793 it was only 411, 336. See Sherburne F. Cook and Lesley Byrd Simpson, *The Population of Central Mexico in the Sixteenth Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1948), 47.

the 2,390 Chinantecs had lost 30 percent of their numbers. As of 1743 there was a "remarkable recovery among the Mazatec" but further loss of the other two groups.[28]

The enormous decline in population necessitated the reorganization of peoples and communities for purposes of political administration, the collection of tribute, and evangelization. Mesoamerican spatial organization was altered to better fit the Iberian mold, and te form it took was novel in Spanish imperial practice: *reducción*, *congregación*, or (less commonly) *junta* meant the relocation of indigenous political-spatial units. All three processes were as much about erecting an urbs as they were about forging a civitas. Indigenous resettlements intended to integrate Mesoamerican subjects into Iberian civilization with the understanding that the organization of space could not be separated from that of politics or culture. Religious instruction and acculturation were together a primary organizing principle of reducción.

The parallels between congregación/reducción and the twentieth-century population relocation in the Papaloapan are notable, from the ideological and political justifications for relocation to the realities of putting policies in practice, to the social programs carried out in the reduced/relocated communities. Curiously, and despite their knowledge of colonial history, the well-read anthropologists who conceptualized the relocation scheme and who worked in the

[28] Gerhard, *Historical Geography*, 303. Disease was the principal reason for demographic decline, but harsh treatment by encomenderos also led to mortality, morbidity, and flight. In 1542, clergy successfully campaigned to end the encomienda system throughout the empire and place indios under the spiritual care of the friars. As a substitute for the labor component of encomienda, colonial officials imposed the *repartimiento*, a regime in which indios were drafted to work on estates and public works projects, and even as household servants. In Oaxaca and Veracruz, repartimiento was awarded to Spaniards and caciques engaged in activities such as cattle ranching, and wheat or cotton production. The term "repartimiento" also refers to early delegation of indigenous labor on the Caribbean islands prior to the conquest of New Spain. The empire-wide repartimiento regime was intended to supplant the encomienda system, though in some areas the encomienda would not die easily. The community of Yolox in the Chinantla region, for example, was held in encomienda long after the supposed end of the regime. See Howard Cline, "Civil Congregation of the Western Chinantec, New Spain, 1599-1603," *The Americas* 12 (2) Oct. 1955: 115-37, 117-18. On repartimiento in the Central Valley of Oaxaca, see William B. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1972).

Papaloapan never referenced the experiments of their ecclesiastical and intellectual forebears. Perhaps planned relocation looks similar regardless of time or place, but the similarities between congregación and modern relocation for the construction of the Alemán dam are worth mentioning because they were based on particular ideas about what it meant to be indio/indigenous that in effect cemented the term's connection to territory and thus its political meaning. In both cases, old communities dissolved and new ones were created in their wake.

Early modern Catholic missionaries were in certain regard New Spain's first ethnologists, as they documented in detail the cultural and linguistic practices of the aboriginal population in order to aid in conversion.[29] Anthropologists working in the Papaloapan during the mid-twentieth century had similar intellectual pursuits, though they were perhaps less interested in changing local practices than in keeping them the same. Yet regardless, they all observed, recorded, and facilitated change among the populations where they worked that reified a notion of indianidad or indigeneity inherently tied to a particular space. For this reason, what it meant to be indio or indigenous was essential to relocation plans in both the colonial form of congregación/reducción and the twentieth-century displacement.

The first resettlements on the mainland were likely those of Friar Vasco de Quiroga in the 1530s. Inspired by Thomas More's *Utopia*, Quiroga's missions in New Spain grouped indios into hospital-towns. The first and second Viceroys of New Spain followed with the implementation of congregaciones and reducciones that often subsumed various indigenous

[29] Fray Bernardino de Sahagún is perhaps the most well-known of sixteenth-century friars who meticulously recorded linguistic, social, and cultural data while working with indigenous nobility in the Mexican Valley. Fray Juan de Córdoba, who worked among the Zapotec of Oaxaca, is another. Because of the harsh climate, linguistic variability, and seeming absence of an imperial hierarchy among the Mazatecs and Chinantecs, Catholic missionaries did not work extensively to construct and publish grammars of the languages spoken in the Papaloapan River Basin.

calpultin (plural of *calpulli*, the political and spatial unit between the level of the family and the *altepetl* or city-state) under the auspices of a monastery or parish church.[30]

Initially, congregación/reducción was promoted as a program to support Indian interests. In some cases, congregaciones relocated individuals and families with a common ethnic or community identity. Such commonalities among constituents of congregaciones could facilitate some continuities from old pre-Hispanic settlements that had now become pueblos de indios. Yet the intention to "uphold rather than restrict Indian ownership" was often only in name: in the Central Mexican plateau and likely elsewhere, congregación and reducción resulted in the creation of new Spanish institutions and the loss of Indian land.[31]

Through the first two phases of reducción and congregación in New Spain (1550-64, 1593-1605), Spanish administrators were convinced that dispersion was an undesirable way to live, but it was another matter to convince subjects of the república de indios that the resettlement was in their favor. Many resettled indios received poorer lands upon relocation and most had to rebuild their homes; flight from reducción was common. The concentration of communities often resulted in head towns' loss of status, and individual political power was reshuffled as well. Perhaps unsurprisingly, such realities would also be commonplace in the twentieth-century relocation for the Alemán dam. Yet for subjects of the república de españoles in the sixteenth century, indigenous resettlement was about more than evangelization and socialization. After the great epidemic of 1545-48 in the Mexican Valley, which reduced the indigenous population by at least eighty percent, Spanish ranchers and farmers wanted the

[30] Peter Gerhard, "Congregaciones de indios en la Nueva España antes de 1570," *Historia Mexicana* 26 (3) 1977: 347-395.
[31] Gibson, *Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 283-284.

depopulated calpulli lands, and those with landed estates entitled to Indian labor (*encomenderos*) wanted tribute payments.[32]

The first phase of congregación (1550-64) was voluntary, and run largely by the mendicant orders of the Catholic Church. To encourage relocation, the Crown declared in 1560 that old lands would continue to belong to the reduced Indians, and thus Spanish usurpation was ostensibly prevented.[33] Apparently the guarantee of both old and new lands was not enough to persuade the pueblos to relocate, leading King Phillip II to allow for the forced reducción of Indians in 1591. During the second phase of relocation, which began just after Phillip's decree and ended in 1605, civil administrators briefly took charge of congregación from 1592 to 1595, to only later return control of its implementation to the Church.[34] Based on the troublesome outcome of the first phase of forced relocation, New Spain's Viceroy Luís de Velasco opted to proceed with caution. The historian José Miranda has found that only two viceregal orders for congregación were given in Oaxaca, and one report was requested of the corregidor (local administrative official) of the Chinantla.[35]

Velasco's successor, the Conde de Monterrey, changed the scope and format of reducción between 1598 and 1603. His program involved clear demarcation plans leading up to the establishment of the reducciones, requiring the assistance and intervention of a slew of administrators to study local geographies and make suggestions for ideal congregaciones.

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[32] Gerhard, "Congregaciones," 350. On Indian population decline in the first century of colonial New Spain, see Woordrow Borah, *New Spain's Century of Depression* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1951) and Woodrow Borah and Sherburne F. Cook, "Conquest and Population: A Demographic Approach to Mexican History," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 113 (1969): 177-183.

[33] Caso, *Política indigenista*, 61.

[34] Howard F. Cline, "Civil Congregations of the Indians in New Spain, 1598-1606" *Hispanic American Historical Review* 29 (August 1949): 349-369, 350.

[35] José Miranda, "Evolución cuantitativa y desplazamiento de la población indígena de Oaxaca en la época colonial," *Estudios novohispanos* 1995: 239-257, 252-253.

Following the Conde's decree, cosmographer Francisco Domínguez divided up congregation areas of New Spain in 1599. About 30 survey teams or *comisarios*—comprised of a Spanish official, a notary, a constable, and an interpreter or local scribe—surveyed pueblos deemed likely candidates for resettlement. The comisarios included in their geographic reports (*relaciones*) information concerning climate, lands, water, produce, etc. for specific regional divisions within the province (in this case Oaxaca). Once a physical inspection was complete, the commissioned *Juez de visita* was expected to meet with local ecclesiastical officials and agree with them upon a joint recommendation as to the sites and get the Indians to agree on a destination. At that time another group of comisarios was tasked with carrying out the congregación/reducción. The Viceroy expected the surveys to be complete by spring 1599 so that the people could be moved before sowing their crops for the next season, but those in charge of the *visita* of Ixtlán in the Chinantla would not begin until September of that year, well into harvest season.[36] From 1603-4, of the documented ten forced reducciones in Oaxaca, only one took place in the Papaloapan region, where Tecomatlán was joined with Tuzantla, Piaxtla and Chinantla, thereby increasing the number of tributaries in Tecomatlán nearly six-fold from 39 to 232.[37]

Obligatory reducción, much like its voluntary iteration, led to mixed results. Mass desertion and rebellion were widespread, leading the Crown in 1605 to return to the voluntary system. Indios dissatisfied with the congregaciones carried out under the regime of the Conde de Monterrey were allowed to return to their old lands. It is difficult to ascertain the degree to which congregación/reducción at the level of the viceroyalty, region, and province directly affected the population. Howard Cline estimates that during the years of congregación 225,000 Indians

[36] Howard Cline, "Civil Congregation of the Western Chinantec," 119; Miranda, "Evolución cuantitativa," 254.
[37] Miranda, "Evolución cuantitativa," 254.

relocated throughout New Spain, and that the total number of congregations was about 177. Thus, he suggests, it is probable that a "minor fraction of the natives were [sic] involved, dwelling mostly outside the main lines of social and economic interest."[38]

On the administrative front, twentieth-century relocation in the Papaloapan in many ways mirrored reducción/congregación. Scientific surveys were to inform the process and site of relocation, voluntary relocation was the initial mandate, and an intermediary body—ecclesiastical authorities in the colonial period, and anthropologists in the twentieth century—facilitated interactions between the state and the relocated population. And in both cases, those interactions begat new relations between the state and indios/indígenas.

Without a doubt and despite the limited reach of congregación/reducción in early colonial Oaxaca, the policy impacted social, economic, and political relations in the province. Yet the degree and quality of those impacts is less clear: while Miranda suggests that reducción gave *indios reducidos* better land and increased "sociability" among the isolated populations, such conclusions rely on Iberian presumptions about land tenure and the benefits urban life.[39] Similarly, it remains to be seen the extent to which indios reducidos—even if the reducción was short-lived—in fact returned to their old lands or moved elsewhere.[40]

Reducción and congregación were political-administrative and religious projects, to be sure, but they also constituted an epistemological project as well. William Hanks and Jeremy Ravi Mumford have suggested that reducción was a knowledge-building enterprise unto itself—and Mumford, in his study of reducción in the colonial Andes, insists it was indeed a form of

[38] Congregación was a likely cause for some of the population decline during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, but not all of it. Cline, "Civil Congregations of the Indians," 363, 368.
[39] Miranda, "Evolución cuantitativa," 257.
[40] Miranda has found that indios from Chiautla dispersed to other regions, including Chinantla. "Evolución cuantitativa," 256.

early modern ethnography.[41] Centering on the experience of reducción among Mayas of Yucatán, Hanks argues that reducción was a colonial project to "*reducir*," or pacify, convert, and order Maya people and pueblos. Added to the more straightforward policy as it applied to space and social and political practices was a third aspect of reducción, Hanks argues: language. "In the overall project, town layout, regional governance, civility of conduct, grammar, and proper speech are of a single cloth for reducción."[42] Instrumental to the practice of reducción was the concept of *policía*, which Hanks translates as civility. Mumford's study, on the other hand, focuses on reducción south of the equator, where Viceroy Toledo's resettlement program was carried out in the Andes during the second half of the sixteenth century. Early colonial officials' reports on the social structures and cultural practices of Andean peoples, Mumford suggests, informed plans that both sought to recast Andean social space and structure and preserve elements of pre-Hispanic practices. Thus for both Hanks and Mumford, reducción is a knowledge-making enterprise with social, cultural, and intellectual consequences beyond its mere territorial and political effects. I suggest that in the twentieth century, the facilitation of resettlement and the attendant modernizing projects in the Papaloapan were also epistemological: anthropological knowledge and practice were reformed as indigenous citizens were simultaneously relocated and deemed objects of improvement.

The totalizing impact of reducción—as at once a spatial, social, cultural, religious, and intellectual phenomenon—guaranteed that, even if indios no longer lived in their ancestral lands, their political and juridical status was invariably tied to *particular* lands. Yet, to be sure,

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[41] William F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010); Jeremy Ravi Mumford, *Vertical Empire: The General Resettlement of Indians in the Colonial Andes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012).
[42] Hanks, *Converting Words*, 4.

reducción and congregación were not realized in the same, systematic fashion across the empire or even within viceroyalties or provinces: they varied according to local geography, ecology, social organization and cultural practices. In the province of Oaxaca, the Spanish minority depended on indigenous labor—principally in the trades of cochineal (a red dye derived from cactus-dwelling insects), cotton, and cotton-mantle production, and reducción did not alter this dependence.[43] At the same time, the impetus for reducción or congregación might be a natural disaster or a local leader or administrator's desire to increase tribute rolls. It appears that Oxitlán (now San Lucas Ojitlán, a municipality partially affected by the President Alemán dam), a mostly Chinantec-speaking pueblo, experienced a congregación of various satellite pueblos sujetos following an epidemic and flood in 1571. The cabecera (head town) and perhaps only settlement of Ixcatlán (now San Pedro Ixcatlán—also one of the municipalities greatly affected by the dam in the 1950s) seems to have moved after a flood in 1592.[44]

What is not always clear is why congregaciones in other pueblos of the Oaxacan portion of the Papaloapan occurred when they did. Franciscan friars convened Chinantecos from Usila and Chinantla in planned pueblos by the 1560s.[45] Tuxtepec, which may have had some urban concentration when its residents first encountered Europeans, had a dispersed settlement pattern that remained until population decline made it "convenient" to gather survivors into a few congregations. The influence of local leaders may have led to particular resettlement decisions and pueblo status designations. According to the 1579 relación, Chinantla had 4 *barrios* or

[43] Brian Hamnett, *Politics and Trade in Southern Mexico, 1750-1821* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1971), 1. In the sixteenth century, Oaxacan indigenous labor was instrumental to the expansion of the silk industry as well.
[44] Gerhard, *Historical Geography,* 304. Gerhard cites Mariano Espinosa, a local historian of the Papaloapan region who collected records and testimonies and whose work also informed that of Howard Cline. See Mariano Espinosa, *Apuntes históricos de las tribus chinantecas, mazatecas y popolucas* (Mexico, 1961), 99.
[45] Gerhard, "Congregaciones," 380.

neighborhood-like sub-sections with 24 sujetos. A congregación was proposed in one such barrio in the 1590s, and an epidemic struck in 1609, which perhaps expedited the relocation process.[46] The old pueblo of Tuxtepec and its reported 9 sujetos were relocated twice: in 1600 the cabecera and sujetos were ordered to relocate downstream to Cozamaloapan (then called Cacaguaxuchitlan), and 80 years later they were purportedly repopulated at their final site.[47]

During the brief interlude of forced reducción/congregación, pueblos were obligated to relocate but had some say regarding the location of their new dwellings. Administrators in New Spain established in 1603 the *Sala de Congregaciones*, an agency that held hearings in which the claims of native complaints were ascertained, and that oversaw the general resettlement process.[48] Yet regardless of whether or not, as Cline contends, considerable work was done to heed the "wishes of the natives," indigenous engagement with the institution betrays not the rejection of congregación but an engagement with it on the pueblos' own terms. In the pueblo of Yolox, for example, a group of Chinantec-speakers requested that they be a separate unit from the Zapotecs who were to be relocated to the same congregación.[49]

Interestingly, the parish of San Pedro Ixcatlán, which included the pueblo of Soyaltepec (inundated by the President Alemán dam in the twentieth century) was reduced in the 1550s, and assigned its own secular priest in 1555. The Church's efforts at Indian evangelization and acculturation have been the subject of a number of excellent monographs and merit more discussion than can be mentioned here.[50] The civilizing program of reducción and congregación

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[46] Gerhard, *Historical Geography*, 303-304.
[47] Gerhard, *Historical Geography*, 304. (Citing Espinosa, *Apuntes históricos*, 114)
[48] Cline, "Civil Congregation of the Western Chinantec," 126-127; and Cline, "Civil Congregations of the Indians," 353-354.
[49] Cline, "Civil Congregation of the Western Chinantec," 127.
[50] Some classics include the following, with a greater emphasis on the late-colonial church: Nancy M. Farriss,

was conducted almost entirely under the auspices of the Catholic Church, the institution that made the most concerted effort at indigenous acculturation from the early days postconquest and set a precedent for the twentieth-century experiments carried out by indigenista anthropologists.

Reducción was by no means the only arrangement in which the colonial state engaged Indians as subjects linked to a particular territory, but as a practice it set a precedent for acceptable Indian mobility. That is, reducción was the state-sponsored relocation of aboriginal populations from one territory to another for reasons of improvement broadly defined. "Reducing" the population was convenient for the colonial state, to be sure, but from the ecclesiastical point of view it was also understood to be in the indigenous population's best interest. Thus an essential feature of Indianness was at once its rootedness in a particular space and the mobility of the Indian populations for reasons of State. Indians' colonial status as political minors in need of special protection under the purview of the state justified paternalistic policies that would endure well beyond the years of Spanish rule.

But colonial administration was far from static during the sixteenth through early nineteenth centuries and the expansion and decline of the pueblos de indios waxed and waned alongside changes in colonial administration and ecclesiastical jurisdiction.[51] Take for example the case of Zoyaltepec, the pueblo that would house the Alemán dam turbines in the mid-twentieth century. According to the *Relaciones geográficas,* Zoyaltepec (also known as

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Crown and Clergy in Colonial Mexico, 1759-1821: The Crisis of Ecclesiastical Privilege (London: Athlone Press, 1968); D.A. Brading, *Church and State in Bourbon Mexico: The Diocese of Michoacán, 1749-1810* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the Sacred: Priests and Parishioners in Eighteenth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996). More recent scholarship on indigenous-church relations in New Spain include: David A. Tavárez, *The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2011); and Javier Villa Flores, *Dangerous Speech: A History of Blasphemy in Colonial Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2006).

[51] María Luisa Acevedo Conde shows how the changing nature of parish and bishopric jurisdiction changed over the course of colonial rule. Acevedo Conde, *Geografía histórica de Oaxaca* (Oaxaca, Mexico: Gobierno Constitucional del Estado de Oaxaca, Secretaría de Asuntos Indígenas, 2002).

Suyatepec) was a Mazatec community, perhaps united with the companion village of Zoyatlan (Coyatlan) around 1600—likely due to population decline and/or inability to pay tribute. In 1548 Zoyaltepec was a Crown possession, but after a lawsuit Bartolomé Sánchez, a resident of Antequera (present-day Oaxaca City), was declared the rightful owner. In the 1560s, the pueblo was divided between the Crown and Sánchez's son. In terms of colonial administration, toward the end of the sixteenth century, Zoyaltepec and Zoyatlan were absorbed by the regional administrative body (*alcaldía mayor*) of Teutila, which at the end of the seventeenth century lost Chinantla-Ucila-Tuxtepec to Cozamaloapa and then saw the jurisdiction returned in 1770.[52]

As will be seen in the Chapter Two of this dissertation, the pueblos continued to transform markedly in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Yet the point about Zoyaltepec in the 1560s makes clear that change and mobility were not simply a reality in the modern period: in contrast to planners' and intellectuals' belief that the communities were largely unaltered by the colonial state and that their culture was somehow intrinsically "indigenous," many of these communities were *made and remade* by the colonial state throughout the era of Spanish rule. Indian territory and Indian political identity were formulations of that state.

In the Papaloapan, as in other regions of New Spain, pueblos de indios rarely existed in complete isolation from other non-indio political units, administrative agents, and neighbors. And non-indios were not only *españoles*, but all those political-caste categories in between indio and español as well. Beginning in the sixteenth century, enslaved peoples originally hailing from Africa were transported by the thousands to the port of Veracruz to labor on mineral mines, cattle ranches, as well as sugar plantations and factories (*ingenios*) of New Spain's provinces.

[52] Gerhard, *Historical Geography,* 302.

Even through the eighteenth century some administrative units were comprised of large free Afro-descended populations. In 1743, for example, 48 Spanish and 5 mestizo families were registered in the Corregimiento of Cozamaloapa, alongside 233 freed blacks (*negros*) and *mulatos* (of purported mixed Spanish and African ancestry).[53]

To be sure, the presence of free Afro-descendants is a testament to the fluid status of colonial subjects under the Spanish Crown, but slavery continued until the end of imperial rule. The Papaloapan, with its plethora of sugar cane and ranching estates, depended on slave labor. Yet not even established estates—and the slaves that worked them—were permanent fixtures in the landscape. From the mid-seventeenth century, pirate incursions pushed Spaniards and their Afro-American slaves inland toward Tlacotalpan. The indios residing there demanded the Viceregal authorities expel the non-indio newcomers, but the Spaniards successfully made the case that Tlacotalpan could become an important defense location, and the Viceroy made it a *pueblo rector* (governing pueblo) in regional merchandise traffic.[54]

Whether their intended destination was a plantation not far from the Gulf coast or a mine in the northwestern interior, the tropical foliage of the lower Papaloapan basin made for a greater chance of successful escape from slavery. Several of Mexico's most infamous and enduring communities of escaped slaves— "maroons" (*cimarrones*)—established themselves in the region's jungles, and some even achieved formal recognition and political-economic relations with New Spanish authorities. One maroon community, located just on the cusp of the pueblo of Zoyaltepec, was such a regional force to be reckoned with that it received formal recognition by

[53] Gerhard, *Historical Geography,* 87.
[54] Velasco Toro, *Tierra y conflicto social,* 115-17.

the Spanish Crown in 1789 as the Pueblo de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa---with "morenos" referring to their caste status as Afro-descendants.[55]

Thus pueblo lands could change place, jurisdiction, administrative oversight, and even social composition. But indios were the only political-caste group to be targeted by the Crown for both relocation and paternalistic civilizing projects. Residents of Amapa could recast their status in gaining recognition as bastions of Iberian urban civility, but such pueblo foundations were unheard of for pueblos de indios, whose status was predicated on either their longstanding relationship to a particular place or their forced relocation by the colonial state and the latter's program of paternalistic acculturation.

From Political to Racial to Revolutionary

The Crown's crisis of succession during the early 1700s spawned political, economic, and social restructuring within the Spanish Empire. The transition from Hapsburg rule to a Bourbon monarchy brought with it administrative changes over the course of the eighteenth century to foment economic improvement and efficiency. The enlightened policies of the Bourbons to limit private power and control maintained the Crown's paternalistic domain over the pueblos de indios. But reforms enacted after the end of the Seven Years' War in 1763 whittled away at an already precarious measure of accountability and complacence among that population. Though local officials and representatives of the Crown did not necessarily have their Indian constituents' best interest in mind, the pueblos de indios—and particularly those in regions far from the centers of administrative power—enjoyed a relatively autonomous

[55] Velasco Toro, *Tierra y conflicto social,* 115-16; William B. Taylor, "The Foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa," *The Americas* 26 (1970): 439-446; Adela L. Amaral, "The Archaeology of a Maroon Reducción: Colonial Beginnings to Present Day Ruination," (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2015).

existence. They made use of the judicial and political tools afforded by the Crown's system of governance, but as indios entitled to defense from outside incursions, they were largely left to their own devices. The reforms enacted in the last decades of the eighteenth century chipped away at this longstanding practice as local judicial and political responsibilities were lost and legal restrictions were imposed on their economic regime.

The effect of these reforms was to reinforce among residents their engagement with the state by identifying with their pueblo de indios *as indios*. An increased emphasis on individual property rights further buttressed a booming hacienda economy, the perennial encroacher upon indio territory. Ever reliant on Indian labor, haciendas in Oaxaca under-produced because indios refused to sow crops for the estates. The pueblos de indios fought the haciendas, as one historian put it, "with the weapons the Crown had given them: social cohesion, supported by the república de indios, the institutions represented in the Cabildo and Indian legislation."[56]

The dissolution of the Spanish Empire in the Americas at the dawn of the nineteenth century had local iterations in the Papaloapan Basin—a testament to the reach of the colonial state and subjects' interest in shaping its republican successor. Riots and risings were infrequent but not unknown to the province of Oaxaca over the course of Spanish rule, and escalated in the last decades of the eighteenth century. In the Papaloapan, a deputy of Teutila was nearly killed in a riot of inhabitants who had tried to burn down Royal residence in that pueblo, and a similar rising occurred in nearby Teotitlán del Camino.[57] When the struggles for independence began on New Spain's soil in the early nineteenth century, Oaxaca's pueblos de indios, and in particular those of the Papaloapan, were no strangers to political conflict and activism even when they did

[56] Velasco Toro, *Tierra y conflicto social,* 219.
[57] Hamnett, *Politics and Trade*, 84.

not partake in widespread rebellion. Mazatecs in the northwestern sierra surrounding Teotitlán as well as the lower Mazateca populations of Soyaltepec, Ixcatlán, and Jalapa de Díaz appear to have participated in the early wars of independence from Spain. Spaniards in Cosamaloapan expressed fear of possible rebel groups who might descend from the Valley of Oaxaca, Teutila, and Villa Alta to the Veracruzan coast. For the hacendados, the people of Oaxaca's sierra, which was densely populated by Indians, were feared collectively as an instigator of local rebellion.[58]

Yet upon independence from Spain and the creation of the Mexican Republic in 1823, pueblos de indios, and indios as individuals, disappeared as political categories. In an effort to cast all former subjects of the Viceroyalty of New Spain as citizens of Mexico, they were no longer indios in the political sense; residents of former pueblos de indios were, at least officially, undifferentiated citizens of the new republic. Yet members of presumably indio spatial-political units with particular usufruct and decision-making practices sanctioned under Spanish rule sought to retain their earlier landholding and political arrangements. And while the official political-administrative category of indio had disappeared, indios certainly did not cease to exist in social thought, nor did their specific relationship to land and state.

Pueblos de indios were cemented both through their seemingly timeless permanence in the land and through the state's relocation of indigenous subjects. Despite the ebbs and flows in the relative political and economic power of the Spanish Crown in New Spain, residents of pueblos de indios made due use of the courts and colonial juridical system to protect their entitlements--one of the most valuable of which, perhaps, was their territorial patrimony.[59] Thus defense of a particular locality, regardless of an historical attachment, became a hallmark of

[58] Velasco Toro, *Tierra y conflicto social*, 265.
[59] On indigenous uses of colonial law in New Spain, see Brian P. Owensby, *Empire of Law and Indian Justice in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).

Indian politics in the colonial period and did not disappear upon independence. During the nineteenth century, the Bourbon impetus to privatize corporate landholdings took on a new life in republican Mexico. Pueblos formerly known as "de indios" were not necessarily averse to privatization on principle, but their defense of landed patrimony was often confused in the minds of intellectuals and politicos as an autarkic resistance to progress.

Nineteenth-century social thought in Mexico was but one heir to global Enlightenment-era notions of political liberalism and progress, which influenced both policies and ideas about what to do with the former indios and their respective polities. Of course, the installation of a liberal republic in which all former colonial subjects were deemed citizens with equal rights under the law did not erase the social meanings of indio. Subject to debate was how pueblos de indios, as corporate landholding polities, would now function in a liberal regime, but in the face of seemingly endless cycles of conflict, colonial land legislation remained for roughly the first half of the century.[60] Thus in practice, the colonial legacy of Indianness as a category tethered to territory persisted well into the 1850s.

By the second half of the century, Mexico's men of letters meditated more openly on how—and if it was indeed possible—to lift the (people formerly known as) indios from the wretched life of subordination they experienced as political minors under the tutelage of the Spanish Crown. Debates about how to turn the former indios into modern citizens of the Mexican nation floated theories about the redemptive value of education, the benefits of a more European diet, and the motivating practice of holding private, individual title to land.[61] In 1857, a

[60] Kourí, "Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands," 80.

[61] See for example the writings of Francisco Bulnes, José María Luis Mora, Vicente Riva Palacio, Francisco Pimentel, Emilio Rabasa, and Justo Sierra. On the development of liberal thought in the latter decades of the nineteenth century see Charles Hale, *The Transformation of Liberalism in Late Nineteenth-Century Mexico*

new constitution, for the first time, codified this latter liberal impetus to turn former corporate holdings into private estates. As indio was no longer a political or juridical category, discussions about the inhabitants of the pueblos became discussions about race, in line with the increasingly influential theories of sociological positivism. It was this sociological discussion of indios as a racial group in need of improvement that anthropology of the late-nineteenth century inherited, and one that the anthropologists tasked with studying and relocating the Mazatecs of the Papaloapan in the mid-twentieth century would reckon with as well. In the wake of the revolution of the twentieth century, indígena replaced indio as an ethnological category and by mid-century it would become an essential component of the revolutionary state's improvement programs.

Thus, the inextricable connection between indianidad and territory has, from the era of Spanish rule, precipitated certain practices of and ideas about indio/indigenous community social relations. Spanish colonial policies, based on ideas about how rural society should function, in turn shaped community life. The precise nature of what social relations in pueblos de indios looked like and why remains, however, an open question. A number of ethnographic studies have used a variety of methods including novel readings of native sources to chart the resilience of indigenous community solidarity, which in some cases, the authors argue, had pre-Hispanic origins.[62] Spanish colonial law certainly facilitated community aggregation and collaboration against outsiders as well, particularly non-indio encroachers or usurpers. Pueblos de indios—

(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

[62] On this point see Marcelo Carmagnani, *El regreso de los dioses. El proceso de reconstitución étnica en Oaxaca, Siglos XVII-XVIII* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988); Nancy M. Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Nũdzahui History, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001); Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

both those recognized as pre-Hispanic settlements and those newly created through migration forced or voluntary—used a variety of means to defend the territorial boundaries and political autonomy of their community. While the reasons for such solidarity may have been multiple and varied, the enduring legacy has been a tendency, among scholars and politicos alike, to understand the community as a primordial source of local identity and collective patrimony to be defended above all and at all cost.[63] As we will see in the chapters ahead, the unacknowledged distance between modern realities and presumptions about indigenous community social relations rooted in the past would be a source of struggle in the twentieth century.

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Eminent domain has historically served to remove people from particular places for state interests in improvement, justified as a benefit for the public good. Relocation in the form of colonial reducción was an initial iteration of a series of indigenous displacements in republican Mexico that were proffered as benefits to both indigenous peoples specifically and the state and its subjects/citizens more broadly. During the presidency of Porfirio Díaz in the late nineteenth century, Yaquis and Mayos from the northern reaches of the country, disdained for being semi-nomadic and recalcitrant, were rounded up and resettled as part of a state program to "pacify" the north and encourage colonization and economic development in the region. Those deported were largely prisoners, detained in ongoing conflicts as a result of state and capitalist encroachment on

[63] The classic text to articulate this point is Eric Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java" *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13 no. 1 (Spring 1957): 1-18. Also Eric Van Young's assertion that "Peasant villagers, in particular, fought in defense of embattled communities which they conceived as antecedent to, and in some sense existing outside of, the colonial state." Eric Van Young, "Agrarian Rebellion and Defense of Community: Meaning and Collective Violence in Late Colonial and Independence-Era Mexico," *Journal of Social History* 27 (1993): 245-69, 247.

Yaqui territory, but their relocation was justified as an attempt to "civilize" the deportees.[64] To be sure, not all indigenous relocation was directed by the state in either the colonial or national periods of Mexican history, but when it was a rhetoric of improvement and acculturation was most often present.

In the mid-twentieth century, resettlement of indigenous populations of the Papaloapan for the construction of a hydroelectric dam maintained the longstanding pattern of state-led improvement and paternalism. The great difference between reducción and this twentieth-century resettlement is that the former privileged indigenous organization for the sake of efficient political, economic, and religious administration; while the latter privileged indigenous social organization, culture, and sensibilities in and of themselves. Ethnography, much as it was in the Spanish empire, was useful in the Papaloapan Project of the twentieth century both for science and for government administration. Yet its use was not self-evident to political thinkers and leaders. At the same time, anthropologists were there not simply for the sake of the nation but for the sake of the *indígena*. To these social scientists, ethnography served an activist purpose. In other words, under Spanish rule ethnography meant appreciating indigenous qualities and preserving them for the sake of the empire; in the twentieth century it meant appreciating indigenous qualities and preserving them for their own sake.

Yet the maintenance of pueblos de indios separate from pueblos de españoles was difficult to justify in modern, republican, liberal Mexico. If there was an inherent paradox in the Spanish colonial model—that Iberian forms of good government and spatial organization were

[64] On the history of the Yaquis and their engagement with the state from the colonial era through the twentieth century, see Evelyn Hu De-Hart, *Yaqui Resistance and Survival: Struggle for Land and Autonomy, 1821-1910* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

preferable but Spanish subjects themselves would corrupt the indios—in modern Mexico the notion of special treatment for indigenous peoples was often incongruous with liberal ideals of citizenship and equality. In both eras—the time in which "indio" was a political category under Spanish rule and the later period of republican rule in which indigeneity was merely a social marker—indios and indígenas were state fixations bound to territory.

Chapter Two

The Papaloapan Before the Project

It should have been a rainy day like any other at the peak of the pluvial season. After all, dwellers of the tropical lower Papaloapan River Basin expected heavy rains and river overflow in September. But in 1944 the deluge was reaching Biblical proportions as the incessant rains pounded away at the soil and the river swelled. The steady pace of the torrent gained speed as it swallowed crops, wooden homes, livestock, and human beings in its path. Reaching landfall at the Port of Veracruz on the early morning of Saturday September 23, one cyclone spiraled west from the Gulf Coast to meet another along the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and dumped thousands of cubic meters of water onto the Sierra Juárez, from which it made its way down the confluents of the Papaloapan River. After three days of downpour, eighty percent of the regional capital of Tuxtepec, Oaxaca had been swept away or submerged under two to nine meters of water, according to some estimates. Communities downstream, all the way to the Port of Alvarado on the Gulf of Mexico, faced similar fates. When the rains stopped the dissipating flood waters laid bare the full extent of what came to be called the "Tuxtepec Tragedy," as remains both animate and inanimate betrayed their mortality. The rain had inundated or affected some 500,000 hectares of land in the basin, leaving in its wake thousands dead, injured or displaced.[1]

As it turned out, the September 1944 flood contributed the last drop to an already overflowing glass. Flooding had occurred along the riverbed for as long as anyone could

[1] For a chronicle of the event, see Tomas Garcia Hernandez, *La Tragedia de Tuxtepec* (Tuxtepec, Mexico: Ayuntamiento Constitucional de San Juan Batitsa Tuxtepec, 1994).

remember and had been documented from at least the fifteenth century.[2] Since the late-nineteenth century, increased industrialization along the river limited the land's capacity to absorb excess water, leading to sediment loss; population increase and investment exacerbated the cost of flood-related damage.[3] President Ávila Camacho visited the ravaged city of Tuxtepec on October 14, promising, among other things, public works measures to safeguard against future flooding. But even before 1944, that president anticipated building on the increasingly salient hydraulic development model that had grown alongside successive presidencies of the ruling revolutionary party since the 1920s.[4] The recent success of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) in the United States had proven that river basin development could effect both economic development and relative social peace and political stability.[5]

The Tuxtepec Tragedy was emblematic of the region's perpetual backwardness and need for enlightened improvements. Two years after the event, the flood justified a grandiose scheme—the first of its kind in Mexico—promulgated by Ávila Camacho's successor President

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[2] In 1936 and 1941 the municipality of Cosamaloapan, Veracruz, located 70 km downstream from Tuxtepec, had petitioned to open diversion canals for future flood prevention. Merchants and cattle ranchers in the region. *El Papaloapan, obra del Presidente Alemán; Reseña sumaria del magno proyecto de planificación integral que ahora se realiza en la Cuenca del Papaloapan* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Recursos Hidráulicos. Comisión del Papaloapan, 1949), 11-12.

[3] In the twentieth century, storm-related flooding had been recorded in 1921, 1922, 1927, 1929, 1931, 1935, 1941, 1944, 1947, but the 1944 flood was the most desastrous. *El Papaloapan*, 11-12.

[4] Avila Camacho created an interministerial commission in 1943 at the behest of petitioners from communities along the river. *El Papaloapan*, 12-13.

[5] The TVA is widely held as the grandfather of state-led regional development projects implemented after World War I. One of its chief architects, David E. Lilienthal, promoted the TVA as a model for "grass-roots" planning and development (as an antidote to Soviet models of river basin development) that would foment the "unity of land, water, and men" with his widely-published *TVA: Democracy on the March* (New York; London: Harper & Brothers, 1944). The Papaloapan Project was the first "baby TVA," and also the first application of an integrated river development scheme in the humid tropics. On the TVA and its impact in Mexico, see Tore Olsson, forthcoming. On the TVA as an initial strategy of Cold War international development, see David Ekbladh, *The Great American Mission: Modernization and the Construction of an American World Order* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), Chapters 2 and 3; and Ekbladh, ""Mr. TVA": Grass-Roots Development, David Lilienthal, and the Rise and Fall of the Tennessee Valley Authority as a Symbol for U.S. Overseas Development, 1933–1973" *Diplomatic History*. For an alternative interpretation of the TVA as the initial developmentalist's romance with planning writ small, see Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2015), chapter 2.

Miguel Alemán. A native of the Veracruzan side of the Papaloapan River Basin, Alemán built on studies conducted during Ávila Camacho's tenure to create the Papaloapan Commission, a semi-autonomous governmental body under the auspices of the new Ministry of Hydraulic Resources (Secretaría de Recursos Hidraúlicos) and modeled after the TVA. Like their colleagues in the Tennessee Valley, the founding staff of the Papaloapan Commission sought to sanitize the region, to build a reliable land and water communications system that would link the basin to the rest of the country, and to harness the river's prowess once and for all to electrify the basin and beyond. The Papaloapan had become a site in desperate need of government intervention to modernize the place and its people. And the large, monolingual indigenous population living in the ex-district of Tuxtepec was an oft-cited example of the region's backwardness.[6] Good planning and infrastructural engineering would augur social engineering, and together the infrastructural and the social were championed as the means to make the region—and Mexico—modern.

Yet despite the rhetoric, the Papaloapan River Basin was neither an untapped source of wealth, nor were its residents so disconnected from the nation's growing political structure or economic progress.[7] In the mid-1940s the region, much as other provinces of the country, had its share of rural poverty and lack of infrastructure, to be sure. But the various municipalities and

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[6] After the Reovlution of 1910, the political jurisdictions of districts in Oaxaca became ex-districts.

[7] The casting of Oaxaca state as peaceful and isolated from the modernizing impulses of President Porfirio Díaz has until very recently remained a fixture in Mexican historiography. Principally due to lack of research and analysis, the accepted version of Oaxaca's history in the era of Díaz and the Mexican Revolution of 1910 has been one of political "passivity," limited economic development, and the uninterrupted retention of Indian pueblo lands. Francie Chassen and Héctor Martínez began to revise this reading of Oaxacan—and in particular Tuxtepecan—history in the 1980s. See Francie R. Chassen & Héctor G. Martínez, "El desarrollo económico de Oaxaca a finales del Porfiriato," *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 48, no. 1 (1986): 285–305. Cf Jorge Fernando Iturribarría, *Oaxaca en la historia de la época precolombiana a los tiempos actuales* (Mexico City: Ediciones Stylo, 1955), Ronald Waterbury "Non-revolutionary Peasants: Oaxaca Compared to Morelos in the Mexican Revolution," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17 no. 4 (1975).

hamlets that would be affected by the President Alemán dam in the coming decades were well integrated into the burgeoning postrevolutionary political apparatus by the 1940s. Peasant organizing, socialist activism, voting in elections and land reform petitioning among the majority of the denizens of the Papaloapan made for a highly mobilized, active rural population, if often politically volatile as well.[8]

This chapter tours the Papaloapan from the late-nineteenth century to the creation of the Papaloapan Commission in the mid-1940s. In tracing the rise of economic development in the region, it highlights the increasing political participation and activism of its residents. A *belle époque* plantation economy preceded a surge in organized labor and leftist activism for salaried workers and peasants alike. Despite this reality of political engagement in the Papaloapan prior to the construction of the Alemán Dam in the late 1940s, the river basin was and has subsequently been re-imagined as a developmentalist's blank slate, as a region excluded from Mexico's ascent to modernity. Autarkic and stagnant, its mostly monolingual indigenous language speakers were believed to be "untouched," in some cases even by the Spanish conquest of the sixteenth century.[9] Though the region's indigenous population—and its purported stagnation, backwardness, and isolation—was a central component of this reimagining, indigeneity was not the principal axis of political organizing for residents, planners, or others. During the decades that followed Mexico's Revolution of 1910, the people of the Papaloapan joined a panoply of peasant leagues, socialist organizations, and organized labor syndicates both officially and unofficially recognized by the state.

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[8] The revolutionary activism of Papaloapan residents mirrors a tendency Alan Knight suggests: a "sea change" at the national level in politics and political attitudes. See Alan Knight, "Popular Culture and the Revolutionary State in Mexico, 1910-1940," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 74 no. 3 (August 1994): 393-444.

[9] This narrative remained well into the 1960s and arguably into the present. See Fernando Benítez, *Los indios de México*, vol. 3 (México: Ediciones ERA, 1970), 27.

By the 1930s, if their principle means of agitation and access to political channels was through class-based organizing, indigenous welfare advocacy was nipping at the heels of peasant activism. Local political organizations and the Ministry of Education, in both direct and indirect ways, brought the indigenous question to the fore toward the end of that decade. Breaking from the construction and salience of Indianness in the previous chapter, then, the present chapter shows that, from the late-nineteenth century through the 1940s, the history of the Papaloapan is not a simple extension of the legacy of colonial Indian pueblos. Mobility and economic change define the years I trace in the present chapter, and while territoriality and jurisdiction are certainly relevant points of concern for the actors involved, the spaces they inhabit are not marked as indigenous. In this way, the political history I outline here is not linked to *indianidad*—rather, during this period people make claims as peasants, citizens, something other than former *indios* or *indígenas*. To be sure, the present chapter is not a global history of the region in the decades prior to the dam construction; instead, the chapter provides a selective glimpse of the political dynamics at play in the communities that would disappear under the President Alemán reservoir. An understanding of this history is critical, for the social, political, and territorial reality of the region affected by the dam was at odds with the assumptions and plans for the displacement and development projects we will see in Chapter 3.

Before we turn to a discussion of the rise of peasant politics and incipient indigenous advocacy in the 1930s, however, a discussion of the river basin's development in the preceding century is in order.

The Road to Development

From the onset of independence, Mexican political leaders struggled to concentrate authority under a centralized state. For a half century following the Mexican Republic's inception in 1823, disagreements regarding the shape and scope of the federal government's power as well as the ideal means of political organization and management of the new nation's economy led to nearly incessant civil war, punctuated first by the Franco-Mexican War of 1838-39, then by the U.S.-Mexican War (1846-48) and subsequent loss of over half Mexico's territory to the United States, and again by Napoleon III's invasion from 1862-67. This last foreign intervention was welcomed by some political leaders as well, as certain segments of the popular classes and clergy responded to then-president Benito Juárez's host of proposed changes to the constitution to break apart corporate landholding and institute liberal reforms.[10]

The most sweeping of President Juárez's reforms were enacted following the passage of the liberal 1857 Constitution, which spawned the War of the Reform a year later. The Reform Laws had begun in 1855 with the promulgation of Juárez's eponymous law when he was acting President of the Supreme Court, which attempted to curtail the power of the Catholic Church and institute a liberal republic. Divisions between self-proclaimed liberals and conservatives came to a head in the 1858 War, and within two years after the winning liberal faction placed Juárez as interim president, conservatives aligned with the French Emperor to seek recourse. But Juárez's intention for the state to disentail corporate estates and build a civil society of individual, politically franchised property owners would not be fully realized until after his unexpected death in 1872.

[10] The reasons for the French Intervention of 1862 were complex, but it was initiated in part after President Juárez suspended interest payments on foreign debt.

A native of Oaxaca, Juárez's education at the Instituto de Ciencias de Artes, a liberal bastion in the capital city of his home state, led him to fellow classmate and Oaxacan Porfirio Díaz. If Juárez was a jurist, Díaz was a statesman, though the latter's political acumen was brought to light following his performance on the battlefield. Díaz fought on behalf of liberal causes, and his notable service in the Reform War and French Intervention earned him fame among locals and imperial military leaders alike. Yet Díaz withdrew his support of Juárez not long after the French retreat, lost against Juárez in the 1870 election and upon the president's death led an open rebellion against Juárez's successor Sebastián Lerdo de Tejada. Díaz's 1876 call to arms was proclaimed in the Papaloapan, in the municipality of San Lucas Ojitlán, District of Tuxtepec, Oaxaca. Known as the Plan de Tuxtepec, the subsequent revolt was a decisive factor in Díaz's ascent to the presidency, a position he would hold virtually unabated for thirty-five years.

It may have been a mere coincidence that Díaz issued his call to arms in a Oaxacan village of the Papaloapan River Basin, but his presence in the area portended the region's centrality in Díaz's economic development program. Villages of the Papaloapan had contributed soldiers and support during the various armed conflicts of the nineteenth century, and especially so during the battles against the French in the 1860s. But it was after Díaz's ascent to power that the region underwent profound economic change. Juárez's dream to disentail corporate landholdings and foment individual property regimes was realized during Díaz's tenure, moving apace in the Papaloapan over the last decades of his rule. The river basin's humid climes were ideal for producing tropical commodities, and with the concession of the southern Mexican railroad in 1888, a combination of fluvial and railway communications made possible the export of tobacco, coffee, sugar cane, cotton, and rubber through the main ports of Veracruz.

In many ways the transition to political liberalism was about transforming corporate landholding—a legacy of the colonial past—into private holding. Yet though there was certainly a legal framework and political impetus to privatize communal lands in the late-nineteenth century, the process of dispossession had been happening since the onset of Spanish rule, and the legal distribution of declared idle lands (*terrenos baldíos*) was a fixture in republican law dating from 1826.[11] During the eighteenth century, haciendas and large ranches were established in both the Oaxacan and Veracruzan sides of the river basin, a process pueblo leaders often alleged was a result of outright usurpation. In 1754, don Fernando de Rivadeneyra allegedly took lands from the head town of San Miguel Soyaltepec to establish his cattle hacienda, La Estanzuela.[12] But the hacienda workers were not necessarily recently dispossessed indigenous peasants: laborers from the hamlet of Amapa, a community of escaped slaves which gained formal recognition as a *reducción* by the Spanish Crown in 1769, had worked on the hacienda in the early 1830s.[13] Amapa's inclusion into the lands of Soyaltepec betrays a reality of communal land tenure regimes and landholding title from at least the late colonial period through the nineteenth century: contraction coincided with expansion.[14] On the Veracruzan side, over the course of the nineteenth century communal lands were privatized and transferred to individual title, and many

[11] José Velasco Toro, *Tierra y conflicto social en el Papaloapan veracruzano (1521-1917)* (Xalapa, Mexico: Universidad Veracruzana, 2003), 25

[12] Oficio Representante Propietario Victoriano Ronquillo to Jefe del Departamento Agrario, D.F. April 23, 1952, Archivo General Agrario [hereafter, AGA], Mexico City. Expediente: 276.1/1670 Legajo 1. San Miguel Soyaltepec, Oaxaca. Oficina de Reconocimiento titulación y confirmación de bienes comunales.

[13] Oficio Representante Propietario Victoriano Ronquillo to Jefe del Departamento Agrario, D.F. April 23, 1952, AGA. On the foundation of Amapa see William Taylor, "The Foundation of Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe de los Morenos de Amapa," *The Americas* 26 no. 4 (1970): 439-446; Adela L. Amaral, "The Archaeology of a Maroon Reducción: Colonial Beginnings to Present Day Ruination," (PhD Diss., University of Chicago, 2015).

[14] Oficio Representante Propietario Victoriano Ronquillo to Jefe del Departamento Agrario, D.F. April 23, 1952, AGA. In 1754 the people of the poblado San Miguel Soyaltepec appeared before Alcalde Mayor that they had been given possession and *amparo* (legal stay) in September 1751 by the Teniente General of the jurisdiction of Teutila the lands called Palacios, Arroyos de Palmas, Laguna de Pastor that bordered don Fernando de Rivadeneyra's cattle Hacienda. The Rancho called Amapa was included in these lands.

a smallholder (*pequeño propietario*) sold his lands to estates through both licit and illicit means.[15]

Desamortización—or the process by which lands were disentailed and given individual title—was a process well under way before the nineteenth century, but it was not always imposed from above on (mostly indigenous) rural folk who lacked political or judicial recourse. As Emilio Kourí and others have shown, desamortización was often initiated by pueblos for a variety of reasons that at times reflected time-honored practices of individual parceling and usufruct.[16] In Oaxaca, broadly speaking, the last of the lands to undergo desamortización were those of common use, such as forests and pastures.[17] Regardless of the motivations for desamortización, the practice was widespread in the Papaloapan and by the late nineteenth century resulted in the proliferation of large estates dedicated to plantation agriculture. As a case in point, in one year (1892) three *fincas* (plantation estates, usually dedicated to monocropping commodities) were dispossessed from the pueblo of Soyaltepec: San Antonio Cosolapa, San Juan Chinacatela, and Chichicazapa.[18]

Disputes between individual proprietors mapped onto disagreements over state and municipal boundary markers as well. In 1869 and 1873 municipal and state authorities argued over the apparently peripatetic dividing line between Oaxaca and Veracruz. The object of debate was the Amapa river, which also divided the hacienda of La Estanzuela and the pueblo of

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[15] Velasco Toro, *Tierra y conflicto*, 26.

[16] Emilio Kourí, *A Pueblo Divided: Business, Property, and Community in Papantla, Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004).

[17] Margarita Menegus Bornemann, "La desvinculación y desamortización de la propiedad en Huajuapan, siglo XIX" in *La desamortización civil en Oaxaca,* coord. Carlos Sánchez Silva (Oaxaca, Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Benito Juárez de Oaxaca, 2007).

[18] Oficio Dir. Gral. Gral. Prof. José Luis Melgarejo Vivanco, Dir Gral. de Asuntos Indígenas de la SEP to Jefe del Depto. Agrario Dirección de Tierra y Aguas 31 oct 1953. AGA San Miguel Soyaltepec, Oaxaca. Expediente 276.1/1670 Legajo 1. Oficina de Reconocimiento titulación y confirmación de bienes comunales.

Soyaltepec. For decades, Veracruz was in jeopardy of losing villages—and thus revenue from the pueblo *alcabala* head tax and hacienda earnings—between the Amapa and Tonto rivers, and though the pueblo of Zongolica managed to acquire some lands from the hacienda Santa María Buenavista, the state and municipal governments were still keen to preserve their holdings as best they could.

Finally, in 1892 the conflict over state limits was partially resolved. President Díaz confirmed a decree in which Congress established limits that the legislatures of both Oaxaca and Veracruz accepted. The state border, however, remained necessarily porous as borders often do: merchants, commerce, and labor moved freely throughout the region and with them came political and intellectual exchange. The seemingly distant jungle backwater of the Papaloapan in fact connected local micropolitics to movements in Veracruz and ideals circulating in the Atlantic world.

In the last decades of Díaz's rule, agricultural production in the District of Tuxtepec surpassed all other districts in the state. Haciendas and fincas dedicated to tobacco, coffee, maize, bean, rubber, sugar, cane, cotton, yucca, banana, and cacao cultivation numbered 123, and almost all of them were founded during Díaz's tenure as president.[19] During this time the Papaloapan region, and the District of Tuxtepec, Oaxaca in particular, earned great notoriety as an Edenic tropical seedbed for agricultural capitalists and a slave-driving hell for laborers. Particularly around the year 1898, when a newly independent Cuba expelled its Spanish tobacco planters—among them the infamous Balsas brothers—those Iberian entrepreneurs found the soils and weather in the Papaloapan ideal for monocropping the addictive nightshade. North American journalist John Kenneth Turner's *Barbarous Mexico* made famous the horrors of the tobacco

[19] Francie R. Chassen & Héctor G. Martínez, "El desarrollo económico de Oaxaca," 299.

plantations. Posing as a potential investor in order to investigate the excesses of the Porfirian (Díaz's) regime, Turner toured the tobacco estates of Valle Nacional, Tuxtepec District in the first years of the twentieth century. His book reports in detail the ghastly, emaciated workers hailing from every corner of Mexico who were misled by charlatans, rounded up for public drunkenness, or detained for no apparent reason, to be shackled and deported to "the Valley of Death" where within six months they were destined to perish. Apparently it was difficult to convince locals to work as peons on the plantations, such that importing disoriented laborers with little defense against the natural environment or knowledge of the area yielded the greatest profit.[20]

While Turner's may have been an exaggerated account of the conditions in Valle Nacional, subsequent scholarship corroborates to a point his depiction of the plantation labor system in the District of Tuxtepec.[21] Following in Turner's footsteps, American journalist and sympathizer of the Mexican revolutionary peasant cause Ernest Gruening traipsed through the hamlets of the Valley of Death just twenty years later, recording testimony from locals who recalled the plight of the infamous *enganchados* who labored in the plantations.[22] Perhaps because their time in the Valley was short, or because the greatest excesses on the plantations occurred only in the last decade or so of Díaz's rule, the infamous workers who toiled the tobacco fields never organized any massive risings. Outright rebellion in the Papaloapan would

[20] John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico* (Chicago: C.H. Kerr & Co., 1910)

[21] Francie Chassen-López has located both letters to President Díaz and articles from the left-wing press that confirm Turner's story, but unfortunately local archives were destroyed in the 1944 flooding of the Papaloapan River. Francie R. Chassen-López, *From Liberal to Revolutionary Oaxaca: The View from the South, Mexico 1867-1911* (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2004), 156-69.

[22] Ernest Gruening, *Mexico and Its Heritage* (New York; London: The Century Co., 1928), 335-36.

be organized and carried out not by the most exploited workers of the plantation complex, but by middling farmers and merchants sympathetic to a national call to end Díaz's thirty-five-year rule.

At the same time, Spanish tobacco magnates were not the only foreigners to invest great amounts of capital—and establish punitive labor regimes—in Tuxtepec. French and U.S. entrepreneurs established fincas and *latifundios* as well. In Soyaltepec municipality, the Cerro Mojarra finca (which was eventually converted to a communally held ejidal grant after the Mexican Revolution and then subsumed by the President Alemán dam) was held by the U.S. Cerro Mojarra Plantation Company. Also in Soyaltepec was the Haddison Hill McKay-owned finca de Santa Margarita as well as the Alvo Plantation Company in the hamlet of El Porvenir.[23] The presence of a plantation economy presided by international and domestic entrepreneurs may have paved the way for revolutionary fervor in the second decade of the twentieth century, but, as we will see, the ways in which the revolution and its aftermath played out in the Papaloapan were far from predictable.

Changes in the Land

When Francisco I. Madero toured the country in 1910, his call for fair and free elections was welcomed by many a Mexican across social sectors, and especially among residents of the Papaloapan. While older Díaz supporters might have served alongside the military man early in his career, a new generation was increasingly dissatisfied with policies that privileged foreign capitalists over locals and upset municipal sovereignty. Supporters of the various revolutionary factions over the course of the decade-long Revolutionary war joined the ranks of fighters from

[23] Chassen & Martínez, "El desarrollo económico," 299-300.

the Papaloapan, which included those who allied with the notorious Flores Magón brothers, themselves anarchists from a Mazatec municipality who self-exiled to the United States.[24]

Indeed, the Papaloapan was a hotbed of revolutionary fervor within Oaxaca. The first *focos revolucionarios* in Oaxaca were organized in 1911 in the municipality of Ojitlán. Of all the regions of Oaxaca, it was in the Papaloapan River Basin, and principally in the district of Tuxtepec, where land speculation and capital investment had caused a great rise in the value of rural property, and after 1880 land was increasingly concentrated in the hands of large coffee and tobacco plantations. At the same time, it would be misleading to imply that *latifundia* overwhelmed the presence of smallholders. The tropical plantations never completely absorbed small properties, and throughout the state of Oaxaca the hacienda was not the dominant model of land tenancy. It was also more common for lands to be acquired through sale than by invasion of pueblo commons. Yet the centers of greatest rural conflict in Oaxaca in 1911 were at the boundaries of the state limits (the Pacific Coast and districts that shared the border with Veracruz) "where the predominant form of land tenancy, and where a limited volume of capital investment and commercialization of agricultural production had occurred." It was in these regions that economic transformation and modernization had their greatest reach, and seemingly where they had been the most disruptive.[25]

The hitorian Paul Garner suggests that the presence of the coffee and tobacco plantations greatly impacted all sectors of rural society in Tuxtepec. On the eve of revolution the district had 14 haciendas, 82 ranchos (individual holdings smaller in land area than an hacienda), and 19

[24] The Flores Magón brothers were born in San Antonio Eloxochitlán, now Eloxochitlán de Flores Magón, to an indigenous father and "mestiza" mother. Famous internationally for their outspoken criticism of the Díaz regime, the family is also a curious example of the relative mobility of peoples living in the Papaloapan region.

[25] Garner, *La Revolución en la provincia: soberanía estatal y caudillismo en las montañas de Oaxaca (1910-1920)* (México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1988), 39-40.

pueblos (hamlets), ranking it third among districts with the greatest number of haciendas.[26] In January of 1911 resident of Ojitlán Sebastián Ortíz, a local schoolteacher, took up the Maderista mantra of "*Sufragio Efectivo. No Reelección.*" Ortíz, the son of Chinantec subsistence agriculturalists, apparently spawned a revolutionary movement after having witnessed the numerous injustices against contract workers in the fincas of his municipio. His first revolutionary act was to liberate the workers of the region's fincas who later constituted the base of his group of rebels, which in May 1911 comprised the Ejército Libertador del Centro y Sur de la República (Liberation Army of the Center and South of the Republic).[27] Following his call to arms, Ortiz commissioned locals to carry out anti-Porfirian propaganda in the surrounding municipalities and recruit men while garnering munitions and horses. Barely five months after launching the campaign, his men made their rounds in the municipalities that would be affected by the President Alemán dam forty years later: Jalapa de Díaz, Soyaltepec, and Ixcatlán, as well as in other hamlets throughout the Chinantec-speaking region of the river basin.[28]

But within Oaxaca state there was a parallel revolutionary movement that effected reverberations in the postrevolutionary era: the movement for state sovereignty, which lasted roughly from 1915 to 1920. Seeking to protect the constitutional sovereignty of Oaxaca state within the federation, the movement was an answer to revolutionary leader Venustiano Carranza's strategy of political centralization promulgated after his Constitutional Army's rise to

[26] Garner, *La Revolución,* 41, data from Secretaría de Economía Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo de estadísticas sociales del porfiriato, 1877-1910* (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos de la Nación, 1956).
[27] Garner, *La Revolución*, 62.
[28] Carlos Sánchez Silva, "Crisis política y contrarrevolución en Oaxaca (1912-1914)" in Victor Rául Martínez Vásquez, coord *La revolución en Oaxaca. 1900-1930* (Oaxaca, Mexico: Instituto de Administración Pública de Oaxaca, 1985), 117.

power in 1914.[29] Garner argues that the Sovereignty Movement continued a longstanding set of political relations between Oaxaca and the rest of the republic that had begun in the nineteenth century. This is not to suggest that the sovereignty movement adherents were homogenous. Rather, they represented an entire spectrum of provincial political ideologies, from antirevolutionaries to federalists, that had been active since the previous century.[30]

Yet while those fighting the revolutionary battles between 1910 and 1920 were in the majority not the highly oppressed (and dispossessed) agricultural workers, the shape of economic development in the Papaloapan in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries indelibly informed both revolutionary and subsequent political actions taken by its denizens. For those living in the District of Tuxtepec, proximity to Veracruz brought with it stripes of radicalism found in various areas of that coastal state. Agrarian radicalism was perhaps the most marked political trend to emerge in the wake of the Revolution, and *agraristas* (politicized agriculturalists) who lacked title to their own lands were eager to take advantage of the reforms the revolutionary fighting had set in motion.

After six years of fighting among the various revolutionary factions, a convention in 1917 led to the passage of a liberal constitution on which the parties could (mostly) agree. While organized labor successfully demanded workers' protection and guarantees, rural-based factions led by Emiliano Zapata and Pancho Villa had left an unmistakable imprint on the minds of urban intellectuals: land reform was a necessary means to political peace in the countryside. And the constitution transformed the political landscape of Mexico as well. It liquidated many old political fiefdoms and prefectures, and it eliminated the division of *cantones* and districts and in

[29] Garner, *La Revolución*, 13.
[30] Garner, *La Revolución*, 15.

their place adopted municipal division as the basis of interstate and national organization. In the now Ex-District of Tuxtepec, many former hamlets or political units with less formal jurisdiction became municipal head towns, including the following pueblos that would be affected by the President Alemán Dam: Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa, Cosolapa, San Felipe Jalapa de Díaz, San José Chiltepec, San Lucas Ojitlán, San Miguel Soyaltepec, San Pedro Ixcatlán, and Santa María Jacatepec.[31]

Map 2.1 Municipal Head Towns Affected by the Alemán Dam



Within these municipal jurisdictions, many residents sought to make a life tilling land to which they held formal title, and the Revolution had now enshrined that dream as a constitutional guarantee. There was, however, a catch. Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution enabled a radical

[31] Tomás García Hernández, *Tuxtepec ante la historia. Apuntes monográficos de la Ciudad y el Municipio de Tuxtepec* (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes; Dirección General de Culturas Populares Unidad Regional de Tuxtepec, 1989), 87-88.

process of land reform—unprecedented in the world at that time— that guaranteed rural men rights to land which could not be sold, rented, or used as collateral, and the title of which would be held communally. This land grant, called an *ejido*, was conferred after a rigorous application process by a group of at least twenty men united in a *Comité Agrario* (Agrarian Committee), a process that could take years, sometimes decades, to bear fruit.

The postrevolutionary political and economic landscape of the Papaloapan in many ways looked quite different from that of the nineteenth century, but it also maintained important continuities that withstood the revolutionary rupture of 1910-1920. Revolution in theory did away with the hacienda as the principal motor of the rural economy, but in practice large landed estates and large concentrations in the hands of few dominated the landscape through the early 1930s. If after the Revolution the forced labor of the Porfirian-era tobacco plantations was no more, tropical commodity export continued: banana plantations were "green gold" for capitalists whose landholdings still dominated the former District of Tuxtepec, as labor disputes and union organizing swelled.[32]

And the carpets of green gold extended for hectares. The continued presence of contract laborers alongside would-be ejidatarios in the Papaloapan made for a political environment in which organized labor and agrarian leagues coexisted and even collaborated. These organizations were active in local elections, and eager to depose political representatives intent on maintaining the Porfirian status quo. For those active on the agrarian front, voting in municipal elections was as relevant as petitioning the *Comisión Local Agraria* (Local Agrarian Commission)—the

[32] The banana economy was so influential to the region's political economy that the Oaxaca state archive (Archivo del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca) has a sub-archive in the Conciliación y Arbitraje (Conciliation and Arbitration) section exclusively for Tuxtepec during the period 1921-1942 due to the particularities of the banana industry.

government organization that processed land grant and restitution petitions at the local level—for land.

In this way the agrarian mobilization set in motion by the Revolution provided an aperture for more radical rural politics. The state of Veracruz harbored some of the most active socialist experiments in the country, particularly in the early 1920s with pro-agrarista governor Adalberto Tejeda and his successor Heriberto Jara. Both of their governments supported the creation of the Communist Party as well as worker unions and peasant leagues. Due to both its proximity to the openly socialist government of Veracruz and the political economy of the region, the Ex-district of Tuxtepec shared many of the same union and political affiliations as its neighboring ex-cantones across the border.[33]

In the process of postrevolutionary pacification, radicalized rural folk organized *defensas rurales*, arming agraristas as "*auxiliares*" against conmen and bandits, who would recognize the power of politicians and generals on the condition that they commit to agrarian leaders and programs.[34] Because the majority of revolutionary fighting was carried out in the countryside among rural soldiers, and the vast majority of the country's population was rural, political platforms in the 1920s included peasants to offset potential rebellion. As a case in point, during his two-year term at the end of the decade (1928-30), President Emilio Portes Gil promoted the creation of new groups of *guerillas campesinas* to secure support.[35]

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[33] The classic text on the dynamics and resilience of agrarian politics in Veracruz during the early postrevolutionary years is Heather Fowler-Salamini's excellent, *Agrarian Radicalism in Veracruz, 1920-1938* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978). On land reform in Veracruz over the course of the twentieth century, see Helga Baitenmann, "Rural Agency and State Formation in Postrevolutionary Mexico: The Agrarian Reform in Central Veracruz, 1915-1992" (PhD Diss., New School for Social Research, 1997).

