

TM

VOICES *of Mexico*

CISAN • UNAM

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser In Memoriam

Sergio Aguayo, Alejandro Hope,
Cassio Luiselli
And José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

Mexico's Voted Transition Mauricio Merino

Mexico's Water Crisis José Luis Piñeyro And Gabriela Angeles

NAFTA And The Mexican Economy Juan Carlos Moreno And Pablo Ruiz-Nápoles

New U.S. Immigration Policies Mónica Vereá

On Chiapas Byways: Textiles, Amber, Archaeological Sites, The Lacandon Jungle And More



www.unam.mx/voices



GUSTAVO

cerámica contemporánea

PÉREZ



*Piezas de barro que se acarician
como la piel.*

ARTES
DE MEXICO

Revista - libro número 74

Adquiera este ejemplar en librerías o en Córdoba 69, Col. Roma, México D.F.
Tels.: 5525 5905, 5525 4036. artesdaemexico@artesdaemexico.com

VOICESTM of Mexico

ISSN 0186 • 9418

Voices of Mexico is published by
El Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN (Center for Research on North America),
Of the Office of the Coordinator of Humanities, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, UNAM
(National Autonomous University of Mexico).

Director

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

Editor-in-Chief

Diego Bugada Bernal

Editor

Elsie Montiel

Copy Editor & Translator

Heather Dashner Monk

Assistant Editor

María Cristina Hernández Escobar

Art Director

Rosalía García

Patricia Pérez

Editorial Advisor

Dolores Latapí Ortega

Layout

Ma. Elena Álvarez

Sales & Circulation Manager

Gabriela Espinosa de los Monteros

Business Manager

María Soledad Reyes Lucero

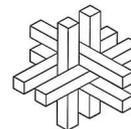
Rector, UNAM

Juan Ramón de la Fuente



Coordinator of Humanities

María del Carmen Serra Puche



CISAN

Director of the Center For Research On North America (CISAN)

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

EDITORIAL BOARD

Sergio Aguayo, Carlos Alba Vega, Jorge Basave Kunhardt, Jorge Bustamante, Jorge Carpizo,

Roberto Escalante, Guadalupe González, Rosario Green, Roberto Gutiérrez López, Andrés Henestrosa, Julio Labastida, Miguel León-Portilla,

Paz Consuelo Márquez Padilla, Mario Melgar, William Merrill, René Millán Valenzuela, Humberto Muñoz García, Silvia Núñez García, Olga Pellicer,

Guillermo Pulido González, Vicente Quirarte, Federico Reyes Heróles, José Sarukhán, Ilán Semo, Mari Carmen Serra Puche, Fernando Serrano Migallón,

Rodolfo Stavenhagen, Diego Valadés, María Teresa Uriarte, Andrés Rozental, Ambrosio Velasco Gómez, Mónica Vereá, Luis Villoro.

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser (†)

Address letters, advertising and subscription correspondence to: **Voices of Mexico**, Canadá 203, Col. San Lucas, Coyoacán, 04030 México, D.F. Tel: 5336-36-01, 5336-35-95 and 5336-35-96. Electronic mail: voicesmx@servidor.unam.mx. Annual subscription rates: Mexico Mex\$180; USA U.S.\$40; Canadá Can\$48; other countries U.S.\$74, prepaid in U.S. currency to **UNAM**. **Opinions expressed by the authors do not necessarily represent the views of Voices of Mexico.** All contents are fully protected by © copyright and may not be reproduced without the written consent of **Voices of Mexico**. The magazine is not responsible for the return of unsolicited manuscripts. Publicación trimestral, año dieciocho, número 72, julio-septiembre de 2005. ISSN 0186-9418. Certificado de Licitud de Contenido No. 2930 y Certificado de Licitud de Título No. 3340, expedidos por la Comisión Calificadora de Publicaciones y Revistas Ilustradas. Reserva al uso exclusivo del título No. 04-2002-060413383000-102, expedida por el Instituto Nacional del Derecho de Autor. Correspondencia nacional de segunda clase. Registro 0851292. Características 220261212. Correspondencia internacional de segunda clase. Registro Cri D F 002-92. Prerensa: Ediciones de Buena Tinta, S.A. de C.V., Insurgentes Sur 1700, 6o. piso, Col. Florida, Álvaro Obregón, 01030 México, D.F. Tels. 5661-66-07, 5662-28-31. Impresa en Impresora Transcontinental de México, Democracia 116, Col. San Miguel Amantha, Azcapotzalco, México, D.F.

VOICESTM *of Mexico*

Issue 72 July-September 2005



Elsie Montiel

Cover

Textiles from Zinacantán. Photo: Elsie Montiel

Back Cover

Woman weaver from Zinacantán. Photo: Elsie Montiel

Contents

Editorial

- 4 Our Voice

Politics

- 7 Reforming the United Nations
Adolfo Aguilar Zinser
- 13 Mexico's Voted Transition
Part I
Mauricio Merino

Society

- 19 On the Pathways of Indigenous Chiapas
Mario Humberto Ruz
- 25 Water and Mexico's National Security
José Luis Piñeyro
- 29 Understanding Mexico's Water Crisis
Gabriela Angeles Serrano

Art and Culture

- 33 The World of Textiles in the Chiapas Highlands
José Rubén Orantes García
- 41 The Myth of Creation and Health
In San Juan Chamula
Jaime Tomás Page Pliego
- 49 Amber from Chiapas. A Gem with History
Lynneth S. Lowe

Economy

- 59 NAFTA and the Mexican Economy
1994-2005
Juan Carlos Moreno Brid
Pablo Ruiz Nápoles

North American Issues

- 69** Immigration Consensus Needed
For Guest Worker-Amnesty Bills
Mónica Vereá
- 75** Frankness and Cooperation
In Mexico-U.S. Relations
Leonardo Curzio

Literature

- 79** A Place in the World
Gerardo Piña
- 83** The Gift Refused
A Short Story By
Rosario Castellanos

The Splendor of Mexico

- 89** The Ancient Cities of the Usumacinta
Notes from an Old Field Diary
Daniel Juárez Cossío
- 98** ZooMAT, Much More than a Zoo
Becky Álvarez

Museums

- 102** The Museum of Mayan Medicine
Rafael Alarcón

Ecology

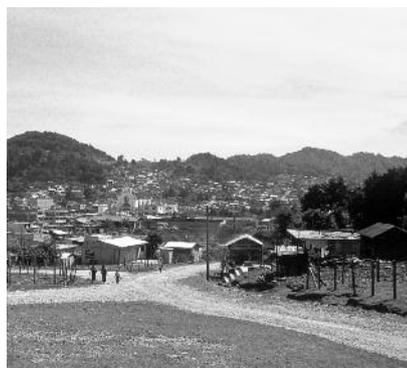
- 108** The Lacandon Jungle
Bulwark of Biodiversity
Osiris Gaona
Rodrigo A. Medellín

In Memoriam

- 113** Adolfo Aguilar Zinser
And Mexican Politics
Sergio Aguayo Quezada
- 115** Adolfo Aguilar Zinser
A Man Faithful To His Causes
Alejandro Hope Pinson
- 116** Experiences With
Adolfo Aguilar Zinser
Cassio Luiselli Fernández
- 119** Adolfo Aguilar Zinser
Generous Intelligence
José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

Reviews

- 123** One Wound for Another -Una herida por otra
Testimonios de Latin@s in the U.S.
Through Cyberspace
(11 de septiembre de 2001-11 de marzo de 2002)
So They Won't Just Be Blown by the Wind
Elaine Levine
- The Outlines of a Complex World
Marisa Belausteguigoitia



Photos: Elsie Montiel

OUR VOICE

Two years after the invasion of Iraq, the horizons of the international order continue to be somber, and the preventive security defense policy imposed by Washington does not seem to have a successful future. Last July 7 the world was once again shaken by evidence that the terrorist threat has not abated. The London bombings demonstrate that the prolonged military action in Asia and the Middle East and the insistence on fighting the terrorist threat mainly militarily have only brought more death and destruction. The situation demands a comprehensive analysis of terrorism and the fight against it with the aim not of resolving it on the military front, but mainly in the sphere of policy and diplomacy, of development and international cooperation. Also, the gravity of the terror imposed by the bombings demands a true comprehension of the phenomenon on the part of the states involved, not from irreducible or fundamentalist positions, but by getting at the origin of the problems that have caused such profound polarization. For example, if there is no rapid, effective solution to the bloody differences between Israel, Palestine and a large part of the Arab world, there will be no way out, and bombs, occupying troops and blood-letting will continue to be international front-page news. The military might and aggressive, unilateral foreign policy imposed by the U.S. government—to which the governments of Tony Blair in Great Britain and José María Aznar in Spain added their support, albeit with only minimal backing from their citizenries—have constituted the main obstacle facing those who have come out for the discussion of peaceful, multilateral alternatives. Perhaps the first premise that should be examined is if we are really witnessing a total war, as President Bush says, or it is a grave international conflict that must certainly be attacked from a totally different strategic perspective. In that sense, this conflict should be dealt with from the standpoint of the action of rational state actors and that of non-state actors who, precisely because they are anonymous, threaten to strike at the most sensitive part of democratic countries, that is, social consensus.

The moment certainly seems propitious for resorting to the community of nations embodied in the United Nations, and for carefully and critically studying the proposals that Secretary-General Kofi Annan recently made with the aim of reforming the United Nations system. We believe that these reforms are the indispensable prerequisite for threats like terrorism being attacked from the point of view of the whole picture, a point of view in which the countries congregated in that great international institution can create the consensus needed for achieving peaceful solutions to the benefit of all.

* * *

In a posthumously published contribution, the late Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, Mexico's ambassador to the UN Security Council during the difficult moments of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, looks in an unquestionably timely manner at the reforms the UN so urgently needs. An unconditional proponent of the United Nations' viability as the guiding body for relations among nations, Aguilar Zinser analyzes the weakness and strengths of Annan's proposals. Without underestimating U.S. resistance to the changes or the UN's problems of internal organization and credibility, he concludes that it must undertake the path of profound reforms and continue defending multilateralism and collective decision-making as mechanisms for guaranteeing international security and global development.

The other article in the "Politics" section is by Mauricio Merino, who analyzes the importance of the models used to theoretically interpret Mexico's political transition. Situated between those who think the transition was completed when the Institutional Revolutionary Party lost the presidency in 2000 after 70 years of political monopoly and those who say that the democratization of electoral processes is only the first step in building a truly democratic political regimen is the real situation which, according to Merino, does not fit into any ideal model. In this, the first part of a two-part article, the author points to at least three

important differences between an ideal transition to democracy and what has happened in Mexico in recent years.

Our “Society” section deals with an issue that will be important for a long time to come: the increasing scarcity of water in Mexico and the world. The struggle for control of this resource and the regions that enjoy an abundance of it, and to privatize its extraction and distribution make it a matter of national security. Two authors reflect on this issue: José Luis Piñeyro deplores the lack of awareness in government and private sectors about the gravity of the water crisis, which can be seen in the scant public investment in hydraulic infrastructure and the total disinterest in establishing alternative policies for managing it involving the population, as well as the government’s growing inclination to turning over water management to private business. For her part, Gabriela Angeles Serrano states that the analyses of this crisis in Mexico are based on inoperative, outmoded categories and therefore generate inappropriate indicators for evaluating it. As a result, there are no proposals that contribute to its real solution. Angeles proposes developing alternative concepts that would make it possible to carry out a more objective, and above all, effective analysis.

In the “Economy” section, we have included an interesting reflection about the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) on Mexico’s economy. Eleven years after it came into effect, Juan Carlos Moreno Brid and Pablo Ruiz Nápoles deal with the topic emphasizing long-term economic growth. After a detailed examination of exports and imports, the trade balance as a whole and economic growth indicators, they conclude that although NAFTA produced an export boom of manufactures and an inflow of much-needed foreign investment along with some technology transfers, its impact on the domestic economy has been low and has not really alleviated the fundamental constraints on Mexico’s long-term economic growth.

Two fundamental issues for the construction of a real North American Community are dealt with in our “North American Issues” section. Specialist Mónica Vereá describes the uncertainty surrounding migration in Mexico-U.S. relations, above all after 9/11. She centers the discussion on the details of the different immigration bills up before the U.S. Congress and how they have been influenced by U.S. national security policies. Congress has accepted the need for reforming the immigration system, as can be seen in the Kennedy-McCain bill, among others. What these reforms will look like, how they will affect bilateral relations with Mexico and the effects they will have on our fellow countrymen and women is still undecided. Leonardo Curzio, for his part, examines an unusual topic in Mexico-U.S. relations: the appropriateness of statements by the U.S. ambassador to Mexico about the Fox administration’s handling of economic and security policy and the fight against drug trafficking. Without denying that both issues are of public interest, Curzio writes that in international relations it is more important to build a relationship based on support and cooperation than on mere frankness in public statements.

* * *

As on previous occasions, *Voices of Mexico* has dedicated an important part of this issue to the knowledge and art of a specific region of Mexico, in this case Chiapas in the country’s southeast. Mario Humberto Ruz says that to speak of Chiapas is to invoke Indian Mexico, that Mexico that despite the centuries and the offenses offers us a lesson in modernity in its traditions, which have gone through constant change in order to remain intact. Before going into the details of those rich traditions and that art, we offer our readers an article by Ruz in our “Society” section that leads us down the pathways of Indian Chiapas, from before the conquest until the twenty-first century.

The “Art and Culture” section takes us to the Chiapas Highlands. José Rubén Orantes studies textile production, an activity reserved solely for women. Embroidery and weaving cloth on waist looms has gone from being a family tradition that reflected a world view and social hierarchy to being an activity for the market. Orantes explains the difficulties producers encounter in marketing these pieces of clothing and the changes in their designs because of them. For his part, Jaime Page explains the details of healing rituals in San Juan Chamula and their relationship with the myths of creation among Chiapas’s Tzotzil Mayans. Elements of pre-Hispanic origin together with rites of the Catholic world merge in a ceremony

full of meanings hidden from outsiders. Lynne Lowe closes the section with an article about amber, a fossil resin millions of years old that was already widely valued in the pre-Hispanic world. The myths and beliefs about amber in Chiapas contribute to its continued use as an ornament and amulet in many places in the Highlands.

The Mayan heritage in Chiapas can be reconstructed based on its impressive archaeological sites. In “The Splendor of Mexico”, Daniel Juárez contributes an article about relations among the kingdoms of Yaxchilán, Bonampak and Palenque, which can be seen not only in their buildings and other constructions, but above all in the stelas and murals that tell us the story of their rulers. Becky Álvarez explains why ZooMAT is more than a zoo. The recreation center *par excellence* for residents of Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas’s state capital, the ZooMAT was conceived from the start as a means to bring the state’s innumerable native species to the population, at the same time that it became a first-rate center for scientific study and management and conservation of the animals.

In the “Museums” section, Rafael Alarcón writes about the Museum of Mayan Medicine, which is part of the Regional Center for the Development of Mayan Medicine founded 20 years ago by the Indigenous Doctors Organization of the State of Chiapas (OMIECH) to defend and keep alive indigenous medical practices. The award-winning museum’s different environments recreate the activities of indigenous doctors, and visitors can also access the museum’s pharmacy for products made with medicinal herbs.

The “Ecology” section takes us to the Lacandon Jungle, one of the bulwarks of flora and fauna diversity in Mexico. Ecologists Rodrigo Medellín and Osiris Castellanos describe the wonders of a world-class ecological preserve and the threats to its existence.

To close the theme of Chiapas, our “Literature” section pays homage to a Chiapas-born writer whose pen changed the way people conceived of the Indians in that part of Mexico. Rosario Castellanos, perhaps better known for the excellence of her poetry, wrote two novels and a book of short stories that reveal the intricacy of relations between Indians and mestizo and white society in the state. We reproduce one of those stories here, “El don rechazado” (The Gift Refused), accompanied by an essay by literary critic Gerardo Piña about the author.

* * *

A constant scholar of politics, a free-thinker, an audacious intellectual, an unconditional defender of democracy, the inventor of new ways to do politics, the enemy of the arbitrariness that comes from power, a permanent insurgent: these are some of the descriptions of Adolfo Aguilar Zinser by the authors of several articles in *Voices of Mexico*’s well-deserved posthumous homage. His academic career, his different incursions into politics and his brilliant performance as Mexico’s ambassador to the UN Security Council during the discussions that preceded the invasion of Iraq turned Aguilar Zinser into a symbol of the honest politician known for his undoubtedly invaluable contribution to the construction of a more democratic and just way forward for our country. This makes his loss grievous for our consolidation as a democracy, for our future. The National Autonomous University of Mexico’s Center for Research on North America, where he had successfully begun a very important research project about the reform of the United Nations, will miss his irrevocable commitment to the university, and, above all, his caliber as a human being, as a fellow academic and a friend. We dedicate this issue to his memory.

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

Reforming the United Nations

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser*



Mike Segar/Reuters

The process of reforming the United Nations system has begun.¹ The secretary-general kicked it off by formulating a broad, ambitious list of proposals emanating from the December 2004 report of the High Level Panel he had named² and from the Millennium Declaration³ and the Eight Goals for Development,⁴ adopted five years ago. In March 2005, then, Kofi Annan presented his plan to strengthen the United Nations,⁵ coinciding by chance with the eleventh anniversary of the genocide in Rwanda and the second of the invasion of Iraq, both events that dramatically exemplify the UN's dilemmas and weaknesses. Annan's attempt to reform the UN also takes place in the context of a apparent weakening of the figure of the secretary-general and an erosion of his political authority because of the differences between him and the United States over Iraq, the public scandals due to apparent irregularities in the Food for Oil Program, implemented in 1997 by the UN in Iraq, and by different allegations of sexual abuse on the part of

* Late researcher at CISAN and Mexican Ambassador to the United Nations.

members of the Peace Keeping Operations in Africa and UN officials. In these circumstances, Kofi Annan is attempting to overcome the UN's credibility problems with a plan of reforms that strengthens its legitimacy and effectiveness. He is hoping that his initiatives will be adopted fully and at once during the next session of the General Assembly to be held in September with the participation of heads of government and state called to review the Millennium Development Goals. His idea is to take advantage of the moment and the international climate to finally bring this reform into being after its relatively unsuccessful discussion for more than 20 years. The reasons for the secretary-general's urgency are clear; what is not so clear is whether his plan is viable.

The measures Annan suggests are, just as described in the media, the most ambitious program of changes ever attempted in the UN. One of the secretary-general's most significant contributions is the very conception he offers of security.⁶ The Annan plan is divided into several chapters, all linked by a new concept of global, collective security: his report gravitates around the freedom to live without poverty, without fear and with dignity. The secretary-general speaks in his document about the need to build a new consensus with regard to collective security based on the recognition that the threats are inter-related, that security, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament and the UN's peacekeeping ability are inter-related. Therefore, he links the development goals set by the Millennium Declaration with world security. In addition, Annan maintains that no state can protect its own security acting alone; they all need an effi-

cient collective security system and must, therefore, commit themselves to applying common strategies to avert all types of threats, from an international war with weapons of mass destruction, terrorism, the collapse of states and civilian conflicts to deadly infectious diseases, extreme poverty and the destruction of the environment.⁷ Until now, the United States has resisted linking terrorism to poverty, arguing that terrorists are motivated by hatred and fanaticism, not by injustice. The secretary-general has categorically countered that the misery of people trapped in unresolved civil conflicts or populations sunk in extreme poverty can increase the attraction of terrorism.⁸

The secretary-general speaks about the need to build a new consensus based on the recognition that security, sustainable development, human rights, disarmament and the UN's peacekeeping ability are inter-related.

Another novel and central aspect of the new definition of collective security offered by the secretary-general is the incorporation of environmental issues. The destruction of ecosystems (the contamination of water, deforestation, desertification, climate change and natural disasters) is, says Annan, both a fundamental brake on development and the cause of massive displacements of peoples, new endemic diseases and new conflicts. Also, in the field of definitions, Annan proposes one for terrorism that satisfactorily bypasses the controversy about so-called state terrorism and about whether liberation movements are terrorist or not.⁹ Both issues, which have stymied the negotiations of the convention on terrorism,

have apparently been solved by Annan's proposal.¹⁰ Kofi Annan also decisively ventured into the terrain of legitimizing so-called humanitarian intervention as an extraordinary measure authorized by the UN to avert or stop acts of genocide or massive violations of human rights. The report adopts the notion of the responsibility to protect, developed by the Axworthy Commission.¹¹ This concept will be the subject of intense debates given that a large number of countries belonging to the Group of Seventy-Seven and China see in it a risk for arbitrary intervention in the Third World, motivated not by human rights but by the hegemonic interests of the powers.

The secretary-general's reform plan includes many measures in different normative and institutional fields that range from fulfilling the Millennium Goals; the signing, ratification and implementation of international treaties like the Nuclear Weapons Non-Proliferation Treaty or the Kyoto Protocol; and finishing negotiations on other conventions like the Convention against Terrorism, to the restructuring of different UN bodies like the ill-fated Human Rights Commission, expanding the Security Council and the reorganization of the secretary-general's office. Outstanding among his proposals is that of creating a Commission for the Consolidation of Peace which, after the end of hostilities, would make it possible to

continue with the tasks and commitments acquired in peace agreements through sustained, combined and participatory efforts by the entire international community that would make for a lasting peace. Despite their broad scope, Annan's proposed reforms do not include (as neither did the report of the experts) important amendments to the UN Charter, which can only be effected with the approval and ratification of at least two-thirds of the member states' legislatures, including the five permanent members of the Security Council. In any case, and despite the fact that the diplomats in New York might simplify and expedite the process of discussion and negotiation of the

tiveness even in defining and setting priorities and the organization's tasks, and that it is turning into a mere forum for declarations and repetitive, hollow, rhetorical and isolated resolutions. The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is seen as a body that has been incapable of effectively organizing its tasks and deciding priorities to give effective follow-up to the compliance with important accords like the Monterrey Consensus on financing for development. In addition, there is agreement that ECOSOC operates with very poor, superficial levels of cooperation and understanding with the Bretton Woods organizations (the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund). No one defends the

how to do that. One of the bodies is, for example, the Human Rights Commission. This commission, which meets annually in Geneva, is made up of representatives from 53 member states, designated by simple, automatic criteria of regional representation. Some of them, like Cuba, are conspicuous violators of human rights which become members of the commission with the explicit aim of blocking resolutions against them. Others, like the United States, attend to selectively disqualify others according to their own political or ideological interests. Kofi Annan suggests transforming the commission into a council with the same status as the ECOSOC and the Security Council, made up of a specific number of states elected by a two-thirds majority of the General Assembly. Annan does not detail his proposal any further than that; he merely states it. Taking it as his starting point, Kenneth Roth, the executive director of the prestigious non-governmental organization Human Rights Watch, suggests adopting selective criteria for membership in that council.¹² This would be the only way of transforming the current commission into a real body for reviewing human rights throughout the world. Nevertheless, defining these criteria will surely unleash a long, torturous discussion. For example, if one of these criteria were that the aspiring member country would have to have already ratified all the international treaties in the matter, the United States, one of the sharpest critics of the current commission, would not qualify because it opposes the ratification of instruments like the Additional Protocol to the Convention on Torture.¹³ Another idea proposed by non-governmental organizations is that the commission be made up not of state

Annan maintains that no state can protect its own security acting alone; they all need an efficient collective security system and must, therefore, commit themselves to applying common strategies to avert all types of threats.

reforms, Kofi Annan's optimism about the possibility of advancing significantly this year is not borne out by the organization's current political and diplomatic realities. It is true that there are already substantial consensuses about the diagnostic analysis, but there are also broad disagreements about the way of dealing with and overcoming different issues. What is more, some of them, like the proposal to increase the number of permanent members of the Security Council, may contaminate others in which agreements seem to be close at hand. Certainly no one is satisfied with the current functioning of the General Assembly. There is broad agreement that this, the highest body of the UN, lacks authority and effec-

performance of the Human Rights Commission, either, which now lacks all moral authority. There is also an outcry because of what is considered the lack of transparency and representativeness of the Security Council and the consistent in compliance with its resolutions. However, the secretary-general's proposals —intelligent, well thought-out and audacious— are, for that very reason, difficult to reach a consensus about, particularly in the short term.

The proposal includes issues of great transcendence that, if put into practice, would revolutionize the UN, but about which, though there is agreement that they should be the subject of reform, there is no obvious formula about

representatives but by well-known individuals or experts. This could be a very important step in the necessary link-up of the UN with international civil society.

In any case, the most controversial and contentious issue around which all the debate could hinge and which could ultimately derail it is the expansion of the Security Council. This is where the secretary-general's proposal seems most fragile and insubstantial.¹⁴ In his report, Annan seems to be equating the reform of the council to the simple expedient of increasing the number of its members. This has earned Kofi Annan's proposal severe criticisms from those who would like to see the coun-

apple of discord. Some countries, particularly those of the Group of Four (Brazil, India, Japan and Germany), claim their right to occupy a permanent seat and bring pressure to bear through different direct and indirect means so that before the September summit the General Assembly decide on the expansion. Others, members of the so-called Coffee Club (among them Pakistan, Argentina, Colombia, the Republic of Korea, Costa Rica, Spain, Italy, Mexico, Canada, Algeria, Kenya, Benin, the Ivory Coast, Egypt, Indonesia, the Arab Republic, Syria and Australia) oppose admitting new permanent members, and some of them oppose a specific country from their region becoming a

contributions.¹⁵ India and Brazil argue that their size, population and relative weight in the region give them the right to a permanent seat.

The conflict between the two sides of this argument has unleashed an intense diplomatic struggle whose outcome can not yet be foretold. This debate darkens the stage of a reform of the council's working methods to make compliance with its resolutions more effective. Neither the secretary-general nor the panel of respected figures deal with the thorny topic of demanding accountability from the Security Council, which functions as a supreme body without its decisions being subject to any review mechanism. Maintaining the council as a sovereign body that, in contrast with democratic states, is not subject to any constitutional legal control mechanism is a pragmatic approach that, while it favors decision-making and, particularly shores up the power of the five permanent members, contradicts what has been said by the secretary-general in his reform plan about the need for the UN to be subject to forms of surveillance, control and accountability in order to ensure its effectiveness and legitimacy.

The UN's credibility and prestige depends to a great extent on its ability to reform itself. The debate prior to the Iraq War put the United Nations in the limelight. International public opinion focused on the UN with an intensity that it had not experienced before because of the hope that it would be in the Security Council where the correct, necessary measures for neutralizing the possible threats of weapons of mass destruction and the guarantee of peace would be discussed and adopted. Though both the proponents of the use of force and the defenders of peace-

No one is satisfied with the current functioning of the General Assembly. There is broad agreement that it is turning into a mere forum for declarations and repetitive, hollow, rhetorical and isolated resolutions.

cil turned into a more transparent, democratic and effective body and not simply a more representative one. The secretary-general offers two options: one, increasing council membership to 24 by adding six new non-permanent seats (without the right to veto) and three new non-permanent two-year seats; the other option is to create eight seats that could be re-elected consecutively and another seat that would exist for a single period.

The increase in seats, even if only of non-permanent members, and without thoroughly revising its working methods, could bring about serious problems for decision making and the building of consensus. In any case, the permanent seats have become the

permanent member. This is the case of China's ferocious opposition to Japan's ambitions, Pakistan's opposition to India's aspirations and Mexico's opposition to Brazil's bid for permanent status. The Group of Four has positioned itself as a formidable pressure group that actively lobbies for its cause with arguments worthy of consideration that place the UN in a serious dilemma. Japan and Germany argue that their contributions percentage-wise to the UN budget and the tangible and intangible resources they contribute to its peacekeeping tasks makes them legitimate aspirants to a permanent seat. Not having one, they say, unjustifiably places them at a disadvantage and erodes the internal political basis for their

ful containment and inspections were unsatisfied with the role played by the UN in the Iraq conflict, world public opinion's expectations about the organization's conciliatory, peace-keeping role and that of multilateralism grew significantly. In those circumstances, the reform is an opportunity to create trust and credibility among domestic opinion-makers, who determine the backing that countries and governments will give the UN in the future. This is why it is important that the reforms advance rapidly and profoundly enough to be able to comply to an acceptable degree with the hopes deposited in the UN. It would therefore be very dangerous for the future of multilateralism for the reforms to bog down and for no solid consensus to be reached in the next few months at least on a part of the changes proposed.

The possibility of achieving these consensus is conditioned by many factors, not all of which are related to the specific content of Annan's initiatives, but rather to the attitudes, perceptions and immediate interests of the great blocs. In general, the developing countries mistrust a reform centered mainly on political and security questions and in contrast demand that the greatest effort be made in promoting economic and social development, the fight against poverty and inequality. In that context, the debate about the reforms could not simply be reduced, as has been said, to a back-and-forth negotiation between the North's vision of security and the South's proposals for development.¹⁶ The secretary-general has been sensitive to this and has proposed a concept of collective security that involves development in the same equation with keeping the peace. One of the greatest obstacles to under-

standing can be U.S. hostility and reticence *vis-à-vis* the UN. The secretary-general's proposals and the very report of the panel of experts took care to include the United States' main concerns about the new scenarios of international security derived mainly from terrorism. However, it is evident that some influential sectors in Washington read in the proposed reforms an attempt to limit the United States' unilateral power. To a certain extent, this is true. In any case, in Washington there is enormous hostility to the idea that international security should be guaranteed by international, collective mechanisms articulated by the UN. Multilateralism and collective decisions are seen as very

Though both the proponents of the use of force and the defenders of peaceful containment and inspections were unsatisfied with the role played by the UN in the Iraq conflict, world public opinion's expectations about the organization's conciliatory role have grown significantly.

dangerous fetters that hamper U.S. security. There is a perception that the United States will not really want the UN reform to lead to a true strengthening of multilateral cooperation.

For all these reasons, the UN reform must be carried out using agile mechanisms for negotiations, with realistic frameworks and proposals, making the most of those understandings that do exist and making sure to advance with imagination and realism, keeping at bay any temptation to talk about winners and losers in the areas of the greatest differences. As the current president of the General Assembly, Jean Ping, has said, the idea is not to make the UN a perfect organization, but simply a better one. **NM**

NOTES

¹ This article was first published in Spanish in *Revista Universidad de México* 16, June 2005, pp. 15-21.

² UN Document A/59/565 "Un mundo más seguro: la responsabilidad que compartimos," Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes, December 2, 2004.

³ UN Document A/RES/55/2, "Declaración del Milenio," September 13, 2000.

⁴ UN Document A/56/326, "Guía General para la Aplicación de la Declaración del Milenio," Anexo: Objetivos de Desarrollo del Milenio, September 6, 2001.

⁵ UN Document A/59/2005, "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human

Rights for All," Report of the Secretary-General, March 21, 2005.

⁶ His proposal states, "I fully embrace the broad vision that the report articulates and its case for a more comprehensive concept of collective security: one that tackles new threats and old and that addresses the security concerns of all States. I believe that this concept can bridge the gap between divergent views of security and give us the guidance we need to face today's dilemmas.

"The threats to peace and security in the twenty-first century include not just international war and conflict but civil violence, organized crime, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction. They also include poverty, deadly infectious disease and environmental degradation since these can have equally catastrophic consequences. All of these threats can cause death or lessen life chances on a large scale. All of them can undermine States as the basic unit of the international system." *Ibid.*, paragraphs 77-78, p. 24-25.

⁷ Ibid., Appendix "For decision by Heads of State and Government," paragraph 6, p. 63.

⁸ Kofi Annan, "In Larger Freedom: Decision Time at the UN," *Foreign Affairs*, May-June 2005.

⁹ Kofi Annan writes, "It is time to set aside debates on so-called 'State terrorism'. The use of force by States is already thoroughly regulated under international law. And the right to resist occupation must be understood in its true meaning. It cannot include the right to deliberately kill or maim civilians. I endorse fully the High-level Panel's call for a definition of terrorism, which would make it clear that, in addition to actions already proscribed by existing conventions, any action constitutes terrorism if it is intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any

act." UN Document A/59/2005, op. cit., paragraph 91, p. 26.

¹⁰ In the name of his organization, Amre Moussa, the secretary general of the Arab League of States, has validated Annan's proposed formulation about terrorism.

¹¹ *The Responsibility to Protect. Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre for ICISS, December 2001).

¹² Kenneth Roth, presentation made at the conference "The UN Adapting to the 21st Century" held at the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo, Ontario, April 4, 2005.

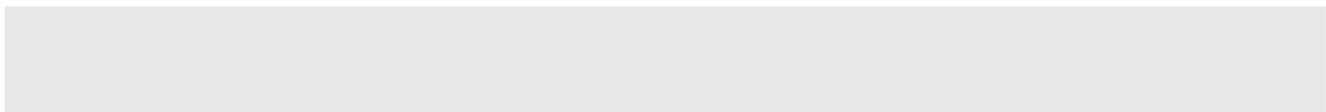
¹³ The United States has not ratified the Convention on Children's Rights (CRC), the

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) or the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), which it has merely signed. <http://www.ohchr.org/english/countries/us/index.htm>

¹⁴ Edward C. Luck, "The UN Security Council: Reform or Enlarge?" presentation at the conference "The UN Adapting to the 21st Century at the Centre for International Governance Innovation in Waterloo, Ontario, April 4, 2005.

¹⁵ Japan contributes 19.5 percent and Germany 8.7 percent of the UN's total budget.

¹⁶ *The UN Adapting to the 21st Century*, Conference Report, Centre for International Governance Innovation, Wilfrid Laurier University, ACUNS, held in Waterloo, Ontario, April 3-5, 2005. http://www.cigionline.ca/v.2/conf_docs/unreform.conf_report.pdf



El Colegio de México

NUEVAS TENDENCIAS Y NUEVOS DESAFÍOS DE LA MIGRACIÓN INTERNACIONAL

Memorias del Seminario Permanente sobre Migración Internacional

Volúmen I
Jorge Santibáñez y Manuel Angel Castillo
Coordinadores

Coedición de El Colegio de México
El Colegio de la frontera Norte
Y Sociedad Mexicana de Demografía

Primera edición 2005 Precio: \$ 294.00 pesos

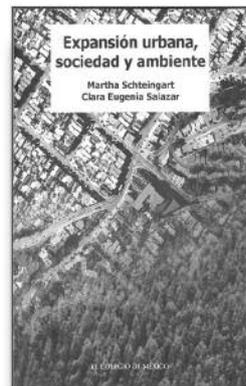
Novedades editoriales

EXPANSIÓN URBANA, SOCIEDAD Y AMBIENTE

Martha Scheingart
Clara Eugenia Salazar

Edición de
El Colegio de México

Primera edición 2005
Precio: \$ 173.00 pesos

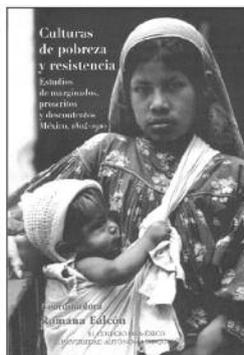
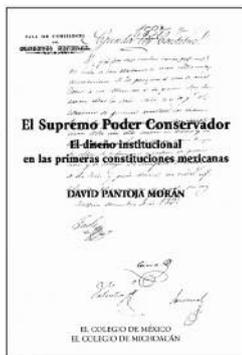


EL SUPREMO PODER CONSERVADOR

El diseño Institucional en las primeras constituciones mexicanas

David Pantoja Morán
Coedición de
El Colegio de México
y El Colegio de Michoacán

Primera edición 2005
Precio: \$ 444.00 pesos



CULTURAS DE POBREZA Y RESISTENCIA

Estudios de marginados, proscritos y descontentos México, 1804-1910

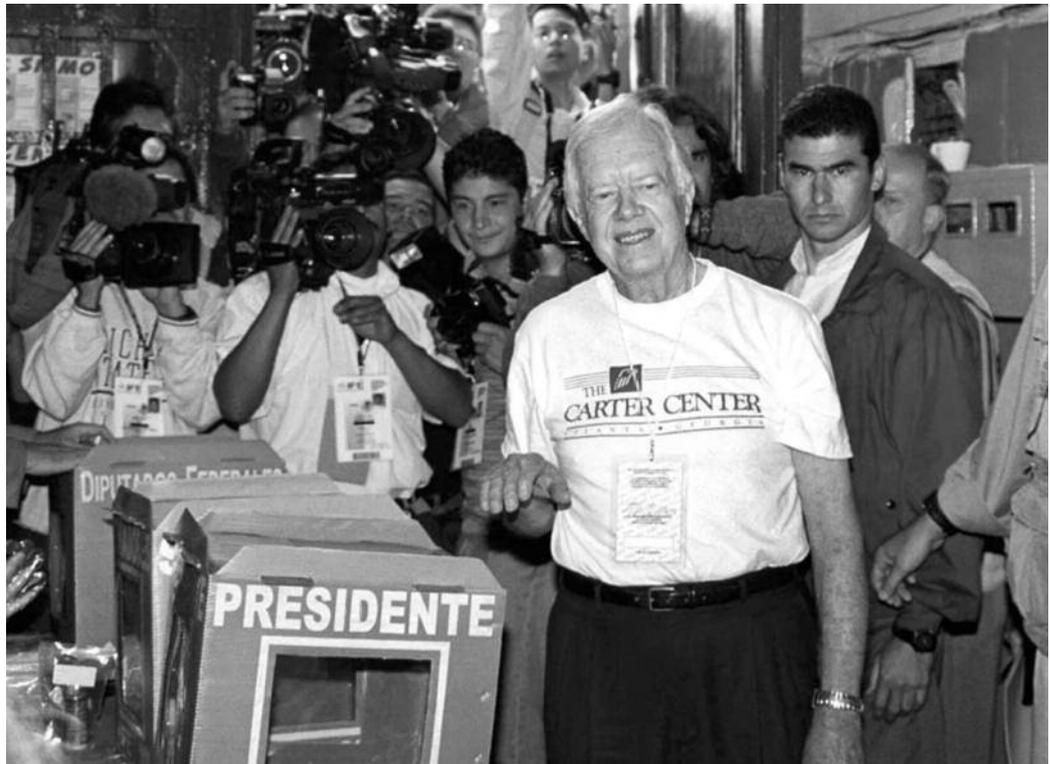
Coordinadora Romana Falcón
Coedición de El Colegio de México,
y La Universidad Autónoma de Querétaro

Primera edición: 2005
Precio: \$ 210.00 pesos

Mexico's Voted Transition

Part 1

Mauricio Merino*



Maria Augusta Salas/Cuantosuro

The results of the July 2, 2000, elections not only changed the composition of political power in Mexico. They also radically modified the direction of debates about the Mexican transition to democracy. On one side of the debate, there were those who, seeing results that showed the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) would not win the presidency, declared the transition completed and turned to new issues.¹ On the other side, it was said that the transition had just started, while the theoretical and political tools needed to channel it were ready.² Nevertheless, this haste in finding immediate answers to the country's new political conditions prevented analysts from using a finer brush to paint the shades that make the difference and show the way for the Mexican transition.

Both sides have legitimately used the models created by comparative political science in recent decades. Nevertheless, despite efforts to find general characteristics in transition processes,³ we cannot ignore the evidence—in Latin America, Eastern or Mediterranean Europe—that

* Researcher at the Center for Economic Research and Teaching (CIDE).

shows a multiple reality, which can hardly be diluted in an ideal model, useful for the formulation of abstract theories, but ineffective in the analysis of each individual step. As an answer, I will try to sketch three main differences between the ideal type of a transition (which assumes a political change based on a pact between elites that, breaking with the past, leads to a political and institutional transformation of the country) and what really happened in Mexico in recent years. To round out this analysis, I will assess the influence that these contrasts would have in the future of the transition process.

These three differences are: instead of being a compromise transition, the Mexican experience has been a *voted* transition, so to speak; furthermore, there has not been—as has been the case elsewhere—a clean break with the previous regime. On the contrary, political liberalization has come on a gradual and continuing basis. Lastly, instead of the transformation of the rules of the game, what has come about is the recovery of existing institutions, rather than the creation of new ones.

THE CLASSIC TRANSITION MODEL

In answering what Samuel P. Huntington has called the “third wave” of democratic processes,⁴ various authors have tried, from different perspectives,

to make sense of experiences in several countries in an effort to obtain valid generalizations. Even though there is no total agreement among so-called “transitologists,” at least three traits seem to be present in a high percentage of the cases that have been studied.⁵ The first of these traits has to do with the pact—explicit or implied—between the old regime elite and those who would lead the new democratic regime. Such pacts involved, at least, the establishment of rules for an institutional transit and provided—or tried to—basic guarantees for the operation of the newborn democracies.

The second component of the classic model is a more or less abrupt break between one regime and the other. The end of Pinochet’s rule in Chile or the fall of communism in Poland came through relatively quick processes with clearly identifiable key moments. Those breaks meant the loss of power—even if temporary—of most of the old regime elites, as well as an erosion of the old institutions. And this in turn gave way to the third trait of the classic model: the building of new institutions. The old ones could not host the new democracies, so it was necessary to create parties, legislative bodies, electoral methods and power allocation and balance systems capable of reconciling the new plural composition of political representation.

This ideal model—with pacts, breaks and new institutions—has not

been absent from discussions about the Mexican transition. Politicians talk tirelessly about founding pacts, and analysts insist on the distinction between the old and the new regimes. But in these attempts to fit the Mexican reality into a model that may explain other experiences but says little about our transit towards democracy, we have lost a measure of depth and ability to explain what has really happened in Mexico. Worse yet, a bad diagnosis at the start can lead to inadequate solutions to poorly understood problems.

A VOTED TRANSITION

In the first place, the Mexican transition has not been a compromise among power-seeking elites. Their agreements have been limited, at best, to electoral reforms, and in the most important of these, in 1996, there was not even a pact on legislative changes: the PRI pushed them through alone, even though these reforms were enough for opposition parties to win the majority in the legislative branch in 1997 and the presidency in 2000. There was no foundational pact that opened the door to democratization, nor a conflict that forced political actors to reach decisive agreements. What did happen was a gradual process of step-by-step, small negotiations limited to the electoral arena. Based on this, we can conclude that the Mexican

There was no foundational pact that opened the door to democratization. What did happen was a gradual process of step-by-step, small negotiations limited to the electoral arena.