[34] Romana Falcón, "El surgimiento del agrarismo cardenista—una revision de las tesis populistas" *Historia Mexicana* vol. 27 no. 107 (enero-marzo de 1978): 333-386. 340.

[35] Falcón, "El surgimiento," 352.

Defensas rurales or not, armed agraristas organized uprisings throughout the Papaloapan in the years after the formal end of revolutionary struggle. 1922 was a particularly busy year. Agrarista dissatisfaction with the electoral process in June led to risings in Chiltepec, and in Tuxtepec banana plantations suspended business because of "agrarista" activity.[36] The Local Agrarian Commission (Comisión Local Agraria) was still disorganized and unable to meet the demands of the agrarian petitioners. As a result, the state government requested that the National Agrarian Commission (Comisión Nacional Agraria)—the national body created to facilitate land reform—send agronomists and civil engineers to set order to the local commission in April of the following year (1923).[37]

Agrarian activism had been part and parcel of revolutionary activity that continued into the first postrevolutionary decades, but of course not all rural people were revolutionary sympathizers cum activists, and not all revolutionary activism was agrarian. Still, in the Papaloapan and elsewhere, agraristas were instrumental figures in shaping the new postrevolutionary political climate. Through the 1920s and 1930s, agrarian agitation coalesced into organized peasant movements, many of which were subsumed under the congealing revolutionary state. In the process, agraristas "became *campesinos*" in the words of historian Christopher R. Boyer, adopting a political identity as campesinos—literally, people from the countryside; categorically often referred to as peasants). As Boyer suggests, the adoption of campesino identity afforded rural people a common cause of solidarity and a way to advance their cause through collective action. It also assisted them, and politicos and intellectuals as well, in framing problems in the countryside in political terms.

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[36] Victor Raúl Martínez Vásquez, "El régimen de García Vigil" in *La revolución en Oaxaca. 1900-1930* 340, 345.
[37] Martínez Vásquez, "El régimen de García Vigil," 349.

Official Organized Labor and Agitation in the Papaloapan

During the decades that followed the Mexican Revolution of 1910, groups of men throughout the Papaloapan organized formal agrarian committees as they sought ejidal grants. Yet the requisite agrarian committee was only one facet of formal agrarian organizing during these years. A dizzying array of worker and peasant syndicates, political parties, and independent socialist and peasant leagues and unions aligned themselves with national and at times officially-recognized unions with ties to the ruling party. Through the course of the first two post-revolutionary decades, unions at the national level often splintered, and their rivalries played out in the Papaloapan at the local level as well. If the exponential rise in agrarian and worker activism was a boon for local political participation, it also betrays the cacophony of peasant organizing and divisions along ideological, political, and personal lines.

In Oaxaca, 1923 was the year in which not only the greatest number of unions and syndical organizations was created but also the Regional Confederation of Mexican Workers (Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana, CROM) and the Partido Liberal Constitucionalista firmly set their bases in the state.[38] A product of the later years of revolutionary struggle, the CROM was closely tied to the federal government. Though the organization formally accepted class struggle, it limited its activity to gaining concessions within the political apparatus as opposed to building a proletarian movement.[39] By the first years of the 1930s, internal divisions and the presence of more radical leftist organizations made way for the creation of the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (CTM) in 1936.

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[38] Martínez Vásquez, "El régimen de García Vigil," 352.

[39] Raúl Trejo Delarbe and Aníbal Yáñez, "The Mexican Labor Movement: 1917-1975" *Latin American Perspectives* 3 (Winter, 1976): 133-153, 135.

At the local level the struggle for representation was fraught as well. The first of the self-defined class-based organizations in the Papaloapan, founded in 1924, was the Liga de Resistencia y Defensa Social. Right away its leaders were the object of retaliation from the state governments. The second such organization, the Federación de Obreros y Campesinos de Papaloapan, Oaxaca, was denied affiliation with the CROM. But other independent unions were also brought into being—so-called "white unions" that were intended to combat workers' organizations. One such group, the Unión Mexicana de Productores, was created in 1926 to fight proletarian organizations, but the Unión had another agenda as well: to replace the American companies that owned and managed many of the tropical fruit plantations (banana in particular) in the zone. The relative variety of plantation firms and the owners' diversity in national origin could prevent monopsonistic markets and at times provide better pricing options for workers, cooperatives, and producer associations. The De la Lana-Basurto company—which had purchased the old Hacienda Santa Rosa with its 19,350 hectares along the margins of the Santo Domingo, Valle Nacional, Papaloapan, Usila and Tonto rivers—competed openly with the American firms Standard Fruit and Weinberger Banana Company, the latter of which ostensibly offered the best prices to workers.[40]

Banana pickers, cane cutters, and would-be ejidatarios alike associated with a variety of unions and peasant leagues, but an abundance of socialist organizations in the Papaloapan attracted members in the ex-district of Tuxtepec more so than anywhere else in the state of Oaxaca. A combination of frequent labor issues and an organized working class, according to the historian Arellanes Meixueiro, set Tuxtepec apart from the other ex-districts of Oaxaca state.[41] In

[40] Velasco Toro, "Tierra y conflicto," 89.
[41] Arellanes Meixueiro, "La Confederación de Partidos Socialistas en Oaxaca" in *La revolución en Oaxaca, 1900-*

1926, three of the first twenty-five cells of the Confederación de Partidos Socialistas de Oaxaca were located in Tuxtepec. Besides the Partido Socialista Democrático Tuxtepecano, the other two cells were found in municipalities along the Tonto River that would lose much of their territory to the President Alemán Dam: the Partido Socialista de Soyaltepec, and the Partido Socialista de Ixcatlán.[42] The presence of socialist organizations in these years is consistent with that of other elements of the organized Left. In the first decades after the revolution, the Mexican Communist Party (Partido Comunista Mexicana, PCM) established strong ties with peasants in the countryside as well.[43]

Workers' political activities, of course, were not the only potential disruption to the successful functioning of the plantation economy in the region. Natural disasters, too, affected all producers in the river basin. In 1927 a devastating earthquake was followed two years later by a hurricane that destroyed that year's banana harvest, dealing quite a blow to one of the dominant agribusinesses in the area, Standard Fruit Co., which had just acquired the local Cuyamel Fruit Company and its share of the region's crop. Yet despite the setbacks, economic activity flourished in the region with the construction of a new branch of the National Railway at Esperanza station, continued land speculation, and capital investment in tropical commodity production. As a testament to the sustained economic boom, the Casino Tuxtepecano managed vast amounts of money on the eve of the Great Depression, drawing from the banana bonanza to don Tuxtepec the title of "city of green gold." Changes after the 1910 Revolution certainly had

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1930, 384.

[42] Arellanes Meixueiro, "La Confederación de Partidos Socialistas en Oaxaca," 383. Arellanes cites AGN Gobernación R 312 (17) Expedientes 3 y 5. Actas Constitutivas de la CPSO, May 24, 1926 fojas 1, 2 y 3.

[43] Perhaps the most well-known case of local agrarian activism aligned with the PCM is that of Primo Tapia of Naranja, Michoacán, documented in Paul Friedrich, *Agrarian Revolt in a Mexican Village* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970).

not upset the rise of economic development and inequality in the ex-district, but the rising and its attendant fervor radicalized denizens in unforeseen ways.

Rural workers organized both as *obreros* (salaried laborers) and *campesinos*, and in the 1920s organized labor included both camps. But at the local or regional level national organizations such as the CROM or the Partido Nacional Agrario played a limited to no role in campesino activism. The state of Veracruz was home to pioneering campesino organizations that from the bottom up came to impact national syndicalism. Starting in the 1920s, regional offices of the Comisión Nacional Agraria created agrarian community leagues (ligas de comunidades agrarias). In 1923 the first congress of agrarian community leagues of Veracruz was convened by Úrsulo Galván, a campesino activist who three years later organized with ex-governor of Veracruz Adalberto Tejeda a national congress to form the Liga Nacional Campesina.

But internal divisions among campesinos were always present, and exacerbated as formal organizations amassed constituents. Reigning in the political power of increasingly organized campesinos became a pressing concern for the newly created Partido Nacional Revolucionario (PNR, founded 1929), the first iteration of the political party that would rule Mexico through the end of the twentieth century. As the PNR sought control over the Liga Nacional Campesina, the league divided into three: one group allied with the Communist Party; the formal Liga Nacional Campesina united with the PNR; and another, the Liga Nacional Campesina "Úrsulo Galván," so named soon after Galván's death, claimed to abstain from politics altogether. The Liga de Comunidades Agrarias, formed initially through efforts by the regional offices of the National Agrarian Commission, retained no centralized authority.[44] In 1931, less than a year after the Úrsulo Galván camp's formation, the election of a new league president brought into relief the

[44] Gerrit Huizer, *La lucha campesina en México* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Agrarias, 1970) 46, 54.

divisions between radicals and moderates. With no means to mend the chasm, the league split once more, between the "genuine" Tejedista radicals and the PNR moderates.

Though they could not act nationally, the Veracruzans enjoyed relative autonomy for a short while. Yet by the end of 1931, guerrilla groups affiliated with the radicals no longer had the cooperation with the head of military operations that they once enjoyed. By 1932, under direct orders from the de facto leader of the PNR former President Plutarco Elías Calles, federal forces engaged in eradicating agrarian "rebels and *bandoleros*." The resulting conflicts played out at the state level, where the federal effort to purge communism from the countryside met resistance from agrarian militias supported by the state's governor.[45]

Peasant organization and political activity continued into the 1930s, gaining further ground upon the election of President Lázaro Cárdenas in 1934. Cárdenas's populist approach included an active courtship of organized labor as he sought to further incorporate all workers into the revolutionary state. Unlike his predecessors, who worked to divide the CROM and Liga Nacional Campesina (or Confederación Campesina Mexicana, CCM, an umbrella organization comprised of the various Ligas de Comunidades Agrarias formed 1933), Cárdenas sought to incorporate organized workers and peasants into the political apparatus through official state recognition. It was during his six-year term that the greatest number of ejidal grants and restitution petitioners were successful in attaining lands, and in the Papaloapan in particular campesino political activism grew. One historical source that affords much information regarding agitation among the campesino population is federal secret police reports. Potential limitations aside, such reports both provide an unparalleled portrait of local political life and betray the priorities of the government as well as, to a certain extent, public servants.

[45] Romana Falcón, "El surgimiento," 364.

The Office of Political and Social Investigation (IPS) was created in 1925 and became a Department with the same name in 1938. Intelligence agents were tasked with taking stock of opposition politics throughout the country, which led them to municipalities in the *provincia* such as those of the Papaloapan. The scope of their work and the prerogative of the Mexican government was by no means the same in both 1925 and 1938, yet from the 1930s, the IPS agents appear to increasingly and openly espouse the pro-peasant rhetoric of the ruling party, using popular class-based language that identified the campesinos more often than not as exploited souls deserving of retribution and justice.

In 1933, an anonymous agent documented the political and social situation on the Oaxacan side of the Papaloapan, where his tour of the municipios of Tuxtepec, Papaloapan, Amapa, Soyaltepec, Ixcatlán, and Jalapa de Díaz left him convinced of stark divisions along class lines. On the one hand were the campesinos, "branded thoughtless and savage" who "want[ed] to have recourse to the benefits of the Revolution in terms of social and economic improvement." On the other were the campesinos' "former exploiters," whom the agent interviewed at length, called *gente de razón* [people of reason—a colloquial holdover from the colonial era] "who are not in agreement and disapprove of the fact that those who were yesterday submissive and exploitable would now be their equals in [terms of] civic and social rights." On this point, unnamed "residents" in Jalapa de Díaz—who by the agent's description were likely not the "campesinos" mentioned above—complained about a disruptive Liga de Comunidades del Estado de Oaxaca.[46]

[46] AGN Gal 2 IPS Caja 137 Exp. 4 310 (7.2) "33" January 1933, p. 10. "…pugna entre elementos campesinos que quieren acogerse a los beneficios de la Revolución en cuanto a mejoramiento social y económico, a quienes se les tilda de inconscientes y salvajes, con los antiguos explotadores de ellos, llamados "gente de razón" y quienes no están conformes y no ven con buenos ojos que los de ayer sumisos y explotables sean ahora iguales a ellos en

The campesino struggle in the Oaxacan communities of the Papaloapan was allied with a confederation of socialist leagues: the Federación Tuxtepecana de Obreros y Campesinos, which itself was a member of the Confederation of Socialist Leagues of Oaxaca. To boot, the Socialist Leagues even had their own political organization: the Partido Socialista de Obreros y Campesinos. The Federación Tuxtepecana reportedly controlled twenty union organizations and ninety agrarian committees throughout the ex-district of Tuxtepec, including the municipalities that years later would find portions of their lands engulfed by the President Alemán dam: Chiltepec, Jacatepec, Jalapa de Díaz, Ojitlán, Ixcatlán, Soyaltepec, and Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa.[47] The Secretary General and Secretary of Propaganda of both the federation and the socialist party were allegedly from Puebla and Veracruz, a point that once again illustrates the campesinos' connection to broader political organization beyond their pueblos.

Opposing the Partido Socialista was the Partido Democrático Tuxtepecano. Over 1,700 members strong, the Partido Democrático was allied with the (non-socialist) Federación Regional of the Papaloapan, which in turn was supported by the Liga Nacional Campesina "Úrsulo Galván," now an affiliate of the CROM.[48] The majority of campesino and worker organizations in Tuxtepec was allied with the Socialist Party and thus were "enemy" organizations of the Democrático. But within hamlets or municipalities there was not always such a clear division between "campesinos" or "workers" and their "enemies," and in most communities the socialists had more political control than their adversaries. In other words, rifts between the various leagues were dynamic at the local level.

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derechos cívicos y sociales."

[47] Curiously, the organization was "virtually absent" in the recently-formed San José Independencia (former hamlet of Soyaltepec), which would also lose lands to the dam.

[48] AGN Gal 2 IPS Caja 137 Exp. 4 310 (7.2) "33" January 1933, 11.

Struggle for power was constant between the Socialistas and Democráticos in the ex-district of Tuxtepec during the early 1930s, and mirrored perennial splits among organizations for regional and national battles over control of organized peasants and labor. The undercover IPS agent reported the Socialists were proud to hold the city government of Tuxtepec: had they lost it, the Democrático would have "destroyed" the campesino and worker organizations affiliated with the Confederación de Ligas Socialistas, allegedly because the Democrático harbored strong anti-labor/campesino sentiments. But the Democráticos of Tuxtepec claimed that suffrage violations in the November 1932 election had taken place, and as a result the Socialists maintained power and continued to support the State Government.[49] The founding members of the Federación Tuxtepecana (member of the socialist leagues of Oaxaca) were in fact mostly ex-members of the Federación Regional (non-socialist, allied with the Liga Nacional Campesina "Úrsulo Galván"), expelled for causing divisions within that latter Federation. Thus while the majority of campesinos in the District of Tuxtepec were affiliated with the Federación Tuxtepecana and/or Confederación de Ligas Socialistas, the Democráticos and Liga Nacional Campesina "Úrsulo Galván" maintained strongholds in several municipalities.

Soyaltepec was one municipio where conflicts between campesinos and "professional politicians" of the region led to bloodshed. Organized campesinos there formed a popular political party called the "Partido del Pueblo," affiliated with the Federación Tuxtepecana and Confederación de Ligas Socialistas, adversary of the "Partido de los de Razón," (so named to represent the "gente de razón," i.e. non-campesinos). The Partido de Razón carried out the worst of the conflict, according to the informant's report: after refusing to recognize the will of the

[49] AGN Gal 2 IPS Caja 137 Exp. 4 310 (7.2) "33" January 1933, 11-12.

campesino majority in the recent elections, the Razón camp had assassinated two campesino leaders. The Liga Nacional Campesina "Úrsulo Galván," also in the municipality of Soyaltepec, organized against the activist campesino elements such as the Partido del Pueblo, and in particular against their efforts to petition for ejidal grants. Vocally disparaging "those *indios,*" the Partido de Razón worked with their counterparts in Ixcatlán, Jalapa de Díaz, and Tuxtepec to get rid of the "indios" at any cost.[50] In Jalapa de Díaz the anti-agraristas refused to accept the election of the agrarista faction's candidate for municipal president, and formed an army 200-men strong to prevent "those indios" from governing them.[51]

The phrase "those indios" was less a reflection of individuals' ethno-linguistic identity than it was a pejorative referent to status and entitlement. While it is entirely possible that "those indios" were indigenous language speakers who self-identified as such, it is more likely that those who identified themselves in contradistinction to indios were eager to assert a superior economic and social standing. Racial or ethnic distinction was (and remains) difficult to ascertain in a region where most individuals spoke an indigenous language and phenotype alone was insufficient as a physical marker of difference.

Where the "razón" contingent had strongholds they promoted other forms of rural activism. A self-denominated Cultural Group in Ixcatlán—comprised of about a hundred or so members "de razón"—promoted theater, worked with schools, held "cultural meetings" and worked on structural improvements in the municipal head including a *nixtamal* mill, to mechanically grind maize into tortilla *masa,* as well as a public library. Their interest in improving their own municipio extended to neighboring pueblos such as Soyaltepec and Jalapa

[50] AGN Gal 2 IPS Caja 137 Exp. 4 310 (7.2) "33" January 1933, 12-13.
[51] AGN Gal 2 IPS Caja 137 Exp. 4 310 (7.2) "33" January 1933, 13-14.

de Díaz, where the campesino "savages and murderers" held power. The goal of "los de razón," as the informant would have it, was to stifle the petitioning and processing of ejidal grants, and limit agrarian revolutionary action.[52]

It is worth mentioning here that IPS agents' reports often contain heavy doses of hyperbole, simplification, or outright invention. Agents had sufficient reasons to characterize community relations as exaggeratedly volatile or adversarial, or to simplify political conflict to fit the paradigm of the ruling regime. One agent was quick to blame the "pernicious effects of alcohol, the priest, and politicians, in addition to ignorance" for preventing the newly emancipated campesinos from realizing their potential.[53] Yet even if we take the IPS reportage with a grain of salt, a notable trend emerges from the records originating in the first half of the 1930s: the persistent blurring of campesino/non-campesino and indigenous/non-indigenous conflict.

Organized labor and peasant activity culminated in a congress held in April 1936, in which the Federación Tuxtepecana, Liga Regional Campesina, and the Comité Regional de Ojitlán requested that the Ministry of the Interior (Secretaría de Gobernación) remove municipal authorities in Tuxtepec, Ojitlán, Soyaltepec, Jalapa de Díaz, Acatlán de Pérez, Jacatepec, and Ixcatlán for being "reactionary enemies" of their organizations. Not long afterward, they summoned the President of Mexico to heed their call.[54] Campesinos of Tetela and Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa themselves asked that local authorities be deposed for their anti-agrarista actions.[55] The resulting congress—the Congreso Unificación Obrero Campesino e Indígena, de

[52] AGN Gal 2 IPS Caja 137 Exp. 4 310 (7.2) "33" January 1933, 14.
[53] AGN Gal 2 IPS Caja 137 Exp. 4 310 (7.2) "33" January 1933, 15.
[54] Telegram 28 April 1936, AGN Galería 5 Dirección General del Gobierno, 2.317.4. (17) - 55 Caja 55, Exp 14.
[55] Comisariado Ejidal del poblado de Tetela, Mpio. de Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa to to President Cárdenas [n.d.,

Tuxtepec, Oaxaca (Unified Congress of Workers, Peasants and Indígenas)—appears to have been a short-lived effort to unify laborers regardless of their ethnic or linguistic background, and seek recognition of the member organizations' political representatives in local elections.

By 1938, efforts at consolidating the postrevolutionary state included a congress of campesino unification that also intended to bring together distinct political groups and laborers under a single umbrella organization: the Confederación de Trabajadores de México (Confederation of Mexican Workers, CTM). The Oaxacan branch of the CTM, the Federación de Trabajadores del Estado de Oaxaca, consisted of a number of unions that included banana worker syndicates, the Local Federation of Workers of the Tuxtepec Region, the League of Marine Workers of the Papaloapan River and Its Tributaries, the Regional Federation of Workers and Peasants of Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa, and—not least—the Union of Women Workers of Tuxtepec.[56] Created in 1936, the CTM leadership was comprised almost entirely of CROM defectors. Seeking to include the organized popular classes for political stability, Cárdenas and the CTM supported campesino and worker demonstrations, with the understanding that worker-capitalist relations could be resolved through state mediation.

The Oaxacan CTM included among its ranks seven Executive Agrarian Committees (CEAs) or Ejidal Councils (Comisariados Ejidales), representing *all* of the municipalities that just over a decade later would be flooded by the President Alemán dam. In the municipality of Soyaltepec, for example, there was representation in 17 of the 41 hamlets under its jurisdiction,

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likely 1937], AGN Galería 5 Dirección General del Gobierno 2.317.4. (17) - 55 Caja 55, Exp. 14.

[56] AGN Gal 2 Caja 5 Exp 8 Clas 000-104

all of which would be affected by the dam. In Ixcatlán, there were five hamlets with representation, four of which would also face flooding in the wake of the dam construction.[57]

In 1937, IPS intelligence officers reported 117 worker organizations in Tuxtepec, including the municipalities of Chiltepec, Ojitlán, Soyaltepec, and Ixcatlán.[58] Perhaps to be expected, the proliferation of campesino and worker organizations coincided with reprisals—in the intelligence officer's version, often from large landowners. That year, IPS agents reported armed groups in Ojitlán (50), Ixcatlán (20), Soyaltepec (10) Jalapa de Díaz (10), Chiltepec (20), Valle Nacional (40), Jacatepec (15), some of which were also supported by municipal representatives (agentes municipales). In Chiltepec, the agent noted that the pueblo was comprised of mostly "timid" Chinantec-speaking indígenas, living under the thumb of local authorities. Campesinos who were not members of the government-affiliated Confederación Campesina Mexicana were often jailed, and there were even reports of the police entering homes to "take advantage of their women." Targeted leaders of the Federación de Trabajadores—part of the CTM conglomerate—fled to Veracruz.[59] Outright support from the federal government was not enough to curb in-fighting among the various branches of campesino and worker activism at the local level, and it was not uncommon for some organizations to ally with non-agrarista interests as they vied for regional and local power.

The municipality of Ojitlán had its share of notable land-related conflicts that involved municipal authorities as well. One Miguel Ortiz, the income tax collector for the fiscal district, was the subject of pages of IPS intelligence reports for persecuting any campesinos who did not

[57] Lista de las organizaciones que forman la Federacion Local de Trabajdores de la Región de Tuxtepec. AGN Gal 2 Caja 5 Exp 8 Clas 000-104.
[58] AGN Gal 2, IPS Caja 68, Expediente 3-130-553 Tomo III Eliseo Castro Reina. Enero-Dic. 1937.
[59] AGN Gal 2, IPS Caja 68, Expediente 3-130-553 Tomo III Eliseo Castro Reina. Enero-Dic. 1937.

belong to the Confederación Campesina Mexicana. Ortiz would force member organizations of the CTM-affiliated Federación de Trabajadores to dissolve, order their homes sacked, and confiscate their files. Authorities never prosecuted him, according to the IPS officer, because when they visited the pueblos the campesinos had reportedly fled, leaving what was left of their paper trail abandoned among the banana trees. In June of 1937, Ortiz's men murdered an ejidatario of Arroyo Caracol and another campesino member of the Federación de Trabajadores in the head town of Ojitlán. At the end of the month an agrarian engineer, apparently sent to measure and evaluate the area of the finca of La Esperanza for an ejidal grant petition, was robbed. Local authorities protected the perpetrators, the intelligence report declares, because they intended to impede verification of the area and thus the land reform process.[60] In Ojitlán as well as the municipality of Chiltepec, campesino groups not affiliated with the Campesina Mexicana were physically beaten by authorities.

Yet regardless of their local or state affiliation, rural activists keenly aware of President Cárdenas's declared support for the campesino cause elicited the president's assistance when local or state authorities were unresponsive or antagonistic. Dating from the first months of Cárdenas's presidency, representatives of the Sindicato de Obreros y Campesinos of the municipio of Ixcatlán hailing from four Agrarian Committees protested electoral fraud in their municipality, demanding the president's intervention.[61] Not a few years later, in1937, Agrarian Committees from Soyaltepec firmly requested the ruling party's (PNR's) support for their slate

[60] AGN Gal 2, IPS Caja 68, Expediente 3-130-553 Tomo III Eliseo Castro Reina. Enero-Dic. 1937.

[61] Sindicato de Obreros y Campesinos de Ixcatlán to President Cárdenas, 5 December 1934, AGN Gal 5 2.311.M. (17) 122 Caja #36B, Expediente 13, Elecciones Ixcatlán. The representatives, from San Felipe Tilpan, Arroyo Zontle, Paso Nazareno, and La Pochota, mentinoed their affiliation with the Liga de Resistencia de Tuxtepec, the Genuina Confederación de Ligas Socialistas de Oaxaca, as well as the Confederación Campesina Mexicana. Their association with a multitude of broader associations that may have been at odds with one another—namely the Confederación de Ligas Socialistas and the Campesina Mexicana—is a testament to both the eclecticism inherent in campesino affiliation during these years and the easily shifting dynamics of such groups' affinities.

in municipal elections. Local political bosses (caciques) and the Oaxacan governor had been treating them and other campesino and worker organizations unfavorably for years, they alleged, and recognition by the President's party would ensure justice for their cause.[62] That these rural activists sought recourse to local problems from the president harkens back the paternalism of Porfirio Díaz, if not also the heads of state before him. But new in the 1930s was a sense of entitlement among politicized agrarian activists: that their affiliation with syndicates and socialist organizations necessarily aligned them with the commander in chief and the trajectory of the Mexican Revolution.

In the late 1930s, local iterations of clashes among organized rural labor groups reflected a national struggle to incorporate rural activists and non-activists alike into a single organization under the auspices of the state. Cárdenas's efforts to channel worker and peasant political activity into the revolutionary state made room for organized workers to participate in national politics while limiting their reach. One way this was done was by separating official worker and peasant unions: despite earlier iterations of worker-peasant collaboration, peasant syndicates were funneled into a new entity distinct from the party's official worker confederation, the CTM. The Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC) became the party's official peasant union, supplanting the former Confederación Campesina Mexicana and agrarian leagues. The CNC was instrumental in the process of soliciting and receiving ejidal grants: those comités agrarios who applied for land grants from the government were automatically funneled into the CNC's membership, and through the union they would be able to advocate for state-supplied agricultural inputs and access to credit.

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[62] Comites Agrarios de Soyaltepec, Arroyo Tigre, Raya Lecuona, Patria Arriba, Patria Abajo, la Guadalupe, and Cozolapa Caracol to President Cárdenas, 15 November 1937, AGN Gal 5, 2.311M (17) 23650 Caja #39B, Expediente 71.

Yet the rise of rural activism and land reform under Cárdenas was not only the work of agriculturalists. As literate intermediaries, rural teachers played a critical role in organizing agrarian committees and filing ejidal petitions on the latter groups' behalf. Functionaries of the Ministry of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP) were active participants in ejidal grant matters, and after 1940 the SEP Department of Indigenous Affairs intervened in communities marked as indigenous, assisting would-be ejidatarios or *comuneros* in articulating their claims for *bienes comunales* (common lands).[63]

That the education ministry had its own department of indigenous affairs, and that it was precisely *that* department facilitating land reform petitions, is revealing of early twentieth-century ideas about indigeneity, education, and rural reform in Mexico. Intellectual currents in a post progressive-era world privileged formal public education as a path to improved social welfare and civility, but Mexico's particular history of indigenous politics and land tenure culminated in a revolutionary ideology that codified a particular kind of ethnic mixture. The perennial conflation of indigenous people with rural dwellers writ large led intellectuals and planners to contend that education and rural development were the best means to uplift and transform the indigenous population, as well as their non-indigenous rural neighbors whose backwardness and rudimentary technological skills were understood as vestiges of their own indigenous ancestry.

As the testimonials and reports of secret police agents demonstrate, the downtrodden and exploited rural underclass was often unquestionably considered to be "indígena" or "indio." Such

[63] The Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas, created during Cárdenas's tenure in 1936, was divested of most of its budget in 1940 and its education-related activities were subsumed by the SEP's Department of Indigenous Affairs. In 1946, then President Miguel Alemán dissolved the Departamento Autónomo and rendered all indigenous affairs the purview of the SEP's General Department of Indigenous Affairs. For example, see AGA Expediente 276.1/1670 Reconocimiento de Titulación y confirmación de bienes comunales San Miguel Soyaltepec.

a trope was not unique to postrevolutionary rhetoric. Since the inception of the political category of "Indian" in New Spain, the word itself connoted political adolescence, and by their very existence in the colonial setting Indians were subject to unique paternalistic protection by the state. By the early twentieth century *indigenistas* were advocating for indigenous emancipation from the vestiges of that colonial past, still with a heavy dose of paternalism. But the notion of the indígena as a citizen in need of his own organization did not settle well with attempts by the Confederación Nacional Campesina to consolidate campesinos as a single class.

In the 1930s Oaxacans representing all the ex-districts—and many of them avowedly indigenous-language speakers— founded the Federación Indigenista Revolucionaria Oaxaqueña. After attending a speech by CTM General Secretary Vicente Lombardo Toledano in February 1939, the Federation drew inspiration from the labor leader's words about revolutionary emancipation and drafted its own articles that outlined a revolutionary approach to the indigenous problem in the state of Oaxaca.[64] In March of that year, their request for support was rejected by the CNC on the grounds that the indigenista federation's emphasis on racial characteristics would divide Mexican campesinos. The "odious concept of race" would provide the opportunity for "politicians to sow divisions that would result in the detriment of the great national campesino movement."[65]

But in the Papaloapan and certainly in other corners of the country, the concerns of the Indigenista Federation were more than relevant: peasant politics mapped onto racial tropes in ways that were impossible to ignore, and not all avowedly campesino groups welcomed their

[64] Federación Indigenista Revolucionaria Oaxaqueña to Lic. Vicente Lombardo Toledano, Srio Gral de la Confederación de Trabajadores de México y Presidente de la IX Convención de la CTM, February 1939, AGN Galería 2, Caja 18 Exp 50 2-1/053.7/1.

[65] CNC Comite Central Ejecutivo Nacional to Comisión Organizadora de la Federación Indigenista Revolucionaria Oaxaqueña, March 3, 1939, AGN Galería 5 2/331.9(17)36710 exp 82.

indigenous *compañeros*. If peasant leagues and syndicates antagonized one another despite their purported dedication to the campesino cause, it may be of no surprise that some, such as the Liga Nacional Campesina Úrsulo Galván, might align with the "de razón," even reportedly anti-agrarista movements. Despite the privileged place of the indígena in national memory and revolutionary ideology, campesino political organizing was not indigenous organizing, and the connection between the two was not always obvious to or expedient for activists. Indeed, the petitioning process for lands under the agrarian reform privileged rural landlessness, not dispossession or ethnic communal bonds, as the principal criteria for grants.

Land and Community

Beginning as early as the mid-1910s, residents of the Oaxacan municipalities of the Papaloapan began to form agrarian committees and petition for land grants or restitution. While some ejidos were granted fairly quickly, other petitions were outstanding well into the mid-1940s and even after the groundbreaking of dam construction in 1949. Before considering some of the cases of the 1940s, a discussion of the process by which committees were created, petitions were filed, and grants were made, is in order.

Following the Revolution of 1910-17, the agrarian reform made possible two kinds of land grant regimes: one for restitution of communal lands, which applied to those who could prove their ancestral lands had been usurped in the nineteenth century; and one for ejidal grants, which was available to any landless group, regardless of ancestral claims, who met certain requirements.[66] Over the course of the first decade post-revolution, successive presidents passed

[66] In cases of restitution, it was necessary to demonstrate lands that had been alienated either before the 1856 Lerdo (desamortization) Law or before the December 1876 law that permitted the Ministry of Development (Fomento), the

a number of laws that further specified who would be able to benefit from the reform, how much land they were entitled to, and what kinds and sizes of lands were exempt from reform. With time the laws increasingly articulated desired social and economic ends from the ejidal granting process and made increasingly concrete the relationship between the Mexican government and peasant organizations.

Legal nuance notwithstanding, between 1920 and 1946 the process from petition to grant went something along the following lines: Once campesinos had formed a requisite committee of twenty males, they would petition the agrarian commission in their state of residence (Comisión Local Agraria), which would then evaluate the case and forward recommendations to the national commission. The National Agrarian Commission would make the ultimate decision to grant or deny the petitioners. Community land grant size depended on land quality, access to water, and the number of petitioners in a given committee.

The granting process could take years and in some cases decades to move from petition to title. As early as 1918, some residents of lands that would be flooded by the Alemán dam in the late 1940s filed petitions under the still new agrarian law. Others filed in the 1920s, 30s, and even during the few years leading up to their displacement by the dam. Of the 34 ejidos affected by the dam's reservoir waters between 1955 and 1961, two were granted in the 1930s, two granted on the eve of the flood in 1955, and the remaining thirty in the mid-1940s (See Appendix A).[67]

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treasury (Hacienda) or another authority to sponsor said alienation. See José Velasco Toro, *Política y legislación agraria en México. De la desamortización civil a la reforma campesina* (Xalapa, Mexico: Estudios Jurídicos y Políticos Universidad Veracruzana, 1993) 89.

[67] Based on files in the Archivo General Agrario for the following ejidos in Oaxaca: Arroyo Chical, Paso Nacional, Pescadito de Abajo, Pescadito de Enmedio, Pescadito Arriba, Loma Alta, Arroyo Tigre, San Martín, La Pochota, Piedra de Amolar, Ideal Arriba, San Felipe Tilpan, El Encajonado; Calería, Playa Lagarto, San Antonio, Cosolapa, Cosolapa Caracol, La Guadalupe, Emiliano Zapata, and Málzaga of Soyaltepec; Cosolapa Sarmiento, Cerro

Perhaps the most interesting quality of the ejido petitioning process is the fact that potential ejidatarios were most often ambulatory agriculturalists before they settled as stakeholders in a given ejido. The ejido's requisite twenty male agrarian committee members who worked otherwise idle land at least 7 kilometers from the population center was not easily achieved on the first attempt; and even when it was, ejidal petitions could be initially denied or grants delayed for a number of reasons. Literacy was another requirement of an executive agrarian committee (the leadership of the petitioning agrarian committee), and the inability of any of its members to read and write could be grounds for denial. Adjudication could be held in limbo if a landowner filed an *amparo*, or legal stay. In such cases, landowners might successfully make the case that their lands were not large enough to qualify for expropriation under the land reform. Over the course of the 1920s-1950s, the Mexican legislature passed a series of agrarian codes that further delimited the scope of land reform and may have impacted the time to grant for aspiring ejidatarios.[68]

As a result, would-be male ejidatarios, often with female partners and children in tow, frequently migrated in search of a committee or existing ejido that best suited their needs. The experience of Panuncio Cadeza, a Mazatec speaker displaced by the dam, illustrates the tenuous and ephemeral nature of ejidal communities. As told to the journalist Fernando Benítez, for reasons both personal and political Cadeza helped form, abandoned, and joined multiple agrarian

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Mojarra, and Los Corrales of Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa.

[68] The agrarian committee of San Felipe Tilpan, Jacatapec municipality in the Ex-district of Tuxtepec, for example, had filed their petition in 1918. Though it had already taken eleven years by this point, one agrarian official surmised that the status of their case was likely affected by the Agrarian Law of 1929, since the governor of Oaxaca did not dictate a ruling in their file. AGA San Felipe Tilpan, Jacatepec. Expediente 106. Dotación de Tierras. On changing agrarian codes, see José Velasco Toro, *Política y legislación agraria en México*; and Enrique Montalvo, José Rivera Castro, and Oscar Betanzos Piñón, *Modernización, lucha agraria y poder político, 1920-1934*, vol. 4 of *Historia de la cuestión agraria* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores; Centro de Estudios Históricos del Agrarismo en México, 1988-1990).

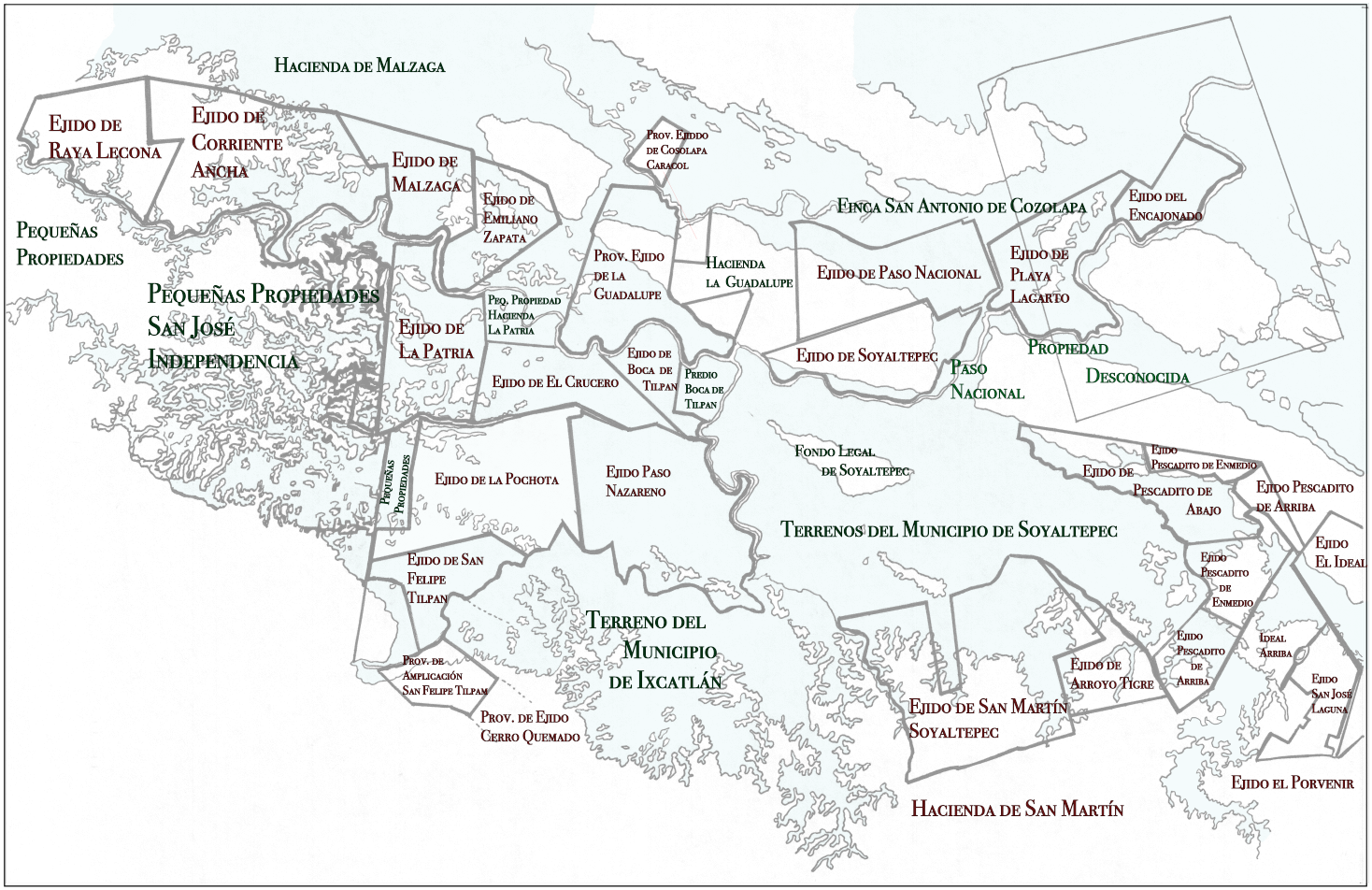
committees or ejidos in the hopes of securing land to farm for his family's sustenance. Born in Paso Nacional, a mostly Spanish-speaking hamlet at the time, Cadeza's father left him and his mother to fend for themselves. By age six or seven, Cadeza and mother had relocated to San Antonio Cosolapa. In 1945, after working in the abandoned lands of the old hacienda at Málzaga for some time, Cadeza became a member of the newfound ejido Emiliano Zapata on the newly expropriated hacienda lands. Now at age 15, his reading skills earned him the title of second-in-command policeman (agente de policia suplente) of the ejido. A series of misfortunes, including the death of his young wife, led him to the city of Córdoba, Veracruz, then back to the ejido where his brother-in-law was an ejidatario but Cadeza "…arrived without rights, as an *arrimado.*" Yet despite his recent arrival status, within nine months the members of the ejido named Cadeza President of the Comisariado Ejidal.[69]

While Panuncio Cadeza's story is perhaps not typical of men from the Oaxacan side of the Papaloapan, it should neither be read as an aberration. Rural families or individuals might be driven by any number of reasons—lack of sustenance, personal misfortune, or political imbroglios—to live in and work different lands over a short period of time, regardless of whether or not they belonged or aspired to belong to an ejido. Even so, in the minds of planners and experts who descended on the region in the late 1940s, the fact that most residents, including ejidatarios, of the Oaxacan portion of the Papaloapan were monolingual indigenous language speakers marked them as somehow unified—both along ethnic lines and within the closed spatial units understood as their "community."

As can be observed below in the map of the political units affected by the dam in the 1950s, ejidos (outlined in red) comprised the majority of the inundated terrain.

[69] Fernando Benítez, *Los indios de México*, vol. 3, 79.

Map 2.2 Ejidos Affected by Alemán Dam



Source: Conjunto de los Ejidos Comprendidos dentro del Vaso de la Presa del Temascal Estado de Oaxaca.. Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca, Asuntos Agrarios, Serie XIV: Presas Cerro de Oro (Lopez Portillo) y Los Chimalpas, n.d.

While the map lacks topographical data to indicate the extensions of flooded lands, and precise population counts of affected residents were not taken before the flood, suffice it to say that a majority of those relocated resided in ejidal lands. Those belonging to ejidos, by and large, were organized as campesinos.

Though it was no secret that most of those belonging to or living in ejidos were monolingual speakers of the Mazatec language, petitioners requested lands as campesinos, entitled to parcels as enumerated in the Constitution. Entitlement to ejidal land depended on idioms not of indigeneity but of rural labor and campesino identity. Thus in their increasingly frequent interactions with the state, residents of the region to be inundated were first and foremost campesinos.

To be sure, residents of the Papaloapan invoked their indigeneity in petitions to the federal government to contest fraudulent elections or political injustice. In a petition to the Minister of the Interior to contest the Oaxacan governor's imposition of his own people over those elected by the pueblo, one author mentioned his pueblo's status as comprised of mostly indígenas who "still lack arguments to defend ourselves and only count on brute force" to ensure authorities would respond to their demands.[70] But in the petition indigeneity functioned less as an organizing principal and more as a rhetorical device that drew on familiar tropes to pique the reader's sympathy. As we will see in subsequent chapters, indigenous politics in the region would change markedly once the dam project was set in motion.

[70] Member of Comité de Propaganda Política Pro-Florencio Clara of Ixcatlán to Secretario de Gobernación, January 23, 1946, AGN Galería 5 2/311M (17) 113 Caja 35B. Ixcatlan, Oaxaca 1948, Elecciones municipales, Expediente 56.

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Miguel Alemán proposed building the landmark hydroelectric dam complex in the Papaloapan during his presidential campaign in 1946. In the press, the Papaloapan River Basin was a blank canvas on which Alemán's administration could render a development scheme to incorporate the region and its inhabitants into an increasingly industrialized, sanitized, electrified—in other words, modern—Mexico.[71] As this chapter has shown, the region was not quite the disconnected backwater planners made it out to be. The development of plantation economies and tropical commodity production in the region transcended Mexico's Revolution of 1910. Local engagement with the state, particularly by organized laborers and campesinos, stretched and primed the Papaloapan Project canvas in ways that shaped plans—and even more so, their execution—for dam building, flood management, relocation, and social development programs in the years to come.

If access and formal title to land were salient issues for residents of the Papaloapan, their relevance was brought into sharp relief upon the dam's construction. Parceling and individual distribution were not complete before groundbreaking began, and unresolved petitions stagnating in the Agrarian Department queue would stifle relocation efforts and spawn political dissent. But campesino politics did not entirely encompass indigenous politics. While rural men organized predominantly as campesinos and principally engaged with the state as such, the historical record betrays a volatile multicultural environment in the Papaloapan—one in which campesino organizing alone did not sufficiently resolve the oppression and inequality of indigenous citizens.

[71] See, for example: "Las Obras del Papaloapan Serán la Consolidación de la Economía," *Novedades,* February 20, 1951; "Todo el País Recibirá los Beneficios de las gigantescas obras en el Papaloapan," *El Nacional*, February 21, 1951; "Esquema General del Gigantesco Proyecto del Papaloapan," *El Nacional*, March 15, 1947; "Factores de Progreso," *El Nacional*, February 8, 1954.

Chapter Three

Plotting and Planning in the Papaloapan, 1947-1953

As troops of engineers and agronomists marched through the humid tropics of the Papaloapan River Basin in June of 1947 to geophysically map the area that would be affected by the dam, a cadre of social scientists, with a parallel yet distinct mission, followed closely behind. The latter group's charge was to carry out ethnographic reconnaissance activities, complementing cadastral surveys with explorations of local social custom, language use, and demographic data. Their work, carried out under the auspices of the newly created Papaloapan Commission's *Oficina de Planeación Social*[1] (Social Planning Office), was intended to serve as the basis of a relocation and acculturation program.[2]

The Papaloapan Commission, created by presidential decree in 1947 as a dependent body under the Ministry of Hydraulic Resources (Secretaría de Recursos Hidráulicos, SRH) would use the sciences of agronomy, economy, geography and ecology in order to carry out a scheme to capitalize on the natural resources of the region and incorporate it into the national economy. Modeled after the United States' Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), the project focused on the river basin as a site of regional modernization that would propel economic development at the

[1] The name of this body appears inconsistently: in some documents it is also "Oficina de Estudios Sociológicos," or "La Oficina de Estudios Socio-económicos." For the purposes of this chapter, I use the name I found most often in the documentation.

[2] Acculturation in the 1930s signified changes that occurred as a result of culture contact—not assimilation (in fact, some social scientists of the early twentieth century argued that acculturation could be defined in contradistinction to assimilation)—to both cultures engaged in such interaction. See Melville Herskovits, *Acculturation, the Study of Culture Contact* (Gloucester, MA: P. Smith, 1958 (1938) and Robert Redfield, Ralph Linton, and Melville Herskovits, "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation*" American Anthropologist* 38, No. 1 (1936): 149-152. For Herskovits's call to further investigate the psychological consequences of acculturation and his assertion of the theoretical common ground of acculturation, diffusionism, and ethnology, see Melville Herskovits, "Introduction" in *Acculturation in the Americas: Proceedings and Selected Papers of the International Congress of Americanists,* ed. Sol Tax (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952). In the context of the Papaloapan Project, acculturation appears to be less of a two-way street, though in the chapters that follow I suggest that culture change was not forcibly nor coercively imposed by anthropologists serving as an arm of the Mexican state.

national level. Development in this regard was not limited to purely economic concerns: the Papaloapan Project, like the TVA, was conceived as an exercise in *integrated* development, one that would raise the standard of living in the region while also fomenting growth in domestic industries such as electrical energy and agriculture. Such an endeavor was perhaps typical of similar mid-century regional development projects, but the involvement of the anthropologists in the Papaloapan Project was a novel aspect of the Commission's integrated development paradigm. These social scientists would wed the science of civilizing the tropics with the science of man, and their research intended to inform a culturally-sensitive program of relocation and social development.

What did this planning proess entail, and why did it matter? In this Chapter I analyze the relocation planning phase of the Papaloapan Project—specifically, the efforts of some of Mexico's most pedigreed anthropologists, who carried out ethnographic reconnaissance work to both take stock of the social practices of the Papaloapan Basin, and record the trappings of cultures that by their account promised to thoroughly transform in the wake of a modern development project. These social surveys would then provide the basis for an informed project of applied anthropology, in which learned anthropologists would facilitate a displacement and relocation process that pretended to be the least harmful —in psychological and social terms— to the target population. While ostensibly they were commissioned to work in the Papaloapan because of their knowledge of indigenous Mexicans, the reality they found on the ground was, as the previous chapter has shown, much more complicated than they anticipated.

These early years of the anthropologists' work in the Papaloapan were formative in two regards. First, their knowledge of indigenous culture and social practice and the neat typologies articulated in anthropological literature did not map easily onto the complex social reality they

found in the basin. For this reason, from the first months of study in the region they had to reconcile that the elusive nature of indigenous culture and society in the Papaloapan perhaps did not justify the reasons for which they were there in the first place. Second, despite the dissonance between knowledge and practice, the more seasoned anthroplogists in the Papaloapan attempted to use the opportunity of this state-funded applied project to cement a new subfield of anthropology— "social"[3] anthropology—as a legitimate academic discipline and profession, deserving of funding and institutional support from the federal government, and crucial to resolving, or at the very least ameliorating, some of Mexico's deepest social problems in the countryside. Anthropologists from a previous generation had certainly established anthropological institutions and a national school of anthropology before the 1940s, perhaps embodied most markedly in the entrepreneurial figure of Manuel Gamio.[4] I suggest, however, that the stature of what some of this newer generation termed *social* anthropology as not only a legitimate discipline in the academy but also a formidable applied science essential to Mexico's modern development efforts, did not come about until social scientists began their work in the Papaloapan.

The process of ethnographic data collecting and the initial interactions among anthropologists, other civil servants and 'experts' in the region, and the population to be displaced shaped the growth of social anthropology and the concomitant rise of anthropology—

[3] It is worthwhile to note, however that the "social anthropology" of Mexico's new generation of anthropologists in the mid-twentieth century was not necessarily the practice outlined in earlier decades by members of the British School of social anthropology. In the classroom, Mexican social scientists' teaching of social anthropology may have been tethered to the theories and methods of Bronislaw Malinowski or Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, but in the "field," and particularly in the Papaloapan, it is more likely that "social anthropology" was more a label than a practice, used liberally due to its perceived political purchase in an applied setting.

[4] Manuel Gamio is the most lauded of Mexico's anthropologist pioneers, and his status has merited a vast literature that treats his role in solidifying Mexico's anthropology institutions through the transition from Porfirian times to the Revolution of 1910-1917, and in particular during the regime of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1940). The relevance of his involvement in Mexican anthropology for the purposes of this chapter is further elaborated below.

and anthropologists—as a critical force in Mexican state institutions. The anthropologists' gradual transition from scholars to public servants would set in motion an institutional precedent in the Papaloapan and state indigenous programs. Practical problems that anthropologists encountered in the Papaloapan fell outside the bounds of formal theoretical and methodological questions, which posed new challenges for a theory-practice dialectic. These transitions would also signify a break from the typical paradigms of postrevolutionary anthropology in Mexico. And this new phase in anthropological thinking and practice would solidify a foundation upon which future indigenous improvement programs in the Papaloapan would build.

Over the course of a few years, the principal efforts of the Social Planning Office would shift, with the main activities falling under the purview of the *Oficina de Reacomodo de Población* (Population Relocation Office). There, the task of ethnographic reconnaissance would become secondary to efforts in planning the relocation process itself. The experience in both data collection and the planning and realization of relocation was instrumental to the legitimation of social anthropology in Mexico as a useful institution for postrevolutionary development programs. Optimism about both the ability of planned development to change rural indigenous society for the better, and the potential of applied anthropology in action, characterizes the collective sentiment of the Oficinas de Planeación/Reacomodo in these years.

The social question in the Papaloapan was a tough one to address, and one that most agronomists and engineering experts were not prepared to deal with. What to do with the local population that the dam would displace? Who were these people, and how would they be persuaded to leave their lands peacefully? How could the relocation process run as smoothly as possible, without resistance from the local population? Though directors of the Secretaría de Recursos Hidráulicos (Hydraulic Resources Ministry, SRH) were cognizant of their lack of

expertise in dealing with such issues, the initial push to include social scientists in this development scheme came from without. Aware that the dam would be erected in a zone with a concentrated monolingual indigenous population, labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano suggested to SRH minister Adolfo Orive Alva that Alfonso Villa Rojas, a budding anthropologist whose connection to the Chicago School of Anthropology fortified his promise as a future doyen in the Mexican social sciences, direct a social research department for the Papaloapan Commission.[5] The department of social research was to acquire knowledge about the local population, and prescribe initiatives for the relocation plan. Lombardo's suggestion would engender an institutional transformation: the early involvement of anthropologists in the Papaloapan set the groundwork for the creation of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (National Indigenist Institute - INI), and provided the first experience from which the INI would draw to become the key state institution to integrate the indigenous population nationally.[6]

Anthropologists, however, were not the first outsiders to visit the region with the intention to transform social life. Cultural missionaries under the auspices of the Secretaría de Educación Pública (Public Education Ministry - SEP) had made inroads to some of the *cabeceras municipales* (municipal head towns) in the 1930s, where they established a handful of elementary schools and initiated activities to educate children and adults alike in the ways of "modern" Mexican life. These missions may have made an impact on communities in their immediate vicinities, but they were hardly successful or far-reaching, particularly in some of the

[5] Cristiana Commetto, "Il progetto della valle del Papaloapan (Messico). Il ruolo dell' antropologia in un programa di sviluppo" (Tesi di laurea, Universia' Degli Studi di Roma, Facolta' di Lettere Istituto di Etnologia, 1984) Interview with Alfonso Villa Rojas, 22 September 1983, A5.

[6] Valeria Elizabeth Estrada Tena, "Gestión de cuencas fluviales en México. Un acercamiento a la historia de la Comisión del Papaloapan, 1947-1985" (Tesis de Licenciatura, Mexico: Universidad Autónoma Nacional de México, Facultad de Filosofía y Letras, Colegio de Historia, 2003), 108.

more isolated indigenous zones. By the 1940s ideas about the rural population in Mexico had shifted as well. The cultural missions, under the leadership of SEP founder and director José Vasconcelos (1921-24), had been uniformly designed to treat all rural realities and peoples equally, but after a failed experiment in the indigenous community of Carapan, Michoacán in 1932-33, pedagogue Moisés Sáenz successfully advocated for a more pluricultural approach to treating rural problems— one that acknowledged the differences inherent in indigenous versus non-indigenous communities.[7]

Sáenz worked with the administration of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-40) to create the Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas (Autonomous Indigenous Affairs Department—

[7] Sáenz, a leader in Mexico's efforts to forge the Inter-American Indianist Institute (which came to fruition in 1940 at the Inter-American Conference on Indian Life held in Pátzcuaro, Michoacán), had studied under the guidance of U.S. pragmatist John Dewey at Columbia University. Sáenz's "experimental station" in Carapan carried out plans for an "integrated" development scheme centered on literacy and educational programs inspired by the teachings of his North American interlocutor and adviser. The pragmatist penchant for linking theory to action in the quest to uplift the marginalized indigenous population was essential to Saénz's plan, and as Juan Comas astutely points out, the *social anthropology* of the Indian was of prime concern to the Mexican pedagog. To be sure, Sáenz was not the first Mexican intellectual to promote the use of social science to remedy the problems plaguing his country's Indian population, but his gesture toward a particular kind of anthropology foreshadowed the efforts of his colleagues over a decade later. For Sáenz's reflection on his work in Carapan, see Moisés Sáenz, *Carapan: Bosquejo de una experiencia* (Lima: Librería e Imprenta Gil, 1936). On Sáenz and his push for social applied anthropology, see Juan Comas, *La antropología social aplicada en México, trayectoria y antología* (Mexico City: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1964), 38-39. Comas references Sáenz, *Carapan*, 336-37. Porfirian intellectuals were, not coincidentally, the first to invoke the particular skills and ideas of social scientists in improving the Indian population. Dr. Jesús Díaz de León, president of the late Porfirian Sociedad Indianista Mexicana, called for the "*etnólogo*" to study the Indian in order to find the means to remedy him of his "marasmic" state. Jesús Díaz de León, "Alocución del Presidente de la Sociedad Indianista en la solamene Inauguración del primer Congreso Indianista, instalado por el Sr. Gral. Porfirio Díaz, Presidente de la República," *Boletín de la Sociedad Indianista Mexicana.* Num. 1 (Enero 1911), 15. Some notable works that reveal the importance of pre-revolutionary anthropological thought and institution building are: Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, *Mexico at the World's Fairs: Crafting a Modern Nation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996); Mechthild Rutsch, "Ramón Mena y Manuel Gamio. Una mirada oblicua sobre la antropología mexicana en los años veinte del siglo pasado" *Relaciones,* 22 no.88 (otoño 2001): 79-118, 85, and also Rutsch *Entre el campo y el gabinete: nacionales y extranjeros en la profesionalización de la antropología mexicana (1877-1920)* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia; UNAM, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 2007). Manuel Gamio picked up where his *científico* colleagues left off, calling for the conscription of the social scientist to ensure good governance and the forging of a unified, "integral" Mexican nation. These points were elaborated in Gamio's magnum opus, *Forjando Patria (Pro Nacionalismo)* (Mexico City: Porrúa Hermanos, 1916) and in his later project in the Teotihuacán Valley: *Introducción, Síntesis y Conclusiones de la obra La población del Valle de Teotihuacán* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, Dirección de Talleres Gráficos, 1922).

DAAI) in 1936. With the creation of the DAAI social scientists would replace the rural teacher as the primary intermediary and agent of change in indigenous Mexico.[8] Until its dissolution in 1946, the DAAI carried out activities designed to better uplift and integrate indigenous Mexicans into the nation—and not necessarily at the expense of their Indian cultural roots. Regional indigenous congresses sponsored by the DAAI had the most lasting effect of the department's programs, and were successful in creating an empowered indigenous constituency.[9] Overall, the institution appears to have had little impact on the indigenous population at large, and was unable to effectively garner sustained federal financial support. Yet despite the limited success of the DAAI's short-lived experiments, the agency formalized the transition from teacher to social scientist as indigenous interlocutor, one that would remain for the duration of the twentieth century.

In Mexico and the Americas more broadly, anthropology—as both amateur vocation and professional, academic discipline—began as the exclusive study of the continent's aboriginal peoples. As national institutions dedicated to the scientific study of man set their roots in Mexico in the late nineteenth century, a growing ideology of indigenous inclusion began to take hold. During the tenure of President Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911), *indianista* intellectuals discussed their fascination and preoccupation with Mexico's socially and economically marginalized indigenous population. The Mexican Revolution (1910-1917) propelled a new ethos—*indigenismo*—in which indianista interests and concerns transformed into a national credo of indigenous integration. Indigenismo, an evolving intellectual quest for the Indian's rightful place in the

[8] Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara, *Anthropological Perspectives on Rural Mexico* (London: Routledge & Paul Kegan, 1984) 13-15.
[9] Alexander S. Dawson convincingly makes this point in *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2004), 97.

Mexican nation, was nearly inseparable from Mexican anthropology: as the discipline expanded its institutional and intellectual reach, indigenismo flourished alongside it. Manuel Gamio, as thinker and as institution-builder, best represents the relationship between indigenismo and anthropology from the late 1910s to the early 1940s.[10] As the dominant figure in Mexico's anthropological discourse and institutions, his practice of anthropology focused on historical, ethnological data collecting that intended to inform improvement programs—programs that were never effectively realized—among the indigenous population. Growing in tandem with U.S. anthropological institutions and thought, Mexico's school of anthropology arose from Porfirian institutions dedicated principally to archaeological excavation and occasional liniguistic studies. Under the guidance of Manuel Gamio, the Porfirian preoccupation with historical ethnology continued during the first decades of the twentieth century, buttressed by the institutional contacts and intellectual interests of Gamio's adviser at Columbia University, Franz Boas. Boas's anti-racist cultural relativism informed Gamio's ruminations, though the latter retooled his adviser's conceptual framework to better fit the Mexican national reality, much as his social scientist predecessors had in Porfirian times.[11]

Gamio's school of anthropology, and its focus on recording and explaining indigenous cultural traits, differed quite markedly—both in terms of theory and methodology—from the

[10] On Manuel Gamio and indigenismo, see Emilio Kourí, "Manuel Gamio y el Indigenismo de la Revolución Mexicana" in Carlos Altamirano, ed., *Historia de los intelectuales en América Latina*, vol. 2 (Buenos Aires: Katz Editores, 2010).

[11] On the simultaneous and dialogical nature of social science in Mexico and the United States from the late nineteenth century to the Second World War, see Mauricio Tenorio Trillo, Stereophonic Scientific Modernisms: Social Science between Mexico and the United States, 1880s-1930s," *The Journal of American History* 86, No. 3. (Dec. 1999): 1156-1187. Tenorio-Trillo suggests that the "wizards of progress" who participated in the Mexican exhibitions at the World's Fairs were engaging in the same debates about race and utilizing the same rhetoric as their European and North American counterparts, yet managed to develop distinct theories that placed Mexico in a modern ontology, *Mexico at the World's Fairs,* esp. Chapter 4. Gamian anthropology, then, was principally ethnological in nature, guided by diachronic interrogations linking the past to the present and concerned with vestiges of "folk" culture. This emphasis would hold within the Mexican academy until well until the 1940s.

growing field of social anthropology. Self-identified social anthropologists moved the locus of intellectual enquiry away from the exclusive enumeration of indigenous cultrual traits, focusing instead on social systems and the particularities of their transformation. At the time of the Papaloapan Project's conception, social anthropology was also the branch most concerned with the relationship between the rural village and society at large, and the ways in which traditional, rural social structures interacted with and adopted semblances of modern, urban society.

Social anthropology as a sub-discipline has transformed since its coinage in the early postwar period in Britain, where it emerged out of a colonialist tradition that emphasized the indispensability of field work. British social anthropology to some extent can be understood in contradistinction to the Boasian tradition, for its more scientistic focus on the relationship between cause and effect, though the agglomeration of Boasianists in the first decades of the twentieth century was also focused on empiricism. Beginning in 1919, U.S. institutions began to expand the discipline of anthropology, turning its ties from the museum toward the social sciences. This social scientific alliance would also include the participation of British funcionalists in U.S. institutions. The prevalence of social anthropology at the University of Chicago's Department of Sociology and Anthropology, which sustained the most important institutional connection with Mexican anthropologists in the postrevolutionary period, emerged from the empirical and theoretical synergy of Robert Park's school of sociology and British social anthropologist Alfred Radcliffe-Brown's functionalism at that institution. Both camps were heavily influenced by the work of Émile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, and Ferdinand Tönnies. Radcliffe-Brown's early abandonment of the notion of "culture" for that of "social structure" and "social system," as the historian George Stocking suggests, was evidence of a particularly

Durkheimian understanding of "function" in which anthropology was a "natural science of society."[12]

It was no simple coincidence that Villa Rojas and his cohort would appeal for such a transition in Mexican anthropology. While the sub-discipline of social anthropology had already earned a place of prestige in North Atlantic academic departments, its growth in Mexico would only commence in the late 1940s, with the social science component of the Papaloapan Project as its principal catalyst. Social anthropologists' preoccupation not just with culture, but culture change specifically, set them apart from their non-denominational colleagues, and their embrace of sociological theory and method reflected an interest in social processes and societal transformation.

During the Second World War, anthropologists in the United States and Mexico had begun to refer to "applied (social) anthropology" as a branch of the discipline, distinct from purely intellectual inquiry in academic circles. This interest in *application* occurred in a context in which now stronger nation-states could fund anthropologists to effect change for national improvement, and scientific expertise qualified certain individuals (such as anthropologists) to scientifically investigate the social and cultural makeup of those at the margins of mainstream society.[13] To anthropologists like Villa Rojas, "applied" anthropology could be synonymous with

[12] George Stocking, Jr., "Ideas and Institutions in American Anthropology" in *The Ethnographer's Magic and Other Essays in the History of Anthropology* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), pp 121-131. ("Ideas and Institutions", 141. Quotes in original text).

[13] George Stocking Jr. mentions the rise of applied anthropology and its birth out of a "progressive" trend within anthropological schools of thought in the 1920s and 1930s toward social engineering, at times overlapping with and at times contradicting a "romantic" trend to preserve primitive or less-modern societies in their noble state of harmony. The U.S. government conscripted anthropologists to work in various capactities for the war effort, culminating in the creation of the Society of Appied Anthropology and the subsequent journal with the same name. See Stocking, "Ideas and Institutions," 160-171.

"social" anthropology, and ultimately the distinction between applied and otherwise was the scientistic way in which anthropologists interacted with their target population.[14]

The rise of social anthropology in Mexico was by no means preordained; a select group of intrepids hewed to the government's preference for funding development projects to guarantee their own stake in the mid-century growth of state institutions. In the pages below, I follow the work of Alfonso Villa Rojas and anthropologists in his employ to tell the story of data collection and relocation planning in the Papaloapan River Basin and the attendant transformations in Mexican anthropology. It is to that story that we now turn.

Social Planning under Alfonso Villa Rojas

Born and raised in Mérida, Yucatán state, Alfonso Villa Rojas's first encounter with the social sciences was in 1927. As a rural bilingual teacher to Mayan youth in Chan Kom, just outside of the archaeological complex and town of Chichén Itzá, Villa Rojas met the archaeology director of the Carnegie Institute of Washington (CIW), Sylvanus Morley, who employed the schoolteacher to assist in excavations at the ancient Mayan architectural site and sacred roads. In 1930 Morley introduced Villa Rojas to Robert Redfield, esteemed University of Chicago professor of anthropology, and convinced Redfield to hire Villa Rojas to assist in his CIW-funded project in Chan Kom. Impressed with Villa Rojas's archaeological and ethnographic skills, Redfield and Morley facilitated the Yucatecan's matriculation to the University of

[14] As explained below, Villa Rojas was not the only Mexican anthropologist pushing for a social anthropology turn in Mexico. Julio de la Fuente, another Chicago-trained anthropologist from Mexico, also pushed for this transformation, and welcomed a transition to social anthropology because he believed it would allow for a diversity of Mexican social scientists (not just ethnologists and archaeologists) to engage in intellectual inquiry that was not restricted to Indians. Julio de la Fuente to Sol Tax, September 14, 1945. Tax, Sol. Papers, Box 84, Folder 4, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

Chicago, where he studied anthropology from 1933-35. At Chicago, in addition to working with Redfield and drawing from his sociologically-inspired work in anthropology, Villa Rojas found another mentor in the British social anthropologist Alfred Radcliffe-Brown, whose teachings in structural-functionalism served as an additional theoretical framework for understanding the role of social institutions in society.[15] Upon his return to Mexico, Villa Rojas began to carry out further ethnographic research in the community of Tusik, Quintana Roo, where he served as an "intermediary" between the government and last Mayan rebel groups left over from the Caste War of 1847.[16]

Following his engagement with CIW-funded studies in Yucatán-Quintana Roo, Villa Rojas was asked to collaborate or comment on various programs and trends in the social sciences, during which time he honed his argument in favor of a sociological turn in Mexican anthropology and applied indigenismo. It was at this time that Gamio asked Villa Rojas to lead an applied anthropological project in Chiapas, the Mexican state that would come to be the next focus of Mayan studies. Villa Rojas was skeptical of the newfound vogue in applied anthropology that seemed to permeate anthropological circles in Mexico City, understanding it as a detriment to "strictly scientific investigation." An aversion to trends of seemingly little methodological import in anthropology institutions, however, would not deter Villa Rojas entirely. Though he declined the offer, he advertised his piqued intellectual interest in the

[15] Redfield's area of intellectual inquiry followed closely the sociological thinking of his father-in-law, Robert Park. His work in the 1930s, according to George Stocking, Jr., reflected a trend promulgated by Radcliffe-Brown toward studies of peoples in the present— "social anthropology"— as opposed to more traditional ethnological studies of the past— "ethnology" (Stocking, "Ideas and Institutions in American Anthropology", 140).

[16] Alfonso Villa Rojas, "Fieldwork in the Mayan Region of Mexico." In *Long-term Field Research in Social Anthropology*, edited by Foster, George M., Scudder, Thayer, Colson, Elizabeth, and Kemper, Robert V., (New York; San Francisco; London: Academic Press, 1979) 45–64.

theoretical aspect of an applied social science and instead proposed to help formulate the project.[17]

The potential of using established scientific principles to resolve concrete social problems became both an intellectual and professional passion for the budding anthropologist, who was determined to move beyond what he considered to be facile tropes and themes in Mexican indigenismo and anthropological discourse. Instead, he preferred to underscore the real utility of sociological methods to effect rural change without causing maladjustment or conflict. Because the Indigenous Affairs Department had been recently dissolved, and indigenous affairs was once again consolidated under the Ministry of Education, Villa Rojas was pessimistic that the reigning political class would appreciate the plight of the indigenous population as such. Many, if not most, of these politicos apparently believed that education alone would single-handedly ameliorate Indians' problems. Villa Rojas lamented, "It hasn't ocurred to anyone to think about the multitude of problems and social vices that the ERA OF INDUSTRIALIZATION, the central intention [*propósito*] of the government, will bring with it."[18] Access to education alone would not equip indigenous neophytes with the necessary tools to avoid the anomie and iniquity of industrialized, "modern" life; the indigenes required shepherds and advocates to shape their path to progress.

In June of 1947, the SRH invited Villa Rojas to begin a preliminary "sociological investigation" of the Papaloapan region, months before the Mexican president officially

[17] Alfonso Villa Rojas to Robert Redfield, February 18, 1947. Redfield, Robert. Papers, Box 38, Folder 8, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. [Hereafter, correspondence from this collection referred to as AVR-RR]

[18] AVR-RR February 18, 1947. "A nadie se le ha ocurrido pensar en la multitud de problemas y vicios sociales que traerá consigo la ERA DE INDUSTRIALIZACION que por hoy es el propósito central del Gobierno."

announced the formation of the eponymous commission.[19] The sociological work was to mirror that of the sociologists who labored in the New Deal-era Tennessee Valley Authority in the United States, though Villa Rojas was given the liberties to develop the study as he desired.[20] The timing was perfect given Villa Rojas's financial predicaments— the National School of Anthropology had informed that they could not add him as faculty member, and he lacked permanent employment.[21] The investigation's purpose was to "know, in sociological terms, the social reality" of the area to be affected by the damming of the Papaloapan River, so that his team could plan action that would not provoke tension or adverse reactions among the affected.[22] To this end, the work of the social scientists would not only systematically document the uses, customs, habits, and values of the inhabitants of the region, but would also consider the "basic interests of their *Comunidades* [Communities], the processes of change, the observable social tendencies of their inhabitants, and the possible causes that originate them."[23]

Despite the fact that the SRH courted Villa Rojas to head the sociological component of the preliminary investigations in the Papaloapan, it was not a foregone conclusion that the young anthropologist would be leading the program. Nor was it absolute that anthropologists would be chosen over other "experts" to carry out research among the indigenous populations to be

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[19] AVR-RR June 2, 1947,1; and June 12, 1947, 1.

[20] Though sociological studies of the residents of the Tennessee Valley were a component of the TVA project, there was no troop of social scientists-cum-civil servants in the U.S. development program.

[21] AVR-RR June 2, 1947.

[22] AVR-RR. June 22, 1947. 1. "Uno de los propósitos del estudio de aquí se propone, es el de conocer en términos sociológicos, la realidad social de las zonas adyacentes al río Papaloapan, a fin de tener así una guía que permita orientar la acción planificada en forma tal, que no provoque estados de tensión ni reacciones adversas en el medio en que se trata de actuar".

[23] Alfonso Villa Rojas. "El Papel de la Antropología en las obras del Papaloapan, México" *América Indígena* VIII, no. 4 (1948): 310-12, 303. "De manera especial nos interesa definir la configuración cultural de toda la Cuenca, los intereses básicos de sus Comunidades, los procesos de cambio, las tendencias sociales observables en sus pobladores, así como las posibles causas que las originan. En términos generales, nos proponemos conocer los modos de actuar y los motivos de la acción."

affected by the dam. Dr. Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez, accomplished Mexican sociologist, had pushed for his Instituto de Investigaciones Sociales of the flagship Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico— UNAM) to carry out these early studies, but in the end the SRH approved of Villa Rojas's proposed 4- to 5-year research project and budget ($400,000 MXN). At the same time, it was no coincidence that Villa Rojas termed his study "sociological": convinced that the word had a scientific connotation, he believed it would allow him more purchase among established experts (engineers, agronomists, architects, topographers, etc.) that considered anthropology to be little more than humanistic arts and folk study.[24] The point was to sell the value of *social* anthropology, a subfield virtually unknown in Mexico, as a legitimate, empirical science, subject to the same kind of scientific rigor as the natural sciences, and also relevant for national development. Like other key figures in the pantheon of Americanist anthropology, he took it upon himself to both legitimate his academic discipline and his purpose in the Papaloapan Project.[25]

By September of 1947, Villa Rojas's team had initiated its first ethnographic reconnaissance of the Papaloapan basin, studying communities to be displaced by the building of the dam, as well as other proximate municipalities and their hamlets. Accompanied by five young anthropologists, three of whom had been trained by Redfield's colleague Sol Tax,[26] the

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[24] AVR-RR June 22, 1947.

[25] George Stocking, Jr. suggests that both John Wesley Powell, director of the U.S. Bureau of Ethnology in the late 19th century, and Franz Boas, celebrated father of Americanist anthropology and the school of cultural relativism, were "in the first instance concerned with establishing the autonomy and scientific status of their discipline" ("Ideas and Institutions in American Anthropology," 161).

[26] Tax, a Mayanist/Indianist anthropologist at the University of Chicago pioneered the Action Anthropology movement in the United States during the 1950s. Action Anthropology was a short-lived practice that Tax developed as a research model for his project with the Meskawaki or Fox Indians in Iowa. It combined applied and theoretical anthropology in an alternative model ideally financed by independent grants as opposed to governmental institutions or businesses. See Douglas E. Foley, "The Fox Project: A Reappraisal" *Current Anthropology*, Vol. 40 No. 2 (1999): 171-192.

Section of Social Studies began interviewing Mazatec, Popoluca, Chinantec, Mixtec and Mixe peoples in the region, as well as *mestizo*/*ladino* "*gente de razón*" (people of reason—i.e., not indigenous) in order to take stock of relevant social institutions and cultural practices. While the team carried out its fieldwork, Villa Rojas continued to push for recognition among officials—in the SRH and Papaloapan Commission, and within the Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia (National School of Anthropology and History, ENAH)—for the legitimacy of the Social Planning Office and of social anthropology. Unfortunately for Villa Rojas, his dream team would be short lived.[27] In April of the following year, the better-trained anthropologists that had been conducting the initial ethnographic researches in the Papaloapan departed for work and obligations elsewhere. The newfound lack of assistance from competent personnel rendered Villa Rojas's plans to eventually return to the highlands of Chiapas and continue his work with the Carnegie Institute that much more attractive. The temperate and familiar Mayan world was ever more appealing in comparison to his social planning experiment in the humid tropics of the Papaloapan.[28]

Finding capable young people interested in social scientific work was no easy task; equally trying was establishing rapport with experts who had yet to be convinced of the utility of using social scientific study to facilitate better rural regional planning. Fieldwork was not considered a respectable job, Villa Rojas wrote to his mentor Redfield; work in the *campo* was understood as "cerebral softening" and young educated people preferred to try their luck in the

[27] A number of push and pull factors incited the participation of young anthropology students in the Papaloapan Project, but not all participants were as optimistic or thrilled with the idea as Villa Rojas may have hoped. Calixta Guiteras Holmes, one of the young students of Tax who conducted researches in Miguel Alemán's home town of Sayula, Veracruz, during her stint under Villa Rojas's direction, had no desire to go to the Papaloapan and would have preferred to continue her research in Chiapas. Calixta Guiteras to Sol Tax, July 28, 1947. Sol Tax Papers Box 85, Folder 5

[28] AVR-RR February 20, 1948, 2.

private sector or politics. The fact that the curriculum at the National School of Anthropology was "markedly anachronous and inadequate" only exacerbated the "marasmus and sterility" in contemporary Mexican anthropology: anthropologists failed to make a connection between their vocation and actual social life, yet expected everything to be handed to them on a silver platter. Villa Rojas was intent on forming a group of young anthropologists interested in doing the kind of work he was leading in the Papaloapan, thereby optimizing future social scientists' ability to take advantage of the newfound economic support available for this kind of research.[29]

For the next few years, Villa Rojas and his newfangled team collected data—ostensibly to inform their activities during the relocation process—but their ethnological investigations stopped short of being larger-scale, holistic studies of social systems. Poor land communication and a lack of personnel made a complete reconnaissance effort difficult to carry out in such a short period of time. But initial researches were also informed by what the anthropologists expected to see. In this regard, much of the work would have a comparative perspective, considering the fact that many of the researchers, like Villa Rojas himself, had fieldwork experience or secondary knowledge of indigenous social systems and culture in other regions of Mexico. The findings of a number of these studies would make their way to academic journals, and a few local ethnographies were published as working papers through academic presses.

Yet regardless of the ways in which prior knowledge or expectation shaped anthropologists' observations, the Oficina de Planeación Social faced other impediments to concrete, representative research. Conflicts between Villa Rojas and Papaloapan Commission employees, on the one hand, or other social scientists on the other, at times inhibited the realization of the anthropologist's plans. He complained of "pressures" from the SRH and

[29] AVR-RR April 30, 1948, 2.

Papaloapan Commission officials to carry out the anthropological work in a timelier fashion, which limited both their time spent in communities and their ability to effectively survey and comment on local social systems. And frustrations with supervisors did not stop with engineers and agronomists: INI director Alfonso Caso and Manuel Gamio, now as head of the Chiapas anthropology project, had different conceptions of anthropological work and its value in an applied form. Caso, an eminent archaeologist, was initially uninterested in the social anthropological method, writing off Villa Rojas's preoccupation with social systems in a given local context. Gamio, on the other hand, was concerned only in documenting and studying "folk" culture, and his plans for using anthropologists to carry out programs of social change were limited in concept and scope.[30]

Yet, while Villa Rojas may have struggled to find common ground with some of his intellectual peers regarding the methods and aims of the anthropological project in the Papaloapan, he managed to establish successful working relations with colleagues outside his field. Hydraulic Resources Minister Adolfo Orive Alva accompanied Villa Rojas on numerous trips throughout the upper and lower Papaloapan and expressed his continued interest in the study of the local customs and societies of the peoples of the region. Relations with the directors of the Education Ministry's Department of Indigenous Issues (Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas) appeared promising as well. In May of 1948, the directorship of that agency agreed to collaborate on a research initiative among the indigenous groups of the Papaloapan basin and send trained field workers to assist in Villa Rojas's reconnaissance efforts. In addition, he

[30] Regarding Caso - AVR-RR February 20, 1948; Regarding Gamio – AVR-RR April 3, 1950. Gamio had carried out applied anthropological projects in other areas of Mexico - first int he Teotihuacan Valley and later in the Chiapas project, but Gamio faulted folk culture for the backward state of indigenous rural people in the Teotihuacán study, sure that such degeneracy could be alleviated through education (see Hewitt de Alcantará, *Anthropological Perspectives*, 11-12).

secured rural teachers from the Education Ministry's Cultural Missions to collect cultural data in the region.[31]

Forging relationships across ministerial lines was valuable both for Villa Rojas professionally and the Oficina's efficacy. The junior scholar had earned fame as Redfield's collaborator and within some indigenista circles, but as a young anthropologist with a vision for the discipline that may not have gone over well with the old guard, he was astute to collaborate with colleagues in other departments and make a name for himself in Mexico's growing state agencies. Moreover, professional gain was not his only prerogative: personal correspondence with Redfield, Tax, and Mexican colleagues betray a Villa Rojas who believed—perhaps naively—that thorough scientific investigation of Mazatec society could beget a smooth and if not benevolent, then certainly benign, resettlement program.

Villa Rojas began to tailor his research and planning methods to the realities of the project as well. He considered changing the "community studies" method of data collection to one of "general surveys" to better pinpoint specific contexts and outline pertinent problems in the communities under his purview.[32] Engineers of the SRH, whom the anthropologists believed had little understanding of or sympathy for the mostly indigenous rural population, attended Villa Rojas's lectures on how to best interact with rural people and what kinds of norms should be employed in dealing with them.[33]

But Villa Rojas's paid position under the auspices of the Papaloapan Commission was just as shaky as the less-than-ideal relationships he maintained with some of his peers. Fieldwork

[31] AVR-RR May 20, 1948.
[32] AVR-ST, May 1, 1948.
[33] Fernando Cámara Barbachano to Sol Tax, July 2, 1948. Tax, Sol. Papers, Box 81, Folder 1, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library. [Hereafter correspondence from this collection referred to as FCB-ST]

in the *campo,* possible only during the dry season (roughly November through March), provided a precarious source of income as it was, but in November of 1948 the "Anthropological Project" of the Papaloapan had been suspended for lack of funds. He scrambled to enlist the support of the SEP in the meantime, but remained concerned about the future. The Papaloapan Commission underwent a complete reorganization, and various bureaucratic leaders ("*jefes principales*") were dismissed. Villa Rojas complained to Sol Tax that "*La política*" had an overwhelming influence on decision-making, and he failed miserably at playing the game. Now the disillusioned anthropologist had to resort to teaching courses in English at Mexico City College during the months of December and January in order to pay the bills. The "gran Proyecto" they had been preparing was promising nothing but disappointment.[34]

By the beginning of February, the project appeared to be back on course. Coincidentally, the directors who had opposed Villa Rojas's plans had been dismissed. In their stead was now architect Luis González Aparicio, dear friend of Villa Rojas and "*aficionado* of the social sciences." González reinstated Villa Rojas as head of the Studies Section, which would now serve as an umbrella department to oversee studies in multiple areas of inquiry (anthropology, economics, education, etc.). The enthusiastic anthropologist would busy himself in ordering the now extensive studies of the region and its people, as he prepared for the next phase of planning.[35]

As the countdown to damming continued, Villa Rojas grew increasingly concerned that his team would find it difficult to collect the necessary ethnographic data in advance of the displacement process. This worry stemmed from both a preoccupation that he and his team

[34] AVR-ST, January 26, 1949; March 26, 1949.
[35] AVR-ST, March 17, 1949; March 26, 1949.

would lack crucial information to carry out a smooth displacement operation and transition in the relocation communities, and a fear that the pantheon of scientific knowledge would suffer should the anthropologists fail to record the ethnography of communities he believed were destined to oblivion. He requested that Redfield send any qualified anthropologists and students from the University of Chicago to the zone in order to further assist the team in conducting strictly scientific — not applied anthropological — research in this "most primitive indigenous zone in Mexico" about to be radically changed through planned action of enormous reach. In fact, Villa Rojas was interested in the potential scientific contribution such outside researchers would make, and offered his own disinterested collaboration by contributing maps, as well as any and all kinds of reports or data about the area. Above all, he was convinced of the necessity to conduct "strictly scientific studies, completely disconnected" from the work of the Papaloapan Commission and the Instituto Nacional Indigenista.[36]

Villa Rojas understood the potential reach of the Papaloapan community studies in contemporary anthropological and psychological debates, in particular with regard to ideas about human behavior and personality. At the same time, he was keenly aware of the relevance of this experiment in applied social science and its engagement with other similar projects in the Americas such as the inchoate Cornell-Peru Project in Vicos, Peru, directed by Allan Holmberg of Cornell University, and U.S. anthropologists' work in Japanese internment camps under the War Relocation Authority.[37] And a growing interest in social anthropology among institutional

[36] AVR-RR September 9 and September 21, 1949, 2.

[37] On the Vicos project, see Jason Pribilsky, "Development and the 'Indian Problem' in the Cold War Andes: Indigenismo, Science, and Modernization in the Making of the Cornell-Peru Project at Vicos." *Diplomatic History* 33, no. 3 (June 2009): 405–426. On the Japanese Internment and anthropology, see David H. Price, *Anthropological Intelligence: The Deployment and Neglect of American Anthropology in the Second World War* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), especially chapter 7.

circles—academic, governmental, and philanthropic—was now beginning to provide training possibilities for students. What is more, Villa Rojas finally convinced Alfonso Caso, director of both the Naitonal School of Anthropology and History as well as the INI, of the importance of social anthropology, and the latter in turn secured a guarantee from President Alemán that funding would be earmarked for a special program in social anthropology at the school.[38]

Fieldwork among the Mazatec

Reconnaissance efforts left Villa Rojas and his team with a deeper, but still myopic, sense of the social and cultural dynamics of communities in the Papaloapan region. They noted the high instance of indigenous-language monolingualism (according to Villa Rojas, seventy-four percent of the population),[39] the prevalence of an indigenous–mestizo/ladino binary that translated colloquially into the categories of "Indian" or "countryfolk" (*indios, paisanos*) and "gente de razón." Villa Rojas in particular highlighted the similarities in spatial organization and political-religious hierarchy in the Indian neighborhoods or *barrios* of the municipality of Ojitlán in comparison to the Tzteltales of Chiapas, each with their old "*principales*" who served as judges, priests, *curanderos* (healers) and *adivinos* (soothsayers). Veneration of rivers, lakes, and water springs was typical practice in a number of these indigenous communities, and each *municipio* had its own distinct *traje*, or costume, and dialectical variation to boot.[40]

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[38] AVR-RR June 14, 1949.

[39] Alfonso Villa Rojas to "Arquitecto" April 2, 1951. Fondo Documental de la Comisión del Papaloapan, Archivo Histórico del Agua, Mexico City, Mexico. Caja 370, Expediente 6028, Legajo 1/4. [Hereafter all documents from the Archivo Histórico del Agua's Fondo Documental de la Comisión del Papaloapan referred to as AHA CP, Caja *x,* Exp. *x*, etc.]

[40] AVR-RR April 22, 1948.

Early budgetary constraints in the Papaloapan Commission turned the onus of financing research on the Instituto Nacional Indigenista, a dynamic that would continue until 1954, when the latter took full control of relocation efforts and planning in the relocation zones. By the summer of 1950 the INI had published findings of other members of the team from their community studies research in Popolucan, Mazatec, and Chinantec municipalities upstream from the future location of the reservoir. In addition, a number of investigative reports regarding areas directly affected by the building of the dam were carried out by students at the ENAH taking a course on applied anthropology. Never published, the reports provide superficial synopses of social relations and purported problems in two towns, newly-formed in the wake of the dam-building process, that constituted the twin capitals of the area encompassing the dam—Temazcal and Nuevo Paso Nacional. A number of the students working in the Papaloapan, much like their director Villa Rojas, would later return to the Papaloapan to serve as resident anthropologists in relocation communities, and would eventually become premier social scientists, recognized both domestically and abroad.

Two of the early studies financed by the INI were those of applied anthropology students Sergio Morales and Agustín Romano. Accompanied by a handful of their classmates, they spent ten days in Nuevo Paso Nacional and Temazcal, which together would comprise the hub of the dam-building and organizing efforts. Paso Nacional they characterized as a "ranchería de mestizos," while Temazcal was an indigenous village quickly transforming into an improvised, cosmopolitan capital in the river basin. With over 10,000 people from outside the region, in Temazcal one would find a mixture of "individuals of the most diverse cultural types: mestizos *campesinos*, mechanics, merchants," and a multitude of specialized workers typical of a large

city. On the other hand, there was a "great number of Indians who [had] left their communities to labor as peons or in other non-specialized work for the Papaloapan Commission:

Photo 3.1 Dam Construction



Source: AHA Fondo Documental Comisión del Papaloapan Caja 326 Expediente 5365

Chinantecs, Mixes, Zapotecs, Mazatecs."[41] Numbers of indigenous youth, "who barely [spoke] Spanish" were vacating their *pueblos,* transforming from campesinos to workers and "working bulldozers, drills, and the most modern machinery."[42]

[41] Sergio Morales, "Informe que presenta Sergio Morales al Instituto Nacional Indigenista acerca de un viaje de estudio que hizo a la Cuenca del Papaloapan bajo su patrocinio" 1951. Fondo Alfonso Villa Rojas, Caja 11, Expediente 62. Biblioteca Juan Comas, Instituto de Investiagiones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City. [hereafter referred to as Morales, *Informe,* all references from this Fondo referred to as Fondo Alfonso Villa Rojas], 10-11

After spending a few days in Paso Nacional-Temazcal, Morales commented that the coastal region of the Papaloapan River Basin, in Veracruz, would be the most "favored" by the work of the Papaloapan Commission for two reasons. First, because that was where the majority of irrigated lands would be; and second, because of their "cultural position," the *jarochos* (people of Veracruz) or *costeños* (those from the coast) would suffer fewer shocks provoked by the changes brought about by the Commission, in comparison to their *serrano* (mountain-dwelling) —and mostly indigenous— neighbors. He projected that the changes effected in the region would likely create a floating mass of unemployed workers who would eventually end up in the larger cities, and would result in a series of social problems as well.[43] The assumption that rural to urban migration would necessarily beget social problems had now for decades been a staple in sociological thought, but there was an unspoken concern in the case of the Papaloapan that indigenous migration to the city would bring about an added layer to the problem: the disappearance of indigenous identity.

Both Morales and Romano shadowed Francisco Plancarte, an anthropologist much like Villa Rojas who had started his career as a bilingual schoolteacher in the Tarahumara region of Chuachochic, Chihuahua, and was selected in 1940 by social scientists Morris Swadesh and Luis Chávez Orozco to study anthropology at the University of Chicago.[44] Plancarte was the only full-time anthropologist (and INI-employed personnel) in the entire river basin during this time, and worked tirelessly to organize a literacy campaign with the Ministries of Health and Education,

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[42] Morales, *Informe*, 11; Agustin Romano, "Informe para el Instituto Nacional Indigenista relativo al viaje de estudio realizado por los alumnos de los cursos de antropología aplicada en la zona de la Cuenca del Papaloapan" November, 1951. Fondo Alfonso Villa Rojas, Caja 11, Expediente 63 [hereafter referred to as Romano, *Informe*], 4.
[43] Morales, *Informe*, 7-8.
[44] Correspondence between Robert Redfield and Francisco Plancarte, January 17 & 23, 1940. Redfield, Robert. Papers, Box 26, Folder 4, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

apparently to no avail. He also embarked on a "campaign to convince" the Mazatec population not only that they should move but that to do so was in their best interest. The campaign involved audio and visual propaganda in Spanish and Mazatec, including cinematographic exhibitions in Paso Nacional and the municipality of Soyaltepec, the latter of which stood to lose most of its territory to the reservoir.

Plancarte experienced as little success with the audio-visual propaganda as he had in his efforts to combat illiteracy. To both Morales and Romano, the Mazatec language propaganda left a bit to be desired, for two reasons. The first was linguistic: considering the fact that Plancarte's language materials were from the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL) missionary George Cowan, who had worked extensively in the upper Mazatec municipality of Huautla, the possibility for misinformation was great given that the Huautleños and Soyaltepecanos spoke variants that were practically mutually unintelligible. The second reason had to do with content: a few of Plancarte's films were from the U.S. Embassy. One of the shorts, presumably intending to convey the ideal trappings of modern life, was a documentary homage to Venezuelan-born baseball star Chico Carrasquel. In response to the Carrasquel piece, a young Mazatec man in the audience naively asked if the athlete was in fact Mexican President Miguel Alemán.

If Mazatecs in the audience did not immediately identify with a Venezuelan in the U.S., the other film proved to be even further removed from their reality. Featuring a small rural town in the U.S. in which local citizens worked together to improve their living conditions, the second documentary was evidently intended as an appeal to the ideals of community solidarity. But according to Morales, the contrast between the two situations—of the small Mazatec community

and the small North American town—was so marked that it bordered on the absurd.[45] Both films, in Romano's words, did nothing more than cause "hilarity among [the Mazatecs]."[46] And not all the visual materials came in the form of Gringo propaganda: Plancarte also showed films from the SEP audio-visual department that explained the advantages of modern rural technologies and literacy. Even so, such displays were few and insufficient to underscore the immediacy of the infrastructural andecological transformations that would take place.

These young anthropologists' findings also revealed the degree to which indigenous communities in the Papaloapan had already encountered the reach of the Mexican state, albeit in somewhat marginal form. Each of the three municipalities presumed to be affected by the dam — Soyaltepec, Ixcatlán, and San José Independencia —had schools in the *cabecera*, a product of the SEP's cultural mission program carried out during previous presidential administrations. Schoolteachers were bilingual, and Romano found that in Soyaltepec, many children attended school, though both attrition and truancy were still common. Those who required more assistance were the adults, who were by and large illiterate and likely monolingual.[47] Another ethnography, however, revealed mixed feelings about formal education among Mazatec parents. Some refused to send their children to school, because in the words of one Mazatec, they "[didn't] learn anything," or because the youths' labor was necessary for productive activities such as the planting and harvesting of *milpa*. Education also meant upward mobility to status of a person "de razón," and according to that author, locals viewed cavalier Mazatec *arrazonados* as contemptuous of indigenous ways of life.[48]

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[45] Morales, *Informe*, 19.
[46] Romano, *Informe*, 8.
[47] Romano*, Informe*, 9.
[48] Alfredo Barrera Vázquez, "Soyaltepec, modos de vida y problemas social, de un grupo mazateco" written for the

Though Morales and Romano omitted any mention of local politics, education was but one arena in which Mazatecs in the Papaloapan interacted with the state. Thousands of inhabitants to be displaced by the dam were *ejidatarios*— rural folk organized into government-sponsored collective landholding entities. The petitioning and bureaucratic processes involved in requesting ejidal status meant that many of these indigenous country people were already familiar with Mexican bureaucratic processes and politicking, at least to some degree. The official postrevolutionary political party, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) as of 1946, was also conspicuously present in municipal and state political elections.[49]

To no surprise, Morales's and Romano's conclusions were imbued with both assumption and critique about Mazatec social structure and the potential impacts the relocation would bring. Morales emphasized the insular, balanced nature of the Mazatec communities, who would constitute the largest ethnolinguistic group affected by the dam. They would suffer a "break" in their long-term equilibrium, he warned, unless scientific action could be taken in order to avoid such discomforts. One proposed solution was to isolate the Mazatecs from mestizos in *Paso Nacional* during the relocation process, in order to prevent the former from exploiting their "[indigenous] *vecinos*."[50]

Morales also predicted that demographic growth would follow the introduction of modern healthcare and other advances, but that in the end there would be insufficient natural resources to sustain the Mazatec population.[51] Romano, on the other hand, revealed exceptional concern for the health of the Mazatecs in his report, lamenting that parasititis and waterborne

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Instituto Naiconal Indigenista, 1950. Fondo Alfonso Caso, Caja 10, Expediente 1, 82.

[49] For more on political involvement and diversity of landholding practices, see Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

[50] Morales, *Informe*, 11, 13. *"*Vecino*"* can mean both neighbor and resident in Spanish.

[51] Morales, *Informe*, 14.

disease were rampant, and in the key municipality of Soyaltepec, one "pseudo legal doctor, a native of the place, lacked the most elementary knowledge necessary to perform his duty." Perhaps a result of few incursions by state public health officials, Mazatecs preferred to seek advice for their ailments from so-called *brujos* ("witch doctors") over modern medical practitioners.[52]

According to the opinion of these novice anthropologists, the efforts of those working under the auspices of the Social Planning Office were limited in reach due to a lack of inter-ministry collaboration. The support of the SEP's rural cultural missions was too little to be effective, the ministry of public health would need to reach every community in the region in order to make any of the subsequent efforts in modernization successful, and the number of personnel working directly with the population to be displaced would need to increase in order for the latter to take seriously their impending fate. A "fluvial mission" that had been in effect since 1949 trudged along the river in motorboats turned mediamobiles, to share mobile libraries, films, and radios as part of the campaign to convince communities. But the Papaloapan Commission did little to assist in these efforts, and the most isolated and "primitive" places, according to Romano, had yet to be visited.[53] Plancarte had begun efforts to convince the Mazatecs to move to a new agricultural colony to be created on a parcel called "Los Naranjos," in the state of Veracruz, where they would receive irrigated lands specifically assigned to them. Still, the inhabitants appeared to remain unconvinced that the building of the dam would engender catastrophic changes to their livelihood. The social scientists feared that if the

[52] Romano, *Informe,* 7.
[53] Romano, *Informe,* 13.

persuasion campaign did not pick up steam and become more effective, inhabitants might resist and the relocation process could become violent.

Reconnaissance ethnographer and INI employee Alfredo Barrera Vázquez made his rounds to the municipality of Soyaltepec including Paso Nacional, where he made it a point to highlight "social problems" as opposed to recording purely ethnographic data. Barrera chose to combine his research with a propaganda mission, educating those he surveyed during his house visits. After six weeks, he drafted his report of the region, which included a schematic ordering of the political structure of Soyaltepec, its connection to the mestizo merchant class of Paso Nacional, agricultural practices and land tenure, and the status of education and health in the municipality. Among some of the curiosities appearing in Barrera's report are a homosexual *cacique* (political boss) and his retinue of young female catechists, the *milperos'* exhaustion and destruction of the local forest for their corn crop, the lack of prostitution but prevalence of polygyny, and the phenomenon of "*gente arrazonada*" or Indians in the process of becoming "de razón" who spoke more Spanish than their "*paisano*" kin. But above all, Barrera indicated that the Mazatecs were "*progresistas*: they want to improve themselves, they want schools, they will cooperate to resolve their problems such that with the factor of their goodwill the work of transformation will be made enormously easier."[54]

Much of the ethnographic work conducted in the Papaloapan region would have broader implications in both anthropological theory and practice. Fernando Cámara Barbachano, another Yucatecan who began doctoral study in social anthropology under the guidance of Sol Tax at the University of Chicago during the early to mid 1940s, had been recruited by Villa Rojas to work

[54] Alfredo Barrera Vázquez, "Soyaltepec", 122. "Ya se ha dicho que los mazatecos son progresistas: quiren mejorarse, quieren escuelas, cooperarían para resolver sus problemas de modo que contándose con el factor de su buena voluntad la tarea de transformación se facilitará enormemente."

in the Papaloapan while simultaneously employed at the National Museum of the Anthropology and History Institute (Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, INAH) and in the process of writing his doctoral thesis. Cámara was interested in questions similar to those of Villa Rojas: how did social and cultural change happen, and to what extent did greater society have an impact on local change? Enthusiastic about the promise of social anthropology and the need to confirm this branch of social science in Mexico, Cámara's personal correspondence with Sol Tax echoes much of Villa Rojas's frustration with the leadership in Mexico's longstanding anthropology institutions, as well as his concern for the future of Mexican anthropology.[55] Indeed, Cámara's work in the Papaloapan was in part an effort to help solidify the stature of social anthropology in Mexico institutionally. While they labored in the humid tropics, anthropologists such as Villa Rojas and Cámara also outlined ideas for programs to teach what Cámara called "theoretical and practical anthropology" to the next generation of Mexico's social scientists who would use their knowledge to effect change.[56]

By 1951, Cámara's work in the Papaloapan had allowed him to make great professional advances— not least of which was an ethnography he published that documented historical change in a Veracruzan community of the Papaloapan, Chacultianguis. The research and findings in his Chacultianguis manuscript indelibly influenced his work in the Ph.D. thesis. Cámara's first drafts of the thesis configured an early theory of cultural change at odds with Redfield or Melville Herskovits's notion of acculturation. As opposed to the Redfieldian idea that contact with urban settings would uniformly impact rural culture and personality, Cámara found that socio-cultural change occurred in "segmentary form" among certain "socio-cultural classes," as

[55] FCB-ST, April 14, 1948.
[56] FCB-ST, August 27, 1951, 1.

he called them.[57] The obervation of subtle differences within a given community group not only nuanced anthropological study of indigenous Mexico; it also had the potential to inform a more effective relocation plan. and perhaps even solidify the place and prestige of a new Mexican school of anthropology, both nationally and globally.

Not all applied work, of course, was necessarily "social" anthropology, and Villa Rojas made it a point to impress his disciplinary orientation on others whenever possible. Manuel Gamio received a large grant from UNESCO in 1950 to study and effect change in any economically depressed and backward region of Mexico, for which he chose the Otomí population of the Mezquital Valley, Hidalgo state. Again, Gamio selected Villa Rojas to assist him in ethnographic data collection and program design. Though Gamio's preoccupation with folklore over the study of social structure was a source of frustration for Villa Rojas, the latter was optimistic about the rising opportunities for social scientists. He decided to participate in Gamio's project, in the hopes that he would eventually persuade Gamio to change his conceptual framework and methodological allegiances.[58] Reconnaissance missions in the Papaloapan coincided with Villa Rojas's incessant petitions to Alfonso Caso to develop a program in social anthropology at the ENAH that would include coursework on applied theory and methods. From Gamio to Caso, Villa Rojas then jumped to a collaborative project run by the Inter-American Indian Institute (headquartered in Mexico City). With initial training centers in the Mezquital Valley and potentially the Papaloapan basin as well, the objective of this project was to train representatives from all American countries, particularly those with large indigenous

[57] FCB-ST, August 27, 1951, 2-3.
[58] AVR-RR April 3, 1950.

populations, and eventually open training centers throughout the hemisphere.[59] The Papaloapan Project had the potential, it seemed, to be a springboard for the future of social anthropology and indigenous improvement programs not only in Mexico, but across the continent as well.

Turning Research into Action

In May of 1949, bulldozers and Caterpillars broke ground in several corners of the Río Tonto tributary of the Papaloapan River Basin to commence the process of excavation and leveling. Though some ethnographic reconnaissance efforts would continue for a short time thereafter, the geophysical changes taking place would signal a transition in the *raison d'être* of the Social Planning Office, from one of knowledge accumulation and data collection to that of action and practice. Activities during the reconnaissance mission had included persuasion campaigns among the peoples who would be displaced, but now the principal purpose and interest of the anthropologists working for the Planning Office was to organize the target population and facilitate their transition to new lands and community life.

By 1950 the majority of activities of the Social Planning Office were consolidated under that agency's Relocation Office (Oficina de Reacomodo de Población) thereby setting in motion plans for the displacement process. Those anthropologists under the direction of the new office would be the first charged with the *simultaneous* study of the local population and direction of relocation activity. One of these applied ethnographers was Rodolfo Stavenhagen, who as a recent graduate of the University of Chicago, was attuned to the intellectual objectives of Alfonso Villa Rojas given their shared experience with anthropologist progenitors Robert Redfield and Sol Tax. Stavenhagen would go on to hold a preeminent place internationally in the

[59] AVR-RR October 17, 1950.

fields of anthropology, sociology, rural development, and later, indigenous rights movements, and his experience in the Papaloapan would profoundly mark his lifelong work in the social sciences.

But what would the relocation process entail? Land issues would be some of the most primordial, regardless of the particularities of tenancy, but tenure regimes would determine the path through which indemnities were issued and areas for relocation were chosen. Anthropologists, topographers, and agronomists had determineed that there were twenty state-granted, communally-held *ejidos* that would be displaced by the building of the dam, covering an area of 21,000 hecatares, which included 1,254 *ejidatarios* who represented an equal number of families totaling about 6,000 people. The variety of lands held by ejidos, both in size and in quality, would add another layer of complexity to the relocation process. Non-ejidatarios were considered to be *pequeños propietarios* (smallholders), who held between one and fifty hectares each. Property owners with lot sizes closer to fifty hectares were considered *latifundistas*, and used their lands mainly for cattle grazing. The indemnities for propertied owners covered by the Papaloapan Commission was nearly double that for ejidatarios ($7,802,672.62 versus $4,826,994.93), since ejidatarios didn't technically "own" the land on which they lived and labored. *Ganaderos*, or ranchers (also known as *dueños de latifundios* or latifundio owners), were people understood to participate in commercial transactions, and generally preferred to receive cash as compensation for their lands as opposed to new lands in another zone. The average pequeño propietario possessed parcels no larger than 10 hectares, and almost all of these middling farmers were Mazatecs. The consensus was that every man over the age of 16 be given a parcel of 10 hectares of cultivable land, plus a reserve in forest or grazing lands of 5 hectares so that everyone would have 15 hectares regardless of the size of his original parcel, even if he

possessed no lands at all in his original community. If a pequeño propietario possessed more than 15 hectares, he would be given an indemnity for the value of the difference.[60]

Ejidatarios and tenant farmers would have only their goods appraised, which might consist of their home, crops and produce trees, and any other permanent aspects of their living arrangement that would not be moved in the displacement process. Ejidatarios would receive such valuations from the federal Agrarian Department (Departamento Agrario), while personnel from the Papaloapan Commission would appraise the belongings of all other landholders, small-scale landowners included.[61] If villagers disapproved wholesale of the lands to which they were to move, they would be taken to others until, at least in theory, a satisfactory agreement could be made. Ideally, those whose lands would be directly affected by the dam would be convinced that the move was to their benefit, but numerous families in the municipalities of Ixcatlán, San José Independencia, and Soyaltepec preferred to relocate to higher ground in the nearby *monte* of the municipality. The Oficina de Reacomodo made it a point to avoid overpopulation of higher ground, however, believing that it would cause sedimentation and a host of other problems associated with ecological disruption and deforestation.[62]

The diversity of the "indigenous" population in the Papaloapan would require more than a mere retooling of social theory or typology. It demanded a keen awareness of the ways in which social stratification manifested, and the elusive nature of community affinities in the wake of a land reform process that by definition required the recreation of community. Anthropologists

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[60] Villa Rojas, *Los mazatecos y el problema indígena de la Cuenca del Papaloapan*, Memorias Del Instituto Nacional Indigenista; V.7; (México: Ediciones del Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1955), 135.
[61] Alfonso Villa Rojas, "Plan general de evacuación de los pobladores del vaso que ocupará la presa "Presidente Alemán" jefe de la Oficina de Estudios Sociales de la Comisión del Papaloapan", nd AHA CP Caja 370, Exp 6028, Legajo 1/4.
[62] Alfonso Villa Rojas *Los mazatecos*, 135.

were coming to recognize that those who spoke indigenous languages were not necessarily as disconnected or autarchic, but they did not appear to notice that many of the inhabitants of the Papaloapan, despite what their language, dress, or other markers indicated for the anthroplogists, did they necessarily identify as indígena. The Mazatec populations to be displaced would require a varied set of plans and policies that recognized the differences among them, especially the reality that their being indigenous may have been inconsequential.

The process of moving individual landowners or tenant farmers could prove to be much more streamlined than that of moving ejidos. The Deparamento Agrario required ejidatarios and prospectives organized in *comités agrarios* (agrarian committees) to make a collective decision about their relocation destination. In the first few years of the displacement process (1950-1953), the majority of families hailed from the municipality of Soyaltepec and relocated to the communities of Las Margaritas, Corral de Piedra, Nuevo Paso Nacional, Soyaltepec, and Chichicazapa, all located in the same municipality in areas that would remain untouched by the reservoir waters.

Yet ejidatarios, unlike many of their landless peers, had more than just social scientists advocating on their behalf. In July 1949, the Confederación Nacional Campesina, or CNC (National Peasant Federation) had already begun its own campaign. The CNC solicited the Papaloapan Commission's compliance with federal agrarian codes and proper appraisals and indemnities for the region's established ejidos, in addition to scrutinizing the negligence of Papaloapan Commission topographers and engineers who had destroyed crops on ejidal land in the municipality of Soyaltepec.[63] Such early CNC defenses of Papaloapan ejidatarios would

[63] Correspondence between CNC and Vocal Secretario de la Comisión del Papaloapan, June-December, 1949. AHA CP Caja 65, Expediente 831.

prove effective in some circumstances, but sustained CNC advocacy in all matters relating to ejidal usufruct and title transfer would prove to be limited.

Advocacy aside, prior to the displacement process in the Papaloapan, ejidatarios were not necessarily better off than any of their neighbors. The mostly monolingual Mazatec population was forced to alienate its crop, before the harvest, to a handful of merchants or caciques who controlled the means of fluvial and land transportation, and therefore access to markets. According to Stavenhagen, institutions ostensibly dedicated to protecting campesinos, such as the ejido, the Departamento Agrario and the CNC, were quite deficient in protecting *Mazatecs* in the region (despite the fact that many if not most of the *campesinos* in the area were Mazatec). And in many cases, pequeños propietarios in possession of two, three, or four hectares of land were in worse conditions than their ejidatario neighbors. Both the pequeños propietarios and ejidatarios were beholden to the interests of influential powerful non-indigenous landowners and ranchers.[64]

The assumption that indigenous peoples required protection from their non-indigenous neighbors justified the intervention of anthropologists and the INI. It is curious that, though anthropologists' ethnographies made note of social stratification within Mazatec society, reports from the Relcoation Office and INI anthropologists consistently called for indigenous-specific measures and programs for the population affected by the dam. But if the anthropologists advertised their purpose in the Papaloapan Project as one of indigenous protection, was there another reason for their involvement? Their work in the basin was as much to study and plan the relocation as it was to convince the population to leave and facilitate its exodus. And as scientists of "man," their expertise was not limited to the indigenous question but also human behavior. In

[64] Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca del Papaloapan", 30.

short, the anthropologists' task was as much to scientifically "know" the population as it was to persuade the residents to safely relocate and dissuade them from rebellion, despite their ethnic or racial affiliation. Yet at the same time, the reason that they, and not other social scientists, were charged with the population research and relocation management was because they supposedly had particular knowledge of and sensitivity to Mexico's indigenous populations. In effect, anthropologists in the Papaloapan claimed or seemed to know what it meant to be indigenous in the first place, but the easily blurred divisions and distinctions among both individuals and groups within the local population in turn made for foggier parameters of the anthropologists' work.

Resettlement work under the auspices of the Relocation Office would be carried out in two phases. During the first phase, which would take place in 1953, inhabitants occupying lands forty meters or less above the floor of the reservoir would be relocated. The second phase was planned for the year 1954, and those living on lands under the seventy-meter mark, who constituted the majority of inhabitants to be displaced, would be moved during that time. Though the work of the anthropologists was to be carried out in three distinct stages— persuasion, resettlement, and integration— Rodolfo Stavenhagen suggested that from the outset it was necessary to plan both resettlement and integration well in advance of the persuasion campaign in order to ensure the process ran as smoothly as possible.[65] While the primary source base does not provide a clear sense of the extent of the Oficina de Reacomodo's plans, it appears that the persuasion efforts were limited and the resettlement plans shortsighted, but the integration process was outlined with the least amount of foresight.

[65] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca del Papaloapan: aspectos de la antropología social aplicada." *Tlatoani* no. 7 (Octubre-Diciembre 1953): 30-35, 32.

If the persuasion campaigns fell short of convincing the Mazatecs of the necessity to evacuate, Mother Nature had the power to create a climate of desperation for the anthropologists. In November of 1950, the Papaloapan river overflowed, destroying recently finished bridges and roads in an eerie demonstration of the untamable force the water could unleash. Just a few weeks later, President Miguel Alemán visited the seemingly untamable river basin. Villa Rojas accompanied the president during his visit, which left him convinced that Alemán was impressed by advances made on all fronts. He found that the president was "beginning to integrate himself just a bit in social science questions," but the physical and climatic impediments to realizing the Papaloapan Project brought with them an air of uncertainty for the social scientists. It was still difficult to convince politicians that human behavior could be analyzed using scientific method. Villa Rojas himself was beginning to lose faith that anthropologists' abilities were superior to and more attuned than those of their expert colleagues in the Papaloapan. "Many still think that it is more effective to use the intuition of a man with ample administrative and political experience," he wrote to Redfield, "the thing is, on many occasions they are right."[66] If anthropologists felt confident in their ability to understand and interact with the indigenous population, they had yet to prove they were pragmatic enough to dominate the art of public administration, and efficient enough to execute the dislocation of inhabitants on such a massive scale. Little did Villa Rojas know that relocation itself would force his colleagues in the Papaloapan to assume a role more akin to social workers than to armchair social scientists.

Throughout 1951-1952, technical experts continued to survey lands and take stock of extant land tenure regimes, while employees of the Oficina de Reacomodo worked on

[66] AVR-RR 11 December 1950. "Todavía se piensa que es mucho mas efectivo el proceder intuitivo de un hombre con amplia experiencia administrativa y política. Y lo curioso del caso es que, en muchas ocasiones, tienen razón."

propaganda and persuasion campaigns. Francisco Plancarte, for example, was contracted to carry out "preparatory cultural diffusion work" from April to July of 1951, in an attempt to preemptively prime the population to be displaced for the cultural changes they would likely encounter upon their move.[67] In October 1952, plans were set in motion to extend the reach of sanitary campaigns that had begun in July of 1947.[68] Medical-sanitary brigades would be carried out in November, in advance of the first plan to relocate residents.[69] These brigades, consisting of a doctor, nurse, and sanitary official, entered the zone to treat the most severe cases and to vaccinate the population. Though Stavenhagen comments that this should have been done much earlier and on a larger scale, it contributed to a favorable position among the people who would be evacuated and was quite effective for the success of later efforts.[70]

Persuasion work included meetings with locals, which the anthropologists identified as "campesinos", "leaders" and "caciques," in addition to viewings of educational films mentioned above. But all of it was carried out at a snail's pace. This was the case for a number of reasons, according to Stavenhagen: there were numerous groups who demonstrated outright opposition to the Papaloapan Commission and the Oficina de Reacomodo, indigenous traditionalism made many reluctant to change and fearful of the future, and "perhaps not all available resources, nor favorable tactics, were utilized to convince people of the imminent necessity to relocate." But Stavenhagen noted the presence of progressive groups who from the beginning understood the necessity and benefits of such a project. The Oficina de Reacomodo employed these people as a vanguard for their activities and many were contracted by the Papaloapan Commission as

[67] Memo AVR to "Arquitecto" April 2, 1951. AHA CP Caja 370, Exp 6028, Legajo 1/4.
[68] Hesiquio Aguilar, "Gigantesca obra de salubridad en la Cuenca del Papaloapan", *Excelsior*, July 30, 1947.
[69] Memo from Vocal Ejecutivo to AVR, June 30, 1952 - AHA CP Caja 370 Exp 6028 Legajo 1/4.
[70] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca", 33.

interpreters or propagandistic agents. Yet much of the Papaloapan Commission's activity in persuasion was not impervious to regional political machinations. Just after the electoral season, local leaders and caciques prolonged political agitations to better their own lot, causing problems for the Relocation Office.[71]

In early 1952, Villa Rojas received notice of the mobilization plans to be carried out over the next several months.[72] In a rush to ensure the affected's complicity in the relocation process, a second reconnaissance effort was carried out that year to find lands for the communities to be relocated. On these occasions, Mazatecs accompanied Papaloapan Commission personnel to various zones of Oaxaca and Veracruz, expressing their concern for soil quality and suitable neighbors. Some of the Mazatecs' purported discontent with the *jarochos* of Veracruz turned them off entirely from relocating to that state, despite Commission workers' insistence that the Veracruzan lands would be part of the hydraulic system's irrigation tract, and therefore of better quality.[73] The Mazatecs' dissatisfaction with the site of future lands notwithstanding, Papaloapan Commission leaders proceeded as planned. The lands in Veracruz were flat, lush, and according to Stavenhagen, superior to the hilly, irregular lands where the Mazatecs lived. But the Mazatecs preferred rocky, less fertile lands in the immediate vicinity of the reservoir, lands that did not belong to the Papaloapan Commission. The differences in criteria for suitable lands provoked a dispute that greatly inhibited the persuasion campaigns. Villa Rojas opted to advocate in favor of

[71] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca", 31. "…por desgracia, una vez pasadas las elecciones, ciertos dirigentes y caciques se ocuparon en prolongar las agitaciones políticas movidos, quizás, por intereses peronales y de lucro, lo cual ocasionó serios perjuicios en los trabajos de la oficina."
[72] Memo from Vocal Secretario Ing. José Ramos Magaña to Alfonso Villa Rojas, January 15, 1952. AHA CP Caja 370, Expediente 6028, Legajo 1/4.
[73] Villa Rojas, *Los mazatecos*, 137.

the Mazatecs, seeking tracts they wanted within Oaxacan state limits. In December of 1952, the Papaloapan Commission promulgated a law to expropriate said lands.[74]

Villa Rojas's insistence on meeting the demands of the Mazatecs is noteworthy, considering the pressures—budgetary and otherwise—to proceed as the Papaloapan Commission mandates prescribed. The Papalopan Commission ethos, unlike that of the Tennessee Valley Authority, had no pretensions to carry out the project democratically, but Villa Rojas and the anthropologists working in the Oficina de Reacomodo expressed a collective interest in respecting the wellbeing and perspective of the indigenous population. In fact, in his treatise on the indigenous question in the Papaloapan (1955), Villa Rojas conspicuously valorized the knowledge of the locals over that of the other resident 'experts' during this process, arguing that the "ideas of the natives" were of more use than the "advice of the agronomists." Agricultural science was "without a doubt very valuable," but lack of time and lands made it difficult to rely solely on chemical formulas. "Besides," he wrote, "the extreme dearth of agricultural lands that exist in the Republic made us think that, if the zones preferred by the natives had superior production to the national average, there was no reason to do away with them…"[75]

Aware of the arrogance of experts —such as agronomists or engineers transplanted from the city— toward the indigenous population, Villa Rojas emphasized that "authoritarian attitudes," which ignored indigenous perspective and knowledge, could be unfavorable. One engineer advised that the anthropologists not take ejidatarios to visit lands that could potentially

[74] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca", 31-32.

[75] Villa Rojas *Los mazatecos*, 137. "En esta selección nos sirvieron más las ideas de los nativos que los consejos de los agrónomos; la ciencia de éstos es, sin duda, muy valiosa, pero cuando se opera con limitaciones de tiempo y de terrenos, resulta difícil apegarse demasiado a las fórmulas químicas que ellos preparan de modo tan cuidadoso. Además, la extremada escasez de tierras agrícolas que existe en la República nos hizo pensar que, si las zonas preferidas por los nativos tenían una producción superior a la del promedio nacional, no había razón para desecharlas..."

form part of a relocation zone. Because the agronomists had already given their opinion about the soil quality, he insisted that it would be unproductive to not take the experts' advice. In his rebuke to the engineer, Villa Rojas argued that the indigenous peoples should be treated as human beings, not "objects." The anthropologist understood his charge, and the responsibility of all anthropologists in the persuasion campaigns, as one of "respect toward the personality of the natives and an adequate comprehension and tolerance of their uses and customs."[76] Local knowledge based in practice had come to be a guiding principal for the anthropologist and his team.

While the persuasion campaigns continued and measures were taken to comply with the Mazatecs' requests, Villa Rojas grew less satisfied with the results of his efforts to qualify anthropologists' role in the Papaloapan. When Orive Alva's term as secretary of the SRH ended in December of 1952, his replacement, engineer Eduardo Chávez, was less amenable to Villa Rojas's ideas about the value of social science. The anthropologist expressed his frustration with Chávez's lack of interest in the activities of the social scientists in the Papaloapan, an indifference that would lead to budget cuts for ethnographic research and planning activity. This time, Villa Rojas found the task of qualifying anthropology as a legitimate science and simultaneously justifying his team's work in the region exhausting. "Anthropological proselytism" and politicking, unfortunately, were not his strengths.[77]

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[76] Villa Rojas *Los mazatecos*, 141. "La función principal de los antropólogos en esta tarea de convencimiento, fué la de procurar que, en todo momento, se guardara respeto a la personalidad de los nativos y una adecuada comprensión y tolerancia a sus usos y costumbres."

[77] AVR to RR December 8, 1952. "Ahora será cuestión de empezar de nuevo, haciéndo labor de proselitismo antropológico. Es lástima que yo no tenga temperamento para inmiscuirme en el mundo político en un país donde se arregla en términos de política."

In early January of 1953, plans were set to move some 1,300 families (8,000 persons) from lands at the forty-meter mark before July, when the reservoir waters were expected to reach such a height. The original mandate would place 600 of these families in Los Naranjos, Veracruz, one of the first selected relocation lots to benefit from the new Papaloapan River irrigation system. Another 400 would be moved to Joachín, also an irrigated zone in Veracruz, and the last 300 families would be relocated to a portion of the bank just to the south of the Tonto river, in the newly expropriated lands. The move to Naranjos was scheduled for the end of January to the middle of March, Joachín from mid-March to the end of April, and the last group of 300 families would relocate during the month of May.[78] According to the original plan, the communities along the riverbank would be the first to be displaced in order to concentrate the populations inland. Some eighty families were expected to remain in old Soyaltepec, which would soon transform into an island community in the vast reservoir.[79]

Villa Rojas planned to have fourteen brigades move people first from their homes to the point of embarkation, then by river to Temazcal, and then to their new *poblados* (hamlets, communities, or ejidos) by truck. Each brigade was to be comprised of two people with experience "in this kind of work," and two others from the region who would serve as interpreters and guides in community-related issues. Villa Rojas also planned to include four water-based brigades to work specifically in river transit from the embarkation point to Temazcal. Once aboard the final means of land transportation (truck or jeep), a representative of the Papaloapan Commission was to be present at all times.

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[78] Arq. Luis González Aparicio, Vocal Ejecutivo, to Ing. Eduardo Chávez, SRH. January 6, 1953. AHA CP Caja 370, Exp. 6028, Legajo 1/4.
[79] Villa Rojas, "Plan general de evacuación".

The Relocation Office outlined detailed plans to transport each family to their new lands, budget and all. Three medical brigades would also be necessary, Villa Rojas surmised, given that this was "such a backward, sickly, and poor" population. It was assumed that each family would require ten to fifteen mules, each with a burden of eight to ten tons. Villa Rojas even estimated the cost of the move: $97,500 MXN for 1,300 families, including a daily allowance of five pesos and the cost of the beasts of burden. The training of personnel employed to relocate residents was of course a concern as well, for everyone wanted to avoid unnecessary deaths and any national scandals.[80]

Perhaps it would be expected that such plans would not translate well into practice. What transpired upon relocation is the subject of the next chapter of this dissertation, but suffice it to say that one of the principal oversights in the planning phase was the nature of the "communities" to be displaced. Some lived in hamlets, some in ejidos, some in both; some were share croppers, some latifundistas, and some were squatters functioning as smallholders but with no legal title. Some had valuable fruit trees and tropical commodities on their lots; others barely eeked out an existence.

Reflections in Applied Ethnography

At least in theory, agronomists, topographers, or engineers could have carried out the displacement program and molded the untamed tropics of the river basin into a hydraulic machine surrounded by civilized spaces of modernity. That the thousands to be displaced were mostly indigenous, rural, and understood to be in need of protection was what anthropologists used to justifiy their presence in the Papaloapan. Lombardo Toledano's suggestion that Villa

[80] Villa Rojas, "Plan general de evacuación."

Rojas act as chief investigator of *cuenqueño* society was deliberate: he and others of his ilk were already convinced well that highly educated social scientists were likely to be the best suited for this task. It was up to Villa Rojas and his team, however, to maintain their place—in Mexico's novel experiment in tropical modernization, in the country's scientific institutions, and in postwar development institutions.

The applied ethnographers who meticulously recorded information used methods similar to their peers who were not employed as part of a government-sponsored development project. Perhaps Sergio Morales and Agustín Romano, the young anthropology students who completed some of the first studies in the municipality of Soyaltepec, could have been any anthropology students anywhere, compiling data in remote societies at their professors' request. But Fernando Cámara Barbachano, Francisco Plancarte, Alfredo Barrera Vázquez, Rodolfo Stavenhagen and even Villa Rojas himself entered the jungle with the understanding that their ethnographic contributions would necessarily be used for program implementation that they themselves would execute. The experience of working directly with the population, both as ethnographers and as civil servants was mutually reinforcing, and potentially qualified these social scientists as premier experts in the areas of Indian studies and policy.

Yet beyond their stature as experts on the indigenous question—a title anthropologists had held since the late-nineteenth century—Villa Rojas successfullly made a case for social anthropology as a viable and necessary subdiscipline in Mexico's anthropology institions. While it is unclear what the Papaloapan Commission leadership or Hydraulic Resources Ministers thought of the import of Villa Rojas's social anthropology versus other academic disciplines, this era of increasing professionalization and delineation within the social sciences was one in which the approbation of a discipline could mean institutional and financial gains. The value of social

anthropology in the Papaloapan may have been less about theory or method and more about Villa Rojas's ability to sell it as a necessary aspect of a rural development project.

As the more advanced anthropologists paid close attention to the societies under study, they became increasingly cognizant of their questionable assumptions about the nature of indigenous society. Those who collected data during the reconnaissance misions noticed that many Mazatecs were *progresistas*, inviting change and looking forward to the life improvements the Papaloapan Project as a whole would entail. But this was not to say that all Mazatecs, or any indigenous groups for that matter, were like-minded. Over the course of the years 1947-1953, many anthropologists noted that homogeneity was not the norm— both in terms of land tenancy and culture.[81] But all the anthropologists saw certain classes of people as problems: powerful (landed) families and hoarders impeded the impeded the Mazatecs from improving their lot. These interest groups, Fernando Cámara noted, prevented the Mazatecs from utilizing the now numerous (post)revolutionary institutions and agencies established to protect and uplift them. The anthropologists identified themselves as the only agents who could successfully enable the Mazatecs to overcome this situation.[82] The contradictory evidence they culled from their cursory ethnographic work was a semblance of the historical social dynamics and conflicts among peoples in the basin. That is to say, the Mazatecs were more than just peoples in need of anthropologists to shepherd them through displacement or manage their lives upon relocation. The degree to which they belonged to "indigenous comunities" varied, yet such detail did not find its way into the Relocation Office plans.

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[81] Fernando Cámara, "Deplácement e réinstallation de groupes indigène au Mexique: Le Plan du Papaloapan" *Civilisations* 5, No. 2 (1955): 203-229, 209.
[82] Cámara, "Deplácement", 206.

So what *was* the anthropologists' plan? Their published works (1953-1955) reveal utopian visions of community transformation, which would become much more evident once the resettlement regime was in place. Sergio Morales suggested that the mestizos of Paso Nacional be resettled separately from the *indígenas* to help sever the ties that enabled the latter's exploitation, and Rodolfo Stavenhagen had also indicated that anthropologists hoped a well-planned move would eliminate the domination of local political bosses, if not the bosses themselves. Cámara signaled the anthropologists' desire to maintain and not disrupt the original culture of indigenous communities during the move, a concern Villa Rojas had also suggested.[83] But the degree to which these experiences in planning the resettlement process would be meaningful, both for the indigenous population and their anthropologist stewards, would be seen only in the real spatial and social transformation that was about to transpire.

[83] Morales, *Informe*; Stavenhagen, "En la cuenca"; Cámara, "Deplácement", 205; Villa Rojas, *Los mazatecos.*

Chapter Four

From Babel to Eden: Relocation, 1952-1963

In May of 1949, Caterpillars and bulldozers dotted the landscape surrounding the hamlet of Temazcal as men erected the President Alemán Dam and its grout curtain. Upon completion, this masterful work of engineering promised to tame and harness nature's wrath for the development of the nation. But first, tens of thousands of people, a majority of them understood to be monolingual indigenous language speakers, had to move. As planners would soon discover, the difficulties in building a dam notwithstanding, the ultimate challenge in the Papaloapan River Basin would be mapping the place and moving its people.

This was, in many ways, a quintessential state-led, top-down modernization project, but it was distinct from contemporaneous river basin development projects around the globe, and not least in Mexico, for its novel inclusion of social scientists as both facilitators of relocation and managers of social and cultural change among the displaced. As we saw in the previous chapter, several of Mexico's brightest anthropologists, convinced that scientific study could and should inform a program of state-directed displacement, planned and managed the relocation of those who would lose their lands. As the first experiment of its kind, the paired planning of the dam construction and evacuation of the population was based on geophysical and social data collected during the first years of the Papaloapan Project, which began in earnest in 1948. Topographers, engineers, and agronomists analyzed the hydrology and top soil and recorded the relief of the basin, while anthropologists took stock of local society.