The 1977 reforms actually gave life to the Chamber of Deputies, opened the municipal arena, and, above all, they were the first clear step towards a full party system.

transition was not based on a pact, but rather, was a voted transition. Changes have occurred since the beginning in the electoral sphere and in the party system.

A TRANSITION BASED ON POLITICAL LIBERALIZATION

Neither has there been in Mexico a break with the old regime, new institutions or even a crisis of legitimacy that forced the hegemonic party to abandon the field for good, as has happened in other countries. As a matter of fact, the PRI is still central to the national political stage. This means that, with the exception of electoral institutions—where there is indeed a clear before and after—political change in Mexico has entailed a process in which the old leadership began to coexist with the new ones that originated in the opposition. Thus, political institutions have mostly remained intact—or even with a renewed formality—so the past has learned to coexist with the present. The transition in Mexico has been a gradual process of inclusion and mutual adjustments. The PRI ceased to be the hegemonic party, lost the presidency and many other political power strongholds, but is still the party with the most aggregate votes and still holds the majority of elected posts. This has not happened in other countries. As a result, transition in Mexico has not meant a break, but rather political liberalization toward plurality.

A TRANSITION THAT BUILDS ON ITS PAST

The third difference from other transitions is that Mexico's has not entailed the development of new institutions—except for electoral ones—, but rather a salvaging of institutions that already existed in the Constitution, but that were clearly subordinate to the machinery of the hegemonic party. From an institutional point of view, the Mexican transition has salvaged more than it has transformed. What are presented as the great innovations of the transition (for instance, an active Congress, an independent judiciary, or local institutions) are really institutions that already existed, but that had been placed by the regime mainly under the hegemonic control of the presidency. We are talking about the salvaging of political institutions that had remained virtually unnoticed during the historic era of the single party.

Indeed, during these last years, especially from 1989 onward, institutions that seemed completely isolated from the country's political life have reemerged. At the top of the list we have the resurgence of municipal governments, Mexico's oldest political institutions. For decades, their huge civic transformation and administrative action capabilities were gradually obscured by the light of centralist political criteria that undermined their authority. In recent years, municipal governments have

not only gone from single party to plurality, but also, as institutions in their own right and regardless of which party controls them, they have earned a new place on the political agenda and today are essential institutional actors in any analysis.

In the second place, state legislatures have emerged. A little over 10 years ago, they were political institutions with very limited scope. Today, local deputies from all parties play a key role in the political life of every state. So, a considerable portion of political conflict resolution increasingly goes every day through negotiations among Mexican state deputies.

A third salvaged actor are city governments, particularly in state capitals which, while being municipal governments, have a separate place, not only because they have traits and responsibilities that set them apart from the rest of local governments, but also because the way in which political problems are approached and the kinds of solutions that are found in state capitals usually have an influence on the rest of the municipalities.

The fourth actors are state governments themselves. Up to the late 1980s, imagining a state house in Mexico occupied by a party different from the president's seemed impossible. In recent years, however, that boundary has fallen and Mexican political institutions are the winners, precisely because plurality also prevailed in state govern-

Mexico's transition has not entailed the development of new institutions, but rather a salvaging of institutions that already existed in the Constitution, but that were clearly subordinate to the machinery of the hegemonic party.

ments. And just as opposition parties have won governorships, the party that used to hold them has had the opportunity to win them back.

Finally, as a result of these processes, the federal Chamber of Deputies has earned a leading role in the country's political life. The Chamber of Deputies is a body of popular representation, but above all, of territorial representation, in the sense that people vote in 300 districts. So, to the extent to which changes have been taking root locally, they have also modified the composition of that body.

None of the five actors we have mentioned is new; none is the creation of political engineering, to use Giovanni Sartori's words; none is unknown; but all of them are new in the sense that they have begun to occupy ground that they did not occupy before on the national political scene.

THE ROAD OF THE VOTED TRANSITION

These three fundamental differences in the Mexican process of political change, *vis-à-vis* the research program that coined the concept of transition toward democracy itself, describe the traits of the new era the country is going through as well as the challenges it poses. In politics, origins matter. In this sense, the Mexican transition still has to face consolidation, without losing

sight of its original traits: its stress on electoral matters, its sense of inclusive political plurality and its foundations in political institutions that already existed. It is a package that has produced slow but stable changes, and at the same time heralds the challenges to come.

From this perspective, we can understand why the Mexican transition was based primarily on an interaction between the electoral and the political party systems. It is a process in which every change undergone by electoral procedures has bolstered parties, and these, in turn, have pressed for further changes in the electoral system. All this time, voters have been learning and growing increasingly confident about the power of their vote.

The first step was taken in December 1962, when a mixed system for the election of federal deputies was introduced for the first time. They were called "party deputies", and they were awarded to parties that got over 2.5 percent of the vote in national elections. This can undoubtedly be interpreted as the first sign of the political liberalization that would characterize the transition process. It was not a lot, but in a political system that had been completely under the control of a single party since 1929, that small representation in the federal Chamber of Deputies was the first crack through which plurality would later slip. By 1973, still in prehistoric times, the bar to obtain

party deputies was lowered to 1.5 percent of the national vote, and this increased the number of deputies allotted to minorities—as they were called then.

However, a number of authors argue that political change started in fact with the 1977 electoral reforms.⁶ Party deputies were the precedent, but the adoption of the proportional representation system was what turned that crack into an open door. The Chamber of Deputies grew to 400 members, 100 of whom would be elected by proportional representation and 300 in districts by the rule of winner-take-all. These reforms also stipulated the adoption of the mixed system by state legislatures, and at the same time, allowed for the election by proportional representation of councilpersons in municipalities with over 300,000 inhabitants at that time. Not much, but opposition parties obtained in this fashion strategic turf within the country's most politically important local governments. And by 1983, this mixed system was extended to all municipal governments. But the 1977 reforms produced additional effects: they actually gave life to the Chamber of Deputies, opened the municipal arena, and, above all, they were the first clear step towards a full party system. Furthermore, they highlighted the possibility and created incentives to find access to elected office from local and regional politics: from the periphery to the center. And this would later turn out to be a crucial route. For the PRI, opening

those spaces to pluralism was perhaps less costly than keeping every access closed since, by then, it was already facing a double crisis of legitimacy: on the left, abandoned electoral hopes had turned into guerrilla warfare in several states of southern Mexico; and on the right, the PRI could not count on its eternal and emblematic adversary, since the only candidate who ran in the 1976 presidential elections was the one nominated by the only party that could really win. José López Portillo's candidacy was a contradiction: it represented the apex of the hegemonic power of a PRI without any electoral legitimacy. The 1977 reforms did not break that hegemony, but they made it possible for other parties to return to the sphere of political representation and to try again to gain ground through votes. At the same time, the access they were given to local chambers of deputies and governments forced the regime to start to dialogue with them. Even though the PRI continued to make the decisions, opposition parties reserved the right to grade its performance, while their access to the media—also guaranteed by the reforms—and to public financing placed them squarely in the electoral field.⁷ In other words, political liberalization provided the initial thrust for the salvaging of old institutions. No new governing bodies, laws or compromises were created; rather, the existing formal arrangements were slowly brought to life.

After 10 years of liberalization, opposition parties came to the 1988 race stronger than ever before. There is no doubt that the federal elections held that year constitute the next inescapable moment in this story. For some, this is when the real transition started, and for others, what had begun in 1977 gathered speed. In the 1988 elections, the number of proportional representation deputies had grown from 100 to 200, compared to 300 district seats, which is how it remains up to this day. And by 1993, the so-called “governability clause” was eliminated, and the maximum number of seats a single party could hold was limited to 63 percent of the total. After suspicions raised by Carlos Salinas de Gortari's victory, the Federal Electoral Institute was also created, with technical autonomy even though it still depended then on the government, and a window to the Senate was opened for the first minority. The truth is that it was the need to find negotiation channels with opposition parties, after his bumpy arrival to the presidency, that forced President Salinas to facilitate transition which, by then, placed most—if not all—of its expectations on the electoral system.

This is why the last stop in this brief tour is the year 1996. After proportional representation had taken hold as the method to ensure the stability of the party system and to counterbalance and qualify decisions that were still con-

trolled by the PRI, a more level playing field for electoral competition, transparency and trustworthiness of the vote count still had to be guaranteed. From both legislative chambers, and from the local governments that they had been winning in elections, by 1996, the two main opposition parties (the National Action Party [PAN] and the Party of the Democratic Revolution [PRD]) had enough strength to close that reform cycle that had started 34 years before.

Perhaps the most important aspects of that year's reforms can be summarized in four points: first, the body responsible for elections became fully independent from the government. Since then, technical electoral matters have been handled by a group of professional civil servants, while oversight is the responsibility of a small army of citizens grouped by state and electoral district. In the second place, in 1996, the Electoral Tribunal, established in 1988 as the court that would deal with post-electoral conflicts, was made a part of the judiciary branch of government. Thus, the reform to the electoral law was rounded off with another piece of legislation establishing mechanisms to modify, revoke or annul results, and a reform to the Criminal Code, to ensure that conflicts derived from elections would be solved by law, as has been the case.

In the third place, resources and prerogatives for political parties have been balanced. Public financing was

With the exception of electoral institutions political change in Mexico has entailed a process in which the old leadership began to coexist with the new ones that originated in the opposition. As a result, transition in Mexico has not meant a break, but rather political liberalization toward plurality.

Mexican transition is a process in which every change undergone by electoral procedures has bolstered parties, and these, in turn, have pressed for further changes in the electoral system.

avored over private funding, and since 1996, 30 percent of both funds and free access to electronic media are distributed equally among parties, while the remaining 70 percent is allotted according to the number of votes each party obtained in the preceding election. This meant, for example, that for the 2000 elections, the coalition that nominated Vicente Fox had similar resources—owing to the sum of both member parties—to those available to the PRI. Finally, the 1996 reforms forced states to make the necessary modifications in their own legislations so that there would be no substantial differences between federal elections—for president, senators and federal deputies—and local elections—for governors, local deputies, and municipal officials. Furthermore, the post of Mexico City's mayor was put to the vote for the first time.

* * *

We will talk about the impact these changes have had in the Mexican electoral system in the next issue of *Voices of Mexico*. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Supporters of this point of view stress two arguments: first, the limits of procedural democracy restricted primarily to electoral processes; and, second, the participation by more than one party in the make-up of the different bodies elected by popular vote

throughout the country. Furthermore, they have in their favor most of the theoretical arsenal that was built since the 1970s by the political scientists who created the very concept of democratic transition.

² Those who back this hypothesis have adopted a vision that stresses political institutions and emphasizes the idea of the democratic regime not only from an electoral point of view but also as the need for values, rules and authority structures to be linked in one coherent democratic system. Their theoretical arsenal is not that of the electoral or party systems, but rather one that explains the political system as a whole.

³ Dankwart Rustow, "Transitions to Democracy: Toward a Dynamic Model," *Comparative Politics* 36 (1970), pp. 337-363. Of course, we must mention two books that have been a constant reference for these studies: Guillermo O'Donnel, Philippe Schmitter and Laurence Whitehead, eds., *Transition from Authoritarian Rule: Latin America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986); and Larry Diamond, Juan J. Linz and Seymour M. Lipset, eds., *Democracy in Developing Countries. Latin America* (Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner, 1989). And, from the institutional perspective, there are those who suggest examining changes from a wider, not only strictly political, and much less, electoral, angle: Samuel P. Huntington, *El orden político en las sociedades en cambio* (Barcelona: Paidós, 1990); Leonardo Morlino, *Cómo cambian los regímenes políticos* (Madrid: Centro de Estudios Constitucionales, 1985); and Adam Przeworsky, *Democracy and the Market* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

⁴ Samuel P. Huntington, *The Third Wave, Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

⁵ I am referring essentially to the experiences in Latin America and Mediterranean Europe of a move from military dictatorships to democratic regimes and the experiences of democracy-building in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism.

⁶ See Kevin Middlebrook, "Political Liberalization in an Authoritarian Regime: The Case

of Mexico," O'Donnel, Schmitter, and Whitehead eds., 1986 quoted in Ricardo Becerra, Pedro Salazar and José Woldenberg, *La mecánica del cambio político en México* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 2000).

⁷ Becerra, Salazar and Woldenberg, op. cit.

FURTHER READING

Becerra, Ricardo, Pedro Salazar and José Woldenberg, *La mecánica del cambio político en México* (Mexico City: Cal y Arena, 2000).

Crespo, José Antonio, *Urnas de Pandora. Partidos políticos y elecciones en el gobierno de Salinas* (Mexico City: CIDE-Espasa Calpe Mexicana, 1995).

Elizondo Mayer-Serra, Carlos and Benito Nacif, *Lecturas sobre el cambio político en México* (Mexico City: FCE-CIDE, 2002).

Gómez Tagle, Silvia, *La transición inconclusa: treinta años de elecciones en México* (Mexico City, El Colegio de México, 2nd ed., 2001).

Loaeza, Soledad, "Political Liberalization and Uncertainty in Mexico," María Lorena Cook, Kevin Middlebrook and Juan Molinar Horcasitas, eds., *The Politics of Economic Restructuring, State-Society Relations, and Regime Change in Mexico* (San Diego: University of California Press, 1994).

Lujambio, Alonso, *El poder compartido: Un ensayo sobre la democracia mexicana* (Mexico City: Océano, 2000).

Luken, Gastón and Virgilio Muñoz, coords., *Escenarios de la transición* (Mexico City: Grijalbo, 2003).

Merino, Mauricio, "La construcción democrática: un desafío del sistema político mexicano," *Coloquio de la pluralidad. La realidad mexicana, reflexión y debate* (Toluca: Gobierno del Estado de México-UAEM, 1999).

Meyer, Lorenzo, *Liberalismo autoritario* (Mexico City: Océano, 1995).

Schettino, Macario, *Paisajes del "nuevo régimen". ¿Revivir el pasado o reinventar el futuro?* (Mexico City: Océano, 2002).

Segovia, Rafael, *Lapidaria política* (Mexico City: FCE, 1996).

Silva-Herzog-Márquez, Jesús, *El antiguo régimen y la transición en México* (Mexico City: Planeta-Joaquín Mortiz, 1999).

On the Pathways Of Indigenous Chiapas

Mario Humberto Ruz*



Elsie Montiel

To say “Chiapas” is above all to invoke indigenous or Indian Mexico. The Mexico which has fortunately not completely abandoned us despite continual governmental and ideological efforts to forget it. The Indian-ness, outmoded for some, creaky with age for others, is at the root of a large part of everything we might consider our own. However, it does not reside only at the very base of today’s Mexico, but continues to flourish, bearing fruit in different ways, since “what is Indian” is not a mere anchor in the past, but at the same time a program for the future.¹

Chiapas is the voice that breaks into innumerable voices and has expressed itself in numerous ways. Despite the frequency with which the first peoples of the state tend to be homogenized into a single entity, each of them has been the artifice of specific forms of expression and a subject capable of forging personal and community pathways through their history.

The region is an ecological cornucopia that includes everything from cold mountain high lands to high tropical jungle landscapes, from valleys sandwiched between mountains, cloud forests and warm depressions along the Grijalva Basin, to broad temperate plains, lake and swamp

* Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Philological Research’s Center for Mayan Studies.

regions or coastal salt estuaries. Since ancient times, it has been inhabited by representatives of at least four well differentiated Mesoamerican groups: the Zoques (of the Mixe-Zoque-Popoluca linguistic group); the Chiapanecs (of the Oto-Mangue family); the Nahuas (of the Yuto-Aztec branch); and a multi-hued variety of peoples and languages from the Mayan family.

We know that when the Spaniards arrived they found the Chiapanecs in the very heart of the territory they would later call the “higher mayoralty of Chiapa,” the Zoques in the mid-Northwest, the Nahuas on the Socunusco coast

the Chiapanecs intermingled physically and culturally; and there were also those who, like the coastal Nahuas, disappeared because of the exploitation they suffered at the hands of their new overlords (the area was rich in cacao). Those who lived in the jungle had to endure the Spaniards’ new population policies. Thus, the Pochutlas were gathered around Ocosingo and the original Lacandons ended their days in the area of Escuintenango, near Comitán, or in Retalulheu, Guatemala. It would not be until the eighteenth century that that area would be populated again, first by people from Petenecté on the shores of

Since ancient times, Chiapas has been inhabited by representatives of at least four well differentiated Mesoamerican groups: the Zoques, the Chiapanecs, the Nahuas and a multi-hued variety of peoples and languages from the Mayan family.

and the Mayans in the entire eastern half. Of the Mayans, the Ch’ols were located in the northern mountains, bordering on Tabasco; the Central Highlands were populated by Tzotzils and Tzeltals, both extending to the central depression; the Tojolab’als, gathered around Balún Canán (or Comitán), were lords of the low mountains, hills and intermediate valleys that open up onto the jungle region; the Pochutlas and Lacandons lived in the jungle bordering on what is today the Guatemalan Petén; the Mochós and Cabil were settled on the skirts of the Sierra Madre mountain range; and some towns where the Mam language was spoken were neighbors to the Nahuas on the eastern-most coast.

With the passage of time, things changed. Some groups left their original location; others, like the Cabils and

the Usumacinta, then by settlers from around Palenque and, finally, by Yucatecans from San José de Gracia.²

Small groups of Spaniards and Africans and later the mestizos born of the different mixes were added to the native populations during the colonial period. After independence, new groups would appear in Chiapas, and others would increase their numbers temporarily or definitively, like the Cakchiquels, the Kanjobals and the Jacaltecs, who year after year emigrated from Guatemala to pick the coffee planted by Germans in the Sierra Madre mountains, or the Chujs who came down from the mountain to settle in the border region of La Trinitaria and Guatemala. And we must not forget the families of Arab descent settled in Tuxtla and environs, or the Japanese who arrived in Soconusco more than a century ago.

At the end of the twentieth century, the ethnic variety broadened out even more when thousands of Mayans and mestizos from Guatemala took refuge in Chiapas fleeing the civil war plaguing their country. Many of them are still there.

But not only did new groups appear and others vanish. Over the almost five centuries since the violent encounter with the Spanish conquistadors, Chiapas inhabitants’ mobility has prompted a profound rearrangement of territorial patterns. It is impossible here to go into all of the processes that brought about these changes, but we can say that, regardless of the endogenous or exogenous causes of these phenomena, the indigenous peoples have been flexible and strong enough to survive them as specific social and cultural entities when they have put their minds to it (since it should not be denied that on occasion, they have freely opted to assimilate into the hegemonic culture, abandoning their primary ethnic ties).

It is clear that if anything can be called a constant in Chiapas indigenous daily lives, it is the diversity of their historic experiences and the changing ways in which they have lived them. This diversity can be seen first as a reaction to the Spanish conquest, and goes from a more or less bellicose confrontation (the Chamula Chiapanecs and Tzotzils in the sixteenth century and the Lacandons in the seventeenth), to collaboration with the recent arrivals, even accompanying them on their incursions into Central America (the Tzotzils from Zinacantan in the sixteenth century).

The Spaniards implemented a new form of organization in the land they conquered to facilitate religious indoctrination and the collection of tribute from the indigenous as the new “vas-

sals” of the king. Once “congregated”, they instituted the new political-legal division of the population into the so-called two republics: that of the “Indians” and that of the Spaniards.³ It would not be too long before the authorities realized that they had not foreseen the emergence of “a third republic” fed by all kinds of racial mixtures: that of the mestizos (indigenous mixed with Spaniard), *pardos* or “dusky ones” (indigenous mixed with black), mulattos (Spaniard and black) and those who worked in Spanish houses or ranches (*naboríos* and *laboríos*, respectively), whose historical importance has not yet been duly weighed.

In old or new settlements, the indigenous were ferociously controlled under the *encomienda* system, which sought to ensure punctual payment of tribute, whether in cash or kind depending on market price variations, money owed the Catholic Church, obligatory service to the Spaniards and a variety of community services (called *tequio*), in addition to being subject to the voracity of uncounted officials who through the system called “forced distribution” obliged them to acquire unnecessary tools or advanced them money that they had not requested but had to pay back with interest.

After the initial missionary fervor had passed, some religious joined the group of exploiters, charging unscrupulously for saying mass or administering the sacraments, inventing new forms of alms (like having to pay to kiss the priest’s maniple or for the “privilege” of helping a bishop get off his horse, called the “stirrup right”), and, especially, exacting payment for presiding over communal or private devotions.

If we add up this rosary of day-to-day exploitation, we should not be sur-

prised at the outbreaks of armed resistance, much more numerous than traditional history leads us to believe. I would just point to some of the more bloody uprisings: the Zoque riot in Tuxtla in May 1693 (when two prominent Indians and the mayor of the province, a voracious Spanish “distributor”, were stoned to death),⁴ the revolt of the inhabitants of Soconusco and Provincia de Los Llanos (Comitán) in the early eighteenth century⁵ and the rebellion by numerous towns in the highlands, particularly Tzeltals and Tzotzils, in 1712, considered the most important in the Guatemala Audience.⁶ They were

The Spaniards implemented a new form of organization in the land they conquered to facilitate religious indoctrination and the collection of tribute from the indigenous as the new “vassals” of the king.

all put down by the sword and drowned in blood.

We should not believe, however, that armed rebellions were the only forms of resistance. Perhaps even more important were the many tactics used in all spheres of daily life: both individually and collectively running away temporarily or definitively; retreating into communal systems or their ancient beliefs or imagining a thousand and one strategies to escape oppression, like, for example, hiding young couples in extended families at the same time that the young people did not marry in the church to avoid being put on the list of “entire” tribute-payers, which meant paying double the tribute and contributing fully to communal labor. Others resisted leaving behind their indigenous first and last names and using the ones they were baptized with by the Westerners, some-

thing the Spaniards tried to avert arguing that it was a sign of paganism. This resistance was linked to another indigenous strategy of using the scribes’ difficulties in writing their original names to argue that they were not the ones registered on the lists of tribute-payers and refusing to pay.

They also used legal mechanisms found in Spanish law itself. Many documents testify to indigenous persistence in denouncing aggressions against them, hiring defenders, taking up collections (*derramas*) to finance trips by their authorities to Guatemala to make complaints before the Audience. As

their demographic recovery made it imperative, the peoples resorted more and more frequently to legal measures, with better or worse results depending on their size and the economic resources at their disposal, resources that they sometimes used to buy land for their children and at the same time block the entry of the Spaniards.

Christianity was a different story altogether, as the indigenous adopted it enthusiastically. However, parallel to the continual and growing adherence to Catholic liturgy and para-liturgical, re-signified time and again, they openly or, usually, clandestinely, maintained ancient cults based on a centuries-old world view. Many of these practices disappeared fairly rapidly, like those carried out in honor of Nandadá, the god of water; Nombobí, the Sun; Mohotove, the patron of fertility; or Nemí, who

helped people to die well.⁷ But many lasted down through the years, in caves and mountains, or in the shadow of institutions created by the new religion, such as the case of the brotherhoods, benevolent associations whose rituals were adopted enthusiastically by the indigenous who saw in the worship of saints a way to maintain the intense ritual life they had had in the pre-Hispanic era.⁸

Under the aegis of the brotherhoods, curious pairs of saints and pre-Hispanic deities even appeared (Chawuk/Saint Barbara; Kisim/Saint Pascual Bailón; Owner of the Mountain/Saint Anthony Abad; Ixchel/Saint Anne); images on straw mats were paraded about and fed with copal and flowers, if not animals' blood, just as had been done with the ancient gods. And some iconographic emblems were even taken as familiars or *nahuales* of the saints (Saint Inés's sheep; Saint Domingo's dog; Santiago's horse; Juan's eagle; Mark's lion and so many others), which made them be considered more powerful.

The variety of strategies used to survive in the new situation and at the same time remain faithful to the old ways was enormous. So, at the same time that Biblical writings were adapted to incorporate them into the indigenous historical vision,⁹ towns like Ocozocuatla rioted when the priest announced his intention of cutting down the sacred *ceiba* or silk cotton tree (1722). Others like the Tzeltals from Copanaguastla and Oxchuc hid their ancient gods in the churches themselves, walled up behind the saints, and certain Chol and Tzeltal communities went *en masse* to worship the hills, considered deities linked to the fertility of their surroundings, to atmospheric phenomena like the rain, which fed



Elsie Montiel

the crops, and to the life's breath of plants and animals.

Others opted to become culturally mixed to escape the heavy work that went along with being considered indigenous. They sought out jobs on sugar plantations, grain farms or cattle ranches to avoid the communal workload, forced distribution of goods and the urgency of paying tribute, since these payments were made by their landlords.

In exchange, they met with other forms of exploitation and the loss of their communities, but they trusted that in the long run they would be able to shirk off the mantle of being indigenous, since once they were far away, they mixed with the other castes, improved their Spanish and adopted Hispanic habits, all of which made it difficult to identify them biologically and culturally. Thanks to this, the second generation managed to avoid being classified as "tribute-paying indigenous".

As may well be imagined, this had a number of consequences for those who continued living in the towns since the absence of many community members made its existence even more precarious than it already was because of the exploitation of their labor, natural disasters and the growing appetite of non-indigenous for indigenous lands.

Almost all the indigenous efforts to keep, recover and even increase their lands were shown to be fruitless after independence with the passage of the Reform Laws, which, underhandedly classifying them as goods "in the hands of the dead," placed the communities' and brotherhoods' lands in the sly hands of the Chiapas liberals.¹⁰ Later, the "surveying companies" commissioned by the government to legalize title to the lands, launched an offensive against what little the Liberals had left behind, even the land that had already been "denounced". In particular, they turned their eyes to the jungles, rich in tropical

Time and again the indigenous of Chiapas have shown their cultures' profound intelligence and adaptability, which have allowed them to adjust and to endure as peoples, singular and always contemporary.

woods like cedar and mahogany and in products like chicle and caucho.

In 1897 alone, the Chiapas Land and Colonization Company managed to legalize title to 1,807,369 hectares.¹¹ By 1903, "around 6,794 farms and ranches had been registered as haciendas or ranches and 1,571 as unclassified properties, covering more or less 3 million hectares, or 44 percent of the total area of the state."¹² Eleven years later "only 3.67 percent of the places registered maintained the category of towns, while 87.84 percent were registered as farms or property."¹³

At the same time, their land stolen from them, the indigenous joined the ranks of the "freed" labor market. The Chiapas government itself reported in 1885 that of the 472,694 inhabitants of the state, only 8,125 lived in a hundred towns, while 236,347 lived on farms and hamlets and the rest concentrated in the few cities and *villas*. And to those trapped by hereditary debt was added at times the work force liberated by the 12 *villas*, 102 towns, and 17 river-bank communities: another 166,607. Three years before the dawn of the twentieth century, the 36,512 servants living in 5,858 rustic farms owed their bosses no less than 3,017,012 pesos. If we take into account that a day's pay was no more than 30 cents, every peon owed 276 days' work.

Without a doubt, the century began well for property owners. So well, in fact, that the outbreak of the Mexican

Revolution did not trouble them overly much. In the region, the revolution consisted of clashes between the inhabitants of Tuxtla and San Cristóbal, who mobilized the Chamulas in their support, promising to free them of taxes, and between the different groups that emerged from the conflict (Carrancistas, Villistas, Pinedistas and Mapaches), who fought a veritable civil war.¹⁴ It would not be until 1936 to 1940 under President Lázaro Cárdenas that the indigenous peoples would recover part of their lands and be freed from the oppressive debts they owed the hacienda owners.

In the second half of the twentieth century, the galloping population growth and the depletion of the land after so much exploitation caused new migration, spurred by people's moving into the jungle areas encouraged by the government (a disjointed colonization effort with a brutal environmental cost); religious and political conflicts leading to the expulsion from their communities of not a few indigenous converted to Protestant or para-Protestant faiths; the attraction of the urban areas (Tuxtla, Villahermosa, Cancún); the possibility of obtaining land in neighboring states (Tabasco, Campeche and Quintana Roo); and the 1994 Zapatista uprising.

Time and again the indigenous of Chiapas have shown their cultures' profound intelligence and adaptability, which have allowed them to adjust

the messages from outside to their own day-to-day lives—whether they be political, legislative, economic and even religious—and turn them into a renewed struggle to endure as peoples, singular and always contemporary. They have offered us an unceasing lesson of the modernity of their traditions, which are perpetually changing in order to endure. For this reason, though it may seem paradoxical, few things in Chiapas are as modern as its indigenous, those supposedly "traditional" indigenous. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Using data from the 2000 National Census, the Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples reported that in 2002, of the total population of Chiapas of 3,920,412 inhabitants, 1,117,597 considered themselves indigenous (this figure does not include children under five). Of that figure, 843,966 speak one of the state's indigenous languages: 37.5 percent are monolingual in the indigenous language and 62.5 percent are bilingual (their native language and Spanish). http://cdi.gob.mx/index.php?id_seccion=91

² The people today known as Lacandons are the descendants of Yucatecan Mayas who settled in the ancient Lacandon territory, becoming confused in people's minds with the original inhabitants.

³ About the first century of the "Indian Republic" see Gudrun Lenkersdorf, *Repúblicas de indios. Pueblos mayas en Chiapas, siglo XVI* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Mayas-IIFL-UNAM, 2001).

⁴ Murdo J. MacLeod, "Motines y cambios en las formas de control económico y político. Los acontecimientos de Tuxtla, 1693," J.P. Viqueira and M.H. Ruz, eds., *Chiapas: Los rumbos de otra historia* (Mexico City: UNAM-CIESAS-CEMCA-UdeG, 1996), pp. 87-102.

⁵ María Carmen León, *Un levantamiento en nombre del rey nuestro señor* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Mayas-IIFL-UNAM, 1988).

⁶ The most complete and intriguing study about this is by Juan Pedro Viqueira, *Indios rebeldes e idólatras. Dos ensayos históricos sobre la rebelión india de Cancuc, Chiapas, acaecida en el año de 1712* (Mexico City: CIESAS, 1997).

⁷ About the first two, see Mario Humberto Ruz, "Amarrando juntos: la religiosidad maya en la época colonial," M. de la Garza and M.I. Nájera, eds., *Religión maya* (Madrid: Editorial Trotta, 2002), pp. 247-282. About the last two, undoubtedly the best source, though limited to the case of the Zoque peoples, is Dolores Aramoni's *Los refugios de lo sagrado* (Mexico City: CNCA, 1992).

⁸ There were even some illegal brotherhoods, such as the one in which the Suchiapas parodied the Twelve Apostles and "went out at night, going from hill to hill and from cave to cave, holding their meetings and consultations under the cover of religion, practicing their rites and the cult of the Devil." (Pedro de Feria, "Carta de fray ... obispo de Chiapa al rey don Felipe II, remitiéndole un memorial de lo que en aquella provincia pasaba. 26 de enero de 1579," *Cartas de Indias I* [Guadalajara: Aviña Levy, 1970], pp. 451-459.), while some Tzeltals pretended to be the

incarnation of the Holy Trinity and charged a fee in the towns for "facilitating" miracles.

⁹ Francisco Núñez de la Vega, *Constituciones diocesanas del obispado de Chiapa (1702)*, critical edition by M.C. León and M.H. Ruz (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Mayas-IIFL-UNAM, 1988).

¹⁰ The law was designed to confiscate the Catholic Church's excessive land holdings and those of the indigenous peoples: to do so, it refused to recognize any legal standing of either the church or the municipal governments that owned the land that had been received as "royal grants" or "viceregal grants" during the colonial period. They were called "goods in the hands of the dead" because they could neither be sold nor given away, so they were outside the circuits of trade or the market. To bring them back into the market, the *denuncio*, or denunciation, was instituted, whereby those who knew of the existence of these kinds of goods denounced them and the government auctioned them off to the highest bidder, paying the denouncer a commission based on the value of the goods. Although the law authorized share-croppers and rural renters to pur-

chase the land they worked with the supposed aim of fostering small holdings, in practice the land was concentrated among the few with enough money to buy it.

¹¹ Alicia Hernández Chávez, "La defensa de los finqueros en Chiapas," *Historia mexicana* XXVIII (3) 1979, p. 349.

¹² Carlos Tello, *La tenencia de la tierra en México* (Mexico City: UNAM, 1968), p. 105.

¹³ Carl Tannenbaum, quoted in Jean Meyer, "Haciendas y ranchos, peones y campesinos en el Porfiriato. Algunas falacias estadísticas," *Historia mexicana* XXXV (3) 1986, p. 495; and Hernández Chávez, op. cit., pp. 342-343.

¹⁴ See the excellent analysis of the period in three classic texts: Antonio García de León, *Resistencia y utopía* (Mexico City: ERA, 1985); Thomas Benjamin, *El camino a Leviatán, Chiapas y el Estado mexicano, 1891-1947* (Mexico City: CNCA, 1990); and "¡Primero viva Chiapas! La revolución mexicana y las rebeliones locales," J.P. Viqueira and M.H. Ruz, eds., *Chiapas los rumbos de otra historia* (Mexico City: UNAM-CIESAS-CEMCA-UdeG, 1995).

Segundo Congreso Internacional
LOS MEDIOS PÚBLICOS
 28, 29 y 30 DE SEPTIEMBRE DE 2005, CIUDAD DE MÉXICO
 DE CARA A LA **DEMOCRACIA**

Museo Nacional de Antropología
 Reforma y Gandhi

www.lared.org.mx

Water and Mexico's National Security

José Luis Piñeyro*



Trucks bring water to Mexico City areas where scarcity is cronic.

In Mexico, like in the rest of Latin America, the trend is to consider drinking water a private, not public, good. Experts in fresh water mention several ways to privatize it using three basic arguments offered by governments, businessmen and international financial agencies like the World Bank. First, they say that there is a generalized water scarcity in the world, differing, of course, from country to country, region to region and continent to continent. For example, Canada has much more drinkable water than Mexico. Secondly, they say that the costs of maintenance, improvement, reparation and distribution of water pipelines can only be met with national and international private capital given the restrictions of government budgets and public finances. Third, they argue that water is wasted because consumers do not pay the real price of extraction and operating costs of the “blue gold” and because a culture of water conservation is almost non-existent.¹

* Professor and researcher at the Sociology Department of the Autonomous Metropolitan University, Azcapotzalco campus. Jlpineyro@aol.com

One way of privatizing the “blue gold” is granting public or private concessions for temporary usage (renewable periods of 10 or 30 years) to multinational companies like water bottlers, real estate companies or agribusiness.

The following are different ways of privatizing the “blue gold”.² One is granting public or private concessions for temporary usage (renewable periods of 10 or 30 years) to multinational companies like water bottlers, real estate companies or agribusiness. Another is granting consortia exclusive rights to the industrial use of residual water so that only they can recycle it, thus appropriating it. Another is to build dams and pipelines and change the course of rivers to supply areas with high industrial, agro-industrial and urban consumption. Another way is to privatize land and bio-regions according to the needs of companies that consume great volumes of water, separating the ownership of the land from that of the wells.³ Lastly, privatization occurs when a public good like water is bottled and sold; in Mexico, the market for bottled water is worth 32 billion pesos and Coca-Cola, Pepsicola and Nestlé, in addition to selling soft drinks, sell bottled water.⁴

Usually when we talk about strategic natural resources, we think of oil, natural gas or minerals like iron, copper and aluminum. They are considered essential for civilian and military industry, commerce and services, experiments and inventions in air, land or maritime transportation or cybernetic communications and automation. They are fuels that contribute to moving the machines and instruments of the mil-

itary and civilian industrial complex and services or they are minerals needed to make alloys for scientific and technological experiments.

However, the productivist, technical view of modern society has been supplemented by another that puts more emphasis on the finite space of the globe and the time limit on humanity’s devastation of the ecology based on an economic model that feeds on the human, animal and vegetable environment. That is, the new view postulates the need to adopt an ecologically self-sustaining development model that is socially and politically inclusive. Respect and conservation of our natural surroundings and the satisfaction of basic social needs must be the guide and not simply economic growth that ultra-concentrates wealth and income and destroys the environment, according to one specialist.⁵

The air we breathe every day, the water we drink and the food we eat are vital: without them, no form of human or animal life is possible. They are ne-

cessary for any national security strategy. In fact, some military strategists and civilian analysts say that future wars will not be only over the control of fuel and minerals, but also for the control of drinking water and therefore of regions with abundant water.⁶ In Mexico’s governmental and private spheres people are almost totally unaware of the gravity of the growing scarcity of water, the constant deforestation that affects rainfall, the quality of the air we breathe and the food dependency on the United States evidenced in the escalating imports of basic grains like corn, beans and rice.⁷ Water, air and sufficient quality foodstuffs should be considered some of the priorities in a Mexican national security strategy. They undoubtedly have an impact on the quality and quantity of sustained reproduction of human and natural resources in our nation-state.

In contrast to the aforementioned unawareness, President Fox’s National Development Plan for 2001-2006 points to threats to national security: poverty and inequality, the population’s vulnerability to natural disasters, environmental destruction, crime, organized crime, illicit drug trafficking and corruption. The plan underlines how indispensable it is to establish an agenda of risks to foresee threats that endanger the population’s welfare, state institutions and “the sustainability of development or our territory’s safety.” It is

Some military strategists and civilian analysts say that future wars will not be only over the control of fuel and minerals, but also for the control of drinking water and therefore of regions with abundant water.

even more precise when it mentions, “The growing *environmental deterioration*, particularly deforestation, whose effects on the country’s water system and biosphere impact negatively on society, the economy and security.”⁸

Nevertheless, as in other areas (the creation of 1.2 million jobs a year, shoring up public security, achieving 7-percent-a-year economic growth, reducing extreme poverty, etc.), the Fox administration’s national development plan, like others before it, has been more rhetoric than reality, with demagoguery prevailing over tangible results. Regarding solving the grave, complex problem of water, Fox officials just continue to say that it will only be solved by privatizing the entire water distribution system, selling it off to national and international capital.⁹ Businessmen’s mentality considers no alternative to turning a public good into a private one, whose consumption will depend on each person’s or each family’s purchasing power. They should “pay until it hurts,” as Alberto Cárdenas Jiménez, former minister of the environment and natural resources, recently said. It will not hurt him at all. He is a millionaire.

Obvious alternatives would ameliorate Mexico’s deteriorating national security: increasing public investment in hydraulic infrastructure to reverse the effects of the last 20 years’ lack of investment;¹⁰ on-going campaigns to

Fox officials just continue to say
that the problem of water will only be solved
by privatizing the entire water distribution system, selling
it off to national and international capital.

prevent the waste of water; establishing a national network of strict and honest water inspectors; building a system of small and medium-sized dams in every city suited for it; giving soft loans for building family cisterns to catch rainwater and for installing purification systems;¹¹ channeling funding into scientific and technological experimentation for desalinizing water and improving waste water treatment, among other initiatives.

All this would foster what the National Development Plan has not achieved: it would create massive numbers of jobs, diminish public insecurity, contribute to economic growth, improve the conservation and use of water, reduce technological dependence, limit poverty through jobs and strengthen public health by reducing illnesses attributable to the lack of pure drinking water and preventing epidemics among humans and animals. But, to do all this and to overcome other threats to national security, what is required is the vocation to be a statesman and not just a leader for a

six-year term, as has happened with this administration and the three previous ones, all of whom have been devotees of de-nationalizing change. Strengthening national sovereignty starts by recovering the three basic substances: air, water and food.

We hope that the National Development Plan of the next federal administration taking office in 2006 will make its programmatic statements jibe with the reality of society, in the general tenor of the phrase “facts, not words” (a phrase that belongs in U.S. government discourse) and that the upcoming administration will have an orientation and content that is more public than private, that defends national public interests over and above private national interests. ■■■

Respect and conservation of our natural
surroundings and the satisfaction of basic social needs
must be the guide and not simply economic growth
that ultra-concentrates wealth and income.

NOTES

¹ Arturo Damm, “Del agua y la lección de economía: escritos de frontera,” *Este País* no. 171, June 2005, and Eduardo González, “Agua: los retos de su financiamiento,” *Investigación y Desarrollo* no. 193, supplement of *La Jornada*, June 2005. See the statements of former Salinas administration Secretary of Finance José Ángel Gurría, the “angel of dependence”, now an “expert” on drinking water and *de facto* spokesperson for the World Bank.

- ² Silvia Ribeiro, "Las caras de la privatización del agua," *La Jornada*, April 30, 2005, p. 29, and Angélica Enciso, "Organismos financieros internacionales fuerzan la privatización global del agua," *La Jornada*, June 30, 2005, p. 41.
- ³ The Valley of Mexico has 4,896 wells, half of which are exploited by private individuals or companies like real estate developers and industries. In 2004 alone, 110 transfers of water rights were granted because of the crisis growers are experiencing. See Emilio Fernández, "Compra-venta de pozos," *El Universal*, May 9, 2005, p. C10.
- ⁴ Luis Hernández Navarro, "Privatizar el agua," *La Jornada*, June 7, 2005, p. 23.
- ⁵ Américo Saldívar, "De la sustentabilidad ambiental a la sustentabilidad económica"; Michèle Chauvet, "Bioseguridad y seguridad alimentaria: políticas inaplazables"; and Yolanda Massieu, "Impactos sociales de la biotecnología agrícola en México: los cultivos transgénicos," José Luis Piñeyro, comp., *La seguridad nacional en México. Debate actual* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 2004).
- ⁶ "Conflicto por el agua en la cuenca del Nilo," "Conflicto por el agua en las cuencas del Jordán, el Tigris-Eufrates y el Indo" and "La disputa de las riquezas de la tierra: Guerras internas por los minerales y la madera de construcción,"

Michael Klare, *Guerras por los recursos: el futuro escenario del conflicto global* (Barcelona: Urano Tendencias, 2003).