As this chapter will show, plans and objectives bore little resemblance to reality. For all experts working in the basin, whether their charge was to transform the landscape or move the people, scientific knowledge was the presumed basis of their endeavor. Yet limitations of such knowledge, and the problems of applying that knowledge in practice, made for a largely ad hoc and messy relocation. Most importantly, the improvised nature of displacement in the Papalaopan, and the divergent ideas and interpretations of these processes as they played out, are indicative of the nature of the Mexican state in the decades after 1940—a state with seemingly sufficient economic and political wherewithal to plan and carry out a project of this scale, but nonetheless a diffuse one in which the centers of power were ill-defined.

Displacement and dispossession are often depicted as seemingly inevitable consequences of improvement projects; oft-cited schemes appear to benefit those who already possess the greatest political and economic capital, leaving the rest—the marginalized, subaltern denizens—poorer in every sense of the word.[1] If a bit of an oversimplification, this characterization certainly holds water for the dislocated residents of the Papaloapan, who for the most part ended up with more impoverished lands and who reaped fewer rewards from the Papaloapan development project than industrialists and ranchers in the region.[2]

Yet beyond the familiar narrative of dispossession, the story of population displacement in the Papaloapan offers a new optic for analyzing the exercise of state power. James C. Scott's

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[1] The works of Eduardo Galeano and Gustavo Esteva, respectively, represent the archetypal characterization of development in this way. Eduardo Galeano, *Open Veins of Latin America: The Pillage of a Continent* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1973) and Gustavo Esteva, "Development" in *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power,* ed. Wolfgang Sachs (London & New York: Zed Books, 1992).

[2] This is the consensus that pervades social scientific literature. See, for example, Juan Ballesteros, Matthew Edel y Michel Nelson, *La colonización en la Cuenca del Papaloapan: una evaluación socioeconómica* (México, Centro de investigaciones Agrarias, 1970); Xicohténcatl Gerardo Luna Ruíz, "De la Cuenca a la selva. Política pública y reubicación en una comunidad indígena: San Felipe Zihualtepec, Oaxaca" (B.A. thesis, Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 2003).

classic treatise on the disastrous consequences of hubristic, state-led, top-down modernization projects, *Seeing Like a State,* has paved the way for trenchant critiques of grandiose schemes and attendant failures. But Scott's thesis, and many of those that have followed in its wake, presume such "high-modernist" states were as powerful and omniscient as their leaders advertised. What do we make of top-down projects carried out by clunky, inchoate states that, unlike Scott argues, did not eschew local knowledge but relied on it for its own existence?[3] Because the Mexican state oversaw the construction of a dam and the relocation of thousands of people, one might read the execution of the dam construction and population resettlement as evidence of the state's relative power and deft use of expertise and knowledge. A fine-grained analysis of the relocation, however, betrays a simultaneous process of displacement and of state-building—one in which rumor trumped knowledge, and in which the natural environment trumped expertise. The power of the state in the Papaloapan, then, was not clearly located in any particular ministry, individual bureaucrat, politician, or local leader. Its center was fickle and at times unpredictable. For this reason, the ways in which the dam-building and displacement were carried out contribute new stories, and with them alternative interpretations, to an established narrative of one-party consolidation and Mexico's economic "miracle" during the mid-twentieth century.

As the agency overseeing the entire river basin development project, the Papaloapan Commission interfaced with the panoply of governmental entities in the area, ranging from the Agrarian Department to local military detachments, from official and extra-official peasant leagues to the *Instituto Nacional Indigenista*, as well as local political leaders and governors. All of these agencies represented different facets of the Mexican state, which, despite the recent rise

[3] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

in groundbreaking scholarship on post-1940 Mexico, is often depicted as a coherent and consummate—if imperfectly authoritarian—governing body.[4] Even where scholarship has revealed the holes in Mexico's political apparatus under the rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (Partido Revolucionario Institucional, PRI), the task remains to examine the impacts of state-led improvement work and expand upon the well-documented instances of rural insurrection that define the limitations of the Mexican State or PRI rule in the decades after 1940.[5]

An examination of displacement reveals the social and political consequences of spatial change, but in this case the lens of displacement sharpens our understanding of how ideas and plans were realized and transformed on the ground as well. Relocation was a political process, in that it was not simply families but parts of and sometimes entire political units with discrete

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[4] Paul Gillingham and Benjamin T. Smith, eds., *Dictablanda: Politics, Work, and Culture in Mexico, 1938-1968* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014); Aaron W. Navarro, *Political Intelligence and the Creation of Modern Mexico, 1938-1954* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2010). Recent scholarship has offered a more critical interpretation of PRI hegemony during the first two decades that followed the ruling party's consolidation in 1946, revealing organized unrest in the countryside as well as the cities, and underscoring the significance of popular support for oppositional presidential candidate Miguel Henríquez Guzmán in 1946 and again in 1952. A number of historians have reconsidered the assumptions of a "Pax Priísta" following the end of Lázaro Cárdenas's presidency (1934-1940), many of them highlighting rural-based revolutionary insurrections, and their work has contributed greatly to my reading of the period. Many of these studies are necessarily regional; see for example Tanalís Padilla, *Rural Resistance in the Land of Zapata: The Jaramillista Movement and the Myth of the Pax Priísta, 1940-1962* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008) and Benjamin T. Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements: The Politics of State Formation in Postrevolutionary Oaxaca* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009). Jaime Pensado's work on student mobilization in Mexico City also upsets assumptions about turning points in the rise in organized opposition and the democratization of the ruling party: *Rebel Mexico: Student Unrest and Authoritarian Political Culture in the Long Sixties* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013).

[5] The PRI was an iteration of the political apparatus that had maintained presidential power since 1929, was restructured and named in 1946 shortly after Miguel Alemán assumed the presidency. Alemán's presidency in particular is signaled as a landmark in the consolidation of Mexico's postrevolutionary ruling party, in part due to electoral reforms, the formalization of political intelligence under both the head of state and the governing cabinet, and Alemán's success in purging the military from the ruling party's highest ranks. On demilitarization (and its myths), see Thomas G. Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization in Postrevolutionary Mexico, 1920-1960* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013). Until the party's monopoly was broken at the federal level in the year 2000, most scholarship on political rule in Mexico presumed a more or less unified, consolidated political party and corollary political system. My reference to "holes" in the post-1940 regimes takes inspiration from Alan Knight's observation: "we are all believers in Swiss cheese these days" (Knight, "The End of the Mexican Revolution? From Cárdenas to Avila Camacho" in *Dictablanda*, 55).

jurisdictional status—hamlets or *ejidos*— that were flooded and relocated. In this way, the damming of the Papaloapan River dislocated both people and centers of political power. Yet as planners and executors of relocation, anthropologists had informed ideas about not only the political but also the social effects displacement might bring about. Their assumption was that the two were related, but they had an incomplete sense of the extent to which political and social change in terms of space and in terms of people mapped onto one another. Their plans were often based on limited, at times ahistorical understandings of the populations affected by the dam; their involvement in the relocation often amounted to social work and reportage, with limited ethnographic detail or theorization. These anthropologists had high hopes that their work would have lasting consequences for applied social science, particularly in the field of public administration, though they likely did not anticipate the ways in which their work contributed to a process of institutionalization and state entrenchment.

The area of the river basin to be flooded, as we saw in previous chapters, was home to people who spoke a variety of languages and linguistic variants. The greatest problem with linguistic mutual unintelligibility stemmed from the inability of Spanish-speaking anthropologists and other experts to communicate directly with the mostly Mazatec-speaking (and minority Chinantec-speaking) inhabitants. Thus problems with communication were both literal and figurative, spatial and linguistic. The population to be displaced was mostly monolingual (Mazatec-speaking), as was the cohort of experts tasked with carrying out the displacement (Spanish-speaking). Bilingual indigenous intermediaries acted as translators from the onset of the Project, leading brigades to convince residents to abandon their lands, brokering negotiations between locals and representatives of government ministries or the Papaloapan Commission, and serving as informants for the anthropologists. But linguistic translation was

only half the battle. Bilingual intermediaries and anthropologists alike had their own objectives and understandings of what relocation would entail. Nor did a common language—Spanish—guarantee effective coordination among representatives of the various state ministries laboring in the river basin.

But knowledge of the people was only one element that influenced the relocation plans and their realization. The exigencies of the natural environment also dictated the processes and patterns of the move. Though the rainy season was a predictable, annual occurrence, the amount of rainfall on a given day or the cumulative effect of the rains over the course of the season was nearly impossible to comprehend. At the time of its construction, the President Alemán Dam was the first of its kind—both in terms of largesse and its location in a mountainous tropical river basin—certainly in Latin America and perhaps even in the world. Though hydraulic engineers conducted extensive studies of the hydrology and geology of the *vaso*—the 185 square-mile area that would be subsumed by the reservoir waters—no experts had fully determined the potential effects of blocking the flow of the Papaloapan River.

For these reasons, the people living and laboring in the river basin, with their difficulties in linguistic and spatial communication, were participating in a series of projects—dam- and infrastructure-building and large-scale relocation—akin to a modern Tower of Babel. The brighter future promised to the residents affected by the dam in the supposedly Edenic relocation communities was intended to persuade them to make a clean break and swift move from their old lands, but the logistics of making such a move proved immensely complicated.

This chapter follows the relocation from the early 1950s into the mid 1960s. Because the population resettlement occurred over the course of a decade, it coincided with social and

economic programs the Coordinating Center staff carried out in the relocation communities, which is discussed at length in Chapter 5. For now, we turn to displacement.

Setting the Stage

In 1949 planners had determined that the reservoir waters would flood portions of hamlets as well as the head towns (*cabeceras municipales*) in three municipalities in the state of Oaxaca: San Miguel Soyaltepec, San Pedro Ixcatlán, and San José Independencia. Precise population counts and area delimitations, however, were never made before completion of the grout curtain or in anticipation of the relocation. The poorly communicated jungle landscape and the relative mobility of many cuenqueños, or residents of the basin—within the region itself, or to Mexican cities and destinations in the United States— had made for spotty census data.[6]

The evacuation was to be carried out in two phases: during the first phase (1952-1954) those living on lands below 40 meters from the reservoir floor would be relocated; and during the second phase, beginning in earnest in 1955, everyone residing under 70 meters would be moved.[7] The municipality of Soyaltepec, with its 41 hamlets and more than 10,000 inhabitants, included within its bounds the dam itself, making it the political unit first affected by the waters,

[6] It is unclear who of the Papaloapan basin may have participated in the waves of migration to the U.S., both under the Bracero Program or by less official means, but seasonal migration was certainly a reality among many rural Mexicans in the period following World War II, and the frequent absence of ejidatarios or smallholders during the relocation and resettlement is a testament to this fact. Though it is virtually impossible to ascertain the community of origin of contracted Braceros, and tracing those who migrated to work in the U.S. under extralegal circumstances is yet more difficult, between 1944 and 1946 an estimated 10,764 Oaxacans and from 1944-45 6,658 Veracruzanos were contracted as Braceros in the United States. In 1953-54, 15,492 Oaxacans and 1,175 Veracruzanos were contracted. See Secretaría del Trabajo y Provisión Social, "Los braceros" and José Lázaro Salinas, "La emigración de braceros: Visión objetiva de un problema mexicano" in *Braceros. Las miradas mexicana y estadounidense. Antología (1945-1964)* ed. Jorge Durand (Mexico: Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas, 2007), 191-192 and 318-319, respectively. I am indebted to María Eugenia Balandrán-Castillo for this information.

[7] This measurement was ostensibly made from the base of the reservoir, but variation in relief throughout the basin made for inconsistent calculation.

and the one to endure the greatest amount of flooding. Residents of the vaso would relocate in small groups, to different "relocation zones" (*zonas de reacomodo*) within the Papaloapan basin. The first zone was within the municipality of Soyaltepec, but between 1953 and 1958 residents would relocate to a total of 5 such zones, some in more remote and nearly incommunicable locations on the fringes of the basin in Oaxaca or the lowlands of Veracruz. And not all who relocated would remain permanently in their new lands. Some, due to climatic emergencies or lack of available lands and infrastructure in the resettlement communities, were temporarily relocated in various regions of the basin. Others refused to call the new lands home, and returned to the vaso on a temporary or even permanent basis, or relocated elsewhere within the region or other corners of Mexico, on their own account. This meant that there were two possibilities for relocation: move up to higher ground within the same hamlet or ejido; or move away, perhaps within the same municipality but more likely to lands in an entirely different area of the vast river basin.

While contractors erected houses and built latrines in the relocation zones, staff working on persuasion campaigns shuttled inhabitants of the vaso to and from the communities they would eventually call home. At least initially, anthropologists hoped these explorers would return to their *poblados*—hamlets, ejidos, and *ranchería* communities of residence—to discuss their impressions with neighbors without the presence of outsiders. Because trips to the relocation communities required a stopover in the newly created cosmopolitan center of Temazcal, many farmers took advantage of the free transport to sell fruit and chickens in the bustling marketplace. Others hoped to catch a glimpse of the *campamento* where Papaloapan Commission field directors and construction workers lived and labored, and many were curious

to witness first-hand the inconceivable erection of the dam walls, not to mention some of the more salacious, notorious vices of urban life.[8]

As a dependency within the Papaloapan Commission, the *Oficina de Planeación Socioeconómica* (later renamed the *Oficina de Reacomodo de Población* or Relocation Office) facilitated the relocation of those residents to be displaced by the dam. From 1949 the Office staff, whose leadership consisted primarily of anthropologists, had collaborated with engineers, architects, topographers, and other personnel of the Commission and various agricultural and public service ministries to plan the evacuation and relocation. As social scientists with a particular sensitivity to and purported knowledge of indigenous society, the Office anthropologists presumed their knowledge could be put to good use in carrying out a culturally-sensitive relocation and reducing the potentially deleterious effects of displacement and resettlement.

In early 1952 interpreters had been added to the brigades (*brigadas de convencimiento*) to convince residents of the need to abandon their lands. This addition was essential for the persuasion campaign, given that not one of the anthropologists was fluent in the languages spoken by the majority of residents (Mazatec or Chinantec), but it was also hoped that the brigade interpreters would prevent local political leaders from sabotaging the relocation. The respective roles of interpreters and advocates in the relocation plans and process was essential, for the local population had no direct representation vis-à-vis the Papaloapan Commission. The various relocation offices—whose names and leadership changed over the course of the

[8] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca", 32. Though Stavenhagen does not mention it, as soon as men arrived en masse to start construction at the campamento, Temazcal could tout its very own brothel. Luis Spota relates this in detail in his seemingly fictional account of Temazcal and the construction of the dam, *Las Grandes Aguas* (1954), and the ethnologist Robert Laughlin corroborated this account as well (personal correspondence, June 5, 2013).

relocation—positioned themselves as the ultimate negotiator throughout this process. Anyone else who attempted to make demands on behalf of a community in a manner antagonistic to these agencies was pejoratively labeled a *cacique* or otherwise characterized as a demagogue or charlatan who intended to mislead the local population. The result was a characterization that often depicted the vocally reticent population as less "indigenous" than the ones who followed orders.

At the outset, residents' distrust of relocation authorities —whether they were "foreign"[9] anthropologists and engineers or local bilingual intermediaries— was commonplace, and tensions rose sharply as the air of uncertainty fanned the embers of dissident political movements. At the same time, the manipulation of the natural landscape, on such a grand scale, was susceptible to the vicissitudes of unforeseeable (and uncontrollable) weather patterns. As a result, residents relocated in waves, in tandem with the ebb and flow of the reservoir's waters as they rose and fell unpredictably during the rainy and dry seasons. But the exodus was subject to the whim and will of the denizens themselves. Conflicting interests and information left some residents of the river basin more reticent than others during relocation, and because Papaloapan Commission officials and anthropologists alike refused to move the population at gunpoint, the *campañas de convencimiento* and the threat of rising waters were the instruments of persuasion.

Moving, Take One

The anthropologist-run Socioeconomic Planning Office of the Papaloapan Commission prepared the populations of Soyaltepec for their relocation in November of 1952. As propitious

[9] Newspaper and archival sources frequently refer to the fact that locals deemed people from outside the Papaloapan region as "extranjeros."

the timing may have been from the perspective of the Office's employees, this first attempt at relocation was in vain. Evacuees were ready to move, but with nowhere to go. On October 29 1952, a Presidential Decree had legally expropriated 52,000 hectares of apparently unused land within the same municipality (Soyaltepec) for the new relocation zone. Made at the request of local residents who preferred to remain within their own municipality in the state of Oaxaca,[10] the acquisition of the new lands in Soyaltepec—some of which were of disputable title and/or were in fact not idle—lasted well into March of 1953.[11] This expropriation was significant, though, for two reasons: it signaled the Papaloapan Commission's willingness to heed indigenous community demands for lands within their municipality, and it was the first instance in which the Office staff, and namely director Alfonso Villa Rojas, made a concerted and successful effort to advocate on behalf of the displaced population.

To be sure, the relocation could not happen without a destination for the evacuees. But it also entailed more than a simple transfer of belongings from one place to another. Life and livelihood in most of the Papaloapan basin was rooted in the land. The relocation staff

[10] The first residents of Soyaltepec to be relocated were offered irrigated lands in Los Naranjos, Veracruz, but refused to relocate there for two reasons: first, in order to maintain their status under a municipio libre; and second, because the soil quality in Veracruz, they insisted, was too poor. See Alfonso Villa Rojas, *Los mazatecos y el problema indígena de la Cuenca del Papaloapan* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1955), 137.

[11] Portions of the expropriated lands in Soyaltepec had been illegally sold, and most of the old titles had been lost; some of the lands were occupied by ejidos, others by campesinos of Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa and Tierra Blanca, Veracruz, and still others by landowners from Mexico City. Alfonso Villa Rojas, Los mazatecos, 137. The legal case of land transfer, restitution, and the parameters of eminent domain during the postwar period of Mexican history merits a monograph in and of itself. Expropriation in this case, to provide lands for the displaced, was only possible if the lands were not in use. Some who had legal title to lands to be expropriated within the municipalities of Soyaltepec and Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa, Oaxaca, lived in other parts of Mexico and may or may not have been using the lands "productively." Many of these individuals filed amparos, or legal stays, newly authorized under a reform to the Agrarian Code in 1947 that protected private property from expropriation for public use. The regional Court of Tehuantepec (Oaxaca) imposed an injunction that was eventually ignored by the federal government. What frustrated many of these landowners most was the fact that they were granted title to said lands after the Papaloapan Commission had begun its work in the vaso (i.e. the CP in coordination with the Depto. Agrario and Secretaría de Bienes Nacionales should have had the foresight to prevent the owners from gaining title). See for example Arq. Luis González Aparicio to Luis Echegarary January 26, 1953, and José Olaria Ll. to Pres. Ruiz Cortines December 9, 1954, Ramo Presidentes Adolfo Ruiz Cortines Caja 968 Expediente 563.3/49, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico.

understood well that these agriculturalists would be reluctant to abandon their original terrain once they had already labored to plant their crops. In order to assure subsistence farmers that they would not starve during or after the evacuation, anthropologists proposed they plant their *milpas* on new lands in the relocation zones. But the Papaloapan Commission lacked both lands on which to relocate residents as well as the funds to properly compensate them for all they would lose to the rising reservoir waters.[12] The seasonal crop cycle made the timing of the relocation essential, and without new lands or indemnities for the old plots, it was completely unfeasible to move the *soyaltepecanos.* By the end of 1952, the first critical window of opportunity to evacuate had brusquely come to a close.[13]

In February of 1953, the Socioeconomic Planning Office was reformed and renamed. The newfangled Oficina de Reacomodo de Población (Population Relocation Office) signified a change in focus from data collection to the relocation of the vaso's residents, with an increase in staff and transportation equipment to improve its reach in the vaso.[14] Still functioning under the auspices of the Papaloapan Commission, Director Alfonso Villa Rojas and Assistant Director Fernando Cámara Barbachano spearheaded the efforts of the Office during this time.[15] But even

[12] Fernando Benítez suggests that the lands were not available for the indigenous evacuees because they had been given to others. The best lands expropriated by the presidential decree, he indicates, had been granted to politicians or generals, sold to Papaloapan Commission employees or inhabitants of other municipalities in the area, and some of the lands had been occupied by ejidatarios. He also makes note of an emerging speculative market: "Tierras abandonadas por siglos habían aumentado su valor a un mil por ciento, y gentes que nunca habían sentido el llamado del campo se les despertaba una irresistible vocación agrícola ante la perspectiva de excelentes tierras de aluvión unidas al centro por caminos asfaltados y dotados de irrigación, electricidad y servicios sanitarios." Benítez, *Los indios de México*, vol 3 libro 1 (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, S.A., 1970) 18.

[13] Alfonso Villa Rojas, Los mazatecos, 144; Fernando Cámara Barbachano, "Le Plan du Papaloapan," 210.

[14] This increase included three health teams, two anthropology students (Alberto Jiménez and Rodolfo Stavenhagen), five "relocation experts," five interpreter-guides, and a larger number of administrative and directing staff.

[15] For more on Villa and Cámara, see chapter 3 of this dissertation.

with its robust name and plan it still lacked “the essential” as Cámara would later write, "in other words, the consent of the population.”[16]

The consent of the general population appeared to be intimately linked to local power relations. To the Office staff, local leaders, political bosses, or merchants were the gatekeepers of the population's collective consent to relocate. The first place to start with, then, was the more urban, mainly *mestizo* hamlet of Paso Nacional, home to the largest concentration of merchants in the vaso. The relocation of Paso Nacional, it was believed, would upset the stronghold of these supposedly exploitative mestizos and create a “feeling of insecurity and anxiety” that would compel the region’s inhabitants to move to their newly assigned communities and thus sever the merchants’ exploitative relationship with poor indigenous farmers. This erasure of the regional economic hub to which most Mazatec farmers were beholden was expected to cause reverberations throughout the river basin, thereby upsetting merchant hierarchies in the entire region.[17] Over the course of just seven days during the month of March 1953, twenty-one families from Paso Nacional transferred to a subdivision of the new head town of Temazcal. Once this center of economic activity was relocated and reconfigured anew (as Nuevo Paso Nacional), it became a locus of activity of a different kind, with technocrats and professionals replacing merchants, and anthropologists using the new community as their base.

In April of 1953, nearly half a year after the publication of the 1952 expropriation decree, 11,000 hectares of the lands chosen for the relocation zones in Soyaltepec were made available for evacuees. The Commission began to build roads and erect the 800 houses outlined in the relocation plan, and the evacuation of those who stood to lose their lands by mid-summer could

[16] Fernando Cámara Barbachano, “Le Plan du Papaloapan”, 214. “Si nous avons le matériel et le personnel nécessaires, il nous manque toujours l'essentiel, c'est-à-dire le consentement de la population.”
[17] Stavenhagen, “En la Cuenca”, 33.

now begin.[18] Well aware that some of the 3,000 inhabitants to be displaced would resist evacuation, Assistant Director Fernando Cámara optimistically invited the challenge: such a formidable obstacle would prove useful not only for the development of the Office's future relocation efforts, but also for public administration and the science of social relations.[19]

Persuasion campaigns included mobile medical-health brigades, which themselves served as propaganda for the promises of modern medicine to be found in the new relocation communities. Each brigade was comprised of a medical surgeon, a nurse, a sanitary health official, and an assistant (*mozo*), and was stationed in the old community, as well as at the locations along the river where residents boarded and disembarked the fluvial transit system, in order to shepherd residents through the evacuation process. The brigade was to escort inhabitants to the Curative and Preventative Medical Service to ensure that they arrived "healthy" to their new lands. The reach of such brigades, however, was likely quite limited, as only three were designated to work in the entire 185-square mile area of the vaso during the month of March 1953.[20]

In the first wave of evacuation, affected residents were duly notified and relocated well in advance of any floods. Relocation Office staff organized the evacuation several days ahead of time, and made a last visit to the community a day before the moving date to confirm the logistics of the move. Evacuation by water was the most efficient means to move people and their belongings through the vaso: a dearth of roads in the region was a problem to begin with, but tug or steam boats could carry larger quantities of people and their appurtenances, and more

[18] Benitez, *Los indios de México*, 18.
[19] Cámara, "Le Plan du Papaloapan" 215-216.
[20] Dr. Luis Figueroa Ortiz, Director Médico-Sanitario de la Comisión del Papaloapan, "Proyecto de organizatión de las brigadas médicas que intervendrán en la movilización de los actuales pobladores del futuro vaso de la Presa 'Presidente Alemán'" March 3, 1953. AHT Caja 105, Exp 1057.

securely move them during the rainy season when land travel was unsafe, if not impossible. On some occasions employees of the Office reported moving ten, fifteen, or even twenty families in a day, at times in two or three trips. In addition to three large motorboats, an eighteen-ton *chalan* or ferryboat, and several small speedboats, the Office had at its disposal six large trucks (*camionetas de redila*) as well as jeeps and other wheeled means of transport to move people, furniture, and livestock.[21] The planning and logistics of the move during this first wave appear to have been carried relatively smoothly, but that would soon change.

As the relocation efforts spread beyond the hamlet of Paso Nacional, Office staff made calculations—based on a combination of information from the 1950 census and data collected by Papaloapan Commission topographers—about the locations and peoples that would be immediately affected by the first wave of flooding. It was estimated that some 1,300 families would be the first affected; 300 of them indicated they would move on their own account, but the Office would need to relocate 600 as soon as possible. The Office had successfully convinced some 200 families to sow their crops in the relocation zones as they awaited their move, while staff worked to combat speculation on staple goods to ensure sufficient food sources upon relocation. Director Villa Rojas boasted a fifty-percent decrease in the price of maize in the vaso as a result of their efforts, which calmed those residents who feared relocation would also deny them affordable access to food.[22]

Now on the brink of the rainy season, unexpected flooding was highly likely and precarious means of land communication could become impassible in a matter of hours. Villa Rojas was confronted with such a problem at the end of April, when the road to one of the first

[21] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca", 33-34.
[22] Alfonso Villa Rojas, "Estado actual de los trabajos de reacomodo de población" April 12, 1953. AHT Caja 16 Exp 174.

relocation communities of Soyaltepec, Las Margaritas, became inaccessible. Relocation staff struggled to move residents and their livestock as quickly as possible, but if emergency measures were not taken, Villa Rojas warned José Ramos Magaña, Secretary of the Papaloapan Commission, all the beasts now moving along that road would perish. "We are entering," the anthropologist bemoaned to the engineer, "a truly difficult and desperate time." He demanded double traction vehicles from the National Defense in order to move people coming down from the hills. Otherwise, the water-logged roads would make the rest of the relocation impossible.[23]

Relocation staff convey mixed, if expected, interpretations of the first phase of relocation: some families moved willingly while many resisted. Yet slowly but surely, cuenqueños continued to pack their belongings, round up their livestock, and begin the journey to new lands. By the end of July 1953, 438 families (including those from Paso Nacional) had made the move. Mobile persuasion brigades continued to circulate throughout the vaso, armed with propaganda to convince the population that the area would be flooded in short order and that it was in their best interest to relocate, of course, with the support of the Papaloapan Commission. These intense persuasion efforts and public health works carried out in the vaso seemed to have made some progress by the year's end, when Cámara made notice of the Office's success in breaking resistance toward relocation among some communities. Eight groups, totaling 192 families, visited the relocation communities (*pueblos de reacomodo*) for the first time, and four of those groups confirmed that they would relocate. But others, such as authorities of the hamlets of

[23] Radiogram correspondence between José Ramos Magaña and Alfonso Villa Rojas, April 30, 1953 and May 2, 1953. AHA CP Caja 370, Exp 6028, Legajo 1/4.

Corriente Coyol and Agua Escondida, both in the municipality of Soyaltepec, formally declared their refusal to move.[24]

Photograph 4.2 Residents of La Patria Boarding Boats for Relocation



Source: AHA Fondo Documental Comisión del Papaloapan Caja 326 Expediente 5365 Legajo 3

Politics in a Tropical Babel

To be sure, local polities' official declarations of their refusal to move posed formidable challenges to relocation staff. But broader political disputes contributed to an overall sense of uncertainty in the region, and they quickly gained momentum during the second half of 1952. That July, national, state, and local elections had stirred a ruckus in the Papaloapan basin as voters chose their respective representatives. President Alemán's successor, Adolfo Ruiz

[24] Fernando Cámara to Raúl Sandoval, December 9, 1953, AHT Caja 16, Exp 174.

Cortines, secured his win as the PRI's official candidate in the election, but his strongest opponent, revolutionary general and former PRI activist Miguel Henríquez Guzmán, found sympathizers amongst the many cuenqueños angered by the imposition of the President Alemán dam. As in other parts of the Mexican countryside, Henríquez supporters alleged electoral fraud and rose in retaliation against the Ruiz Cortines camp.[25] In the Papaloapan, *henriquistas* sought to organize a rebellion that would prevent the building of the dam and thus the relocation. To exacerbate matters, Oaxacan *alemanista* governor Manuel Mayoral Heredia resigned in July 1952, just two years into his six-year term, in the face of widespread popular protests throughout the state against his rule. Local politicians, from municipal heads to state-level *diputados*, incorporated the Papaloapan Project into their political platforms, promising their constituents that if elected, they would prevent the dam construction— and the relocation— from coming to fruition.[26]

The elections themselves, though, were not the only cause of political turmoil. The unpredictability of the fate of the Papaloapan Commission and any collaborating ministries induced a domino effect that added to the miasma of anxiety in the vaso. Even if the new local leaders, governor, or president were members of the PRI, party continuity meant little in the way of budgetary consistency. New leaders brought with them new cabinets, new ideas, and new priorities, which collectively threatened any chance of maintaining a relatively seamless

[25] Benjamin T. Smith relates local demonstrations of dissatisfaction with postrevolutionary social and economic policy that overlapped with henriquismo in Oaxaca during the election season of 1952 in Smith, *Pistoleros and Popular Movements*.

[26] On henriquismo and the 1952 election, see Elisa Servín, *Ruptura y oposición: El movimiento henriquista, 1945-1954* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 2001); and Servín, "Las elecciones presidenciales de 1952: un intento de cambio democrático." *Estudios de Historia Moderna y Contemporánea de México* 23 (June 2002): 179–205.

transition between and across *sexenios*.[27] When new leaders took office in December of 1952, the relocation process ground to a halt, as the staff of the Socioeconomic Planning Office awaited news of its financial fate.

Financial concerns were not exclusive to the relocation campaigns, and despite attempts to thoroughly plan each aspect of the evacuation, relocation staff could do little to anticipate the effects of bribery and corruption more broadly among the bureaucrats and political leaders in the vaso. In the municipality of Ixcatlán, engineers of the Oaxacan Comisión Agraria Mixta—the Oaxaca state arm of the federal Agrarian Department—assured campesino residents that, for a fee, they would be exempt from relocation. Infuriated, Assistant Director Cámara requested that the Agrarian Department place a permanent representative in the region, hoping that such a presence would curb the financial exploits of dishonest officials.[28] But the actions of these Agraria Mixta employees were yet another symptom of the opaque nature of the relocation. Thousands of engineers, architects and topographers, hailing from other parts of the republic — namely Mexico City— and armed with sophisticated measuring tools and an air of confidence, arrived to the hamlets of the Papaloapan basin, ready to impart their expertise. How would any local resident, eager to find a way to evade forced evacuation, ascertain whether or not the demands and promises of these experts were appropriate, or even legal?

One of the most disconcerting encumbrances to a smooth relocation came from the Papaloapan Commission leadership itself. Financial constraints under the Ruiz Cortines presidency left their mark on the Commission budget, and the first cut in May of 1953 went to

[27] The "Sexenio" in Mexican Spanish refers to the six-year term for elected officials at the presidential and gubernatorial levels. Because the constitution forbids re-election at these levels, the term is used to delimit tenure in popular parlance.
[28] Fernando Cámara to Raúl Sandoval, December 9, 1953, AHT Caja 16, Exp 174.

indemnities for the displaced.[29] The suspension of payments for the inhabitants of the vaso was of great concern for the anthropologists in the Relocation Office: indemnity installments had been delayed and incomplete as it was, and the empty promises of anthropologists made their relationships with the displaced all the more tenuous.

Perhaps the Office staff was eager to upset local power structures in order to facilitate the evacuation of the vaso and indigenous liberation from the throes of mestizo domination, but the disorder that the relocation process engendered brought with it a deep sense of insecurity. Public safety issues proliferated throughout the vaso from August through December 1953, prompting the Papaloapan Commission to deploy both its own police force and military personnel in the region. Federal Hydraulic Police had been commissioned from the outset of the Papaloapan Commission's work in the basin, but their activities increased outside of the Commission encampment in Ciudad Alemán, Veracruz as the evacuation efforts intensified.[30] In August of 1953, after reports of looting and setbacks to relocation reached the offices of the Hydraulic Resources Ministry directorate, the Hydraulic Police were sent en masse to the vaso itself, to "create a vigilance system adequate to give guarantees" to the interests and peoples living within the boundaries of the reservoir.[31]

Meanwhile, the Relocation Office began to serve as the principle arbiter of justice in the region. In August of 1953, the president of the nearby municipality of Tierra Blanca, Veracruz

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[29] Alfonso Villa Rojas to Alfonso Caso, May 9, 1953. Fondo Alfonso Villa Rojas, Caja 10, Expediente 9, Biblioteca Juan Comas, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, UNAM, Mexico.

[30] Like the Comisión Nacional de Irrigación before it, the Secretaría de Recursos Hidráulicos was created in 1947 with its own policing body, the Policía Federal Hidráulica, or Federal Hydraulic Police. This force was tasked not only with caring for and preventing the deterioration/theft of works of art and engineering in and near the nation's fluvial bodies, but also maintaining order within encampments where agents of the SRH were carrying out hydraulic study or construction. Agents could be secret or uniformed, and were granted the authority to collect intelligence in their area of jurisdiction.

[31] Alfonso Villa Rojas to Mayor Enrique Zamorano Gómez, Comandante Particular de la Policía Federal Hidráulica of Temazcal, August 7, 1953. AHA CP Caja 370, Exp 6028, Legajo 1/4.

implored Office Director Villa Rojas to prosecute an assailant who allegedly robbed residents of Agua Escondida and Colonia Cosoltepec, both in the municipality of Soyaltepec, stealing sugar, clothes, and cash.[32] By the month of October, the Papaloapan Commission called upon military authorities to prevent the reoccupation of lands already dispossessed by the Relocation Office, while Villa Rojas requested more thorough inspections in several of the populations to be displaced, where some individuals unauthorized to bear arms may have had rifles in their possession.[33] Petty crime and the bearing of arms was nothing new in the region, but the municipal president of Tierra Blanca wrote to Villa Rojas for good reason. Displacement had shifted both the physical location and local power of regional leaders: political authority was increasingly dislocated, and when it could be found it was often centered in the Relocation Office, among its anthropologist directorate.

The relative authority of the Relocation Office, however, did not mean peace and justice in the basin. The culminating sense of disorder and insecurity provided fertile ground for outright rebellion. And with only 62 employees in the Relocation Office to survey the poorly communicated vaso, such resistance would prove formidable. A man from outside the vaso— Orizaba, Veracruz to be precise— by the name of "Coronel" Baldomero Carrera was one who had been promoting henriquista propaganda in the vaso during October of 1953, effectively "disorient[ing] the natives," according to Villa Rojas, "making them see that they don't have a reason to leave their *poblados*, since General Henríquez will assume the Presidency any time now and will immediately suspend the construction of the dam."[34]

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[32] Municipal President of Tierra Blanca to Alfonso Villa Rojas, August 29, 1953 AHT Caja 83, Exp. 810.
[33] José Ramos Magaña to Alfonso Villa Rojas, October 2, 1953; José Ramos Magaña to Raúl Sandoval, October 10, 1953. AHA CP Caja 370, Exp 6028, Legajo 1/4.
[34] Alfonso Villa Rojas to Raúl Sandoval, "Informe confidencial" October 20, 1953 AHT Caja 123 Exp 1127.

Yet not all armed groups were necessarily rural insurrectionists with a political platform, and not all were henriquistas. Some dispossessed merchants posed a problem for the Oficina de Reacomodo as well, allegedly because they did not want to lose the "privileged situation they [had] enjoyed for some time completely monopolizing agricultural production throughout the region."[35] The merchants had increased their domain over the campesinos with armed force but they had also been quite successful in bribing the *defensas rurales*—rural militias that ranged from state-sponsored peasant keepers-of-the-peace to privately-funded pistoleros—with weapons from the national army. Less formal or regulated than the Hydraulic Police, defensas rurales had been a mainstay of the Mexican countryside since the 1920s, when they first functioned as ad hoc security forces mobilized under the auspices of regional military commanders. Much as Thomas Rath indicates for the whole of Mexico during the 1940s-50s, the discipline of defensas rurales in the Papaloapan was unpredictable,[36] and so was their allegiance.

The defensas rurales of concern to Villa Rojas were organized under a colonel of Boticaria, Veracruz, whose domain included a large sector in the Papaloapan basin. The infamous "cacique" Casto Virgen of Ixcatlán was forced to leave the newly created local metropolis of Nuevo Paso Nacional, Soyaltepec, in September of 1953 after he had attempted to populate the community with "his people" (*gente de su confianza*). The colonel came to the aid of his *amigo* Virgen, and was now a menace in the area. The defensa was demobilized in part—five of the colonel's arms were given to the Federal Hydraulic Police— but only because his

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"tendiente a desorientar a los nativos haciéndoles ver que no tienen porque salirse de sus poblados, ya que, el Gral. Henríquez asumirá la Presidencia de un momento a otro y suspenderá de inmediato la construcción de la Presa."

[35] Alfonso Villa Rojas to Raúl Sandoval, "Informe confidencial October 20, 1953, AHT Caja 123 Exp 1127. "…no quieren perder la situación de privilegio que han disfrutado desde tiempos atrás monopolizando totalmente la producción agrícola de toda la región." Casto Virgen of Soyaltepec, and Crescencio Virgen, Primo Suárez, Primitivo Aguirre, Plácido Pérez and Pedro Palacios, the latter men hailing from Ixcatlán, were some of the more notables.

[36] Thomas Rath documents the fickle nature of the defensas rurales in the 1920s and 30s, in Rath, *Myths of Demilitarization*, Chapter 2.

cohort included more than the legal allowance of eleven armed individuals. Thus, the defensa of Ixcatlán still remained standing, to be fully disarmed, Villa Rojas hoped, by an entity other than the Relocation Office.[37] But by whom? Residents of the vaso trusted few bureaucrats in the basin, and were unlikely to heed such a request given the state of insecurity.

Multiple issues incited vaso residents' reticence and incredulity. There was much talk of a dam and imminent flooding, but for those who had not observed first-hand the dam or the purportedly foreboding waters, the threat of the man-made lake could have been a farce—a contrived story to convince them to cede their lands, some of the most fertile in Mexico. Disbelievers and municipal authorities who feared they had been or would be swindled by Papaloapan Commission personnel inundated the Oaxacan governor's office with complaints. Commission Executive Director Raúl Sandoval's response to the governor's prodding explained local residents' concerns as a misunderstanding. The curtain wall was closed at the beginning of 1953, but the scant rainfall in the months following the closure caused an insignificant rise in the reservoir's water level. The lack of a visible threat likely confirmed skepticism among the unconvinced, who saw no apparent need to evacuate their lands.[38]

The uprooting of various hamlets during 1953 provoked ever more disorder and insecurity, prompting Cámara to implore Sandoval to establish a larger regiment of Hydraulic Police in December of that year.[39] Once evacuated, the former residents of the vaso were subject to criminal acts when they returned to their old lands to harvest their maize and rice crops. Lack

[37] Alfonso Villa Rojas to Raúl Sandoval, "Informe confidencial" October 20, 1953 AHT Caja 123 Exp 1127.
[38] Raúl Sandoval to Oaxacan Governor General Manuel Cabrera Carrasquedo July 10, 1954, AHT Caja 16 Exp 174.
[39] Hydraulic Police had been established in the municipal head town of Soyaltepec with a detachment in the relocation zone of Las Margaritas. This group was charged only with maintaining public security and controlling "actos de delincuencia" such as cattle rustling, milpa robbing, etc., that had begun to extend throughout the zone. "Informe confidencial" Alfonso Villa Rojas to Raúl Sandoval October 20, 1953 AHT Caja 123 Exp 1127.

of accountability concerned Cámara, for he feared it would stimulate greater unrest and more uneven power relations. In the municipalities of the vaso, he wrote, "there exists a situation of anarchy given the disintegration of the communities and their respective authorities. This has reinforced regional *caciquismo*, the same that finds strength in the nuclei that refuse to evacuate. In fact, the municipal authorities that still exist in the vaso find themselves impeded by the lack of adequate means or by the lack of interest, to prevent and duly punish felonious acts that occur there."[40] Community "disintegration" resulting from relocation was a problem anthropologists had feared from the start of their experiment in the Papaloapan. While they had hoped dislocation would dilute the political and economic strength of political bosses in the region, government impotence at the local level—willful or not—had the potential to jeopardize the lives and livelihood of local residents.

Anthropologists' disdain for so-called caciques had much to do with ideas about historic intermediaries between the Spanish colonial, and later national, state and indigenous communities. To these social scientists, caciques, understood as powerful leaders who hoarded any political or economic benefits at the expense of the community they claimed to represent, were the principle obstacle to socioeconomic justice in indigenous Mexico. Yet the removal of regional caciques would not eliminate the need or place of interstitial figures. The term itself was a capacious one, for its negative connotations in indigenista speak more often referred to local power-wielders in opposition to the *caciquista* tendencies of either the leaders and intermediaries allied with the anthropologists or the anthropologists themselves.[41] The anthropologists presumed that the communities of the Papaloapan were unified, and that that unity should be

[40] Fernando Cámara to Raúl Sandoval, December 10, 1953, AHT Caja 16, Exp 174.
[41] This notion of the anthropologists as pseudo-caciques develops more fully in chapter 5.

preserved at all cost considering the potential for disintegration upon relocation, but the reality did not neatly fit the mold of the theories of communal socio-cultural practices that had informed the anthropologists' earlier studies of the local population.

Political Economy of the Land

Moving people and relocating centers of political power posed numerous challenges, but land use and property regimes comprised another essential yet vexing variable in the relocation. In the early 1950s, the residents of the vaso consisted mainly of agriculturalists, ranchers and merchants, though a smaller population of artisans lived in the region as well. While there was great variation in terms of economic means, class status, and access to political capital within all of these sectors, differences in land tenure regimes also marked the heterogeneity of the population dedicated to farming. Agriculturalists living in the vaso were private property owners with lands of all shapes, sizes, and verdancy; some were sharecroppers, renters, or field hands on larger coffee or sugar plantations; and some belonged (or aspired to belong) to *ejidos*—collectively held lands under a unique juridical framework in which the Mexican state granted usufruct rights to *ejidatarios*, but the lands themselves were inalienable and could not be legally sold, rented, or used as collateral. And this complexity in land tenure status had also defied the anthropologists' neat categories of indigenous agriculturalism.

The two property regimes of private ownership and ejidos required distinct treatment in the issuing of appraisals, granting of indemnities, and title reconstitution upon relocation.[42] For

[42] In order to qualify for an indemnity, residents had to prove that they would lose at least 50% of their lands to the reservoir. Unless the various dependencies in charge of relocation could prove that an individual would endure particular hardship with the loss of less than half of his lands, it was unlikely that a resident would receive compensation. Residents received indemnity advancements only after they abandoned their lands, with few

the small private property owner, or *pequeño propietario*, the Papaloapan Commission's Departamento de Tierras y Colonización (Department of Land and Colonization) was in charge of all indemnity- and title-related transactions. For the ejidos, the federal ejido-granting agency, the Departamento Agrario (Agrarian Department), administered such transactions. Even within each of the landholding groups (ejidatarios and pequeños propietarios) there was great diversity in terms of quality and quantity of land and average crop yields. Some pequeños propietarios were closer to middling smallholders with greater access to capital and credit than others. Considering this diversity, coordination among and between these various bodies, with the agency managing the evacuation and relocation processes, was a consistently muddy affair.[43] Hundreds of rural denizens of the vaso complained that crop valuations were inconsistent and pequeños propietarios alleged that their land area had been undercounted.[44]

Dissident movements arose again in 1954, for which indemnity payments were a central issue. Another intransigent, Carlos Balleza, used a regional division among peasants to plot his own revolt. Balleza had worked in Mexican agricultural agencies in the past, serving as a delegate to the official national peasant league— the Confederación Nacional Campesina

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exceptions, unless (again) the relocation authorities pleaded a case on the residents' behalf.

[43] The indemnity schedule for different kinds of landowners shifted over the years. In 1954, pequeños propietarios were to receive indemnities for their lands and appurtenances; highly valued tropical fruit trees such as mango, pineapple, or coffee, as well as staple crops such as maize, beans and rice, would receive an agreed-upon appraisal set by the Papaloapan Commission. If property owners had lands valued at more than $10,000 pesos, they were required to furnish legal title, but those with lands valued at less than that amount had to provide either certificates from local authorities or the testimonies of "dignified persons of credit." (Ing. Raúl Sandoval Landázuri, Acuerdo del C. Vocal Ejecutivo para los C.C. Director de Tierras y Colonización y Jefe del Departamento Legal, August 13, 1954 AHA CP Caja 66, Exp 839). Indemnities that year were granted at $1,800 per hectare (Ing. Ramos Magaña to Ricardo Pozas June 10, 1955 AHA CP Caja 66 Exp 839. In 1955 the Commission determined that campesinos whose valuations were less than $5,000 and whose lands covered an area smaller than 10 hectares, they had the option to become ejidatarios in the relocation zones. Those with lands or valuations over those amounts would be relocated as "colonos." This was proposed for heads of household relocated in the Santa Margarita Yogopi predio of Playa Vicente, Veracruz, and I have yet to determine if such an offer was extended to campesinos in other relocation zones. Disposiciones del C. Vocal Ejecutivo, April 1955 AHA CP Caja 66 Exp 839.

[44] See for example complaints in AHT Caja 16 Exp 174 (1953); Caja 17 Exp 181 (1954-1955); Caja 83 Exp 815 (1958); Caja 100 Exp 997 (1958).

(CNC)— and founder of the Cuerpo Colegiado de la Vieja Guardia Agrarista, a dissenting arm of the CNC in the regional capital of Tuxtepec. Balleza's formal ties to the PRI extended to the Education Ministry's Indigenous Affairs section (Dirección de Asuntos Indígenas of the Secretaría de Educación Pública, or SEP), where he worked under the Oaxacan branch while continuing his activities in the vaso. Such entrenchment in state agencies had empowered Balleza, and figures like him did not need to rely on the indigenista bureaucracy to achieve political or social upward mobility. In June of 1954, the head of the Vieja Guardia Agrarista had implored ejidatarios of the vaso to attend meetings in Tuxtepec, where he would then distribute propaganda that, one anthropologist declared, "systematically obstructed the work of the [Relocation] Brigades."[45]

Balleza's camp was well aware of locals' frustration with low indemnity appraisals. On the 26th of August, relocation staff was to begin the evacuation of some 50 families of Segunda Pochota, Soyaltepec and move them to the new relocation community of Los Capulines. The Vieja Guardia Agrarista intercepted, advising the campesinos not to move because their appraisals were too low, and that very likely they would not receive the indemnity amount to which they were entitled.[46] While the henriquista and Vieja Guardia opposition movements never transformed into full-fledged, large scale rebellions, they undermined the integrity and inertia of the relocation process. Balleza's activism also blurred the distinction between official and unofficial party activism, and made even less clear to locals and bureaucrats alike which residents could be trusted as intermediaries. Consolidation of one-party rule had gone hand in

[45] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos to Ricardo Pozas. June 16, 1954. AHT Caja 105 Exp 1056. "Balleza tiene juntas periódicamente en Tuxtepec, en las cuales distribuye una hoja de labores cuyas indicaciones obstaculizan sistemáticamente el trabajo de las Brigadas."; Raúl Rodríguez Ramos "Informe de la Sub-Dirección del Centro Coordinador Indigenista del Papaloapan, sobre los trabajos de movilización y reacomodo" June 11, 1957.
[46] Ricardo Pozas to Raúl Sandoval August 27, 1954. AHT Caja 16 Exp 174.

glove with the empowerment of organized labor and agrarian movements, but at the local level, such empowerment came at a price. The relative authority of figures like Balleza, who had both aligned with official state institutions and non-affiliated organizations such as the Vieja Guardia Agrarista, upset the tenuous power of the still congealing one-party state in Mexico to impose directives in the river basin.

Whether or not Balleza's propaganda campaigns were entirely to blame, many locals refused to move. Despite heavy rains at the beginning of July of 1954 and subsequent flooding in various communities, a number of residents did not leave the lands and receive their indemnities. These individuals, Sandoval assumed, had been advised by "unscrupulous persons who take advantage of the ignorance of the campesino to achieve their desired ends in political propaganda and agitation." Sandoval's point mirrored a widely-held belief among relocation staff and Commission officials alike: that the humble "campesino," who at times might also be referred to as an ignorant indígena, was incapable of resisting relocation or refusing indemnities on his own. Only those with the economic and political wherewithal, so the story went, were capable of orchestrating such maneuvers.

Yet not all challenges to a seamless relocation amounted to rural insurrection or a clearly articulated ideological platform. Pequeños propietarios with the most economic means posed a problem to timely relocation efforts as well, since they could afford to wait until the last moment and depart without their indemnity payments.[47] Many such smallholders were indigenous agriculturalists, and indemnity refusal was one of few tactics available to locals who complained

[47] Raúl Sandoval to Oaxacan governor General Manuel Cabrera Carrasquedo July 10, 1954. AHT Caja 16 Exp 174. "…asesorados por personas sin escrúpulo que aprovechan la ignorancia del campesino para conseguir sus fines de propaganda política y de agitación."

Commission officials had undervalued their assets, such as tropical fruit trees and commodity crops (coffee, mango, sesame seed, tobacco, rubber, pineapple, banana) as well as homes.

In 1954, relocation management once again changed, but this time the Relocation Office was dissolved, replaced by the Indigenista Coordinating Center of the Papaloapan under the auspices of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI). Under agreement with the Papaloapan Commission, the INI Coordinating Center occupied the former headquarters of the Relocation Office, and was charged with the management of relocation and attendant creation and direction of new communities in the resettlement zone. Center Director Ricardo Pozas Arciniega and Assistant Director Raúl Rodríguez Ramos, both graduates of the National School of Anthropology (Escuela Nacional de Antropología, ENA) were seasoned INI anthropologists with previous experience in Chiapas, but newcomers to the Papaloapan staff. Like Villa Rojas before them, they soon learned that the Mayan world of San Cristóbal, where they experienced their first round of applied indigenista research and work, was nothing like the Papaloapan.[48]

Surges in dissident political activity hit once again in the first months of 1954. Armed henriquistas were rumored to take action against the pueblos of Temazcal and Las Margaritas in February of that year, which incited the INI Coordinating Center directorship, SRH manager of construction, and the commander of the Federal Hydraulic Police detachment to convene and discuss the problem of "seditious movements" in the vaso. At the meeting, a Mazatec informant by the name of Jacobo Reyes told the group that one night some 800 people had gathered in the municipality of Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa. Acatlán was one of five municipalities not included

[48] The Coordinating Center in San Cristóbal was the first of its kind, initiated by the INI in 1951, and defined that institution's applied work among those populations understood to be indigenous for years to come. Though eventually in the late 1960s INI staff would advertise the grand theory behind the Indigenista Coordinating Center model, the initial coordinating centers were in many cases more ad hoc areas of convenience for applied programs in areas understood to be indigenous zones.

in the original displacement plans, but to the Commission's surprise was partially flooded by the dam. Calling them "unruly," Reyes reported: "they wanted to burn Temazcal and dynamite the tunnels of the curtain of the Alemán dam." Though Reyes and the convened bureaucrats were unable to determine whether or not they had arms, Reyes suggested the "*indígenas* were frightened because [the leaders] are going to oblige them to come and burn Temazcal." Another ally of the Coordinating Center also shared rumors that hostile residents from the poblados of Pescadito and Arroyo Tigre were passing through La Capilla, with weapons in tow.[49] Outright protests from residents like Balleza were one kind of impediment to relocation, but both the Papaloapan Commission and Coordinating Center intelligence regarding dissent or anti-relocation activity was based largely on rumor and hearsay from local informants whose own political or personal agendas were at play.

Certainly, the fact that the Papaloapan Commission still lacked adequate lands for the evacuated populations did not help matters. Residents from many of the seventeen hamlets that would be relocated in 1954 reported to the Coordinating Center their dissatisfaction with the lands assigned to them. Though there appeared to be sufficient space to relocate these various ejidos, comités ejecutivos agrarios (petitioning committees awaiting ejidal status), and small landowners, a number of ejidos or private property owners found the options before them inadequate and remained steadfast in their refusal to move.[50]

With skeptical residents and the presence of outright and covert dissidents, evacuation brigades alone were not enough to move inhabitants on a permanent basis. Nearing the end of 1954, some turned their focus to demolition. These newly formed *brigadas de demolición* were

[49] Ricardo Pozas, "Movimientos sediciosos en el vaso. Reportes Recibidos" February 27, 1954. AHT Caja 123 Exp 1127

[50] Rodríguez Ramos, "Informe" April 1954, AHT Caja 105 Exp 1056.

to dismantle houses that belonged to the families who had moved to new homes in the relocation zone. This effort was initiated to complement the vigilance activities of federal police and armed servicemen, stationed in evacuated hamlets to ensure that the population did not return to the vaso during the dry season when the water level receded.[51]

For a number of populations in the vaso, their first experiences with evacuation would not be their last. Some residents were transferred temporarily to lands in "New" (Nuevo) Soyaltepec when their lands flooded, as they awaited the drawing of boundary lines on their new lands and the construction of their new homes. In one case, residents waiting in the purgatory of Nuevo Soyaltepec took it upon themselves to relocate to the hamlet of Loma Colorado, where they then demanded that the Commission build a pueblo for them. Commission Director Sandoval rejected the idea on the grounds that a road to the newfound community would be too costly considering the small number of families that had relocated there.[52] But as the new residents of Loma Colorado show, the lack of coordination and action among Commission officials and the Coordinating Center pushed some of the vaso's denizens to take matters into their own hands. And such activism and community aggregation was exactly what the anthropologists hoped to find in the wake of relocation.

Even if some residents could be convinced, Coordinating Center anthropologists were concerned with maintaining community unity above all. Their social scientific training, and the zeitgeist at the time even outside anthropological circles, presumed that rural peoples, and especially indigenous peoples, maintained a primordial tie with the social community they

[51] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos, "Informe bimensual que rinde a la dirección del CCI del sub-director" October and November 1954 AHT Caja 105 Exp 1056.
[52] Vocal Ejecutivo Ing. Raúl Sandoval to Prof. José Luiz Melgarejo Vivanco, Director de Asuntos Indígenas, D.F. September 14, 1954, regarding Melgarejo's file related to a memo from campesinos of San Antonio Cosolapa, Soyaltepec. AHT Caja 16 Exp 174.

inhabited. Yet aside from the social bonds expected to exist within a given community, there was also the political reality of the community unit. Where, ultimately, did the boundaries of the "community" lie? And did it matter if a given community, such as an ejido, was of very recent creation and comprised of individuals bound to one another for the sole purpose of receiving a land grant from the state? The reasons cuenqueños sought to remain in their lands, or to retain some of the political character of their old poblados, were complex, far beyond a simple defense of the old community.

The supposed "disintegration" of the municipal head of Soyaltepec evinces some of the problems inherent in the relocation staff trying to manage, or maintain, such community integrity. Though anthropologists had hoped to maintain the unity of the *municipio* through the relocation process, toward the end of 1954 Soyaltepec was in a "frank process of disintegration"; its hamlets were "mutilated" as residents resettled in new areas. The municipal authorities asked to be relocated to Temazcal, but the engineer tasked with constructing the municipal buildings had yet to begin. The Agente Municipal of Temazcal and now Coordinating Center employee Filogonio Vásquez Cruz pushed the Center directorship to relocate the municipal powers of Soyaltepec provisionally in Temazcal or anywhere, really, while the municipal palace was under construction, in order to provoke people within the vaso to move. Rodríguez believed that the reluctant residents in the municipality of Soyaltepec would relocate once their authorities had done so. But even if some feeling of "abandonment" were to inspire the unwilling to follow their relocated leaders, not all political organizations or "authorities" of Soyaltepec supported the efforts of the Center. In previous years, an *Acta* had been drawn between the *Junta de Administración Civil* de Soyaltepec and the (now defunct) Oficina de Reacomodo, but there was no commitment on the part of the Junta to facilitate the relocation. In fact, the Coordinating

Center directorship was certain that the Junta had fomented resistance among the campesinos to prevent evacuation.[53]

Varied results came of the evacuation effort, not only from hamlet to hamlet or ejido to ejido, but within communities themselves. If a significant number of groups or even small communities refused to relocate, a majority of localities in the vaso formally expressed their support at an August meeting of the Campesino Congress for the Mazatec pueblos. Communities presented their petitions expressing interest in collaborating with the Coordinating Center and Papaloapan Commission, in order to relocate their respective communities. Rodríguez's campaign appeared to have been a success: the communities' leadership supported the relocation effort because the INI promised to carry out programs in the relocation communities to improve their local economy, combat illness, and teach them to read and write in Spanish.[54]

Perhaps convenient for the Coordinating Center directors, the inclusion of a local political representative (Agente Municipal) among the Center's staff at best posed a conflict of interest and at worst portended an outpouring of objections from locals. In fact, members of the Colonia Agrícola Arroyo de Enmedio of Soyaltepec declared as much in a scathing complaint to the Director of the Papaloapan Commission. Calling Center Director Ricardo Pozas a "*sinarquista*" the author complained that Pozas repeatedly paid some individuals to cut cane in the Colonia "with the deliberate intention that we fire shots against them." Shortly thereafter three members of the Colonia working for the Commission were let go because of the potential for conflict of interest, but Pozas pushed for an "agent" of his own to become part of the local general assembly. In turn, this "agent" and the agente municipal working for the Coordinating

[53] Raúl Rodríguez to Ricardo Pozas September 21, 1954, 2, AHT Caja 105 Exp 1056.
[54] Raúl Rodríguez to Ricardo Pozas, September 21,1954, AHT Caja 105 Exp 1056.

Center submitted a host of complaints about the Colonos of Arroyo de Enmedio to the Commission directorship.[55] Such collaboration between local power-wielders with either the Center or Commission directorship, whether it was implied or conspicuous, further blurred the distinction between official and non-official centers of power.

Murky Cartographies

Ahistorical assumptions and limited knowledge about the people affected by the flood waters made for an ad hoc relocation that betrayed the inconsistencies of state power in the Papaloapan, but knowledge about the physical environment was just as relevant in this regard. To ensure a more accurate rendering of the vaso, the Papaloapan Commission sent topographers to various communities within the estimated confines of the area, where, with a combination of barometric and leveling tools, they gathered information to complement aerial photography. But significant gaps in knowledge of the land were invisible until a cyclone brought the heaviest rains yet in 1954. The first and perhaps most significant gap had to do with the expected impact of dam-induced flooding. That year, three municipalities in the area—municipalities *not* included in the Commission's original calculations—were surprised when floodwaters began to inundate their lands and lapped at their doorsteps.

The Papaloapan Commission, of course, was not the first to attempt geophysical renderings of the Papaloapan River Basin. From the era prior to Spanish rule, imperial and republican powers alike had drawn spatial representations of the region. The regime of Porfirio Díaz (1876-1911) was prolific in its cartographic renderings of the Papaloapan river, tributaries,

[55] Comité Ejecutivo Colonia Agrícola Arroyo de Enmedio to Vocal Ejecutivo de la Comisión del Papaloapan December 27, 1954, AHA CP Caja 370 Exp 6028 Legajo 4.

and tropical commodity enclaves. But even during Díaz's reign, much of the river basin was impossible to map effectively.[56] The rugged landscape and lush tropical forests made for less than accurate measurements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It was not until after World War II, when aerial photography was incorporated into projections, that more representative renderings could be produced. But even from such a vantage point, subtler variation in altitude and soil quality was an immense challenge to calculate. Despite experts' assurances to the contrary, cartographic calculations and knowledge were insufficient to predict to what extent and when flooding would occur. This level of unpredictability had at times catastrophic consequences for the relocation process, and most importantly, for the displaced themselves.

Accurate topographic renderings were essential for predicting what areas would be flooded when, but soil composition was also instrumental in determining the extent to which, and how quickly, areas along the riverbed could absorb the floodwaters. Once the grout curtain —the barrier for the reservoir that prevents seepage— was complete, the drainage tunnels remained open. These tunnels acted as release valves of sorts, to prevent excessive water accumulation over a short period of time. At this stage some water began to collect in the reservoir, but it was not until the rainy season that the artificial lake would begin to fill to such an extent that flooding was a possibility. At the end of the rainy season, the water level would fall once again. Some communities would experience complete flooding during this period, some would encounter temporary flooding, and some at higher elevations would not be affected at all for the time being.

[56] Díaz's regime is credited as the first to extensively map the Mexican territory in its entirety. The regime fostered development throughout the republic, employing survey companies to carry out these activities. See Robert H. Holden, *Mexico and the Survey of Public Lands: The Management of Modernization, 1876-1911* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1994); also Raymond B. Craib, *Cartographic Mexico: A History of State Fixations and Fugitive Landscapes* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

Once the tunnels were sealed, the reservoir would begin to fill, exclusively from the flow of the river during the dry season and then by both the river and rainfall during the rainy season. The variation in water level over the course of this process would render evacuation by land and water more or less difficult, also depending on local topography and soil conditions.

In 1953 Commission officials issued a warning that the water would reach an elevation of 57 meters that year. By the beginning of 1954 the Papaloapan Commission was prepared to seal the drainage valves and detain the flow of the Tonto river, the section of the Papaloapan to be dammed. Commission Director Sandoval alleged that warnings issued did little to incite most of the would-be displaced to apply for indemnities or arrange for their own relocation.[57] But personnel had not yet determined the precise water level and locations of the reservoir's maximum reach in each poblado. Sandoval's insistence that the water level that year would reach 57 meters, based as it was on studies that determined probable rainfall, [58] meant little for the incredulous who saw such claims as a malicious government ploy to steal their lands in the name of the "public good."

To their surprise, residents in hamlets and ejidos of Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa, Santa María Chilchotla and San Lucas Ojitlán in Oaxaca, and Zongolica in Veracruz watched the ground shrink as the water inched toward their lands.[59] Those communities not zoned for relocation rushed to evacuate in a period of just days, even hours, when the water level of the reservoir rose and began to flood their homes. Now agronomists or engineers making sloppy or

[57] Raúl Sándoval to Governor General Manuel Cabrera Carrasquedo, July 10, 1954. AHT Caja 16, Exp 174.
[58] Raúl Sandoval to Governor General Manuel Cabrera Carrasquedo, July 10, 1954. AHT Caja 16, Exp 174.
[59] The municipality of Tlacotepec, Puebla, was also affected by the dam waters, though only 1% of the population (24 families) was affected and it seems likely that most of them relocated to higher ground in the same hamlet. "Afectación de Localidades y Familias de los municipios del Vaso de la Presa 'Presidente Alemán' (Hasta el 31 de diciembre de 1956" AHT Caja 102, Exp 1017. As of 1959, however, the Papaloapan Commission had yet to pay their indemnities: Informe September 14, 1960, AHT Caja 103 Exp 1035.

inconsistent land and crop appraisals were not the only source of cuenqueños' ire. Topographers' lack of precision had real consequences for the relocation and inhabitants' perception of all the experts at work in the tropics. Lacking an evacuation plan for the localities of Chilchotla, which was the municipality not included in the evacuation plans that would now likely experience the most flooding, Coordinating Center Assistant Director Rodríguez warned that an "appreciable percentage" of the 2,327 individuals living in the municipality would need to be swiftly evacuated.[60]

It is possible that there just were not enough men, machines, or photos to collect the data necessary for an accurate rendering of the river basin. Or, that some topographers took their jobs less seriously than others and made less-than-accurate observations. Perhaps the engineers who made the calculations for the final rendering made mathematical errors with respect to the basin's hydrology, soil density, and relief. Maps may always be, as Raymond Craib argues, "state fixations" and means through which particular spaces are rendered natural. But in this context of mid twentieth-century infrastructural development, the map of the river basin was a blueprint, and the application of science for a precise state improvement project was doing much more than rendering a space natural.[61] Whatever the reason for the mishap in the Papaloapan, the final plans were based on egregious topographical and ecological inaccuracies, reflecting a limited understanding not only of the basin itself but also of the possible human costs such a miscalculation could effect. My own attempt to georeference a 1955 Papaloapan Commission map of the area to be flooded and its environs to topographic maps from both the 1930s and

[60] "Informe bimensual que rinde a la dirección del CCI del subdirector..." October and November 1954, AHT Caja 105 Exp 1056.
[61] Craib, *Cartographic Mexico,* 2.

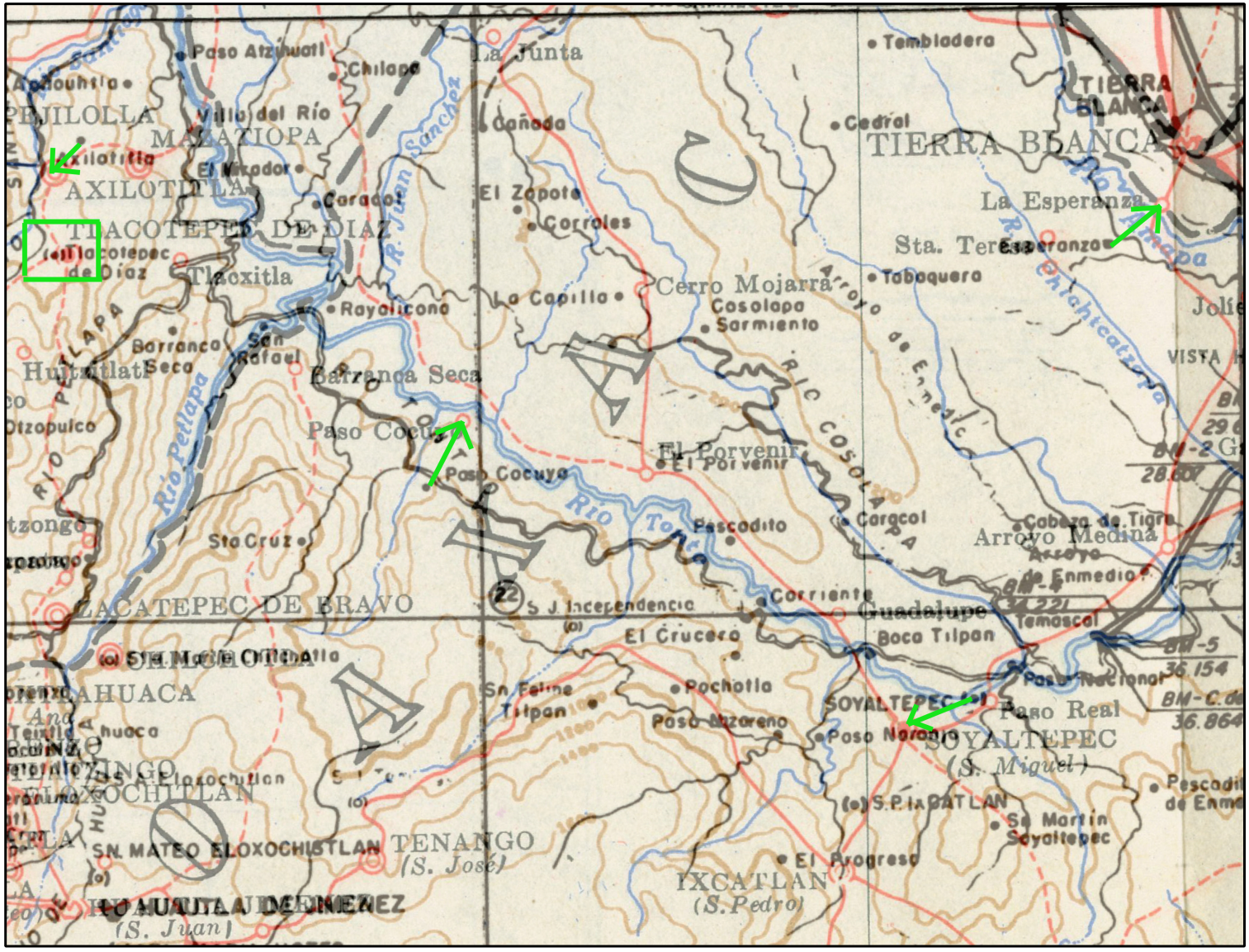
1970s is one example of how limited the caluclations may have been.[62] In Map 4.1 below, the inconsistencies in geographical referents, including the river, are indicated in green.

Going into the 1955-56 relocation season, the Coordinating Center was still without a clear map of which communities would be affected by the waters, and when. This made precise numbers of affected families and individuals nearly impossible to determine. Ideally, the Commission's data would inform a more calculated relocation effort in 1955-56, given that the evacuations carried out in 1954 were done "on the fly, without any scientific base." But Coordinating Center Assistant Director Rodríguez did not only fault the Papaloapan Commission for this oversight. Knowledge transfer among, across, and within institutions was lacking: the Relocation Office itself had left "…not a single document upon which to build the treatment, evacuation, and relocation of the indigenous population of the 'vaso.'"[63] As the heir to the Relocation Office's archive and duties, the Coordinating Center was left with a minimum basis for devising plans.

[62] The 1955 publication from the Comisión del Papaloapan explains the calculations made to determine the cartographic rendering of the basin, before the reservoir had filled. Included the publication are several maps in addition to the more detailed rendering of the basin (Map 4.1) that includes many of the hamlets not included on other official maps (though not all). When I attempted to georeference this map in relation to others, both older and more contemporary, a number of geographical referents, including the river, did not match the other two. Though I cannot conclusively argue that this map is simply inaccurate, I suggest that this apparent imprecision is indicative of an oversight in the Papaloapan Commission's calculations. See Comisión del Papaloapan, *Memoria sobre la carta 1:50 000 de la Cuenca del Papaloapan* (Mexico City: Estados Unidos Mexicanos, Secretaría de Recursos Hidráulicos, Comisión del Papaloapan, 1956).

[63] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos, "Informe bimensual que rinde a la dirección del CCIP del sub-director" October and November 1954, 6, AHT Caja 105, Exp 1056. The poblados of Chilchotla were in the Alto Tonto: Agua Apaxtla, Barranca Seca, Paso Cocuyo, Río Lodo, Río Sapo, and San Rafael. Spanish citation: "… sobre la marcha y sin base científica, dado que en los archivos de la Oficina de Reacomodo no se encontró documentación alguna sobre la cual fincar las tareas de tratamiento, movilización y reacomodo de la población indígena del "Vaso"."

Map 4.1: Discrepancies between Papaloapan Commission Map and ca. 1949 Topographic Map



Sources: Comisión del Papaloapan, Memoria sobre la carta 1: 50 000 de la cuenca del Papaloapan, 1956 (black and white); Dirección de Geografía y Meteorología (color)

Moving, Take Two

From 1956-59 the Papaloapan Commission continued to hold regular meetings with ejidatarios and campesinos to clarify the process of property transfer as part of the relocation. The procedures that both the Papaloapan Commission and the Coordinating Center employed to deal with the relocation, with the past few years of experience in the basin behind them, became more consistent during these years. Though five more municipalities than expected had been affected by the reservoir waters, the Coordinating Center and Commission had acquired another lot in Oaxaca, bringing the number of relocation zones to five.[64] The bulk of the relocation of the vaso's inhabitants happened after 1954, though like the previous phase, it would take place in fits and starts. Based on the calculations of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista, no more than 2,700 individuals moved in any given year, and the overall number of evacuees during 1953-58 dropped from the predicted amount of approximately 25,000 to 13,784 (see table).[65] These numbers, of course, should be read as cautiously as the census data on which they were based. There was no exact science to counting people in the river basin, both long prior to, during, and after the dam construction.

[64] The new lot, Zihualtepec, was located in Yaveo of the Mixe Region of Oaxaca. The other four up to this point were Las Margaritas, Yogopi, La Joya, and Los Naranjos. In Chapter 5 I discuss the relocation zones in further detail.

[65] Instituto Nacional Indigenista, *Memorias. Realidades y proyectos. 16 años de trabajo* (Mexico City.F.: INI, 1964), 3: 125. These numbers contradict numbers from various Relocation Office and Coordinating Center reports. Because the relocation staff's accounting was inconsistent, because many people did not "relocate" wholesale but spent time between old and new locales or relocated temporarily, and because half of the Papaloapan Coordinating Center archive was incinerated in the 1980s, I must assume that these final, published counts are as close to accurate as possible. Cf. "Afectación de Localidades y Familias de los municipios del Vaso de la Presa 'Presidente Alemán' (Hasta el 31 de diciembre de 1956)" AHT Caja 102, Exp 1017; and "Número de familias movilizadas a las nuevas zonas de reacomodo, del año de 1953 a 1958" August 29, 1958 AHT Caja 102 Exp 1017. It is also worth noting that some residents relocated from 1959-1963; according to the publication, 50 families moved in 1960.

Table 4.1. Relocation by year (1953-58)

Year	Number of Families	Number of Individuals	Proportion of Total
1953	377	1,291	14%
1954	411	2,230	16.2%
1955	461	1,950	14%
1956	675	2,434	17.6%
1957	562	2,689	19.6%
1958	409	1,840	13.6%
Sub-Total	2,895	13,064	95%
Others*	177	720	5%
Total	3,072	13,784	100%

* Relocated on their own account.

Source: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, *Memorias. Realidades y proyectos. 16 años de trabajo* (Mexico City: INI, 1964), 3: 125.

In November of 1955 relocation staff began planning the next phase of the move. Two thousand five hundred (2,500) families from approximately 30 localities, staff projected, would need to evacuate by the beginning of the next year's rainy season. But the Coordinating Center needed more lands, with precise borders. And in order to build the new poblados, lands required not only demarcation but also easily accessible roads. Concerned about the timing of the relocation, Center Director Ricardo Pozas petitioned INI Director Alfonso Caso to intervene on the Center's behalf before the authorities of the Papaloapan Commission and the Departamento Agrario to have the borders drawn, land handed over to the Center, and roads completed as soon as possible.[66]

[66] Oficio I Consejo Ricardo Pozas to Alfonso Caso, November 4, 1955, AHT Caja 16 Exp 169, 1-2.

The Coordinating Center staff continued in their quest to convince cuenqueños of the vaso that it was in their best interest to move. Asst. Director Raúl Rodríguez held "orientation chats" with locals, convinced that such action was causing a "sensitive change in attitude of the people of the 'Vaso' toward the work of the Center."[67] He proudly reported the efficacy of various programs the Center had implemented: the mobile supply-store-on-a-boat to set price controls on staple goods in the region, the provision of free medical services and medicines at cost, the granting of indemnity payment advances, and the Center's dedication to fulfill their promises to each pueblo. Now the Center would have a "firm base" for the next phase of relocation: with over 500 families prepared to leave their lands for good, the only thing missing was a permanent place to resettle. It would be up to the Papaloapan Commission to prepare the new lands before any further relocation could take effect.[68]

But budgeting problems again surfaced in the beginning of 1956. Though the Center, as a dependency of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista, had its own budget independent of the Papaloapan Commission, the Commission had agreed to pay in part the expenses for relocating the displaced, and the recent cuts could dry up already scant resources. Compounding the issue was the fact that the Mexican president did not approve any increase to the INI budget, which left the Coordinating Center in the Papaloapan underfunded.[69] As staff discussed how they might

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[67] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos, "Informe bimensual que rinde a la dirección del CCIP del sub-director" October and November 1954, AHT Caja 105 Exp 1056.

[68] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos, "Informe bimensual que rinde a la dirección del CCIP del sub-director" October and November 1954, pp 8-9, AHT Caja 105, Exp 1056. Poblados visited were Arroyo Pescaditos, Corriente Ancha, Málzaga, La Patria, Santa Julia, Primera Pochota, San José Independencia (cabecera), San Juan Cosolapa, Loma Alta, Paso Cocuyo. Plans were also made to visit the following pueblos in the Vaso: Esperanza Madero, Raya Lecuona, Venustiano Carranza (all of the municipio of Soyaltepec), Arroyo Murciélago and Arroyo Tzontle (of Ixcatlán). Rodríguez also mentions the lands purchased by the Papaloapan Commission in La Joya de Obispo and the Ex-Hacienda Santa Eduviges of Ixcatlán, but writes that many of these lands have been "invaded" by outsiders and are still insufficient to fulfill the necessities of the population that would need to move during 1955-56.

[69] An exception had been made for the Centros Coordinadores to open in the states of Nayarit and Guerrero, because

deal with their newfound financial strain, Pozas interjected: the Center staff had already notified the Commission of their concern with the budget cuts in a previous communiqué. And though the Commission directorship lamented the dire situation, they reminded Pozas that the Center staff was "brought here to help [the Commission] resolve a problem, not to pose problems for them."[70] The Coordinating Center staff were increasingly reorienting the institution as not just an intermediary between government ministries and the displaced population, but as an advocate for the interests of the displaced before the Papaloapan Commission.

Advocacy aside, the the impact of the budgetary cuts was deep. Ninety-one persons had been moved since the beginning of the calendar year, and all related expenses had been paid for with loans.[71] Center staff never received a paycheck in December, and the Center lacked a budget for the entering calendar year as they waited for word from the Papaloapan Commission. They projected to move two to three families a day from the poblado of Pescadito to a relocation community where empty houses were still available, toward the end of the month. Financial constraints notwithstanding, many residents, with some counseling from the Center, were active in searching for lands on their own.[72] This sort of activity was more than welcomed by the Center staff; for years, anthropologists working in the vaso had hoped that the displaced would not only accept the relocation but adopt a proactive attitude in becoming citizens of a new community. Though they did not have much say in determining the course of relocation, the displaced population did have some autonomy, which also meant that not all residents of the vaso acceded to move, and not all viewed the Center as their ally.

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their respective governors had strongly advocated for extra funds.

[70] Meeting Minutes, Consejo del Centro, January 26, 1956, AHT Caja 16 Exp 169, 1. In Pozas's words, "… a nosotros nos habían traído aquí para ayudarles a resolver un problema no para plantearles problemas a ellos."

[71] Meeting Minutes, Consejo del Centro, January 26, 1956, AHT Caja 16 Exp 169, 2.

[72] Meeting Minutes December 17, 1955, AHT Caja 16 Exp 169.

Nearing the end of 1956, abrupt and unanticipated changes in Commission administration came about when Executive Director Raúl Sandoval Landázuri died in a plane crash in the basin. Later eulogized in the press as friend and defender of the region's Indians, Coordinating Center anthropologists too lamented the loss of an engineer who not only seemed to understand but appreciate their ethnographic studies and applied relocation work in the river basin.[73] For them, the tragic loss would mean they no longer counted an ally among the Commission's highest ranks. For the people of the basin, Sandoval's death was evidence that Mother Nature would not tolerate the arrogance of men who naively believed they could break the untamable river.

The Multivalent State

When government agencies fell short of providing indemnities or adequate lands for residents of the vaso, many turned to the federal government— namely the president— for recourse. For generations, struggling citizens of Mexico had written to successive presidents and governors, many of them verbally prostrate to demonstrate their deference in the prose of patron-client relations and obstinate paternalism as they requested, even pleaded, for aid. In many ways, the mid-twentieth century was no different, though the institutionalization of the one-party state also meant that new agencies would be the new interface between state and citizen, replacing some, though not all, of the personal politics of yore. Most of the authors of these pleas to the president were leaders of their respective ejidos, frustrated by the inaction of the Departamento Agrario in providing indemnities and insulted by the diminutive appraisals of their belongings and agricultural produce. Others were propertied heads of household, angered that their lands

[73] Juan Rulfo, "The Papaloapan" *Mexico this Month,* May 5, 1958, 13-18; Juan Rulfo, "Homenaje a Raúl Sandoval" *México en la Cultura*. 409, January 20, 1957.

had now been usurped by the federal government to relocate the evacuated population, or ranchers with some means but poor or no lands to relocate their cattle.[74]

Residents of the vaso subject to displacement made appeals to both the President and the Oaxaca state government, some alleging the Coordinating Center's malfeasance for using locals' indemnities to pay for medical provisions and transport services.[75] While the federal government was overseeing the Papaloapan Project, the state of Oaxaca did not follow in lockstep. The governor's office often heeded the requests of local authorities who rejected displacement.[76] Now acting with the support of the state government, these authorities' communities comprised one of the most formidable obstacles to relocation. A cacophony of institutions and governments acted without due coordination with their counterparts in the vaso, while savvy residents utilized whatever recourse available to them to reject outright their orders to evacuate or proffer their own demands for due compensation. The Coordinating Center may have increasingly presented itself as the defender of the interests of the residents from the vaso and their displaced neighbors now in the relocation zones, but it was not a neutral party. Remaining true to its charge, the Center continued to push for evacuation, much to the chagrin of many residents.

Problems with the relocation continued through 1957 as they had beginning in 1954. And, as the case had been three years prior, consistent complaints from the Coordinating Center directorship, a lack of lands for the displaced, and inaccessible roads to transport them impeded evacuation procedures. By the beginning of the rainy season, it became clear to Assistant

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[74] These complaints are numerous. See Caja 968 Expediente 563.3/49, Ramo Presidentes, Adolfo Ruiz Cortines, Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico (Henceforth ARC/AGN).

[75] Lauro Bravo and Eusebio Granados Flores to President Ruiz Cortines 4 March 1955 ARC/AGN Caja 698 Expediente 563.3/49.

[76] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos and Agustín Romano "La situación actual de los pueblos afectados por la presa "Presidente Alemán" Oaxaca" April 30, 1958, AHT Caja 102 Exp 1018.

Director Raúl Rodríguez that the perennial obstacles would again delay the year's plan for evacuation and relocation. Both the Commission and the Departamento Agrario were certainly preparing lands for the displaced, but still at this time the quality was too poor and the process too slow. Adding to the issue was the steadily climbing number of complaints regarding both unjust indemnity valuations and payments past due. But something had changed since 1954: The Coordinating Center's fervent advocacy on behalf of the displaced (and those to be) vis-à-vis the Papaloapan Commission and the Departamento Agrario signaled both an increase in the Center's autonomy from these institutions and the discordant missions and interests of these bureaus and their respective experts.

Posturing both himself and the Coordinating Center as ardent advocates of the campesino, Rodríguez made a point to side with the disaffected farmers, defending their wishes for fair appraisals to either the Departamento Agrario or the Commission, and demanding their indemnity payments in a timely fashion.[77] But the procedure for formulating valuations and payments for pequeños propietarios changed once again, rendering even less legible an already convoluted process. Many residents were now forced to sleep in *galerones*— longhouses in relocation zones with hundreds of beds, reminiscent of the sleeping arrangement for the forced laborers of the neighboring district of Valle Nacional as recounted in such disturbing detail by John Kenneth Turner at the beginning of the century.[78] Rodríguez understood why so many were now hesitant to move, though he suspected the water would rise enough through the rainy season to submerge fifty or so communities. And while the attempted henriquista rebellion of 1954 had been subverted, one collaborator of Coronel Baldomero Carrera continued to rally against the

[77] Raúl Rodríguez, "Informe de la Sub-Dirección del Centro Coordinador Indigenista del Papaloapan, sobre los trabajos de movilización y reacomodo" June 11, 1957, 1, AHT Caja 101, Exp 1011.
[78] John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico* (Chicago: C.H. Kerr & Co., 1910).

evacuation. Indigenous leader and purported cacique of San José Independencia, Casimiro Rodríguez, together with a previous president of the Ejidal Commissary, now had complete control over the population of the ejido Cerro Mojarra, Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa.[79] Indigenista advocacy may have better positioned the Coordinating Center as a principal intermediary between the Papaloapan Commission and state institutions, on the one hand, and the local population on the other, but local agitation and resistance to relocation prevailed.

Relocation Ethnography in San José Independencia

Even if the knowledge and assumptions they brought to the basin did not effectively prepare them for the logistical and administrative predicament in the river basin, the experience spawned new ideas and contributed to the institutionalization of anthropology in Mexico and indigenismo in action. Anthropologists who carried out the relocation labored on persuasion campaigns, called on police, demanded equitable and timely payment of indemnities, usurped the place of local power-wielders, and advocated generally for the displaced. But in addition to redacting reports and sending communiqués to both local dissidents and representatives of state ministries in the Papaloapan, some of them took notes—field notes to be precise. The archive of one such anthropologist, Maurilio Muñoz Basilio, during his time among the residents of San José Independencia, betrays a host of social and political realities among those slated to lose their lands to the dam waters. They also reveal that the sources of information the anthropologist-cum-relocation facilitators relied upon most were often based on rumor and gossip from those who wanted to share. Some of Muñoz's greatest observations happened on tug boats and canoes, in

[79] Raúl Rodríguez, "Informe de la Sub-Dirección del Centro Coordinador Indigenista del Papaloapan, sobre los trabajos de movilización y reacomodo" June 11, 1957, 1, AHT Caja 101, Exp 1011.

people's homes as they sorted out indemnity appraisals, or in conversation with local leaders. The science of data collection in San José Independencia was often reduced to hearsay and propelled by intrigue.

Muñoz, an indigenous Otomí speaker from the Valle del Mezquital, had trained in the National School of Anthropology (ENAH) in Mexico City and briefly in France before working among the residents of San José Independencia from August-November 1957.[80] His *Diarios de Campo* in many ways corroborate other anthropologists' reports: locals in San José complain that in their appraisals coffee plants were undervalued and undercounted; where they can, most move up, as opposed to away, when the reservoir waters arrive; and various leaders negate the possibility of flooding altogether. Yet Muñoz also notes opportunism, not to mention the presence of indigenous merchants or wealthy farmers whose limited Spanish-language abilities do not preclude their deftness.

While Muñoz makes a point of the population's monolingual Mazatec-speaking majority, he collects extraordinary detail regarding local political clashes, drinking culture, and family gossip from bilingual informants. Most residents of San José are unwilling to leave the municipality, he writes, and despite the fact that parts of the municipality are flooding during his time there, the community receives mysterious letters of warning from anonymous authors that they should forego carrying out appraisals of their estates or crops because the relocation under the pretense of dam-building is a government ploy to usurp their lands. Some assure Muñoz they will relocate to the designated lands in the relocation zone of Nuevo San José Independencia,

[80] The following discussion is based on Chapter 3 of Muñoz's field diary, Maurilio Muñoz, "San José Independencia, Oaxaca. 30 de agosto-21 de noviembre de 1957," in *Fuentes para la historia del indigenismo en México. Diarios de Campo de Maurilio Muñoz en La Cuenca del Papaloapan (1957-1959)* coord. José Martín González Solano (Mexico City: Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, 2009). 104-193.

Los Naranjos, Veracruz, but in the end elect to move to lands in the nearby hills of the poblados Cerro Campana and Chapultepec. But incredulity and refusal to leave do not prevent them from seeking lands in Nuevo San José. If the government was offering free lands, even 150 kilometers away, residents of San José were willing to lay their claim: they happily received lots in Nuevo San José while erecting homes on the hilltops of the old municipality.[81] Even if the municipal parish saints were moved to the new lands—a tactic that had been used for communities hailing from Ixcatlán and Soyaltepec—residents of San José reported they would accompany the saints to the new lands but still return to the old.

Political rifts, too, impacted communities' willingness to relocate. Muñoz observes a sharp conflict between the poblado of Buenos Aires and the municipal head of San José. One source told Muñoz that at one point there was talk of Buenos Aires becoming part of the town council (*ayuntamiento*), but when one local leader committed a robbery, he lost his potential seat on the council and the political division existed ever since.[82] Those of Buenos Aires, despite the fact that their lands were most impacted by the reservoir waters, refused to live "among their enemies" in Nuevo San José, Veracruz.

And yet, though Muñoz is apparently keen to observe the reality of local enmity, his prose reinforces the assumption that "indígenas" partake in such decisions as a group. To be sure, municipal agents and local authorities such as the *Consejo de Ancianos* (Council of Elders) convened and made decisions on behalf of the community, but the anthropologist's observations elide the possibility that families or individuals may have decided, or even taken steps, on their own account, in spite of the consensus of community leaders or the status quo.

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[81] Muñoz, *Fuentes para la historia*, 104-105, 114.
[82] Muñoz, *Fuentes para la historia*, 105.

Muñoz also speculated that residents of San José, and Buenos Aires in particular, did not want to relocate because they would find the "urban zone" too oppressive to live in. But yet again, these presumptions about their affinities seems to be premised more on Muñoz's own ideas about what indigenous life and desires should look like than anything the locals themselves reported. The anthropologist noted that a number of local merchants (many of whom, he also commented, were monolingual Mazatec speakers) preferred to remain in the hills of the old lands because they could set up shop on the heavily transited paths that historically served as a crossroads for regional commerce, and in the wake of the dam construction would continue as a junction for important population centers.[83] For these merchants, moving to Veracruz would not simply upend their socioeconomic status; it would deny them access to a livelihood they could count on, and one that would not simply reproduce itself in new lands.

The Last Stretch

As Muñoz's account conveys, in 1957 the Coordinating Center confronted the same problems the Oficina de Reacomodo had faced. Word-of-mouth evacuation propaganda was apparently ineffective. The locals' response to advice that they should leave before their lands and homes were flooded was increasingly sardonic, as the incredulous would often "make a mockery" of staff warnings of inundation. Now the Center's directorship opted for a different strategy to convince the population to relocate: to *show* instead of *tell*, what awaited them in the new communities. Outside of the vaso, residents could witness first-hand their neighbors using modern machinery for farming, the creation of consumer cooperatives, and modern health

[83] Muñoz, *Fuentes para la historia*, 117.

services provided by indigenous nurses.[84] Perhaps this way, the modern "Eden" promised to the people slated to lose their lands would seem a more likely reality.

From 1957-1958, the vaso of the dam now looked quite different than it had just four years prior: some communities had relocated in their entirety, leaving abandoned houses and untended milpas in their wake; others had sought refuge in lands uphill, now isolated in small little islands dotting the voluminous reservoir. And many more remained, some waiting desperately for lands, indemnity payments, and the green light to make their exodus from their beloved homelands. This latter group had good reason to believe that the warnings of Papaloapan Commission officials and Coordinating Center staff were disingenuous, given the alarming number of vacant poblados that now remained above water and were subject to "invasions" by outsiders.

Invaders, of course, were not the only ones to reoccupy the evacuated communities. Many of the displaced returned to their homes when they realized that their old lands had remained untouched by the reservoir waters. In order to prevent repopulation of evacuated lands, the Coordinating Center requested the assistance of both federal police and military units stationed in the zone to destroy houses. Brigadas de movilización would carry out demolition in their respective zones, escorted by police officers. Police were also tasked with vigilance and patrolling in designated zones, to further prevent any invasion or illegal preparation of the land for agricultural use.

[84] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos, "Informe sobre los trabajos iniciales para la movilización de la población mazateca del 'vaso' a los pueblos de reacomodo, que rinde a la dirección del CCIP, la subdirección del mismo" April 1954, AHT Caja 105 Exp 1056. "El decirles que sus tierras y sus casas van a ser inundadas por las aguas no tiene ya validez ante ellos, y esta aseveración, a la fecha, pudiera resultar negativa ya que el mazateco en ocasiones hace mofa de ella."

Rodríguez requested that a team of soldiers assist the leader of one brigade in "touring" his zone, to be sure no such "invaders" were present.[85] The head of another brigade, Manuel Virgen, was assigned a "Power" truck to tear down houses in three communities (Raya Licona, Santa Josefina Licona and San Juan Cosolapa) whose inhabitants had already been relocated— a measure deemed more appropriate given the agreement with the Papaloapan Commission that destruction by fire should be avoided whenever possible.[86] At times the Coordinating Center, in accordance with the Commission, requested a detachment of federal forces (accompanied by a brigade leader) to assist in the evacuation of lands. Such was the case in January of 1958, when residents of Primera Pochota, Ixcatlán, were found sowing crops on their lands in the vaso, with "the *ánimo* to continue living there." Because these lands had been expropriated by federal decree, as all the lands in the vaso had been, and because those of Primera Pochota had been designated lots in the relocation plots of La Joya del Obispo, Rodríguez requested a detachment to visit the community in order to "proceed with the evacuation."[87]

If the Papaloapan Commission and the Coordinating Center were in agreement with respect to housing demolition in the vacated communities of the vaso, there were consistent confrontations over protocol regarding the treatment of compliant residents during the relocation. The Coordinating Center directorship requested the assistance of soldiers during the evacuation process, but grew frustrated when servicemen overstepped their bounds. Guards frequently searched residents' belongings and prevented boats carrying cattle from embarking, even when they arrived with the appropriate documentation. At least one soldier stationed at the river

[85] Directorship of CCIP to Subcomondante de Caballería Abelardo Díaz Pedraza, March 15, 1958, AHT Caja 101, Exp 1011.
[86] Raúl Rodríguez to Hugo Luis Trigo, March 8, 1958, AHT Caja 101, Exp 1011.
[87] Raúl Rodríguez to Arnulfo González Freyre, Teniente de la Caballería, Comandante de Partida, January 15, 1958, AHT Caja 101, Exp 1011.

repeatedly confiscated the rifles of residents who used the arms for hunting in order to supplement their meager diet. Rodríguez requested a replacement soldier for this "illiterate one" who would detain anyone carrying cattle with no regard for the documentation they carried.[88]

Many residents scheduled for evacuation were proactive in requesting new lands and preparing themselves for the move. But representatives of the Commission did not always encourage this activism, and at times residents' requests for regional communications improvements—so that they could relocate quickly and safely—were ignored. When residents of Pescadito de Arriba requested funds from the Papaloapan Commission to pay for a *chalupa*, or canoe-like boat for intra-vaso transport, Commission engineer Cándido Cruz strongly urged the Coordinating Center to refuse any compensation, for fear that such an action would encourage the residents to remain on their lands despite eviction orders. Rodríguez opposed Cruz's position and supported the residents' request, "considering it of justice for the campesinos of this community." The people of Pescadito de Arriba, Rodríguez retorted, had been willing to move to their new relocation community in Yogopi, Veracruz, but were unable to do so because the new plots lacked even temporary *galeras* to house them. When the water reached the 56-meter mark, the community was left in complete isolation. The water now covered accessible roads to both Ojitlán and Temazcal, where the people of Pescadito de Arriba would buy their goods. The Coordinating Center had been providing the people of this community weekly trips to Temazcal to buy staple goods, but the trips had to be suspended because the Center had been reduced to only one serviceable tug boat.[89]

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[88] Raúl Rodríguez to Felipe Camarena Sánchez, November 16, 1957, AHT Caja 103, Exp 1040. "… "me refiero al que es analfabeto por cuya causa detiene cualquier partida de ganado, aún caundo llegue debidamente documentada."

[89] Rodríguez Ramos to Ing. Cándido Cruz April 18, 1958, AHT Caja 103, Exp 1040.

Photograph 4.3 Second Day of Inundation, Temazcal



Photograph by Robert Laughlin, Artist's Private Collection, 1957

As Papaloapan Commission officials, staff at the Coordinating Center, and police and armed servicemen labored in the vaso, the physical space became increasingly more intellegible to the bureaucracies involved, but the populations still remained somewhat of an enigma for the experts in the basin. Now with trained, bilingual heads of the evacuation brigades, documented anthropological knowledge of the inhabitants, and staff that had spent time in each of the affected communities, the residents of the vaso were surely not as mysterious for relocation managers. But they were still not completely—or easily—identified. Supposed members of ejidos were transported to relocation communities in error, only to be discovered later when the "true" ejidatarios complained. The Papaloapan Commission insisted to the Coordinating Center that they establish a proper identification system in April of 1958, to not only transfer people to

the appropriate lands but also avoid complaints and problems associated with a second round of displacement, now from the relocation zones.[90] Such a request may sound reasonable, but was virtually impossible to realize. As with much of the planning associated with the relocation, keeping track of people, places, moneys, conflicts, was unexpectedly trying for those involved.

Rains pounded again in July of 1958 as they had in 1954 as the reservoir rose to reach its maximum level. The torrent of this vast body of water now resembled a sea, with menacing waves that promised to capsize the small boats used to transport people and goods. And just as in 1954, no one foresaw the coming of this next, massive storm. To be sure, the rainy season was always a guaranteed challenge in the tropics, but it was unviable to calculate when the rains would start and stop, and in turn to plan the evacuation process accordingly. In a panic, Rodríguez reported the acute issues affecting the relocation. On July 17, saturated clouds had been dumping their contents nonstop for two hours, and he feared the reservoir volume would climb to 62 meters in no time. He regretted that campesinos, told they could plant their crops in the vaso because they still lacked lands in the relocation zone, would lose half of their harvest, though they had been reassured that it was safe to plant. How could Coordinating Center staff assuage frustrated vaso residents if their word was meaningless?

Moving the inhabitants would be challenging in this climate: they could not be evacuated in one fell swoop because wood groves and sediments that had collected over the course of the past four years formed a de facto partial detaining wall that slowed the water current. Now, as the Evacuation Brigade of Ixcatlán municipality reported, much of this wall had rotted, and the former once-a-day swell had transformed into rapid waves. Rodríguez insisted that they prepare new tug boats, condition them to avoid any dangerous situations, and do everything possible to

[90] Ing. Cándido Cruz to Ramón Delgado and Raúl Rodríguez, April 16, 1958. AHT Caja 103, Exp 1040.

ensure the evacuees' trust in the vessels. Once the waters surpassed the 62-meter mark— the point up to which the population had been evacuated— the Center would have to deal with moving a dispersed population. Many families still lived on little islands, and their houses risked being completely submerged in the rising water. The fluvial transport team now had three tug boats, two *chalanes* and a speed boat, which together were "insufficient and inadequate to face an emergency situation." The tug boats were incapable of navigating waters with such strong waves, and the reduced number of units at their disposal would not be enough to move at once all of the people remaining in the vaso.[91]

Though the Coordinating Center repeatedly voiced its concern regarding repopulation in the evacuation zones, the Papaloapan Commission was ineffective at preventing it. Crops and new houses persistently reappeared on indemnified lands, and the constant arrival of new invaders or returning evacuees could extend the relocation efforts of the Coordinating Center indefinitely. At the same time, many families needed to move and just as in past years, lacked a definitive place to relocate. For the over 1,000 families to be relocated in July of 1958, there were only 117 houses, scattered across the relocation zones. Once again, there was no place for the remaining vaso residents to go. To make matters worse, the hurried relocation of these families would be compounded by the fact that most of them were in highly precarious financial situations now that they would lose their crops to the floods.[92] Lighthouses and lifesavers were now of urgent need, and Rodríguez requested their installation and delivery from the Commission.

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[91] Raúl Rodríguez to Antonio Paillés Brizuela, July 17, 1958, AHT Caja 103, Exp 1040.

[92] Raúl Rodríguez to Antonio Paillés Brizuela, July 17, 1958, AHT Caja 103, Exp 1040. "… se han construído y se siguen construyendo nuevas casas en terrenos ya indemnizados y se han efectuado siembras en esos mismos terrenos sin que se haya hecho ningún intento de impedirlo." Lighthouses/lightsavers: Raúl Rodríguez to Ramos Magaña, 4 July 1958.

Inhabitants continued to wait for appraisers (*valuadores*) from the Departamento de Tierras of the Papaloapan Commission to appraise their lands and crops. These "estimators" held the fate of many of the campesinos in their hands, and when they shirked their duties for weeks on end, as was the case in Ixcatlán during November of 1958, complaints were in order. The precious cards with stamped appraisals were perhaps one of the most invaluable commodities in the vaso, for without a valid one, the time and energy invested in procuring fruitful lands was worth nothing. The Coordinating Center repeatedly forwarded concerns about problems with such appraisers to director Cruz López, but to no avail.[93]

The vaso had become a hotbed of seemingly illicit activity, not all of it as mundane as tending crops on the expropriated lands. Invasion of cattle and farmers continued, to be sure, but exploitation of another sort, perhaps of more pressing interest to the Papaloapan Commission, was happening as well. The felling of precious hard and soft woods had begun as soon as the dam construction commenced, but now people living in the hills were reportedly descending to gather logs. Lacking means of transport to the isolated islands where this was taking place, the corporal of the federal detachment had no way to prevent this "robbery."[94] Precious woods as well as those useful for making railroad ties were of great interest to the Papaloapan Commission, and now that the lands of the vaso technically belonged to the federal government, locals were no longer permitted to benefit from such exploitation. But there they were, participating in one of the few lucrative extractive activities remaining in the vaso.

In 1958, a total of 86 communities had been affected by the reservoir waters, and only 39 had been completely evacuated. The dam was expected to reach the 70-meter mark that year, and

[93] Raúl Rodríguez to Cándido Cruz López, November 6, 1958, AHT Caja 103, Exp 1040.
[94] Raúl Rodríguez to Captain Felipe Camarena Sánchez, Ayudante al Vocal Ejecutivo de la Comisión del Papaloapan, September 3, 1958, AHT Caja 103, Exp 1040.

when it did, Coordinating Center staff feared many families would remain on higher ground, isolated within the vaso and without any means to sustain themselves. The action of federal agencies, one Center report maintained, still lacked "adequate coordination," now aggravated by the fact that the state government of Oaxaca was undermining the work of both the Papaloapan Commission and the Coordinating Center. Once again, the report warned, the elevation had not been duly calculated in every area of the vaso, and Center staff foresaw dangerous consequences for the next wave of evacuees.[95] Coordinating Center brigades, now staffed mainly by locals, had become another body within the Instituto Nacional Indigenista advocating on behalf of the population of the vaso.

That year, thirty-five localities still remained, at least partly populated, in the vaso. The Temazcal representative to the Ligas de Comunidades Agrarias y Sindicatos Campesinos del Estado de Oaxaca, Bernardo Mortera Valido, reported to Oaxacan governor Alfonso Pérez Gasga in April of 1959 that 3,000 families had left the vaso, but another 2,000 remained. Five hundred of them would need to be moved, and 1,500 would stay. The Papaloapan Commission had paid some seven million pesos in indemnities, and owed approximately the same amount in outstanding payments to evacuees. Everyone seemed to acknowledge that the Commission had been subsidizing the Coordinating Center's relocation efforts, but the ever-decreasing Commission budget had been adversely affecting the Center's work. Now it appeared the latter had just enough money to move 150 families, both by land and water. The presence of a Departamento Agrario representative was most urgent, Mortera claimed, in order to determine the exact number of ejidatarios who would remain in the vaso, and therefore offer vacant houses

[95] "Informe sobre la movilización y el reacomodo en la población del vaso de la Presa "Presidente Alemán" n.d. AHT Caja 102 Exp 1018.

in the relocation zones to families in need. Mortera echoed the concerns of Coordinating Center relocation staff during previous years: lacking money for land, the building of roads and houses, and indemnity payments, let alone for the cost of evacuating and relocating families, this next rainy season would likely be as trying as those before it.[96]

Between 1959 and 1960, 57 families were relocated from the vaso, most of them from Ixcatlán, but others hailed from five different hamlets in the municipalities of Ojitlán, Soyaltepec, and Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa. The majority of these evacuees were small property owners or renters, save eight ejidatarios from Cerro Mojarra, Acatlán.[97] For as much as the anthropologists of the Oficina de Reacomodo and the Coordinating Center valued the integrity of the community, their ideas were premised on false assumptions about the nature of social life and mobility in the basin. Why these families moved when they did is unclear, but certainly the splitting of localities into multiple parts over the course of several years was not conducive to preserving the anthropologists' intention for the population. The relocation process in general undermined a direct application of theory to practice, and upon resettlement Center anthropologists would also find it difficult to turn their knowledge and assumptions about the cuenqueños affected by the dam into concrete applications.

Counting people, much like calculating which communities would be affected by the floodwaters, and when, was informed guesswork. But the Coordinating Center staff attempted to accurately represent the number of persons who had already been or would be displaced. During these last years of evacuation, staff at the Coordinating Center continuously reworked their

[96] Bernardo Mortera Valido to Governor Pérez Gasga, "La situación actual de la parte de este Estado ha quedado dentro del Vaso de la Presa "Presidente Alemán" es la siguiente:" April 7, 1959, AHT Caja 102 Exp 1017.
[97] "Relación de familias desalojadas del Vaso de almacenamiento de la Presa "Presidente Alemán" por este Centro durante los años de 1959 y 1960, redactado en Nuevo Paso Nacional" October 27, 1961, AHT Caja 102, Exp 1017.

spreadsheets, compiling data from multiple sources to determine precise numbers of families, of individuals, and the localities of origin. Raúl Rodríguez calculated that, between 1953 and 1959, the total number of families evacuated from the vaso at 3,146, or 14,311 individuals.[98] Unfortunately, even decades after relocation, precise accounting of who moved where was never achieved.

During first few years of the 1960s, dynamics within the vaso continued much as they had during the second half of the previous decade. The Papaloapan Commission, though, established a protocol to photograph and fingerprint those who made indemnity claims, including biographical information on their identity "postcards" as well.[99] After nearly a decade of overseeing the relocation, the Commission and Coordinating Center had grown increasingly adept at documenting and tracking the population of the vaso. As of mid-September 1960, 1,470 families, totaling 7,350 individuals had still not evacuated their lands. The reticent population was causing a double problem: these "indígenas" had been denied access to all services that they previously had available before the dam was built, and now they were forced to plant their maize on the slopes of the hills, using slash and burn practices "deforesting and provoking erosion" of the land that was causing sediment collection at the bottom of the dam.[100] The ambulatory store on a boat (tienda-lancha) was no longer making its rounds in the reservoir, and populations were ever more dispersed. Rodríguez, now Director of the Coordinating Center, beseeched INI Director Alfonso Caso to act: "The Instituto Nacional Indigenista cannot remain indifferent to this situation, to not resolve it will translate into injury for the people who continue living on the

[98] Raúl Rodríguez to Ramos Magaña Oficio D/CCIP/74 Expediente 42/VE/60 February 15, 1960, AHT Caja 102 Exp 1017.
[99] Cándido Cruz López to Raúl Rodríguez, April 29, 1960, AHA CP Caja 66 Exp 839.
[100] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos to Alfonso Caso, September 14, 1960, 15 AHT Caja 103 Exp 1035.

islands and shore of the reservoir." Their presence would also jeopardize the forests, "as well as deterioration on a construction for which the Mexican Nation has paid so much."[101] The intensity of this memo was not simply performative: it was indicative of how the Coordinating Center had come to position itself vis-à-vis both the Papaloapan Commission and the relocated population, and also betrayed the Center's relative lack of power in effecting the change anthropologists intended.

In 1960 the Coordinating Center was unable to evacuate a single family. Without sufficient funds, it was impossible to relocate numerous individuals who had made such a request. In August of 1961, 40 poblados still remained in the vaso, totaling 2,402 families. Twenty five of these localities included at least 271 families that required immediate relocation from the vaso.[102] Over the next year, families continued to request their relocation, and still, in 1962, many remained stranded in their old lands when the Papaloapan Commission completely withdrew its subsidy.[103]

By the Coordinating Center's estimates, the majority of the residents flooded out of the vaso had been relocated by 1962, but resettlement work was by no means complete and many locals' circular migrations between old and new lands continued. Still into the second half of that decade, there remained evacuees without lands and many in desperate need of due payment for

[101] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos to Alfonso Caso, September 14, 1960, 13 AHT Caja 103 Exp 1035. "El Instituto Nacional Indigenista no puede permanecer indiferente a esta situación, que de no resolverse se traducirá en perjuicio para la gente que sigue viviendo en las islas y orillas de la Presa, y su presencia ocasionará destrozo en el bosque, así como detorio en una obra que tanto ha costado a la Nación Mexicana."
[102] Bernardo Mortera Valido, "Localidades que aún quedan dentro del Vaso de la Presa 'PRESIDENTE ALEMAN', con anotación del municipio y estado a que pertanecen, número apróximado de familias y las provables [sic] de movilizar y los que no se movilizarán" August 25,1961, AHT Caja 96 Exp 932.
[103] Bernardo Mortera Valido to Mejía Fernández, January 15, 1962 AHT Caja 96 Exp 932.

the territory and livelihood they had lost.[104] In 1970 it was calculated upwards of 78 percent of the three municipalities expected to be flooded by the dam was affected, and anywhere from .1 to nearly 25 percent was affected in the five municipalities surprised by the reservoir waters (See Table 4.2).

There was no clean end date for the relocation, as families continued to trickle into resettlement communities, return to higher ground on their old lands, or seek a better life in urban centers of Oaxaca, Veracruz and Puebla or the nation's capital. But relocation itself was only the beginning of the work Coordinating Center staff would carry out in the Papaloapan.

Table 4.2 Percentage of population affected by President Alemán Dam, by Municipality

Municipality	Percent of Population Affected
San Miguel Soyaltepec, Oaxaca	78.5
San Pedro Ixcatlán, Oaxaca	82.3
San José Independencia, Oaxaca	83.7
Santa María Chilchotla, Oaxaca	24.9
Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa, Oaxaca	22.9
San Lucas Ojitlán, Oaxaca	12.5
Zongolica, Veracruz	4.5
Tlacotepec, Puebla	.1

[104] Juan Ballesteros Porta, et. al, *La colonización en la Cuenca del Papaloapan; una evaluación socioeconómica* (Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones Agrárias, 1970).

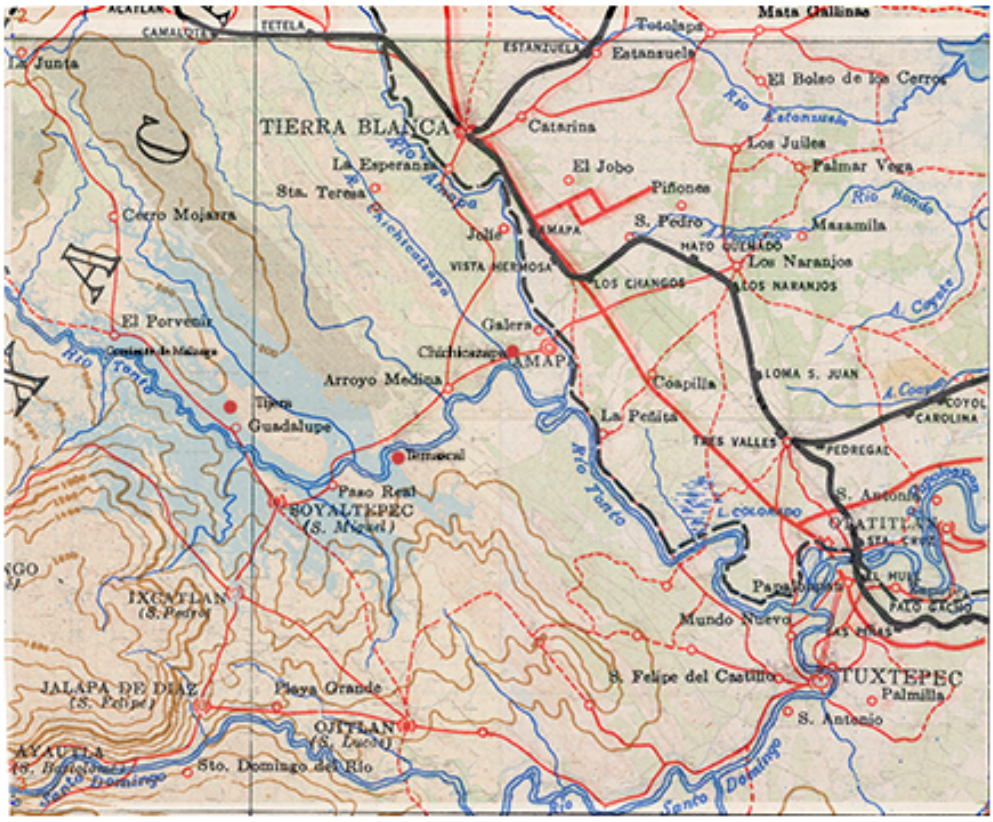
Conclusion

Life and land in the Papaloapan River Basin was far from what any of the experts laboring there expected. Perhaps it is unsurprising that the relocation process itself unfolded in unpredictable ways—any large-scale project brings with it a host of unanticipated problems or unforeseen circumstances. But the inability to apply knowledge to facilitate relocation as experts predicted evidently took planners, whether they were anthropologists or engineers, by surprise. Anthropologists and relocation staff faced several impediments to carrying out the plans they envisioned. Lack of funds and precarious budgets certainly stood in the way of a smooth relocation, but the knowledge they brought with them itself was incomplete or insufficient, and in turn theories were nearly impossible to apply in practice. Engineers' and topographers' plans and calculations, too, were incompatible with the reality on the ground.

Despite the shortcomings in relocation planning and management, the Mexican state's reach in the Papaloapan extended. This fact, however, was not because the state was an a priori solid, omniscient or omnipotent entity, but precisely because power in the basin had winnowed. Curiously, anthropologists were deeply concerned with the disintegration of the community, when in fact other iterations of political authority, and the state itself, were hardly unified. Perhaps this case, then, is indicative of how statecraft worked under Mexico's ruling party during these years: state directives were largely ad hoc, not imposed from above as high modernist attempts to make people and place legible, but comprised a slippery process of state-building in motion. Anthropologists and Coordinating Center staff fit in this conjuncture precisely because they positioned themselves both within and outside of it, as interlocutors with state actors and funded by state institutions but as advocates for and an ultimate allegiance to the local population. It would be misleading, then, to consider them, like many of those laboring in the

Papaloapan, agents carrying out the will of the state.

Map 4.2 Overlay of Maps Pre- and Post-Alemán Dam



Sources: Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía e Informática, *Carta Topográfica 1: 50 000* (Mexico, 1970); Secretaría de Agricultura y Ganadería, Dirección de Geografía y Meterología *"Puebla" Escala 1: 500 000* (Mexico, 1933-34)

By the end of the 1960s, the dam was built, many communications issues in the basin improved, and thousands of people were relocated to new lands in the absence of any large-scale rebellion or violent resistance. The flooding that had justified the dam's erection in the first place was never entirely resolved, but the infrastructural improvements made as part of the Papaloapan Project were certainly not carried out in vain. But what did the project hold for the people most deeply affected by it? Only an examination of life after relocation can tell us that part of the story.

Chapter Five

Indigenous Modernization as Utopia: Life after Relocation

From 1953-1963 they moved hamlet by hamlet, household by household. Thousands were rescued by boat as their homes flooded, dragging with them the transportable stuff of their daily lives—chickens, rustic furniture, elaborately embroidered *huipiles*— through the silted waters. For the anthropologists who planned and facilitated this migration, relocation was an opportunity— a blank canvas onto which new economic, political, and social arrangements could be rendered. In the Papaloapan, displacement was part and parcel of economic development, but anthropologist planners were committed to a development scheme that would both transform and *preserve* certain elements of the displaced population's culture. These social scientists believed that relocated residents, as members of communities that anthropologists identified as "indigenous," required a tempered plan to change their lives and livelihoods for the better. But there was no consensus among evacuees—nor among anthropologists—about what aspects of their lives should change upon relocation. The multiple ideas of what "indigenous" meant, and what kind of "development" was desirable, begged the question: What should—or could—development in the resettlement communities look like?

This chapter provides a ground-level analysis of the programs carried out among resettled residents to reveal the plans and realities of community development after relocation. In doing so, it shows that "modernization," and "development" were capacious concepts that meant more in theory than in practice, and, along similar lines, "indigenous," was an elusive and malleable category. Yet, I argue, in the context of the Papaloapan community development programs, indigeneity, despite its shifting meanings and dubious relevance, hardened into a political

category over time. Under the auspices of Mexico's Instituto Nacional Indigenista, anthropologists and a staff that included local bilingual (indigenous- and Spanish-speaking) intermediaries institutionalized indigeneity. The relocated population and INI employees thus secured "indigenous" as not only an ethnic, but a political category, one that both evacuees and INI employees alike could employ to legitimate claims made to or on behalf of the state. In turn, this transition implicated anthropologists as experts in indigenous integration, and more specifically, as necessary mediators in indigenous modernization.

By relating the untold story of life after relocation, this chapter upends two conventional narratives of post 1940 Mexico. First, it complicates the argument that all sectors of Mexico's developmentalist state unilaterally privileged urban industrialization over rural improvement, and by extension agricultural modernization over the livelihood of small-scale farmers.[1] Relatedly, the argument of this chapter belies the assumption that indigenous policy during this period was simply a "tool for promoting capitalist accumulation and social control" at the expense of indigenous culture and social practices.[2] As James Ferguson and Tanya Murray Li have suggested elsewhere, the less conspicuous and even unintended effects of a seemingly ineffectual development program can have significant and lasting consequences for individual and local

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[1] Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara, *Modernizing Mexican Agriculture: Socioeconomic Implications of Technological Change, 1940-1970* (Geneva: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1976) and Joseph Cotter, *Troubled Harvest: Agronomy and Revolution in Mexico, 1880-2002* (Westport, CT.: Praeger, 2003). Hewitt de Alcántara posits two phases of agricultural modernization in Mexico— socialistic community- based agricultural societies under President Lázaro Cárdenas (1935-1940) and industrial, capitalist development under his successors, particularly Manuel Ávila Camacho (1941-1946) and Miguel Alemán (1947-1952).

[2] Alexander Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Postrevolutionary Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2004) 158. Dawson's work, which treats the first four decades of the twentieth century, echoes a number of anthropological treatises that presume a monolithic indigenista arm of Mexico's ruling party and developmentalist state. See Carlos García Mora, coord, *Los hechos y los dichos, 1880-1986* vol. 2 of *La antropología en México: panorama histórico* (Mexico City.F.: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1987-1988).

community relations with state bureaucracies.[3] Though much of the anthropologists' work in the resettlement communities was fraught with difficulty, and their programs' success was limited, the history of community development in the Papaloapan demonstrates that managed capitalist development could promote indigeneity, and that bureaucratic institutionalization had lasting political consequences.

The pages that follow tell the story of resettlement by tracing the implementation of plans for ideal community life in practice. I relate the story in two sections. The first explains plans for life after relocation and characterizes the main aspects of spatial organization and community development in the basin—in terms of health and education programs, and economic activity and markets—in order to demonstrate that the work of the INI Coordinating Center in effect brought about the resettled population's reliance on the institution. The second focuses on a specific resettlement community called Nuevo (New) Ixcatlán, drawing comparisons with other communities forged in the wake of the dam's construction and providing a textured examination of social dynamics upon resettlement to show that the use of indigeneity hardened. In short, the resettlement institutionalized indigeneity.

[3] James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: "Development," Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Tania Murray Li, "Beyond 'the State' and Failed Schemes." *American Anthropologist* 107 (September 2005): 383–94.

I. Building Utopia

Background and Plans

A constellation of technical experts abounded in the region during the first decade of relocation, but the most ardent advocates for the Papaloapan's residents, both prior to and following displacement, had always been anthropologists—Mexican nationals determined to put their training to good use. Ethnographic study of the *cuenqueños* living in the basin during the late 1940s to early 1950s provided these applied social scientists with cursory yet illustrative details about social organization and cultural practices among those identified as indigenous inhabitants. But it was the process of dislocation—and relocation—that most greatly informed the anthropologists' understanding of cuenqueños, as well as the problem of infrastructural, economic, and social "improvement" in the region.

As we saw in Chapter One, Mexico's most pedigreed anthropologists were not the first ideologues to imagine a perfectly planned society for, or by, indigenous peoples in the western hemisphere. The colonial encounter between continents on either side of the Atlantic provided European thinkers with an inspiration for envisioning harmonious man in his perfect state, free from corruption and malice—in other words, a Rousseauian "noble savage." Just two decades after Sir Thomas More penned his oft-cited *Utopia* in 1516, Spanish friar Vasco de Quiroga implemented his own utopian program among the Purhépecha Indians of Michoacán, Mexico, modeled after More's depictions of political, social, economic, as well as spatial organization on the eponymous fictional island (which is located, we are told, somewhere off the Atlantic coast of Brazil). Quiroga's plans for social organization included a regimented evangelization effort in

perfect sixteenth-century form: where More's treatise depicted idyllic life among pagans, Quiroga's egalitarian society would be decidedly Christian.[4]

Quiroga's program was but one of a number of historical practices to consolidate indigenous communities for the purposes of more efficient political—and religious—administration. *Reducciones* under Spanish rule comprised another, albeit less utopian, vision of condensing families into discrete political and spatial units to both emulate the ideal urban grid of Old World cities and better facilitate Catholic conversion and regular tribute payment.[5] Following independence from Spain, successive governments of republican Mexico sought to permanently settle a number of populations in the northern reaches of the national territory, as a means to pacify the population and expand the reach of the state.[6] But the relocation experiment in the Papaloapan, though in many ways reminiscent of the ethnographically-minded plans of Catholic missionaries under the Spanish Crown or the economically-minded plans of liberal politicos, would entail a different kind of proselytization.

The difference in the Papaloapan was the way in which reformers sought to integrate the indigenous population into the Mexican state. Contemporary anthropologists may have believed in the promise of modern social welfare services and public infrastructure to uplift the indigenous population from centuries of economic poverty and abandonment by the Mexican government, but they were not overzealous preachers from the church of modernization.

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[4] On Quiroga's utopian program in Michoacán, see Edgard Fabián Cattana, *La utopía humanista en Vasco de Quiroga*. (Córdoba: Editorial de la Universidad Católica de Córdoba, 2004); and Silvio Arturo Zavala, *Ideario de Vasco de Quiroga* (Mexico City: Colegio de México, Centro de Estudios Históricos, 1995).

[5] On the social and cultural implications of reducción among the Maya of Yucatan, see William F. Hanks, *Converting Words: Maya in the Age of the Cross* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

[6] Evelyn Hu-De Hart, *Yaqui Resistance and Survival: Struggle for Land and Autonomy, 1821-1910* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1984).

Relocation, these anthropologists predicted, would effect a temporal leap among the indigenous inhabitants of the Papaloapan, from a backward society and economy to a modern existence. As social and economic planners intent on both *identifying* and *preserving* essential aspects of indigenous culture while simultaneously integrating indigenous peoples and communities into the capitalist economy, anthropologists would be discerning. In ascertaining which practices were categorically "indigenous," they in turn made normative judgments about what was desirable about indigenous culture and society, what was compatible with modern life, and what attributes might shield indígenas from its excesses. The modernity that these social scientists envisioned was just as vague, if not more ill- defined. To be sure, as previous chapters have demonstrated, the ostensibly "backward" Mazatec society that comprised the majority of the relocated population was neither autarkic nor isolated from the reaches of the broader capitalist economy. Through their ethnographic reconnaissance efforts in the late 1940s and early 1950s anthropologists such as Alfonso Villa Rojas, Fernando Cámara Barbachano, and Rodolfo Stavenhagen found that the indigenous inhabitants of the Papaloapan were anything but pre-capitalist neophytes. To the contrary, they participated in a variety of tropical commodity markets and labor regimes, and for decades experienced first-hand the evolving national political apparatus that emerged in the aftermath of Mexico's Revolution of 1910-1917.[7] The anthropologists also observed social stratification among these indigenes, which in some cases upset the preconceived notion of a petty capitalist, non-indigenous class of merchants or *caciques* (political bosses) who unfairly derived their riches from exploiting indigenous peasants. As Fernando Cámara astutely reported in the early 1950s, the merchant class held Mazatecs among its ranks, Mazatecs exploited other Mazatecs, and some non-indigenous inhabitants were

[7] This point is discussed in Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation.

as poor and disfranchised as their indigenous neighbors.[8] These early findings, then, were a foretaste of the varied meanings of indigeneity that would surface in relocation's wake.

In their publications and reports, anthropologists appear most concerned with indigenous peoples' collective position as an exploited class. Indian labor, in the tropics in particular, historically conjured up notions of exploitation and marginalization.[9] It was the vestiges of these exploitative relationships that anthropologists sought to do away with. But it was tricky to define *which* of these aspects of indigenous society—and of indigenous group's relationships to non-indigenous society—to eliminate. In simplified terms, anthropologists understood caciques to be social leeches draining an equitable existence from indigenous nuclei, but these political bosses—many of them indigenous go-betweens themselves—were also key intermediaries for the anthropologists and gatekeepers for the assimilation of new "modern" aspects of life into indigenous society.

The evacuation necessitated the assistance of indigenous intermediaries, but the social and economic programs the INI Coordinating Center was to carry out in the relocation communities would require more than informal indigenous allies. Anthropologist residents of the Center in the Papaloapan enlisted *promotores*, "promoters," many of them bilingual Mazatec speakers from the area, to assist in the areas of health, education, agriculture, and economic

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[8] Fernando Cámara, "Deplácement e réinstallation de groupes indigène au Mexique: Le Plan du Papaloapan" *Civilisations* 5, No. 2 (1955), pp. 203-229; Sergio Morales, "Informe que presenta Sergio Morales al Instituto Nacional Indigenista acerca de un viaje de estudio que hizo a la Cuenca del Papaloapan bajo su patrocinio" 1951. Fondo Alfonso Villa Rojas, Caja 11, Expediente 62. Biblioteca Juan Comas, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City; Agustin Romano, "Informe para el Instituto Nacional Indigenista relativo al viaje de estudio realizado por los alumnos de los cursos de antropología aplicada en la zona de la Cuenca del Papaloapan" November 1951. Fondo Alfonso Villa Rojas, Caja 11, Expediente 63; Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca del Papaloapan: aspectos de la antropología social aplicada." *Tlatoani* 7 (Octubre-Diciembre 1953): 30-35.

[9] John Kenneth Turner's trenchant critique of the tropical plantations in Valle Nacional (located in the Papaloapan River Basin) and the Yucatan peninsula during the years leading up to the Revolution of 1910 was perhaps the first and most emblematic in this regard: John Kenneth Turner, *Barbarous Mexico* (New York: Cassell, 1911).

programs. Indigenous intermediaries had served crucial roles for both community aggregation and state administration at least since the beginning of Spanish colonial rule, if not before.[10] During the latter half of the nineteenth century, bilingual indigenous go-betweens were instrumental in shaping local discourses and implementation of liberal political and economic reforms, and indigenous policies in the earlier part of the twentieth century included programs to create bilingual and bicultural indigenous citizens who both serve as mediators between the state and their home communities and uplift the respective communities from within, which yielded various desired results as well as unintended consequences.[11] In the Papaloapan, as in other areas within the ambit of INI Coordinating Centers, promotores worked in conjunction with anthropologist residents in relocation communities; much like indigenous intermediaries from previous eras, their role had the potential to provide them a privileged political and economic position both within the community and vis-à-vis state institutions. Yet not all promotores were from the region, not all of them spoke Mazatec, and even when they were bilingual locals, their community credentials did not always impress their neighbors. The anthropologists' reliance on promotores was a testament to the former's limited ability to mediate relations among locals or between locals and outsiders, and the promotores' relative position of power vis-à-vis both state

[10] Yanna Yannakakis provides the most salient example of how indigenous go-betweens both consolidated Spanish colonial administration and carved a place for elite indigenous autonomy in New Spain: Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). On the twentieth century, see Dawson, *Indian and Nation*.

[11] See Karen Caplan, *Indigenous Citizens: Local Liberalism in Early National Oaxaca and Yucatán* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009); David G. LaFrance & Guy P. C. Thomson, *Patriotism, Politics, and Popular Liberalism in Nineteenth-Century Mexico: Juan Francisco Lucas and the Puebla Sierra* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999); Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Patrick McNamara, *Sons of the Sierra: Juárez, Díaz, and the People of Ixtlán, Oaxaca, 1855-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007). For the early nineteenth-century genesis of liberalism in the Spanish-American world, see Mónica Quijada Mauriño, "La caja de Pandora. El sujeto político indígena en la construcción del orden liberal" *Historia Contemporánea* 33 (2006): 605-637.

representatives and evacuees—a position of power with the potential to reinforce unequal relationships upon resettlement.

The wide spectrum of promotores' allegiances and qualifications was a symptom of the underlying heterogeneity among the Mazatec-speaking population of the Papaloapan, a heterogeneity that made it convenient for evacuees and INI staff to refer to the former population interchangeably as "*indígenas*" or "*campesinos*." Campesino ascription, too, was political, forged through postrevolutionary activism and the inclusion of an official peasant league in the corporatist structure of Mexico's ruling party.[12] And prior to the INI anthropologists' arrival to the Papaloapan, denizens who belonged to communities that the social scientists would later identify as indigenous overwhelmingly represented themselves as campesinos in their written correspondence with state bureaucrats and the government.[13] This is not to imply that the referents "campesino" and "indígena" were mutually exclusive; to the contrary, most indígenas were campesinos and the two were often conflated in Mexican social and political thought.[14] What is significant about the slippage between these terms is that the object population of the INI anthropologists' work was "indigenous," and yet these anthropologists would easily drop the referent for one that many of the evacuees likely used to refer to themselves.