- ⁷ The voracity of the U.S. government and their farmers in attempting to push forward the quota of border water that Mexico must supply annually has been brutally demonstrated, as has the Fox administration's servile attitude despite protests by the governors of Mexican border states. In discussing possible scenarios, one Mexican specialist has concluded, "What is clear in this 'debtor/creditor' scenario is that the strategic character of water along the border is beginning to deepen the tensions of water policy and geo-politics that could be read as the beginning of the U.S. appropriation of at least most of the water there." Gian Carlo Delgado Ramos, "Agua y seguridad nacional," *Memoria* no. 194, April 2005, p. 13.
- ⁸ Poder Ejecutivo Federal, Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2001-2006 (Mexico City: Talleres Gráficos de México, 2001), pp. 128 and 133, the author's emphasis.
- ⁹ According to Maude Barlow, the president of the Council of Canadians, an NGO that opposes water privatization worldwide, today, 20 percent of Mexico's fresh water systems have been privatized in the last decade. The Fox government fostered this by creating the Program for Modernizing Water Operators (Promagua), which "established a national data base to help foreign corporations decide where they can

invest in water facilities in Mexico." In its balance sheet of Promagua, the National Bank of Public Works and Services considers private participation in water services a "futile discussion." Roberto González Amador, "Privatizado, 20% del servicio de agua," *La Jornada*, June 25, 2005, p. 43.

- ¹⁰ The Workers' Coordinating Commission of the National Water Commission and the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources wrote in a recently published document, "In the last 20 years, an average of U.S.\$2.4 billion a year should have been invested in the sector, but only one-third of that amount was actually forthcoming, and 12 percent of that budget was used for treating residual water, which explains to a great extent the bad results obtained from limited and badly applied budgets." Feliciano Hernández, "El gran negocio de las aguas mexicanas," *Forum* no. 145, June 2005.
- ¹¹ For example, the Chapingo University Graduate College invented a storage and purification system for rainwater. Javier Salinas, "Desarrollan proyecto para purificar y envasar agua de lluvia: beneficiará a tres millones de viviendas sin acceso a agua potable," *La Jornada*, April 12, 2005, p. 3a, and Antimio Cruz, "Hacen potable agua de lluvia," *El Universal*, April 12, 2005, p. 5C. Financial support to a national research plan for desalinization of sea water would be a strategic investment for Mexico's future, instead of immediately thinking of privatizing water.

The North American Booklets collection is an academic series aimed at the public interested in social, political, economic, demographic and, of course, foreign policy and international relations issues in North America. The series presents both well-documented timely analyses of current issues and theoretical, specialized reflections based on rigorous research.

For sale at Torre II de Humanidades, piso 10, Ciudad Universitaria, Mexico City.
 Phones: (0115255) 5623-0311, 5623-0314 and 5623-0315 www.cisan.unam.mx

Understanding Mexico's Water Crisis

Gabriela Angeles Serrano*



Iván Stephens/Cuartoscuro

Water management and use are facing many daily challenges and are the subject of heated debate throughout the world. However, very little is understood about the negative implications of environmental decision makers' holding on to misconceptions and outdated paradigms about the behavior of the hydrological system. The dearth of mechanisms for translating existing technical and scientific knowledge into public policies is very grave, particularly since these public poli-

cies should not only protect the environment, but also be consistent with the social, economic and cultural dynamics that are driving environmental transformation.

This essay aims to explore how these generalized schema and misconceptions are used to indicate the state of the water crisis in Mexico and emphasize how the lack of articulation between the technical or scientific conception of the problem and its implementation could be, like in other regions, a great limitation for managing water resources in a more fair, balanced way. This is because there are cases in which an environmental problem, like the decline and dete-

* Researcher at CISAN. ganserr@servidor.unam.mx

rioration of aquifers, grows after applying a specific public policy or regulatory norm, although it appears to be scientifically or technically correct.¹

Decision makers say there is a water crisis in Mexico because water sources are over-exploited, because most of the country's terrain is arid or semi-arid and because of growing demand on the part of an expanding population. They also say that these three elements put the brakes on achieving sustainable development. But this analysis does not take into account the problem's complexity, from the physical conditions to social and economic aspects.

In Mexico, political agendas and discourses began to include the environment and the concept of sustainable development in the late 1980s. This was the most important push toward linking technical-scientific knowledge with practice in the form of instruments for managing resources like water, soil or biodiversity.²

Among the definitions best known worldwide of sustainable development is that of the Brundtland Commission, which defines it as that which “meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”³ In Mexico, the term is defined in the most recent amendment to the Law on National Waters as “the process that can be evaluated using water, economic, social and environmental criteria and indicators that tends to improve people's quality of life and productivity...in such a way that does not compromise the satisfaction of water needs of future generations.”⁴

It remains to be seen, however, based on what the law and its regulations have to say, what concrete indicators could be formulated to evaluate

Despite efforts in different parts of the globe, patterns of development and management of water resources are not sustainable from the social, economic or environmental perspective or as a whole.

sustainable development. It is widely accepted throughout the world that it is very difficult to achieve success with proposals for water management. For example, the Comprehensive Assessment of the Freshwater Resources of the World confirms that despite efforts in different parts of the globe, patterns of development and management of water resources are not sustainable from the social, economic or environmental perspective or as a whole.⁵

One of the very important but little heeded reasons for this is that decision makers continue to apply misconceptions or obsolete paradigms about the behavior of transformed natural systems or with intensive management of the resource. This can be more clearly seen if we use various disciplinary focuses to contrast the quality and relevance of the indicators used to evaluate and monitor the environment, like their integration into more complex models.

Then, it should be recognized that one of the clearest challenges in the new Law on National Waters is the lack of indicators to objectively evaluate the sustainability of the management actions that stem from it.

One of the most important indicators for evaluating the impact on the

environment of water resource management is the term “over-exploitation.” For example, it is not very appropriate for referring to the negative impact of intensive groundwater development because it does not allow us to consider the complexity of the physical systems, the complex answers to different regimes of extraction, or the uncertainty of technical models for evaluating aquifers. It also does not allow for including a series of very important social components.

In the Law on National Waters, the term “over-exploitation” alludes to unacceptable uses of water sources, while in other documents this term refers to when the extraction of water surpasses “10 percent of the capability of natural annual and long-term renovation.” At first glance, this definition is understandable and precise, as it may refer to an unacceptable decrease in water levels that precede or indicate a non-renewable decrease in water storage. But the term “over-exploitation” is also used to point to the loss that can cause or worsen one or more of the following processes: 1) the decrease in the base flow of surface runoff; 2) the reduction of wells' pumping chambers; 3) a change in the quality of the water; 4) a change in the regimen of groundwater flow; 5) land sinkage (subsidence). All of these processes are linked in turn to more complex problems, difficult to evaluate, that range from an increase in production costs and ecological imbalances to social conflicts and health problems. To this we should add that phenomena like the salinization of the soil and the increase in the concentration of elements like arsenic and fluoride, and the induction of non-renewable groundwater flow —commonly called fossil water— also exists in areas with

intensive development of the resource that can not be considered over-exploitation strictly speaking.

To deal with this complex series of interactions, current water management policies are based only on the criteria of the rate of safe yield, which means a rate of extraction that does not cause over-exploitation. It should be recognized that many specialists are aware that it is not possible to obtain this rate with an acceptable degree of uncertainty, but they all use this criterion since, for the moment, it is the only indicator that exists to distribute water to different consumers.

At the same time, there is great uncertainty about how much and what quality of water different ecosystems need and, consequently, how this requirement varies with the seasons, for example in the cases in which natural groundwater flows that need more time for renewal (thermal springs or those with special mineral composition) are valuable for maintaining certain types of ecosystems.

Despite the fact that the safe yield rate is an indicator that has many desirable characteristics like geographic scope, relevance and utility for potential users and even being understandable for non-specialists, its scientific validity and representativeness of the entire territory analyzed are limited by the number of environmental responses and by the differences in the threshold value and interpretations it has. In addition, the negative effects of over-exploitation present themselves regardless of whether the capability of natural renovation of the aquifer, river basin or any other territorial unit being analyzed has been surpassed.⁶

All this brings to the fore the need to review the prevailing paradigms in

There is great uncertainty about how much and what quality of water different ecosystems need and, consequently, how this requirement varies with the seasons.

institutions; if we thoroughly assess recent environmental diagnoses with regard to water, there are no national or regional indicators comprehensive enough to evaluate these complex interactions.

There is insufficient capability to manage groundwater jointly and integrally with surface water. Proof of this is the fact that in 2004, water statistics in Mexico still mainly focused on surface water, which represented 65 percent of the 79.4 cubic kilometers of total annual extraction (which includes both surface and groundwater), mainly for agricultural use. This is despite the fact that many regions have intensive development of groundwater, more than 70 percent of which is channeled into urban and industrial use.⁷ This weakness in the focus of water management can be more clearly seen when we take into consideration that more than half of the country has important potential for developing groundwater given three specific conditions: 1) the arid (31 percent) and semi-arid (33 percent) conditions that exist mainly in the North that make it impossible to form surface runoff, do allow for the presence of aquifers with different annual renewal rates; 2) the generalized con-

tamination of surface water; and 3) geographical conditions that make for a lack of surface water despite high precipitation (for example, in Yucatán). Nevertheless, this potential for the country's development of groundwater resources is limited by the technical, scientific and institutional difficulties in measuring, evaluating and managing them appropriately.⁸

A generalized trend among decision makers regarding the use of groundwater is to consider it a resource that causes great number of environmental problems. But this is true only to the extent that it is more difficult to manage and evaluate because of its greater number of non-linear responses compared to surface water. Also, because of the difficulty in controlling the volume of extraction or given that extraction from wells can cause adverse environmental effects like land sinkage or desiccation of bodies of water, in addition to other reasons, priority was given to hydraulic works that tapped into and measured surface water, despite the fact that in many territories, more importance should have been given to appropriate management of groundwater.

However, intensive exploitation of wells has become more and more frequent for public and industrial use in Central and Southern Mexico, and for agricultural use in the North. This trend in northern regions can be reversed given that current policies offer incentives for transferring water from less productive agricultural uses to more productive ones like urban or industrial uses.

Another focus that should be questioned is attributing the water crisis mainly to the country's physical conditions aggravated by demographic

growth, when there is no reliable estimate of the state of the hydrological system under these conditions of pressure. Among other reasons this is because the network for monitoring climatic and hydrological seasons and of aquifers is incomplete and technical studies specifying groundwater behavior and its different levels of interaction with ecosystems and the population are very inadequate. To make these hydrological and water quality studies, 37 hydrological regions that group 314 basins are taken into consideration, and for groundwater management, a conventional definition of 653 aquifers has been established. All these delimitations suffer from the restriction that they must incorporate complete municipalities in order to internalize costs and benefits on a municipal scale. This delimitation of territorial units for management causes a high degree of fragmentation and implies placing little attention to surface and groundwater interaction, given that these interactions can be better observed using a larger spatial unit.

The need for greater integration of the indicators to evaluate the progress toward sustainability of water resources is clear when analyzing how the notion of “a scarce resource with a cost that must be covered” jibes with the statistics. For example, Mexico’s National Water Commission (CNA) calculates that an excess of between five and six cubic kilometers of water per year are extracted from the country’s aquifers, an amount which cannot be renewed and contributes to the degradation of the water sources. It has also been estimated that 102 aquifers, including the country’s main ones from which 50 percent of the water used is extracted, suffer from some degree of over-exploitation. However, this scenario of “physical scarcity”

contradicts the figures for potable water coverage nationwide, according to which the southern states have more water available but suffer from greater scarcity, while the states with “over-exploited aquifers” enjoy higher than 90 percent coverage.

This discrepancy between natural availability and water coverage could reveal what many authors have already warned: that a “water crisis” has been created based on indicators that most times do not cover appropriate theoretical expectations.

Finally, many studies emphasize the limited organizational and human resources capabilities for dealing with the “water crisis”. I add my voice to those who point out the urgent need to educate and train engineers and administrators working in institutions related to water management about the social and environmental consequences of their decisions, “not only in water planning and management, but also of associated natural resources, human health and social well-being.”⁹

FINAL REMARKS

In Mexico, like in many other countries, erroneous conceptions prevail among decision makers and even among specialists that at the very least limit the advance of more profound research for the complete development of water resources in a more environmental-friendly way that would also contribute to the well-being of the population. At the same time, how the discrepancy between environmental and social analyses plays out in the tendency to environmental deterioration or improvement has not been explored very deeply. If it were, the necessary indicators could

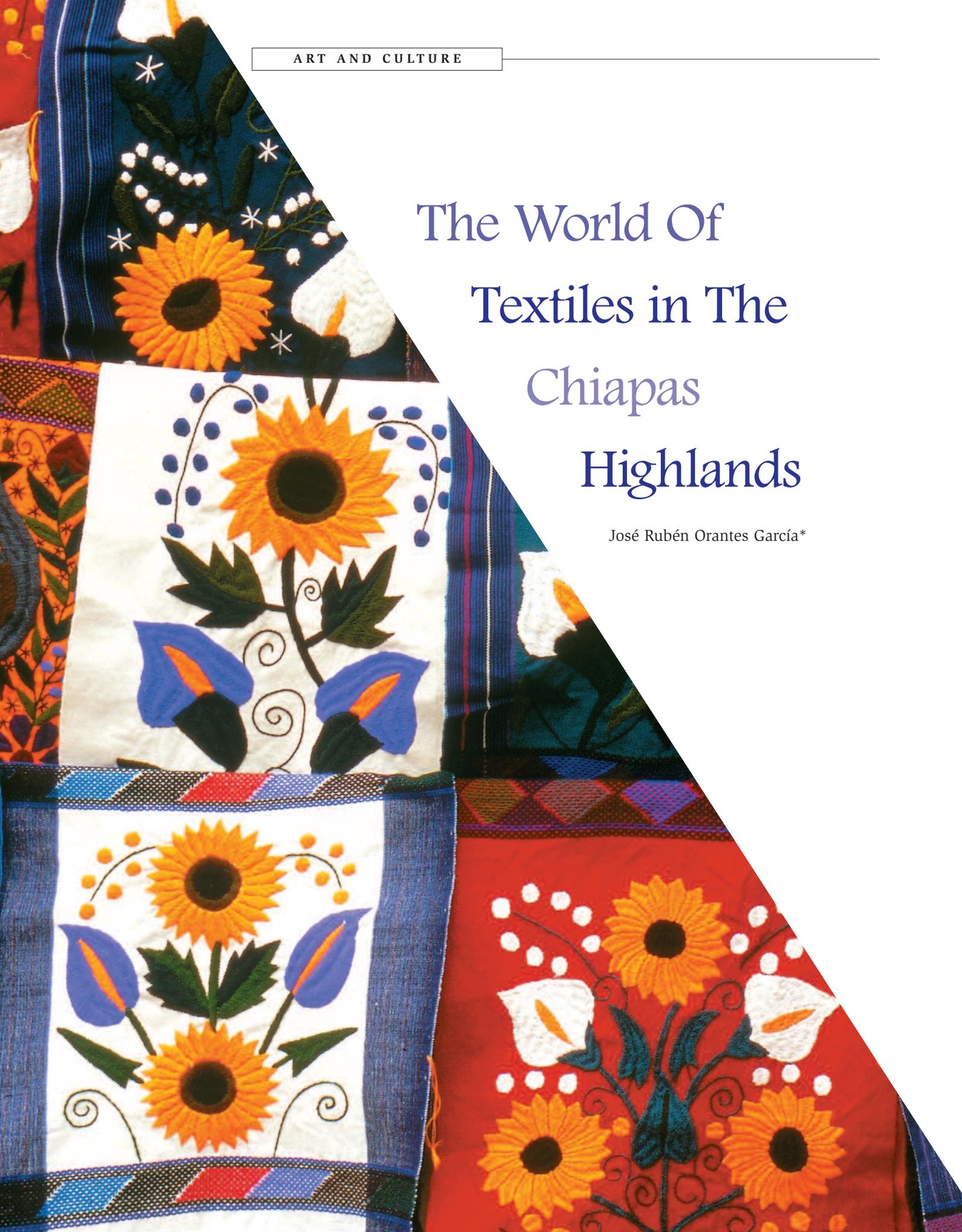
be developed to show more clearly how a specific policy or regulation comes close or not to goals of sustainable development. Given this panorama, we can anticipate that many of the negative environmental effects throughout the country may be related to the intensive development of groundwater but not necessarily to the over-exploitation of aquifers or any other indicator of deterioration currently used to create regulatory and control policies for the extraction of groundwater. ■■

NOTES

- ¹ In China, for example, the enforcement of a law to replace traditional irrigation with very efficient, water-saving high-tech irrigation caused the expansion of cultivated land, and with it the increase in vapotranspiration, thus accelerating the depletion of the aquifer. Eloise Kendy, “The False Promise of Sustainable Pumping Rates,” *Ground Water* 41, pp. 2-3.
- ² Due to the Earth Summit and other international conventions, political consensus were reached with regard to the meaning of “sustainable development,” a term that spread rapidly.
- ³ World Commission on Environment and Development, *Our Common Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987).
- ⁴ “Decreto por el que se reforman, adicionan y derogan diversas disposiciones de la Ley de Aguas Nacionales,” *Diario Oficial de la Federación* (Mexico City), April 29, 2004, pp. 27-69.
- ⁵ C. Sullivan, “The Potential for Calculating a Meaningful Water Poverty Index,” *Water International* vol. 26, no. 4, pp. 471-480.
- ⁶ A very complete study of the limits of the conceptual models for quantifying water sources can be found in J. Bredehoeft, “The Conceptualization Model Problem-Surprise,” *Hydrogeology Journal* 13, pp. 37-46.
- ⁷ Comisión Nacional del Agua, *Estadísticas Nacionales del Sector Agua* (Mexico City: Comisión Nacional del Agua, 2004).
- ⁸ J.J. Carrillo-Rivera, “Lack of a Conceptual System View of Groundwater Resources in Mexico,” Editorial, *Hydrogeology Journal* 1, pp. 519-520.
- ⁹ C. Tortajada, “Capacity Building for the Water Sector in Mexico. An Analysis of Recent Efforts,” *Water International* vol. 11, no. 4, pp. 9-26.

The World Of Textiles in The Chiapas Highlands

José Rubén Orantes García*





In the Chiapas Highlands, each town has its own textiles, distinguishing Tzotzil or Tzeltal Indians according to their marital status and the political or religious posts they hold. Clothing has been a symbol of social status that reflects the virtues that women and men have acquired in service to their communities. Each drawing, each color, each figure, each technique is selected not because they are beautiful or fashionable, but because the maker, seduced by the gods while asleep, feels the need to create a piece of clothing with the products of his/her land, which proudly expresses his/her world view.

FROM COSMOGONY TO
PRODUCTION FOR THE MARKET

Craft production has its origins in the transmission of knowledge down through many generations. This happens orally and is reproduced by imitation. Undoubtedly, the great teacher of all artisans is the family into which they are born, where they grow up, and where listening and repeating is the most solid basis for their abilities.

In the Chiapas Highlands, textiles have been a significant element in the cosmogony and social organization of Tzotzil towns. Even their original raw material, wool, was considered a gift from the gods to men to protect them from the cold; a divine mandate banned killing or eating the flesh of the sheep from which it came. And in the

* Researcher at the UNAM Institute for Anthropological Research Program of Multi-disciplinary Research on Mesoamerica and the Southeast (PROIMMSE). jrorantes@correo.unam.mx

Previous page: Photo: Elsie Montiel

same way, woolen clothing has served to identify the holders of certain posts within the community.

Making textiles has traditionally been a female activity done within the family, alternated with housework and agricultural labor. Technical weaving ability has allowed Tzotzil craftswomen to make complicated drawings with different colored thread and yarn which also play a very important part in their peoples' world view. The production of an object is insolubly linked to their ability and rhythm. Tzotzil women impose their own personal mark on textiles, from the preparation of the wool to the finished garment.

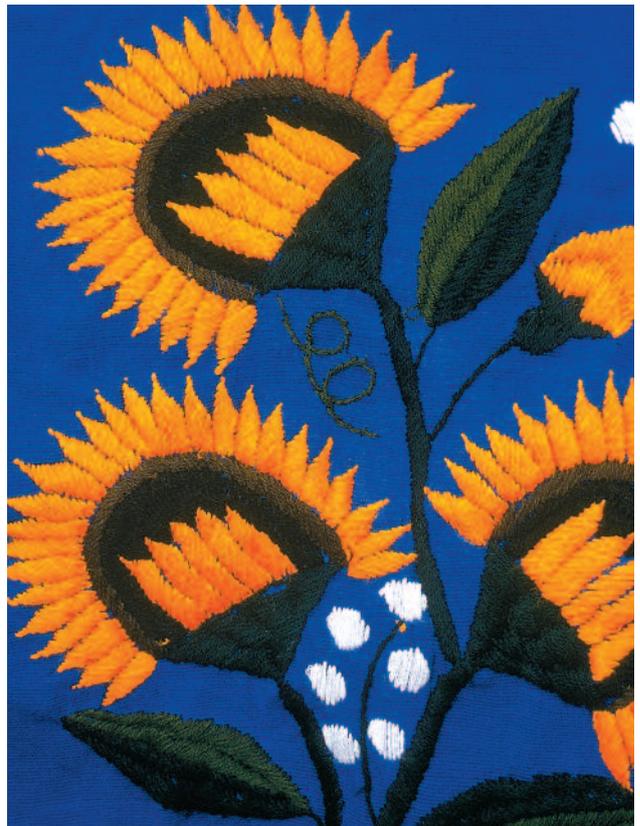
When the craft market grew in the 1970s, traditional textiles stopped being worn exclusively by Chiapas Highland Indians and became goods produced mainly for sale. At the same time that making clothing reproduced an identity and a cultural tradition, it became another way to satisfy economic needs.

In this process, craft production had to adapt to the demands of a market that gives the objects produced another type of value, assigning them a different use than that given by their producers. One example is the traditional waist loom, used by the Tzotzil indigenous women to create a piece of clothing, but used by purchasers as an ornament.

Craft production had to adapt to the demands
of a market that gives
the objects produced another type of value.



Elsie Montiel



Rubén Yáñez



This activity began, then, to depend on an external market made up mainly of Mexican and foreign tourists that pushed it forward and without which its aims were lost. This brought important changes in the trade passed on from generation to generation of craftswomen. Thus, in a single family, we can see the differences between a piece of cloth made by the oldest woman (with figures that refer to the cosmogony of her people) and one made by the daughter (which does not necessarily contain figures referring to the cosmogony and is more adapted to the market's changing demands).

Figures, techniques, forms and tools began to be constantly enriched and/or exchanged for others that made production easier and allowed for better marketing.

Nevertheless, the benefits of this activity have not been particularly clear or long-lasting. The majority of indigenous families in this region are extremely poor and lack the necessary resources to work commercially. For that reason, both individual and cooperative production (regardless of the many or few institutional support programs) almost always enters into commercialization circuits at a disadvantage and struggles to survive the innumerable shifts in the market.

THE LIFE AND ADVERSITIES OF HIGHLAND TEXTILE CRAFTSWOMAN

After breakfast, once the sun has dissipated the fog, women begin their work by tying and plaiting the waist loom to a post, tree or pilaster. If the day is rainy, they will have



Technical weaving ability allows Tzotzil women to make complicated drawings with different colored thread and yarn. Photos: Elsie Montiel

to stay indoors or on the little porch that some houses have. Bad weather, like rain or fog, hinders their work: not only does it determine where they will work, but it also slows down the already drawn-out process of creating a piece of cloth.

If the woman belongs to a cooperative, many times she will have to finish the piece of clothing in the shortest time possible, working many more hours a day than if she worked alone. Unorganized women work on the waist loom fewer hours a day because the sale of their goods is not guaranteed and they do not have to deliver the product at any specific time. They are the first to seek out supplementary activities to satisfy their basic needs.

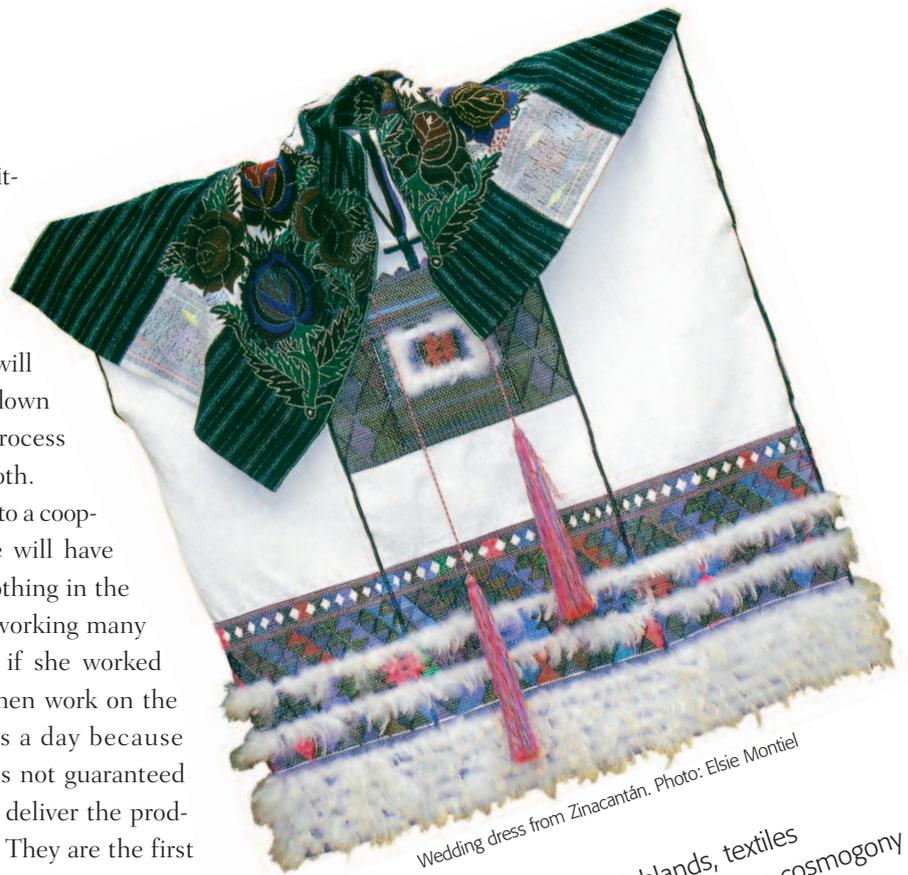
Today, Tzotzil artisans no longer use sheep's wool as their main raw material for making clothing. One reason for this is that working with wool is difficult, tiring and badly paid; so, both affiliated and independent women have decided to use other, more easily manageable materials, facilitating the sale of their products. The few artisans who use wool buy it—if they do not have their own flock—in the San Cristóbal de Las Casas markets, where it comes from places as varied as they are far away.

Recent research frequently mentions artisans who make woolen clothing, emphasizing the hard work it takes to turn it into yarn, dye it and weave a piece of cloth not only beautiful and durable but also a living reflection of the indigenous world view.

However, if we ask ourselves where these Tzotzil women are who produce clothing classified as “traditional”, the answer is not at all encouraging. In highland indigenous towns only a few craftswomen still work with wool, and although some members of the community like the traditional authorities wear woolen clothing, most of the population no longer makes nor wears it.

Wool has been replaced with industrially processed cotton and natural and synthetic thread and yarn obtained in the San Cristóbal de Las Casas markets, in specialty stores in the municipal seat, or through the cooperatives that supply their members on credit.

Despite the transformations and adaptations and the women's ancient dexterity in weaving and embroidery, the benefits of work-



Wedding dress from Zinacantán. Photo: Elsie Montiel

In the Chiapas Highlands, textiles have been a significant element in the cosmogony and social organization of Tzotzil towns.





Tzotzil women leave their own personal mark on textiles, from the preparation of the wool to the finished garment.

ing in textiles have been neither clear nor lasting. The majority of artisans are extremely poor and lack the resources to work commercially.

THE LABYRINTHS OF MARKETING

There are several ways to commercialize production in the local market. In the case of independent workers, one way is to wait until a buyer comes into town to purchase the textiles directly. Another is to take their products to San Cristóbal de Las Casas and sell them personally, whether in the atrium of the Santo Domingo Monastery or to the merchants in Real de Guadalupe Street.

In the case of artisans organized in cooperatives (the Chiapas House of Crafts, the Sna Jolovil Group or the Mayan Cultures Women Weavers Group), someone responsible for the organization visits the community and deals with the members, “purchasing” a fairly large amount and later reselling the items in each of the cooperatives’ shops in San Cristóbal.



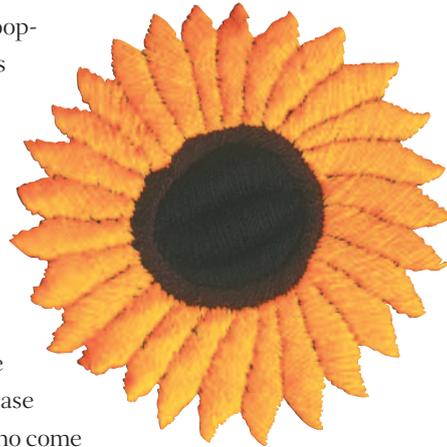
It is hard for a Tzotzil craftswoman who does not belong to a cooperative to sell her products outside her locality, basically for economic reasons. Most of the artisans do not have the means to enter extra-regional markets. The few attempts at selling in other markets without the backing of a cooperative have not made money for the weavers.

Only the Institute of Human Development through the Chiapas House of Crafts has managed to sell crafts from different municipalities throughout the state in other regional markets, and the nation-

al and international markets. The Sna Jolovil cooperative, which initially, with Fonart's support, was the only one that sold outside the local market, has now stagnated because it has not been able to open other markets for its products.

Given the lack of incentives, in places like San Cristóbal many artisans have stopped producing either because they cannot get credit or they have gotten no support from institutional sources, or simply because they can make more money selling crafts than making them. Many purchase crafts from their fellow artisans or from merchants who come from Guatemala with much cheaper products. In their free time, the craftswomen of Santo Domingo produce woven bracelets while they sell clay dolls and/or cloth representing figures from the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN).

Despite efforts to keep their products in circulation, Chiapas Highland weavers lack markets. And while the cooperatives seek immediate ways for Chiapas craft production to continue to play an important economic role, being a middleman and producing other items have become an alternative source of income. **MM**



Given the lack of incentives many artisans have stopped producing, and prefer selling textiles from Guatemala which are much cheaper.
Photo: Rubén Vázquez

CALL FOR PAPERS FOR A NEW JOURNAL

The National Autonomous University of Mexico's Center for Research on North America (CISAN) is preparing to publish the first issue of its new biannual journal based on academic excellence, *Norteamérica*, with the aim of contributing to the study and reflection about the political, economic, social and cultural situation of North America. To this end, we wish to invite the national and international academic community to contribute under the following



NORTEAMÉRICA
The CISAN's Academic Journal

GUIDELINES

- The journal's theme is interdisciplinary in the areas of social sciences and the humanities about the North American Region (Mexico, the United States and Canada) and its links to the rest of the world.
- All papers must be previously unpublished.
- *Norteamérica* is an peer-refereed magazine, and all articles will be submitted to a board of specialists for review.

SECTIONS

Norteamérica has three sections: "Ensayos" (Essays), "Análisis de Actualidad" (Current Analysis) and "Reflexiones y Miradas" (Reflections and Glimpses). Contributions will be received in Spanish or English and published in their original language, and for each section, the articles must have the following characteristics:

ESSAYS AND CURRENT ANALYSIS

- Only articles based on scholarly research will be considered. These two sections will not publish articles on current events or opinion pieces.
- The articles must include relevant, up-to-date source citations.
- Articles must be accompanied by 4 to 6 key words and a 100- to 150-word summary or abstract.
Length: 30 to 60 pages.

REFLECTIONS AND GLIMPSES

INTERVIEWS

- The interview will be with an outstanding figure from the academic, political, social and/or cultural world.
- Each interview will include between 5 and 10 analytical and comparative questions.
Length: 15 to 20 pages.

CRITICAL NOTES

- Academic reflections about a polemical, current issue.
Length: 10 to 15 pages.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTES

- Essays that review, compare and profoundly analyze from 2 to 5 recently published books on the same theme.
Length: 15 to 20 pages.

CHRONOLOGIES

- They will deal with the most important events in North America and the rest of the world and their reciprocal impact.
Length: a minimum of 15 pages.

FOR PUBLICATION

All manuscripts must comply with the following norms:

- A page is understood as a double-spaced (**not a space and a half**) text printed on one side of letter-sized (8.5 x 11 inch) paper in **12-point Times New Roman typeset**, with an average of 1,680 spaces.
- Manuscripts must be submitted in both printed and electronic form. The printed version must be on 8 x 10-sized paper, numbered from the first to the last sheet, without binding. An original and three copies are required. The electronic version must be in Microsoft Word.
- Manuscripts with corrections written by hand, words crossed out, indications on cards, etc., will not be accepted.
- Tables and graphs will also be turned in printed on letter-sized paper and in Microsoft Word and Excel, respectively, and will count toward the final total length.
- Source citation will be done using the author-date citations and references list style, also known as Harvard system. Example: (Diamond, 1995: 49-59).
- *Example of the reference list in the author-date style:*

Diamond, Larry, Seymour Menton and Juan J. Linz, comp.
1995 *Politics in Developing Countries: Comparing Experiences with Democracy*, Reinner, Boulder, Colorado.

Longer explanations of the guidelines and norms for presenting manuscripts can be consulted or requested at:
<http://www.cisan.unam.mx>
sgallard@servidor.unam.mx

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS FOR
THE SECOND ISSUE OF *NORTEAMÉRICA* IS OCTOBER 31, 2005.
PLEASE SEND AUTHOR'S RESUME WITH THE MANUSCRIPT.

Please send manuscripts to:
Revista *Norteamérica*
Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte
Torre II de Humanidades, piso 10
Ciudad Universitaria, México, D.F. CP 04510
e-mail: sgallard@servidor.unam.mx
Phone: 5623-0305, Ext. 42180
Fax: 5550-0379



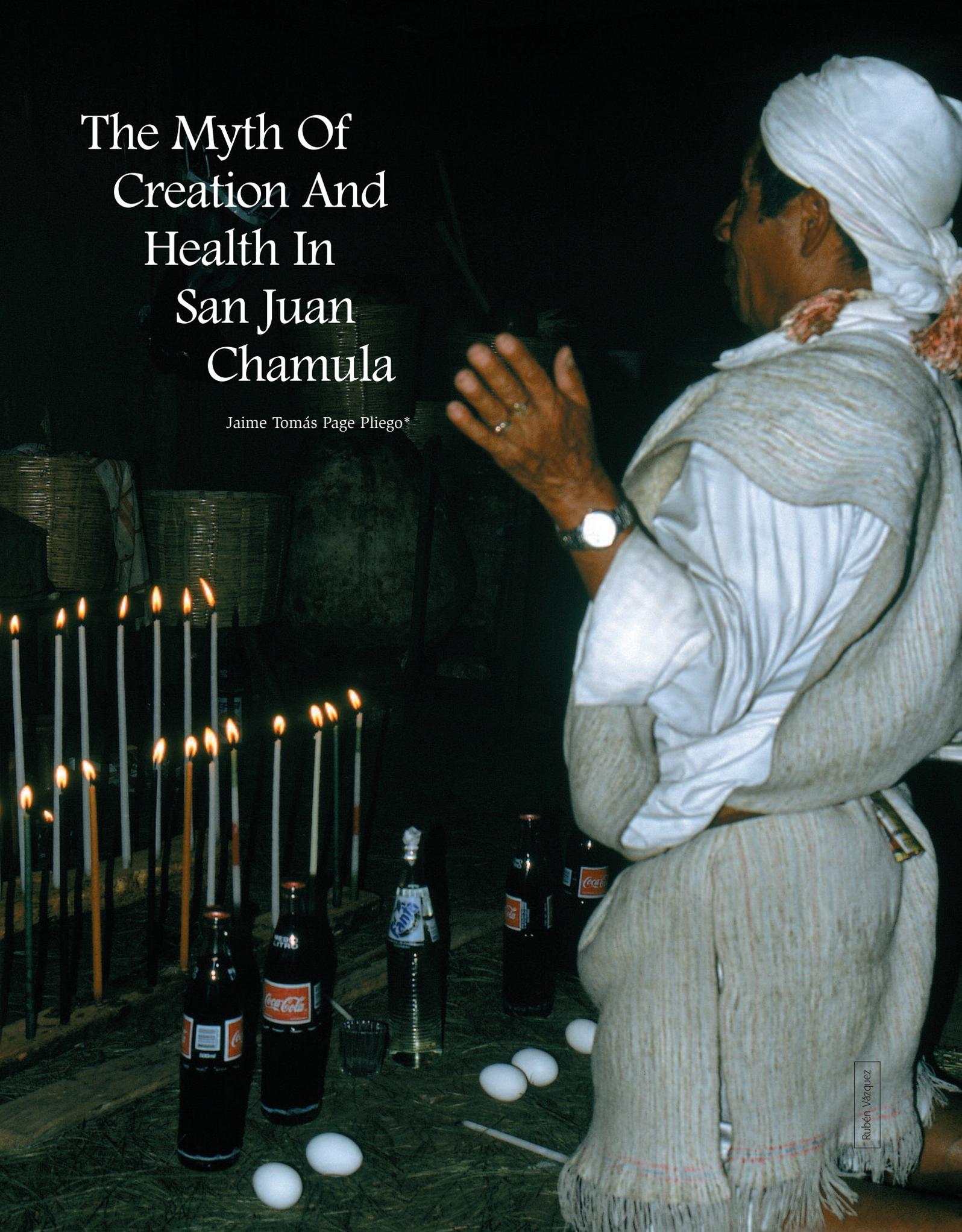
UNAM



CISAN

The Myth Of Creation And Health In San Juan Chamula

Jaime Tomás Page Pliego*



Rubén Vázquez



The visitor's impression of religious activity in the San Juan Chamula church is unforgettable. The luminous offerings made of candles, copal, flowers, soft drinks, traditional San Cristóbal de las Casas *coletto* bread, hens or black roosters and *pox* (liquor made from sugar cane) hit the viewer straight on. All this is softened by the rhythmic, monotonous oratorio singing of the *j'iloletic* ("those who can see") to try to help rescue the *ch'ulel* or some other animus from the bodies of the ill who have asked for their intermediation before the gods.

The ill, clearly distinguishable by their weakness and disarray, and their families surround the *j'iloletics*, who make the offerings and petitions to the saints and apostles, grossly obese from many layers of clothing and wearing one or three mirrors at the height of their hearts as a symbol of their supernatural luminosity. This ambiance evokes a pre-Hispanic past strongly imbued by Catholic Christian elements, which has been called Indocolonial.

However, most of the healing rituals are carried out in patients' homes or by natural springs or in caves. They are done in churches only when the extreme gravity of the patient's condition demands it.

Undoubtedly, this scene prompts innumerable questions that cannot be resolved in the limited space of this article. But, even so, I will attempt to sketch the reasons that give meaning to the existence not only of the Chamulas, but also of the Tzotzil Indians in other municipalities.

* Researcher at the Program of Multidisciplinary Research about Mesoamerica and the Southeast (PROIMMSE) at the UNAM Institute for Anthropological Research (IIA).

First, we have to look at this group's origins. It is said that the Tzotzil-Tzeltals come from Central Guatemala, from the tribe of the house of the Zotzils, which, to avoid being subjected by the Cakchiquel (a people who lived in Central Guatemala), stole fire from them, which they used to subdue their neighbors.¹ With fire in their power, they emigrated north and occupied part of the Comitán plains, the eastern valleys of the Grijalva and what today are the Highlands, all in Chiapas.²

The Chamulas are descendants from this group of Tzotzils. Their municipality, San Juan Chamula, is in the central mountains of Chiapas, and their world view jibes with their Central American origins, given that it is based on those peoples' myth of creation. This myth says that the ultimate reason the deities (*Riox*)³ had to lend themselves to the creation of different versions of humanity was to leave on Earth beings whose foremost, if not sole, task was to sustain celestial deities. The myth holds that, after three attempts and failures, "the Creator, the Forger and the Progenitors" exclaimed in a single voice,

Let us make him who will sustain and feed us! How will we manage to be invoked, to be remembered upon the earth? We have already tested our first creatures with our first labors; but we could not consummate being praised and venerated by them. Let us try now to make obedient, respectful beings that will sustain and feed us. Thus they spake.⁴



The Old Church of San Juan Chamula next to the cemetery. Photo: Rubén Vázquez

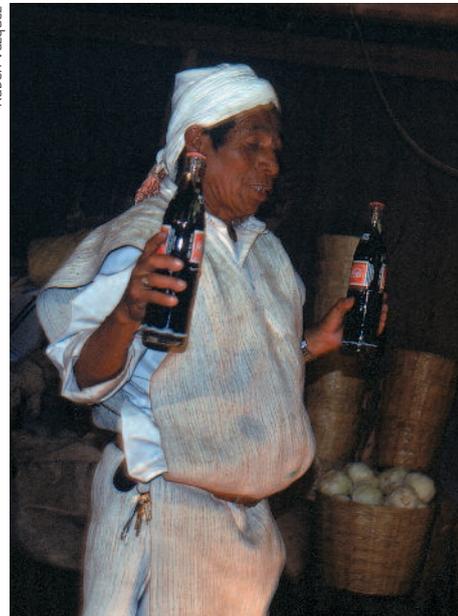


We call this divine purpose the “prime mandate”.⁵ Not fulfilling this mandate is enough reason for the deities to coerce and, in extreme cases, exterminate different humanities they created. The *Popol Vuh* explains in the myths of origin that several humanities were created and destroyed.⁶ The flesh of the first men was made of mud, but it disintegrated; the second attempt was made with wood,⁷ but they had no soul and “they did not remember their Creator, their Former.” Other woods, “*tzité* and *espadaña*”, were used for the third group of men, but they neither spoke nor thought.⁸ Lastly, the fourth humanity, the current one, was created with yellow and white corn cobs.⁹ This humanity is still imperfect because of its lack of constancy and proclivity to sin, but it has the ability to fulfill the prime mandate, above all because its defects can be to a certain extent neutralized through suffering.