Spatial Organization

As we saw in the previous chapter, most of the evacuees may have worked the land for sustenance, but communities in the Papaloapan were hamlets, *poblados*, ejidos (land-grant

[12] Christopher R. Boyer, *Becoming Campesinos: Politics, Identity, and Agrarian Struggle in Postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2003).
[13] I elaborate this point in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.
[14] Emilio Kourí, "Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands in Porfirian Mexico: The Unexamined Legacies of Andrés Molina Enríquez," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, 1 (2002): 69-117.

communities)— in other words, they were juridical, political entities mapped onto particular spaces within the basin. Their reconstitution upon resettlement was made difficult for a number of reasons that together compounded the social, economic, and political problems in the new lands, among them differences in legal title and land tenure regimes both between and among communities, and the refusal of some members of communities to relocate while others were left with no other choice. The resettlement of families from various hamlets of distinct ethnic and linguistic backgrounds into a single new community often added to the trying task of finding suitable lands for the displaced to recreate their lives and livelihoods.

Relocation was not simply a process by which "communities" were coherently transplanted from one side of the river basin to another. The juridical course that displacement entailed followed a different route depending on the property status of the hamlets at hand. Small property owners, *ejidatarios* (members of land-grant communities), sharecroppers, and agrarian committees (this latter category of individuals comprised groups awaiting an ejidal grant or restitution) all interfaced with governmental land titling and agrarian agencies in distinct ways. Over the course of relocation, their usufruct rights could change drastically, and many lived in juridical limbo for decades as they lived without legal title to the lands they worked.

The five zones established by the Papaloapan Commission and Coordinating Center to accommodate the displaced population were unique for reasons of time and space: time, because each was founded at a different stage of the relocation process; and space, because the ecological and topographical conditions of each zone differed enough from the rest such that they shaped agricultural and commercial activity among the displaced. The first rural community to house the hundreds of displaced families was a hard-won *predio* (plot) ten or so kilometers southwest of the reservoir within the municipio (municipality) of Soyaltepec. Displaced families chose this

plot over lands the Commission offered on the other side of the Veracruz-Oaxaca border in order to maintain their status as members of their *municipio libre* (free municipality) within the state of Oaxaca.[15] The Relocation Office, then under the direction of the anthropologist Alfonso Villa Rojas, secured these lands, a predio called Santa María Chichicazapa, in 1953 after a protracted petitioning process to the Commission and federal government. Though the lands may not have been ideal for farming, initially residents appear to have been quite satisfied with the proximity of the new relocation zone to their old communities.

The next four zones would be divided evenly between the states of Oaxaca and Veracruz. The second of the zones was Los Naranjos, Veracruz, approximately 25 kilometers due east of the dam. Reluctant residents from the municipio of San José Independencia would resettle there, but over the course of the relocation a large number of them—perhaps even half the resettled population—moved back to their home hamlet or to the community of Cerro Campana, along the northwestern perimeter of the reservoir.[16] The third zone, La Joya del Obispo, located approximately 34 kilometers southwest of Tuxtepec, or 50 kilometers southeast as the crow flies from the dam in Temascal, would become home to families from Soyaltepec and Ixcatlán, Mazatec-speaking ejidatarios in their majority. Also located in Veracruz, the fourth zone was established on the predio Yogopi, Tierra Blanca municipality. The first families to relocate to

[15] The designation of municipality allowed political units greater autonomy and latitude in local decision-making than the designation of *Agencia Municipal* under the auspices of an overarching municipal authority.

[16] Luna Ruiz, "De la Cuenca a la selva," 120. Population data for any of the affected communities before, during, and after relocation is inconsistent and contradictory. The Internal documentation from the Coordinating Center indicates that by 1959 462 individuals had been relocated to the predio of Los Naranjos (see "Estado Actual" August 22, 1962 AHT Caja 102, Expediente 1017). Census figures from the national statistics bureau, the Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía (INEGI) indicate that San José Independencia had a population of 1,417 in 1940, 2,061 in 1950, and 1,847 in 1960. If by 1959 462 individuals had relocated, the population of San José Independencia consisted of 214 fewer individuals in 1960 than it did in 1950, which corroborates Luna Ruíz's claim that (roughly) half of the relocated population returned.

this zone would found the community of Nuevo Ixcatlán, with a majority of them hailing from the old municipality of the same name. San Felipe Zihualtepec, within the state limits of Oaxaca, was the last zone to be created and, located some 250 kilometers away, the farthest from the dam. Nestled between the Papaloapan River Basin and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, this tropical plot in the Sierra Norte belonged to a Mixe-speaking majority municipality, which invariably turned the relocation communities of Zihualtepec into intercultural melting pots of Mazatecs, Chinantecs, and of course Mixes, alongside some landless Mixtecs and mestizos from the region.

Map 4.3 Relocation Zones



An underlying assumption about the power of the city to civilize the individual no doubt guided much of Mexico's planning efforts during the mid-twentieth century. Yet planners and

policymakers alike recognized the potential problem of overcrowding in the nation's capital, not to mention the difficulty in realizing the constitutional mandate for land reform throughout the country.[17] In order to remedy the problem of overpopulation in the city and arable land scarcity in the country, the federal government actively promoted colonization in the less populated tropical lowlands. This "march to the sea," or rather, to the humid tropics, embodied one essential component of Mexico's development aims: not all citizens could or should live in the city, but the state could bring the city, and all the trappings of civilization therein, to the countryside.[18]

Though the Papaloapan Commission's colonization efforts targeted urban and rural dwellers outside the river basin as opposed to the locally displaced Mazatecs, the Coordinating Center staff envisioned relocation communities with the same advantageous spatial and organizational attributes of urban life.[19] A young University of Chicago-trained anthropologist named Rodolfo Stavenhagen visited the area that would be subsumed by the dam's reservoir during the first phase of displacement and would later work as a resident anthropologist—a hybrid political leader, social worker, community planner under the auspices of the INI Coordinating Center— in the relocation community of Nuevo Ixcatlán. His publication on applied anthropology in the Papaloapan, appearing in 1953, was the first to both synthesize the activities of anthropologists in the relocation process, and to comment on the significance of this

[17] Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution made possible the formation of comités agrarios who could legally petition for communal land grants (ejidos). The limited availability of idle lands in Mexico with sufficient access to water led to conflict among would-be ejidatarios and private property owners (both those with large tracts of land and smallholders).

[18] Luis Aboites, "Optimismo nacional: geografía, ingeniería hidráulica y política en México (1926-1976)." In *Identidades, estado nacional y globalidad: México, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Brígida von Mentz (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología, 2000).

[19] The colonization component of the Papaloapan Project was carried out with limited results. See Juan Ballesteros, Matthew Edel y Michel Nelson. *La colonización en la Cuenca del Papaloapan: una evaluación socioeconómica* (México, Centro de investigaciones Agrarias, 1970).

work to social science. Both he and Alfonso Villa Rojas, as director of the relocation and Chicago anthropologist Robert Redfield's most decorated Mexican collaborator and protégé, noted the transformation of community relations as the first wave of inhabitants resettled in Santa María Chichicazapa, Soyaltepec.

Villa Rojas observed among the resettled population certain aspects of "human behaviour" that he had really only known in books, "with well-organized and precise concepts that are almost never found in real life"[20] and requested that Redfield send his North American students to fully record the "rapid and controlled changes" taking place before his eyes.[21] For his part, Stavenhagen observed that changes in spatial configuration led to distinct rhythms of daily life for those in relocation communities who now would find easier access to roads; have to travel longer distances to work their farm lands; and engage more regularly with local politicians, teachers, public health providers, not to mention new neighbors.[22] In this initial stage of relocation both anthropologists were convinced that this unprecedented experiment in regional development would potentially augur irreversible changes among peoples yet untouched by the holy water of modernization.

According to early plans, the individual plots or *solares* for new homes in all of the relocation communities measured areas ranging from 1000 to 1500 square meters, allowing for families to raise two to three larger animals and to plant fruit trees or other agricultural goods. Each community would also have a designated portion of land where a center of civic activity, a

[20] AVR- RR March 22, 1953. "...con conceptos bien organizados y nítidos que casi nunca se encuentran en la realidad."
[21] AVR-RR August 9, 1953.
[22] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca," 34.

school, and a commercial zone would be located.[23] Much like in colonial-era *reducciones*, the intention was to locate denizens' homes in this central area and grant them at least ten hectares each—an amount typical for ejidal grant parcels— in outlying portions of the community to dedicate to agricultural work.

The plans outlined new living quarters that would boast cement floors, some with brick walls, tile roofs, and fenced-in yards. But for Stavenhagen, such constructions, more typical of urban dwellings in the Mexican Central Valley, appeared ill-suited to life in the humid tropics. In smaller relocation communities,[24] homes better resembled the local construction of *chozas,* or huts, with walls made of wood and palm leaf roofs (See Photograph 5.1 of Nuevo San Martín). Regardless of the shape the ideal construction would take and whether or not it was compatible with the life most relocated Mazatecs led, after the first phase of resettlement many communities lacked housing altogether for the newly arrived. Throughout the decade, residents and Coordinating Center staff alike implored the Papaloapan Commission, which was responsible for building homes and preparing new lands for the displaced, to carry out its charge. Feebly built houses in some communities did little to assuage the fears of the newly arrived that the construction materials were too weak to endure cyclones, or even flooding should the dam wall itself crumble.[25] Needless to say, the Mazatecs' skepticism of the durability of their new homes proved to be well-founded when, after the rainy season of 1953, homes in the relocation communities of Nuevo Soyaltepec and Nuevo Cozolapa collapsed.[26] At least in terms of housing, lofty ideals of city living were rarely (successfully) realized. And yet, the Papaloapan

[23] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca," 34.
[24] For example: Las Margaritas, Corral de Piedra, El Capulín, and Chichicasapa.
[25] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca," 32.
[26] "Se Derrumban las Casas del Nuevo Soyaltepec" *Acción* March 28, 1954. No. 1443.

Commission's apparent lack of interest in the construction and durability of homes in the relocation communities was a first instance in which anthropologists positioned themselves as defenders of the displaced vis-à-vis the Commission.

Photograph 5.1 Nuevo San Martín, 1958



Photograph by Robert Laughlin, Artist's Private Collection, 1958

To be sure, relocated residents had their own ideas about how life should be organized in the new communities, which at times clashed with the plans anthropologists conceived. One relocated man requested two homes—one for each of his wives; a twelve-year-old male, recently married, surprised relocation staff with his request for his own house as well. Sixteen families that had relocated to the community of Nuevo Soyaltepec, disillusioned with the poor quality of their new lands, moved on their own volition to a vacant portion of another community, where

they demanded the Coordinating Center erect homes and infrastructure for them.[27] If the Papaloapan Commission was the supreme agency directing development efforts in the basin, its leaders and staff were not the only agents with a vision for what development should look like.

One of the most pressing issues for the displaced population was that many *campesinos* did not own any land, and some of the landless rented from small-scale owners to grow their crop. Few renters were able to become *ejidatarios* in the new community and thus earn usufruct rights to an inalienable parcel of ten to twelve hectares; most of those without land of their own could only become *ejidatarios* where there was land available outside of the reserved ejido plots.[28]

The Departamento Agrario, which oversaw land-related issues pertaining to ejidos, drew much criticism from the Coordinating Center directorship throughout the first decade of relocation. In 1955, Center Director Pozas and his wife, the anthropologist Isabel Horcasitas, launched the first wave of critiques, indicating that at times the Departamento Agrario's interventions in the relocation process not only hindered the persuasion campaigns but also encouraged "despondency and disconcert" among the indigenous ejidatarios. The department, they claimed, was ignorant of the expressed desires of the displaced indigenous population, and assigned lands either untenable or inappropriately sized for the ejidatarios.[29] It is unlikely that the anthropologists were necessarily better qualified than the Departamento Agrario to recognize and articulate the indigenous ejidatarios' needs and desires, but Pozas and Horcasitas's acerbic commentaries may have served another purpose: they carefully outlined the ways in which the

[27] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca"; Letter to Vocal Ejecutivo Raúl Sandoval from Prof. José Luiz Melgarejo Vivanco, Director de Asuntos Indígenas, September 14, 1954. Caja 16, Expediente 174, Archivo Histórico de Temazcal, Comisión Nacional para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Oaxaca de Juárez, Mexico [hereafter AHT])
[28] Pozas y Horcasitas, *Informe Crítico*, 4-5.
[29] Pozas y Horcasitas, *Informe Crítico*, 3-4, 7-8.

Center was distinct from their fellow bureaucrats in the Departamento Agrario, and therefore why their work on behalf of the indigenous population was critical to rural development.

Not all families or individuals relocated under the auspices of either the Departamento Agrario or the Coordinating Center. Those who could afford to—most of them wealthier farmers or ranchers— relocated on their own account. And then there were also those of modest means who took it upon themselves to find a suitable place to call home. In September of 1954, sixteen families from the relocation community of Nuevo Soyaltepec moved to Loma Colorada on their own and demanded a pueblo be built for them. Though it is not entirely clear why they refused to remain in Nuevo Soyaltepec, it was likely the case that the presence of competing political bosses made it disagreeable for some of the new inhabitants. It would cost the Papaloapan Commission more than $500,000 to open a road in order to move the necessary machinery to the hillside where the families made their requisition, and so the request was immediately denied. The families likely became squatters on their new lands, an early example of the land titling quagmire in the basin.[30]

Community Development

Over the course of relocation, the Coordinating Center, Papaloapan Commission, more than a dozen state agencies (including the Agrarian Department as well as the Ministries of Agriculture, Public Health, and Education) implemented a series of improvement programs in the river basin. In the resettlement zones, the Coordinating Center oversaw four areas which had the most direct effect on the displaced population: health and sanitation, education, agricultural

[30] Prof. José Luiz Melgarejo Vivanco, Director de Asuntos Indígenas, to Raúl Sandoval, September 14 1954, AHT Caja 16, Exp 174.

modernization, and economic planning. Planners at the Papaloapan Commission and anthropologists tasked with evacuating residents agreed that sanitizing the region was necessary, for it would ensure a healthy population primed for increased economic productivity and a more efficient and safer relocation process. Thus, health and sanitation brigades circulated throughout the region months before the evacuation of residents began. The river basin was a comfortable berth for rugged mosquitoes, parasites, and other waterborne maladies. But aside from tropical diseases, such as malaria or onchocerciasis (river blindness), other causes of high mortality and morbidity included dysentery, polio, smallpox, measles, and bacterial infection. With little to no access to the Ministry of Health and Assistance (Secretaría de Salubridad Pública y Asistencia), most residents used home remedies or sought local healers to treat their ailments. To eliminate vectors of infectious disease, doctors and nurses traveled by boat and mule to treat and inoculate young and old.

A Medical Service circulated throughout the zone during the first years of relocation, with two doctors and a Mazatec-speaking (male) nurse attending the 17 recently transplanted populations. In 1954 the lack of medical personnel was an issue, and during the dry season falling water levels made travel by river increasingly difficult. In October of that year, communities accessible by land received medical visits, and the Center staff called for four more recent medical school graduates to fulfill their social service requirement in the vaso.[31]

These and other health campaigns brought mixed results during the first years of life in the relocation zones. Resistance to some of these foreign healing practices was frequent, even with the assistance of bilingual Mazatec health promoters. Latrines were erected at a snail's pace

[31] Informe bimensual que rinde a la dirección del CCI del subdirector... correspondientes a los meses de octubre y noviembre de 1954, AHT Caja 105 Epediente 1056.

and potable water nonexistent, both of which exacerbated sanitation problems.[32] While some evacuees welcomed the use of pharmaceuticals and vaccinations to damper tropical viral outbreaks and prevent the spread of Old World diseases, averseness to blood drawing and inoculation remained high, and local healers held their ground as the ultimate authorities of human health concerns. Both before the evacuation and in the first decade following relocation, health officials were most successful in their efforts when they convinced and enlisted *brujos* (known pejoratively as "witch doctors," otherwise as medicine men or women) to incorporate modern medicine into their practice. Reticent cuenqueños, even those who were outright hostile toward the practices of the health brigades, had a change of heart when their local *brujo* administered malaria treatments.[33] The degree to which anthropologists encouraged syncretism in local healing methods is unclear from the archival record, but it appears that the Center's staff intended to complement most existing health practices among indigenous residents, as opposed to replacing them entirely with "modern" medicine.[34] Perhaps the presence of local healers already fluent in scientific curing methods made some of the region's denizens more amenable to state public health practices. One such *curandero*, whom anthropologists identified as a Mixtec Indian from a region outside the river basin, was much sought after in the relocation community of La Joya. His use of an edited volume on medicinal plants from Mexico's flagship national university, the UNAM, earned him high regard among the Center's anthropologists.[35]

Despite any shortcomings, throughout the 1950s resident anthropologists, Coordinating

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[32] Memorandum from Vocal Secretario Ramos Magaña to Alfonso Villa Rojas, June 27, 1953. AHA, CP, Mexico City, Caja 370, Expediente 6028, Legajo 1/4.

[33] Meeting minutes January 27, 1956 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 1969.

[34] Such public health practices were not uncommon in other parts of the Americas. See Steven Paul Palmer, *From Popular Medicine to Medical Populism: Doctors, Healers, and Public Power in Costa Rica, 1800-1940* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003).

[35] Diario de campo, 1958 AHT Caja 3 Expediente 23.

Center doctors, and health promoters bragged of success in campaigns to convince relocated residents to take full advantage of state services. Propaganda to boil water and take precautions against malaria infection proliferated in the basin.[36] Yet as early as 1954, the first of a series of budget cuts limited the provision of health services, including life-saving medication. Though the federal government directly funded the INI and the Coordinating Center received a partial subsidy from the Papaloapan Commission, both sources of funding were subject to the vagaries of federal budgetary balancing during these crucial years of the so-called Mexican Miracle.[37] The salaries of resident medical doctors were too costly, leaving the Coordinating Center no choice but to hire a small number of purely ambulatory medical personnel to make routine visits throughout the basin. Weekly calls were less frequent during the rainy season when poor flood control and incomplete or unpaved roads rendered some of the new communities inaccessible. And inaccessibility affected the availability of pharmacy stock as well.

Financial constraints notwithstanding, the number of health consultations in the Papaloapan Coordinating Center increased by 80-100% every year during the first three years of service, and maintained an average of 10,000 consultations from 1958-1964. Through the application of the potent insecticide DDT (dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane) the Coordinating Center social medicine section staff stifled malaria outbreaks in the basin; they also combatted hookworm and "mal de pinto," a bacterial skin disease, and built over 200 latrines.[38] Starting in 1956, the section enlisted bilingual promoters of the Coordinating Center Audiovisual

[36] Informe bimensual que rinde a la dirección del CCI del subdirector... correspondientes a los meses de octubre y noviembre de 1954 AHT Caja 105 Epediente 1056.
[37] The "Mexican Miracle" refers to the period following World War II to the early 1970s, the Mexican government successfully enacted policies to promote domestic consumption and economic growth while maintaining low rates of inflation.
[38] Instituto Nacional Indigenista, *Realidades y proyectos. 16 años de trabajo.* (Mexico, Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1964), 56.

Department's Guiñol Theater to perform health-awareness puppet shows for the relocated populations. Clad in local dress and staged in a familiar setting, these Mazatec-speaking puppets' comedic routines taught captive audiences—at times numbering in the hundreds— about inoculation against whooping cough, the treatment of intestinal worms, and formal scientific understandings of general contagion and prevention. The audiovisual department was determined to use local, endearing, and memorable indigenous characters to impart knowledge to residents—in opposition to U.S. mass-produced images from Walt Disney films—to show the audience that they too could utilize modern medicine, without forfeiting that which made them Mazatec.[39] With its dependency theory-laden undertone, the subtext of such educational methods encouraged a nationalist identification with the Mexican state. That is to say, Mazatecs could utilize modern medicine, remain culturally Mazatec, but in the process identify more deeply as Mexican nationals with the support of the Mexican state.

Puppet theater and other forms of popular education proved to be successful ways of edifying the populace, but formal education too was one of the Center's principle mandate when it took command of the relocation in 1954. Schools, historically in Mexico and elsewhere, were essential to the goal of national integration and socialization.[40] Each of the five municipal head

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[39] "Informe de la jira efectuada por el "Teatro Guignol Mazateco" Sept 17-24, 1956 AHT Caja 99 Expediente 980. According to Lini De Vries, the original puppet master was Marco Antonio Montero, known at the time for his direction of Arthur Miller's plays in Mexico City. Montero had initiated the puppet theater program in Chiapas before moving, upon Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán's request, to Nuevo Paso Nacional to spearhead the puppet theater program in the Papaloapan. See De Vries, *The People of the Mountains: Health Education among Indian Communities in Oaxaca, Mexico.* (Cuernavaca, Mexico: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969) 128. For more on the puppet theater (Teatro Petul) in Chiapas, see Stephen E. Lewis, "Modernizing Message, Mystical Messenger: The Teatro Petul in the Chiapas Highlands, 1954–1974." *The Americas* 67, no. 3 (2011): 375– 97.

[40] On Mexico, see, for example, May Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1997); Stephen Lewis, "The Nation, Education, and the 'Indian Problem' in Mexico, 1920-1940" in *The Eagle and the Virgin: Nation and Cultural Revolution in Mexico, 1920-1940,* ed. Mary Kay Vaughan and Stephen E. Lewis (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006); Ariadna Acevedo Rodrigo, "Ciudadanos indígenas: la construcción de derechos y obligaciones en la relación de los pueblos indígenas con las escuelas, 1875-1940" in *Educación, ciudadanía y estado en México: Siglo XX,* coord. Marco

towns affected by the dam had at least one primary schoolhouse, but most hamlets (which numbered 86 when evacuation had come to an end) lacked any semblance of formal education. The Coordinating Center was to establish schools in the relocation communities, ostensibly in conjunction with the Ministry of Public Education (Secretaría de Educación Pública, SEP). The Coordinating Center Schools' mission, on the other hand, was a bit more nuanced than the rural schools that had proliferated since the 1920s, with its focus on bilingual education and the immediate goal of teaching indigenous literacy.[41]

Anthropologists were not alone in believing that command of the Spanish language, both written and spoken, was the key to fully integrating indigenous citizens into the Mexican nation. Their approach to literacy, however, was more complex than a simple, totalizing policy of Spanish language immersion. In line with contemporary psychological and linguistic scholarship, anthropologists understood language to be intrinsically related to culture and personality. Approaches to indigenous literacy in Mexico had been pioneered by linguist Morris Swadesh and colleagues in the Tarascan Project of the 1930s, but their utility had been undermined by a lack of state support throughout the 1940s.[42]

Calderón & Elizabeth Buenabad (Mexico: Instituto de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades, Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla; El Colegio de Michoacán, 2012); Alicia Civera, "La reforma integral del campo mexicano a través de la escuela rural posrevolucionaria: la relevancia de la enseñanza agrícola y el cooperativismo, 1921-1945" in *Campesinos y escolares: la construcción de la escuela en el campo latinoamericano, siglos XIX y XX,* coord. Alicia Civera Cerecedo, et al (Zinacantepec; Mexico City, Mexico: Colegio Mexiquense; Miguel Ángel Porrúa, 2011); Engracia Loyo, "El conocimiento del indio. Nuevo camino para su asimilación (1930- 1940)," in *Historias, saberes indígenas y nuevas etnicidades en la escuela*, ed. María Bertely Busquets (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 2006).

[41] The Coordinating Center's bilingual literacy policy was an institutional mandate within the INI more broadly. Certainly attempts at bilingual teaching had begun much earlier—most notably in Morris Swadesh's Tarascan project among the Purupecha Indians of Michocán state in the 1930s.

[42] This reference to second language education is ubiquitous throughout CCIP internal memos and reports. See also INI/CCIP "empleo de las lenguas vernáculas en la enseñanza" taken from the UNESCO document of the same name, originally published in 1953. AHT Caja 69 Expediente 696. The notion of "culture and personality" as interrelated aspects of human life came to prominence in anthropological circles with Ruth Benedict's publication of *Patterns of Culture* (Boston; New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1934). Throughout the 1940s and 1950s,

In April 1954 the INI and the SEP agreed on a Rural Education Plan in what they termed the "Zona Indígena Mazateca de la Cuenca del Papaloapan," to service both the lowlands affected by the dam and the Mazatec highlands around the municipality of Huautla de Jiménez. The plan was a collaborative effort, under the direction of the Coordinating Center, the Papaloapan Commission's representative to the Board of Federal Education (Dirección de Educación Federal) in Oaxaca, and the federal teachers and promotores of education who would labor in Mazatec-speaking poblados. According to the agreement, teaching methods could vary depending on the circumstances of the community, particularly with respect to the use of indigenous languages. The signatories agreed: Mazatec children should become literate in their mother tongue, the indigenous youth would at once learn to read and write in Mazatec and learn orally the Spanish language. Literacy in their first language, it was believed, would translate directly into Spanish literacy once the students had acquired a "minimal vocabulary" in Spanish.[43]

The responsibility to prepare bilingual teachers fell on the shoulders of the Coordinating Center. Under the guidance of various INI professionals that included linguists, anthropologists, education supervisors, doctors and agronomists, as well as federal school inspectors, the bilingual education promotores would be required to undergo a thirty-day training course. The agreement established the promotores' minimum wage (300 pesos per month) and a supplementary income for bilingual federal teachers, both to be paid by the Coordinating Center.

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culture and personality studies applied aspects of psychological theory and method to anthropological research, bearing a heavy mark on studies of culture change, particularly among "backward" or "primitive" societies. On the Tarascan Project, see Morris Swadesh, "Proyecto de plan de educación indígena en lengua nativa tarasca." *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana* 3, no. 3 (1939): 222–27.

[43] Such ideas about language, culture, and psychology informed social scientific thinking in the Soviet Union, where national (glossed as "indigenized") identity formation was understood as a necessary precursor to Soviet/communist identity and allegiance in the Marxian evolutionary sense. See Francine Hirsch, *Empire of Nations: Ethnographic Knowledge and the Making of the Soviet Union* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

Literacy Centers for adults (*Centros de Alfabetización*) at work in the Mazatec zone under the auspices of the Ministry of Public Education or the Oaxacan government would become *Centros de Educación Fundamental*, staffed by trained promotores.

In large part, the education program in the Papaloapan, mirroring bilingual education elsewhere in the country, was a stop-gap measure to promote literacy and incorporate indigenous students into the federal education system. While a majority, if not almost all, of the anthropologists and linguists collaborating with the INI in the early 1950s were committed to indigenous literacy and education, the bilingual program only extended through primary education, and only where promotores or bilingual teachers were available. Bilingual promotores would teach alone if more than fifty percent of the school was monolingual; on the other hand, if a simple majority spoke Spanish, a federal teacher would teach, with a promotor serving as assistant. Had the INI counted on the financial resources and political strength to promote a bilingual program through secondary school, it would have been both onerous to implement and largely impractical. Teaching materials in Mazatec were limited to phonetic flash cards, and there were no printed or recorded sources to aid teachers and students at more advanced levels. Consequently, as the plan outlined, when a student commanded the Castilian language he would move to a Spanish-only Federal Rural School.[44]

This agreement differed quite markedly from the Papaloapan Commission's plan, which discouraged students from speaking to one another in Mazatec, calling instead for libraries, newspapers, magazines adequate for "*la mentalidad infantil*," and the introduction of radio and cinema as first order material in elementary and preschool education. Rural newspapers were to function as agents of social and educational guidance to imprint on the minds of the denizens

[44] Convenio entre la SEP y el INI April 19, 1954 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 173.

how to properly manage the region's natural resources.[45]

At first, Commission director of education Antonio Barbosa Heldt's proposal gained little traction. The Coordinating Center serviced 1450 monolingual students,[46] and the initial efforts would follow the mandate of the Coordinating Center-SEP rural education plan. In Nuevo Paso Nacional, location of the Coordinating Center and home to a cosmopolitan blend of professionals, merchants, and upwardly mobile Mazatecs from the region, bilingual educators used the Freinet technique to promote indigenous literacy. Brought to Mexico by Spanish Republican refugees Patricio Redondo and José de Tapia Bujalance who had landed in Veracruz, the Freinet approach of child-centered story-telling and print-making pedagogy was established in a series of schools in the basin. American expatriate public health nurse Lini De Vries was awestruck by what she witnessed during her first visit to a local schoolhouse in 1955: "With pride, children were learning their own legends and history as told by the old story-tellers. These accounts were now being read on mimeographed sheets in both languages – Mazateca [sic] and Spanish, as well as contemporary knowledge – all taken home to their families. Their cultural background, fortified in this way, was maintained by the people as they were moving into the *mestizo* culture."[47]

De Vries's idealistic understanding of the program was at least a bit naïve: in practice such a policy was difficult to realize over the long term. But her language also betrays the tension inherent in the indigenous modernization program. Children were learning, proudly, to read and write in their mother tongue, but the objective was for them to move "into the mestizo

[45] Antonio Barbosa Heldt (Coordinador Educativo de la Comisión del Papalaopan) January 8, 1954 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 173.
[46] Pozas to Jefe del Depto. de Estadística Escolar, SEP September 2, 1955 AHT Caja 18 Expediente 200.
[47] De Vries, *The People of the Mountains,* 127.

culture." Without a long-term indigenous language program, the sustainability of indigenous literacy was minimal. Thus, as they transitioned into "mestizo" (read: modern) Mexico, how could the Center conserve the indigenous language, which was perhaps the most salient marker of indigeneity?

Many schools in the relocation zones were comprised of students from various hamlets of the river basin, and the mutual unintelligibility of linguistic variants of the distinct Mazatec communities rendered Mazatec-language instruction impossible in those areas. Joining Director Ricardo Pozas early on in the Center was his wife and fellow anthropologist Isabel Horcasitas, who was named Coordinating Center Director of Education during the first two years of relocation. Initially she sought to implement Mazatec literacy programs throughout the new schools, but the impracticability of such programs led her to administer uniform Spanish literacy programs. During her tenure, educational directors from the other three Coordinating Centers congregated to the Papaloapan to agree on a unified methodology for literacy education among the monolingual indigenous populations in the INI sphere of influence. Other INI functionaries, such as Assistant Director Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, anthropologist Julio de la Fuente, authorities from the Interamerican Indianist Institute, and representatives from the Public Education Ministry, among others, met and criticized the sole use of the Spanish language for literacy education. The heated debates, in which Aguirre and de la Fuente argued for the primacy of indigenous literacy while Horcasitas defended the impossibility of putting such an idea into practice, ended with INI Director Alfonso Caso's removal of Horcasitas from her post. Angered both by his wife's dismissal and disagreements about other INI policies, Pozas left his position as

director shortly thereafter.[48] INI anthropologists might agree on the theory of indigenous bilingual education but program implementation was another story.

INI staff's relationship with Mazatec parents was no more congenial. Perhaps educational promoters had students' best interests in mind, but parents did not always agree with their educational policy or pedagogy. In community schools where students spoke the same linguistic variant, Mazatec parents often balked at time wasted in teaching their children to read and write in their mother tongue instead of Spanish. And regardless of whether or not teachers spoke Mazatec in the classroom, some parents derided the educators' use of the Freinet technique, which to them appeared more like a series of games, inappropriate in a serious learning environment.[49] Much of the educational work in the relocation communities involved collaboration between the Center and parents, and heeding the latter's demands was critical to the success of the Center's programs. From the mid-1950s onward in all of the relocation communities, adults formed parent committees (Comités de Padres de Familia), both independently from or at the behest of the resident anthropologists. Some of these cohorts were more active than others, frequently working in conjunction with the staff of the Coordinating Center, and were quick to demand replacement teachers when educational promoters slacked on the job or utilized techniques not to the parents' liking.[50] At times communities refused to collaborate with the Center and reneged on paying their half of the promotores' salaries.[51] In such cases the Center removed its educational project from the respective hamlet or municipality, and

[48] Luna Ruíz, "De la Cuenca a la selva" 161-162.
[49] "Junta del Consejo Correspondiente a Noviembre" November 25 [no year, likely 1956] AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169.
[50] "Junta del Consejo" November 25 [n.d.] AHT.
[51] Prof. Romeo Cid Gil, Supervisor of Education, CCIP Informe 25 February 1955 regarding Arroyo Chicali AHT Caja 16 Expediente 173

formal education would not return until the Education Ministry assumed jurisdiction of the Coordinating Center's schools, well into the 1960s.

Thus the impact of parental activism on education policy, as limited as it may have been, indelibly shaped both the practice of education in the relocation zones and the civic culture of the community. Together with the parent committees, various Coordinating Center schools implemented free breakfast programs and employed *faenas,* or community collaborative labor projects, to build outdoor courts suitable for volleyball and basketball. This latter endeavor served to foment inter-community sports competition throughout the new communities. The faena, an old practice frequently used to carry out public works projects when government moneys were scarce, was here invoked to promote locally-based sport—a modern form of sociability.[52] Parents encouraged vocational training sponsored by the Coordinating Center as well, which by the end of the 1950s included courses in haircutting and hygiene, as well as dressmaking with sewing machines, and woodworking at the Center's carpentry shop.

Yet collaboration between relocated families and the Center could only go so far, as the jurisdiction of these public schools over time exacerbated financial and political problems. Federal rural schools were few and far between in the relocation zones; the vast majority, even into the early 1960s, were sanctioned by the Ministry of Education but lacked full federal funding. Coordinating Center schools rarely employed federal teachers, instead contracting educational promoters from the region, many of them Mazatecs, to teach primary education. The Coordinating Center could not cover the salaries of these promoters in their entirety: every community paid half the cost, either via the political leadership's treasury or local fundraising. Until 1959, the promoters' wage was significantly lower than that of federal teachers in the

[52] I thank Ariadna Acevedo for bringing this to my attention.

region, and because they were essentially doing the teachers' work, they demanded parity.[53]

The Coordinating Center staff of the Papaloapan understood their role in the education of relocated indigenous youth as temporary, yet their intervention in other arenas of society and economy in the relocation zones would prove to be more permanent. In the early 1920s, under the auspices of the first Secretary of Public Education, José Vasconcelos, rural education linked agriculture to the classroom through the collective farming of a school plot. This component would become a mainstay of rural education in successive regimes, later to be called the school parcel (*parcela escolar*). The parcel was key to mid-century modernization efforts throughout Mexico but particularly in the relocation communities of the Papaloapan River Basin, because there, students and parents alike experimented with new seed or species varieties, planting techniques, and inputs without jeopardizing their source of sustenance. The majority of communities harvested the School Parcel crops for sale, using funds for building improvements and school related social functions. Here, the Parcel was the crucial nexus between education and agricultural development.

Access to modern medicine and formal education was indeed a pillar of improvement efforts, but a program for economic development in the relocation zones would need to address the peoples' source of sustenance. While a small but significant portion of those affected by the construction of the President Alemán dam were artisans or merchants, the vast majority dedicated their lives to working the land. Agricultural modernization had the potential to provide

[53] Coordinating Center Meeting Minutes January 26, 1955 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169. The Center advocated the federalization of all schools in the region, whereby the Education Ministry would incorporate the community school under the purview of the federal system. Federalization would alleviate the financial burden of paying instructors, both for the Center and the community; but more importantly, it had the potential to standardize and improve education in the relocation zones, setting in motion a mandate for secondary education and thus providing greater educational opportunity for Mazatec youth.

families with the means to earn an income— one that would ensure them more long-term economic security. The School Parcel was but one of numerous experimental agricultural units in which such bastions of agrarian science were utilized; not infrequently, individual *campesinos* dedicated sections of their family parcels as "demonstrations," using more modern techniques or seed to reveal to the community the potential fruits of modern agricultural labor.[54] Efforts in the relocation zones aimed to provide farmers with the means to grow lucrative agricultural commodities as well as access to scientifically improved seed, breeds, and inputs.

Resettlement in the Papaloapan coincided with new gains in agricultural science the world over, later branded the "Green Revolution."[55] Literature on this phenomenon in post-1940 Mexico has emphasized the proliferation of mechanized, industrial farming among an agricultural elite at the expense of smallholders, or the concomitant rise of agronomists as veritable experts in the consolidated bureaucracies of the Mexican state.[56] Though in certain parts of the country— the Papaloapan River Basin included—industrial farming transformed the landscape while smallholders and subsistence growers struggled to make ends meet, this

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[54] "Estudio de campo". AHT Caja 102 Expediente 1021. *Campesino* is the term anthropologists, Papaloapan Commission officials, and residents themselves most commonly used to identify the relocated residents who worked the land. The Spanish word roughly translates to "peasant," though the connotations of "campesino" are distinct, particularly in the Mexican context during this period, because of the significance of campesinos as a political (and politicized) class in the construction of the postrevolutionary state and ruling party.

[55] The first iterations of this global movement took place on Mexican soil through a joint collaboration between scientists and reformers on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. On the origins of the Mexican Agricultural Program and its connection to the "Green Revolution," see Nick Cullather, *A Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010). On cross-border rural planning and collaboration, see Tore Olsson, "Agrarian Crossings: The American South, Mexico, and the Twentieth-Century Remaking of the Rural World," (PhD diss., University of Georgia, 2013).

[56] See Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara*, Modernizing Mexican Agriculture: Socioeconomic Implications of Technological Change, 1940-1970* (Geneva, Switzerland: United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, 1976) and Joseph Cotter, *Troubled Harvest: Agronomy and Revolution in Mexico, 1880-2002* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), respectively. Hewitt de Alcántara posits two phases of agricultural modernization in Mexico— socialistic community-based agricultural societies under President Lázaro Cárdenas (1935-1940) and industrial, capitalist development under his successors, particularly Manuel Ávila Camacho (1941-1946) and Miguel Alemán (1947-1952).

narrative obscures the fact that planners during the 1940s-60s also enacted programs with an alternative vision of modernized agriculture in mind. INI staff in particular envisioned indigenous smallholders producing for subsistence as well as for local, regional, domestic, or even international markets. Planned agricultural improvements could give rise to financially solvent indigenous yeoman farmers, these reformers believed, with the right amount of outside mediation and *indigenista* know-how.

Tobacco, peanuts and *hule* (rubber tree) were the first commercial crops the Coordinating Center promoted in the relocation zones. The Center sent a handful of the INI's agronomists and requested assistance from Papaloapan Commission engineers as well to survey land use, take stock of the soil quality in the commodity parcels, and counsel farmers on best agricultural practices for high yields. Resident anthropologists reported enthusiasm among campesinos in the new communities, and not long thereafter, improved rice and maize seed were also introduced to the region.[57] But if at times tropical commodities left a bit to be desired in the relocation communities, improved seed and species certainly made a lasting mark. Blue Bonnet rice, an upland variety that did not require a flooded paddy and was therefore less susceptible to waterborne pests or rot, was used widely throughout the basin; a maize variety created from careful selection and Christened "Papaloapan I" was also distributed throughout the new communities. In some cases, experimentation with hybrid cereals took place as well, though resident anthropologists and Coordinating Center staff were wary of the long-term feasibility of residents purchasing new seed on an annual basis. Campesinos welcomed and even requested chemical fertilizers, insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides to support both their experimental and traditional crop yields, taking advantage of subsidies and credit opportunities furnished by

[57] Informes de Stavenhagen, Muñoz, Cadeza, 1955-56 AHT Caja 101 Expediente 1016.

the Papaloapan Commission or other authorities.[58]

Plant-based nutrients were essential for subsistence, but animals could provide both a protein supplement to the traditional diet of maize and beans, and a potential source of income. To this end, the Coordinating Center facilitated the introduction of new breeds of chicken, hogs, and cattle. Evidence suggests that over time campesinos in the resettled zones actively embraced these new species, at times exhorting the Center to deliver the animals in a more timely fashion.[59] Of course animals were a superior economic investment to seed, and that which agronomists contributed in the way of chemical fertilizers and horticultural inputs, veterinary scientists added in the way of vaccines, antibiotics, and selective breeding practices. Numerous communities grew to depend on cattle and swine studs to raise large populations of livestock, and when these invaluable males grew sick or succumbed to tropical disease, residents invariably suffered. The increased reliance on livestock as a source of income brought with it a reliance on INI veterinarians and medicines, and when budget cuts or floods limited communities' access to provisions, desperation set in. Here was a critical juncture in the institutionalization of the INI in the Papaloapan. In the areas of health and education, the INI provided a service and acted as arbiter with other state agencies, but agricultural modernization programs fostered among the relocated population a financial dependence on the institution.

In the late 1950s, with the expansion of the INI's bureaucracy, the Coordinating Center added local agricultural promoters, who became the principal agents of agrarian modernization in the relocation zones. Much like their counterparts in the areas of health and education, the agricultural promoters received training in the agricultural sciences, provided instruction to

[58] See for example Panuncio Cadeza to Saturnino Fuerte reports from November 1962 AHT Caja 7 Expediente 67.
[59] Ing. Saturnino Fuerte to Miguel Mejía Fernández 5 August 1963, and Ing. Saturnino Fuerte to Promotor Panuncio Cadeza Montor, April 6, 1963 AHT Caja 7 Expediente 67.

residents, inoculated (pigs and chickens) against cholera and other curable illness, and replaced the ambulatory Papaloapan Commission or Coordinating Center engineer as a local and permanent technician.

Economic security was the greatest concern in the early years following relocation. The first issues began in the initial phase of resettlement, when those who had lost their lands and livelihoods to the reservoir waters awaited outstanding indemnity payments from the Papaloapan Commission. Anthropologists saw the displacement and relocation processes as a means to uproot extant economic relations in which *mestizo* or *ladino* "*gente de razón*" exploited their indigenous neighbors. Indeed, the evacuation of thousands of people from their homelands upset commercial exchange, but the displaced also suffered from economic insecurity, now with little if any means of subsistence or access to local sources for even temporary economic assistance. Most of the resettlement zones had limited access to outside markets, which rendered local merchants and moneylenders in the Papaloapan basin an indispensable means of immediate financial support as well as the most dependable links to regional markets.

Coordinating Center staff were confident that the promotion of remunerative crops and agrarian products would ensure economic security in the relocation zones and provide ample opportunity for indigenous campesinos to capitalize on regional, national, and even international markets for tropical commodities. The first imperative, however, was to guarantee price controls for staple crops in the immediate aftermath of the relocation. While some evacuees were able to plant crops in the new communities well in advance of their move, others were relocated only days, sometimes hours after receiving notice of their imminent evacuation, and arrived to the virgin relocation zones without any local source of sustenance. Upon relocation, the Papaloapan Commission provided each family with a 100-kilogram sack of maize, yet residents could not

subsist exclusively on corn, and few of them arrived to their new lands with cash or the means to purchase other dietary supplements, let alone feed for their livestock. The Coordinating Center stepped in after the first harvest, providing price guarantees for corn and rice by buying and selling the cereals at prices that favored the farmers over the rates offered by regional merchants.[60]

Price guarantees and controls were managed through local cooperatives established in the relocation communities, which regulated economic exchange both within the community and between the community and outside parties. Yet, their fate, as with all the Center's programs, was subject to budgetary constraints imposed by both the INI and the Papaloapan Commission, which at times rendered them unable to purchase rice or bumper crops of other commodities in their entirety. The Center maintained price controls for staple crops over the next decade, yet the stronghold of regional hoarders (*acaparadores*) was not easily curtailed.

In addition to stabilizing somewhat the cost of staple goods in new communities, cooperatives supplied household necessities and other manufactured or raw goods originating from markets outside the immediate vicinity of the hamlet. In this respect the objective of the cooperative was twofold: it would subsidize basic foodstuffs and commodities in the new community, and foster economic self-sufficiency therein as well. In order to meet the goal of economic viability, the Coordinating Centers also established aviary coops, sawmills, carpentry shops, and apiaries, all to assist in financing local improvement projects and to subsidize the salaries of the Center's employees, including promoters.

The apiary venture was particularly novel. The exotic honey of stingless bees native to

[60] Informe para Alfonso Caso September 14, 1960 AHT Caja 103 Expediente 1035. Price controls varied, depending on the season, favoring Mazatecs anywhere from 15 to 100% of the going purchasing price in the region.

the tropical region of Mesoamerica was harvested in relocation communities, then clarified and packaged in the Coordinating Center headquarters and sold domestically. There was even talk of expanding its distribution to the United States or Europe. Donning labels from the "Papaloapan Indigenista Coordinating Center Cooperatives," it was hoped the honey jars would further link Mazatecs to the domestic economy, and even perhaps that of the United States. The point here was not only to provide Mazatecs with a source of income, but improve Mexico's economic standing as well. Center staff agreed that the global sale of honey would be beneficial, but Director Ricardo Pozas drew from contemporary ideas about peripheral economies in the global capitalist structure to make the case for Mexico to grow its national economy through domestic consumption of its own tropical commodities:

> Since the entire economy of the country and of the dependent countries have an export economy, everyone always speaks of coffee. ... We think that the people can eat honey, that it's necessary to sell the honey cheap and have the people grow accustomed to eating honey. We don't have pretentions to earn money but rather have a product reach the people who consume it and that they learn to consume the things that are produced in Mexico.[61]

The honey project of the Center never gained much steam, but it set in motion a series of plans to link the Mazatec's financial improvement with the growth of Mexico's domestic economy. Much like the beekeeping enterprise, the sawmill promised some gains—even in the short term— in providing a needed commodity to the region. In 1954, the National Railroad Company, Ferrocarriles Nacionales, had signed a contract with the Comisión del Papaloapan for the lumber cleared both for the construction of the Miguel Alemán dam and for the building of the new relocation communities. The Coordinating Center opened its first sawmill in Nuevo Paso Nacional to act as sawyer for Ferrocarriles Nacionales, and by 1955 the Center had sold nearly

[61] Junta del Consejo correspondiente a noviembre (November, no year, likely 1954) AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169.

$140,000 pesos worth of planks. It also used this lumber for the construction of latrines, schoolhouses, and other construction projects in the relocation zones, where resettled communities opened their own carpentry shops.[62]

Community development programs produced mixed results. They were successful to a point, but failed to uplift people out of economic poverty, and did not necessarily provide them with the means to be empowered modern indigenous citizens either. While they secured dependence on the INI as an institution, Coordinating Center staff were unable to develop and bring to fruition a plan to promote a clear and enduring indigenous modernity. Yet a closer examination of the practices of locals, promotores, and anthropologists alike illustrates how communities took shape upon resettlement, and the ways in which economic development practices reconfigured indigeneity. It is to this detail that we now turn.

II. Life in a Resettlement Zone

Settlers arrived for the first time to the *predio* of Yogopi in the late Winter of 1955. Improvised roads led them to a plot in the overgrown jungle, where no one had confirmed the land was either bountiful or flat enough for farming. Nonetheless, the newcomers razed the landscape to prepare and sow modest plots that would later provide their first harvest. Returning in the spring of 1955, they once again reshaped the land *a machetazos*, machetes in hand, this time to carve out new homes and new lives. During the months of March, April and May, the first families made their way from Old to New Ixcatlán.

Rodolfo Stavenhagen organized the pueblo from its inception, raising a schoolhouse and general supply store, and—controversially— a church. Summoned from fieldwork in Chiapas in

[62] Pozas & Horcasitas, *Informe crítico*, 44.

February of 1955, he moved to the Coordinating Center offices shortly thereafter to undergo "preparation studies" and began his job as resident anthropologist in the early spring, earning a monthly wage of $1,000 pesos.[63] As more families arrived to Nuevo Ixcatlán, the community was segmented into *colonias*, in this sense quite literally colonies, but more accurately translated as neighborhoods. Residences were segregated based on the appraisal of the household lands and appurtenances in old Ixcatlán: those with a valuation up to $5000 or less than 10 hectares could be accepted as ejidatarios in Nuevo Ixcatlán, but those who had appraisals of higher value or more than 10 hectares in their old community would have to be moved to a specific area destined for *pequeños propietarios,* or smallholders.[64]

The first months were a trying experiment in perseverance. The Papaloapan Commission had not built houses for the recently arrived, and without an access road during the rainy season, it was impossible to transport modern materials for the cement, urban style houses envisioned in the first years of relocation planning. The Commission's imprecise predictions of which hamlets would flood—and when—left many residents, some of them quite incredulous of the strength of the dam grout curtain, ill-prepared for relocation. Regardless, they built rustic homes with dirt floors and awaited the next steps in re-rooting their lives in Nuevo Ixcatlán.

The Papaloapan Commission and ancillary federal agencies were slow to support the new resettlement. Four months after the beginning of the academic year, not one school inspector had visited the area, and the educational promotores' limited training had begun to show. The Coordinating Center doctor visited sporadically, and charged a service fee to some inhabitants who could not prove they were part of the resettled community. Rubén Cupich, a local

[63] Antonio Salas Ortega of INI, Mexico DF to Agustín Romano in San Cristóbal February 17, 1955 AHT Caja 18 Expediente 197.
[64] Pozas to Pedro Betanzos, Policía Rural April 18, 1955 AHT Caja 24 Expediente 253.

administrator of the Center in Nuevo Ixcatlán hailing from Mexico City, shirked his responsibilities, both in the office where he held irregular service hours and in the general store where numerous thefts had been reported. A resident complained that local authorities had denied the resettled denizens access to the recently completed houses in the zone, and a neighbor was required to pay a fee for simply leaving the community to bring some of his belongings from the vaso.[65]

Yet even more outrageous was the authorities' sheer negligence, as the author of the complaint related in humble vernacular that a swollen, dead draft animal was floating in the nearby river, which happened to be the community's water source: "... there was a beasts [sic] dead for several days... the residents realized that the rotting beast was there... they were at their wits' end."[66] Perhaps inspired by the appallingly unsanitary conditions in Nuevo Ixcatlán, Center director Pozas intervened, ordering heads of household—in collaboration with the Center and under the supervision of a doctor—to build septic tanks for each family, in order to avoid an epidemic.[67] Perennial inundation inspired Stavenhagen, begrudged by the "swimming pools" that had erupted from the compacted earth floors of the residents' homes, to pour cement in each family's house, despite the obstacles he encountered in the middle of the rainy season.[68]

Food security was perhaps the most immediate issue in Nuevo Ixcatlán. The initial harvest of those who had sown back in the winter was meager but enough to provide some with

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[65] Letter to Pozas May 25, 1955 AHT Caja 100 Expediente 988.

[66] Letter to Pozas May 25, 1955 AHT Caja 100 Expediente 988. "... se trata de que en el rio de Donde el pueblo agarra agua al lado de arriba de donde está istalada [sic] la bumbas [sic] se encontrava una vestias [sic] muerta ya de varios dia sin darse cuenta los habitante del poblado estuvieron ocupando el agua Durante varios dia [sic] hasta que los mismo habitante se dieron cuenta de que se encontraba la vestia podrida como dicho individuo se dieron cuenta andaban deseperado [sic]..."

[67] Pozas to Ing. Leobardo de la Luz Marino May 26, 1955 AHT Caja 24 Expediente 253.

[68] Stavenhagen to Pozas July 19, 1955, AHT Caja 100 Expediente 988.

sustenance through the beginning of the summer, but by mid-June the newest wave of residents went hungry. With few, nearly impassable roads and no adequate means of water transport, the nearby town of Juanita, Veracruz, became the most promising source of the cereal. But in Juanita, the prices were extraordinarily high, and the maize supply was rapidly depleting.[69] Stavenhagen opted to set aside a portion of his thin funds from the Coordinating Center to send for maize from governmental agencies controlling distribution of the grain in Mexico City.[70]

Leaking roofs on the new houses and the general store, symptoms of poor construction materials, jeopardized the quality of goods that families and the Center stored for sustenance. The *nuevoixcatecos* and Stavenhagen made improvements where they could. Though heavy rains from August through October 1955 suspended the construction of more houses and infrastructure, the campesinos collectively erected a bridge over a small creek at the base of the new pueblo, where agricultural machinery could then enter the community. They transformed one of the “casas del pueblo" into a space for Coordinating Center employees, dividing it into three rooms and installing electricity to make it one of only a handful of buildings in the relocation communities with artificial light. In those months they also finished a well to provide potable water for the new residents. With ninety more houses to build, less than half of the pueblo’s construction was complete by mid October, but as Stavenhagen was proud to report, the gains made were almost entirely the work of the community residents themselves.[71]

If there was one benefit to the untouched lands of Nuevo Ixcatlán, it was that tropical commodities could be immediately introduced to campesinos and sown without displacing any

[69] Rodolfo Stavenhagen informe July 19, 1955 AHT Caja 101 Expediente 1016.
[70] Pozas to Luis Torres of Banco Agrícola Ganadero, A.A. 25 June 1955 AHT Caja 18 Expediente 190; Junta del Consejo November 25, 1955 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169.
[71] Stavenhagen Informe to Pozas August 16 to October 15, 1955 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169.

subsistence crops. In this respect the Center wasted little time, sending engineers at the peak of the rainy season to determine the best location for a rubber nursery.[72] At the end of the summer, campesinos prepared seedbeds for tobacco and purchased fungicides, an application pump, and powdered insecticides as well to protect against pests. Forty-two people in the pueblo received funds from the Coordinating Center, providing them with enough to prepare and cultivate 66 hectares. But the campesinos would need more credit, and fast, to procure the necessary inputs to prepare, maintain, and cure the tobacco leaf. Timely fixed asset (for the purchase or rent of machinery) and working capital (for the purchase of raw materials) loans would enable campesinos to properly utilize insecticides, protect the young plants, use draft animals for preparing the plantations, and construct drying houses. “The most urgent," Stavenhagen underlined, “is to do everything possible so that this cultivation does not fail, and so that the relocated campesinos don’t end up losing, which would be a tremendous psychological and economical slap in the face, as much for them as for us."[73] The economic stability of the Center rested in part on the viability of such crop production, but, as Stavenhagen’s comment betrays, the staff’s morale and sense of purpose was invariably tied to its programs’ success.

Even the Nuevoixcatecos with the highest tobacco yields found a saturated market in September, with few buyers offering paltry sums for the cured leaf.[74] The Commission suggested that the Center initiate a peanut cultivation program, given that the legume was less labor intensive than tobacco, and Pozas found a funding source outside the Commission to absorb the cost of production. By December, an “expert" in peanut cultivation made his way to Yogopi, and

[72] Pozas to Stavenhagen June 28, 1955 AHT Caja 18 Expediente 190.
[73] Stavenhagen to Pozas August 16 to October 15, 1955 AHT Caja 101 Expediente 1016 “Lo más urgente, sin embargo, es hacer todo lo posible para que este cultivo no fracase y para que no salgan perdiendo los campesinos reacomodados, lo cual sería un tremendo golpe psicológico y económico, tanto para ellos como para nosotros.”
[74] Pozas to Stavenhagen September 22, 1955 AHT Caja 18 Expediente 200.

Pozas was confident that a crop of the export-grade legume was in order.[75]

In the meantime, farmers lacked a steady source of income and the low wage they received to erect their own homes did not suffice. Toward the year's end families continued to arrive while others, dissatisfied with the economic prospects in their new hometown and financially capable of relocating elsewhere, departed. Even with this steady flow of out-migration— a phenomenon prevalent throughout the resettlement zones— a scarcity of houses for the newly arrived meant that many were temporarily lodged in *galerones*, longhouses of sorts.[76]

By November of 1955, Stavenhagen and the Coordinating Center had spearheaded a new wave of agricultural programs to increase the locals' purchasing power and better integrate them into the domestic economic market. The resident anthropologist's credit request from the Central de Maquinaria provided them with machinery to prepare 200 hectares of lands for tobacco. This joint effort between the Coordinating Center, the Papaloapan Commission, and the Secretary of Agriculture had fostered a rubber nursery which now had enough small trees to plant 150 hectares. This, with another sixty sacks of raw peanut would provide residents with a rotation of crops "as remunerative as tobacco."[77]

But these agricultural ventures were expensive. The improvement schemes cost $500,000 pesos, well over what the budget had allotted. The joint venture with the Papaloapan Commission meant the latter would help provide technical expertise and inputs, but cash was lacking. The Commission had given only half that amount to cover expenses until the end of the year, and without the funds, salaries in Nuevo Ixcatlán went unpaid. Designs to provide the

[75] Meeting Minutes December 17, 1955 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169.
[76] Stavenhagen-Rodríguez correspondence November 28, 1955, November 8, 1955 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 171.
[77] Junta del Consejo November 25, 1955 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169.

residents with better chicken breeds spawned an economic debate within the Coordinating Center: How economically feasible would it be to give people healthier chickens— which to many rural subsistence farmers was a ticket to a more remunerative existence— to complement their economy? Center director Ricardo Pozas reminded the Board "... we're not creating a grange with the aim of economic production, rather with the purpose of social service,"[78] Pozas's comments were certainly sanguine but also perhaps naive: if the grange was not economically sustainable, the utility and consistency of the social service it provided was questionable.

After a visit to the new community, Assistant Director Raúl Rodríguez commented on the lack of markets for the population to sell its products, signaling the stabilization of the economy as the Center's utmost priority.[79] In a continued effort to promote economic vitality, the Center initiated apiaries. Lacking sufficient space in the farming plots, the Nuevoixcatecos moved the bee hives to a zone with flowers along the recently constructed La Granja-Tierra Blanca highway, and installed an ambulatory apiary as well. Eleven apiculturalists helped the denizens properly "modernize" the apiaries, and though the short term prospects of reaping any pecuniary benefit from the bees were slim, the Center directorate saw an untapped a wealth of flora of great promise in the Papaloapan. The honey, however, would need to make its way to the consumer. "Rivers of honey are lost year after year and nothing is made of it," Pozas pontificated, "and so it is, strictly speaking an uneconomic investment."[80]

The hallmark of the Coordinating Center's economic plan for resettled communities, the cooperative store, did little to protect residents from the vicissitudes of the market. From 1954-

[78] Ibid. "Pero nosotros no estamos creando una Granja con fines de producción económica sino con fin de servicio social."
[79] Junta del Consejo November 25, 1955 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169.
[80] Junta del Consejo November 25, 1955 AHT Caja 16 Expediente 169. Pozas: "Ríos de miel se desperdician año con año y no se obtiene nada de esto así es que es una inversión propiamente antieconómica."

56, the cooperatives sporadically compensated campesinos only in installments, which left those growers in need of cash with little choice than to sell their crop— rice in particular— to regional merchants at a lower price.[81] For Stavenhagen, the Coordinating Center was the only entity with the wellbeing of Nuevoixcatecos in mind, and even then, the doctors and ambulatory health practitioners in the employ of the Center lacked an indigenista purpose or interest in the social aspect of their work.

The municipal authorities of Playa Vicente, Veracruz, to which Nuevo Ixcatlán belonged, were not a reliable source of solidarity either. Though in Oaxaca the Ixcatecos belonged to the municipio libre of San Pedro Ixcatlán, in Veracruz they had been demoted to an "Agencia Municipal," a department with little local autonomy in tax-related or other political matters. The municipal presidency saw in Nuevo Ixcatlán a "juicy source of economic exploitation," and implemented a tax schedule for so-called "public services" that Stavenhagen read as mal-intentioned. It was indispensable, he opined, to protect the relocated population from "abusive interventions contrary to their interests from outside political forces," at least until the people [pueblo] could defend themselves.[82]

By October of 1956, after Stavenhagen had returned to Mexico City to finish his graduate studies, a series of complaints made its way to the directorship. Angered residents denounced Stavenhagen's replacement, Rubén Cupich Díaz, who apparently left a bit to be desired as an administrator and spent too much of his time meddling in local politics. Sixty campesinos of the ejido Venustiano Carranza, Nuevo Ixcatlán asked the Coordinating Center to name one of their "*antropólogo*" professors to coordinate alongside Cupich, who could not attend to the

[81] Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Informe No. 4 October 16, 1955 –January 31, 1956 AHT Caja 101 Expediente 1016.
[82] Stavenhagen, Informe No. 4 October 16, 1955 - January 31,1956 AHT Caja 101 Expediente 1016.

responsibilities before him: "... when Prof. Rolf Estavenajen [sic] and Prof. César Tejeda was [sic] here not one difficulty arose." Cupich earned the ire of another Nuevoixcateco, Luciano Martínez, who would later become Agente Municipal. Martínez wrote to the INI directorate in Mexico City to request that Cupich "not intervene in political issues of this community, since the objectives sought are social, economic, and cultural, and this individual tries to exert his will because [your] office does not constantly look after him."[83]

In 1957 the Center initiated the process of legalizing the landholdings of all persons who had relocated in Nuevo Ixcatlán, constituting an ejido of 400 parcels, of ten hectares each. Another ejido within the predio of Yogopi would be formed as well, with 100 families from the original municipio of San Pedro Ixcatlán, Oaxaca.[84] Not all Ixcatecos would relocate to Nuevo Ixcatlán and its adjacent lands in Yogopi. That same year, the last relocation predio of Zihualtepec was opened, and though its location was twice as distant, many Ixcatecos with a choice opted to relocate within their home state to a true Eden, rumored to have the most bountiful land of any resettlement zone—and plenty of it. Certainly rumors of tribulations during the first years after the founding of the new poblado in Yogopi made their way back to vaso, and it is reasonable to assume that if one of the resettlements was indeed a promised land, it was certainly not Nuevo Ixcatlán.

More residents of the vaso arrived to lands in Yogopi from 1957-59, and the attendant rise in school enrollment was a mixed blessing. Already overburdened, promotores added more

[83] Ejidatarios of Venustiano Carranza to Agustín Romano, October 24, 1956, AHT Caja 100 Expediente 988. "...nombre a su prof. Antropólogo para que con el Sr. Cupich coordinara mejor los planes sobre los problemas en que se encuentra el pobaldo y asi lograr el éxito. Y que cuando estubo el Prof. Rolf Estavenajen y el Prof. César Tejeda no surgió ningúno dificultad."; Antonio Salas Ortega to Agustín Romano October 26, 1956 "...que no intervenga en asuntos políticos de esta Comunidad, ya que los fines que siguen son sociales, económicos y culturales y este mencionado trata de hacer sus caprichos porque esa Dependencia no lo vigila constantemente."

[84] Informe 1957 Agustín Romano to Alfonso Caso, February 26, 1958 AHT Caja 17 Expediente 184.

students to overcrowded and dilapidated classrooms. Outside the classroom, the Teatro Guiñol puppet theater waxed and waned. In early 1957 the Centro's and community's limited funds made for mundane performances that failed to attract an audience. Center Director Agustín Romano awaited the assistance of famed writers and indigenista collaborators Rosario Castellanos and Nancy Cárdenas, hoping to make the theater more entertaining and less educational, given that now the "cultural level of the indígena of the zone require[d] it."[85] Fortunately in 1958, Cárdenas's puppet adaptation of the film "Guerra a los parásitos" (War on Parasites) headlined in Nuevo Ixcatlán, drawing a crowd of over 300 to witness the comedic routine of talking intestinal worms.[86] But come January 1959, another wave of budget cuts and administrative reorganization in the Center eliminated film and puppet showings from its entertainment docket.[87]

Meanwhile, Rubén Cupich continued to incite complaints from nuevoixcatecos. Accused of both siding with powerful political lobbies in the community and freeing a man who fired a bullet squarely into a child's forehead, his questionable leadership skills mirrored the general miasma of disorganization and desperation in Nuevo Ixcatlán.[88] A lack of medical personnel in the community— and in both the vaso and resettlement areas more generally—was a cause of concern for the denizens, many of whom grew fatally ill from curable conditions that went untreated.