Elsie Montiel

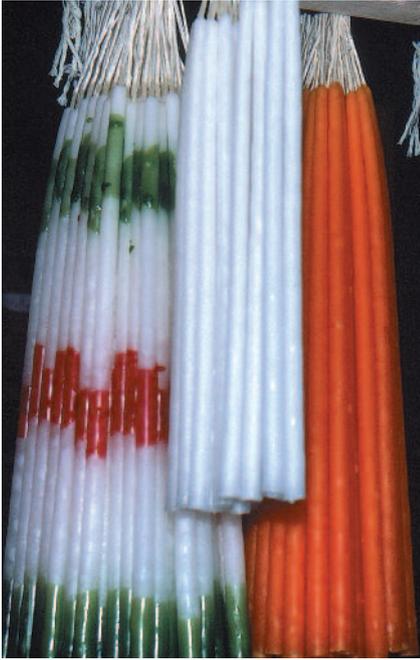


Rubén Vázquez



Rubén Vázquez





Photos: Rubén Vázquez

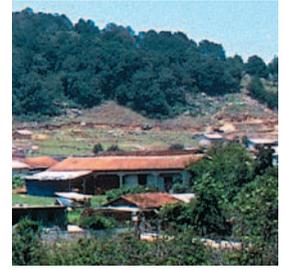
Given that the ultimate aim of humanity is to provide the Gods with food, that is, fulfill the “prime mandate”, and to do that required appropriate conditions, *Riox* set up the Earth and the Cosmos to that end by creating a vertical structure of the world that would accommodate the hierarchies among the deities and between the gods and humanity. In this cosmography, Yan Vinajel (Heaven) is placed at the top, here God the Father, “Jesuschrist-Sun”, the “Virgin of Saint Mary-Moon” and, recently, Our Lady of Guadalupe reside. Between Heaven and Earth 13 strata were placed, each occupied by different supernatural elements. Among them are Jerusalem, where the souls of the dead reside until the day of the Last Judgment and one which for the moment is uninhabited but will later supposedly become Hell. Other strata contain what is beautiful, dangerous and prohibited, all present in the Tzotzil imaginary. According to divine plan, these strata constitute different tricks for making the *ch’ulel* (shadow or soul) fall from those people who have not fulfilled the prime mandate.¹⁰ At the Earth’s surface there are two more strata, the *Osil Balamil* (the surface of the Earth), which is inhabited by humans and secondary deities, and *Olol* (under the Earth’s surface), where a humanity of small beings lives that preceded humanity on the surface of the Earth.¹¹

Those secondary deities that share the Earth’s surface with humanity are separated into two groups. In the first are the apostles and saints from the Catholic pantheon, who reside in churches and family altars. The second group is made up of the deities who inhabit the natural surroundings; they belong to the pre-Hispanic pantheon, although today they are represented as angels. They are in charge of providing or depriving humanity of sustenance, health and illness.





Elsie Montiel



The last fundamental element in structuring the world for fulfilling the “prime mandate” is related to humanity. The Tzotzil conceives himself not only as a body (*Bec'talil*), but also as being composed of by several animuses among them: *C'al*, a synonym of life energy, can be translated from Tzotzil as “heat”; *Ch'ulel* might correspond to the shadow described by the Nahuas; *Vayijelil*, or animal companion, several of which might coexist with one body; and *Quibal* or *Nahual*, present only in the case of individuals with extreme powers. Most of the animuses that make up the Tzotzil person move at night through a space called *Yan Vinajel-Yan Balamil* (Another Heaven-Another Earth).

According to how many of these elements are present, we can build the following typology of the Tzotzil person:

- 1) A weak and sickly person is made up of two or three weak, sickly bodies; three weak *ch'ulel*, which are difficult to keep confined to the body and frequently bring on illness; and three small *vayijelil*.
- 2) A normal person has two or three healthy, more or less strong bodies, capable of doing agricultural and domestic labor; from three to six normal *ch'ulel*, with a tendency to regularly leave the body at night to go wandering about; plus between three and six *vayijelil*, one of which may be strong, such as a medium-sized feline (a bobcat or ocelot). Most Tzotzils fall within this category.

- 3) A complete Tzotzil person is made up of two or three strong, healthy bodies; between nine and 13 strong *ch'ulel* and between nine and 13 strong *vayijelil*, which may be large predators, mammals or birds.
- 4) A person with extraordinary powers has more than 13 strong *ch'ulel* and the same number of *vayijelil*, although he/she may have 36 or up to 75 of each. These individuals invariably have the gift of transmutation, or *quibal*, and therefore, depending on where they are, they will be powerful *totilme'iletic* or *j'iloletic*, that is, of great aid and protection for the community or a terrifying danger (if they are on the side of evil) because they will be eaters of *ch'ulel* through their *quibaltic*.¹²



All this allows us to return to the church and try to elucidate the ceremony and the function of the objects on the altar before which the *j'iloletics* sing.

- These objects are the patient's offerings to feed *Riox*, placed before an intermediary apostle who is begged that he "raise them up."
- They understand that *Riox* feeds on heat (they place candles there), smells (they light the copal and place soft drinks, bread and flowers there) and the words in song sung by the *j'ilol*.
- In his song, the *j'ilol* asks the divinity to forgive the patient his/her faults and to restore its protection; he promises in the name of Hell that the patient will change his/her ways and fulfill the "prime mandate".
- He also begs for support for the liberation and return to the body of any animus that may have been lost or trapped and/or sold by any of the secondary deities of the natural surroundings. This animus will be exchanged for the blood of a hen destined for sacrifice.



Rubén Vázquez





- In this process, from time to time, the officiator sprays the alcoholic beverage *pox* on the altar “to give it to the Devil, to confuse him.”
- As the supplication advances, the patient’s pulse is taken to see if he/she is improving and to discover what other actions or charms are required, because deities speak to the *j’ilol* through the blood.

Thus, as the *j’ilol* helps the patient to heal, he also redirects the Tzotzils back onto the path of fulfilling the prime mandate, a function more like that of a priest than a shaman. **MM**

NOTES

¹ Adrián Recinos, trans., *Popol Vuh: Antiguas historias del Quiché* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1952 and 1961), p. 115.

² Antonio García de León, *Resistencia y Utopía* (Mexico City: Ediciones Era, 1985), p. 28.

³ The term *Riox* is not used in the first person, like God, but as the divinity in its totality, as Gossen said, “Although *Riox* is loaned from the Spanish word *Dios* (God), the meaning of the Tzotzil term is much more general than the Spanish one. *Riox* alludes to an entire composite of religious phenomena that include God (synonymous with Htotik, the Sun); individual saints and their images; religious acts...; religious gestures...; and perhaps others.” Gary H. Gossen, *Los chamulas*

en el mundo del Sol. Tiempo y espacio en una tradición oral Maya (Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes-Instituto Nacional Indigenista, 1980), pp. 207-209.

⁴ Adrián Recinos, op. cit., p. 27.

⁵ Jaime Tomás Page Pliego, *El mandato divino. Etnomedicina entre los tsotsiles de Chamula y Chenalhó, Chiapas*, Scientific Collection no. 10 (Mexico City: Programa de Investigaciones Multidisciplinarias sobre Mesoamérica y el Sureste-Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas-UNAM, at press), p. 102.

⁶ Recinos, op. cit., pp. 27-28.

⁷ Ibid., p. 29-30.

⁸ Ibid., p. 103.

⁹ Ibid., p. 104.

¹⁰ Page, op. cit., p. 122.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 122.

¹² Shamanism places prime importance on the close relationship established between the shaman and certain animals, whether by communicating with them or transforming himself into them. According to Eliade, the link with the animals is a demonstration of his access to the supernatural, the ability to abandon his human condition to transform puts him in control of the material and the subtle, as well as of life and death.

E D U C A T I O N

B E Y O N D B O R D E R S



Spanish Courses

- Over 60 years of experience
- Highly trained faculty
- Top quality instruction in Spanish and ESL
- Unique Certificate in Mexican Studies
- Special Mexican art, history and literature courses
- Year-round lectures, exhibits, workshops & distance learning programs
- Fully equipped language and computer labs
- International videoconferencing



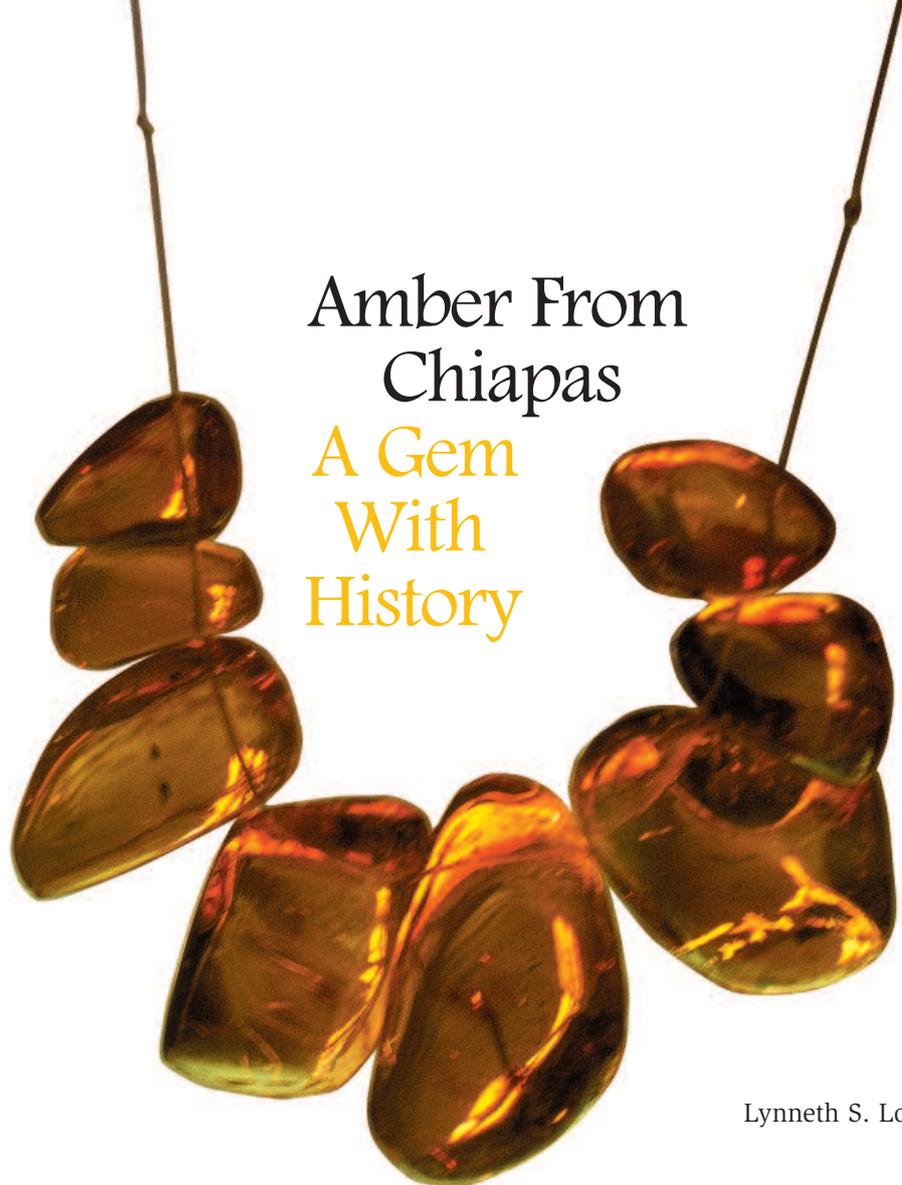
Registration Summer, 2005
Session I: May 23-24 • Session II: July 8

Registration Fall, 2005
Session I: August 25-26 • Session II: October 20-21

500 Hemisfair Park, P.O. Box 830426 • San Antonio, Texas
78283-0426 • 210.222.8626
oml@servidor.unam.mx • www.usa.unam.edu



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTONOMA DE MEXICO / SAN ANTONIO CAMPUS



Amber From Chiapas

A Gem With History

Lynneth S. Lowe*

Amber is a very transparent, brilliant fossil resin found in Mesoamerica only in the northern and central highlands of Chiapas. From pre-Hispanic times, amber has been highly valued for making ornaments, and archaeological evidence and historical sources show that trade spread it to far-flung regions like the Central Highlands, Oaxaca, the Gulf coast, the Zoque region of Western Chiapas and the Mayan area.

CHIAPAS'S AMBER

Although there are amber deposits in several parts of the world, Chiapas amber is special. In its natural state it is found in yellow-, red- or gold-colored nodes inside sandy, calcareous marine strata and layers of lignite in geological formations dating from the end of the Oligocene and the beginning of the Miocene epochs, from between 22.5 to 26 million years ago. Researchers have determined that its paleo-botanical origin was the resin of a legume called the *Hymenaea*, an ancestor of the tree known locally as the *guapiñol*.

* Archaeologist and researcher at the Center for Mayan Studies and professor at the UNAM School of Philosophy and Letters.

AMBER IN PRE-HISPANIC TIMES

Undoubtedly, the most complete description of pre-Hispanic amber handed down to us is the one chronicled by Friar Bernardino de Sahagún in the mid-sixteenth century, both in his bilingual *Códice Florentino* (Florentine Codex) and in *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España* (General History of the Things of New Spain). He writes,

The amber of this land is called *apozonalli*. It is called this because the amber of this land or the stones thus called are similar to the little water bubbles when the Sun creates them as it comes out, which look light yellow, like gold. These stones are to be found in mines in the mountains.

There are three manners of these stones: one of them is called yellow amber. These seem to have a flash of fire inside them. They are very beautiful. The second is called *quetzalapozonalli*. They are thus named because they are yellow with a mix of light green. The third is called *iztacapozonalli*, thus called because they are whitish yellow. They are not transparent nor are they very precious.¹

One of the text's illustrations includes a circular stone to which a stream of water has been added to the top, characteristic of the Nahuatl iconography, with small spiral shells and *chalchihuites* on the ends of the stream. Similar representations appear both in the *Registry of Tributes* and in the second part of the *Mendocino Codex*, on the plate that corresponds to Soconusco; this was the only province that used amber in bulk as tribute to the Mexica Empire, sending two large pieces "of clear amber the size of a brick" every year and two



Piece from the Amber Museum. Photo: Rubén Vázquez



▲ Amber necklace and ear spools found in Monte Albán's Tomb 7 in Oaxaca (according to Alfonso Caso, *El tesoro de Monte Albán*). Photo: courtesy of Lynne Lowe



▲ Mexica traders went all the way to the Chiapas highlands to obtain feathers, skins and precious gems, among them amber (*Florentine Codex*).
Photo: courtesy of Lynne Lowe

Amber lip plug with its gold setting shown in the *Mendocino Codex*. These ornaments could only be worn by brave warriors and chief traders.
Photo: courtesy of Lynne Lowe ▶



long *bezote* lip plugs set in gold. Cotaxtla and Tuxtepec were other provinces that sent these ornaments, which they may have procured through trade.

According to archaeological evidence, the oldest piece of amber comes from the Olmec site of La Venta, dating around 700 B.C. However, during the Postclassic period (from A.D. 900 to 1521) amber was more widely used in Mesoamerica, from Central Mexico to the Yucatán peninsula and the Guatemala highlands.

The pre-Hispanic amber ornaments include pendants, beads, ear plugs, nose plugs and lip plugs. The pendants have a perforation on one end and often follow the natural form of the pebble. Some zoomorphic pendants have also been found by archaeologists, representing ducks' heads, such as in the collar from Monte Albán's Tomb 7.

The beads are more varied, and may be round, tubular or irregular. Different examples have been found in Chiapa de Corzo, Toniná, Chichén Itzá and Las Margaritas. Usually they are made into bracelets or necklaces, and during the colonial period, they were restricted to being fashioned into rosaries.

Amber cylinders found in pairs in funeral offerings in Chiapa de Corzo were part of ear plugs made of amber flanked by jade or shell ornaments. Four pairs of amber ear spools were found in Monte Albán's Tomb 7, and are an example of the ability and delicacy of these peoples' work in amber.

However, the most frequent item from the Postclassic Period were small disks that have been found usually in funeral offerings from the Chinantla in northeastern Oaxaca and from the southern part of the Tehuantepec Isthmus all the way to Chichén Itzá in the Yucatán Peninsula. In Chiapas, they have been found in different areas, including Simojovel to the north and in the eastern highlands, Tenam Puente and Las Margaritas. Thanks to ethno-historical information, we know that these disks were used as nose plugs placed in an orifice created in the septum. This custom was reported among the Chiapanecs, the Tzeltals and the Lacandons, as well as among the Mayans from Yucatán.

For example, Friar Diego de Landa, in his *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán* (Account of the Things of Yucatán) said that the women of the region “pierced their noses through the cartilage that divides the windows in half to place a piece of amber in the hole in order to dress up.”² Several of the sixteenth-century *Relaciones Geográficas* (Geographic Registries) also stated that the Yucatecans, “had their noses opened and in the orifices put amber stones, and these were very few.”³

The Mexicas obtained amber in tribute from provinces they had subjected militarily and through the exchange of gifts among the elites of different peoples and long-distance trade. Mexica traders went to the highlands of Chiapas in order to exchange valuable goods, obtaining feathers, skins and precious stones, especially amber. Very often, however, they had to disguise themselves in order to not be recognized when they entered the area. Barter was carried out with fine cloth, obsidian blades, cochineal and copper needles and rattles, among other items brought from Central Mexico.

Amber *bezotes*, ornaments hung on the lower lip, are frequently mentioned in the Central Mexican sources and are illustrated in the tribute codices. From the descriptions, we know that they were small cylindrical or curved pieces that were inserted into gold mounts and their use was the privilege of great warriors and head traders, making them a symbol of bravery and military prowess.

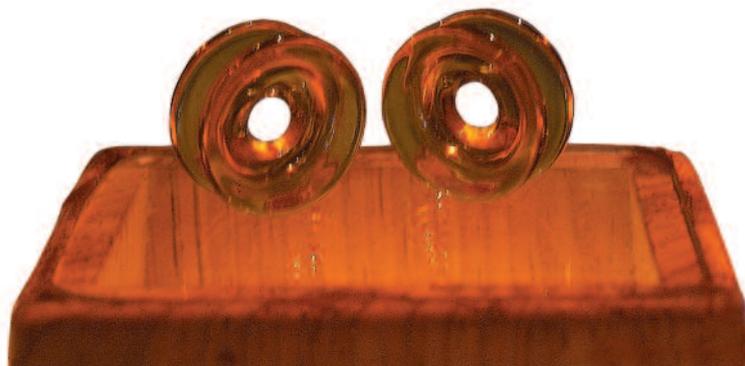
It is important to point out that, despite their wide distribution in the pre-Hispanic period, the problems of preserving and identifying archaeological amber pieces make their study more complex. Usually, the surface of the objects is altered by rust, changes in color, cracking and even, in extreme cases, being pulverized, which makes their correct identification difficult. However, it is clear that amber continued to be an important luxury product for a very long time, probably not only because of its external qualities, but above all because of a series of beliefs, concepts and associated symbols. Undoubtedly the detailed study of this kind of archaeological materials will contribute to greatly enriching our knowledge of Chiapas’s pre-Hispanic past. ■■

NOTES

¹ Fray Bernardino de Sahagún, *Historia general de las cosas de Nueva España*, J. García Quintana and A. López Austin, eds. (Mexico City: CNCA-Alianza Editorial Mexicana, 1989), p. 790.

² Fray Diego de Landa, *Relación de las cosas de Yucatán*, C. León, ed. (Mexico City: Conaculta, 1994), p. 132.

³ *Relaciones histórico-geográficas de la gobernación de Yucatán (Mérida, Valladolid, Tabasco)* (Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Mayas-Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas-UNAM, 1983), p. 124.



The Amber Museum. Photo: Rubén Vázquez

CHIAPAS AMBER TODAY

A FEW FACTS

- The municipalities of Simojovel de Allende, Huituipan and Totolapa in Chiapas are Mexico's main producers of amber today, accounting for 90 percent of production nationwide. Internationally, the pieces from Simojovel, together with those from the Dominican Republic and Santo Domingo, have the finest color.
- Extraction falls mainly to local indigenous; Zoques, Tzeltals and Tzotzils that live in the area. They work in open-pit mines or underground, but in both cases technology and tools are inappropriate, making it necessary to invest a great deal of work and effort to extract small quantities of the resin. About 292 kilograms of amber are mined in Simojovel every month.
- Between January and May, the indigenous spend all their entire work day extracting amber; after that, production drops because of the rain and planting and harvesting seasons, which last the rest of the year.
- Family members manually select, clean and polish the amber. It is then carved by artisans and commercialized in Chiapas's important cities, mainly in the form of jewelry.



PROTECTION AND CURES

- Amber is used as an amulet to protect children from the evil eye: babies wear amber bracelets from birth. It is also said that a piece of amber, preferably a gift, protects anyone who wears it. When striae appear inside the piece, making it look as though it were shattered internally, it means that it has protected the wearer from some danger and should be replaced with another unblemished piece.
- Amber is also said to have curative powers. Indigenous groups used to mix it with honey, oil and alcohol to massage aching muscles or make salves for many different illnesses.
- Recipes have been handed down to us that include amber dust among their ingredients to cure kidney and gall bladder ailments, coughs, asthma and rheumatism.

Photos in this page: courtesy of Lynneeth Lowe

The dust can only be obtained by polishing the amber, making it difficult to get, which is why local wisdom recommends that the patient wear an amber necklace for a cough or an amber belt for kidney trouble and not take them off even to sleep.

HOW TO RECOGNIZE REAL AMBER

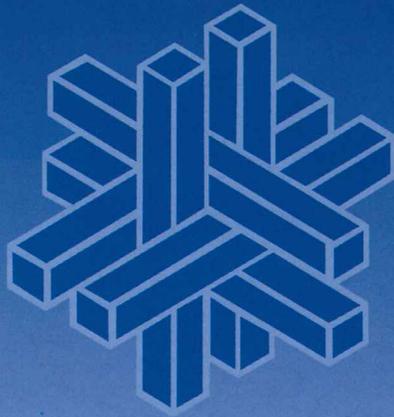
- It is important to be able to tell real amber from plastic and glass imitations. Amber turns blue when put under a black light. It also produces static electricity when rubbed, making it possible to lift small pieces of paper. Burning it to see if it is amber or plastic (the latter burns more quickly) is not recommended because real amber is also damaged by the flame.
- You should avoid purchasing amber containing insects said to have been trapped there millions of years ago. There are very few authentic pieces of this kind, and they obviously would cost a fortune.

Information obtained at the Chiapas Amber Museum, located in the former La Merced Monastery. The exposition includes a brief explanation about what amber is; its different types and colors; how it has been used since pre-Hispanic times; and how it is extracted. Pieces from different historic periods are on display showing the creativity of artisans and carvers who have worked in amber.



Elsie Montiel

MUSEO DEL ÁMBAR DE CHIAPAS (CHIAPAS AMBER MUSEUM)
ANTIGUO CONVENTO DE LA MERCED
CALLE DIEGO DE MAZARIEGOS S/N
PLAZUELA DE LA MERCED
SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS, C.P. 29200
PHONES: 01 (967) 678-9716 AND 678-9769



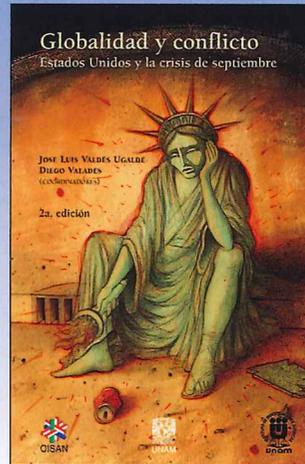
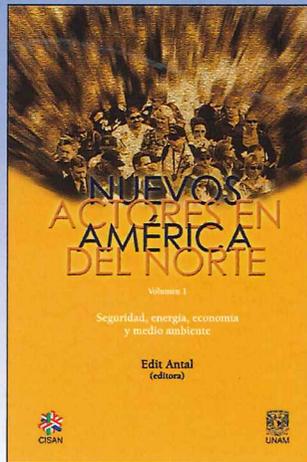
CISAN

p u b l i c a t i o n s

Nuevos actores en América del Norte

Edit Antal, ed.

New regional actors (networks, social movements, companies and institutions) have emerged in recent years in North America that academic analyses must take into account. This book is an indispensable contribution to a multidisciplinary focus on their activities and the process of their interaction.



***Globalidad y conflicto
Estados Unidos y la crisis de septiembre
Second edition***

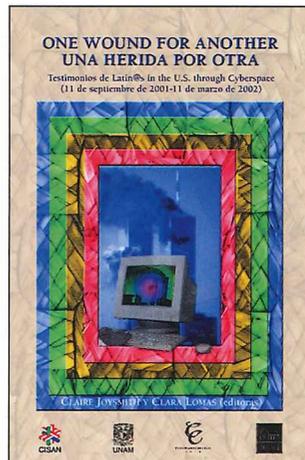
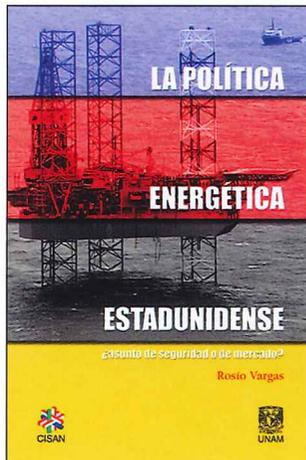
José Luis Valdés-Ugalde and Diego Valadés, coordinators

The wound opened up by 9/11 has not yet closed and is still having an impact worldwide. Specialists from the fields of political science, philosophy, sociology, economics and internationalism contribute in this book to the debate about the whys, the wherefores and the scope of that impact, asking questions and seeking answers about the short and long-term effects for the U.S. and the world.

La política energética estadounidense: ¿asunto de seguridad o de mercado?

Rosío Vargas

This work contributes to the understanding of the origins, causes and implications of declining oil production in the United States. Events such as the 1970s oil crisis and the current invasion of Iraq demonstrate the role that energy resources can have in changing history. The book combines history, the current situation, an analysis of the international oil market and domestic energy policy in the United States.



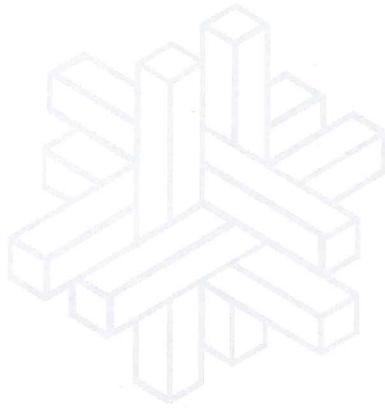
One Wound for Another. Una herida por otra. Testimonios de latin@s in the U.S. through Cyberspace (11 de septiembre de 2001-11 de marzo de 2002)

Claire Joysmith and Clara Lomas, eds.

September 11 revealed a multi-ethnic, middle- and working class country among the victims. This book gives voice to that other country, concerned that the response to the terrorist attacks give rise to a different, more representative, plural and just country. 9/11 also means that the U.S. people have become a testimonial people that has to deal with catastrophe, unjustified massacre, irremediable loss, displacement, incomplete mourning and the anger marked by the emergency out of which these testimonies are born.

For further information contact

Centro de Investigaciones sobre América del Norte, CISAN,
Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Torre de Humanidades II, piso 9, Ciudad Universitaria, 04510,
México, D.F. Tel. 5623-0015; fax: 5623-0014; e-mail: cisan@servidor.unam.mx



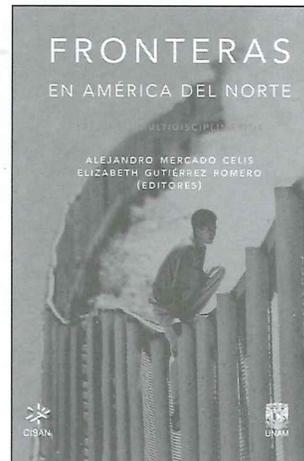
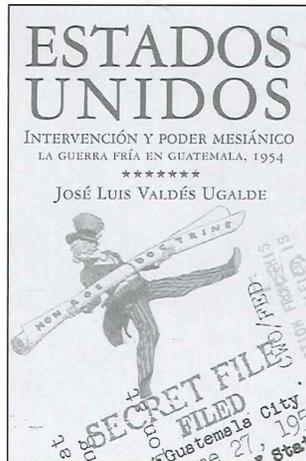
CISAN

p u b l i c a t i o n s

Estados Unidos: Intervención y poder mesiánico. La Guerra Fría en Guatemala

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

The outstanding feature of this book's analysis of the 1954 intervention in Guatemala is that it is sensitive to the need to present a comprehensive image of Washington's actions, taking into account both internal and external factors, local and international dynamics, as well as power relations and the issues contained in its discourse.



Fronteras en América del Norte. Estudios multidisciplinares

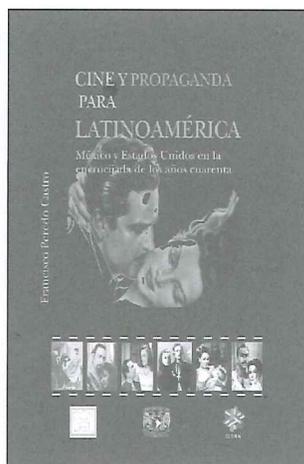
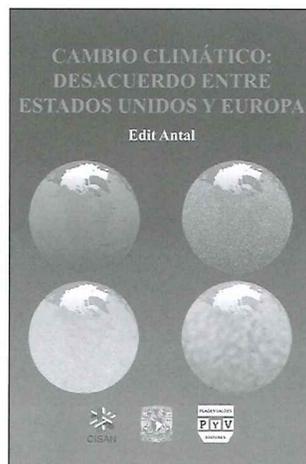
Alejandro Mercado and Elizabeth Gutiérrez, eds.

This book compares the Mexican and Canadian borders with the United States, singling out the regional as opposed to the national, and debates theoretical and empirical questions from a rich multidisciplinary perspective.

Cambio climático: desacuerdo entre Estados Unidos y Europa

Edit Antal

This book uses a constructivist focus to explain the differences between the United States and the European Union with regard to climatic change. The United States takes no preventive measures until the damage has been proven and can be measured and refuses to revise its way of life, production and consumption. Europe, on the other hand, is more cautious and is making ready to take measures even at the expense of economic losses.



Cine y propaganda para Latinoamérica. México y Estados Unidos en la encrucijada de los años cuarenta

Francisco Peredo Castro

When in the late 1930s, fascist propaganda films threatened to flood Latin America, the allies reacted rapidly, from Mexico to the north and Argentina to the south. In a film production project coordinated by the United States and Mexico at a time of diplomatic tension and international intrigue, Mexico emerged as the region's firmest ally. For that reason, it would later receive fundamental support to consolidate its movie industry and achieve its cinematic "Golden Age."

Forthcoming

*La controversia sobre el aborto en Estados Unidos
El Tratado de Libre Comercio de América del Norte a los diez años
El Tratado McLane-Ocampo. La comunicación interoceánica*

Vol. 36, núm. 141, abril-junio 2005

ÍNDICE

EDITORIAL

ARTÍCULOS

Del MERCOSUR al ALCA: críticas al modelo liberal de nuevo regionalismo del BID
ALEXIS SALUDJIAN

Cambio histórico mundial, capitalismo informático y economía del conocimiento
MIGUEL ÁNGEL RIVERA RÍOS

Nuevo comportamiento de los bancos y su efecto en países con mercados financieros débiles: el caso de México
NOEMÍ LEVY ORLIK

Exchange rates, market efficiency and purchasing power parity: Long-run tests for the Latin American currencies
EDGAR ORTIZ, ALEJANDRA CABELLO, RAÚL DE JESÚS Y ROBERT JOHNSON

Desigualdad y polarización en la distribución del ingreso salarial en México
MARIO M. CARRILLO-HUERTA Y HAYDEE V. VÁZQUEZ MATEOS

Relación entre el crecimiento económico y las economías externas de aglomeración en México
ROBERTO I. ESCALANTE SEMERENA E IGOR LUGO OLMOS

La maquila (fragmentación de los procesos productivos) y su impacto sobre las remuneraciones a los factores

ALICIA PUYANA MUTIS Y JOSÉ ANTONIO ROMERO TELLAECHE

Población y producción de alimentos. Tendencias recientes
MAURICIO SCHOIJET GLEMBOTZKY

COMENTARIOS Y DEBATES

La coordinación fiscal en México. Logros y desafíos
MARCELA ASTUDILLO MOYA

REVISTA DE REVISTAS

RESEÑAS

El ahorro popular en México: acumulando activos para superar la pobreza, de Pilar Campos Bolaños
ERNESTO SEPÚLVEDA VILLAREAL

ACTIVIDADES EN EL IIEC

NORMAS PARA LA RECEPCIÓN DE ORIGINALES

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING ORIGINALS

UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO

Rector:

Juan Ramón de la Fuente

Coordinadora de Humanidades:

Mari Carmen Serra Puche

Director del IIEC:

Jorge Basave Kunhardt

Secretaria Académica del IIEC:

Rosario Pérez Espejo

Directora de la Revista:

Esther Iglesias Lesaga



Comité Editorial

José Luis Calva Téllez
(IIEC-UNAM-México)

Hubert Escaith
(CEPAL-Chile)

Víctor Gálvez Borrell
(FLACSO-Guatemala)

Celso Garrido Noguera
(UAM-A-México)

Aurora Cristina Martínez Morales
(IIEC-UNAM-México)

Miguel Ángel Rivera Ríos
(FEC-UNAM-México)

Gonzalo Rodríguez Gigena
(ALADI-Uruguay)

Emilio Romero Polanco
(IIEC-UNAM-México)

Héctor Salas Harms
(FCA-UNAM-México)

Horacio Sobarzo Fimbres
(COLMEX-México)

A la venta en librerías de la UNAM. Suscripciones y ventas: Depto. de Ventas del IIEC: Torre II de Humanidades, 1er. piso, Ciudad Universitaria, 04510, México, D.F., MÉXICO o al A.P. 20-721, 01000, México, D.F., MÉXICO. Tel.: (52-55) 5623-0080, Fax: (52-55) 5623-0124, 5623-0097. Correos electrónicos: ventiiec@servidor.unam.mx.

revprode@servidor.unam.mx
Colaboraciones: Departamento de la Revista: Torre II de Humanidades, 5o. piso, Cubículo 515, Tels.: (52-55) 5623-0105, 5623-0074, Tel./fax: (52-55) 5623-0097, con Atención de la Directora, Doctora Esther Iglesias Lesaga. Correo electrónico:

revprode@servidor.unam.mx

Consultar la página:

[Http://www.iiec.unam.mx/problemas_del_desarrollo.htm](http://www.iiec.unam.mx/problemas_del_desarrollo.htm)

NAFTA and the Mexican Economy 1994-2005

Juan Carlos Moreno Brid*
Pablo Ruiz Nápoles**



Juan Pablo Zamora/Cuatoscuro

INTRODUCTION¹

In the early 1980s, in the aftermath of the most dramatic balance of payments crisis that Mexico had faced in decades, President De la Madrid started a structural reform to shift the economy away from its traditional state-led development growth path and protectionist trade strategy. Important elements of this reform were the deregulation/privatization of public enterprises and the opening of Mexico's domestic market to foreign competition.

In 1984 the government began to remove a number of tariff and non-tariff restrictions on imports. In 1986 a crucial step in this direction was taken by Mexico's becoming a full member of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and initiating a gradual elimination of some restrictions to foreign investment particularly in capital- or technology-intensive industries. By 1988 the coverage of import licenses as well as the average tariff rate had been sharply reduced. And official prices on imported goods had been totally cancelled. President Salinas's administration

* Regional adviser for the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). juan-carlos.moreno@cepal.org

** Professor of economics, currently at the Latin American School of Social Sciences (Flacso). pruiz@flacso.edu.mx

TABLE 1
SELECTED INDICATORS OF MEXICAN EXPORTS
TO THE OECD: 1985-2001

	1985	1990	1994	2001
Mexico's Market Share Of OECD Imports	1.78	1.52	2.03	3.62
Natural resources	3.08	2.10	1.98	2.65
Agriculture	1.30	1.28	1.37	2.09
Energy	4.60	3.26	2.99	3.29
Textiles, fibers, minerals and metal	1.89	1.48	1.57	1.49
Manufactures	1.10	1.29	2.02	3.85
Based on natural resources	1.23	0.96	1.03	1.26
Not based on natural resources	1.10	1.33	2.10	4.03
Others	1.61	2.54	2.70	4.12
Structure of Exports	100	100	100	100
Natural resources	58.6	33.6	21.4	14.7
Agriculture	9.7	10.3	8.2	5.1
Energy	45.9	21.0	11.8	9.1
Textiles, fibers, minerals and metal	3.0	2.3	1.4	0.5
Manufactures	39.1	62.5	74.9	81.4
Based on natural resources	3.4	3.4	2.5	1.5
Not based on natural resources	35.0	57.6	70.7	78.1
Others	2.3	3.9	3.7	3.9
Source: Authors' table using data from Comisión Económica para América Latina (CEPAL), <i>Competitiveness Analyzed of Nations (CAN) 2003</i> .				

(1988-1994) accelerated the economy's structural reforms. In 1989 a new regulatory framework on foreign investment was approved to eliminate restrictions to foreign capital participation in about 75 percent of all branches of economic activities. In December 1993, a new Law of Foreign Investment was enacted, simplifying administrative procedures and eliminating all restrictions on foreign direct investment (FDI)

in manufacturing except in the production of explosives and basic petrochemicals.²

NAFTA negotiations started in 1990, and by then Mexico was already one of the world's most open developing economies. The tri-lateral agreement was signed two years later by Mexico, the United States and Canada and went into effect January 1, 1994 with the commitment to eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers

Mexico's trade liberalization, crowned by NAFTA, has been accompanied by a radical shift in its insertion in global markets, making it a dynamic player in non-oil exports.

to most intra-regional trade and to ease restrictions on foreign investment over the next 10 years. NAFTA's importance was to formally institutionalize Mexico's trade liberalization strategy in an agreement with the United States, its key trading partner and the main player on the global trade scene.³

EXPORTS BOOM: FROM OIL PRODUCTS TO MANUFACTURING AND *MAQUILADORAS*

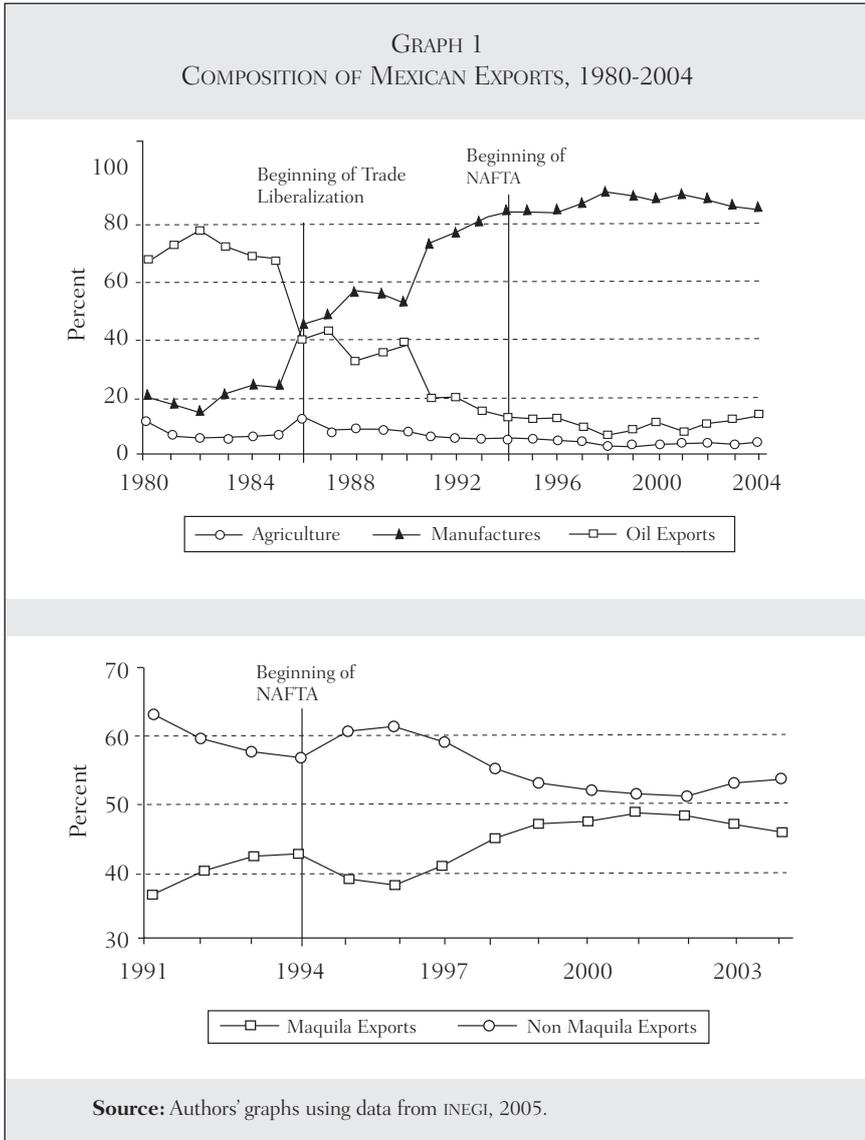
Mexico's trade liberalization, crowned by NAFTA, has been accompanied by a radical shift in its insertion in global markets, making it a dynamic player in non-oil exports. Though not always recognized, Mexico's export drive started nearly 10 years before NAFTA was put in place. In any case, 1994 is a turning point, as the launch of NAFTA opened an unprecedented window of opportunity to export to the United States, the world's largest market. A few years later, exports had increased approximately 20 percentage points as a proportion of Mexico's gross domestic product (GDP), reaching 30 percent.⁴ Their dynamism repositioned Mexico in world trade. Having started in the early 1980s as a fundamentally oil-exporting economy, 20 years later more than 80 percent of its total exports were manufactures. The fast growth in exports of manufactured goods more than compensated for the decline in foreign sales of oil and agricultural commodities. As shown in Graph 1, a key element behind this dynamic performance was the in-bond industries called *maquiladoras*.

Indeed, it has become a standard fact of the Mexican economy that *maquiladoras* are responsible for about half of its manufacturing exports. The dynamic response of Mexico's ma-

nufacturing exports was helped by NAFTA but it was stimulated by a considerable real depreciation of the exchange rate of the peso *vis-à-vis* the U.S. dollar in 1995. In addition, as the Mexican economy plunged into a recession that year (real GDP decreased 6 percent), local firms were pressed to seek external markets in order to compensate for the collapse of the domestic market.

The preferential access granted by NAFTA led to a large increase in Mexico's exports, among them in garment, topping for many years other international competitors in the U.S. market. Key promoters of the overall boost in exports were the various foreign firms that already had a strong presence in Mexico (including *maquiladoras*). The arrival of foreign investment to selected sectors motivated by the opportunity or need to use Mexico as an export platform to the United States also helped. The export drive has been accompanied, within strict limits, by greater technological sophistication of Mexican products sold abroad. Traditionally they were mainly primary commodities. By the late 1970s, crude oil was the dominant export item. Today, as in the last 15 years, most of Mexico's sales abroad consist of manufactures.

Table 1 presents the structure of Mexican exports and their share in the OECD's total imports from 1985 to 2001, classifying them in three groups: 1) exports directly based on natural resources; 2) manufactures; and 3) other exports. In turn, manufactured goods are classified into two groups: those that are essentially the result of simple processing of natural resources and the rest. A key point to notice is that Mexico's penetration of the OECD market more than doubled during 1985-2001. Equally impressive is the considerable rise in the share



of Mexico's manufactures in OECD imports (from 1.1 percent to 3.8 percent). In this respect, note, too, the particularly rapid expansion of exports of manufactures *not based* on natural resources. Indeed, while in 1985 they represented 35 percent of Mexico's total exports, by 1994 their share had risen to 71 percent, and in 2001 they stood at 78 percent. Exports of natural-resource-based goods experienced a mild retraction in the OECD market, and saw their proportion of total Mexican exports collapse from 58.6 percent in 1985 to 14.7 percent in 2001.

However, the export-driven growth was not felt in all productive activities in Mexico. Indeed, since 1994, though some sectors gained an increased presence in international markets, others retreated. The impact at the micro-level of the firm is very unevenly distributed. According to some authors, the bulk of Mexico's non-oil exports comes from no more than 300 businesses, most of them linked to multinational corporations.⁵

The impressive performance of Mexican exports since NAFTA has been favorably reflected in the country's trade balance with its major

TABLE 2
TRADE BALANCE OF MEXICO, 1994-2003
(BILLIONS OF U.S. DOLLARS)

	NAFTA TRADE			BALANCE OF <i>MAQUILADORAS</i>	NAFTA BALANCE WITHOUT <i>MAQUILA</i>	BALANCE WITH THE REST OF THE WORLD	TRADE BALANCE
	EXPORTS	IMPORTS	BALANCE				
1994	53.4	58.6	-5.2	5.8	-11.0	-13.3	-18.5
1995	68.5	55.4	13.1	4.9	8.2	-6.0	7.1
1996	82.8	69.4	13.5	6.4	7.1	-6.9	6.5
1997	96.6	84.1	12.5	8.8	3.6	-11.8	0.6
1998	104.8	95.7	9.1	10.5	-1.4	-17.0	-7.9
1999	123	108.5	14.5	13.4	1.0	-20.1	-5.6
2000	151.2	131.8	19.4	17.7	1.7	-27.4	-8.0
2001	143.6	118.3	25.3	19.3	6.0	-35.2	-9.9
2002	146.1	111.4	34.7	18.8	15.9	-42.6	-7.9
2003	149.8	110.2	39.7	18.3	21.4	-45.3	-5.6

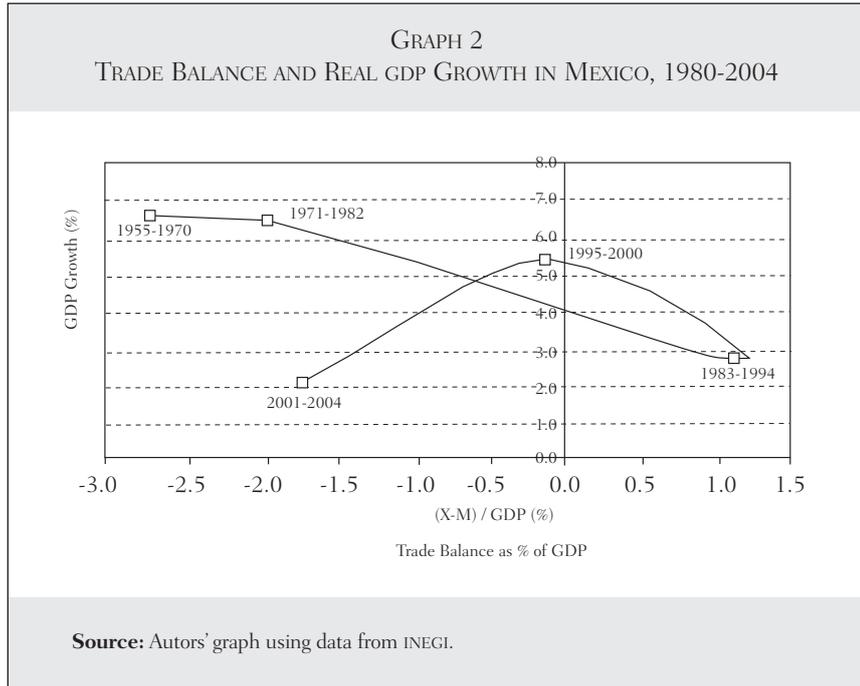
Source: Authors' table using data from *Estadísticas de Comercio Exterior*, INEGI, 2005.

partner, the United States. Indeed, since 1995, Mexico has run trade surpluses with the U.S., but not with Canada. However, this surplus has been more than offset by its mounting trade deficit with the rest of the world. Indeed, except for periods of severe recession, Mexico has systematically registered trade deficits (see table 2).

The other favorable development in Mexico's economic performance, frequently associated with trade liberalization and NAFTA, is the vast inflow of foreign direct investment it has received. FDI, measured as a percentage of Mexico's GDP registered impressive growth since the early 1990s. By 2004, the majority of businesses in Mexico that had foreign capital were of U.S. origin.

IMPORTS, TRADE BALANCE AND LONG-TERM ECONOMIC GROWTH

To complete this —so far— favorable assessment of Mexico's trade and FDI performance after NAFTA, we must examine the evolution of its imports and its rate of economic expansion. After all, a key goal of NAFTA and the overall macroeconomic reform strategy was to put Mexico on a path of high and persistent growth. Parallel to the export and FDI boom that Mexico experienced, in the last 15 years trade liberalization has been accompanied by a massive penetration of imports. Given the decades of trade protection marked by high tariffs and strict controls on imports, the elimination of these trade barriers was bound to



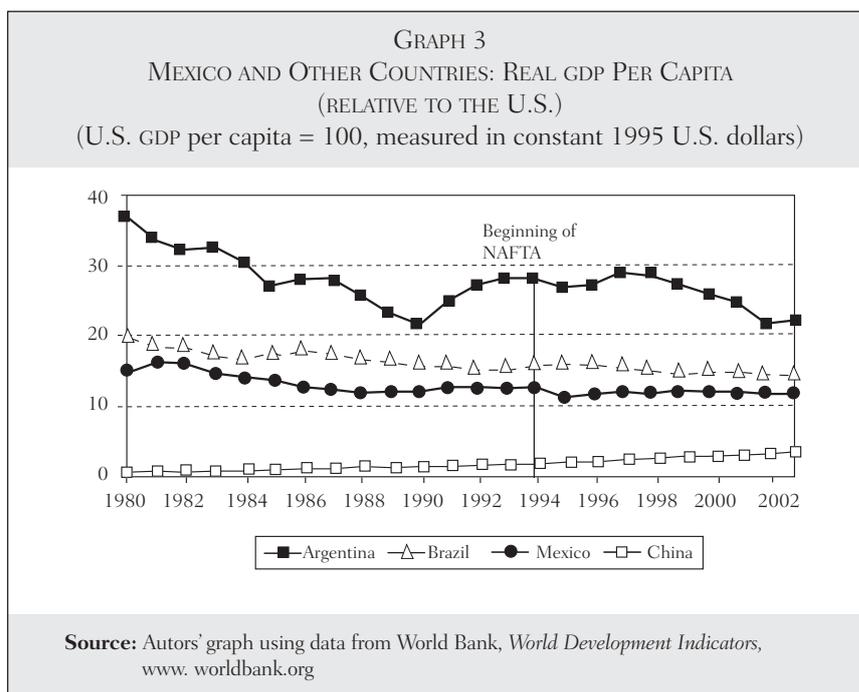
provoke an intense but in principle temporary flood of imports. It was assumed that, once Mexican consumers got adjusted to the new “menu” made available by trade liberalization that included the —until then— inaccessible foreign goods, purchases of imported goods would lose momentum. However, such a slowdown has not happened.

The first stages of this trade liberalization implemented in the late 1980s triggered an explosive increase of imports, expanding at annual rates over and above 30 percent. As a share of GDP, they climbed from 10 percent in 1982 to more than 30 percent by the mid-1990s.

The swift pace of Mexican imports since the second half of the 1980s was induced not only by the elimination of non-tariff barriers to foreign trade, but also by the expansion of domestic demand in a context of a persistent appreciation of the real exchange rate. The resumption of a facilitated access to external funds also played a role. Mexican consumers began to eagerly satisfy their pent-up demand for a wide variety of foreign goods and brands, after decades of a tightly restricted access to them. But,

this import demand also mirrors to some extent the increasingly strong relationship that an important part of the exporting sector has with foreign suppliers. *Maquiladoras*, the most successful export sector, rely fundamentally on imported inputs and materials, with scant relations to local suppliers. Another factor that boosted import penetration of the domestic market, and that cannot be ruled out *a priori*, is the likely breakdown of some internal linkages in Mexico’s domestic productive structure, as local producers have been put out of business by foreign competition.

Such a persistent and rapid increase in imports would sooner or later put enormous pressure on the economy’s exports and other sources of foreign exchange. In fact, to keep the trade deficit from excessively increasing as a proportion of income, Mexican exports would have to expand at rates of at least 15 percent a year. Such dynamic behavior is not easy to sustain. During their most prominent and recent boom, 1988-1999, they expanded at an average annual rate of 10 percent, but imports expanded even faster (14 percent).



Remarkably, and contrary to prior expectations, the dynamism of imports has barely subsided. The most recent data from January 2005 reports an annualized increase of 18 percent in Mexico's imports, while its real GDP expanded 4.4 percent.

If imports remain at these high levels, the external sector will continue to be a major obstacle in Mexico's struggle to enter a path of high economic growth and get away from recurrent balance of payments crises.

Graph 2 illustrates how trade liberalization and the process of macroeconomic reforms have not yet been able to put Mexico on a path of strong export-led growth. It shows that the relation between trade performance and economic growth has been deteriorating. Indeed, during the periods of 1955-1970 and 1971-1982, its real GDP expanded at an average annual rate of over 6 percent and registered a trade deficit of 2.7 percent and 1.9 percent of GDP, respectively. The international debt crisis and the collapse of the oil boom forced an economic slowdown in the 1980s concomitant with a trade surplus of 1 percent of GDP. The first five years after NAFTA

saw real GDP expand at a 5-percent annual average rate. This recovery was short-lived.

The renewed appreciation of the peso eventually slowed down the export boom, and the recession of the U.S. economy starting in 2001 put an end to the dynamism of this short period of export-led growth. In 2001-2003, the Mexican economy barely grew (an average of 2 percent annually) and registered a trade deficit once again of 1.5 percent to 2 percent of GDP. Such slow expansion, most alarmingly, implied that per capita income fell for three years in a row. In 2004, GDP rose 4.4 percent, better than its performance in the recent past but still way below the rates of expansion that it had experienced before the 1980s and that it needs in order to absorb the vast number of people entering its labor market. In other words, with relatively similar amounts of foreign resources as a proportion of GDP as it received in the four decades before the oil collapse, the Mexican economy is now able to grow on average at only one-third of the annual rates it experienced between 1950 and 1980, before macroeconomic reforms were put in place.

Given the decades of trade protection marked by high tariffs and strict controls on imports, the elimination of trade barriers was bound to provoke an intense but in principle temporary flood of imports.

Put another way, trade and financial liberalization did result in rapid growth of exports and, though not sustained, of FDI. But Mexico's economic growth performance has been disappointing. In fact, instead of closing the gap of its real GDP per capita *vis-à-vis* the United States, it has widened it. As graph 3 shows, in the late 1980s Mexico managed to begin to moderately reduce this gap. However, the economic crisis suffered in 1995 widened it once more. And since then it has remained with minor changes. Its gap with the U.S. is currently at a level comparable to what it was in the 1950s!

Thus, and contrary to the expectations raised by NAFTA, Mexico has yet to see any significant convergence in its average income in real terms with its main regional trade partners. Blecker, examining not only GDP but also alternative measures of income concludes, "There is no evidence of any catch-up in average Mexican living standards to U.S. or Canadian levels under NAFTA."⁶

Sustaining high long-term economic growth should be a top priority on the national agenda. The Mexican economy needs to expand at least at average annual rates of 5-6 percent in real terms just to create the jobs required to absorb the 2.5 percent annual increase in its work force. Its economic expansion needs to be even stronger in order to significantly improve the living standards of the more than 13 million Mexicans who live in extreme poverty.

CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

It is true that NAFTA, as part of the package of economic reforms implemented in Mexico,

helped to produce an export boom of manufactures, an inflow of much needed foreign investment and, with it, some technology transfers. However, these positive phenomena had a limited impact on the domestic economy and did not really alleviate the fundamental constraints on Mexico's long-term economic growth. Some of them have actually become more binding. NAFTA's positive impact may have by now reached a point of exhaustion. It should be revamped. It was not the success expected either in terms of economic growth or of job creation. The direct impact of exports on domestic output was not strong enough due in part to its reliance on *maquiladoras* and in part to the break-up of backward linkages brought about by the massive inflow of imported inputs, many of them required for export production. NAFTA's future extension should, sooner or later, include the legal intraregional mobility of labor, as well as the implementation of a common external tariff. Ideally, and inspired in the European Union model, it should include the creation of a special fund to help promote and complement investment to restructure and develop the least advanced regions in each of the three countries. In this sense, and regardless of whether a new economic/labor agreement is reached sooner or later in North America, thus extending NAFTA, it should be recognized that Mexico is at a crossroads. It can no longer base its international competitiveness on low wages. But, at the same time, it has not yet proved itself able to successfully enter international markets based on knowledge-intensive, high value-added processes and products. If Mexico is to succeed in its so far unsuccessful quest to achieve high, sustained economic growth, there is an urgent

need to rethink key elements of its overall development strategy. In particular, this may require new policies to promote innovation and technological development as well as a new wave of public investment to modernize and broaden infrastructure. It is also necessary and urgent to implement a policy to create jobs in the formal sector of the economy, in particular by providing income support and training to upgrade workers' skills and help them relocate to more qualified jobs in activities that are able to successfully compete with imports or in international markets. Without a fiscal reform these initiatives are simply not feasible. ■■

NOTES

¹ The opinions expressed here are the exclusive responsibility of the authors and may not necessarily coincide with those of the United Nations or of Flasco. A longer version of this paper written with Juan Carlos Rivas will be published shortly in the *North Carolina Journal of*

International Law and Commercial Regulation, School of Law, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

² J.C. Moreno-Brid, "Mexico's Economic Growth and the Balance of Payments Constraint: A Cointegration Analysis," *International Review of Applied Economics*, 13 (2), 1999, pp. 149-159.

³ P. Pacheco-López and A.P. Thirlwall, "Trade Liberalisation in Mexico: Rhetoric and Reality," *Banca Nazionale del Lavoro Quarterly Review* no. 229 (June), 2004, pp. 141-167. After NAFTA, Mexico signed many more trade agreements *inter alia* with the European Union, Japan and various Latin American countries.

⁴ An important part of this change is explained by an increase in Mexico's exchange rate during the 1994-1995 crisis. Exports as a percentage of GDP measured in constant 1993 pesos showed an increase from 17 percent to 24 percent during 1994-1995.

⁵ J. Mattar, J.C. Moreno-Brid and W. Peres, "Foreign Investment in Mexico after Economic Reform," K.J. Middlebrook and E. Zepeda, eds., *Confronting Development: Assessing Mexico's Economic and Social Policy Challenges* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2003); and E. Dussel, "La inversión extranjera en México," ECLAC Productive Development Series 80 (2000), pp. 1-100.

⁶ R. Blecker, "The North American Economies after NAFTA: A Critical Appraisal," *International Journal of Political Economy*, forthcoming.



UNIVERSIDAD NACIONAL
AUTÓNOMA DE MÉXICO

Colección Lecturas Jurídicas



Serie: Manuales Jurídicos
Incluye 22 títulos.



Serie: Estudios Jurídicos
Incluye 24 títulos.



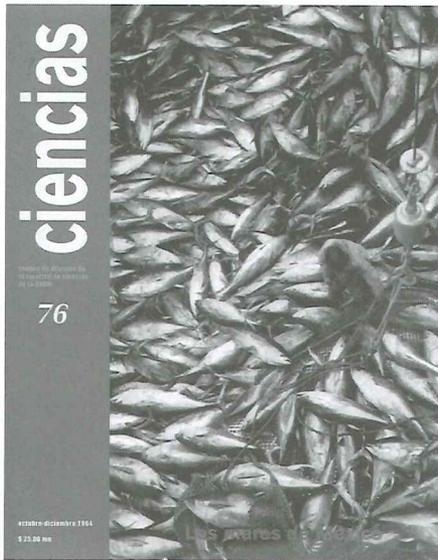


FACULTAD DE DERECHO

Serie: El Derecho y sus Maestros
Incluye 10 títulos.

De venta en la Facultad de Derecho y librerías de la UNAM

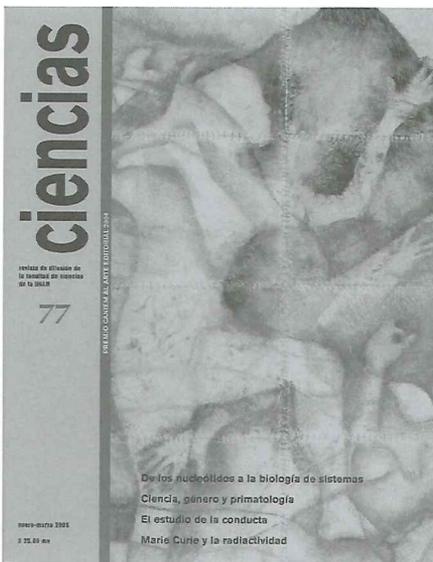
ciencias



76

octubre • diciembre 2004

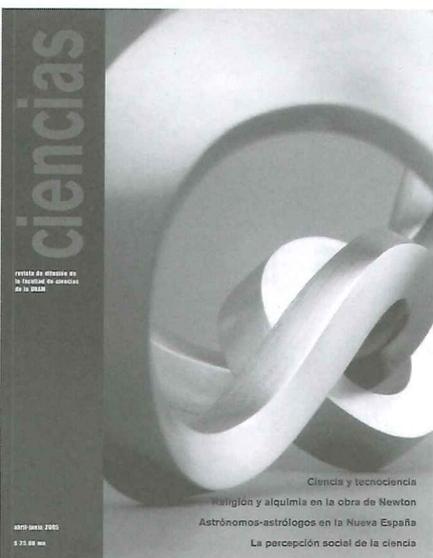
- Gran escenario de la zona costera y oceánica de México
- El Pacífico mexicano
- Golfo de México, circulación y productividad
- El joven mar Caribe
- La biodiversidad de las lagunas costeras
- Entre el mar y el viento
- Restauración en arrecifes de coral



77

enero • marzo 2005

- De las secuencias de nucleótidos a la biología de sistemas
- Una ciencia, ¿de quién y para quién?
- El clan Leakey. Percepciones femeninas en la primatología
- La elección femenina
- Hermano, querido hermano: competencia por la leche
- Amasando la caja. Reflexiones sobre orientación y conducta
- Madame Radiactivité



78

abril • junio 2005

- La ciencia y la sociedad civil
- El espacio de la ciencia, del genoma humano al océano
- La percepción pública de la ciencia en México
- La ciencia vista por la sociedad, la experiencia europea
- Isaacus Neutonius. *Jehova Sanctus Unus*
- Astrónomos-astrólogos en la Nueva España, del estamento ocupacional a la comunidad científica

Suscripciones
y números
anteriores

Cubículos 319 • 320 • 321
Departamento de Física
Facultad de Ciencias, UNAM
Coyoacán 04510,
México, D. F.

Teléfono: 56 22 49 35

Fax: 56 16 03 26

Direcciones electrónicas:

revci@hp.fcencias.unam.mx

<http://www.ejournal.unam.mx>

Immigration Consensus Needed for Guest Worker-Amnesty Bills

Mónica Vereá*



Fred Greaves/Reuters

Minutemen defending their promised land.

Forging a consensus of opinion and viewpoints around the issue of immigration has always been very polemical and something that has divided both the U.S. Congress and the leaders of different sectors of U.S. society. It has been even more complex to negotiate a migratory accord like the one proposed at the beginning of the Bush and Fox administrations, a proposal frozen after the 2001 terrorist attacks because anti-terrorist paranoia was added to the already prevalent xenophobic, anti-immigrant feelings. For three years after the terrorist attacks, policy makers resisted openly discussing immigration, concentrating on how to manage their own national security.¹ Despite the fact that in Mexico, people thought that the migratory accord already enjoyed the consensus of the negotiating parties, the reality is that it still had a long, winding, conflictive way to go in the U.S. Congress and among different sectors of U.S. society, not to mention needing the commitment of President Bush himself.²

Since January 2003 after the resignation of Foreign Affairs Minister Jorge Castañeda, the architect of “the Whole Enchilada,” his successor Luis Ernesto Derbez distanced himself from the migratory issue, considering that it had too high a political cost for our complex bilateral relations. Minister of the Interior Santiago Creel took advantage of the opportunity to fill the vacuum, taking a leadership role around the issue for the last two and a half years. Creel consolidated bilateral accords about national security for the control of our shared border, the Americans’ main objective.

For better or worse, over the last few months, migration has again been highly debated among leaders of public opinion and U.S. policy mak-

ers. In general, the U.S. public is alarmed by continual media attention to growing waves of undocumented migrants, most of them from Mexico’s border areas, arriving every year in their country. For this reason, they think reforms to their immigration system are needed.

Today, Mexico is the most important source of permanent and temporary immigrants to the United States, both holders of different kinds of visas and undocumented migrants. About 27 million people, or 65 percent of the Latino community, are of Mexican origin. Of these, 10.6 million were born in Mexico, the majority undocumented. Approximately 400,000 Mexicans remain in the United States every year, a figure that grows with the 110,000 temporary workers who receive work visas for different kinds of jobs.³

That is, despite restrictive measures taken to reinforce the southern border and keep migrants out, at the end of the twentieth century and in the first years of the twenty-first century, both documented and undocumented Mexicans have continued to migrate to the

United States. And, they play a very important role in the U.S. labor market and in the development of its economy.

ANTI-IMMIGRANT MEASURES

A year and half after the U.S. president announced his electorally oriented “Bush Plan,” in which he set forth his idea for temporary work visas, he has remained cautiously absent from the immigration debate. This silence can be interpreted as an attempt to achieve a consensus of Republicans and Democrats about the importance of promoting reforms to the U.S. migratory system. To show his commitment to the fight against terrorism and his policy of strengthening national security, President Bush

The U.S. public is alarmed by continual media attention to growing waves of undocumented migrants to their country. So they think reforms to their immigration system are needed.

* Researcher and founding director of CISAN (1989-1997). mverea@servidor.unam.mx

has signed several measures that affect bilateral migratory relations, some of which are enumerated below.

The Real Identification Act (Real ID) obligates state governments to verify drivers' license applicants' migratory status,⁴ despite this having been rejected by some members of the Supreme Court.⁵ Republican Congressman James Sensenbrenner, the main promotor of this measure against undocumented migrants, has been the foremost opponent to recognizing the validity of the Mexican Consular Registry.⁶

The Real ID is a reaction to the more than 1.5 million consular registrations that have been issued in the almost 50 Mexican consulates in the United States. Although the issuance of this ID is not new, the Fox administration, after the failed migratory accord, decided to more aggressively promote the document to protect undocumented Mexicans in the United States. The registrations have been used to get drivers' licenses, open bank accounts, send money to family members and board airplanes. Their validity has been questioned by some state congresses like Arizona's and by U.S. anti-immigrant groups, using the argument that it is not a secure document. However, some sympathizers and pro-immigrant associations, financial institutions like the Bank of America, Citibank and Wells Fargo Bank, among others, have supported the registration as a secure document for transferring funds. And opening bank accounts has been responsible for decreasing the cost of sending remittances home, thus benefiting both immigrants and their families.

The leading role Arizona has played in the war against undocumented migrants should be mentioned, since it became the first state to require proof of citizenship when registering to vote and approved a measure requiring state employees to report illegal immigrants to federal authorities if they apply for health benefits.

Also, with Bush's support, the state authorized project SB 1306 so 500 Border Patrol agents could cooperate to stop illegal immigration as part of the Arizona Border Control Initiative, ABC. But the most controversial action has been the Minuteman Project, which allows retired volunteers with guns, mainly land owners, who say they are tired of illegal immigrants crossing their property, to "hunt illegals." That is, Arizona is a model for other states like California starting up "look alike" operations which may begin in September this year.⁷ These initiatives demonstrate growing intolerance with severe racist overtones, deepening the division and affecting bilateral relations.

The migratory accord has a long way to go in the U.S. Congress and in some sectors of U.S. society, not to mention needing the commitment of President Bush.

BUSH'S PLANS VS. MCCAIN-KENNEDY AND CORNYN-KYL

In early 2004, President Bush thought that his plan would solve the problem of undocumented immigration and smuggling of persons. In addition to a reasonable annual increase in visas for

legal immigrants, his plan put forward the possibility of creating a Guest Worker Program, offering people renewable 3-year visas. Since Bush is convinced that immigrants are "temporary," he proposes that these employees would be credited with retirement benefits in their nations of origin, as well as the creation of savings accounts they could access on returning home.

President Bush did not come up with this plan suddenly, but based it on several bills that the U.S. Congress was already discussing, mainly about guest worker programs and bills to regularize and/or legalize undocumented migrants, among other measures, that had not won Republican support but did have the Democrats' blessings for their eventual passage.

Bush did not send his plan to Congress because he feared it would be rejected by his own

A year and half after the U.S. president announced his electorally oriented “Bush Plan,” he has remained cautiously absent from the immigration debate.

party members, but at least he sent a signal about the importance of reviving discussion about the issue. The White House is said to have been working with Republican Senators John Cornyn from Texas and Jon Kyl from Arizona to reach a consensus between their bill and the McCain-Kennedy bill.⁸

On May 26, Senators Cornyn and Kyl presented their bill called the Comprehensive Enforcement and Immigration Reform Act of 2005, the first part of a migratory plan that would establish many balanced measures to control the border and create a limited temporary workers program.⁹ It would create a nationwide electronic system to verify the immigration status of prospective employees; increase the penalties for hiring or continuing to employ illegal aliens (since they are aware that the government has done almost nothing to enforce the law banning their employment); hire 10,000 new agents and 1,000 more inspectors at ports of entry between 2006 and 2010 (to add to the 11,000 already existing agents and inspectors); and allot U.S.\$500 million for equipment acquisition on the northern border.¹⁰ This bill also includes a guest worker program that would require foreign workers to eventually return to their countries of origin rather than offering them a path to citizenship. As Cornyn said in an interview, “It would be a temporary worker program based on the principle of work and return rather than work and stay.”

The Cornyn-Kyl plan will try to compete with a proposal presented two weeks before by a bi-partisan team made up of Senators John McCain (R-Arizona) and Edward Kennedy (D-Massachusetts) with backing from Republican

Congressmen Jim Kolbe and Jeff Flake of Arizona and Democrat Luis Gutiérrez from Illinois. The rival bill, the Secure America and Orderly Immigration Act, is less tough on border enforcement and more generous with old and new immigrants.¹¹ It has been backed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and numerous other groups and would allow some of the estimated 10 to 12 million undocumented immigrants in the U.S. to obtain legal work permits and eventual citizenship. Despite not offering an amnesty —“There is no free ride for illegals in their bill”—after a six-year period of indenture, payment of some fines, criminal and security background checks and an English and civics test, they and their families could get green cards. This is a prospective amnesty, as opposed to the 1986 Act, which was a retrospective one.¹²

The McCain-Kennedy bill takes on board some of President Bush’s proposals. That is, at the same time that it puts forward rigorous border security and the fight against smuggling of people, it proposes a guest worker program that would cover about 400,000 people a year, who would have to work for a 4-year period of indenture before they could get a green card. It would establish a new visa, the H-5A, for low-skilled, non-agricultural foreign workers. To accommodate them, legal immigration quotas would be increased by half a million a year. Those who have been working for more than five years, have dutifully paid their taxes and have no criminal record could be candidates for requesting the regularization of their migratory status, an option Bush did not offer in his plan. They propose that guest workers not on a path toward citizenship would return home after their work visas expire.

To show his commitment to the fight against terrorism and his policy of strengthening national security, Bush has signed measures that affect bilateral migratory relations.

The McCain-Kennedy bill has similarities to the failed 2001 migratory accord, which contains measures to legalize millions of undocumented migrants at the same time that it creates a temporary worker plan. In contrast with the Cornyn-Kyl bill, it establishes mechanisms to accelerate family reunification for those who aspire to regularization and, to that end, includes simplifying the process of getting visas for the spouses and children of immigrants. In addition, it proposes a national strategy to strengthen border security particularly with Mexico, and offers the Mexican government incentives for protecting its southern border with Central America. It also deems it necessary to earmark new resources for surveillance of enforcing the law in the work place, that is, to penalize employers for hiring undocumented migrants, something that very little has been done about since its being voted into law in 1986.

Even if one of these bills or a combination of them got through the Senate, it would still face important stumbling blocks in the House of Representatives where there are many anti-immigration members, mostly Republicans. President Bush has to work very hard to achieve a consensus between these two bills and come to a mid-point on a highly divisive issue. It is possible that Bush will propose immigration changes that would first tighten up border security, like Real ID, before looking to possible legislative changes that would inaugurate a path to some kind of legalization for undocumented migrants already in the country.

This opens up a window of opportunity for Mexico to lobby in both houses of Congress and in the Mexican-American community in

support of the McCain-Kennedy bill, which more closely reflects our interests. The Mexican government and Congress should foster an open reflection or national debate about the issue of migration in general and about the bills currently before the U.S. Congress in particular. It will be necessary to prepare a formal proposal supported by different sectors of society, perhaps a quasi-NAFTA-Plus proposal, 11 years after NAFTA came into effect, that would deconstruct the migratory accord proposed four years ago and put forward a policy of small advances over a period of 10 years: it is not the same to negotiate more different kinds of visas for Mexicans as it is to press for an amnesty. The position of the Mexican government is still not clear about whether we want to fully integrate to the North American region and what price we are willing to pay politically and economically.

The document "Construcción de una Comunidad de América del Norte (The Construction of a North American Community) can serve as the basis for a discussion of interests and the direction to be taken for the eventual creation of an economic and security community in the region.¹³ This document was presented at the trilateral meeting in Texas in March 2005 where the three countries signed the Alliance for Security and Prosperity of North America.

The task force that wrote the document considered that a common security parameter must be established by 2010, as well as a North American pass and a unified North American Action Plan, which would require the harmonization of migratory and security systems. In the chapter on increasing labor mobility in North America, it proposes expanding migra-

tory worker programs and implementing the Social Security Totalization Program negotiated between Mexico and the U.S. For that, the authors considered it necessary to create a “North American Preference,” establishing the labor mobility rules necessary to work elsewhere in the region. This system should be broader and simpler than the current system of NAFTA visas. One forgotten issue that they do propose is the creation of a North American Education Program, which I think is indispensable and urgent for the region.¹⁴

I would add, among many other measures, the need to establish in the short term an *ad hoc* training program for persons with non-professional experience, through the TN visas created under NAFTA. These visas are available for professionals in unlimited numbers and have been highly under-utilized by Mexicans for different reasons. Bringing together education with training programs for specific jobs and broadening the number of possibilities beyond what NAFTA establishes is a goal that we should study and propose for the benefit of Mexicans in particular and the region in general. ■■■

NOTES

¹ The author wishes to thank Erika C. Veloz Gutiérrez for her efficient technical support.

² The migratory accord included border security, the promotion of economic development in migrant-sending regions, more visas, regularization for undocumented migrants and the establishment of a guest worker program. Mónica Vereá, *Los migrantes temporales en América del Norte: propuestas y respuestas* (Mexico City: CISAN-UNAM, 2003), p. 15.

³ Sixty-one percent of the 107,048 Mexicans who were given work visas in 2003 received H2-B visas, for low-skilled non-agricultural workers; 9 percent of them were granted visas to work in agriculture; and 15 percent received H1-B visas for highly skilled workers. Only 1,269 people (1 percent) were given TN visas for professionals based on NAFTA. For more information, see Mónica Vereá, “Movilidad laboral a diez años de la creación del espacio del TLCAN,” Monica Gambrell, comp., *Impacto del TLCAN en México a los 10 años* (Mexico City: CISAN-UNAM, at press).

⁴ The Real ID was approved by the U.S. Senate last May 10, five days after the House of Representatives passed it 368 to 58. It stipulates that anyone who requests or renews a drivers’ license must present an authentic copy of his/her birth certificate, which must be verified by the Department of Motor Vehicles, together with other documents like his/her Social Security number and utility bills like light, water or gas bills.

⁵ This is the case of New York State judge Karen S. Smith, who found that the state had no right to deny drivers’ licenses to immigrants if they cannot prove they are in the country legally.

⁶ “Congress Approves Financing to Fight Wars and Terrorism,” *The New York Times*, May 11, 2005.

⁷ “U.S. to Bolster Arizona Border Security,” *Los Angeles Times*, March 30, 2005.

⁸ John Cornyn is the chairman of the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration, Border Security and Citizenship, and Jon Kyl is the chairman of the Subcommittee on Terrorism and Homeland Security.

⁹ The bill is divided into four parts: a) Border Enforcement and Visa Security; b) Interior Enforcement; c) State and Local Law Enforcement; and d) Workers Identification and Document Integrity.

¹⁰ Among other things, it also proposes reimbursing the states for expenditures incurred in incarcerating undocumented aliens. John Cornyn, Jon Kyl, *Comprehensive Enforcement and Immigration Reform Act of 2005*, www.cornyn.senate.gov, consulted May 26, 2005. See also Alan Elsner, “Immigration Changes Face Obstacles in Congress,” Reuters, June 21, 2005, and “U.S. Mexican Lawmakers Find Common Ground on Immigration,” *Washington Times*, June 14, 2005.

¹¹ The bill contains measures of border security; assistance to foreigners accused of a crime; a visa program for workers; the promotion of a model of migratory circulation; family reunification; civic integration and promotion of health care access.

¹² Mark Krikorian, “Fool Me Twice, Shame on Me: the McCain/Kennedy Amnesty,” *National Review Online*, May 13, 2005, <http://www.nationalreview.com/comment/krikorian200505130942.asp>

¹³ This is a report by an independent working group sponsored by the Council on Foreign Relations, the Mexican Council for International Affairs and the Canadian Council of Chief Executives. Pedro Aspe coordinated the Mexican participants, John P. Manley, the Canadians, and William Feld, those from the U.S.

¹⁴ Council on Foreign Relations in association with the Canadian Council of Chief Executives and the Mexican Foreign Affairs Council, *Building North American Community: Report of the Independent Task Force on the Future of North America* (Mexico City: mimeographed copy, May 2005).

Frankness and Cooperation In Mexico-U.S. Relations

Leonardo Curzio*



U.S. Ambassador to Mexico Anthony Garza dances with George Bush's wife, Laura, after his civil wedding ceremony.

United States Ambassador to Mexico Anthony Garza has made a series of statements about Mexican issues that have created a stir in public opinion, as is only natural due to the prominence of his position. For many sectors of Mexican society it is not quite clear if his statements are personal observations or a reflection of State Department or White House thinking. In either case, it should be recognized that Mr. Garza's points are not groundless —as we shall see later— but are tremendously inopportune and, in any case, show that he is distancing himself from events in Mexico in which the United States could play a more empathetic and, of course, cooperative role.

Exercises in frankness are very useful in personal relations, although they may be heart-rending. But in international relations, frankness can turn into frank impertinence. Ambassador Garza has opted for invoking frankness as an exculpatory preamble to launching high impact verbal fusillades. Two recent examples are illustrative.

In May, during the Hermispheria 2005 Summit held in Nuevo León, Mr. Garza's statements were impeccable from the point of view of their logic: "The sort of reforms that Mexico will need

* Researcher at CISAN.

to stay competitive are not easy.” Up to here, everything is normal. But a second later comes the painful exercise in sincerity: “And let’s be honest with each other, relying on remittances from Mexicans working in the United States and wind-fall revenues from high oil prices is simply not an economic policy. The underlying message of these reports is clear —reform or fall further behind.”¹

The matter would not be important if it involved two countries that were far apart and without close links. If that were the case, the statement could be taken as an academic reflection that sought to objectively describe the reality of a country. But things are different when you are talking about one of your main trade partners. The United States, and therefore its ambassador, cannot speak of Mexico with

The U.S. government is aware of the fact that since the beginning of his administration in 2000, President Fox has not enjoyed the majority needed in Congress to pass these reforms. Modernization of the Mexican economy today depends on the relationship of forces in Congress, where market-oriented policies are not exactly the most popular among most representatives. The discourse of economic nationalism and state intervention in the economy continues to be politically profitable. Opposing the structural reforms (particularly the fiscal and energy reforms) has become one of the opposition’s banners and a point for unity between two old enemies: the previous governing party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and the leftist Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD).

Ambassador Garza’s frankness looks like a poisoned dart instead of being a shot in the arm to reinforce the image of cooperation between the two countries.

the same distance that he would if he were speaking of the Ukraine or Bulgaria. Mexico is the U.S. economy’s third biggest supplier after Canada and China, with a trade volume of over U.S.\$250 billion, an appreciable amount by any standards.

Pointing to the need for structural reforms to improve the country’s competitiveness is obvious. The Fox administration and a large number of specialists who study the matter (like Mario Rodarte, the director of the Private Sector Center for Economic Studies) waste no fora for underlining the need to make these reforms to facilitate foreign investment flows and the increase of the Mexican economy’s global competitiveness. For any observer of Mexico, the issue is not recognizing this need, but the political viability of these reforms in a very delicate political context.

The problem stemming from this situation is delicate because the lack of reforms weakens the president, his party and reform proponents and therefore reinforces the so-called revolutionary nationalists who feed off the deterioration of the Fox administration. Of course, I am not suggesting that the U.S. embassy should defend the Mexican government, but the least that can be expected is that it not throw fuel on the fire, so to speak.

The United States must recognize that its role in Mexico’s political transition has been limited and not very constructive in reinforcing the first democratic government of the country’s modern history. While the government of George W. Bush repeatedly promises that it is going to support those who fight for freedom throughout the world, it has made few explic-

it gestures to strengthen the advance of the regimen of liberty in Mexico. What is more, we could say that there is no qualitative difference in the treatment given an administration like that of Salinas de Gortari, with its doubtful electoral origin, widespread corruption and lack of internal transparency, and that of Vicente Fox, which has fostered transparency and an open door to freedom in modern Mexico. The vehemence with which the Bush administration defends freedom and market reforms in Asia or Russia contrasts sharply with its disinterest in consistently supporting a neighbor stumbling toward making those reforms.

Not to go on about the issue, but it is worth remembering that all the Fox administration's attempts to establish a new basis for relations with the U.S. (NAFTA Plus or the strategic part-

Things are not very different with regard to security. Once again, Ambassador Garza's frankness looks like a poisoned dart instead of being a shot in the arm to reinforce the image of cooperation between the two countries. A recent U.S. embassy communique lamenting the assassination of the Nuevo Laredo police chief who only a few hours before had taken office, reads, "And while I have no interest in criticizing the Mexican government... As friends and neighbors, we should be honest with each other about the rapidly degenerating situation along the border and the near-lawlessness in some parts." Further on, it must be admitted, Garza said, "I absolutely recognize that the security of the border region around Nuevo Laredo is a shared responsibility."²

Once again, this would not be more than an anecdote mentioned in passing if we were talk-

George W. Bush has made few explicit gestures to strengthen the advance of the regimen of liberty in Mexico.

nership of North America to compete in the world) have not been met with a response that was politically useful for reform supporters. U.S. disinterest in Mexico has paradoxically been the opposition's driving force for discrediting Fox and politically shoring up the groups to the left of the political spectrum who are traditionally hostile to Mexico's trade integration with the United States. The Fox administration is frequently and severely accused of selling out the country. It is also ridiculed, alleging that its policy of creating closer ties to the United States has obtained nothing in exchange. National public opinion deems that the United States considers us its backyard (and, is it true?). Was it the idea that the nationalists reaffirm their traditional anti-Americanism? If it was, it was successful; if not, the effect was perverted.

ing about some tourist destination in the South Seas, but when it is a neighbor with which you share an Alliance for Security and Prosperity, the statements are a matter of concern because they bring into doubt two fundamental questions.

The first is that cooperation to fight drug trafficking seems to begin to be fractured. A brief look at bilateral relations around this issue shows that during the 1990s and in the first years of this century, the institutionalization of the binational fight against drugs advanced a great deal through the creation of the High-Level Contact Group, and the frequent exchange of tactical and operational intelligence seemed to be yielding good results. The tacit recognition that a large part of the drug problem was due to high consumption in the U.S. market helped reinforce the idea of co-responsibility.

We should also remember the flexibility of Mexican laws for extraditing dangerous drug kingpins as another example of convergence. Only a few months ago, former-Attorney General Macedo de la Concha was recognized on several occasions by the U.S. administration for his work in striking at the leadership of the cartels.