Though Cupich was replaced as head resident of Nuevo Ixcatlán in August of 1957, his

[85] Informe 1957 Agustín Romano to Alfonso Caso, February 26, 1958 AHT Caja 17 Expediente 184.
[86] Informe Carlos Jurado December 1958; Informe de Sección Trabajo de Ayudas Audiovisuales August 4, 1958 AHT Caja 57 Expediente 558.
[87] Informe April 1959 AHT Caja 57 Expediente 558.
[88] Letter to Agustín Romano, December 7, 1958; Raúl Rodríguez to Ruben Cupich February 13, 1957 AHT Caja 103 Expediente 1041.

successors struggled to stifle political chasms.[89] Repeated conflicts with municipal police of Playa Vicente prompted Luciano Martínez, now acting as Agente Municipal of Nuevo Ixcatlán, to write the Municipal President in April of 1959, in which he admonished the police's tacit support of a man by the name of Palacios, who had both threatened Martínez and challenged the Coordinating Center resident anthropologist to a duel. Palacios, angered that the Center and Martínez prohibited him from both purchasing or occupying land parcels in the community, apparently had the police and authorities of Playa Vicente on his side.[90] Death by poisoning, or at least so his wife alleged, was the fate of Luciano Martínez in August of 1959.[91] Just weeks later, once again complaints of municipal authorities abounded, this time for drinking on the job and brandishing their pistols with impunity; federal forces in the nearby Mexican Petroleum company (PEMEX) encampment in Yogopi confiscated local campesinos' machetes in another display of outsiders' arrogant abuse of authority.[92]

It is perhaps of no surprise that Nuevoixcatecos, hundreds of them mired in a land quagmire without official title, were infuriated at the apparent impotence of the Coordinating Center (and even Agencia Municipal) vis-à-vis the Papaloapan Commission. A majority of the inhabitants had yet to receive their indemnity payments from their lost lands and belongings in the vaso, title to their current plots or place of residence notwithstanding. In some cases, the delay was a result of their lack of legal title in the vaso at the time of evacuation, but in others it was due to the fact that ejidos did not move wholesale from one place to another. The dissolution

[89] Armando Aguirre to Raúl Rodríguez March 12, 1958 AHT Caja 103 Expediente 1041.
[90] Acta levantada Luciano Martínez April 1, 1959; Luciano Martínez to Lorenzo Pérez Castellanos, Presidente Municipal Playa Vicente April 15, 1959 AHT Caja 83 Expediente 813.
[91] Alberto Delfin Hermida to Sandoval Prats August 26, 1959 AHT Caja 83 Expediente 815.
[92] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos to Gral. de Div. Modesto A. Guinart, Comandante de la II Región Militar La Boticaria Ver. October 4, 1960 AHT Caja 83 Expediente 815.

of some ejidal communities through the resettlement process meant that ejidatarios could be scattered throughout the relocation zones. And many resettled, partially constituted “ejidos" were fused with others in similar states of disintegration. If heads of household lost less than 50% of their lands to the reservoir waters, they might not even be eligible for lands in the resettlement zones. By 1960 2,752 residents had moved to the community, and only $1,500,237.64 of their estimated $3,487,495.29 in appraisals had been paid by the Papaloapan Commission. Though Nuevo Ixcatlán was among a handful of resettled communities that could boast potable water services by this time, not one of the resettlement zones had electricity— perhaps the most symbolic of the broken promises made to ensure they would abandon their old lands.[93]

Photograph 5.2 Men Await Indemnity Payment outside Coordinating Center Temazcal, 1957



Photograph by Robert Laughlin, Artist's Private Collection, 1957

[93] Informe June 30, 1959 Caja 103 Expediente 1035.

Some kinks in the improvement programs of Nuevo Ixcatlán straightened out by the end of the decade. The Coordinating Center was able to stabilize its experimental credit system by 1960, and a branch of CEIMSA (Mexico's import-export bank and foodstuff price controller) opened in Nuevo Ixcatlán to ensure Mazatecs would earn $700 MXN per ton of maize against the $350 MXN the local merchants were willing to pay.[94] In August of 1961 the community used funds from their barbasco processing plant—which extracted hormone supplements from the barbasco wild yam for contraceptive pills—to place metal roofs on the schoolhouses.[95]

Institutionalizing Indigeneity

By the decade's end, political and economic issues still went unresolved in Nuevo Ixcatlán. In January 1961 frequent use of firearms and a series of arson cases left representatives of CEIMSA and the Ejidal Bank stationed in Nuevo Ixcatlán fearful that the large sums of money they managed, as well as their persons, were vulnerable to the caprice of disgruntled residents who might act on a whim with impunity. Rafael Sandoval Pratts, head of the Center's legal department, requested permission to both order the municipal police to investigate the cases of arson and send a military detachment to the community.[96] That summer, the Center's legal department consistently intervened in instances of theft, beating, and kidnapping. And while that department also trained promotores to provide legal aid to Nuevoixcatecos, its involvement in community affairs only increased. The legal department head even went so far as to suggest to the Coordinating Center director that they meddle in the elections for agente municipal of Nuevo

[94] Informe June 30, 1959 Caja 103 Expediente 1035.
[95] Informe Mensual to Mejía Fernández August 31, 1961 AHT Caja 69 Expediente 696. For an excellent history of peasant knowledge and barbasco processing in the Papaloapan, see Gabriela Soto Laveaga, *Jungle Laboratories: Mexican Peasants, National Projects, and the Making of the Pill* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009).
[96] Sandoval Prats to Rodríguez Ramos, January 6, 1961 AHT Caja 83 Expediente 815.

Ixcatlán, to better ensure that the elected representative was sympathetic to the Center's plans.[97]

Political and economic volatility may have been characteristic of villages of Mexico's countryside, but the case of Nuevo Ixcatlán reveals an element perhaps less typical of most of rural Mexico during the mid-twentieth century. By the late 1950s, resident representatives of the INI Coordinating Center in resettlement communities were no longer "outsiders" like Rodolfo Stavenhagen, but rather local bilinguals such as Panuncio Cadeza who as promotores climbed the ranks of the Coordinating Center hierarchy. Perennial complications meant that the INI Coordinating Center would have a continued stake in the resettlement community's affairs.

Cadeza, as we have seen in previous chapters, is a worthwhile figure to follow for two reasons: he was a landless Mazatec- speaking farmer who successfully employed a campesino identity to demand an ejidal land grant before the dam was built,[98] and he also successfully inserted himself into the INI apparatus, as a promotor, later as a resident head in the resettlement community of La Joya, and eventually as a political representative of a municipal head town. Cadeza and a fellow bilingual Center staff member known as "Pata Gira"—who from the record appears to be more of a sidekick than Cadeza's colleague—evinced a surprising vision of what kind of disciplinary action should be taken among the ranks of the Center in order to promote indigenous improvement: "to seek true orientation and alignment of the indígena with the objective of removing him from his old customs that are products of error and misunderstanding..." In the same document, the two men retracted, asking the addressee to not expose them to "sarcasm and mockery," claiming that this was just their idea but that "better trained minds" should ascertain whether or not these mere thoughts "with some symptoms as a

[97] Ignacio Patlán Romero, Jefe del Depto Legal to Mejía Fernández October 16, 1961, Caja 100 Expediente 990.
[98] See Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

base" should inform such a plan.[99]

Considered indigenous by INI representatives, Cadeza and Pata Gira may have doubted their own "expertise" in the face of pressure from formally educated anthropologists. But they drafted a resolution anyway, which, based on their experience in resettlement, suggested a transformation of the INI's organization by creating a section called "Indigenous Disciplinary Organization and Pacification." Calling for stricter guidelines of designated Center staff in relocation communities, they suggested the Coordinating Center continue to maintain staff residing in the resettlement communities, when those communities were comprised of "*raza indígena*," and that whenever possible those residents—who should now be called "Representatives"—interfere with liberty before any authority to avoid arbitrarily ill treatments against "the campesina indigenous class." To boot, they suggested measures be taken to treat a number of maladies, including the excess of alcoholic beverages, "one of the great misfortunes that directly affect the raza indígena, both economically and personally." Critiques of polygamy, the physical abuse of women "as if they were beasts of burden" fill the document as well. Not least, they proffered mutuality among "campesino brothers."[100]

Cadeza and Gil's suggestions are revelatory of their assumptions— assumptions about themselves and the work of the INI, certainly, but also about what it meant to be indigenous and what that had to do with the Coordinating Center's charge. Their prose, both humble and presumptuous, was buttressed by knowledge of their personal predicaments, issues their family members and neighbors had encountered, and the language of indigeneity emanating from the INI. Their suggestions conveyed to the Coordinating Center director that they understood

[99] Panuncio Cadeza and Ruperto Ramírez Vidal "Pata Gira" to Rodríguez Ramos October 1959 AHT Caja 5 Expediente 39.
[100] Panuncio Cadeza and Ruperto Ramírez Vidal "Pata Gira" nd AHT Caja 5 Expediente 39.

campesinos cum indígenas needed protection (weren't all indígenas campesinos, anyway?), both from exploiters and from themselves. But Cadeza and Gil still asserted their role as knowledgeable, if modest indígenas.

A majority of the figures examined in this chapter considered inhabitants of Nuevo Ixcatlán "campesinos," correctly betraying the latter group's social status and occupation as rural folk who tilled the land. INI staff and Nuevoixcatecos alike would frequently refer to the latter as "indígenas" as well, but the interchangeability of the two betrays some slippage in what "indigenous" meant. In December 1960 a "ladinized" man—i.e. a man who spoke Mazatec but was attempting to "become" ladino (non-indigenous)—José Reyes in the neighboring agencia of Zanja Seca had been committing a series of assaults. According to an ejidatario of Nuevo Cosolapa Sarmiento, Reyes "became ladinized, and thought it easy to exploit and extort" his indigenous neighbors. The Agente Municipal, who allied with Reyes and other merchants of the community, was himself accused of being "directors and exploiters of the indígenas without resources, as they had been doing in the vaso of the dam." Exercising its increased authority in the resettlement communities, the Center replaced the Agente Municipal with another ejidatario, who according to INI staff was an "indigenous Mazatec, very serious, hardworking, and honorable."[101]

This conflict, and the INI's solution, is indicative of two assumptions. First, by the Center's standards, a representative who exploited his constituents was a "ladinized" Mazatec—despite early findings to the contrary. In the resettlement communities indigenous was coterminous with vulnerable. Relatedly, a "ladinized" Mazatec was no longer "indigenous."

[101] Sandoval Pratts to Rodríguez Ramos December 22, 1960 AHT Caja 83 Expediente 815.

Certainly this interpretation of upward mobility and inequality was not the sole domain of anthropologists or INI representatives, but the Center's actions marked institutionally what it meant to be indigenous, in terms of both social status and political representation.

Indeed, the power of intermediaries—ladinized or not—grew in the early years of the 1960s, as they assumed many of the agricultural-related duties of the resident anthropologists. Between 1962-63, one local promoter doubled as his relocation community's resident anthropologist while also serving within the community's local political leadership. Effectively, over time local leaders slowly displaced anthropologists as the resident representatives of the Coordinating Center. Yet this is not to imply that the Coordinating Center, or the INI more broadly, was undergoing a democratic transformation. The INI created its own Agrarian Department (Departamento Agronómico), which at the behest of the Coordinating Center effectively displaced Papaloapan Commission and Federal Agrarian Department officials (of the Departamento Agrario) as the harbingers of agronomic expertise. The INI's Agrarian Department conducted studies of soil samples from various relocated communities, and it was they who promulgated the sowing of buckwheat, diffused information regarding the planting and harvesting of special seed and the use of chemical inputs, and curtailed an outbreak of the rice screwworm, an incessant pest that could jeopardize entire rice fields.[102] By the early 1960s, then, in the area of agricultural science, the INI had become a formidable agent of development and management of the indigenous countryside.

The management of loans and credit opportunities remained at the helm of the Center.

[102] Fuerte to Cadeza August 8, 1963 AHT Caja 7 Expediente 77; Director Alfonso Caso, "Reglamento de la Comisión Técnica Consultativa" June 1, 1963, Departamento de Agronomía [INI] July 17, 1963 "Instructivo para el manejo de las semillas enviadas en paquete especial del laboratorio INI", and "Método de control y combate del barrenador del nudo vital del arroz." AHT Caja 7 Expediente 80.

While initially its efforts aimed to facilitate credit relations between indigenous residents and extant governmental agencies, such as the Agricultural and Ejidal Banks, the Coordinating Center under the auspices of the INI mediated all lending relationships. Within a few years after relocation, the power monopoly of local or regional merchants had disappeared, only to be replaced by Coordinating Center staff—resident "anthropologists" (consisting of both indigenous locals and anthropologist outsiders), indigenous agricultural promoters, or agents of the INI's Economic Promotion Department. That is to say, economic strongmen lost their prominence, not necessarily to a mass of would-be yeoman indigenous farmers, but to indigenista economic managers, some of whom were themselves Mazatec locals.

When taken alongside the rhetoric of community development as "cultural" improvement, it becomes evident that the agricultural work and economic management of the INI was justified as a means to, perhaps paradoxically, solidify indigeneity. The Coordinating Center implored the Papaloapan Commission to provision technical elements and impart their knowledge, as such economic improvement would also leave to the "cultural improvement of the zone, given that they will be able to satisfy the new necessities created."[103] In other words, development created new demands, and as those demands were met, they could only be satisfied by the work of the Center. Indigenista work would beget culturally "improved" modern, indigenous citizens.

Indigenous or not, identifying who was entitled to services and where was a trying task. Non-ejidatarios, either renters or sharecroppers who worked adjacent lands to the community before relocation or *paracaídistas*, squatters with no formal title who literally "parachuted" onto

[103] Raúl Rodríguez Ramos, Agustín Romano "La situación actual de los pueblos afectados por la presa Presidente Alemán" April 30, 1958 AHT Caja: 102 Expediente 1018.

the lands either before or during the relocation process, were a thorn in the Papaloapan Commission's side. Management of this problem was limited by the fact that no one had developed an efficient identification system for the displaced population. Anthropologists had attempted to record identification index cards for the heads of household scheduled for relocation, but such cards allowed for an estimate of numbers of families, not individuals, to be relocated. More often than not, these sources of identification were lost, misplaced, or rendered futile when some communities moved instead to higher grounds within their own municipalities or when displaced residents migrated—either temporarily or permanently—to regional cities or the country capital. In other words, no one kept accurate record of who had moved where, and the unknowable demographic composition of resettled communities allowed for accusations—well-founded or not—that undeserving outsiders were invading the new communities. The Commission Departamento de Tierras made a request to install a more formal and global identification system of relocated individuals and families, but the record leaves no evidence that a such a system ever developed.[104]

Though many members of the Coordinating Center staff were well-versed in the current language of political economy and dependency, the anthropologists were not economists. Both the Coordinating Center and INI more broadly were aware of the need to employ trained economists to advise in their economic endeavors, and from the outset employed resident economists as well. By 1963 the INI Office of Economic Promotion had been established to further develop strategies of local economic development among indigenous communities. In the late 1960s, that agency joined forces with the Ministry of Agriculture to introduce *mojarra* (a freshwater snapper) into the President Alemán reservoir and promote fishing, particularly among

[104] Rodríguez Ramos to Ing. Cándido Cruz April 15, 1958 AHT Caja 103 Expediente 1040.

the indigenous population in the immediate vicinity of the dam.

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Life in relocation communities, INI anthropologists had hypothesized early on, would also include new economic relations. But the "reintegration" of indigenous groups into the national economy would entail changes that social anthropology was ill-prepared to resolve. The category "*indígena*" was essential to the work of anthropologists in the Americas; anthropologists laboring in the Papaloapan were tasked to study and work principally with the indigenous population. Yet, Stavenhagen observed that this "reintegration" process would transform the indigenous population into "*campesinos*," "*obreros*" (workers) or "*proletarios*"—social categories that would require both the adoption of the "psychology and perspective" of these respective groups or social classes and the position such groups occupied in the economic, political, and social structures of the country. He warned, "... if social anthropology persists in being applied to the groups in the process of change exclusively for their quality as "*indígenas*" and does not prepare them as capable and efficient members of the classes of which they will form a part, it can cause grave harm to the development of the affected groups, as well as to the country in general."[105] What is more, full exposure to the capitalist economy was already taking its toll on peasants and workers, where *acaparadores* and monopolizers that "inevitably slide like worms into these communities" would likely exploit the displaced much like they had in

[105] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca," 35. "Pero si la antropología social persiste en aplicarse a los grupos en proceso de cambio exclusivamente en su calidad de "indígenas" y no los prepara como miembros capaces y eficientes de las clases de que formarán parte, puede causar graves daños al desarrollo de los grupos afectados, tanto como al del país en general."

other campesino communities.[106]

Stavenhagen's early insights beg another question: what was it about the resettled cuenqueños that qualified them as markedly indigenous and distinct from any other campesinos in the basin? Was it their language? Their "culture"? Despite their intention to promote a particular kind of development among the indigenous inhabitants of the basin, the lasting outcome of the INI Coordinating Center's work was the establishment of a shadow welfare state—at times largely ineffective—created to rescue Mexico's indigenous population from the excesses of capitalism by providing them with more equal footing in the economic market.

From the outset, the relocation staff of anthropologists was hopeful that small gains made in new communities would proliferate in due time. The expectation was not that these communities would become bastions of wealth, but that they would be somehow self-sufficient and economically sustainable. The premise that Import Substitution Industrialization would foster domestic economic growth and elevate Mexico within the global economy was evident in the Coordinating Center's plans as well. With the right combination of credit opportunities, scientific agricultural practices, and health and education services, the indigenous peoples of the Papaloapan could pull themselves out of misery and isolation, thus creating both economically self-sufficient indigenous communities and an economically sustainable Mexico.

Through this process of managed economic development among the indigenous population, the INI created its own ancillary agencies for the various governmental bureaucracies that labored in the Papaloapan River Basin. To be sure, the experience in the Papaloapan was not the INI's sole effort at facilitating a community development program among indigenous

[106] Stavenhagen, "En la Cuenca," 35, "La explotación, la opresión que ejercen los acaparadores y monopolistas que inevitablemente se deslizan como gusanos en tales comunidades..."

peoples, but it was certainly the first program in which it served a displaced indigenous population and negotiated with a river basin commission enacting a regional development project. In this regard, the Coordinating Center's motives and intentions were at times vastly distinct from those of the Papaloapan Commission. Both agencies represented overlapping and distinct visions of what economic development should look like.

The resettlement communities were hardly utopian for the people who resided therein. But the preservation of the concept of indígena also conserved an idyllic notion of what community life should be like among the resettled villagers. Budget cuts and their inability to turn ethnographically-informed ideas into concrete realities rendered the work of the INI Coordinating Center relatively ineffective. Yet the institutionalization of the Center, and locals' increased dependency on the Center for goods and income, fomented a concept of indigeneity that could be employed at will.

The work of the INI Coordinating Center secured its anthropologist directorate a longstanding place in intellectual and policy debates about both economic development and programs for indigenous peoples. Though the Center may have promulgated indigenous modernization and equitable integration into the capitalist economy as a policy agenda, its actions resulted—perhaps intentionally—in a national program that required anthropologists to direct development in areas understood as indigenous. Moving from stewards to managers, anthropologists' relationship to indigenous peoples would leave a lasting impression on anthropological theory and indigenous policy for decades to come.

Chapter Six

The Papaloapan in the World: Regional Development, Internal Colonialism, and the Indigenous Question

After two world wars and multiple national revolutions, the second half of the twentieth century promised to be a time of national integration. Nation-states the world over struggled to reconcile the liberal mandate of citizenship-based rights among pluralist polities, from post-war Western Europe and the USSR, to postcolonial South Asia, to the Americas.[1] The mandate to "integrate" diverse nations coincided neatly with the drive to modernize: to integrate a people into a single national culture was to integrate them into a single national economy, and here the expertise of certain bureaucrats was essential. The science of man promised to at once bridge the gap among conationals and facilitate economic development. Mexico's Papaloapan Project was a quintessential example of an intervention with such a promise.

But faith in development as a panacea for a tenuously bound nation dwindled over the course of two decades. Optimism that the benefits of economic development would reach far and wide shifted to disillusion as the poorest and most marginalized appeared to benefit little from improvement projects. If anthropologists working in the Papaloapan were witness to the unrealized promises of developmentalism, how did they dialogue with broader observations and theorizations of economic development and indigenous policy?

Historians have skillfully traced the trajectory of key social scientific ideas and practices across national borders during the twentieth century— ideas and practices for which Mexico was

[1] There were notable exceptions in this regard, South Africa notwithstanding.

either the locus of study, the center of elaboration of theory, or both.[2] The inter- or trans-national dimensions of critiques of developmentalism and transformations are indeed essential to the history of the human sciences, but I emphasize the interrelationship of theory and action, in which on-the-ground realities in a place like the Papaloapan basin shaped and were shaped by broader ideas and experiences in social scientific circles. This chapter expands the scope of analysis of those that preceded it, moving from the Papaloapan basin and its environs to include national institution building and the realm of ideas. It reveals the implications of the Papaloapan Project in greater debates concerning both economic development and the indigenous question—that is, how to fully emancipate and incorporate the nation's aboriginal populations—in Mexico and beyond. The transformation of the river basin embodies the confluence of those two areas of mid-century intervention.

My argument is twofold: first, and simply, that the Papaloapan Project mattered as much to ideas and institutions as it did to the physical and social transformations that took place in the basin. Second, and more ambitiously, ideas about indigenous society and culture and indigenous policy in Mexico from the late 1940s framed the debates and informed the professional contributions of Mexican social scientists who crafted the concept of internal colonialism.[3] This

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[2] Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo, "Stereophonic Scientific Modernisms: Social Science between Mexico and the United States, 1880s-1930s." *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (December 1, 1999): 1156–87; Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, "Other Americas: Transnationalism, Scholarship, and the Culture of Poverty in Mexico and the United States," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 89, no. 4 (November 2009): 603–41; Rosemblatt, "Modernization, Dependency, and the Global in Mexican Critiques of Anthropology." *Journal of Global History* 9, no.1 (2014): 94–121; Sheyda F. A. Jahanbani, "'A Different Kind of People': The Poor at Home and Abroad, 1935-1968." Ph.D. diss, Brown University, 2009.

[3] Cynthia Hewitt de Alcantára alludes to the indigenista origins (namely in Aguirre Beltrán's concept of the refuge region) of internal colonialism, but her monumental monograph stops short of making an explicit connection: "One might say that indigenismo pioneered in the study of mechanisms of regional domination, but subsumed its findings in an ever-increasing concentration on promoting cultural change. Dependentistas, on the other hand, remained concerned with the early preoccupations of radical indigenistas and extended the scope of their investigation in an effort to understand the broader context of structural disadvantage, of which culturally defined defensiveness was

concept, now understood as one of Latin America's major contributions to theorizing the postcolonial condition in the twentieth century[4], in turn provided a later generation—in Mexico and beyond—with a language and framework to critique and reject anthropology and state indigenous policy.

An increasingly disillusioned and politicized cohort of human scientists across the globe mounted a series of critiques of anthropological methods and action in the late 1960s. In Mexico, this mounting discontent is most often associated with a political movement that erupted in 1968. The politicization of students and professors—many of them anthropologists—may have catalyzed this critical turn in anthropology, but the 1968 moment of political dissidence and mobilization does not fully explain why or how ideas and institutions of the social sciences changed. Thus, the subsequent turn to more conspicuously utilize Marxian and/or pluricultural frameworks for interpreting and explaining unequal social relations does not constitute a "paradigm shift" in the Kuhnian sense of the term.[5] Rather, I argue, this change was a crescendo of cumulative intellectual and practical experience: the "field," the classroom, the international conference, and both popular and scholarly publications together comprised a collective arena in which the dialogical relationship between theory and practice was essential. In this respect, the Papaloapan was as much an epistemological space as it was a physical one. Certainly that river

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more symptom than a cause." Hewitt de Alcanántara, *Anthropological Perspectives on Rural Mexico* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 113.

[4] Dependency Theory is the other major contribution of Latin American Social Scientists, enumerated first by Argentine economist Raúl Prebisch and further elaborated at the UN Economic Commission on Latin America (ECLA or CEPAL in Spanish) located in Santiago de Chile, during the early 1950s.

[5] Thomas Kuhn posits that the acceptance of "new" scientific theories happens because a shift occurs in the scientific community's worldview or "paradigm." This notion, which itself revolutionized historical writings of science, may have applied at other moments in the history of anthropology (the Boasian turn toward cultural relativism, for example, in the early twentieth century), but I am reluctant to call the transformation over the course of the 1960s a "paradigm shift." I suggest that there was a shift in the institutional dynamics of anthropology and indigenismo, but in fact the accepted scientific bases of the discipline have not changed since the 1930s. See Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962).

basin was not the only place where programs of economic development were carried out in indigenous zones, but it was one of few in Mexico that embodied such a transformation in terms of both space and ideas.[6]

The activities both in the Papaloapan basin and in Mexico's incipient Instituto Nacional Indigenista coincided with a global preoccupation to simultaneously modernize and preserve aspects of indigenous life. Such a concern was codified in the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization) resolutions of 1951 and 1952, which called for the study of methods to relieve tensions brought by modernization (specifically, by the "introduction of modern techniques"). On the U.S. front, President Truman's Point Four Program and the Cold War imperative of economic cooperation provided both financial and political support for scientific study of culture change and "acculturation."[7] Yet while the global context betrays a confluence of developmentalism and scientific concern for attendant cultural transformations, the work in the Papaloapan and Mexico more broadly were not merely a "global South" country's emulations of U.S.- or U.N.-driven programs or mandates. A Latin American consciousness of core-periphery relations had more explanatory value and guided conversations south of the U.S. border. The global question of economic development and the implications of social science carried meaning at the local level in Mexico, and ideas and practices played out there impacted theories and policies at the national level and beyond.

[6] It is impossible to isolate the practice of applied anthropology in the Papaloapan from coeval activities in other parts of Mexico, or even the world, that impacted the theory and practice of anthropology and/or development. I am interested in the relationship between the on-the-ground experience of economic development in indigenous communities, which I suggest the Papaloapan Project embodies well, to more global ideas and policies.

[7] Robert A. Manners, "Functionalism, Realpolitik and Anthropology," 8.

Documenting the Papaloapan

The most thorough documentation of the social, political, and economic world of the Papaloapan was largely ethnographic. At times limited, and even at odds with the social realities, anthropologists' observations and reports both before and during the population relocation comprised an essential written archive of information about the people and the place. But anthropologists were certainly not the only observers to document their observations: journalists and social development workers published tracts that conveyed their awe of the work unfolding in the river basin and their sanguine faith in the paternalist cause to emancipate the indigenous population.

The indigenous question, in its mid twentieth-century form, had its place in popular culture, and not just in the form of picaresque, costumbrista, or indigenista novels but in daily print as well. The seeming impossibility of dam building in a jungle landscape inspired creative works: award-winning journalist, novelist, and autodidact Luis Spota was one of the first fortunate men of letters to enjoy an early tour of the area not long after groundbreaking. He arrived in Temazcal in October of 1950, the day after eighty schoolteachers from Veracruz and Michoacán had visited the vaso.[8]

Spota, both revered for his incisive works of historical fiction and later reviled for his uncritical stance toward the ruling party, based his second novel on the early dam building efforts of the Papaloapan Project. *Las grandes aguas* betrays the social life of the vaso's builders, detailing power battles and relating stories of vice and intrigue in the boom town of Temazcal. Spota's protagonist is an erstwhile urban engineer whose *deber* –sense of national

[8] Sergio Mendieta "Informe Mensual de avance de trabajos que rinde la residencia" 31 October 1950 AHA CP Caja 368 Expediente 6004.

duty—compels him to leave the comforts of the capital city and oversee the building of the dam. The sacrifices he and his family made for the progress of the nation were a model for all Mexicans riding on the wave of national optimism and the inertia of the economic miracle.[9] Mexico, like any other nation in the mid-twentieth century, had its problems, but they could be overcome. The application of expert knowledge and skill on the ground implicated a new technocratic class of state workers. This era of *optimismo nacional* was one in which the promises of science and technology could both improve Mexico and make it whole; *desarrollo integral* could mean national unity and progress.[10]

Luis Spota was one of a handful of lettered and expert men and women who made their way to the Papaloapan basin to observe its transformation firsthand. In 1953 alone, forty farmers from California and a group of engineers visited the site of the dam, and throughout the 1950s, anthropologists from throughout the Americas landed at the base and received tours of both old and newly created communities throughout the basin.[11] Mexican agronomist Edmundo Flores and Dutch-American nurse Lini de Vries wrote of marvel and malaria in their respective memoirs; most importantly they were captivated by the Mexican government's intention to bring progress and prosperity to this regional backwater, and local experts' dedication to helping their fellow citizens.[12] Yet in the early 1950s, "development" was a capacious, and fuzzy concept. To many high-level officials in the Papaloapan Commission, it was about infrastructure and capital-

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[9] Luis Spota, *Las grandes aguas* (Mexico City.F.: Librería Porrúa, 1953). The novel also inspired a *telenovela* with the same name that began in 1989 and ran for eighty episodes.

[10] I borrow the term "optimismo nacional" from Luis Aboites, "Optimismo nacional: geografía, ingeniería hidráulica y política en México (1926-1976)." In *Identidades, estado nacional y globalidad: México, siglos XIX y XX*, ed. Brígida von Mentz (Mexico City.F.: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología, 2000), 95-152.

[11] Informe de Avances de Trabajos 30 May 1952 AHA CP Caja 369, Expediente 6010.

[12] Edmundo Flores, *Antesalas de poder: Historias de Edmundo Flores*. Volumen II, Autobiografía 1950-1973. (Mexico City.: Editorial Posada, 1986); Lini de Vries, *The People of the Mountains: Health Education among Indian Communities in Oaxaca, Mexico* (Cuernavaca, Mexico: Centro Intercultural de Documentación, 1969.

intensive growth; to anthropologists and sympathetic agronomists and engineers working in the displaced communities, it was about social welfare and targeted cultural change. As one Papaloapan Commission engineer told Lini de Vries: "Look, we are engineers, road builders, dam builders, and so forth. We need someone who understands human engineering. We have agronomists, road experts, soil experts, civil engineers, electrical engineers, sanitation engineers – but how can we get people to come to a clinic when we don't even know their language or their culture?"[13]

For another of Mexico's literary greats, the Papaloapan Project would serve as both creative inspiration and a gateway to a lifelong career as a bureaucrat for the Instituto Nacional Indigenista. Shortly after submitting his manuscripts of *Pedro Páramo* and *Los murmullos*, the man who was to become one of Mexico's most celebrated fiction writers was offered a job as photographer and researcher for the Papaloapan Commission's publications department. The young engineer Raúl Sandoval Landázuri, appointed Executive Chair of the Commission in 1953, invited Juan Rulfo to document the peoples and projects of the basin as it transformed. In 1955, Rulfo, who elegantly rendered the nuances of Mexico's countryside and its people as well with the camera as he did with the pen, accompanied Sandoval to villages in the states of Oaxaca, Puebla, and Veracruz. Rulfo's early reflections on his time in the basin echoed Spota's sentiments. "For to the majority of the people at work here, and especially among the technicians and professionals, climate, bugs, and drain on the health are truly secondary; and what counts is the fact that one's country and one's people are being helped and served. Other than this satisfaction, there are few rewards in such work—for advancement, prestige, publicity or fame are all pretty much absent; the work is done in the anonymity of public service, moreover at the

[13] De Vries, *The People of the Mountains*, 40.

mercy of political winds too."[14] Both Rulfo's and Spota's images of selfless, thankless public servants working for progress in the Papaloapan evinced a sense that Mexico's road to economic development was not only the right one, but that the solution to the problems facing rural and particularly indigenous peoples required the personal dedication and sacrifice of experts in the Papaloapan.

Critic Andrew Dempsey likens the photographic repertory of Rulfo to that of Depression-era photographer Dorthea Lange, both executing profound images that at once documented misery and humanity. Rulfo's photos of women, Dempsey argues, are nothing like the "iconic" or "generic" images of famed painters Diego Rivera or José Clemente Orozco—a difference that may be as much a result of personal taste as a sign of the times. Social scientists of the 1920s and '30s, contemporaries of Orozco and Rivera's first phase of commissioned mural painting, themselves sought to explicate indigenous peoples as staid figures, and vestiges of a precolonial past. If Rulfo's photographs convey a complexity of character (personality?) and candor among Oaxaca's indigenous women, anthropologists' ethnographies increasingly tell of dynamism and diversity among the peoples of the Papaloapan basin. But both visual and ethnographic renderings offered limited interpretations of the realities *cuenqueños* faced and an ambiguous prognosis of the form improvement should take. This era of the Mexican miracle, of the mandate of economic modernization, was a time of discovery, but also one of ambivalence.

While his photographic journey in the Papaloapan was cut short when Commission Director Raúl Sandoval's plane careened into the mountainside of the Lower Papaloapan basin in 1956, Rulfo's stint in the Papaloapan introduced him to the work of the INI and eventually Director Alfonso Caso. Caso offered the struggling writer a position as editor of the INI

[14] Juan Rulfo, "The Papaloapan" *Mexico this Month* May 5 1958, 13-18.

publications department in 1962, a job Rulfo would keep until his death in 1987. The encounters of Rulfo, Spota, de Vries and others in the Papaloapan betray the diverse ways in which experts and intellectuals confronted the questions of both economic and social integration on the ground. For Rulfo and Spota, indigenismo was more than a literary genre;[15] for INI anthropologists in the Papaloapan, it was more than ideology.

Spheres of Influence

As anthropologists Alfonso Villa Rojas, Fernando Cámara and Rodolfo Stavenhagen led the relocation of thousands of residents of the Papaloapan, the changes they anticipated were increasingly a topic of interest in social scientific circles. Mexican social scientists had always been part of global professional communities even if their principal ideas and actions were rooted in Mexican realities and the indigenous question. Their work in the Papaloapan, however, was formative for their own professional and intellectual development. Both ethnographic research among pueblos of the vaso and applied experience as Coordinating Center administrators shaped debates within the INI and among anthropologists in the Americas, and eventually influenced more global dialogues about modernization, dependency, and internal colonialism. Their research findings, contributions to social scientific theory, and ideas for policy grew in tandem with the relocation process and infrastructural development in the Papaloapan region. While other INI projects in coordinating centers throughout the country were also undeniably critical to these processes of intellectual development and policymaking, the Papaloapan Project was an unparalleled fusion of the mandate of capitalist development in the

[15] Indigenista literature, of course, existed alongside indigenista policy. Though many of the recognized writers of Mesoamerica and the Andes, such as José María Arguedas (Peru) and Miguel Ángel Asturias (Guatemala), did not work for an indigenista institute, others, such as Rosario Castellanos (Mexico), did.

countryside and the movement for national integration. Contemporaneous publications betray the ways in which theory and practice influenced one another, but also and more importantly, the misfiring and misinterpretation between the world of ideas and the realm of praxis. Anthropologists observed contradictory social and economic relations in the communities of the Papaloapan that at once justified and contradicted theories of indigenous exploitation at the hands of non-indígenas.

During the 1950s, the INI's official publication, *Acción Indigenista*, featured reports of indigenista intervention and its effects on indigenous peoples, as well as meditations on both indigenista ideology and policy. The INI's work in "indigenous zones" began in the archetypal Maya highland region of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas (1951), spreading then to the Mixtec region of Oaxaca, the Papaloapan (where activities centered around the displacement and relocation efforts), and the Tarahumara region of Chihuahua. The pages of *Acción Indigenista* during the 1950s focused principally on the activities of the Coordinating Centers in the aforementioned regions, though INI staff also published thought pieces on the institute's mandate for indigenous integration and policies outside the purview of the INI that affected the indigenous population. If there was a main institutional credo or ideological current in the INI during this decade, the periodical made room for contention and debate.

Anthropologists' contributions to *Acción Indigenista* evince efforts to both explain and effect changes from without in indigenous communities, but throughout the 1950s and into the early years of the following decade, contributors failed to reach a consensus on the material and social elements that defined indigenous communities as such. INI director Alfonso Caso's definition of Indian and Indianness, articulated in a 1948 publication, was based on the

indigenous subject's identification with an indigenous community.[16] But the qualities of an indigenous versus non-indigenous community—a concept at the time articulated interchangeably with "Indian" community—were perennially elusive considering the great diversity conveyed in ethnographic studies conducted throughout Mexico since the late 1930s—among and within communities of study.

Ideas about indigenous culture linked the concept to practices of the past, and by the mid-twentieth century such a past was also representative of pre-capitalist society. "Culture," a term invoked, often equivocally, to define indigenous persons vis-à-vis their national counterparts, justified the intervention of the INI in indigenous zones. But so-called "indigenous" culture could be anything from dress to language, to means of production and engagement in markets. Alejandro D. Marroquín's conceits first articulated in 1964 mirrored many of his colleagues': indigenous culture was inherently "traditional," and "conservative," which jibed easily with the "isolated" and "feudal" qualities of indigenous communities. The "prestige" economy and "magical-religious" value systems made for an indigenous world that operated under rules distinct from the capitalist system. Yet despite their different relationships to money exchange, a number of anthropologists writing in the 1950s asserted that indigenous communities were part of a regional economic system in which a non-indigenous, mestizo, or mixed "center" had a hold on the indigenous communities.

This center may have been a conservative force in maintaining "feudal" economic relations and "caste divisions," but the observation that powerful centers reigned over

[16] Caso, Alfonso, "Definición del indio y de lo indio," *América Indígena*, 8 (1948): 239-247.

subordinated satellites was already prevalent by the middle of the decade.[17] That is to say, indigenous peoples and communities operated under different economic rules, due mainly to the fact that they had a culture distinct from that of the singular Mexican nation, and it was this idea of indigenous culture that justified the INI's intervention in "Indian" Mexico. At the same time, at mid-century anthropologists were increasingly articulating a particular phenomenon that defined the regional political economy in Indian Mexico, in which a nucleus and the communities in its orbit participated in an uneven relationship of reciprocity.

The question of market relations in the countryside is another theme that anthropologists prior to the 1950s had treated as well in their writings, though it is not until the 1950s that these ideas make their mark in debates—both in indigenista circles and among Americanist anthropologists. British social anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski and Mexican anthropologist Julio de la Fuente's 1940 study of Oaxacan markets, published in 1957, served as a model for later theories of indigenous social and economic relations, especially those of Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, as we will see below.[18] But the mid-1950s were also a time during which a cauldron of interpretations was brewing, one that included Boasian "culturalist" as well as "structural" and "functionalist" theories emanating from British social anthropology. It was no coincidence that a sort of grab bag of approaches to studying and explaining indigenous society came into being at the same time that Mexico's mandate for economic development was being realized in the countryside.

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[17] Alejandro D. Marroquín, "Características de la economía indígena mexicana" *Acción Indigenista* 56 (February 1958). The article was presented at conferences organized by the INI Círculo de Estudios Mexicanos in 1954. The tropes of conservatism, isolation, and feudalism are present in many ethnographic accounts of rural and principally indigenous communities starting before the 1950s.

[18] Malinowski and de la Fuente's research spawned an interpretive move from Redfieldian idea of insular community to interest in relating community to the outside world.

Anthropologists also used a handful of predicates to explain the ultimate goal and work of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista. Semantically speaking, "integration" had become a catchall phrase to indicate the INI's *raison d'être* by the early 1950s. But whereas in the 1920s through early 1940s anthropologists and pedagogues had debated the respective definitions and benefits of "acculturation," "incorporation," and "integration," all three terms were used in official publications and internal reports by mid century. From the mid-1950s to early 1960s, contributing authors to *Acción Indigenista* called for indigenous communities' self-sufficiency, "and to incorporate themselves to the economic and cultural life of Mexico."[19] Director Alfonso Caso, commonly referred as a hard-liner "integrationist" with little tolerance for cultural (or ideological) heterogeneity, explained the fundamental mission of the INI as "the incorporation of the autochthonous nuclei to the life of the country, and the conservation of positive values of the native culture."[20] In this sense, "integration" was a convenient term favored in economic circles and attractive for political speech, but in reality signified a loosely defined policy program of indigenous cultural preservation and modernization. While Caso and other contributors to *Acción Indigenista* may have claimed the work of the INI was not to create dependence on the indigenist institution, its programs solidified the INI's place as perennial interlocutor between rural indigenous communities and federal social service bureaucracies.[21]

Yet as we saw in chapters 4 and 5, the INI staff in the Papaloapan rarely if ever worked to directly alter indigenous cultural practices. If anything their most concerted efforts were

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[19] "…se basten a si mismas y se incorporen a la vida económica y cultural de México." "México y sus indios" *Acción Indigenista* 52 (October 1957), 3.

[20] Alfonso Caso, interview with Ramón Beteta, "Los indios carecen de tierras" *Boletín Indigenista* 73 (July 1959). "Misión fundamental del Instituto Nacional Indigenista es la incorporación de los núcleos autóctonos a la vida del país, y la conservación de los valores positivos de la cultura nativa."

[21] For more on this, see Chapter 4 of this dissertation.

directed at unequal economic and political relationships between the indigenous (read: economically marginalized) population and local power brokers. In a March 1958 article, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán boasted that in the relocation community of Nuevo Ixcatlán a government-run cooperative turned what was once a bartering system between "paisanos" (Mazatecs) and "gente de razón" (non-Indians or ladinized Mazatecs) into a money economy.[22] The paisanos took no issues with mechanized agriculture or credit arrangements, he claimed, but were against the "impersonal, bureaucratic" treatment of the federal credit system and the lack of credit opportunities. While I have found no evidence of resistance to the "impersonal" nature of the local credit system in the archival record, relocated farmers were indeed frustrated at the lack of credit opportunities at their disposal; this in spite of the fact that they had been promised access to agricultural credit prior to their move. What is more, and contrary to Aguirre Beltrán's assertion about the cooperative, the archive reveals a lack of funds in the Nuevo Ixcatlán cooperative and poor access to outside markets during the late 1950s, for which reason many relocated farmers were forced to sell to "gente de razón" at rates lower than the market price in order to subsist.[23] The limited work of the INI in equalizing market relations between indigenous and non-indigenous actors was not necessarily effective, but it did not change indigenous culture either.

While the contributions to *Acción Indigenista* were likely intended to convey both the successes of and need for further INI action, contributors betrayed the multitude of approaches to and conclusions about improvement programs in indigenous Mexico. During this time the pages of *América Indígena*— the official publication of the Interamerican Indianist Institute (III)—

[22] Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Nuevo Ixcatlán" *Acción Indigenista 57* (March 1958).
[23] See Chapters 4 and 5.

were also rife with ideological meditations and reports of indigenismo in practice, but in contrast to the effusive reportage of the INI's applied projects in *Acción Indigenista*, *América Indígena* balanced news of applied work throughout the Americas with scholarship of ethnographic and linguistic relevance, as well as articles that engaged in dialogues and polemics of broader theoretical and methodological significance throughout the Western hemisphere.

Despite the diversity of scholarly contributions to *América Indígena*, the journal's monthly editorials—written mainly by Inter-American Indianist Institute Director Manuel Gamio until his death in 1960—included brief reports on indigenista legislation and short opinion pieces on indigenous life, the latter of which tended toward a paternalistic call for indigenous uplift and improvement more typical of Gamio's earlier writings. Editions of *América Indígena* from the late 1940s covered relevant topics of the day: the definition of Indianness ("*lo indio*"), whether or not Indian policy was discriminatory, and occasionally the relevance or importance of applied anthropology to indigenous problems. When the UNESCO and the III or member countries (Bolivia, Haiti, and Mexico, for example) signed cooperation agreements in 1949 and 1950, editorials followed. But the tenor of those editorials, which lauded indigenista programs and tended to simplify the realities of indigenous peoples and communities, was not always consistent with that of the main articles, which revealed a diversity of ideologies, theories, and approaches to explaining indigenous problems and policy.

More patently than in *Acción Indigenista*, the issues of *América Indígena* served as a battleground in which the objective definition and purpose of indigenismo were debated, clarified, and redefined. Juan Comas, the Spanish-born anthropologist active in both the INI and National School of Anthropology (ENAH) clarified to readers in 1953 the true mission of indigenismo:

> Acculturation, the incorporation of aboriginal groups to the citizenry of the country to which they belong does not imply, then, in any way the concept of "de-Indianization," nor the homogenization of customs and ways of life. Indigenismo does not want—we repeat— to "de-Indianize" the Indians; it wants to grant them the most adequate means for their best social, cultural, and economic development, but respecting the many material or psychic manifestations, including language… from their maternal culture considered useful and dignified to be inspired.[24]

At odds with President Lázaro Cárdenas's famous call in 1940 to unequivocally "Mexicanize" the Indian,[25] Comas's public clarification offered the nuanced approach that INI employees upheld, or at least attempted to uphold, in the Papaloapan.

In both publications, anthropologists, those affiliated with the INI and not, debated not only social structure and economic behavior in indigenous communities, but also when an Indian stopped being one— and to what extent this was a desired end. Indigenista ideologues waivered on this question, which would later lead some critics to the conclusion that indigenismo, because it ultimately sought to do away with the Indian, was at base ethnocidal. If there is a lesson to be learned from the ethnographic writings, reports, and publications of anthropologists who worked under the aegis of the INI, it is that there was no singular indigenismo, nor was it consistently clear what "indígena" actually meant in a given context. Similarly, there was no single, ubiquitous desire to do away with the "Indian."

Both Alfonso Caso and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán—the most regular contributors to indigenista publications and the Director and Assistant Director of the INI, respectively, until

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[24] Juan Comas, "Razón de ser del movimiento indigenista" *América Indígena* XIII No 2 (April 1953): 133-144. 138. "La aculturación, la incorporación de los grupos aborígenes a la ciudadanía del país a que pertenecen no implica, pues, en modo alguno el concepto de "desindianización" y ni siquiera el de homogeneización de costumbres y modos de vida. El indigenismo no quiere –repetimos "desindianizar" a los indios; quiere simplemente dotarlos social, cultural y económicamente de los medios más adecuados a su mejor desenvolvimiento, pero respetando cuantas manifestaciones materiales o psíquicas, incluso el idioma… de su cultura materna se consideran útiles y dignas de ser impulsadas."

[25] Cárdenas declared the mission of indigenous policy as such at the first Interamerican Indigenista conference in Pátzcuaro, Michocacán.

1970— suggested in the 1960s that the ultimate goal was to acculturate the indígena and make him Mexican, but while Caso's definition of indigenous was rooted in the cultural particularism of Manuel Gamio's earlier writings, Aguirre Beltrán considered the indigenous a subordinated caste. To him, the quality of being "indigenous" was a hold over from the political system of the colonial period, in which the "Republic of Indians" existed alongside the "Republic of Spaniards" with distinct juridical status. The political category "Indian," officially eliminated upon republican political consolidation in Mexico during the 1830s, continued to define a caste of people whose existence as such was evidence of their subordinate political and economic position vis-à-vis whites, mestizos, or ladinos. In Aguirre Beltrán's vision, "Indian" was not an ethnic distinction with the attendant cultural values, it was a category that should cease to exist when the oppression of those considered "Indian" ceased to exist. Effective equality among all Mexican citizens, Aguirre and Caso both pronounced, was the desired objective of the INI, and national integration (or "incorporation") was the means to this end.

Prior to the establishment of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista in 1948, anthropologists in Mexico explored the varied meanings of "indio" and "indianidad," and at times even noted how individuals could slip between indio and non-indio identities. By the early 1950s and now with the institutional infrastructure of more robust anthropology programs and the INI, such anthropologists deepened connections to international social scientific institutions of study as they continued to consider and publish treatises on this question. Fernando Cámara Barbachano, one of the anthropologists to combine reconnaissance ethnography with leading the evacuation in the Papaloapan, spent a stint at the Institut International des Civilisations Différentes (IICD) in

Brussels during 1952, contributing to publications in the institute's quarterly *Civilisations*.[26] His "Aspectos sociales y culturales de la América indígena," (social and cultural aspects of indigenous America) written while at the IICD and subsequently published in both *Civilisations* and *América Indígena*, argued that there was no clear "ethos," of indigenous culture, that four hundred years of contact meant there was no distinct indigenous genotype or biological "purity" among the population so labeled, and within the indigenous population no clear phenotypical distinctions either. Of interest to Cámara were not static social practices but what happens when a hostile environment and need force indigenous populations to encounter the contemporary world that in many ways is distinct from their own.[27]

Three years thereafter followed another publication by Cámara in the Belgian journal: his critical analysis of the early stages of relocation for the Papaloapan Project. Cámara's candid elaboration of his and other anthropologists' hubris—about indigenous culture and society as well as the anthropologists' ability to effect directed change—echoed his earlier reticence toward a global definition of indigenous America.[28] Ideas about indigenous policy and managed social and cultural change were undergoing a transformation. The exercise in the Papaloapan tested the limits not only of acculturation theories but of the assumptions on which they were based.

Meanwhile, the INI had already initiated its first Coordinating Center project in the highland city of San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas to serve Tzeltal and Tzotzil Mayans in the

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[26] Cámara and other international social scientists published on issues of cultural difference and social change from the journal's inception in 1951. Some colleagues of note who contributed to the journal's volumes during the early 1950s were sociologist Lucio Mendieta y Nuñez, anthropologists Ricardo Pozas, Manuel Gamio, and Clyde Klukhohn. Increasingly, and perhaps predictably, in the 1960s themes covered in the journal were more about urbanization than rural transformation and development.

[27] Fernando Cámara Barbachano, "Aspectos sociales y culturales de la América indígena" *América Indígena* XIV No. 2 (April 1954): 127-155; "Aspects Sociaux et Culturels de l'Amérique Indigène." *Civilisations* 2, no. 3 (September 1, 1952): 419–38.

[28] Fernando Cámara, "Déplacement et Réinstallation de Groupes Indigènes Au Mexique: Le Plan Du Papaloapan." *Civilisations* 5, no. 2 (January 1, 1955): 203–29.

surrounding area. As Paula López Caballero argues, the coordinating center was more of an ad hoc organizational model than a well-theorized ideal or plan put into practice, established in San Cristobal more out of convenience than for the spatial justification Aguirre Beltrán would later give.[29] The establishment of the Coordinating Center in the Papaloapan was equally a decision of convenience: when the Relocation Office, located at the site of the dam in Temazcal, fell under the auspices of the INI, it became the regional Coordinating Center. Yet Aguirre Beltrán worked over subsequent years to fully articulate his model for locating the center of indigenous modernization. A coordinating center, he would later explain, should be seated in the (necessarily mestizo/ladino) regional city of an indigenous zone, which served as a nucleus around which various satellite indigenous pueblos were dispersed. According to his logic, the coordinating center would be best situated to change the local or regional social, economic, and political dynamics if it worked within the centers of political and economic power.

Thus, while Eric Wolf's idea of the indigenous peasant community as an insular polity or social world mostly autonomous from society outside had its appeal, it was insufficient to explain the dynamism of Mexico's various indigenous communities.[30] Aguirre's first publication in this regard appeared on the pages of *América Indígena* in 1955. Outlining the historic importance of applied social science in Mexican government action, particularly among indigenous peoples, his piece begins with a short meditation on the importance of social theory to applied practice, and vice versa. Lauding the work of colleagues Bronislaw Malinowski, Julio

[29] Paula López Caballero, "Las políticas indigenistas y la 'fábrica' de su sujeto de intervención en la creación del primer Centro Coordinador del Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1948-1952" in *Nación y alteridad. Mestizos, indígenas y extranjeros en el proceso de formación nacional*, coord. Daniela Glazer and Paula López Caballero (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Unidad Cuajimalpa, 2015).

[30] Eric R. Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java." *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (April 1, 1957): 1–18.

de la Fuente, and Robert Redfield— the latter for his notion of the folk-urban continuum in particular— Aguirre suggested that "integral development" of what he and others had begun to call "cultural regions" was only possible if it encompassed the entire system that included not only Indians but mestizos and ladinos as well. Echoing de la Fuente's observations made a decade earlier about the problems brought by the exclusive anthropological study of indigenous peoples in Mexico, and Cámara's observation that work in the Papaloapan would fall short if it did not include a program for the non-indigenous population of the river basin, Aguirre argued that Indians', mestizos', and ladinos' "mutual dependence connects them so inextricably that it is impossible to think of the improvement of one without being concerned with raising the level of the others."[31] While he recognized the previous utility of studying communities as "isolated, self-sufficient and ethnocentric societies," the community study model was insufficient for development work in indigenous areas.[32] Using the adept and willing indigenous cultural promoters as an example, Aguirre negated the notion that indigenous peasant societies were completely closed to outsiders.[33]

The regional theory of integration linked the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous communities to national and supranational dynamics of political economy. The "intercultural regions" to which indigenous communities belonged were also tethered to a national mestizo nucleus. This center-periphery model of the INI conspicuously echoed the

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[31] Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "A Theory of Regional Integration: The Coordinating Centers." *América Indígena* XV, no. 1 (January 1955): 29–42. 34; Julio de la Fuente to Sol Tax, September 14, 1945. Tax, Sol. Papers, Box 84, Folder 4, Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library; Cámara, "Plan du Papaloapan."

[32] Aguirre Beltrán, "A Theory of Regional Integration," 31.

[33] It is unclear if this assertion is in response to Eric Wolf's incipient thesis of the closed corporate peasant community, which would not be published until two years later. Curiously, Wolf's use of the concept of "dualization" to explain the partitioning of an entrepreneurial sector and a dominated sector of native peasants parallels Aguirre's discussion of indigenous vs. non-indigenous relations. As an interesting aside, Wolf and Cámara had discussed the relocation of the Papaloapan, which he cites in the article: Eric R. Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities," 3.

language of dependency theory. Certainly the notion of regional study and action was not a post-dependency concoction: pedagogues and anthropologists such as Manuel Gamio and Moisés Sáenz, among others, had argued for regional improvement programs— as opposed to national ones— directed at both mestizo and indigenous communities. The particular formulation of Aguirre's framework, however, implied a specific spatial relationship of domination that had been a mainstay in rural Mexico from colonial times. It is worthwhile to note that the premise of Aguirre Beltrán's articulation— and that of almost all contemporaneous work in indigenous Mexico—was that the community was a solid and consistent unit of analysis and target for directed change. The community study model, perhaps made most famous by Robert Redfield in his monograph on the village of Tepoztlán, Morelos, was still a hallmark of ethnographic enquiry in indigenous regions (not just of Mexico, but of the Americas more broadly). Yet as Aguirre's example demonstrates, not all anthropologists assumed the "community" to be an integrated whole unmarred by internal strife or contradictions.[34]

The theory of regional integration and the coordinating center model that Aguirre proposed and succeeded in implementing was not without its critics. Most vocal in his dissent was Ricardo Pozas Arciniega, who had initiated the Indigenista Coordinating Center in Chiapas. For Pozas, the work of the Centers should be centered at the heart of indigenous communities themselves, and their labor should be focused on organizing indigenous peoples to demand social justice. Pozas's forthright critiques may have contributed to his transfer from Chiapas to the Papaloapan Coordinating Center, but the work he had carried out among Tzteltals and Tzotziles

[34] Ricardo Pozas's publication of *Chamula: un pueblo indio en los Altos de Chiapas* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1959) utilizes the community study model to explain social transformation through both capitalist forms and internal contradictions within the community. See Roman Piña Chan, "Reflexiones personales en torno a la antropología mexicana" in Eyra Cárdenas Barahona, coord. *50 años: memoria de la ENAH* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1993), 45.

in Chiapas— developing cooperatives for indigenous farmers, organizing the latter against local crop hoarders— made him an attractive candidate as the first director of the INI's Center in the Papaloapan. Pozas's short stint in the river basin was mostly cause for disillusionment. His battles with the Papaloapan Commission, ministerial representatives and INI the directorship led him back to Mexico City after just over one year. Indigenismo and applied anthropology should be used to liberate the Indian on his terms, Pozas contended, and provide him with the tools to articulate his position as part of a class struggle.[35]

The Rise of the Peasant

From at least the beginning of the twentieth century, social thought on indigenous peoples and policy developed in tandem with ideas about the rural masses and their place in the Mexican nation. The fact that for centuries "Indian" identity had been pegged to a particular, and increasingly rural, political unit led to the consistent conflation of the indigenous population with the Mexican peasantry. To numerous anthropologists and social thinkers, the idyllic rural community had served as a hallmark of indigenous anti-modernism. As Emilio Kourí shows, debates that led to the promulgation of Article 27 of the 1917 Constitution—which codified communal land entitlement—was mired in racist assumptions regarding rural peoples' ability to manage and propensity for owning private property.[36] And while not all social thinkers understood rural problems to be Indian problems and vice versa, the two were often intertwined.

[35] Unfortunately, I have few sources dating from the 1950s or 60s that illustrate this contention. The Pozas-Aguirre debate became most conspicuous in a 1976 publication, *La Quiebra política de la antropología mexicana,* discussed below.

[36] Emilio H. Kourí, "Interpreting the Expropriation of Indian Pueblo Lands in Porfirian Mexico: The Unexamined Legacies of Andrés Molina Enríquez." *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (February 1, 2002): 69–117.

In Mexico, social anthropology rose alongside an increased interest in explicating economic relations, particularly between indigenous and non-indigenous individuals and communities.[37] In burgeoning indigenista circles throughout the hemisphere, Marxist examinations of indigenous economic life explicated the material conditions of Indian society. Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui may have most famously elaborated such an analysis in 1928, when he lauded ancient indigenous Andean forms of land tenure and economic exchange as the key to Peru's future and lamented the modern indigenous population's landholding status, but he was certainly not the only thinker to relate the plight of the indigenous population to the land.[38] Labor-based discussions of the indigenous reality were also held on the international stage. The International Labor Organization (ILO) in 1936 unanimously adopted a resolution "concerning the living and working conditions of native populations," at the first Conference of American States Organization Meeting in Santiago de Chile, the topic of which was discussed in a 1941 article appearing in *América Indígena,* "The International Labour Organisation and the Indigenous Workers of the Americas."[39] Others, such as anthropologist Julio de la Fuente and labor leader Vicente Lombardo Toledano, were similarly forthcoming in their material analysis of indigenous society in the 1930s and '40s. Perhaps this focus should be of no surprise, as both were avowed Marxists and active in organizing workers, though de la Fuente eventually became a career anthropologist and researcher for the Instituto Nacional Indigenista.[40]

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[37] For a deeper explanation of social anthropology and its rise in Mexico, see Chapter 3 of this dissertation.
[38] José Carlos Mariátegui, *7 ensayos de interpretación de la realidad peruana* (Lima: Biblioteca Amauta, 1928).
[39] David H. Blelloch, "The International Labour Organisation and the Indigenous Workers of the Americas" *América Indígena* 1, No. 1 (October 1941): 35-37. 35.
[40] Susan Drucker-Brown, "Introduction" in *Malinowski in Mexico: The Economics of a Mexican Market System*, Bronislaw Malinowski, ed. Susan Drucker-Brown (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1982), 2-7.

Intellectual space for Marxian typologies, however, was curbed after World War II. The Truman Doctrine and Cold War politics more broadly may in part explain the limited use of such language in publications and official discourse, but diversity in theoretical and ideological approaches were not entirely dictated by political tides. To some of the avowed social anthropologists, "scientific" anthropology was not to be colored shaded by political partiality.

Mexican (and Americanist) anthropology's central preoccupation with culture made for analyses that often omitted entirely categories of class and labor, and certainly did not forgo the use of ethnic categories for explaining relationships of exploitation and domination even when they included referents to class struggle. Anthropologists working among the displaced in the Papaloapan struggled to operationalize theories of cultural change, and for many of them, the commitment to resolve the "indigenous problem" was a commitment to a more equitable existence between indigenous and non-indigenous Mexicans. Increasingly, many of their generation found that the "Indigenous problem" was nearly synonymous with the "rural problem:" the unfulfilled promises of the Revolution had caused economic stagnation in the countryside. A framework that explained the material realities of indigenous life could better provide anthropologists with the tools to both theorize indigenous marginalization and carry out their mission indigenous improvement.

If Marxism and Marxian analyses were nothing new to Mexican anthropologists by the 1950s, neither was an approach to explaining social life that included the ecological habitat of a particular indigenous culture.[41] Manuel Gamio's "integrated" study of Teotihuacan (published in

[41] Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara concedes that the indigenistas of the 1940s-50s were structural-functionalists, though their ideas were quite heterodox, and they incorporated Marxist elements into their revisions. This was in part because it was difficult to use either particularist or structuralist definitions of "Indianness." Hewitt de Alcantára, *Anthropological Perspectives*. I am not convinced, however, that "indigenistas," as diverse a lot as they

1922) included data on the particular space where Teotihuacanos lived and worked, and similarly the early ethnographic studies of the Papaloapan basin in preparation for the relocation process stressed the methodological importance of detailing the local habitat and its relationship to society. When North American Julian Steward proposed the concept of "cultural ecology" as a counterpoint to the Boasian "culturalism" prevalent in the Americas, it gained much traction in anthropological circles throughout the hemisphere.

Though Steward was admittedly not a Marxist, Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara has demonstrated that this cultural interpretation grounded in material bases served as a spring board for future elaborations of Marxist theory that would explain the historical development of the Mexican countryside. Steward's student Eric Wolf, an active collaborator with Mexican anthropologists, gradually fused his mentor's cultural ecology with Marxist theory, articulating not organic but rather mechanical solidarity as an integral component of indigenous community life in Mexico. Simply put, indigenous community members demonstrated ties of "mechanical" solidarity more typical of "traditional" societies characterized by relative homogeneity.[42] What was once Redfield's "folk" came to be the "peasantry."[43]

Throughout the 1950s and 60s, Mexico continued to be part of, if not the heart of, hemisphere-wide discussions of anthropological theory. The establishment of the United Nations

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were, were wedded to any particular theoretical frameworks. The "structural-functional" designation, after all, is one that contemporaries (such as Malinowski) rejected outright. Much as indigenista policy was an amalgam of ad-hoc decision-making and eclectic approaches to applied projects, so too, I suggest, did "indigenistas"— or human scientists in general—utilize various theoretical frameworks as they saw fit.

[42] These concepts were developed and explained by Émile Durkheim in *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997 [1893]), Chapter 2.

[43] Hewitt de Alcantára, *Anthropological Perspectives*, 72-75, 79. Wolf collaborated extensively with Angel Palerm, a Spanish exile to Mexico who collaborated with Steward and Wolf during 1950s and early 60s first as editor of *Revista Interamericana de Ciencias Sociales* and later as director of Office of Social Studies of Panamerican Union in Washington. Palerm's selective borrowing of Marxist thought was at odds with both Boasian particularism and the structural functionalists, which led to his dismissal from the National School of Anthropology in 1968.

Economic Commission on Latin America and the success of theoretical approaches that used dependency to explain Latin American economies' relationship to the North Atlantic world unified social scientific thought around the idea of Latin America as a geographic region. Economic planners in countries such as Mexico, which implemented Import Substitution Industrialization programs as a means of economic development, used dependency theory to justify their policies. The Papaloapan Project was a quintessential regional development program that emerged from such policies, making the INI's work there a supportive appendage of dependency theory-fashioned development policy.

Numerous institutions, including the UNESCO, had a keen interest in utilizing Mexico as a training center for social scientists of all strains, including agronomists and rural economists, hailing from Central, South, and North America. Many of the most revered anthropologists of the United States continued to work in Mexico, where Harvard's Evan Vogt founded and directed the Harvard-Chiapas project in 1955, and the University of Chicago planted its version of the Chiapas project, Man-In-Nature, in 1957.[44] Exiles from throughout Central and South America and the Caribbean cycled through and sometimes remained in Mexico City, many of them students and intellectuals whose ideas built from dependency theory's articulation of a Latin American condition. A "Latin American consciousness," in the words of Rodolfo Stavenhagen, resulted from the conglomeration of students at the National School of Anthropology (ENA) in Mexico City who shared their experiences of misery, dictatorship,

[44] The Man-In-Nature project was a five-year program in which participating anthropologists elaborated a theory of "multiple society" that grouped Indian communities and compared them to a "national segment" of the population. It is noteworthy that the comparison between ideal Indian and non-Indian types was a central organizing framework for the program, in contrast with Aguirre Beltrán's developing theory of regional integration.

repression.[45] As president of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), Mesoamericanist Sol Tax planned the 1959 meeting of the AAA to convene in Mexico City, the first time it was held outside of Anglophone North America.[46]

And Mexicans were active in such circles outside their home country as well. The growth of international institutions and research centers dedicated to the study of social problems made for spaces in which Mexican social scientists would collaborate with their colleagues from the hemisphere and beyond to both theorize social marginality and share ideas for policy implementation. In 1957 the UNESCO funded the creation of two research centers in Latin America: the Centro Latino-Americano de Pesquisas em Ciências Sociais (CLAPSC) in Rio de Janeiro, which in turn published its annual *América Latina*; and the Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO). Contributors to *América Latina* included not only Rodolfo Stavenhagen but also Pablo González Casanova, a fellow Mexican national who, like Stavenhagen, was a collaborator at the CLAPSC in Rio de Janeiro and graduate of the University of Paris (Sorbonne). They brought to bear their applied experiences in the Mexican countryside on more generalized debates on social and economic relations among marginalized populations.

The exchange of ideas has always crossed national borders, but the development of specific institutions dedicated to the study of human problems, particularly in Latin America, allowed for an elevated discourse that transcended the "Indian problems" debated at the Interamerican Indianist Institute congresses. An increasingly outward looking cohort of Mexican

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[45] Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "Los chicos del cambio," in Cárdenas Barahona, Eyra (coord), *50 años: memoria de la ENAH* (México: INAH, 1993), 105. According to Stavenhagen, the students at ENA (the "H" was added later when the curriculum began to include a track in history) supported the striking students at the Instituto Politécnico Nacional in 1956, but were placated when then head of the Education Ministry Luis Echeverría offered them extra funds for fieldwork (*trabajo de campo*).

[46] 1948 was the first time it was held outside the U.S. (Toronto). In 1974, the AAA annual meeting was once again held in Mexico City.

anthropologists and anthropological institutions now used more universalizing language to explain subjugation in the countryside. Discussions of local Indians alone would no longer suffice: class dynamics and both inter- and intra-regional political and economic relations were necessary categories of analysis to both understand and transform indigenous society.

From Indigenismo to Internal Colonialism

The increased use of Marxist categories and typologies to explain economic inequality and underdevelopment in the countryside accompanied gradual institutional changes in both the INI and anthropology institutions in Mexico, as well as global changes in the human sciences and integration policies. Critiques of colonialism in the wake of decolonization and the success of the Cuban Revolution lent legitimacy to Marxian explanations of exploitation and underdevelopment. Mexican anthropologists were part and parcel of transnational dialogues that sought to both explain and find a solution to uneven economic development.

A noticeable shift in the INI's official publication, *Acción Indigenista*, transpired over the course of the 1960s, as more propagandistic reports of "indigenista action" increasingly replaced some of the more critical contributions from the previous decade. The Institute itself, twelve years old by 1960, had set its bases in over twelve Coordinating Centers across the Mexican countryside. Its oldest branches had so deeply rooted themselves in their communities that the relatively flexible programs of the previous decade had morphed into an increasingly rigid apparatus. Stringent credit programs replaced experimentation with local, Coordinating Center-run cooperatives, and some of the more radical of young anthropologists laboring in or directing the centers had been relocated to Mexico City or returned on their own volition, some relegated

to teaching over a career as applied anthropologists and others seeking careers and intellectual pursuits beyond the confines of the INI.

Former anthropologist employees continued to adapt the cultural ecology and structural materialist frameworks to explain indigenous communities as both isolated from yet integral components of the national economy. At the 1962 Americanist congress in Mexico City, Fernando Cámara Barbachano, the Papaloapan Indigenista Coordinating Center's first director, stressed in his introduction to the panel "Agricultural Development in Indigenous and Campesino Communities," the "ecological" focus of the participants' work, extending the contributions of Robert Redfield and Julian Steward to explain how the physical environment interacted with cultural and social structures.[47] His student, Margarita Nolasco Armas, utilized the notion of the epicenter-satellite relationship between non-indigenous, merchant centers and indigenous, peasant peripheries to explain the stagnation of economic progress in agricultural areas.[48] Though neither cited Aguirre Beltrán's theory of regional integration, the echoes were clear: isolation and uneven development went hand in hand, while at the same time indigenous regions, as spatial and political units, formed integral components of regional economic systems that subsequently contributed to national and international economic exchange. "Traditional" communities were isolated, but still highly connected to regional and even national economies.

As Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt has deftly shown, it was in this milieu that González Casanova first introduced an elaborated concept of what he called internal colonialism.[49] In his

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[47] Fernando Cámara Barbachano "Recursos agrícolas y humanos en México" in *XXXV Congreso internacional de americanistas. México 1962: actas y memorias* (Mexico City: Editorial Libros de México, 1964, 207.

[48] Margarita Nolasco Armas, "Agricultura y desarrollo económico," *XXXV Congreso internacional de americanistas. México 1962: actas y memorias* (Mexico City: Editorial Libros de México, 1964), 219-228.

[49] Specifically, Rosemblatt illustrates how González Casanova builds on French geographer François Lambert's idea of dualism in Brazilian society, as presented in a 1959 conference at the Centro Latino-Americano de Pesquisas

1963 article published in *América Latina*, González Casanova adapted the notion of coloniality to the postcolonial state, in which unequal economic and political relations continued after power transferred from the metropole to a contingent of national elites. The concept's explanatory value, he suggested, could easily be applied to countries such as Mexico, "where there has been a process of *development* and *mobilization* that has not completely resolved the problem of a plural society."[50] The North Atlantic development model, as dependency theorists had argued, would not eliminate uneven economic growth, but dependency theory alone did not explain the specific economic and political relations of subjugation that reigned *within* countries like modern Mexico.

The clearest example of an internal colony was the indigenous population, subject to domination by the Creole nationals who displaced the Spanish as the political and economic elite upon independence. Incomplete economic "development" was a symptom of internal colonialism. The metropole's monopoly on commodity exchange meant a lack of economic integration within the colony, and this meant a lack of cultural integration. Colonial structures, González Casanova claimed, "are tightly connected to a plural society, to unequal development—technical, institutional, cultural…" and in colonies slave and feudal social relations coexist with capitalism and industry. Internal colonialism could help explain the

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em Ciências Sociais, to articulate his theory of internal colonialism. The 1963 publication was inspired by both dependency theory and postcolonial critiques such as those of Franz Fanon *(Wretched of the Earth*) and C. Wright Mills (both in contributions to the aforementioned conference and in *The Sociological Imagination*). Karin Alejandra Rosemblatt, "Modernization, Dependency, and the Global in Mexican Critiques of Anthropology." J*ournal of Global History* 9, no. 1 (2014): 94–121.

[50] Pablo González Casanova, "Sociedad plural, colonialismo interno y desarrollo," *América Latina* 6 No. 3 (1963):15-32, 16. "donde ha habido un proceso de desarrollo y de movilización que no ha acabado de resolver el problema de la sociedad plural." My emphasis.

"unequal development" in underdeveloped countries, which was both psychological and (mostly) structural.[51]

Both his in-text examples and secondary source citations betray González Casanova's keen awareness of writings by INI anthropologists.[52] Internal colonialism was indelibly tied to external economic dependency, and so was Mexico's indigenous population to the fate of the country's economic development. In fact González Casanova's typology echoed many of the tropes and conceits of Aguirre Beltrán's theory of regional integration. This is not to say that conditions in Mexico's hinterland were the only symptoms of uneven economic development: starting in the 1950s if not before, social scientists published increasingly on the phenomenon of urbanization and rural migration to Latin American cities.[53] And so too did this preoccupation with the demographic shift and urban growth require more universalizing tropes to explain phenomena and propose policy solutions.

During this time Rodolfo Stavenhagen, along with González Casanova, had begun to publish his own critiques of developmentalism. Stavenhagen's experience as an applied anthropologist in the Papaloapan basin and fieldwork in Chiapas informed his interpretation of economic development and inequality alongside the theories of the human sciences' greats. In addition to academic journal articles on the question of social stratification, class structure, and

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[51] González Casanova, "Sociedad plural," 21, 24-25, 29.

[52] For example, he cites both unpublished and published works by Julio de la Fuente, Alejandro D. Marroquín, M.O. de Mendizábal, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, and Manuel Gamio.

[53] This increased interest in the study of urbanization was a trend throughout the hemisphere, the impetus of which was perhaps president of the American Anthropological Association Ralph Beals's 1950 address. See Ralph L. Beals, "Urbanism, Urbanization and Acculturation." *American Anthropologis*t 53, no. 1 (1951): 1–10.

colonialism in Latin America,[54] Stavenhagen published a series in the Mexican periodical *El Día* in June of 1965, where he shared with readers common misconceptions about development and underdevelopment in his "*Siete tesis equivocadas sobre América Latina*" (seven erroneous theses about Latin America). Most notable for our purposes are two of the theses: first, the idea of the dual society, which posited that within a single nation there existed both an industrial urban section and a backward rural region. To Stavenhagen the importance was not what marked the differences between feudal/underdeveloped/backward society and capitalist/developed/modern society, but that the two were interconnected, and development and industrialization of the cities occurred at the expense of the traditional, backward zones.[55]

The other thesis of note is the sixth, regarding national integration and miscegenation. Social scientists and politicos who had celebrated miscegenation as Latin Americas' solution to problems of national integration—with Brazil's myth of "racial democracy" as perhaps the most well known in the U.S. at the time— were misleading, he argued. National integration, which Stavenhagen identified as the "full participation of all citizens in the same cultural values, and the relative quality of social and economic opportunities" was possible in the "Indian areas, not with the development of a new biocultural category, but with the disappearance of internal colonialism." Mestizos, or the racially mixed population, represented "the local and regional ruling class who help to maintain the Indian population in a state of oppression. The have not the slightest interest in true national integration." Rural migration to urban centers, of people often of

[54] Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "Estratificación social y estructura de clases," *Revista de Ciencias Políticas y Sociales*, 8, no. 27 (1962): 1–30; "Clases, colonialismo y aculturación en América Latina," *América Latina*, 6, no. 4 (1963): 63–104. Citations in Rosemblatt, "Modernization," 114.

[55] Reprinted in Rodolfo Stavenhagen, "Seven Fallacies about Latin America," in *Between Underdevelopment and Revolution: A Latin American Perspective* (New Delhi: Shakti Malik Abhinav Publications, 1981), 2-6.

"Indian stock" represented a different kind of "integration," but this did not undo the presence of internal colonialism.[56]

For Stavenhagen the dependency-inspired critique of developmentalism was more than a theoretical insight or abstraction; it was an interpretation of a real observation, an analysis based on a lived experience. As the manager of a relocated community in the Papaloapan basin, and later as an anthropology student doing applied work in Chiapas, Stavenhagen had witnessed the failures and broken promises of a development program, but also the local and regional dynamics of inequality and subjugation. Yet, from his first stint in the Papaloapan he had been critical of the proposed indigenista project: what kinds of social conflicts would come as indigenous Mexicans were increasingly "integrated" into the ranks of "campesinos," or the "proletariat," and how prepared were anthropologists to triage the effects of such a transformation?[57]

Applied experience, largely in Indigenista Coordinating Centers, had taught anthropologists such as Stavenhagen that indigenous Mexicans' gravest problems were economic, and that at root such problems were those of the peasantry (campesinado) at large. But if their experience and academic formation now led them more easily to class analysis, what was the solution to the problem? For some such as Andre Gunder Frank, fellow collaborator a the CLAPSC in Rio de Janeiro, capitalism could certainly not provide the the answer. His critique of both global capitalism and dependency theory held that in a capitalist world system

[56] Stavenhagen, "Seven Fallacies," 16.
[57] Rolf Stavenhagen, "En La Cuenca Del Papaloapan: Aspectos de La Antropología Social Aplicada." *Tlatoani* 7 (1953): 30–35, 35.

underdeveloped regions and countries could never catch up: only a revolutionary change would upend such inequality.[58]

In practice, INI bureaucrats and social scientists continued to implement social welfare programs and administer credit in their regions of influence. They worked alongside the Agrarian Department to help communities file land grant and restitution applications and solicit credit. More radical ideas of indigenous liberation were never put into practice, and their work was rarely based on "scientific" data collection. Though the extensive ethnographic studies of indigenous communities in the sphere of INI Coordinating Center influence had been microfilmed or bound and were available for contemporaries' perusal, INI programs fell short of institutionalizing programs based on specific ethnographic knowledge or scientific theory. In the Papaloapan, knowledge of local custom and social practice was understood as necessary for resident anthropologists on the ground to carry out the Coordinating Center's social programs among the displaced, but there is no evidence that ethnographic data collection and analysis shaped the Coordinating Center's program.

Yet the impulse to study indigenous communities in order to implement "development" programs proliferated in the Americas. The Organization of American States sent Technical Cooperation Program experts to study and establish Indian community development training centers in December 1961, and that organization's Economic and Social Council approved an agreement for a continent wide program with the Interamerican Indianist Institute on Indian Community Development.[59]

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[58] André Gunder Frank, *The Development of Underdevelopment* (Boston: New England Free Press, 1966).
[59] "The Institute and the PanAmerican Union to Start a Project for Indian Community Development," *América Indígena* XXII, no. 2 April 1962: 101-102, 101.

The "development" work of the INI Coordinating Centers, based as they were in non-indigenous municipal head towns and satellite indigenous hamlets, was centered on the "community" as a social unit and sphere of influence. The concept of "desarrollo de la comunidad"— as capacious as that of "desarrollo nacional"— transformed over the course of indigenista applied work starting in the early 1950s, from a mere description of indigenista work to an INI program. In a 1966 essay, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán once again employed the dual society trope to explain the problems suffered in the "Third World." The Western development model, he reiterated, was inadequate in these countries, and economic planners following such models excluded the "pre-industrial sectors whose economic behavior, ruled by principles not well understood, was unpredictable and unexplainable according to the concepts conceived by Western science." The distance between the industrial economic haves and the pre-industrial economic have-nots in both present and former colonies was the result. The have-nots required a theory and practice specially attuned to this situation; the solution received the designation "desarrollo de la comunidad" (community development).[60]

The INI Coordinating Centers were the Mexican version of community development projects, Aguirre Beltrán suggested, calling the areas in which the INI worked "regions of refuge" due to the inherited colonial, pre-industrial structure in which peoples of these regions had "found a refuge [*abrigo*] against the batterings [*embates*] of modern civilization."[61] INI

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[60] Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Desarrollo de la comunidad" *Acción Indigenista* No. 154 (April 1966). "Dejaron a un lado, en sus planes de desarrollo, a los sectores pre-industriales cuya conducta económica, regida por principios no bien entendidos, era imprevisible e inexplicable de acuerdo con los conceptos ideados por la ciencia occidental."

[61] Aguirre Beltrán, "Desarrollo de la comunidad." "…porque en ellas la estructura heredada de la Colonia y la cultura arcaica de franco contenido pre-industrial, han encontrado abrigo contra los embates de las [sic] civilización moderna." Aguirre Beltrán's refuge region concept had been previously elaborated in his article "Regiones de Refugio," *Acción Indigenista* No. 145 (July 1965), but was later extended and published as a monograph as *Regiones de Refugio*. *El proceso dominical en mestizo América.* (Mexico City: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano, 1967).

representatives had presented their work at a meeting of the Interamerican Development Bank in 1965, proposing the Mexican interpretation of community development theory as one that could be adapted to other Latin American countries in the process of development with a similar "dual" structure. According to Aguirre, Mexico's community development model was in complete agreement with the United Nations' definition of community development. But he made no pretentions to sell it as anything other than an integration program for indigenous communities, who were not simply underdeveloped peasant populations but "ethnic groups with a different culture that have great internal cohesion and present a great resistance to integration when it pretends to preserve the mechanisms of domination that segregate *indígenas* in ostensible positions of subordination."[62]

Economic and technical backwardness subjected indigenous people to exploitation and subordination by groups more advanced than they. The refuge region Aguirre expounded was as much environmental as cultural, characterized by particular ecological realities and forms of production.[63] In contradistinction to Frank's assertion that capitalist development would not eliminate dependency and internal colonial relations, Aguirre Beltrán argued that underdevelopment itself further facilitated unequal economic relations and exploitation. Aguirre's conclusions suggested that economic development would beget more (social and economic) development, and in true Marxian form, only full integration into the capitalist market would resolve the condition of the region of refuge and the dynamic of internal colonialism.

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[62] Aguirre Beltrán, "Desarrollo de la comunidad." "Las poblaciones indígenas no son poblaciones campesinas subdesarrolladas, son fundamentalmente, grupos étnicos de cultura diferente que tienen una gran cohesión interna y que presentan una gran resistencia a la integración, cuando ésta pretende preservar los mecanismos dominicales que segregan a los indígenas en posiciones ostensibles de subordinación."

[63] Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Regiones de Refugio."

The premise of Aguirre's project was to empower community members so that they could eventually plan and enact changes themselves. But until indigenous people rose from their subordinated caste status, they would require stewards. If indigenous communities were inherently different from campesinos, then for Aguirre indigenismo was an integration policy in which non-indigenous sages with a nationalist consciousness would design and carry out programs in indigenous regions. And the community development program he proposed was not an inherently democratic one. Indigenous people and communities, from his perspective, did not have a national outlook that could propel integration and development.[64] Development programs in indigenous communities would need to be created and imposed from without, with the consent of the community but not by the members' design.

There was no doubt in any of these thinkers' minds that indigenous peoples were different, but the causes of their unequal condition, and what programs they needed to improve their lot, were up for debate. And as concomitant Director of the INI and head of public culture for the Ministry of Education, Aguirre Beltrán's theory of the refuge region was not a disinterested abstraction. His ideas further justified the INI's mission and the Coordinating Center model. As a result, subsequent elaborations of internal colonialism, which built on both Aguirre's earlier theory of regional integration and the refuge region concept, were rooted in applied indigenista action. The indigenous question and internal colonialism were two sides of the same coin.

[64] Aguirre Beltrán maintained this position well into the late 1960s. See for example, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "El Verdadero Indigenismo," *Acción Indigenista* No. 166 (April 1967).

The Genesis of Dissent

The national optimism that characterized the aforementioned writings of Luis Spota and Juan Rulfo dissipated over the course of the 1950s and 60s. Economic development and state-led modernization programs did not resolve Mexico's problems, and in some cases exacerbated them. The political stability of single-party rule was increasingly considered less an asset than an impediment to the establishment of the liberal democracy Mexico pretended to be. National integration, where successful, brought with it the rise of an increasingly entitled and articulate class of young citizens. Political changes accompanied economic ones: the unprecedented economic growth identified as the "Mexican Miracle" had resulted in a swelling of the middle classes, the welfare state, and the promise of economic opportunity for younger sectors of society that were now more upwardly mobile than previous generations. But by the end of the 1960s, the postwar boom that had buttressed this expansion began to dissipate, and citizens' discontent with the government and ruling political party spread from the page to the classroom to the streets.

Indigenous policy, too, was never without its critics. Outsiders rebuked the work of the INI for both doing too much to modernize Mexico's Indians and not enough. Debates as to whether or not the indigenes should be left alone or to what extent government programs should forcibly change their cultural practices abounded in Mexico's dailies throughout the 1940s and 1950s. But criticism came from within as well. INI anthropologists discussed the definition of both *lo indígena* and *lo indigenista* as they questioned the value and efficacy of applied anthropology. As INI expats settled in positions at Mexico's institutions of higher education in anthropology, they raised a critical generation of students who had less practical fieldwork experience but a deeper penchant for more radical applications of anthropological theory.

Daniel Cazés was one of this generation. Shortly after completing his bachelor's degree in linguistics at the ENAH in 1963 he published a trenchant critique of both Mexico's indigenous policy and national anthropology in the inchoate Marxist journal *Historia y sociedad. Revista latinoamericana de pensamiento marxista*. For Cazés, the real issue for Mexico's indigenous peoples was economic, and the means indigenistas such as Aguirre Beltrán proposed to resolve the problem would never save indígenas from the suffering of the country's proletarian masses. He criticized anthropologists' obsession with culturalist definitions of indigeneity—that is, what constituted indigenous identity or group belonging. A real definition, he argued, would need to locate the Indian's role in the country's capitalist development. Cazés conspicuously echoed Aguirre Beltrán's conceits, but pushed them even further: indigenous peoples' liberation would come about only if they joined the class struggle against the enemy bourgeoisie. After all, did their linguistic and cultural attributes differentiate them, at base, from their fellow mestizo campesinos?[65]

The 1968 meeting of the Interamerican Indianist Institute was another arena in which approaches to the issue of inequality in indigenous communities were debated. Daniel Cazés's generation of students of the social sciences was increasingly vocal in its criticism of both ideological and applied indigenismo as they understood it. Held in the city of Pátzcuaro, Michoacán, where the first meeting of the III had met in 1940, delegates from 12 countries throughout the American continent discussed themes from language teaching to racial discrimination, health programs to rural economics, with representatives ranging from Marxian social scientists to members of formal national indigenista institutions to missionaries from the Summer Institute of Linguistics. The content and tenor of debates echoed the observations and

[65] Daniel Cazés, "Indigenismo en México: Pasado y presente," *Historia y sociedad* No. 5 (1966): 66-84 76-78.

critiques spawned by González Casanova's, Stavenhagen's, and Aguirre Beltrán's publications: the indigenous populations of the Americas were by and large victims of internal colonialism or isolated in regions of refuge. The younger generation of scholars, however, expressed in unison their increasing disenchantment with national indigenista institutions' solutions to the problems of inequality in the countryside.[66]

The climate of social activism and discontent that culminated on a global scale in the late 1960s manifested in multiple ways in Mexico, most famously in the student-labor movement centered in Mexico City that was violently repressed in October of 1968. Discontented anthropologists—both students and professors— found a place to roost in the tumult of these last years of the decade. The ugly underbelly of Mexico's "miracle" of economic growth and stability was not only a failure of developmentalism, they claimed, but a failure of statist integrationism. Critiques from many of the younger generation conflated Mexico's anthropology institutions and curricula with the Instituto Nacional Indigenista. Mexican anthropology was an amalgam of weak theory and unscientific methodologies; so-called "official indigenismo" was paternalistically benign at best and ethnocidal at worst. A number of new "sages" followed Cazés's lead, calling for an anthropology that fully allied itself with the struggle of Mexico's oppressed classes as Marxian revolutionaries. Some old guard Marxists of Mexican anthropology such as Ricardo Pozas, despite their sympathies toward the student movement, were deemed complacent reformists.

But revolutionary Marxism would not be the exclusive ideological strain that diverted the course of indigenismo and Mexican anthropology at the turn of the 1970s. The INI's community

[66] Alan Shane Dillingham, "Indigenismo and its Discontents: Bilingual Teachers and the Democratic Opening in the Mixteca Alta of Oaxaca, Mexico, 1954–1982," (PhD diss., University of Maryland, College Park, 2013), Chapter 3.

development model suffered its share of critiques, most notably at the hands of Ángel Palerm, a Spanish exile whose communist militancy dissipated after the Civil War but whose Marxian interpretation of market relations and economic development remained.[67] Palerm argued that the institute's "community development" plans "frequently [tried] to substitute, or even to eliminate, any consciousness of the need for structural change." The effect, he suggested, was that such programs diverted to rural peoples the responsibility for their economic difficulties.[68] And here was the real question for social scientists: what kind of applied work (anthropology) would truly emancipate Mexico's most marginalized populations? Was it most effective to work within the confines of the state or subvert it?

Palerm and a handful of his younger colleagues had supported student demands for institutional reform in the late 1960s. The ruling party's threat to consolidate Mexico's multiple and "unnecessary" anthropology institutions into a single school was but one impetus for protest.[69] The students' and faculty members' dissatisfaction with what they considered extreme political and intellectual conservatism in anthropology institutions motivated their proposal to

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[67] Palerm, another critical figure in Mexican anthropology, merits a more thorough discussion that unfortunately cannot be treated here. Needless to say, his worked under the direction of Isabel Kelly and later served in the Pan American Union Office in Washington D.C. Palerm's contribution to anthropological theory fell mostly within the "cultural ecology" school pioneered by Julian Steward, but from the mid- to late-1960s he equally critiqued "despotic" regimes on both sides of the ideological spectrum. See, for example, his discussion of Wittfogel's (and Marx's) ideas on the "Asiatic mode of production"/ "Oriental despotism" in Ángel Palerm & Juan Maestre Alfonso, *Agua y agricultura: Ángel Palerm, la discusión con Karl Wittfogel sobre el modo asiático de producción y la construcción de un modelo para el estudio de Mesoamérica* (Mexico City: Universidad Iberoamericana, 2007). On Palerm's intellectual and institutional contributions, see Andrés Fábregas, *Ángel Palerm Vich.* (Guadalajara, Mexico: El Colegio de Jalisco, 1997); Luis Vázquez León, "Ángel Palerm y la institucionalización de la antropología social en México," *Alteridades* 8 no. 15 (1998): 167-184.

[68] Ángel Palerm, "La antropología aplicada y el desarrollo de comunidad," *Anuario Indigenista* 29 (1969): 153-161, 158. Quoted in Hewitt, *Anthropological Perspectives*, 95.

[69] "Un nuevo atentado contra los estudiantes mexicanos: el caso de la Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia," February 1970, reprinted in *La quiebra política de la antropología social en México (Antología de una polémica)*, vol. 1 (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autonoma de México, 1983), 367; Carlos García Mora, "La antropología en México: presentación y preliminares," in *Los hechos y los dichos (1521-1880)*, vol. 1 of *La antropología en México. Panorama histórico,* coord. Carlos Gacía Mora (Mexico City: INAH, 1987), 54.

reform the curriculum of the National School of Anthropology. The institutional rejection of their proposal spawned protest assemblies and marches. The federal government threatened payment suspension and dismissals. Some colleagues threatened to resign in solidarity. And Palerm did just that.[70]

The following year, the dissident social scientists published a collective critique of Mexican anthropology and indigenismo: *De eso que llaman la antropología mexicana.* Contributors to this volume, which included Palerm's student-cum-colleague Arturo Warman, as well as graduates Guillermo Bonfil Batalla and Margarita Nolasco, excoriated Mexican anthropology for its complicity with the state, its unscientific and hyper nationalistic theoretical and methodological orientation, and for creating anthropologist "experts in manipulating Indians."[71] Anthropologists had been swept into the indigenista bureaucracy, so they claimed, and their indigenous-centered myopia had made for weak anthropological institutions and poor anthropology.

While at least a few of these young scions' critiques were well founded (anthropology had focused too long on the indigenous question at the expense of the national population at large, and relatedly, anthropologists had ignored social questions outside the narrow confines of indigenous communities), the reproach was a poorly informed echo of previous generations' complaints that assumed the existence of not only a singular, essential "Indian," but also an unwavering, homogeneous "Mexican anthropology," interchangeable with "indigenismo."

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[70] The UNAM, which had been granting master's degrees to ENAH Students, was also to separate from ENAH in order to develop its own anthropology program, which ENAH students understood as a way to create a more quiescent anthropology program. See Rosemblatt, "Modernization," 117-118.

[71] Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, "Del indigenismo de la Revolución a la Antropología Crítica," 59; Margarita Nolasco Armas, "La antropología aplicada en México y su destino final: el indigenismo," and Arturo Warman, "Todos santos y todos difuntos," in *De eso que llaman la antropología mexicana*, coords. Arturo Warman, et. al (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1970).

Mexican anthropologists and anthropology and indigenista institutions were certainly not faultless. Yet, the contributors of *De eso que llaman*, despite the internal disagreements among them,[72] crafted a chimera from a multitude of diverse agencies, individuals, theories, and methods. Theirs was an amalgamated proxy for the social problems plaguing Mexico and the world: authoritarianism, internal colonialism, inequality, the failures of development. Yet one critique that surfaced would not disappear—not even when some of the dissident anthropologists obtained high posts in later years. The blend of politics and science that had always marked Mexican anthropology, and to many was an attribute of its practice and institutions, was a point of contention. For the contributors of *De eso que llaman*, the issue was that the politics of the old guard indigenistas were the wrong politics. In the highly politicized world of the 1960s and thereafter, the political flavor of anthropology— a discipline tainted the world over by its colonial and racist origins— was contested.

Aguirre Beltrán issued a series of rejoinders to the critiques, not least of which took place at a meeting regarding indigenismo in Mexico, that involved members of the Catholic and Protestant churches, INI staff, professors and researchers of anthropology from the UNAM (Mexico's flagship public university), the Universidad Iberoamericana, the INAH (National Institute of Anthropology and History), and the Inter-American Indigenist Institute. The case was opened for more public debate in the late summer of 1971, where President Luis Echeverría, as but one component of his populist turn to reincorporate dissenting groups, presided over a hearing with the Board (Consejo) of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista and a handful of the

[72] The dissenters were just as heterogeneous as the "indigenista," objects of their critiques—a point that Arturo Warman acknowledged. Warman accused Margarita Nolasco Armas of agreeing with Aguirre Beltrán that the ineluctable route for indigenous peoples was to exchange colonial exploitation for class exploitation. Warman, "Comentarios," *Anuario Indigenista* XXX (December 1970): 85-93, 91.

dissenting anthropologists. Published shortly thereafter as *¿Ha fracasado el indigenismo? Reportaje de una controversia*, participants shared proposals for a transformation of indigenous policy in Mexico, centering mainly on education. Journalist and amateur archaeologist-historian Fernando Benítez, who had recently published the first of his multivolume *Los indios de México*, offered the first "intervention": Mexico's latifundistas and caciques had robbed the Indians of all they had gained under the presidency of Lázaro Cárdenas. Indigenista policy had failed because of the "dispersion and duplication of its functions;" regional development commissions, governors, the Agrarian Department, state ministries all worked in isolation.[73] Benítez, who had opened one of the volumes of *Los indios* with the Alemán Dam and displacement of Mazatecs in the Papaloapan, was less concerned with the state of Mexican anthropology than with the limited reach of indigenismo.

Pablo González Casanova, as acting rector of the UNAM, called Aguirre Beltrán's suggestion "decolonization," "… that we can consider it a policy that gives back and returns to the indígena his quality as a political man." In addition to a call for the UNAM to enroll indigenous students who had finished the *secundaria* (grades 6-9), González pushed for greater indigenous inclusion. A congress not just about indígenas, but that included indígenas as participating members, was necessary.[74] As the decade of the 1960s came to a close, the role of the indigenous population in policy decision-making had become central to indigenous debates in the Americas. Indigenous "delegates" had increased in number from the 1964 to the 1968 meetings of the Interamerican Indianist Institute, but their representation remained relatively

[73] Fernando Benítez (1a intervención), in *¿Ha fracasado el indigenismo? Reportaje de una controversia (13 de septiembre de 1971),* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1971), 69.
[74] Pablo González Casanova, in *¿Ha fracasado el indigenismo? Reportaje de una controversia (13 de septiembre de 1971),* (Mexico City: Secretaría de Educación Pública, 1971), 90-91.

minimal.[75] Nationally speaking, Mexico's INI had no official indigenous representation, though a number of its employees—anthropologists included— were raised speaking indigenous languages.[76] If internal colonialism had become an accepted analytic to explain the reality of indigenous peoples in Mexico, the notion that internal "decolonization" must include direct indigenous participation in policy decisions did not require a great cognitive leap.

Alfonso Villa Rojas, Redfield's longtime research partner and INI pioneer, offered a surprising critique of indigenismo. Reflecting on his experience in the Papaloapan—his first with the INI and applied indigenismo in action—he alluded to the failed promises of the INI's development work. "…one can mention the not so favorable and at times adverse results to the aboriginal sector that have come of some of the costliest works of hydraulic engineering realized in the country. Those thousands of Mazatec families that were removed from their ancestral habitat to give way to one of our largest dams, are still awaiting efficient aid, so that they can remake their existence."[77] The Papaloapan Project, perhaps like many of the INI's projects, was a source of pause and contention. At the project's inception, it represented the potential of regional economic development to transform a place and its people; two decades later, it evidenced the limits of such programs to improve the lives of Mexico's most marginalized citizens. For many anthropologists who lived and labored in the region, the reasons for the

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[75] Laura Giraudo, "El Instituto Indigenista Interamericano y la participación indígena (1940-1998)," *América Indígena* LXII, no. 3 (July-September 2006): 6-34.

[76] The question of whether or not some of these characters were "indigenous" is nearly impossible to answer, for the issue of self-identification was not a topic of inquiry until later in the decade.

[77] Alfonso Villa Rojas, "El resurgimiento del indigenismo mexicano," in *La quiebra política de la antropología social en México,* Carlos García Mora & Andrés Medina, eds. (Mexico City: UNAM, 1986), 153. Original publication from *América Indígena* vol. XXXI núm. 4 (1971). "Por vía de simple illustración, podrían mencionarse los resultados poco favorables y, en veces adversos, que han tenido en el sector aborigen, algunas de las más costosas obras de ingeniería hidráulica realizada en el país. Aquellas miles de familias mazatecas que fueron removidas de su *habitat* ancestral para dar asiento a una de nuestras más grandes presas, están todavía en espera de que se acude a ellas eficazmente, a fin de poder rehacer su existencia."

project's limited reach among the indigenous inhabitants were numerous. The Papaloapan Commission offered limited financial resources, was laden with corruption and despotism, and failed to fulfill contract obligations or pay indemnities in full. The Papaloapan Coordinating Center was ineffective and unable to effect radical change such as more equitable economic and political relations, and it solidified its foundation as an indigenista bureaucracy in the region. But even Ricardo Pozas, the most outspoken of contemporary critics, never doubted the original intentions of the indigenista intervention in the Papaloapan. The loudest critics of applied anthropology and indigenismo in the 1970s questioned the very premise of anthropologists' involvement in such a program, as employees of the state.

A new critique developed in this era, where "ethnocide" made its way into anthropological writings, along with more trenchant meditations on maligned social scientific theory and action. U.S. Native American lawyer, scholar, and activist Vine Deloria's *Custer Died for Your Sins* was but one of a number of treatises that denounced governmental and ecclesiastical action intended to assimilate or assist indigenous peoples with devastating consequences. An entire chapter devoted to the nefarious and self-interested work of anthropologists implicated social scientists' complicity with such state action.[78]

In 1973, the Papaloapan was once again a site of anthropological reconnaissance and investigation, but much had changed since the first wave of anthropology students began their studies in the late 1940s. Argentines Alicia Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé, were commissioned as anthropologist consultants to advise on the second phase of dam building that would displace another 20,000 residents of the river basin, this time mostly Chinantecs. The anthropologists' report on the ethnocidal consequences—both past and present— of the hydraulic development

[78] Vine Deloria, Jr., *Custer Died for your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969).

project along the Papaloapan river flattened the intentions of both the Mexican state and the INI. According to Bartolomé and Barabas, both intended to strip the indigenous inhabitants of their culture and "semi-independence," in the name of capitalist development, and incorporate them into national systems of production and exploitation. As they would have it, the INI was solely interested in developing a class consciousness among the indigenous inhabitants, devoid of any sense of ethnic identity.[79] Aguirre Beltrán would later scoff at Barabas and Bartolomé's "irresponsible" claim, but the accusation stuck.[80] Indigenismo was either too culturalist or too Marxist for respective elements of the new generation. A "committed" anthropology and a new kind of indigenous policy were in order, but had yet to be defined, let alone proposed.

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Following the politicization of anthropology and indigenismo of the late 1960s, both the INI and national schools of anthropology underwent institutional changes. The INI adopted a new credo— *indigenismo de participación*— which paved the way for policies more inclusive of "bottom-up" ideas and plans. The rhetorical threat to the National School of Anthropology and History (ENAH) led Aguirre Beltrán, Warman, and Palerm to create the Centro de Investigaciones Superiores-INAH in 1973.[81] The perennial tension between culturalist and Marxian explanations of indigenous social and economic relations that had come to a head in the 1960s remained. Where some anthropologists pushed for an acknowledgement of the

[79] Alicia Barabas & Miguel Bartolomé, *Hydraulic Development and Ethnocide: The Mazatec and Chinantec People of Oaxaca, Mexico.* (Copenhagen: International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1973).
[80] Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, "Etnocidio en México: una denuncia irresponsable," *América Indígena* 35, No. 2 (April-June 1975): 405-18.
[81] In 1980 the institution was renamed as the Centro de Investigación y Educación Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS).

multiethnic, pluricultural nature of Mexico's national makeup, doctrinaire Marxists focused on the peasantry as a unit of analysis.

Perhaps it goes without saying that the rise of an outspokenly critical cadre of anthropologists in the late 1960s was not unique to Mexico. Efforts to "decolonize" anthropology developed in tandem with global movements. In the western hemisphere, months before the INI Board's meeting with President Echeverría, anthropologists convened at a symposium in Barbados sponsored by the World Council of Churches' Program to Combat Racism. The resulting declaration decried the legacy of conquest and colonization among American Indians throughout the hemisphere. Proclaiming "irrelevant" any Indian policy that did not seek to break this colonial situation, the signatories agreed that states must recognize the multiethnic character of their constituents and the right of native peoples to exercise and develop their own culture and act as "agents of their own destiny." The responsibilities of anthropologists were outlined as well. Their collaboration in "nefarious Indian action programs" was no longer acceptable; anthropologists should take action on behalf of Indian communities to aid the latter in their struggle for liberation.[82]

Anthropologists working in the North Atlantic world launched invectives against the colonial origins of British social anthropology and the complicity of U.S. anthropology departments with that government's anti-insurgent activities.[83] Ensuing debates betrayed the

[82] Declaration of Barbados. 30 January 1971 http://www.nativeweb.org/papers/statements/state/barbados1.php. Accessed 22 August 2014.

[83] Karin Rosemblatt makes mention of the following, among others, in "Modernization," 95: Irving Louis Horowitz, *The Rise and Fall of Project Camelot: Studies in the Relationship between Social Science and Practical Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1967); Dell Hymes, ed., *Reinventing Anthropology* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1969); Talal Asad, ed., *Anthropology and the Colonial Encounter* (New York: Humanities Press, 1973).

ubiquitous tension between reform and revolution, community-level versus structural change.[84] For all their claims—many of them well argued and lasting in debates on the ethics and practice of anthropology— Mexico's dissident anthropologists had merely revamped and configured old theories and approaches to their liking. The very anthropology and indigenismo subject to critique were the seedbed out of which emerged concepts of great utility to the new generation. Pablo González Casanova's elaboration of internal colonialism utilized language and ideas articulated by Mexico's rising stars in anthropology.

But another longstanding criticism of anthropology continued to haunt practitioners over the years: was Mexican anthropology scientific, and did it contribute anything of substance to the scientific study of mankind? Aguirre Beltrán himself acknowledged the knotty ties that bound institutionalized indigenismo and social anthropology in Mexico.[85] But did that render the academic discipline unscientific? The idea that Mexican anthropology, or anthropologists, never offered any solid theoretical interpretations to the pantheon of the discipline has propelled this suggestion. The theories of culture change popular in the 1940s and '50s were supposedly Robert Redfield's, and after that it was allegedly only sociologists (Stavenhagen and González Casanova notwithstanding) who contributed any theory of value. Both Ralph Beals and Claudio Lomnitz-Adler have discussed the importance of Mexican anthropology to nationalist development, Lomnitz in particular signaling Mexico's importance as a model for other Latin American nationalist anthropologies.[86]

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[84] Rosemblatt, "Modernization," 95-97.

[85] Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, *Obra polémica* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones Superiores, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1976), 12.

[86] Ralph Beals, "Anthropology in Contemporary Mexico," in *Contemporary Mexico: Papers of the IV International Congress of Mexican History*, eds. James W. Wilkie, Michael C. Meyer, Edna Monzón de Wilkie (Berkeley: University of California Press; Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1976), 753-768; Claudio Lomnitz Adler,

Yet Mexican anthropology was as scientific and unscientific as its national neighbors to the north, south, east and west. Wearing their researcher's caps, Mexican anthropologists were just as observant and skilled at seeing what needed to be seen with an ethnographer's eye; they scrutinized Redfield's folk-urban continuum and reconciled Malinowski's functionalist view of culture with the reality of intra-community conflict. And not least, as this chapter has attempted to show, Aguirre Beltrán's refuge region and theory of regional integration yielded dynamic and lasting effects in social scientific and policymaking circles—a grand theoretical contribution, with all its faults, to the field of anthropology.

Ricardo Pozas's later critique of the "bureaucratization" of indigenismo was yet another stab at the INI's inability to improve the lives of Mexico's indigenous population. But his contention begs the question: what did it mean to be a bureaucrat versus a theorist? If Aguirre Beltrán is an example, could one not be both? The new generation, wary of "state anthropology," was also less active in the "campo." Their interest in a curriculum more laden with theory also meant a program that moved away from fieldwork, and from applied social action in indigenous Mexico.

Mounting critiques against "official indigenismo," and against Aguirre Beltrán's position in particular, assumed a consensus about what an "Indian" was and that changing the "Indian" meant to strip him of his culture, language, humanity. But what did it really mean to "stop being" Indian/indigenous? Was "Indian" a social condition? A political class? Throughout the history of anthropology, discussions of indigeneity and indigenous policy have always invoked a historical

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"Bordering on Anthropology: Dialectics of a National Tradition," in *Deep Mexico, Silent Mexico: An Anthropology of Nationalism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2001), 228-262.

definition of indigeneity rooted in the colonial encounter. Even the dissidents emerging from the frenzy of 1968 have been unable to break from the colonial trope of centuries past.

Anthropologists in Mexico had always disputed ideas, and indigenista ideology—as articulated in the INI—was never consistent or coherent beyond the official reports and publications of the institution (nor within them, for that matter). The culmination of frustration and anxiety that surrounded the activism of 1968 propelled some dissidents to articulate their seemingly contrarian position and demand changes. A handful of these students would become reincorporated into the ruling party bureaucracy (Arturo Warman, for example), and others would propose real and lasting policy changes that were implemented in subsequent years. Yet instead of interpreting the fallout of 1968 as a "rupture" in the social sciences, and for indigenismo in particular, it is better understood as yet another moment of reconfiguration and re-articulation of the indigenous question, one that would continue in later years. Perhaps, much like anthropologists saw—or theorized—what they wanted to see among indigenous peoples, subsequent anthropologists—and historians—have seen what they wanted to see in their "indigenista" subjects as well.

Conclusion

In 1975 bulldozers and Caterpillars once again descended on the upper Papaloapan River Basin to expand the hydroelectric complex of the President Alemán dam. The Cerro de Oro or Miguel de la Madrid dam, named after the president who inaugurated its completion in 1988, extended south from the curtain wall of the Alemán construction, and its capacity to both increase hydroelectric output and dispossess thousands of local residents mirrored that of its predecessor. Approximately 26,000 ejidatarios representing 46 ejidos of the municipalities of Ojitlán, Jalapa de Díaz, Usila and Tuxtepec, Oaxaca, most of them Chinantec ejidatarios, would lose their lands to the reservoir waters of this second dam.[1]

By then much had changed in that part of the river basin. The regional economy had transformed: now propelled in part by the hydroelectric dam, the ranching and commercial agriculture industries had boomed, and the Papaloapan Commission's introduction of *mojarra*—a freshwater bream fish—to the reservoir made for a lucrative and viable fishing income for those who remained within the vicinity of the man-made lake. Most visibly, state services were now available in municipalities where previously there were few: new schools and health clinics now served communities both newfangled and old. And though it took years to extend power lines to all the communities of the relocation zones, by the time the Cerro de Oro groundbreaking had begun resettled families affected by the Alemán dam could count on electricity and running water. Engineers had become permanent figures in the region, not just in the administrative city of Ciudad Alemán but also in the immediate dam vicinity of Soyaltepec municipality.

Once again, anthropologists were employed to assist on the project. But this time

[1] Those residing in Jalapa de Díaz were mainly Mazatecs.

anthropological knowledge and skill was no longer part and parcel of the greater development venture; rather, the Papaloapan Commission only temporarily contracted the social scientists to conduct surveys of the local population and predict potentially deleterious effects of the displacement. These contractors conducted fieldwork not as employees of the Mexican state, but as outside observers, in part to fulfill a World Bank requirement as a condition for the dam's funding that anthropologists assess the potential social impacts of the project. As we saw in Chapter Six, and perhaps of little surprise given the intellectual culture of anthropology after 1968, at least two of these anthropologists excoriated their predecessors for fomenting an integrationist project that sought to change local culture and replace indigenous practices with those of modern Mexican mestizo society.[2]

Like the new generation of critical anthropologists, residents to be affected by the Cerro de Oro dam also drew conclusions from the local memory of the Alemán dam resettlement to anticipate potential shortcomings in relocation management as well as land tenure issues and problems with state-led social development programs. It seems that the activism of those displaced by the Cerro de Oro dam was perhaps also a result of their own self-advocacy without the intense management of a state institution. After disagreements with the Papaloapan Commission over resettlement plans, the Instituto Nacional Indigenista refused to oversee the Cerro de Oro resettlement, and instead the Confederación Nacional Campseina and two other peasant organizations—the Confederación Campesina Independiente and the Unión General

[2] Alicia Barabas & Miguel Bartolomé, *Hydraulic Development and Ethnocide: The Mazatec and Chinantec People of Oaxaca, Mexico* (Copenhagen: International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1973); Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas, *La presa Cerro de Oro y el Ingeniero El Gran Dios: relocalización y etnocidio chinanteco en México* (Mexico City: Dirección General de Publicaciones del Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes; Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1990).

Obrera, Campesina y Popular—would carry out the population relocation. These campesino organizations had their own paternalistic tendencies, but meddled little in the social or cultural affairs of the local population. Despite the fact that the INI was not involved in managing the relocation for the Cerro de Oro dam, the institution maintained a stronghold in the region as a motor of local social development programs. Still, the fact that the official peasant league was at the helm of relocation management represents a curious aspect of the trajectory of indigenous politics, agrarian activism, and territorial change in Mexico during the latter half of the twentieth century.

Indigenous Politics, Anthropologists, and the State

Indigenous policy—first in its colonial iteration under the jurisdiction of the república de indios and in the twentieth century through institutions for indigenous improvement—has since its inception been tethered to agrarian issues. But in the 1960s, the domain of anthropologists, which had since the late nineteenth century been principally consumed with articulating differences in cultural practices, began to shift focus to the problems of the peasantry. There are a number of reasons for this shift, both domestic and global, but what is interesting with respect to the case of the Papaloapan development project, as this dissertation has attempted to show, is that it happened as indígena shifted from a nearly exclusive ethnic or racial category to a political one. Anthropologists had struggled to identify who was indigenous in the Papaloapan and what made them so, in order to define the parameters of their work and justify their interventions. But for a population that initially defined itself more readily as "campesino" as opposed to "indígena," the latter category became relevant *because* of the anthropologists' interventions. Indígena did not replace campesino as a primary political identity for the resettled population of

the Papaloapan, but rather complemented it as another means of political engagement with the increasingly expansive Mexican state.

The local population's adoption of indígena occurred as anthropologists became ever more aware of the problems of the peasantry and class relations. The social scientists' denotation of the local population as campesino in reports and correspondence increased from the early work of ethnographic data collection to the intense years of relocation management and social development schemes, perhaps in part because that was how the local population often referred to themselves, but also because their sustenance came from working the land and for many their principal relationship to the state was through land reform. In this way, anthropologists and the relocated population learned from each other, and their political and intellectual engagement with the state grew side by side.

When anthropologists began their work in the Papaloapan, much of the knowledge, and the presumptions about the populations they would encounter, were textbook abstractions that poorly represented the reality they found on the ground. The practice of applied anthropology, then, helped to forge an indigenous population not just in anthropological treatises or university curricula, but in real life. The anthropologist's' imagined indígena of the early 1940s became a self-ascribed political actor by the 1960s.

Because the political category of indio was codified in the early sixteenth century under Spanish colonial law, the crafting of indígena as a modern political category in the twentieth century appears almost as a throwback to the policies and practices of centuries prior. To be sure, the twentieth-century indígena is not the indio of the seventeenth century, neither in terms of social thought or self-identification. Those whose juridical categorization was indio under Spanish rule do not appear to have identified as such for political gain, and the category itself

was hardly relevant for their day-to-day interactions with fellow community members, belligerent neighbors, or political authorities. But in terms of how the categories functioned as part of a political structure that enshrined unique duties and privileges and justified certain kinds of state interventions, the colonial term indio and the modern term indígena have significant parity.

As I argued in Chapter 1, the principal similarity between the political concepts of indio in the colonial period and indígena in the mid-twentieth century is how the terms are related to ideas and practices of state improvement. The colonial-era reducción, while in many respects an ad hoc administrative solution to population decline, was also justified by contemporary thinkers—principally clergy—because the policy had the potential to better incorporate indios into the colonial state as ideal subjects. Their status as indios, always grounded in a territorial notion of community belonging, remained even when they were forced to relocate and were "reduced" to new political units and territories. Late nineteenth-century attempts to consolidate state power and labor sources also involved the forced relocation of indigenous populations for reasons of state and justified by ideals of civilization and socio-cultural improvement,

While these colonial and nineteenth-century iterations of indio/indigenous improvement were likely not well-known by anthropologists of the mid twentieth-century, the comparison merits mention, particularly between the colonial era and twentieth century, because of the political nature of the categories indio and indígena and their relationship to ideas and practices of improvement imparted by the state (in the late-nineteenth century, indio had been stripped of its political significance and indígena functioned principally as a social or cultural category tied to sociological ideas of race).

By no means is the developmentalism of mid 20th century the same as the impetus for

improvement of the colonial period, or even the nineteenth century for that matter. If economic liberalism from late Enlightenment through the nineteenth century meant a stronger emphasis on the role of private capital, the mid- twentieth century saw a convenient marriage of state and capital and a heavier hand of the state in infrastructural improvements and economic reforms to shape capital accumulation. For this reason, the Papaloapan Project was only possible when the state had sufficient means to reach into the country's interior and access capital. In independent Mexico, the people formerly called indios were defined in contradistinction to what was considered modern, identified as impediments to national progress, and increasingly over the course of the nineteenth century understood as a population in need of guidance and education in order to realize the economic and social improvement of the nation. By the mid-twentieth century, when modernization had become an international watchword and development a global preoccupation, indígenas were a population in need of both improvement and preservation. As the soul of the Mexican nation, indígenas could not disappear entirely, but rather should be modified and made compatible with the nation's march toward the modern world of development.

Colonialism as Original Sin

If indio was a political category created in the late fifteenth century, it should be of little surprise that intellectuals, politicos, and in the twentieth century, social scientists, might reference the colonial encounter when discussing indigenous policy. What is curious, however, is that in the 1960s colonialism became a principal category of analysis and arguable cause of not only indigenous marginalization but uneven economic development and inequality. Yet the colonialism invoked in the 1960s was a qualified condition of the modern era: *internal*

colonialism. The purported colonial condition of Mexico's indigenous populations in the twentieth century provided a partial answer to the problem of why capitalist development and modernization failed to equalize power relations in the countryside. While internal colonialism was an incomplete explanation of the problem, it is nonetheless significant that precisely in the 1960s, when economic development schemes in postcolonial societies, like the Papaloapan Project, had run their course for over a decade, the concept of a modern, independent condition of colonial relations would have intellectual purchase. It is, I contend, of little coincidence that Mexican social scientists such as Pablo González Casanova and Rodolfo Stavenhagen would resurrect colonial relations not only as critiques of developmentalism mounted, but also as indigenous cemented as a political category.

I have suggested that it was development—as mandate and as practice—that set in motion the shift of indigenous from an ethnic or racial category to a political one. Yet just as colonialism and internal colonialism were distinct conditions shaped by particular historical contexts, the use of indígena as a *political* as opposed to a *social* category was not a complete reiteration of the colonial category indio. The juridical apparatus that shaped indio-state relations under colonial rule was never reinstated, even in the mid-1990s when constitutional reforms declared Mexico a multicultural nation and reforms in states such as Oaxaca allowed for supposed "traditional" (read: indigenous) electoral practices known as "*usos y costumbres.*" Constitutional changes and state policies have shifted greatly since 1994, when the neo-Zapatista uprising in Chiapas state made local political autonomy in "indigenous" zones a matter of national political concern, but they have not undone the liberal ideal of equal citizens under the law.

And yet it is notable that historically, ideas and practices of improvement and indigenous

peoples have been bound together in Mexico. In the twentieth century, and in particular in the decades after the Second World War, however, anthropologists have been instrumental in fortifying this connection and maintaining it to the present day. The critical generation of anthropologists that became increasingly outspoken in the early 1970s may have critiqued the ideology of improvement, but aside from those who rejected the salience of indigenous identity and opted to focus instead on class relations, the hard line critics of indigenou policy continued to invoke the same tropes of indigenous society and culture as their intellectual and political progenitors.

Displacement and Development in the Papaloapan

Many of the assumptions about indigenous society and culture that anthropologists brought with them to the Papaloapan were at once easily disproven by the reality on the ground and slow to die. As we saw in Chapters 3 through 5, anthropologists encountered and meditated on the myriad ways in which the behavior and practices of the local population before, during, and after resettlement seemed to be at odds with prior observations of indigenous life or theories of culture change. But because their charge was to support the indigenous population and foment indigenous social development in a way congruous with the modernizing project in the river basin, it was nearly impossible, let alone counterproductive to their institutional mandate as employees of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista, to abandon or rework entirely their plans and expectations.

Displacement was a means by which anthropologists laboring in the Papaloapan expected to shake up the status quo, but it also posed new problems for outlining how essential indigenous practices would be sustained. Indigenous peoples' perennial connection to the land, or more

precisely, specific territory, was presumed to shape everything from community relations to cultural practice. And yet, as Chapter 2 has shown, the supposed permanence of indigenous identity rooted in a particular territory was almost entirely irrelevant to the history and land tenure practices of the local population. Yet by virtue of the kind of work they carried out in the river basin, institutionalized indigenismo was fortified over the course of the 1950s and 60s. Even scholarly and indigenista publications that questioned the salience of indigenous identity as the principal justification for their applied labor were unable to undo the state-building aspect of the INI's work.

Both this reality of the institutionalization of indigenismo and the ad hoc and elusive nature of the Mexican state that manifested during the dam building and resettlement in the Papaloapan have revealed the nature of state-building in Mexico as something that did not precede mandates or political directives but was in fact a *process* spawned by such directives. To put it another way, it was not simply the case that the prowess of the Mexican state that made the Papaloapan Project possible to realize, but rather that the power of the Mexican state and ruling party was fortified *through* the realization of the Papaloapan Project. The trajectory of institutionalized indigenismo is a microcosmic aspect of this very process: the INI established its reach, much as the Mexican state did, through quotidian and often mundane activities carried out on the ground. It was precisely the messy, often improvised activity that constituted "development," and it was carried out by actors representing bureaucracies and organizations in which the center of power was often elusive and transient.

The story of the Papaloapan Project related in the pages above is not evidently consistent with the narrative that many locals would tell. In an interview with Romeo Sarmiento, a former resident of San Pedro Ixcatlán, who as a young teacher in the Papaloapan River Basin taught in a

number of community schools and collaborated with the INI during relocation, I learned a somewhat paradoxical interpretation of the Papaloapan Project that a few of his old colleagues corroborated. The local population was better off as a result of the development projects carried out in the river basin, and the anthropologists were veritable stewards of the indígenas, by Sarmiento's account, but the work of the anthropologists under the auspices of the Papaloapan Commission (cum Mexican government) constituted "*etnocidismo*," a term I interpret as ethnocide.[3] My analysis does not support the conclusion that the work of the anthropologists was ethnocidal, for even if their paternalism was wrong-headed or misinformed, my research has shown that there was never an intention on their part to eradicate indigenous culture. But for our purposes Sarmiento's observation is of great value because it betrays the entrenchment of institutionalized indigenismo in the region and the multiple narratives of anthropologists who have labored in the Papaloapan from the 1950s to the present day. All of these social scientists—from the original intrepids Ricardo Pozas and Rodolfo Stavenhagen, to the critical contractors Alicia Barabas and Miguel Bartolomé, to today's social scientists who study linguistic and cultural change in the Mazatec and Chinantec communities of the river basin—have cemented anthropologists' role in facilitating or at the very least mediating the terms of indigenous engagement with the Mexican state.

The great irony of the work of anthropologists in the Papaloapan Project is that because the local reality was not what they expected, they could not realize the managed acculturation program they set out to do. Yet unwittingly, the economic and social development work they carried out facilitated the assimilation of indigenous identification. Even when the anthropologists themselves abandoned the primacy of indigeneity for a class analysis of unequal

[3] Interview with Pedro Sarmiento July 12, 2012.

social and economic relations, the resettled population of the Papaloapan became indigenous for all political intents and purposes. This was a practice of applied anthropology that mattered, to the people who interacted and built relationships with the anthropologists, and to broader theories and questions of economic development that continues to shape social thought and policies today.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF EJIDOS AFFECTED BY ALEMÁN DAM

Ejido Name	Municipio	Application date	Grant date
Arroyo Chical	Soyaltepec	?	1945
Paso Nacional	Soyaltepec	?	1948
Pescadito de Abajo	Soyaltepec	1930	1945
Pescadito de Enmedio	Soyaltepec	?	1945
Pescadito Arriba	Soyaltepec	?	1945
Loma Alta	Soyaltepec	1944	1955
Arroyo Tigre	Soyaltepec	?	1944
San Martín	Soyaltepec	?	1944
Piedra de Amolar	Soyaltepec	1930	1943
Ideal Arriba	Ojitlán	?	?
Soyaltepec	Soyaltepec	?	?
San Felipe Tilpan	Ixcatlán (not Jacatepec?)	1918	1934
El Encajonado	Soyaltepec	?	1944
Calería	Soyaltepec	?	Denied 1944, given 1951
Playa Lagarto	Soyaltepec	1935?	1944
San Antonio Cosolapa	Soyaltepec	1931?	Denied 1944, given 1955?
Cosolapa Caracol	Soyaltepec	?	1943?
Cosolapa Sarmiento	Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa	1931?	1950
Cerro Mojarra	Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa	1935?	1944
Los Corrales	Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa	1935?	1944
La Guadalupe	Soyaltepec	1931?	1943?
Emiliano Zapata	Soyaltepec		1945
Málzaga	Soyaltepec	1942	1944
Corriente Ancha	Jacatepec		

Ejido Name	Municipio	Application date	Grant date
Raya Lecuona	Jacatepec	1931	1944 (1945 in Soyaltepec)
Raya Caracol	(no entry)		1930
El Mirador	Zongolica		
Ixtacapa el Grande	Zongolica		
Boca Tilpan	Soyaltepec	?	1943
El Crucero	Soyaltepec		1944? unclear
La Patria	Soyaltepec	1930?	1944
Paso Nazareno	Soyaltepec		
La Pochota	Soyaltepec		
San Miguel Soyaltepec	Soyaltepec	?	1936

APPENDIX B: POBLADOS AFFECTED BY THE DAM, BY MUNICIPALITY, AS OF 1957[1]

Name of Poblado	Municipio	State	Affected Area	Relocated to (Poblado)	Municipio	Estado
Playa Lagarto	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Corral de Piedra	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
Cosolapa Libre	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
San Antonio Cosolapa	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	En la Presa Nvo. Cosolapa Caracol	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
Cosolapa Caracol	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Nuevo Cosolapa Caracol	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
Cosolapa Arriba	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Cosolapa Sarmiento	Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa	Oaxaca	Total	Zanja Seca	Playa Vicente	Veracruz
Cerro Mojarra (La Capilla)	Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa	Oaxaca	Partial	Cihualtepec	Cotzocón	Oaxaca
Los Corrales	Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa	Oaxaca	Partial			
Col. 21 de Mayo	Acatlán de Pérez Figueroa	Oaxaca	Partial			
Isabel María	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Corral de Piedra	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
La Guadalupe	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Las Margaritas	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
Corriente Tijera	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Emiliano Zapata (Sta. Julia)	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	La Joya	Jacatepec	Oaxaca

[1] Rafael Sándoval Prats del Depto. Legal, Bernardo Mortera, Srio Particular, Dir. Del CCIP Raúl Rodríguez Ramos, 13 August 1960, AHT Caja 102, Exp 1017.

Name of Poblado	Municipio	State	Affected Area	Relocated to (Poblado)	Municipio	Estado
Málzaga	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Mano Marquez	Jacatepec	Oaxaca
Arroyo Pescadito	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	La Breña	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
Venustiano Carranza	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Cihualtepec	Cotzocón	Oaxaca
Esperanza Madero	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Cihualtepec	Cotzocón	Oaxaca
Corriente Ancha	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	La Joya	Jacatepec	Oaxaca
Raya Licona [sic]	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	La Joya	Jacatepec	Oaxaca
Santa Josefina Lecuona	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Cihualtepec	Cotzocón	Oaxaca
Raya Caracol	Zongolica	Veracruz	Partial	Zanja Seca	Playa Vicente	Veracruz
El Mirador	Zongolica	Veracruz	Partial			
San Juan Cosolapa	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Partial	Cihualtepec	Cotzocón	Oaxaca
Ixtacapa el Grande	Zongolica	Veracruz	Partial			
Monte Alto	Zongolica	Veracruz	Partial			
La Yagua	Soyaltepec	Veracruz	Total			
San Rafael	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Partial			
Villa del Río			Partial			
Boca de Tilpan	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Las Margaritas	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca

Name of Poblado	Municipio	State	Affected Area	Relocated to (Poblado)	Municipio	Estado
El Crucero	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Las Margaritas	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
La Pátria	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Nueva Patria	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
Paso Nazareno	Ixcatlán	Oaxaca	Total	Nuevo Paso Nazareno (Chichicazapa)	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
La Pochota	Ixcatlán	Oaxaca	Partial	El Capulín	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
San José Independencia	San José Independencia	Oaxaca	Partial	Nuevo San José Independencia	Cosamaloapan	Veracruz
Buenos Aires	San José Independencia	Oaxaca	Total	Nuevo San José Independencia	Cosamaloapan	Veracruz
Arroyo Lodo	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Total			
Arroyo Sapo	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Partial			
Paso Cocuyo	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Partial			
Loma Alta	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Partial			
Chapultepec	San José Independencia	Oaxaca	Partial			
Cerro Campana	San José Independencia	Oaxaca	Partial			
Agua Apaxtle	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Partial			
La Panga	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Total			
Tepeyac	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Total			
Cerro Clarin	San José Independencia	Oaxaca	Partial			

Name of Poblado	Municipio	State	Affected Area	Relocated to (Poblado)	Municipio	Estado
Ungaria	Chilchotla	Oaxaca	Total			
Arroyo Chicali	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Arroyo Huaquequeche	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Paso Naranjo	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Chinacatela	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Paso Nacional	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Pescadito de Abajo I	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Pescadito de Abajo II	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Pescadito Enmedio	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca				
Pescadito de Arriba	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Partial			
Loma Alta	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Arroyo tigre	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Partial	El Arenal	Playa Vicente	Veracruz
San Martín Soyaltepec	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Partial	El Arenal	Playa Vicente	Veracruz
Piedra de Amolar	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Partial			
Loma de Piedra	Ojitlán	Oaxaca	Partial			
Raya Soyaltepec	Ojitlán	Oaxaca	Total	Cihualtepec	Cotzocón	Oaxaca

Name of Poblado	Municipio	State	Affected Area	Relocated to (Poblado)	Municipio	Estado
Arroyo Caracol	Ojitlán	Oaxaca	Partial	Cihualtepec	Cotzocón	Oaxaca
Ideal de Arriba	Ojitlán	Oaxaca	Partial	La Breña	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca
Soyaltepec	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total			
Buena Vista	Ixcatlán	Oaxaca	Total			
Progreso	Ixcatlán	Oaxaca	Total	Nuevo Ixcatlán	Playa Vicente	Veracruz
Arroyo Murciélago	Ixcatlán	Oaxaca	Total	Nuevo Ixcatlán	Playa Vicente	Veracruz
Arroyo Zontle	Ixcatlán	Oaxaca	Total	Nuevo Ixcatlán	Playa Vicente	Veracruz
San Felipe Tilpan	Ixcatlán	Oaxaca	Total	La Joya	Jacatepec	Oaxaca
Arroyo Camalote	Ojitlán	Oaxaca	Total			
Laguna Arroyo Grande	Ojitlán	Oaxaca	Total			
Adalberto Velez	Soyaltepec	Oaxaca	Total	Mano Marquez	Jacatepec	Oaxaca
Atlipozonía	Zongolica	Veracruz	Partial			
Caxapa	Zongolica	Oaxaca	Partial			
San José Laguna	Ojitlán	Oaxaca	Partial			

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AGN	Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City
AGPEEO	Archivo General del Poder Ejecutivo del Estado de Oaxaca, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, Mexico
AHA, CP	Archivo Histórico del Agua, Fondo Documental Comisión del Papaloapan, Mexico City
AHT	Archivo Histórico de Temazcal, Comisión Para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca, Mexico
BJC	Biblioteca Juan Comas, Instituto de Investiagiones Antropológicas, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Mexico City
CDI	Comisión para el Desarrollo de los Pueblos Indígenas, Mexico City
SC-UCL	Special Collections, University of Chicago Library

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