However, in recent months something seems to be changing. Given the brutal wave of violence unleashed along the border and in Sinaloa, with its death toll of more than 600 in six months, joint work does not seem to be yielding the desired results. Something is failing in operational intelligence gathering along the border that leads U.S. authorities to censure what is going on in Mexico. In this case, more useful intelligence for arresting those responsible for the killings would be more effective than reproaches. Or perhaps it should be recognized that U.S. anti-drug services are just as lost in this bloody war as their Mexican counterparts, something not at all reassuring.

The second point is that something is wrong with the design of U.S. security strategy. If the United States' intention is to armor itself against a terrorist attack, the weaknesses of its southern border are clear. Not only because of the number of weapons circulating in the region and the amount of "black" money flowing between the two countries, but because illegal emigrants enter the United States with relative ease. How can six million undocumented Mexicans live in the great fortress without the complaisance (if not something else) of that country's authorities?

The violence caused by drug trafficking is also a symptom of the decomposition of a security system that does not seem to have its priorities straight. The situation is alarming, and reproaches or greater distrust are not going to solve it. It is in the interest of both countries to improve border security.

It is clear that the United States is not going to solve Mexico's political, economic and security problems. That is not its role. What seems

obvious to me is that it can play a more constructive and cooperative role with Mexican authorities and be more sensitive about what is going on here. It is not a matter for comparison, but Mexico has taken on board the objectives of the global struggle against terrorism and has adopted the necessary measures for maintaining the North American security perimeter because it is a U.S. priority, and it is in our own interest to do so. The Mexican government cannot —nor should it— be pleased that things have not progressed until now as the Bush government would have liked; it must continue to cooperate wholeheartedly and decidedly.

It makes me shiver to just imagine our ambassador in Washington saying publicly, with the frankness appropriate between friends, that an economy with a deficit the size of the United States' does not seem to be seriously led. But if, just to complete the scene, in another public event, our exuberant diplomat continued along the same lines of forthrightness and expressed his regret that the anti-terrorist crusade had not yet achieved the arrest of Osama Bin Laden, or, worse, deplored the fact that all the laws restricting civil liberties passed in the United States to fight terrorism had only resulted in what the Washington Post cites as 39 individuals charged with terrorism, his statements could well and fairly be taken as impertinent.

Without a doubt, just like among individuals, among nations, cooperation in solving problems is appreciated more than frankness in describing them publicly. ■■■

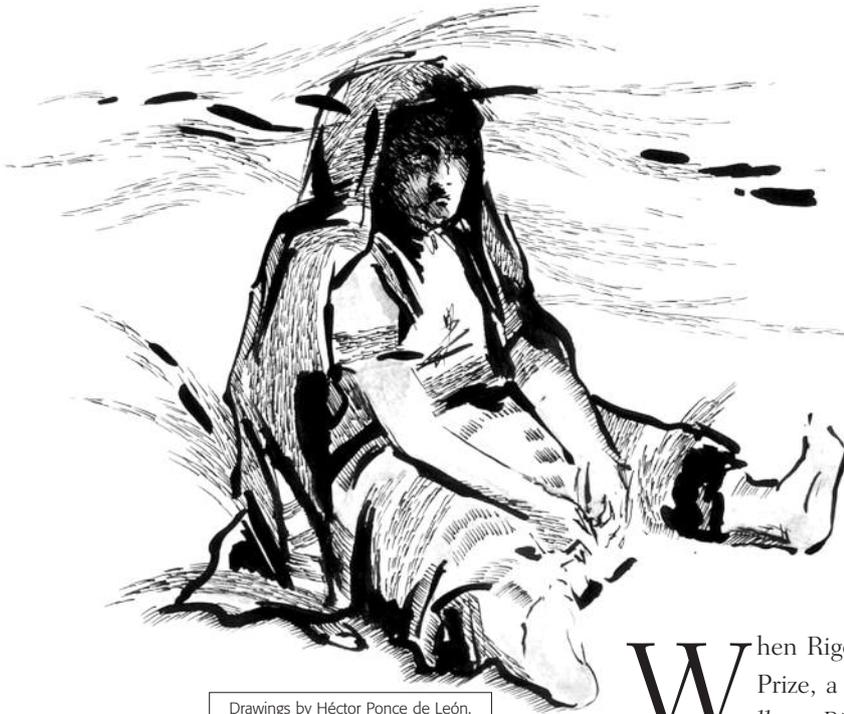
NOTES

¹ Speech read May 13, 2005 at the Hemispheria Summit by Ambassador Garza. www.usembassy-mexico.gov/ambassador

² Embassy of the United States in Mexico, Communique (June 9, 2005), <http://mexico.usembassy.gov/mexico/epress05.html>

A Place In The World

Gerardo Piña*



Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León.

When Rigoberta Menchú won the 1992 Nobel Peace Prize, a lot of people got interested in her book *Me llamo Rigoberta Menchú y así me nació la conciencia* (My Name Is Rigoberta Menchú and This Is How My Consciousness Was Raised) (Siglo XXI: 1985). Many readers were surprised. Rigoberta presents us with an autobiography that does not fit into conventional Manichean stories about injustice. Her narrative about how she managed to survive in a hostile and xenophobic society and how she helped organize her community to resist the military attacks by the Guatemalan government is much more than a testimony. It reflects a whole philosophy of what being human is about (or should be about), regardless of cultural context. One tends to put the social or ethnic characteristics of an author above his or her works. First and foremost, Rigoberta's is a human, female voice that happens to be Mayan or Guatemalan —just as Mayans are human beings who happen to be Mayans.

This last statement may be rather obvious, but it does not seem that obvious when we look at the way most Mexicans behave toward our country's indigenous peoples. We either admire them blindly or totally ignore them, but we hardly make an effort to understand them, which is particularly awkward because their culture is so deeply related to ours. It is as if we were ashamed of our-

* Mexican writer. Translator of *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* (Siglo XXI editors) to Spanish and author of *La erosión de la tinta y otros relatos* (The Erosion of the Ink and Other Stories). gh_pina@hotmail.com

selves. Very few Mexican fiction writers have approached this subject successfully when describing the problems and culture of indigenous in Mexico, but Rosario Castellanos is one who has.

Born in Mexico City in 1925, Castellanos grew up in Comitán, Chiapas. She returned to Mexico City when she was 16 years old and later earned her master's in philosophy from the National Autonomous University of Mexico in 1950. She worked at the Chiapas Science and Arts Institute and at the Indigenous Institute of San Cristóbal de las Casas and was Mexico's ambassador to Israel where she died in 1974. She wrote two novels *Balún-Canán* (The Nine Guardians) (1957) and *Oficio de Tinieblas* (Office of Tenebrae) (1964); three books of short stories *Ciudad Real* (City of Kings) (1960), *Los convidados de agosto* (The Guests of August) (1968) and *Álbum de Familia* (Family Album) (1971); several books of poetry, notably *Trayectoria del Polvo* (Dust Trail) (1948) and the anthology *Poesía no eres tú* (Poetry Is Not You) (1948-1971); two books of essays: *Mujer que sabe Latín* (A Woman Who Knows Latin) (1973) and *Sobre cultura femenina* (On Feminine Culture) (published posthumously in 2005).

Castellanos is an emblematic figure of twentieth-century Mexican literature. She is considered to be the first author to show that there is a feminine (not necessarily feminist) culture in Mexico. She did not need to rage against men in order to state and prove that women in Mexico were oppressed. As a major author in our culture, her defence of women came naturally. Her works are interesting and varied, with plenty of irony and witticism. The title of one of her books, *Mujer que sabe Latín* (A Woman Who Knows Latin), alludes to a saying we have in Mexico: "Mujer que sabe Latín ni tiene marido ni tiene buen fin" ("A woman who knows Latin will not get a husband nor will she come to a good end."). In this book, Castellanos talks about the artistic or scientific achievements of various remarkable women. *Poesía no eres*

Castellanos's works remain unique in Mexican literature. She managed to offer us a well-balanced social, aesthetic and philosophical view of literature.

tú (Poetry Is Not You) refers to a line by the Spanish poet G.A. Becquer that reads "¿Me preguntas qué es poesía? / Poesía eres tú" (Do you ask me what poetry is? / Poetry is you). "Poetry Is Not You" is a brief poem with a constant theme of Castellanos's poetic: otherness. "Because if you

existed / I would also have to exist. And that is a lie," she says in that poem, adding later, "The other: mediator, judge, balance / between opposites, witness, know in which is knotted what had been broken... The other. With the other / humanity, dialogue, poetry begin." To her, the other is our complement but also a potential Genesis of ourselves. It is only through others that we can assert our own place in the world. Our love, hope and misery begin or die in ourselves only in relation to others. Rosario Castellanos was conscious of the importance of looking at other people the way we look at ourselves and vice versa. In a thoroughly racist and plural society like Mexico's, this issue transcended the sphere of philosophy and poetry in Castellanos's works and occupied a solid place in her prose.

Her prose and particularly her short stories are not as widely read as her poetry, which is why I have chosen her first collection of stories, *Ciudad Real* to comment here. It is perhaps the one that is most representative of her style. In this book, she further explores the Mayan-indigenous perspective that she had already presented in her novel *Balún-Canán*. She did not like the term "indigenista" ("indigenist" or "nativist") being applied to her literature because she was not indigenous herself and because "indigenista" literature tended to regard Indians as exotic, good, victimized people. "This simplicity makes me laugh. The indigenous are human beings exactly like whites, but just placed in special, unfavourable circumstances," she said in an interview.¹ The world depicted in the stories of *Ciudad Real* —as San Cristóbal de las Casas was known— is a world of injustice, poverty and suffering but also of hope,

set in a city where Indians and mestizos are both portrayed as just and unjust people. The city itself reminds us of Rulfo's Comala in *Pedro Páramo* — it is a wasteland, a place in decline, where nonetheless many stories still take place.

Because the splendour of Ciudad Real was already a memory. The ruin first ate the entrails. People without audacity or initiative, paid by their glories, submerged in the contemplation of their past, let go of the sceptre of political power, abandoned the reins of the companies, closed the book of the intellectual disciplines. Fenced in by a tight ring of indigenous communities, deaf enemies, Ciudad Real always maintained a relationship presided over by injustice. Systematic pillage was countered by a latent state of protest that had culminated several times in cruel uprisings...Ciudad Real was no longer any more than a presumptuous, empty shell, a scarecrow effective only for the soul of the Indians, stubbornly cleaving terror.²

Riots, revolutions and injustice are inherent to Ciudad Real but in those events all social classes are equally responsible. In the story "La Tregua" (The Truce) the Indians turn out to be as ignorant and violent as the white people. Rodolfo López, an authority in the town of Chamula and the owner of a wine-shop, burns two Indians alive because they had been distilling alcohol without his permission. On the other hand, a group of indigenous torture and beat a white man to death because they think (or pretend to think) that he is the *pukuj*, a malign spirit disguised as a man.

Castellanos dissects the mentality of both mestizos and indigenous. Even though Indians are at a clear disadvantage, both groups share a lack of comprehension both of each other and of themselves. Castellanos describes the mentally stultifying effects of that situation. Ciudad Real reflects a far more complex world than we are used to reading in fiction related to Mexican Indians. Mestizos despise other mestizos as much as Mayans are unable to understand other Mayans. There is, for example, the story "Aceite Guapo" (Handsome Oil). Daniel, the main indigenous character, real-

izes one day that he is an old man. People start to shun him because old age is synonymous with decrepitude, death and bad luck.

Daniel was now like he had been at the beginning: empty-handed. But he had to admit he was old because other people's stern looks of suspicion, quick looks of alarm, heavy looks of disapproval proved it to him.

Daniel knew what those looks meant: he himself in times past had looked at others like that. They meant that if a man has been respected by death at such an age, it is because he has made a pact with the dark forces, because he has consented to becoming a spy and the executor of their intentions when they are evil...An old man is evil, and no one must approach him seeking compassion because it is useless. It is sufficient for him to sit on the side of the roads, in the door of his house, for whatever he looks upon to become untilled, a ruin, death...You must get away from him, avoid him; leave him to be consumed by hunger and need, lie in ambush in the shadows to put an end to his life with a machete blow, incite the multitude to stone him (p. 251).

Daniel tries to find a way to avoid death. As readers, we share his fear of being caught and then probably being killed with a machete, but soon we see that his tragedy is also an excellent motive for comedy. He thinks he can only be saved from death by the Holy Virgin. A big problem arises when he finds out that the Virgin only speaks Spanish. He is told that there is a kind of magic syrup, "aceite guapo" (handsome oil), that is supposed to make anyone who drinks it speak Spanish. Daniel has to find a way to raise the money to buy the syrup, which is only sold at white people's pharmacies. The same kind of naiveté is depicted among white people in "La rueda del hambriento" (The Wheel of the Hungry One).

Alicia Mendoza has a job as a nurse's assistant in Ciudad Real at an institution that is dedicated to helping Indians. She is expecting a prosperous new life there. What she finds, though, is a terrible place where the first hostility comes from

other people like her. Through various difficulties, she has to understand that neither Indians nor white people are true to themselves.

Castellanos's works remain unique in Mexican literature. She managed to offer us a well-balanced social, aesthetic and philosophical view of literature. Her poetry easily moves from love to metaphysics. Her essay *Sobre cultura femenina* (On Feminine Culture) and short story "Lección de cocina" (Cooking Lesson) deal directly with feminism without being dogmatic. Her two novels *Balún-Canán* and *Oficio de tinieblas* (Office of Tenbrae) are among the finest accounts of mid-twentieth-century social life in Chiapas. Some of her books available in English translations are *The Book of Lamentations* (Penguin: 1998), *Another Way to Be* (University of Georgia Press, 1990), *The Nine*

Guardians. A Novel (Balún Canán) (Readers International, 1992), *A Rosario Castellanos Reader: An Anthology of Her Poetry, Short Fiction, Essays and Drama* (Texas Pan American Series, University of Texas: 1998).

Reading Castellanos's works is highly rewarding. In her novels and short stories we find ourselves confronted with a different, distant and alien world. And yet it is not that alien. She is talking about us. ■■■

NOTES

¹ Emmanuel Carballo, *Diecinueve protagonistas de la literatura mexicana del siglo XX* (Mexico City: Empresas Editoriales, 1965).

² Rosario Castellanos, *Obras completas I* (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1989), p. 238.

Revista 58 Mayo-agosto de 2005

Mayo-agosto 2005 año 20 número 58 ISSN 0187-0173

sociológica

Tiempo y modernidad en el debate sociológico contemporáneo

sociológica

División de Ciencias Sociales y Transdisciplinarias DEPARTAMENTO DE SOCIOLOGÍA

UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA METROPOLITANA Unidad de Estudios y Servicios Interdisciplinarios

Lidia Girola

- Tiempo, tradición y modernidad: la necesaria re-semantización de los conceptos

Luis Méndez

- Modernidad tardía y vida cotidiana

Margarita Olvera

- Sociología e historia: la distancia temporal en la reconstrucción histórica

Héctor Vera

- Cuándo, dónde y cuánto. El tiempo, el espacio y las medidas como problemas sociológicos

Pablo Navarro

- ¿Una sociedad capaz de computarse a sí misma? El nuevo papel de los métodos de análisis sociológico en Internet

The Gift Refused¹

Rosario Castellanos

Before anything else, I must introduce myself: my name is José Antonio Romero and I'm an anthropologist. Yes, anthropology is a relatively new major at the university. The first teachers were culled from most anywhere and in the confusion, some undesirable elements had the chance to slip through, but they are being weeded out little by little. Now, we new people are fighting to establish a decent academic level for our school. We have even taken the battle to the Senate, when it discussed the matter of the Law on Professions.

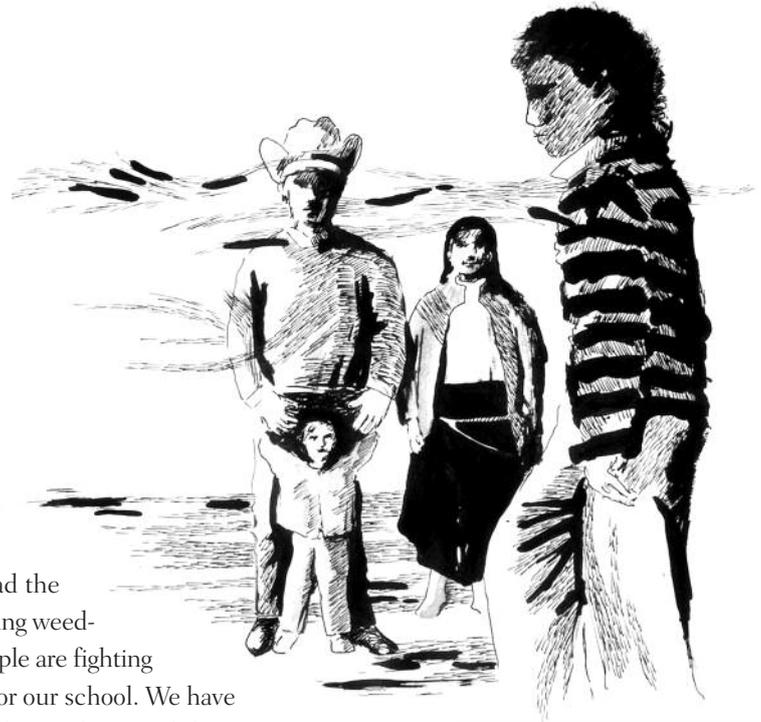
But I'm straying from the topic; that wasn't what I wanted to talk about, but rather a very curious incident that happened to me in Ciudad Real, where I work.

As you know, in Ciudad Real there's a Mission for Aid to the Indians. It was founded and initially maintained by private contributions, but now it has passed into government hands.

There, I'm just one more among many technicians, and my duties are quite varied. As the saying goes, I'm just as good for sweeping as for dusting. I do work as a researcher; I intervene in conflicts among towns; I've even done service patching up marriages. Naturally, I can't just sit in my office waiting for people to come looking for me. I have to go out and get ahead of the problems. In those conditions, I have to have a car. Lord almighty, what it cost me to get one! Everybody, the doctors, the teachers, the engineers, they all asked for the same thing I did. Well, in the end, we figured it out somehow. Now, at least a few days a week, I have a jeep at my disposal.

We have finally come to understand each other, the jeep and I; I know its little tricks and even how much it can give. I have discovered that it runs better on the highway (well, at least what we call a highway in Chiapas) than in the city.

Because in the city, traffic is a mess; there are no traffic signs or if there are, they're wrong and nobody obeys them. The people from San Cristóbal de las Casas (we call them "Coletos") walk down the middle of the street, without a care in the world, talking and laughing



Drawings by Héctor Ponce de León

as though the sidewalks didn't exist. Honk the horn? If you like wasting your time, go ahead. But the pedestrian won't even turn around to see what's going on, much less move out of the way.

But the other day, something very curious happened to me, which is what I was going to tell you. I was coming back from Navenchauc and driving the jeep down Real de Guadalupe Street, which is where the Indians and the *ladinos*² do business; I couldn't drive more than 10 kilometers an hour amidst those crowds and the people enjoying themselves bargaining or stumbling down the street loaded down with large bundles of merchandise. I said 10 kilometers, but sometimes the speedometer needle didn't move at all.

This slowness had put me in a bad mood even though I wasn't in a hurry or anything like it. Suddenly, a little Indian girl, about 12 years old, came out of nowhere and threw herself at the jeep. I managed to brake and only gave her a little light shove with the bumper. But I got out in a black fury, swearing. I won't hide anything, even if I am ashamed of it. I don't usually do it, but this time I swore as much as any Ciudad Real *ladino*.

The little girl listened to me, whimpering and hypocritically rubbing her eyes, where there wasn't a trace of a tear. I took pity on her, and despite all my convictions against begging and the ineffectiveness of isolated actions, and despite the fact that I abhor sentimentality, I took out a coin amidst the jeers of the onlookers who had crowded around us.

The little girl did not want to accept the money, but took hold of my sleeve and tried to take me somewhere that I couldn't understand. The onlookers, naturally, laughed and said things in double entendres, but I paid no attention to them and followed after her.

I wouldn't want you to misunderstand me. Not for a moment did I think that this was a liaison, because in that case I wouldn't have been interested. I'm young and single and sometimes the need for a female can become oppressive in these miserable towns. But I work in an institution, and there's something called professional ethics that I respect very much. Also, why fool ourselves? My tastes are a little more demanding.

So anyway, we came to one of the streets that crosses Guadalupe and there I found a woman—also an Indian—lying on the ground, apparently unconscious, with a newly born infant in her arms.

The little girl pointed to her and said who knows how many things to me in her dialect. Unfortunately, I have not learned to speak it yet because—apart from the fact that my specialty is not linguistics but social anthropology—I haven't been in Chiapas very long. So, I had no idea what she was saying.

When I leaned down toward the woman I had to repress the impulse to cover my nose with a handkerchief. She gave off an odor that I don't know how to describe: very strong, very concentrated, very unpleasant. It was not just the smell of someone who was dirty, although the woman was very dirty and sweat soaked the wool of her jacket. It was something more intimate, more... what can I call it? More organic.





I automatically took her pulse (I have no more idea of medicine than anybody else). And I was alarmed by its violence, its chaotic beating. To judge by that, the woman was in very serious shape indeed. I didn't hesitate any more. I went for the jeep to take her to the clinic at the mission.

The little girl never left us, even for a moment; she took charge of the newborn infant, who cried desperately, and made sure that the patient was, if not comfortable, at least secure in the back of the jeep.

My arrival at the mission caused the confusion that you might well expect; everybody ran to see what was happening, but they had to put their curiosity on the back burner because I couldn't tell them anything more than what I've told you.

After examining her, the doctor at the clinic said that the woman had childbed fever. Just imagine! Her son had been born in who knows what unhygienic conditions, and now she was paying for it with an infection that had her on the verge of death.

I took the matter very hard. At that time, I had a kind of vacation and decided to use it for those who had come to me in a moment of need.

When the mission pharmacy's antibiotics ran out, so as not to get into a lot of red tape, I went myself to buy them in Ciudad Real, and what I couldn't get there, I went to Tuxtla to get. With what money? My own. I'm not telling you so you can praise me, which I'm not interested in, but because I promised not to hide anything from you. And why should you praise me? I earn good money, I'm single, and in these towns there's not much to spend your money on. I have my savings. And I wanted that woman to get well.

While the penicillin took effect, the little girl wandered around the clinic halls with the baby in her arms. He never stopped bellowing, the little bugger. And well should he, what with how hungry he was. He was given synthetic food and the wives of some of the mission's employees—good women, if you hit the right note with them—provided the kid with diapers and talcum powder and all that stuff.

Little by little, those of us who lived in the mission became fond of the little family. We heard about their misfortunes in great detail thanks to a maid who served as translator from Tzeltal to Spanish because the linguist was on a trip at the time.

It turns out that the patient, whose name was Manuela, had been widowed during the first months of her pregnancy. The owner of the land who rented to her dead husband set himself up as the Great Captain. According to him, the peon had made commitments that

he hadn't finished paying off: loans in cash and kind, advances, a mess that now the widow had the obligation to unravel.

Manuela ran away from there and moved in with members of her family. But the pregnancy made it difficult for her to work in the fields. Also, crops had been poor in recent years and everywhere people were feeling the scarcity.

What way out did the poor woman have? She could think of nothing more than to come down to Ciudad Real and see if she could get a job as a maid. You think about it for a moment: Manuela, a maid! A woman who didn't know how to cook anything but beans and who was incapable of doing an errand, who didn't even speak Spanish. And to top it all off, the baby about to come.

After much searching, Manuela found a place in an inn for muleteers run by Doña Prájeda, famous throughout the neighborhood for working anybody who had the misfortune of serving her to the breaking point.

Well, that's where my fortunate Manuela ended up. Since her pregnancy was well along, she finished up the housework with the help of her older daughter, Marta, a very smart and naturally vivacious little girl.

Somehow, the two of them managed to please the *patrona*³ who —as we found out later— had her eye on Marta to sell her to the first man who asked for her.

No matter how much she denies it now, Doña Prájeda couldn't help but know what state Manuela was in when she took her in. But when the time came for her to give birth, she pretended to be surprised and raised a hue and cry, saying that her inn was not a shelter and made preparations to take her servant to the Civil Hospital.

Poor Manuela was crying her eyes out. Just imagine. Who knows what she had contrived to imagine a hospital was. A kind of jail, a place for penance and punishment. Finally, after much begging, she managed to get her *patrona* to relent and let the Indian woman give birth in her house.

Doña Prájeda is one of those people who don't do the whole favor. So Manuela wouldn't bother anybody with her screams, she hid her away in the stable. There, amidst the dung and the flies and who knows what other filth, the Indian woman had her baby and caught the fever she had when I picked her up.





As soon as the first symptoms of the disease appeared, the *patrona* shouted to the high heavens and, without a drop of pity, threw the whole family out on the street. There they could have stayed, from sun-up to sun-down, if a charitable soul had not taken pity on them and given Marta the advice that she try the mission, since the Civil Hospital terrified her mother so much.

Marta didn't know where the mission was, but when they saw a jeep pass by with our logo on it, somebody pushed her so I would have to stop.

If we put to one side the scare and the dressing down, things didn't turn out so badly for them because in the mission, not only did we cure Manuela, but we worried about what was going to happen to her and her children after she was released from the clinic.

Manuela was too weak to work and Marta was more of school age. Why not sign her into the mission's boarding school? There, they teach them skills, the rudiments of reading and writing, the habits and needs of civilized people. And after their learning, they can go back to their own towns with a job, a decent wage, with new dignity.

We proposed this to Manuela believing that she was going to see the heavens open up; but she just held her son closer to her breast. She didn't want to respond.

We thought a reaction like this was strange, but in the discussions with the other anthropologists, we came to see that what concerned Manuela was her daughter's wages, wages she needed to support herself.

You can just imagine that it was no big thing; a pittance and for me, like for anyone else, it was no sacrifice to make that monthly expenditure. I went to propose this arrangement to the woman and I very carefully explained it all to the interpreter.

"She says that if you want to buy her daughter to be your mistress, she's asking a gallon of liquor and two almuds of corn.⁴ That she won't take any less for her."

Perhaps it would have been more practical to accept those conditions that to Manuela seemed normal and innocent because they were the custom of her race. But I tried my best to show her—for me and for the mission—that our aims were not like those of any *ladino* in Ciudad Real, neither to corrupt them nor to exploit them. What we wanted was to give her daughter the opportunity to get an education and improve her life. Useless. Manuela kept insisting on the liquor and the corn, to which she now, seeing my insistence, had added an almud of beans.

I opted to leave her in peace. In the clinic they continued to care for her and her children, feeding them, pouring DDT on their heads because they were seething with lice.

But I couldn't resign myself to giving up; it nagged at my conscience to see a little girl as smart as Marta be raised any old way and end up in who knows what poverty.

Someone suggested that the best way for me to win the mother's trust was through religion: being god-parents is a spiritual family relationship that the Indians respect very much. The newborn was not baptized yet. Why not convince Manuela, little by little, that she ask me to be her baby's godfather?

I began by buying the baby toys: a rattle, amber for the evil eye. I made sure I was there when the nurse bathed him and I even learned to change his diapers relatively painlessly.

Manuela let me do all this, but not without concern, with a hesitation that she could not dissimulate behind her smiles. She only breathed freely when the baby was in her lap again.

Despite everything, I had my hopes that I was gaining ground, and one day I decided that the moment had come to propose the matter of the baptism.



After all the necessary circuitous preliminaries, the interpreter said that the baby could not continue to live like a little animal, without a name or any sacraments said over him. I saw Manuela docilely assent to our reasoning and even reinforce them with affirmative gestures and exclamations that showed she was mentally weighing things. I thought the matter was settled.

But when it came time to pick the godfather, Manuela did not let us continue; she had thought of this from the beginning and there was no use discussing it.

“Who?” asked the interpreter.

I moved a few steps away to allow the patient to speak freely.

“Doña Prájeda,” responded the Indian in her half Spanish.

I couldn’t contain myself and, clutching the bars on the bed, I shook it in a paroxysm of fury.

“Doña Prájeda?” I repeated incredulously. “The one who sent you into the stable so your son could be born amongst the filth? The one who threw you out on the street when you needed her support and sympathy the most? The one who hasn’t come by the mission once to ask if you were dead or alive?”

“Doña Prájeda is my *patrona*,” responded Manuela seriously. “We haven’t broken our agreement. I am still not out of her power.”

To make a long story short, the argument lasted hours and Manuela and I could not come to any agreement. I left the clinic angry as hell and swearing to never again get involved in something that was none of my business.

A few days later, a completely recovered Manuela left the mission with her children. Naturally, she went back to work for Doña Prájeda.

Occasionally I have run into her in the street and she averts her eyes from mine. But not like she was ashamed or remorseful. More like she was afraid of being harmed.

No, please don’t call Manuela ungrateful, or abject or an idiot! Do not conclude—in order to avoid taking responsibility—that Indians are incorrigible. Their attitude is very understandable. They don’t distinguish one *caxlán*⁵ from another. We all look alike. When one treats them brutally, they know what’s happening, they know what must be done. But when another is friendly and gives without asking anything in return, they don’t understand. It’s outside the order of things in Ciudad Real. They fear that the trap is even more dangerous and they defend themselves in their own way, by running away.

I know all of this, and I know that if we work hard—we at the mission and everyone else—someday things will be different.

But meanwhile, Manuela, Marta... What will become of them? What I want you to tell me is if I, as a professional, as a man, did something wrong. There must be something. Something that I didn’t know how to give them. ■■

NOTES

¹ Taken from, Rosario Castellanos, *Obras Completas I* (Mexico City: FCE, 1999), pp. 313-320.

² In Chiapas a *ladino* is a mestizo, usually one who mistreats and despises indigenous people. Tzeltal and Tzotzil people called people of their own race *ladinos* when they learn the ways of the mestizos, speak in Spanish and refuse to wear traditional clothes. [Translator’s Note.]

³ *Patrona* can be translated “boss,” but this English word does not convey the semi-feudal nature of the relationship established, which includes aspects similar to those in the relationship between a lord and his serf. [Translator’s Note.]

⁴ An almod is a measure of grain anywhere from 2 to 21 quarts. [Translator’s Note.]

⁵ *Caxlán* is a mestizo or a white man, usually one with authority.

Reproduced with permission of Fondo de Cultura Económica and Gabriel Guerra Castellanos.

The Ancient Cities of the Usumacinta



The Grand Plaza with Stela 2 to the right. Yaxchilán. Photo: Elsie Montiel

Notes from an Old Field Diary

Daniel Juárez Cossío*



In December 1983, battered by the torrential rains caused by cold fronts along the Chiapas Lacandon Jungle, we were excavating the first stairways that lead from the Great Plaza to the heights of Building 33 in Yaxchilán. During our work, we located the box of stela 2, an eroded monument found by the Austrian explorer Teobert Maler at the end of the nineteenth century. The stela dates from A.D. 615 and shows the features of a long forgotten ruler of Yaxchilán, perhaps the father of Bird Jaguar III, a personage of the legendary dynasty that restored its line in the mid-seventh century.

YAXCHILÁN

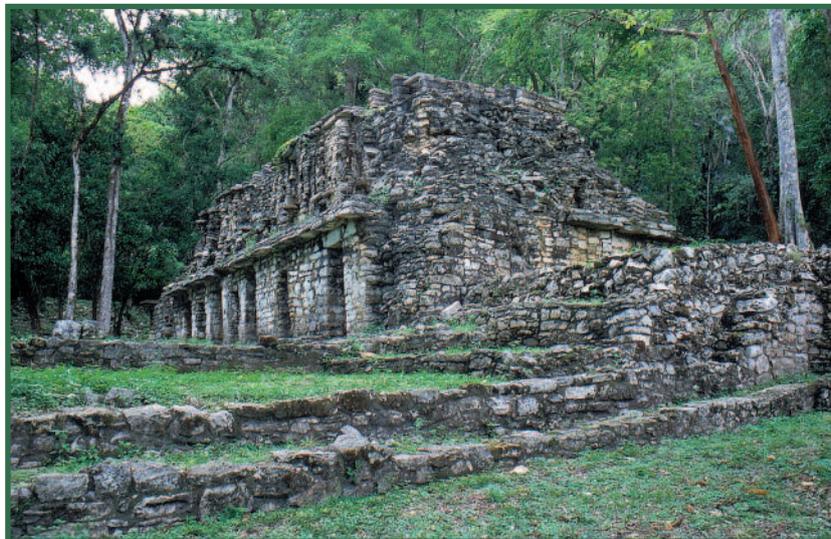
Yaxchilán is splendidly placed on a curve on the left bank of the Usumacinta River. Its architects took good advantage of the succession of natural terraces parallel to the river to erect the most splendid of buildings. Today, the traveler to the ancient city enters by way of the Grand Plaza, passing by a series of subterranean galleries under Building 19, called the Labyrinth because of the intricacy

of its corridors. The trip, in the dark, suffocating humidity of its hallways, evokes the experience of a journey into the depths of the underworld, Xibalbá. An entryway for those who, divining the shadows at the end of the road, will be allowed to push to one side the veil covering the world of the ancient Maya, a world of presences and essences that once populated that jungle.

Crossing the threshold, we see the Great Plaza, separated from the river by several buildings, among them, the *temascal* or steam-bath house, a small structure with wide built-in stone benches used for ritual ablutions; Building 16, on whose lintels Bird Jaguar IV, disposed to be represented, along with his mother and his consort, invoking the Vision Serpent; the ball game, a court where the sacred contest took place between the celestial powers and those of the underworld, whose constant clashes maintained order in the cosmos; and, finally, a modest palace complex, whose corners are now inhabited only by the murmur of the river. At the center of the Great Plaza is Stela 1, *axis mundi* or center of the earth that celebrates the end of a period in the reign of Bird Jaguar IV, and also indicates the way to Building 33, his most elaborate work.

As we prepare to put Stela 2 back in its original position, we never stopped thinking about the unidentified personage carved on it, whose

* Researcher at the National Institute of Anthropology and History Department of Archaeological Studies.



Building 19, Yaxchilán. The traveler reaches the main plaza passing through its subterranean galleries.
Photo: Elsie Montiel



Stela 1, detail. Yaxchilán. Photo: Elsie Montiel

epigraphic records, just like those of his probable son Bird Jaguar III, continue to be lost in the obscurity of time and the rub-

ble of the buildings. We know that after the beginning of the government of Mah k'ina Cranium II in the year A.D. 526, there is a prolonged silence in the Yaxchilán inscriptions until Shield Jaguar I took the throne in A.D. 681. He, together with his son Bird Jaguar IV, recovered part of that memory, marked by the oblivion that characterized the Mayan lowlands for almost the entire sixth century and the first third of the seventh.

In the sixth century, the years-long alliance between the governing elites of Tikal and Caracol dissolved, causing political destabilization in the region and giving the reign of Calakmul the opportunity to extend its influence over a larger area. Thus, while the Tikal line found refuge in the Petexbatún region, other cities fought to control the strategic enclaves in the Usumacinta basin and the lowlands of Tabasco, dominions that would pave the way to obtaining important resources and the possibility of exchanging them with other Mesoamerican provinces. In that context lived Bird Jaguar III, who faced not only the old rivalries with the neighboring kingdom of Piedras Negras and its allies, but also with the powerful kingdom of Palenque under the command of K'inich Janaab' Pakal I (Pakal the Great). At the

end of the conflict, he managed to achieve for himself and his successors dominion over the Yaxchilán lines.

The few monuments whose inscriptions refer to Bird Jaguar III were erected by his son and grandson. These inscriptions state that he occupied the Yaxchilán ceremonial center between A.D. 630 and A.D. 681, a period in which Building 7 and the palace

complex made up of Buildings 10, 11, 12 and 74 were erected. Older constructions were found in the Little Acropolis, a group of buildings situated on top of a hill to the northwest of the site, suggesting that they were originally ordered built by Bird Jaguar III to use as a residence. The final constructions, together with Buildings 42 and 44, were erected under the supervision of Shield Jaguar I, whose architectural program was dedicated to consecrating his military feats and proclaiming his links to his divine ancestors.

Stelas 3 and 6, commissioned by Bird Jaguar IV, show the sublime moment in which Bird Jaguar II made an offering of his blood, a rite with which Mayan rulers commemorated the turn of the *katún* after taking the throne.¹ For the ancient



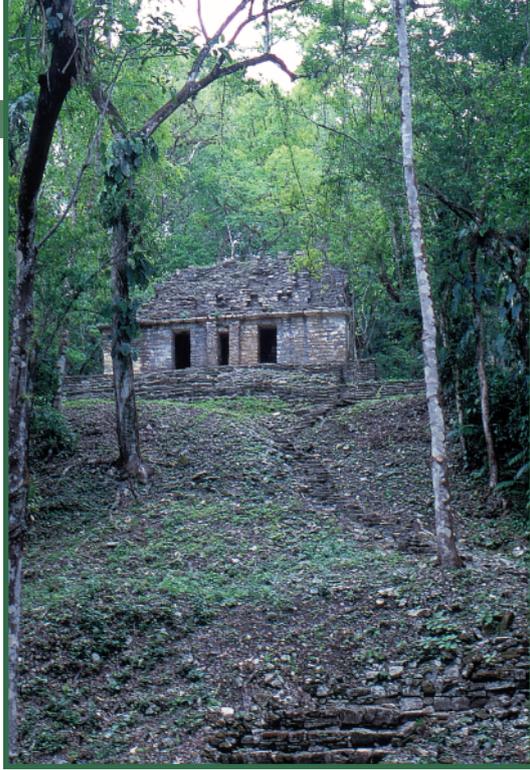
Glyphs from Building 33. Yaxchilán. Photo: Rubén Vázquez

Mayan imaginary, the blood offering, whether in the solitude of the private chambers or in a lavish public ritual, was a transcendental event through which it was possible to open up the prodigious doorway of communication with ancestors and gods. The rites of passage such as birth, the transition to puberty or death, as well as the events that affected people's reality such as rulers being enthroned, preparations for battle or the culmination of certain calendar cycles required ablutions and the mortification of the flesh.

To do this, men perforated their penises and women their tongues using sharp obsidian knives or the spiny tail of the stingray, which, when blessed, were possessed by the spirit of the Perforator God, thus becoming objects of power. The blood from



Bird Jaguar IV, Building 33. Yaxchilán. Photo: Rubén Vázquez



Building 30. Yaxchilán. Photo: Elsie Montiel

the self-sacrifice was collected on strips of *amate* paper to be consumed in the blackened burner, in whose evanescent column of smoke, mixed with the aromatic *pom* (copal resin), emerged the materialization of the Serpent Vision, considered the manifestation of the divine ancestors, who was consulted about the signs of the universe. The ostentation of these public ceremonies at the height of the Mayan culture can be seen in the Bonampak murals.

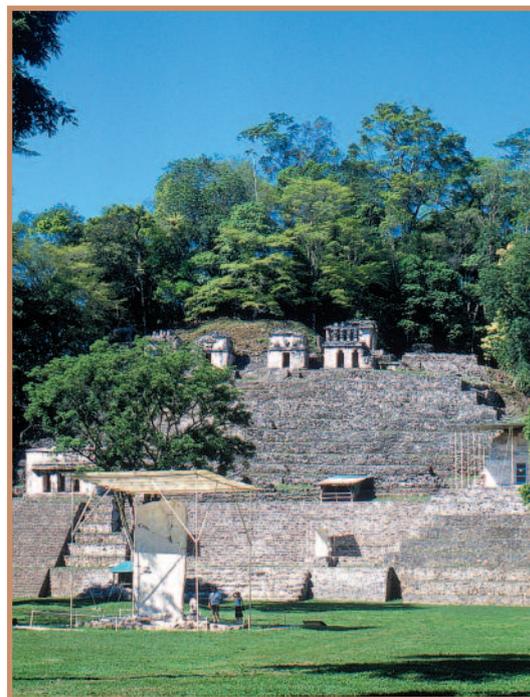
BONAMPAK

The ancient city of Bonampak occupied a narrow valley crisscrossed by many streams that feed into the Lacanjá River. It is barely 25 kilometers south of Yaxchilán and separated from it only by some craggy mountains. The architects used one of the high places to recreate the founding passage of the sacred mountain. On its northeast side, they planned a series of terraces and erected the buildings of the Acropolis. One of the outstanding edifices is the Temple of Paintings, which dominates the large plaza at its feet and in whose center is the *axis mundi*, Stela 1, which shows the figure of the last known ruler, Chaan Muan II.

To him we owe the iconographic work of the Temple of Paintings done to celebrate his third anniversary in the ceremonial center in A.D. 791.

Chaan Muan II had himself depicted in Room 1 dancing in rich, sumptuous clothing. Parallel to that, another ceremony is taking place in which one of the figures holds a child in his arms, showing it to a group of nobles. The scene, which has been interpreted as the presentation of the successor in a dynastic line, is still debated by the epigraphers, since while the erection of the building commemorates the event, the ceremony is not mentioned in the inscriptions.

Room 2 recreates a cruel, bloody battle culminating in the capture of victims for sacrifice in the year A.D. 792, jealously observed from the firmament by the personification of Venus the evening star, the warrior power that boasts its own captives. Room 3 evokes what may be the paroxysm of the celebration in the public plaza in which a group of dancers executes the steps imposed by the grave beat of the *tunkul*, or drum, accompanied by rattles and trumpets, while other figures, perhaps guided by mystical rapture, offer up their blood, as does a group of women who, in the intimacy of the site, are seen perforating their tongues and wearing ribbons around their necks as a sign of their devotion.



The entrance to Bonampak. Photo: Elsie Montiel



Left: Stela 1, Chaan Muan II (detail); center: Stela 2, Chaan Muan II and Yax Rabbit (detail); right: Lintel, Chaan Muan II subduing a captive, Temple of Paintings. Bonampak. Photos: Elsie Montiel

Chaan Muan II's iconographic project included other monuments. Stela 2, in addition to depicting his enthronement in A.D. 776, shows him preparing for his self-sacrifice, assisted by his mother, standing in front of him, and his consort, Madame Yax Rabbit, a prominent member of the Yaxchilán line; both of them are holding the vessels with the instruments used to bleed him. Stela 1 commemorates his first celebration in A.D. 782, in which Chaan Muan II is wearing a breastplate of sea shells. Stela 3 depicts the second anniversary in which, wearing a headdress in the shape of a serpent, he is holding a dart launcher in his hand and has a captive prostrate at his feet. On the lintels that close the openings in the wall of the Temple of Paintings, in addition to having himself depicted subduing a captive, the sovereign shared this sig-

nificant space with Shield Jaguar II of Yaxchilán, his most important ally and the brother of Madame Yax Rabbit. Another figure offers us a glimpse of the past, reminding us of a victory by his grandfather, Withered Eye Jaguar II, who in about A.D. 740 made relations with the kingdom of Lacanjá closer to stop the attacks of the kingdom of Sak Tz'i.

* * *

Like in Yaxchilán, in Bonampak only a vague memory remains of its first rulers; their memory, chiseled in stone, is today dispersed and fragmented among museums and private collections or lost in the rubble of the ancient city.

This memory, broken and dispersed, tells us that around A.D. 641 Bonampak defied the con-



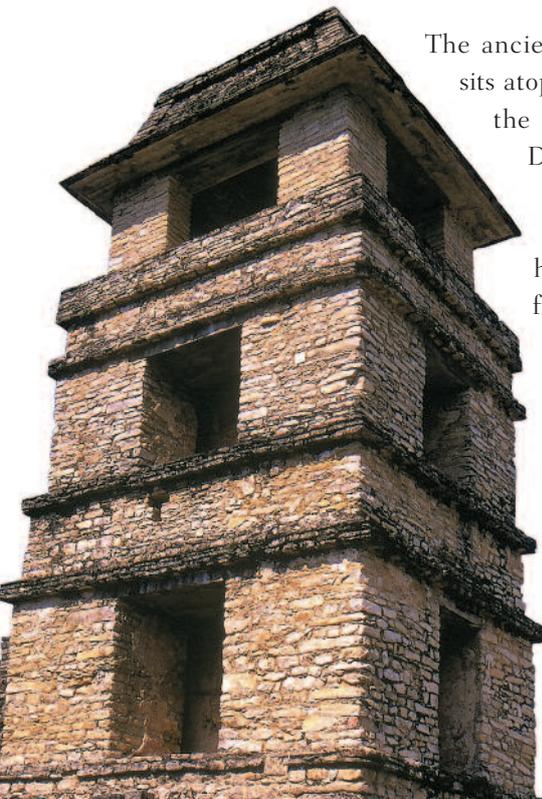
The Presentation in Room 1, Temple of Paintings. Bonampak. Photo: Elsie Montiel

ditions imposed by the sovereigns of Piedras Negras, who, using the complicity and alliances plotted from the halls of Calakmul, managed to extend their domains and take over the river region of Tabasco, therefore limiting Palenque's expansionist aspirations to control that territory. Thus, the lord of Piedras Negras known as Ruler 2, sadly remembered on Bonampak's monuments as Nik' Moo Tul (Flower Macaw Rabbit), at only fifteen took prisoner and sacrificed Hun Ek' Tut' (One Star Parrot), the divine lord of Bonampak.

Piedras Negras's Panel 2 was erected in A.D. 658 to commemorate the death of Yo 'nal Ahk I, the father of Ruler 2. It also seems to salute the presentation of his son as successor in the dynasty, a ceremony which the nobles of Lacanjá and Yaxchilán attended, as did the ruler of Bonampak, Moyil Chaan K'awil (Last? Heaven God), about

whom it is difficult to fully understand if he was imposed in the ceremonial center or whether, after the death of his predecessor, he preferred to opt for prudence and maintain a weak political equilibrium. At the end of the seventh century, Bonampak's ceremonial center was occupied by Ah Chuh Uul Yaxún Bahlam (Lord? Moon Bird Jaguar), whose efforts managed to consolidate his alliance with Lacanjá when he sponsored the enthronement of Ah Bahlum Uh (Jaguar Moon). Everything seems to indicate that these cities were clearly subordinate to the influential kingdom of Piedras Negras, which managed to establish broad territorial power that reached all the way to the rivers of the north, the valley of Lacanjá to the west and the high Usumacinta to the south, whose domination by Palenque in the early eighth century would be eclipsed years later by the incursions by the lords of Toniná.

PALENQUE

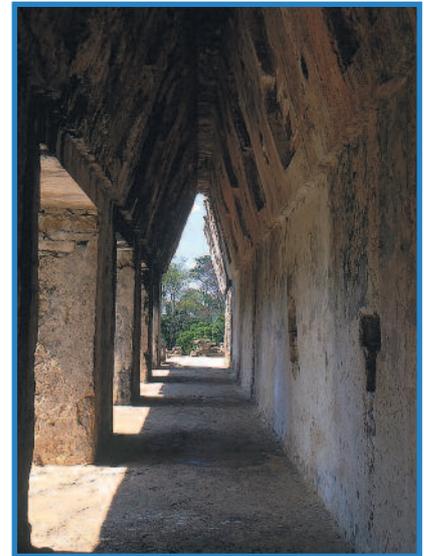
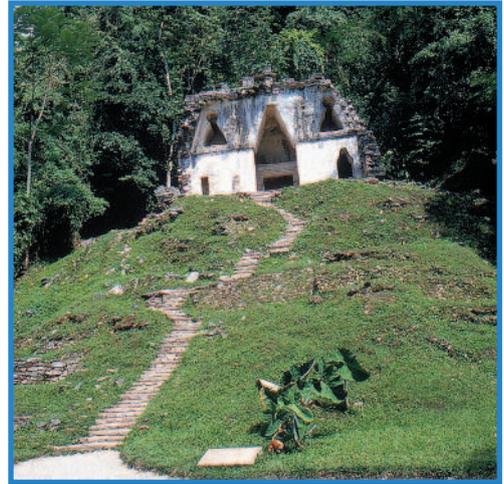


The Tower. Palenque. Photo: Rubén Vázquez

The ancient city of Palenque sits atop a mesa located on the slopes between the Don Juan and Palenque mountain ranges that separate the highlands of Chiapas from the broad floodplain of Tabasco. Palenque's scenery is particularly attractive because it seems to have been modeled as a labyrinth of ravines covered by exuberant tropical vegetation barely broken by the rumor of the many streams that crisscross it, among the largest of which are

the Motiepa, the Balunté, the Murciélagos, the Picota and the Otolum. The Otolum was re-routed in order to build the heart of the city, for which the architects designed a vaulted aqueduct that channeled its waters to a place very close to the Temple of the Lion (also known as The Beautiful Relief) and then re-released them near the ball game court, at whose exit a relief in the form of a lizard is still visible. At that point, the water begins its descent, through a succession of wells and waterfalls, and then flows into the complex network of the Chacamax and, finally, the Usumacinta.

Outstanding among the great buildings of this ancient Chontal city are the Palace and the Temple of the Inscriptions, without doubt both emblematic of Palenque and both erected during the reign of K'inich Janaab' Pakal I, who ascended to the throne in A.D. 615 when he was only 12 and the kingdom was totally crestfallen after its clashes with the overwhelming Calakmul kingdom. It is to be supposed that in those years in the distant city of Yaxchilán, Bird Jaguar III was being born, whose destiny began to be carefully plotted by the able hands of the divine powers in the expecta-



Upper left: view from the Temple of the Cross. Upper right: Temple of the Foliated Cross. Lower left: Temple of the Inscriptions. Photos: Elsie Montiel
Lower right: the interior of the Palace. Photo: Rubén Vázquez

tion that the conjunction of the heavenly sign would indicate the moment of his encounter, when Venus, the star of war, would shine on the horizon.

* * *

The Palace, the administrative center and the residence of Palenque's sovereigns, was built in two important stages. The first completed an enormous platform on the plaza, erected toward the end of the sixth century and in the beginning of the seventh, perhaps during the reign of Madame Yohl Ik'nal, the first woman who occupied Palenque's ceremonial center in the year A.D. 583, according to the epigraphs. The best known remains of this ancient construction are the so-called "underground", among whose dark galleries visitors to the city can still wander.

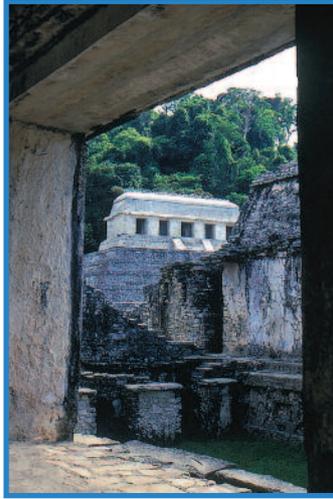
The ruler K'inich Janaab' Pakal I was responsible for the second great transformation of this architectural complex; he ordered the original platform to be covered with huge amounts of filling material in order to build Houses E, B, C and A, with very beautiful curved vaults. The rest of the buildings would be erected later. House E, also known as the *sak nuk naah*, or "house of the white skin", was fitted out as a throne room, where the "jaguar mat" was kept, which is why it was decorated with a relief that shows the moment this ruler ascended to the throne accompanied by his mother, Madame Sak K'uk' in the year A.D. 615.

The eastern patio of the Palace, bordered by Houses B, C and A, is also known as "the house of the captives", where K'inich Janaab' Pakal I reasserted his regional power, showing in a series of reliefs his

most important prisoners, humiliated and subjected to public scorn. While many of the texts seen there are still obscure, we can suppose that K'inich Janaab' Pakal I made a strong alliance with Nuun Ujol Chaak from Tikal to deal with Calakmul's expansionist ambitions.

K'inich Janaab' Pakal I's next great architectural undertaking was the building of the Temple of Inscriptions, the door through which he would go to begin his road to Xibalbá. He built the temple against the northern slope of a hill southwest of the Palace, where he first erected a nine-terrace base that represented the floors of the underworld. On top of that, he built a temple with three monumental panels in its interior, on which the sovereign described his divine genealogy, emphasizing that he was the son of Madame Sak K'uk', who he compared to the first mother of the gods of creation and the guardian deities: the Triad of Palenque. From the top of the building, the visitor descends to the funeral chamber taking two steep staircases covered by a succession of 13 vaults which symbolize the levels of heaven. In this world view, the manifestation of the divine and its links to the secular sphere, the borders between history and myth blur, legitimatizing the exercise of power by the Mayan sovereigns.

K'inich Janaab' Pakal I died before concluding his funeral monument, which was finished by his son, K'inich Kan B'alam II, who also presided over the funeral and mandated placing the body inside a sarcophagus on which were sculpted the portraits of his parents, his children and other rulers. An enormous slab with the carved figure of the sovereign was placed on top of the sarcophagus. This can be read in two ways. First, that it is a representation of the deceased in his fall toward the underworld, where the sovereign, transformed in his essence into a nocturnal sun, is received in the jaws of the monster *cauac*, the symbol of the sacred mountain, on his road to Xibalbá. Second, that it represents his rebirth as the god of corn emerging



View of the Temple of Inscriptions from the Palace. Photo: Rubén Vázquez

from the jaws of the monster of the earth. Finally, the sarcophagus where his remains lie is connected to the surface by a conduit that reaches the entire length of the stairway that may have allowed him to communicate with the secular world through his manifestation as Serpent Vision.

K'inich Kan B'alam II ascended to the throne in A.D. 684. Under his leadership, Palenque dominated the land that reached to the banks of the upper Usumacinta and the small communities of La Mar and Anaité. Among

the buildings erected during his reign, perhaps the most important are those that make up the Group of the Crosses, an impressive architectural complex constructed to commemorate his ascension to the throne, in which he shares the scene with the triad of the creator gods.

* * *

The buzz of the biplane sounds through the ravines, accompanying its trip over Yaxchilán's improvised landing strip as it wends its way to the heights. The field work is finished. The pilot's able turns around the winding river allow us to see some of the buildings distributed along the Great Plaza through the shrubbery. There they remain, just like the rubble of other constructions, as part of the memory of its ancient inhabitants, waiting for the patient scrutiny of all those willing to penetrate their arcane mysteries. **MM**

NOTES

¹ The turn of the *katún* is like the turn of the century. The *katún* is one of the classical Mayan measurements of time, which begins on a mythical date in the past set at 13.0.0.0.0 4 Ahau 8 Cumku. The first number represents the *baktúns* (the equivalent of 144,000 days or 400 years); the second the *katúns* (the equivalent of almost 20 years); the third the *tuns* (a 360-day year); the fourth, the *uinals* (28-day months); and the last, the *kíns* (days).

Photos reproduced by permission of the National Institute of Anthropology and History. Conaculta-INAH-Mex.

*¿Visitas guiadas
o guías
espirituales?
Así es Chiapas*

*Visita las Culturas Vivas de Chiapas
y deja que guíen tu espíritu a un lugar donde
el tiempo no existe.*

- ★★★★★ Tarifas desde \$ 1,000.00
- ★★★★★ Tarifas desde \$ 800.00
- ★★★ Tarifas desde \$ 240.00
- ★★ Tarifas desde \$ 165.00

Tarifas diarias por persona
en base a ocupación doble.
Vigencia: Del 1 de junio al 31
de diciembre de 2005.

CHIAPAS
auténtico por naturaleza

01 800 280 3500

www.turismochiapas.gob.mx



CHIAPAS
Secretaría de Turismo

México

Vive hoy, vive lo tuyo

ZooMAT

Much More than a Zoo

Becky Álvarez*

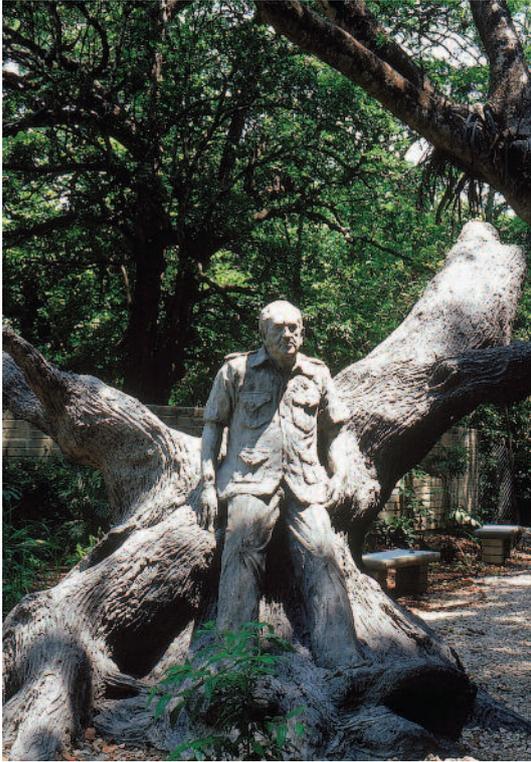


The César Domínguez Flores Zoological Museum, inside the ZooMAT. Photo: Elsie Montiel

More than half a century ago in southern Mexico, in a state that was part of Mesoamerica, cradle of great pre-Hispanic cultures, a zoo was founded using a totally innovative creative concept for its time. Today, in addition to being Chiapas capital Tuxtla Gutiérrez's main tourist attraction, the ZooMAT is a front-ranking scientific center for the study, management, protection and conservation of wildlife.

The ZooMAT —full name, Miguel Álvarez del Toro Regional Zoo— is named after the man who made it distinctive and was its director until his death in 1996. It all began very modestly in 1942 on some city property. Over the years, after relocating twice, urban growth made it necessary to relocate one last time to a more appropriate site, and in 1980, the state government

* Assistant to the director of the Institute of Natural History and Ecology (INHE). nambue@yahoo.com



Statue of museum founder Miguel Álvarez del Toro. Photo: Elsie Montiel

approved Álvarez del Toro's proposal to definitively build the zoo in an ideal spot, a natural forest in the southern part of the city.

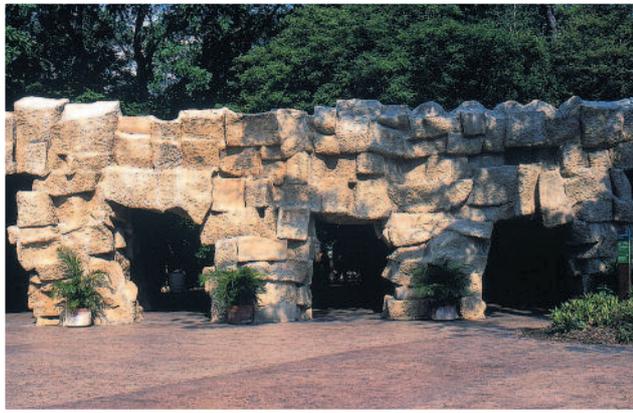
Since then, ZooMAT has been located in El Zapotal, a 100-hectare area of semi-humid jungle that was designated as a reserve in the same year, with a climate typical of the region: warm, with summer rains and a long dry season in which the vegetation loses a large portion of its foliage as part of its life cycle. Its name derives from the presence of various species of trees famous for their fleshy, sweet, fragrant fruit: black sapote (*Diospyros digyna*), sapodilla or "little sapote" (*Manilkara achras*) and mamey or red sapote (*Pouteria sapota*).

The zoo adapted to its new surroundings as though fated to be there. The rugged terrain was used to build spacious enclosures fenced off by mesh and stone walls, crisscrossed by small streams fed by underground water. The animals, some practically unknown to the public, are in semi-captivity in surroundings very like their original habitats,

which often makes it difficult to see them even when they are near. Other native species run completely free. This offers the zoo's 500,000 visitors a year the opportunity to go through part of the forest on a 2.5 kilometer path, while observing an interesting display of wildlife diversity from all over the state of Chiapas: 2,041 animals of 241 species, including the groups of mantled howling monkeys (*Alouatta palliata*) that move freely from tree to tree, often making deafening noise with their screeching.



After entering ZooMAT, you come out onto an esplanade. Photo: Elsie Montiel



Main entrance. Sundays from 9 to 10:30, admission is free. Photo: Rubén Vázquez



The zoo is located in a 100-hectare area of semi-humid jungle. Photo: Rubén Vázquez



The Nocturnal House has an inverted day-night cycle. Photo: Elsie Montiel

Miguel Álvarez del Toro's work in Chiapas is a legacy for the world. His scientific work is classified as the most important in Mexican zoology in the twentieth century. A native of the state of Colima, he fell in love with Chiapas and its natural wonders from the moment he arrived, and stayed there the rest of his life. Among the many honors he received in his lifetime are the Paul Getty Prize for Nature Conservation; being chosen by the committee for the UN Prize for the Environment to be included on the Honor Roll for Environmental Achievement; the Chiapas Prize; two honorary doctorates; more than 10 species named after him; and the zoo itself being named after him by a 1981 government decree.

From the beginning, Don Miguel—as everyone called him—thought that one way of educating Chiapanecans in the respect and care for the state's wealth of fauna was that they get to know it up close. And what better way than a zoo where people could find information about the species and their ecosystems, their habits and life cycle? To achieve this goal, the animals have to live in appropriate conditions. The ZooMAT's animals exhibit their well-being by maintaining the behavior and habits they display in the wild. Almost all the species in the zoo have reproduced, and some of the births have even been world records. Longevity records have also been set, such as in the case of the harpy eagle (*Harpia harpyja*), which lived 41 years after arriving at the zoo full grown.

In addition to the fauna that lives in the open air like the ponds with aquatic birds or otters, or in cages with macaws and other birds, the ZooMAT has closed spaces for exhibiting certain species, like the Crocodile Museum. The first of its kind in Latin America, this museum shows the visitor everything about these large reptiles: nests and eggs, skeletons and, of course, live babies and adults from the three Mexican species (*Crocodylus moreletii*, *C. acutus* and *Caiman crocodilus*), since Chiapas is the only state where all three live. The Tropical Reptile House and the Mountain Reptile House, the latter specifically adapted for species from temperate climates, exhibit serpents and lizards. The Nocturnal House, logically, is home to species with nocturnal habits and has an artificial lighting through which their day-night cycle has been inverted, which makes it possible to see them in activity during the day. The Insect and Spider House exhibits a wide array of these species and other invertebrates from the state. And, lastly, the César Domínguez Zoological Museum, dedicated to the memory of the man who shared with Don Miguel the founding and design of the zoo in El

Zapotal, boasts several dioramas of Chiapas's different ecosystems. It also has two exhibits of live species: one is adapted to house a pair of quetzals (*Pharomachrus mocinno*), the mythical inhabitants of the Mesoamerican cloud forests. The appropriate humidity and temperature conditions made it possible for them to reproduce in 2004, the first time they have ever reproduced in captivity. A beautiful blue egg, cared for like the treasure it was, brought into the world a diminutive quetzal chick that is now covered in the emerald green feathers that make it look like a jewel.

Another of ZooMAT's important assets is its staff, who has a thorough knowledge of Chiapas wildlife and knows its job. Anyone familiar with how zoos work knows that successfully maintaining live species in captivity and on display depends a great deal on an enormous amount of behind-the-scenes work. The constant presence of a group of professionals including biologists, veterinarians and many kinds of technicians who design diets and prepare food, prevent disease and treat the animals when they get sick are the guarantee for that success.

What began in 1942 as a state effort to study and exhibit samples of regional fauna gradually grew and added other areas related to the knowledge, management and protection of the state's natural resources. Today, ZooMAT is the best known part of the Chiapas state government's Institute of Natural History and Ecology (INHE), dedicated to the study and conservation of biodiversity in the state, divided into six areas: the botanical (the herb garden, and botanical garden and museum); natural areas (reserves and protected areas); education and environmental culture, which has in ZooMAT an ideal live laboratory for its activities; research (research projects, scientific collections, the Paleontological Museum); environmental protection, which enforces state environmental norms; and zoology (ZooMAT and matters related to wildlife).

The ZooMAT is the cornerstone of the Chiapas institution that is a leader in conservation of its natural resources. But, its merits go beyond its merely biological achievements: for many years the public has been very fond of it, proud of it, its history and Don Miguel's legacy. ZooMAT's originality and the feeling of belonging and identity that it creates made people form habits that are difficult to forge without resorting to consumerism or carnival rides: the pleasure of visiting ZooMAT comes only from the forest and its fauna, from enjoying nature. And this alone is a valuable contribution to environmental culture. **NM**



Almost all species in the zoo have reproduced. Photo: Elsie Montiel



The ZooMAT has baby and adult crocodiles of all three Mexican species. Photo: Rubén Vázquez



The green *nauyaca*, one of the most venomous snakes in the southeastern Mexico. Photo: Elsie Montiel

The Museum Of Mayan Medicine

Rafael Alarcón*



Rubén Vázquez

El Museo de la Medicina Maya (Museum of Mayan Medicine) in San Cristóbal de las Casas is a magnificent opportunity to look into the theoretical-practical details of Tzotzil and Tzeltal indigenous medicine in museographical surroundings deserving of the 1997 Miguel Covarrubias National Prize for Museography awarded by the National Institute of Anthropology and History and the National Council for Culture and the Arts.

The museum is part of the Regional Center for the Development of Mayan Medicine (CR), designed and operated by the Indigenous Doctors Organization of the State of Chiapas (OMIECH) which for the last 20 years has sought to recover, defend and develop ancient Mayan medicine.¹ The importance of such a task is clear if we take into account that 80 percent of the illnesses in communities that belong to the OMIECH are treated by indigenous doctors.

*The ancient Mayan doctor-priests,
our grandfathers, wanted
their knowledge not to be lost.
They left it to us.
They taught us to heal through dreams.*

* Advisor to the Indigenous Doctors Organization of the State of Chiapas (OMIECH) who has worked 23 years in Chiapas indigenous communities on primary health care, health and inter-culturalism and traditional indigenous medicine projects.



Deborah Diemont

The museum is extraordinary: its seven museographical environments (photo-murals, panels, objects on display, sounds and life-sized human representations) allow visitors to situate themselves geographically, become familiarized with traditional doctors' different specialties and place themselves in the very site where therapeutic rites and activities are held. The complexity of health-illness processes and their undeniable link to nature are perfectly presented in each environment. Two of the spaces, the church and the garden *temazcal* or steam bath, are used daily by the organization's indigenous doctors to treat and heal patients who seek them out for help.

ENVIRONMENT 1
PUBLIC PLAZA IN A CHIAPAS TOWN

The first display represents the central plaza of a town in the Chiapas Highlands, with its church, two photo-murals with a view of the Chiapas mountains and the sounds of a marketplace (the voices of the merchants, dogs, fireworks, bells). In addition, two panels with drawings and photos of the Chamula and Chenalhó plazas explain traditional doctors' different specialties, the illnesses they treat and their therapeutic resources: the *I'lol* or

he-who-prays; the midwives; the bone doctor; he-who-prays of the hills; and the herb doctor (see box).

Maps of Mexico, the state of Chiapas, the Mayan region and the area where the OMIECH communities are located situate the visitor geographically. They also pinpoint the physiographic regions, areas of vegetation and general data about the medicinal plants used in the world, Mexico and Chiapas. On the upper part written quotes from Mayan doctors illustrate details of their activities.

ENVIRONMENT 2
CHURCH OF SAN JUAN CHAMULA

The church, in addition to being a place for religious activity, is a therapeutic space where traditional doctors perform many of their treatments. The museum boasts five altars, each one with a wooden saint, a cross, flowers, candles and an incense burner. At one end of the room is the main altar with its wooden Christ and three life-sized mannequins in front of it dressed in traditional Chamula garb. The mannequins represent a traditional doctor praying, a sick little girl and her mother kneeling next to her. The sound system reproduces the indigenous doctor's prayers. Next to the altar



Elsie Montiel

is a door to the outside with a view of the Chiapas mountains. The church is attended to by its own I'lol, a member of OMIECH, and anyone can come to him for treatment.

ENVIRONMENT 3: THE I'LOL'S GARDEN

This room represents the highland mountains, with drawings of fauna and the minerals used in indigenous medicine, in addition to 10 slides of medicinal plants being continually shown, giving ethno-botanical information. The most interesting item in this space is the altar of the hills placed in the center of the room, with the three customary crosses with stones around it. At the foot of the altar, a mannequin represents he-who-prays of the hills, kneeling and praying for illness not to enter his town.



Rubén Vázquez



Deborah Diemont



Deborah Diemont

The environmental sounds are those of the mountains: a waterfall, the wind, the birds chirping, the sounds of animals in the hills and the prayers of the healer. This, together with the dim lighting make the scene very realistic.

THE HOUSE OF MAYAN MEDICINE

This representation is outfitted like a real house, with earthen walls and a four-sided, slanted roof made of straw brought from the municipality of Chenalhó, and is divided into three more environments.

ENVIRONMENT 4: THE MIDWIFE'S HOUSE

This room is set up with the original objects from a Tzotzil house from the municipality of Chenalhó (kitchen utensils, machetes, gourds, a rifle, traditional clothing and a hearth at the center), donated by organization members. Four life-sized mannequins are posed to represent a birthing Chiapas-Highland style. The woman gives birth kneeling, with her husband in front of her seated on a chair and the midwife behind her in a crouch to catch the baby. Next to the midwife are the plants com-

monly used in birthing. The advantages of giving birth like this are explained in short paragraphs: the vertical position allows the baby to descend more easily; the husband, who embraces his wife around the waist, pressures the baby downward so it is born more quickly; and the husband's active participation creates an act of communion for the couple. The sound track reproduces the dialogue in Tzotzil among the three participants.

ENVIRONMENT 5 THE HOUSE OF THE HERB DOCTOR

This environment shows the visitor how *pilico* is made, a sacred compound made of wild tobacco, a pinch of lime and cane alcohol, used to protect people from envy and bad air, and so nothing happens to them on the roads when they go out at night or walk great distances. It should be carried with the person in his/her bag or hung around the neck to be used whenever necessary. It also helps for stomach pains and dizziness. The mannequin, dressed in the traditional clothing of Tenejapa, sits on a bench preparing the plant in a wooden mortar and pestle, with lime in a gourd and tobacco leaves to one side. On the floor are some agricultural tools and on the wall are the healer's hat, dry wild tobacco leaves and earthen pots to hold the *pilico*.

ENVIRONMENT 6 TRADITIONAL FACTORY OF VOTIVE CANDLES IN SAN JUAN CHAMULA

Divided from the herb doctor just by a passageway but in the same room is the mannequin of a standing woman, dressed in the customary clothing of San Juan Chamula. She is standing in front of a wooden wheel-shaped frame (called a *rueca*) where the wicks for making the candles are hanging. Candles are indispensable in all prayers because they are the food the I'ols offer God during the treatments. Under the *rueca* is a tray, placed on the fire, for melting wax which is then poured over the wicks to make the candles. Bunches of

different sized and colored candles hang from the walls. The sounds include traditional music from Tenejapa municipality, a background for the rhythmic pulsing of the herb doctor's wooden mallet beating the mortar.

ENVIRONMENT 7: THE ALL-PURPOSE ROOM

This room is used for talks, lectures, film showings and temporary exhibits of indigenous medicine from other states (Oaxaca, Nayarit, Yucatán, etc.). Temporary exhibits and videos that form part of the "Itinerant Museum" are also shown here: mobile museographical exhibits on cultural themes and indigenous medicine that are shown in the region's communities, schools and local museums, including the Itinerant Herbal Photographic Exhibit; a video and photo exhibition about Mixe medicine; the photo exhibition Li Poshil, on Mayan medicine; a video about Catemaco healers; a video on the Mayan Medicine Center; another on the Power of the I'lol; and another on He-Who-Prays in Santa Tierra.

The Itinerant Herbal Photographic Exhibit is a training exhibition featuring color photographs of medicinal plants used in the Chiapas Highlands. It includes 50 photographs accompanied by ethnobotanical information; the names in Tzotzil and the scientific names; the local name; their botanical description; if they are used to cure "hot" or "cold" diseases; their medicinal uses; how they are used and counter-indications. Today, the exhibit is temporary shown in cultural centers, schools and anywhere else it is requested.

GARDEN-SHOWPLACE OF MEDICINAL PLANTS AND TEMAZCAL

After leaving environment 7, the visitor walks into a garden where the plants most used by the region's indigenous doctors are cultivated. The garden is 1,500 square meters, divided into two parts, one with pre-Hispanic plants and the other with plants imported from Europe by the Spaniards that

are used regularly by Chiapas indigenous doctors. Each plant is tagged with a little stick on which its medicinal and botanical characteristics are written.

Another attraction in the garden is the *temazcal* or pre-Hispanic bath used by the midwives to alleviate the condition of post-birthing mothers. It is also used for therapeutically cleansing the body, and visitors can use it if they so desire.

Yet another attraction is the pharmacy of medicinal herbal products that is part of the comprehensive CR project. It has a room for chopping, drying and bagging the medicinal plants and a cubicle for making medicines naturally (syrups, salves, tinctures, soaps and shampoos). The herb doctor is available for consultation and to recommend the appropriate treatment for the most frequent acute and chronic conditions: diarrhea, the sniffles, diabetes, gastritis, excessive uric acid and diseases of the urinary tract, among others. This pharmacy, open to the general public, benefits from the vast knowledge of the use of medicinal plants, a knowledge that is preserved and defended by OMECH members so it is not appropriated or patented by the large multinational pharmaceutical companies. **MM**

NOTES

¹ The CR has a complete team of bilingual technicians, advisors and indigenous doctors who participate in seven operational areas: women and midwives; the Museum of Mayan Medicine (including the garden-showplace of medicinal plants); the use of medicinal herbs (including the herb pharmacy and greenhouse); management; advisory services; institutional liaison; and communications.

MUSEO DE LA MEDICINA MAYA
AV. SALOMÓN GONZÁLEZ BLANCO #10
COL. MORELOS
SAN CRISTÓBAL DE LAS CASAS
CHIAPAS, C.P. 29230
PHONE: (967) 678-5438
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY, 10 A.M.
TO 6 P.M.; SATURDAY AND SUNDAY, 10 A.M. TO 5 P.M.
omech@laneta.apc.org

THE MUSEUM SHOP OFFERS VISITORS BOOKS, PAMPHLETS,
POSTERS, POSTCARDS AND SOUVENIRS RELATED TO INDIGENOUS MEDICINE.

SPECIALTIES IN TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS MEDICINE

I'LOL OR PULSE-TAKER

"I can open myself up to the invisible world and face it to rescue the patient's lost and imprisoned soul. I make my diagnosis using the pulse: when I take the pulse, I feel a flow of blood that goes from the heart to the thoughts; everything is made known through the blood, and I hear its voice, which tells me what is wrong with the patient."

K'OPONEJ WITZ OR HE-WHO-PRAYS OF THE HILLS

"I am the indigenous doctor who prays to the spirit of the earth on the four points of the compass. When I am in the mountains, the spirit of the hills tells me, 'If you do not speak to me, if you do not ask me, I cannot give you your food; although you have fields, I will send the wind to push over the plants, and you will not have food. If you do not pray to me, there will be disease and problems. If, on the other hand, you pray to me and leave something at my door, I will happily give you what you ask!'"

TZAK'BAK OR BONE DOCTOR

"I treat the illnesses of the bones; I correct displacements, fractures and all the ills of the skele-

ton. I know how to touch the injured place to find the illness and cure it with whistles, herbs, bandages and prayers."

AC'VOMOL OR HERB DOCTOR

"I cut medicinal plants, herbs or trees, in the mountains to cure people. I use different kinds of plants depending on the disease. Cold or hot, strong or weak, for children and women, for a short or a long time. I know when to use the entire plant or part of it. There are plants that are boiled or crushed raw; others are heated on the grill or only used fresh to cleanse the person. I also can tell when a plant is poisonous and must not be ingested. As the herb doctor, I have all the secrets of plants in my head."

JVE'TOME OR MIDWIFE

"I am the indigenous midwife. I can make birthing easier. I know how to cure women's diseases; problems with urination; spasms during pregnancy; the danger of miscarriage; painful or irregular menstruation; swelling when women cannot have children or when their milk does not come after labor; when a baby is not in the right position, I can fix it; a fallen uterus and hemorrhaging after labor."

Important to note: These specialties are not mutually exclusive. That is, a traditional doctor can have more than one specialty: he or she can be an herb doctor, he-who-prays and a bone doctor, or an i'lol and an herb doctor; a midwife can also be an i'lol, an herb doctor and a bone doctor, etc.



TAXCO

School For
Foreign
Students
In Taxco

Language, Art, And Mexican Culture Courses

- You can improve your Spanish and learn about Latin American culture in Taxco, a colonial jewel set high amid the mountains.
- Intensive courses in Spanish (1,2,3,6 weeks)
- New Special Immersion Classes: Basic Spanish for Executives Spanish in International Relations Spanish for Latin Americans (or for Spanish speakers)
- Language and Latin American Culture: Art, History, Literature.
- Workshops: Silverwork, Sculpture, Jewelry, Drawing, Engraving, Photography

Centro de Enseñanza para Extranjeros Taxco Apartado Postal 70
40200 Taxco Gro. México. Phone/Fax (762) 622-0124
email: guspe@servidor.unam.mx
espino@servidor.unam.mx

The Lacandon Jungle Bulwark of Biodiversity

Osiris Gaona*
Rodrigo A. Medellín**



Photo: Elsie Montiel

Mexico's great biodiversity is due partially to its wealth in tropical flora and fauna. The Lacandon Jungle, the Guatemalan Petén and the south of the Yucatán Peninsula cover more than 3 million hectares of one of the world's most diverse ecosystems: the humid tropical jungle. The Lacandon Jungle originally covered about 1.5 million hectares between the Chiapas Highlands and the Usumacinta and Tulijá Rivers. Today, more than 500,000 hectares of jungle are still connected to the Guatemalan Petén.

THE DIVERSITY
OF THE LACANDON JUNGLE

The region's topography is rugged, with many rivers, mountains, lagoons and flood plains. More than 4,300 species of plants exist here, between 15 percent and 20 percent of Mexico's total in an area that covers less than 1 percent of the country's territory. Almost all kinds of vegetation that exist in Mexico can be found in the Lacandon Jungle, from humid tropical jungle to oak and pine forests, and even open savannahs and wetlands. In Las Cañadas, giant trees up to 80 meters high can still be found. This part of the jungle has suffered the most from unplanned use of resources, destroying what was probably the richest and most diverse part of the Lacandon Jungle.

Here we find ecosystems akin to the Amazons because, given the con-



The Lacandon Jungle originally covered about 1.5 million hectares between the Chiapas Highlands and the Usumacinta and Tulijá Rivers. Photo: Elsie Montiel

nection of the humid jungles from the Amazons to the north of the Isthmus of Panama, over several thousand years jungle species have migrated and distributed themselves throughout the region. The Isthmus of Panama rose above sea level, dividing the Pacific Ocean from the Atlantic about 3 million years ago. This made it possible for Amazonian species to continue their colonization northward and for North American species to colonize South America at the same time. This caused many changes in both fauna: many species became extinct because they could not

compete with the new invaders, and others found fertile ground for expanding and even diversifying into new species. The cats, peccaries, camels, skunks, tapirs, pocket mice and many others invaded from the north, and the armadillos, anteaters, monkeys, opossums, sloths and several groups of rodents came in from the south. Many other groups, such as the toxodonts, the giant sloths, mammoths, glyptodonts and horses became extinct in the last 2 million years. This is why we find many species today that in Mexico exist only in the Lacandon Jungle but that fur-



There are still significant numbers of jaguars in the Lacandon Jungle. Banks of the Lacantún River. Photo: Rodrigo Medellín

* Coordinator of projects for Dr. Medellín with more than 10 years experience in ecology and mammal conservation.

** Researcher at the UNAM Institute of Ecology, with 30 years experience in ecology and conservation, 20 years specifically in the Lacandon Jungle.

ther south are more widespread. This is the case of the naked-tail armadillo, the brown four-eyed opossum, several kinds of bat, the red macaw, the giant potoo, many other birds and some reptiles. We could say, then, that the Lacandon Jungle is a Mexican extension of the Amazon Jungle.

Home to the most diverse mammalian fauna in Mexico, one of the most varied of the Americas, at least 117 species of mammals have been recorded in the region. Thus, there are 70 different species of bats, more than in any other region of the country. Five of the six different species of Mexican cats can also be found here: the *tigrillo*, the ocelot, the jaguarondi or South American wild cat, the mountain lion and the jaguar still live in the jungle in significant numbers.

The Lacandon Jungle manages to preserve endangered species in an extraordinary and still effective manner. This means that if we lose it, the risk to these species will also significantly increase. Among the endangered species are the jaguar, the tapir, the spider monkey, the *senso* or white-lipped boar and the river otter. At least 345 species of birds live in the Lacandon Jungle, one-third of all the species to be found in Mexico (an amazing feat if we consider that it covers only one percent of the country's territory). Some endangered animals have found in the Lacandon Jungle their last refuge for survival: for example, the scarlet macaw, the harpy eagle, the black hawk eagle, the king vulture, the giant potoo and the hoco pheasant. Amphibians and reptiles are also plentiful and diverse, with 80 species, three of which are endangered: the river crocodile, the swamp crocodile and the white tortoise.

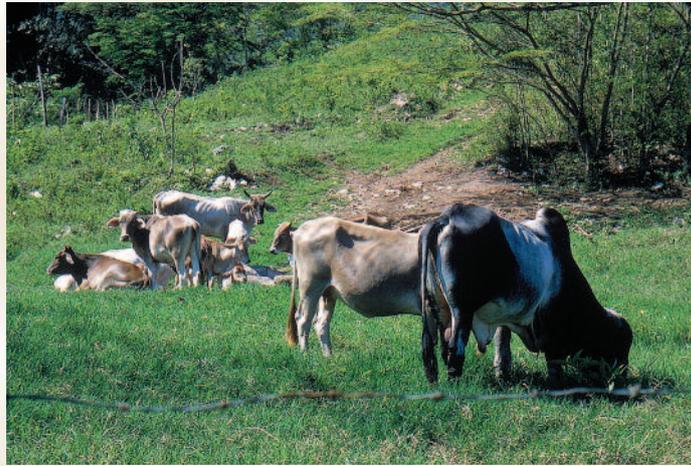


Photo: Elsie Montiel

The jungle has its own natural mechanism for regenerating itself. It can overcome intensive agricultural use, but livestock will always be its death sentence.



Photo: Elsie Montiel

ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
IN THE LACANDON
JUNGLE

The extensive, complex forest cover of 1.5 million hectares provided an extraordinarily important environmental service for the entire South of Mexico. Above all, it constituted an exceptional “rain factory” that captured and

breathed millions of liters of water through its vegetation. This stabilizes the climate, making the region rainy. Unfortunately, due to the severe deforestation of an increasing portion of the jungle, this function has declined. For that reason, in 1999, the city of Villahermosa suffered one of the most severe floods in its history: the copious rains both in the Lacandon Jungle and downriver along the Usumacinta were not absorbed by the “sponge” that the humid tropical jungles had previously functioned as, sucking up the excess water into their foliage and vegetation-covered soil. The jungle also uses the rainfall little by little, giving life to the vegetation and the fauna. Thus, when there is no forest cover, the rainfall creates increasingly powerful torrents of water that sweep away everything in their path, destroy the scant naked topsoil remaining after deforestation and cause floods, mud slides and the destruction of agricultural and urban areas.

The area's flora and fauna provide important ecological services for the region's environmental and socio-economic processes. For example, wood like mahogany, red cedar and many others are part of the wealth of the jungle that, if well managed, could yield moderate wealth in the long term to many local inhabitants instead of being irrationally destroyed in a few decades for the

Dozens of frugivorous species spread millions of seeds, favoring the jungle's regeneration.
Photo: Rodrigo Medellín

benefit of the few. Hunting of some of the animals whose flesh is used for human consumption, like the agouti paca and the *temazate* or brocket deer, could also be subject to a long-term management and conservation plan, but because of lack of planning or incentives, many local inhabitants do not hesitate to pull the trigger to bag another piece of game, whether it is a beneficial animal necessary for their lives or not. This destruction without greater benefit or thought is causing very severe reductions in animal populations vital for the functioning of the jungle ecosystem.

The jungle, for its part, has its own natural mechanisms for regenerating itself. For example, animals, mainly bats and birds, disseminate seeds, so that when the jungle is deforested, pioneer plants begin restoration immediately. A few years after a process of deforestation, the area might be covered with dense secondary vegetation that in a few decades would once again give rise to a full-blown jungle with all its elements and benefits. However, most frequently, once an area has been deforested, it is used for cultivation. This process could also be overcome: even after the soil had become too depleted to render another crop, the jungle would be able to regenerate itself. But, after agriculture, the land is used for livestock, which is a real death sentence for the jungle. Cattle eat or trample on all the new sprigs of pioneer plants that the jungle regenerates through the seeds disseminated every night by thousands of bats. What is left is a degraded grazing ground that leaves increasingly sterile stretches of land in which only a few blades of grass grow on the red, naked lateritic soil, heralding the death of the ecosystem. In the end, not even cattle can survive in these places.

THE CONSERVATION OF THE LACANDON JUNGLE

The protection of the Lacandon Jungle and its resources should be the highest priority of the federal, state and municipal governments. However, it has been used as an escape valve for solving land ownership problems in other parts of Mexico. Situated on a conflictive border, vulnerable to the incursion of Central American guerrilla fighters, it has been used to cushion national security problems by fostering colonization without a plan for sustainable development. Finally, the poverty that this process created culminated with the emergence of the most important rebel movement in the second half of the twentieth century, the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), the self-styled spokesperson for the demands of part of the local population. All of Mexico heard, then, of the injustices and poverty that afflicted the region, but the destruction of the jungle continued. Today, irregular settlements exist inside the protected areas and social conflicts are intensifying as environmental problems become more and more severe, affecting increasing numbers of Mexicans.

Different non-governmental organizations have undertaken efforts to protect the jungle. Unfortunately, because of the lack of communication and political manipulation, they have hurled accusations at each other, forgetting that all the groups work for the conservation of the jungle and to benefit all Mexicans. The fact

Amphibians and reptiles are still plentiful and diverse.
Photo: Rodrigo Medellín

is that the Lacandon Jungle is continuing to lose ground and the only people benefitting from it are groups that socially and politically manipulate the situation, actors completely alien to any commitment to conservation.

A sad example of the division among conservationists is the Chajul Biology Station, for more than 10 years the base for the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM) and operated by agreement with different NGOs to carry out scientific studies for conserving and understanding the jungle's ecosystem. Many students wrote their theses and contributed to the stock of knowledge in Chajul; the Lacandon Jungle had a high profile in scientific literature and in the world arena of conservation during those years. Unfortunately, today, the Chajul station, in the hands of one NGO and completely divorced from the UNAM, is virtually abandoned; it produces no scientific information nor is it visited by professors or students for academic and conservationist purposes; it functions only as a destination for high-income tourists and is totally divorced from the local socio-economic process.

What is required for all the initiatives to preserve the Lacandon Jungle to really fulfill their objectives? The first thing is forging unity among the groups and inhabitants in favor of conservation. The day that these groups finally decide that they are on the same side of the fight and put aside their rivalries, the unplanned development processes will be effectively thwarted and real possibilities for protecting the Lacandon Jungle will exist. Time is running out and the natural treasures, the patrimony of all Mexicans, are disappearing with little probability of being recovered. Now is the time to act. **NM**

Study Spanish in the heart of Mexico



IMEC is more than a language school!!

We energize our program with Mexican culture, history music, dance, art, cooking and excursions.



YES, IMEC is your destination to learn Spanish and discover the beauty of Mexican culture.



Spanish Programs

- University Program (Credit*)
- High School Program
- Independent Study
- Medical and health program
- Business Program
- Children's Program

Special Packages

- Day of the Dead
- Sabor de México
- Spa+ Spanish
- Golf + Spanish
- Mother + Daughter

¡Join the IMEC family!



www.imeccuernavaca.com.mx

Street Address: Piñanonas 26, Col. Jacarandas, Cuernavaca, Morelos, 62420, Mexico Email: pregunta@imeccuernavaca.com.mx
Tel/Fax: +52 (777) 315 79 53, 322 10 83



Presenting his credentials to Secretary-General Kofi Annan, February 2002.

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser And Mexican Politics

Sergio Aguayo Quezada*

The political biography of Adolfo Aguilar Zinser has to be situated in two dimensions: his activism, that of a generation that has transformed Mexico, and, on the other hand, his academic and journalistic work, which turned him into a representative of the “public intellectual”.

In Mexico, the long battle against authoritarianism gave birth to a large, heterogeneous *generation of the transition* that transcends ideologies or partisan affiliations, that goes beyond gender, age or state of origin, made up of Christians and people who eat priests for breakfast, of intellectuals, combative

social leaders and journalists, of businessmen, officials and politicians. This generation is a spider web, a network that envelops the entire country and is constantly expressing itself in public, although in the private sphere it also pushes and resists, transforms and brakes.

The *generation of the transition*, of which Adolfo was part, is a sociological category and a historic reality that lacks formal structure, but where social climbers have difficulty gaining admittance because the prerequisites for entry are hard to fulfill. Only those who demonstrate an authentic, long-term commitment to peaceful change, democracy and human dignity can belong to it. Like Samuel del Villar and Jaime González Graff —just to mention a couple of other members of

* Researcher at the Mexican College, political analyst and commentator.

this group who have already passed away—for more than three decades, Adolfo demonstrated the firmness of his commitment.

With his social origins, his family relations, his intelligence and education, Adolfo could have comfortably installed himself in the Olympus of economic or political power. Instead of that, he voluntarily opted for the arid pathways of the reformer. That was how he became involved in the political, civic and intellectual struggles that slowly but surely eroded Mexican authoritarianism. In addition, Adolfo observed elections and was part of the San Ángel Group and the Agreement for Democracy (Acude). He always donated his time and work when called upon by civic organizations.

One of the most recurring criticisms aimed at Adolfo was of his institution hopping. He did hop. First he collaborated with former President Luis Echeverría in the Third World Social and Economic Studies Center. Then he was an active and close collaborator in one of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas's presidential campaigns, a deputy for the Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) and a senator for the Green Ecologist Party of Mexico. Finally, he was very close to presidential candidate Vicente Fox and held a couple of important posts in his administration. I would like to point to some nuances about these facts.

Adolfo never sought or held those posts for any economic gain or to polish his ego. His life was characterized by a search for the spaces that would allow him to contribute to the country's democratic transformation. That was what he was really interested in. Therefore, he was willing to run risks and be criticized. He did it, always providing a reasoned explanation of his motivations of why he began or ended each one of these stages. He wrote a plain-spoken book about his experience in the Cárdenas campaign which won him the repudiation of part of the PRD. His journey through the Fox ranks ended with a public resignation which brought to a halt his open, valiant opposition in the UN Security Council to the United States' aggressive unilateralism in Iraq.

He was criticized in public and in private as “too individualistic.” It is true that he was very independent, but the other side of that coin is the limitations parties impose by monopolizing participation in public life. The “party-ocracy” has led to a paralysis of politics, controlled by bureaucracies deter-

mined to preserve the established order that avails them of enormous budgets and privileges. Those institutions ruthlessly reject independents.

During the long night of authoritarianism, the majority of intellectuals were confined to an ivory tower. However, the transformations fed off a handful of academics who decided to leave their cubicles to face up to the regime's obscurantism in public, with ideas and words. After he received his education in the Mexican College, Adolfo chose the path of the “public intellectual” already legitimized by, among others, Pablo González Casanova and Daniel Cosío Villegas.

Being a “public intellectual” meant—and means—doing research into difficult, polemical and current themes without abandoning the rigorousness imposed by the social sciences. It demands a willingness to experiment with style because that is the only way you can move from specialized publications to the mass media. It requires preparing yourself to meet

with the irritation of the powerful and to overcome misunderstandings because until relatively recently, the “public intellectual” was dimly viewed in some academic circles that considered that kind of interaction with those in power unworthy and polluting. Adolfo did it and he did it well, and he wrote about the relationship between civilians and the military, national security, the Central American wars and the southern border. And, partially for that reason, he was hound-

ed and persecuted.

It should be remembered that the battles for the transition always had an international dimension, and Adolfo defended the Central American revolutions and the refugees seeking asylum in Mexico. At the same time, he studied U.S. foreign policy and as an academic and a diplomat, faced down U.S. conservatives.

In short, Adolfo deserves to be remembered for the firmness of his principles, because he was a splendid public intellectual and because he was uncommonly politically congruent. He wrote thousands of pages full of passion and intelligence, of principles and the sophistication of the intellectual familiar with the methods and techniques of the social sciences. That *generation of the transition* has achieved a great deal but it still has an eternity to go before it makes the Mexican democracy and equity for which Adolfo Aguilar Zinser lived a reality. ■■■

Adolfo never sought posts for any economic gain or to polish his ego. He sought the spaces that would allow him to contribute to the country's democratic transformation.

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser

A Man Faithful To His Causes

Alejandro Hope Pinson*

Mexico is a country of instant saints. As soon as a public figure dies, everyone discovers his unsuspected virtues and unknown achievements. However, in the case of Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, every bit of praise received in the weeks following his fatal accident is fully justified by his extraordinary life.

Adolfo was my boss for the three years he spent in the Senate and in the ephemeral National Security Advisor's Office for President Fox. During that time, I saw him up close and from far away, at his happy moments and during his gloomy periods. Above everything else, he was a man of strong emotions, although mild tempered. He never lost his composure, but neither was he ever indifferent.

He was more like Don Quixote than he may have liked to admit. His tall, thin figure, his radical untidiness and his apparent physical fragility were the perfect visual complement to the moral *gravitas* he radiated. Almost without exception, he chose the most difficult causes, the rockiest roads, the most impregnable of walls. In the 1980s, he took on the defense of the Guatemalan refugees and paid for his daring with a kidnapping that lasted several hours. In the 1990s, he dared to defend Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas amidst the Salinas administration's persecution, and then criticize him, winning for himself the permanent hostility of Party of the Democratic Revolution (PRD) members.

In Congress, Adolfo always swam against the current. In an institution dominated by party bureaucracies, it was not easy to maintain his independence and a critical spirit. However, he managed to carve out a space for himself and invent new ways of doing politics. With only his voice and his intelligence as weapons, he was decisive in more than one legislative debate: against the ferocious opposition of the government and the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI), he created the Conasupo Investigating Commission; he forged a consensus about the need to evaluate NAFTA; and he made himself indispensable in foreign policy discussions.

Perhaps the most audacious position of his political career was coming out in favor of Vicente Fox's candidacy early on. As early as 1995, he aided in building the conditions and arguments that facilitated the construction of the vast Fox coalition. Without Adolfo, the strategy of the "useful vote" (or "making my vote count"), so effective in the 2000 campaign, would be incomprehensible. It did not come without a price: many —among them, some who today praise him— accused him of treason and opportunism, vanity and aspirations to power.

None of that could be farther from the truth. Adolfo was faithful to his causes, not to institutional names. His idealism was never in conflict with effectiveness. His support for Fox had the same source as his support for Cárdenas: loyalty to the democratic cause, to the imperious need to throw the PRI out of Los Pinos, of breathing fresh air into the political scene, of fighting corruption.

Was Adolfo disappointed by Fox? Undoubtedly. But the process was gradual and I have the impression he always hoped that Fox would recover his initial impetus for change. And nevertheless, there was more than one reason for an early disillusionment. His time in the executive branch was very hard: his moral constitution made him very bad at bureaucratic infighting. He was not a master of intrigue; he was no betrayer; he did not deliver low blows; he was frank, direct and reliable, all qualities that made it difficult for him to manoeuvre in the palace-like atmosphere that arose around Fox as soon as he took office. Minister of the Interior Santiago Creel took it upon himself to make his life impossible, and Adolfo did not find in Foreign Minister Jorge Castañeda the ally he expected. It was a very lonely year.

In many senses, Adolfo was reborn when he was named ambassador to the United Nations. Suddenly, he was once again in a parliamentary setting, the champion of a just cause, speaking firmly and directly. The debate about the war in Iraq brought out the best Adolfo, the permanent insurgent, the enemy of those in power. It was the natural extension of his fight for democracy in Mexico, the perfect pinnacle of a long career as a rebel.

* Consultant with the GEA Group of Economists and Associates.

The circumstances of his resignation from the embassy in New York were the patent demonstration of the abyss that already separated him from the Fox project. To the incontrovertible reality of the U.S. perception of Mexico as its back yard, Fox responded with evasions and false indignation. To Adolfo's memorable letter of resignation, he responded with the silence of the tomb. Perhaps because by that time, they had very little to say to each other.

I am not certain, but I believe that the return to the desert of the opposition must have been both bitter and liberating for Adolfo. Bitter because he had spent time, effort and political capital on an administration that did not deserve it: he had to start again, without clear allies and with many doors closed to him. Liberating, because Adolfo had the soul of an oppositionist: he fed on the fight against those in power, on denouncing the tyrannical, on fair fights and on free speech, on everything he could not have when he was an administration official and representative.

His death came at the worst possible moment, just when he was rebuilding his life, when he was about to once again become the imperious, exhilarating dissident of his best years. I do not know what he would have done with his newly recovered freedom, but I am convinced that he still had a lot of aces up his sleeve. Perhaps he would have gone back to Congress or written a book or headed up some citizens' campaign. Undoubtedly, these and many other possibilities flew around his permanently animated brain.

To honor Adolfo, only one thing comes to mind: to continue the struggle. To write the books he left unwritten, join the fights he would have carried out, argue for the causes he would have defended.

I completely lack his charisma and his creativity, his energy and his intelligence. I only have some of his passion: he infected me with it as my boss and as a friend, as a public figure and as a private man. It is my inheritance and I promise to make good use of it.

Experiences With Adolfo Aguilar Zinser

Cassio Luiselli Fernández*

I met Adolfo Aguilar almost 30 years ago at Harvard University. A dear mutual friend, Eugenio Anguiano Roch, introduced us. We were attending a boring, ceremonious seminar about Mexico-U.S. relations. Happily, we soon found it more interesting and pleasant to chat amongst ourselves and make jokes about the gratuitous solemnity of the lecturers, then all very much older than ourselves. We visited bookstores and took long walks through the campus. It was the birth of a close friendship that enormously enriched my life and which I continue to be thankful for.

His overwhelming eloquence and charm, his wit and intelligence made his company a pleasure, a challenge, but

above all a great reason for joy. I remember our rambles, still young and unconcerned, our journeys together and innumerable academic and political events. I remember, of course, the discussions about where Mexico was going, but also the unending laughter and shared joy of living. Very often Adolfo and I did not agree, but between us there was never any lack of respect or dialogue, much less good humor. There was something of the Don Quixote in Adolfo, and I very often told him so. His walk and his slender, rather lean physique, but above his way of fighting and "cutting through entanglements"¹ made them seem more and more alike with the passing of the years.

Our friendship was nourished not only by politics, travel and the intellect; we also shared our taste for being fathers and for our families. Our children Valeria and Adolfo, Jr., spend

* Professor at the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Learning (ITESM).

unending moments of their childhood together, which I trust herald the continued friendship in the next generation. The last time we were together with our children was at the residence of Mexico's mission to the United Nations in New York. He and his wife Marta and their son Adolfo visited us in Korea (Nicolás had not been born yet), where I was the Mexican ambassador. We traveled together through Asia and spent extraordinary moments enjoying how different things were and comparing them with Mexico. I remember that Adolfo was then a very decided opponent of the government and some were uncomfortable with him visiting his friend the ambassador. But not then-Foreign Minister Fernando Solana, an open, free man who never discouraged respectful dialogue with lucid, honest men like Adolfo, even if they did not think like the sitting administration.

The thing is that Adolfo made those in power uncomfortable on innumerable occasions. We have the case of the investigation into corruption in the now-defunct Conasupo; his defense against the injustices and abuses heaped on the first, shaky victories of democracy, like the case of Dr. Nava in San Luis Potosí; the protests against electoral fraud in Chihuahua in 1986; and his support for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas in 1988. Later came the founding of the San Ángel Group with Jorge Castañeda and, then, the Commitments of the Nation. Aguilar Zinser was a brilliant deputy in parliamentary debates and a tenacious, independent senator. His eloquence and valor earned him the respect, admiration and dislike of many colleagues. He was as good with the spoken word as with the pen, and his brilliant articles published every Friday in the *Reforma* daily prove it. Hopefully they will be collected and published in book form, since in addition to their quality, they clearly reflect pages in Mexican life in these years of transformations.

Adolfo Aguilar was a strategist and effective spokesperson for the second candidacy of Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas for the presidency. After his defeat, Adolfo commented that unfortunately, the way the campaign had been waged had been wrong and that insufficient attention had been paid to television. He was right and he wrote it all down in a very insightful book about how Cárdenas eluded victory. At that time, many criticized the book and Adolfo's daring for having written it. Adolfo always maintained genuine affection

In the UN Security Council, his courage, eloquence, lucidity and charm earned him the respect of everyone and the affection of many.

and respect for Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas. The distance between them pained him, something he mentioned on many occasions. I remember that conversation from one of the walks he organized with his dear friend Antonio Saldívar on the Tepozteco mountain that he enjoyed so much on Sundays.

But if you read the book carefully, you can find well-founded observations and criticisms by someone who is loyal but independent. Adolfo told me only a few weeks ago that he had had a very fortunate encounter with Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, which is why he was so welcome during the wake attended by the Aguilar Zinser family and his wife Marta. His support for Vicente Fox's candidacy was not, as many argued, a 180-degree turn. Quite to the contrary, there is a very clear line of continuity: anyone who knew Adolfo knew perfectly well that it was once again his desire for a change to democracy that spurred him to support the then-PAN challenger. Not only did he support him, but he was one of the main architects of his victory, and with that, the installation of democratic alternation in office in Mexico. This is why the president's condolences were also welcome.

It is necessary to say that the power structure was not generous to Adolfo. It is as unfair as it is inexplicable that one of the pillars of Fox's victory and democratic alternation in office did not become a member of the cabinet. Several times he commented to me his dissatisfaction with his fictional post of "national security advisor," something as pompous as it was useless in a country where nobody wants to share sensitive information or work as a team on delicate matters like intelligence. But it should also be noted that he did not feel comfortable in a powerful post.

Adolfo Aguilar bestowed pride and dignity on Mexico in the UN Security Council. His courage, eloquence, lucidity and charm earned him the respect of everyone and the affection of many. His ferocious opposition to the never-justified U.S. invasion of Iraq made both Bush and Colin Powell uncomfortable. After trying first to change his mind, they then tried to have him removed. But that did not happen and Mexico (together with Chile) was key in ensuring that the resolution approving the war did not prosper. In the end, not only his friend Secretary-General Kofi Annan, but also Condoleezza Rice herself, whom he had met when they both

held the post of national security advisor, paid him a well-deserved tribute.

Adolfo's last months were not easy: they were marked by important changes in his life and work. After leaving his post as ambassador to the United Nations, he worked at the National Autonomous University of Mexico. Rector Juan Ramón de la Fuente lent him his support and soon Adolfo, with his talent and wide audience, began to make valuable contributions to the university.

I remember the visit to Mexico of a man who was key to unmasking Bush's intentions of invading Iraq, Hans Blix, who always spoke affectionately and respectfully of Adolfo. Adolfo was working on a book about the Security Council, and for that he was preparing a stay at the University of California at Berkeley, which he loved.

In the last months, we two began to develop projects together once again. The last time that he was at the Monterrey Technological Institute of Higher Learning was to attend a round table discussion we had organized about the possible integration of Mexico and the United States. Together with Gabriel García Márquez, he also enthusiastically helped me organize a series of Colombian-Mexican events, which still have not been held, that will explore Mexico's bilateral relations with that Andean nation.

Adolfo was held in high regard by friends and adversaries alike. That is also a sign of honor of many members of the political class's different parties, as well as the intellectuals, officials and businessmen who went to the house on Francisco Sosa Street to pay their respects and express their condolences, something that happens only with brave men with integrity like Adolfo.

Of the many posthumous acknowledgments of my friend, I would like to mention the obituary published in what is undoubtedly the world's most influential weekly magazine, *The Economist*, that circulates worldwide. It alludes to Mexico being the U.S.'s "back yard", saying, quite rightly and justifiably, that while Adolfo headed up Mexico's delegation to the Security Council, no one ever thought that Mexico could be anyone's back yard. However, no matter how just and important the homages and obituaries are, I am heartily sorry for them because they speak to his irremediable absence. That hurts. Adolfo will be sorely missed, above all in the times to come. ■■■

NOTES

¹ The author is quoting a well-known phrase from *Don Quixote*. [Editor's Note.]



At the UN Security Council, during the Iraq crisis.

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser

Generous Intelligence

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde*

Adolfo Aguilar Zinser died instantly in an absurd highway accident that none of us expected and which has caused me both sadness and indignation. Adolfo lived every second of his life with such intensity and in such a hurry that he did not even let himself think that death would come to him in this or another way. What is more, I am sure that he did not even bother to think about it; neither did I. The intense rush in which Adolfo moved during his life as an intellectual and a politician allowed him to carry out an infinite number of activities that would have taken others twice the number of years.

As always, Adolfo had original, astute, provocative ideas and plans for his political-academic future, which he was beginning to weave from his offices in the CISAN, in the university, and from his office on Dr. Gálvez Street in San Ángel. Those of us who knew something about some of those plans are his silent heirs, and time will tell how many of them were the indisputable brush strokes that drew a picture of the coming years of Mexico and the world. Having known and worked closely with Adolfo, I am sure that his insightful intelligence will have erred about almost nothing.

I cannot stop thinking about the very intense intellectual and mental exercise that Adolfo practiced constantly, while alone or in the company of others, about the endless number of national and international topics that occupied his mind. In this, Adolfo was an untiring artisan of genius. And I thank him for it and will always be thankful to him because he motivated me to learn from his far-sighted intelligence. He weighed the facts of a given situation and wove with extreme care the various possible scenarios to interpret and deal with it. Although in some cases he might over- or undervalue the importance of these facts, he was never wrong in the tone he used, in his sharp interpretation, the gravi-

ty of the various situations that the country faced or could face. Adolfo's was a highly intense and very valiant political intelligence; just as he gave no quarter and faced reality implacably, his was also a generous intelligence.

I believe for this and other reasons that it will be understood that Adolfo's was also a complex intelligence. The complexity of his mind, which could be seen from the first moment, was a very important instrument in interpreting the facts; and, above all, it was a powerful weapon that everyone, especially his adversaries, feared. I will not forget my first encounters with that intelligence of Adolfo's when he had finished his course work in political science; I never imagined that he would accompany me in later years. It was my good fortune that I was able to witness some of Adolfo's moments of political and human transition. And I was also able to attest to the authenticity of his devotion to the causes he committed to, whether in academia, in politics or in public posts. When performing his tasks as senator and National Security Advisor, arenas in which I accompanied him, Aguilar Zinser was implacable when he connected intelligent ideas with great words. Both in the Senate and in Vicente Fox's cabinet, he was rightfully respected, but at the same time he was the object of different political intrigues which blurred the real nature of his commitment and his strategic vision of politics.

Over the long period in which he honored me with his friendship and proximity, from the years of the CEESTEM, the CIDE, the CISAN, the Senate, the National Security Council and once again the CISAN in more recent times, when he returned to what had always been his home, I was witness, from the standpoint of complicity without false sentimentality, of my colleague and friend Adolfo's dedication to good national causes and good personal causes. Certainly that generosity and complexity of Adolfo's allowed some of us to also benefit from his human and humanist sensibility. A sensi-

* Director of CISAN and *Voices of Mexico* magazine.

bility that usually expressed itself from the first contact and continued over the times that he asked that we share with him our moods. In Adolfo, Mexico and many of us gained a very valuable politician and a bounteous friend. With his absence, Mexico loses a fighter for democracy and leaves an important hole that all democrats, regardless of ideological orientation or party affiliation, recognize. The death of someone close to you always weighs heavily, but it weighs much

more the more affection you have for the person and the more absurd his being taken is because it was both premature and unnecessary. I will miss Adolfo painfully, but also with the pleasure and sense of humor with which he lived and with which he showed us, delicately, from his generous intelligence, how validly close reason and the heart can be if the object is to bring together uprightness and lucidity in a single exercise. ■■■




THE NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS
UNIVERSITY OF MEXICO

AND THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON
NORTH AMERICA

extend their condolences to the family
and friends of our colleague

ADOLFO AGUILAR ZINSER

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde
CISAN DIRECTOR

University City, Mexico City, June 6, 2005.

REVISTA DE LA UNIVERSIDAD DE MÉXICO

NÚM. 17 |

JULIO 2005

NUEVA ÉPOCA

Tomás Segovia
El lenguaje errante

**Ambrosio Velasco y
Gerardo Jiménez**
Juliana González y el
genoma humano

Sealtiel Alatraste
Roberto Bolaño y el Mal

Ignacio Solares
Sobre Julio Scherer

Hugo Hiriart
Sobre Antonio Gómez
Robledo

Evodio Escalante
Sobre Sergio González
Rodríguez

Hernán Lavín Cerda
Octavio Paz y las voces
secretas

Esther Seligson
Eurídice vuelve

Javier Wimer
Sobre Emilio Uranga

Ricardo Pozas Horcasitas
Poema

Gerardo Suter
Reportaje fotográfico

Textos de

Joaquín-Armando Chacón
Claudio Isaac
Alma Rosa Jiménez
Carlos Pineda
Jesús María Tarriba Unger
Guadalupe Alonso
José Gordon

20 Universidades

· ENERO - JUNIO DE 2005 ·

Universidad, democracia y desarrollo

Adrián Acosta Silva

**Tendencias, desafíos y oportunidades de la educación superior
al inicio del siglo XXI.**

Gilda Waldman M y Luis A. Gurovich

Intermediación social de la universidad en la gobernanza metropolitana

Alejandro Mendo Gutiérrez

Posibilidades de una nueva institucionalidad social: contribución desde la educación y el conocimiento

Enrique Luengo G.

El impacto de la universidad en la formación de los alumnos

Luis Felipe Gómez López

Aspectos políticos de la educación socio-ambiental

Roger Martínez Castillo

Sección Cultural

La Maga

Unión de Universidades de América Latina

Suscripciones:

Circuito norponiente de Ciudad Universitaria, México, D.F., 04510 Tel: (55) 5622 0093 Fax: (55) 5616 2183

correo-e: udual1@servidor.unam.mx página web: <http://www.udual.org>

De venta en librerías universitarias, Fondo de Cultura Económica y Gandhi.

Reviews



**One Wound for Another-Una herida por otra
Testimonios de latin@s in the U.S. through Cyberspace
(11 de septiembre de 2001-11 de marzo de 2002)**

One Wound for Another: Testimonies of Latin@s in the U.S. through Cyberspace (September 11, 2001-March 11, 2002)

Claire Joysmith and Clara Lomas

CISAN/Colorado College/Whittier College

Mexico City, 2005, 316 pp.

SO THEY WON'T JUST BE BLOWN BY THE WIND

One Wound for Another-Una herida por otra: testimonios de latin@s in the U.S. through Cyberspace (11 de septiembre de 2001-11 de marzo de 2002) is a unique collection of writings. In spring 2002, the editors Claire Joysmith and Clara Lomas sent out an e-mail request to friends and acquaintances asking for contributions expressing their respondents' thoughts, experiences, sensations and emotions after September 11, 2001. Their stated purpose was to document these views, experiences and emotions in the form of *testimonios*, to be shared with Mexican/U.S. transnational audiences and *para que no se lo lleve el viento* (so they won't just be blown away by the wind). They posed five specific questions pertaining to immediate reactions, personal political or spiritual changes, perspectives on various issues such as peace, war, the media, and the future impact on Mexico-U.S. relations, but also urged that people respond any way they wished.

While several contributors followed the outline of topics and issues as provided by the editors most responded more freely and indirectly to the queries raised. Contributions vary in length from less than a printed page to several pages and range in form from extracts of essays published in newspapers or maga-

zines and poetry to less formal, more personal e-mail replies to the editors or forwarding of those sent to third persons in the aftermath of the events. As Claire and Clara point out, "The wide array of creative expressions was, in itself, indicative of the multiplicity of voices and perspectives."

Not surprisingly, a majority of the contributors are cultural workers, many of them university professors, and some of them are quite well known; others are simply Latinas/os (or spouses or children of Latinas/os) living in the U.S. or Mexico, who are nonetheless unique individuals trying to assimilate and explain to themselves and those around them what happened on 9/11: how? why? and what will the consequences be?

The book begins with a prologue by Mexican author Elena Poniatowska in which, among other things, she calls attention to the ambiguous and contradictory feelings that many Latinas/os and Latin Americans have toward the U.S. Further on she comments, "Curiously enough, the participants do not focus too much on condemning the terrorists," adding, "To condemn terrorism in every country and under any circumstance would be, for me, one of the main premises." Poniatowska also underlines the fact that "The personal is

political; therefore, even though the *testimonios* Clara Lomas and Claire Joysmith have compiled—mainly from intellectual and academic spheres—may be emotional or visceral, their context is nevertheless political.”

As the editors state, “It soon became evident that contestatory voices within the U.S. were being labeled anti-American or simply erased,” and hence their desire to “make these differing alternative views available to a broader Mexican audience—and by extension to a *las Américas* readership—and to those in the U.S. who were dealing with patriotic monolithic discourses through mainstream news media.” They explain to their readers that it was “Our personal queries, our need to participate in a multiple healing process, in addition to our academic concerns regarding racialized constructs of subjective *latinitudes*, and our mutual interest in working on exchanging/comparing the varying manifestations of our different yet similar cultural backgrounds, [that] led us to initiate this project.”

Regarding the mechanism chosen to carry out their endeavor Joysmith and Lomas point out, “As articulated by Donna Haraway, cyberspace has become an indispensable medium for the new age of globalization to economically and culturally engulf the world and stifle the potential for change. She further argues, along with others, that paradoxically enough, cyberspace has become a spatial site for global exchange of alternative marginal ideas and perspectives from some of those most traumatically affected by globalization.” In the particular case of *testimonios* from Latinas/os during the aftermath of 9/11, “Cyberspace became a site from which these subjects/agents, facing computers, addressed and reached out to an unknown transnational/transborder audience to tell their own stories from their various geographical vantage points within the U.S.”

The result of this process is an engaging, thought-provoking and often heartrending collection of texts that will no doubt confront readers with their own preconceived notions of identity, race, racialized identity, racialized identity politics, “them”, “us”, the U.S., etc. The fact that the contributors are all somehow identified as or identified with Latinas/os may, to some extent, explain why, as Poniatowska

noted, they didn’t “focus too much on condemning the terrorists.” Perhaps they identified in some way with the terrorists—having themselves experienced, or having relatives, or knowing people in their countries of origin who have suffered from some sort of aggression perpetrated or aided by U.S. interests—or perhaps they feared being identified with the terrorists because of phenotypes or physical characteristics. As Sandra Cisneros wrote in her *testimonio*, “When I look in the mirror I look more like Osama Bin Laden than I do Bush. Osama looks like my tío Nacho. The Afghans look like my brothers. They are my brothers.”

One contributor from Arizona told of how her daughter’s car was vandalized, most likely because of her physical appearance, as she explains how one of the police officers who arrived on the scene said “Pardon me, miss, but I have to ask. Are you Arabic?” In her text she asks, “Has anyone noticed how this is happening only to people of color, whether they be Latinos or Indians or Arabs or Syrians, either Mediterranean looking or with indigenous features?” She goes on to relate, “I don’t remember any white people being harassed after terrorist acts committed by other whites. It’s the same old question of ‘otherness’ of not belonging—the question that Latinos get asked all the time: ‘Where are you from?’ As if we didn’t belong. Reminds me of all the people in this country who still don’t know (and don’t care) that Puerto Ricans are citizens by birth.” Which according to the Constitution is also the case for all those of Latino descent, or any other origin, who are born anywhere in the United States.

Perhaps to many the Bush administration’s response seemed just as horrible as the events of 9/11. Catherine Herrera wrote, “How beautiful our world could have been if instead of the typical response, an alternative, peaceful solution had been sought first. Now instead, thousands and thousands of lives have been disrupted. What about all the refugees that have fled Afghanistan? Who will cry for them in a month as the weather turns gloomy, who will call for justice on their behalf?” She also expressed other concerns: “Politically, my views have changed, although not just as a result of the bombings, but more than anything as a result of the response. I am fearful of

the stripping of civil liberties I had believed were intrinsic to being a U.S. citizen, and worry how these changes, accepted in a time of panic and fear, will play out in the future.”

Colombian-born poet Antonieta Villamil, who has lived in the U.S. for about two decades, responded with several poems, some in Spanish and some in English. She explains her utter stupefaction as she saw the images on television thinking, “Once again the terror. Once again.” She also explains how she felt compelled to reread the first poem she ever wrote in English and how she cried. She cried a lot. The poem is called “My Name is Pedro.” It begins, “I swim in the water of a sea more vicious than salt. I ride the waves of my deprived voice. I am an echo in the memory of the unremembered. The ones that swim and swim, no island near, no shore, no sand.” And some 20-some-odd lines later concludes with, “That grave of which nobody knows. The grave in your chest that is never visited. Without a date. Without an epitaph./ But remember, my name is Pedro./ Pedro is my name even though, / it is not I anymore.” At the end of the poem there are two lines that read, “Antonieta’s brother ‘died of disappearance.’ He is in the long list of people that disappear every day in Central and South American countries.”

One male contributor stated, “Intellectually, I am for peaceful resolutions and concerted agreements to nation[s] disagreements. But it was a unilateral act of war, therefore I support military action, regardless of the casualty (sic).” However he was the only one to explicitly express such retaliatory sentiments. Several others repeated a poster slogan from the New York City peace vigils that says, “An eye for an eye leaves us all blind.” On a lighter note, which nevertheless has serious implications about the hold Hollywood has on people’s thoughts and emotions, there were innumerable references to initial disbelief linked to the U.S. film industry: “For a moment I thought it was some sort of horrible film or movie preview [then] I realized it was life.” “At first I thought it was an advertisement for an upcoming horror movie.” Others felt the need to clarify “this is not a Hollywood movie” or “it seems like the script of a Hollywoodesque blockbuster.” Thus someone else felt compelled to raise the question, “I wonder what it’s like for the kids

who thrive on such images in the movies they watch, the video games they play. How real can it be for them? Is there a total disconnect between their video playland and the real, live NYC in THEIR real country, THEIR tranquil Pennsylvania. What are they feeling?”

As one woman confesses to watching the broadcasts for seven days straight, others expressed feelings of disgust at the endless reiteration and over-saturation offered by the media. Most references to mainstream media were in fact quite critical and many mentioned public broadcasting systems as preferred sources of information. Among the many other weighty issues he dealt with in his lengthy and thought-provoking contribution, George Yúdice points out, “Coverage of opposition to the war has not been part of network news’ agenda setting policies, perhaps a significant reason for such widespread support for the war. Yet opposition to war was quite palpable on the streets of New York almost immediately after the attack on the Twin Towers.”

The list of issues and questions raised by the events of 9/11 and their aftermath, as dealt with by the contributors to this collection of *testimonios*, is endless, and it is far beyond our purpose to list them all here since our only intent is to whet the appetite of the book’s potential readers. However even the briefest of lists must by obligation mention the several references to another Tuesday, September 11. The most extensive of these was contributed by Ariel Dorfman. He wrote, “During the last twenty-eight years, Tuesday September 11 has been a date of mourning, for me and millions of others, ever since that day in 1973 when Chile lost its democracy in a military coup, that day when death irrevocably entered our lives and changed us forever. The differences and distances that separate the Chilean date from the American are, one must admit, considerable. The depraved terrorist attack against the most powerful nation on Earth has and will have consequences which affect all humanity....Whereas very few of the eight billion people alive today could remember or would be able to identify what happened in Chile.” As Dorfman concludes, “It is still not clear if the United States—a country formed in great measure by those who have themselves escaped vast catastrophes, famines, dictatorships, persecution—it is far from certain that

the men and women of this nation so full of hope and tolerance, will be able to feel that same empathy towards the other outcast members of our species; we will find out in the days and years to come if the new Americans forged in pain and resurrection are ready and open and willing to participate in the arduous process of repairing our shared, our damaged humanity. Creating all of us together, a world in which we need never again lament not one more, not even

one more terrifying September 11” Helping others to remember and providing them with new and different perspectives about such tragic events, as these *testimonios* do, may contribute in some small way to keeping such things from happening again.

Elaine Levine

Researcher at CISAN

THE OUTLINES OF A COMPLEX WORLD

I would like to begin this review by highlighting the book's first good point: its clarity. Claire Joysmith and Clara Lomas push us to a dawn and a type of transparency after the horror of that Tuesday, after four years of political and emotional density. Claire and Clara clarify in the brightest sense of clarity: dissipating, taking away anything that obfuscates something's transparency, making something less thick or dense. Or, they carry out the function of shedding light, which I perceive as even more appropriate for the book in question: increasing the extension or the number of spaces or intervals in which something exists. Shedding light: increasing the extension by introducing intervals, that is, by making visible the forces that cause an argument *vis-à-vis* another. The space of the interval is what opens precisely between one dense vision and another which responds with equal thickness (I refer to the interval that opens up *vis-à-vis* two thick discourses: that of the blindness of the comments by many Americans, expressed in a whispered phrase, “Why do they hate us so much?” counterposed to the “They deserve it” of our rancorous Latin American world or the world as a whole).

The function of criticism is the production of intervals among thick visions. It propitiates understanding and the direction of intelligence and action away from revenge and hatred. The book makes this greater function of intelligence and emotion possible and its name underlines this: the exchange of one wound for another, of one pain for another, of one equivalence of abysses and thus, of understandings. The phrase,

“Your wound is equivalent to mine” is the transaction, the ultimate emotional and intellectual translation in a chain of the reparations and the compensation of hatred and revenge. What the clarity of the book propitiates is greater: the equivalence of different griefs, the interaction between opposing wounds.

Its achievement is greater because it contributes to a primordial function, that of criticism: disfiguring the easy enemy, the learned, organic enemy, and in this way sketching the outlines of a complex world, a world of the borders not only with the United States, but with different empires, that of the economy and globalization of the local and the national, but also of the desolation and poverty that produces terrorism as an empire of hard-won hatred, the empire of horror, of migrants who die without a name or a body, that of the war born of the harshest patriarchal construction, that of the hard fatherland, that of the fatherland that sees enemies in those who are dissidents or biologically, linguistically, racially or sexually different.

The book, then, functions as an extraordinary critical apparatus, as a border that creates intervals, spaces, making visible tensions that harden. It intervenes in languages to repair based on the concentration of testimonies that move any radicalness learned by hatred or revenge.

But *One Wound for Another*, like any border and like any criticism that works, not only separates and produces intervals, but also connects, propitiates the fraternizing of wetbacks with erudite language, of bridge with bridge.

The 59 intervals build stories that are the product of the wound of September 11, based on an intermediate position, criticism, but not Lettered criticism in the style of Rama, which increases the gaps and makes the environment denser, but the criticism that in addition to clarifying (its primary function), repairs and propitiates an indispensable intellectual act: the understanding that blurs the enemy, that is the understanding that propitiates the withering of the easily pinpointed scourge (I am not referring to that of the adversary who is the fruit of sacrificial pardon, but to that of the enemy as a result of a profound understanding of the concept as the only cause of patriotic, common, individual pain).

The inter-views, intervals of this book between the oral and the written, between the virtual and the real, between the American and the Mexican, between the Spanish and the English, between the brutal memory and reparation, enter(inter)-tain. The book fulfills a strange repairing function through purification; each interval, each inter-view, propitiates a sedimentation, like the particles in a liquid, each of the witnesses propitiates a fall, remembers a fall, not only of the bodies that forcefully and of necessity emerge in our minds, but of a curtain of a layer of fog produced by pain, patriotism against the adversary or indolence.

Claire and Clara not only translate, they interpret. That is to say, they make known the movements of the soul. They purify by posing the stories one after the other, like particles that clarify the water on falling.

Four years after the disaster of the towers, this book reintroduces, revives different indispensable polemics for understanding the mediation of a painful event on the screen (television was the medium that most articulated an opinion). The intervals presented in this book are articulated based on another medium that does not reinforce the function of the screen, which is to protect, but that managed to exhibit and connect: I am referring to the Internet screen, which made it possible to gather the testimonies that can compete with the overwhelming power of the larger screen. Between the oral and the written, a medium whose main virtue is velocity and the privilege of the voice over the body, the

Internet makes possible the voice's winged, out-of-body voyage. In this case the angry authors intervened and caused the bodies to have, in addition to a first and last name, color, ethnicity, nationality and language. The book very effectively opposes the function and efficiency of television and the Internet.

The authors of this dawning reformulate the question that it is indispensable to underline in our current dense political situation: what place does the screen have, what place the reconstruction of an atrocious event, on the border of the comprehensible? Screen, sheet that protects by directing the light far from our eyes. The book redirects the light to our eyes. The theme and its treatment occupy a central place, indispensable for any criticism whose function is dispersing easily labeled adversaries, enemies who blind our intellectual capacity. *One Wound for Another...* situates itself between two screens: the screen that protects and prohibits access and the one that redirects the light to our eyes, between television and the Internet.

Today, as we are experiencing the effects of the broadcast on a screen of all kinds of wars and invented enemies to be eliminated—not dispersed—from the Arab enemies in Iraq to the electoral enemies of the impeachment, the book fills us with hope, it turns rubble and density, smoke and pain into stories, into spaces, into intervals that allow us understanding, memory and something irreplaceable, the dignity brought with the exchange of one wound for another, one grief for another, neither better nor worse, a grief of equivalent dimensions to the one that doubles over our body and tenses our tongue. *One Wound for Another/Una herida por otra...*, one pain for another, a perfect measure of compassion, perfect harmony of living together, of the construction not only of reparations after grief, but of political and democratic living together with the dignity of equity.

Marisa Belausteguigoitia

Director of the UNAM University Gender Studies Program (PUEG)



THE NATIONAL AUTONOMOUS
UNIVERSITY OF MEXICO

THE CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON
NORTH AMERICA



AND

VOICES OF MEXICO MAGAZINE

express our most sincere condolences to
Dr. Juan Ramón de la Fuente, the rector of our
university, for the death of his mother, the
outstanding humanist and art historian

BEATRIZ RAMÍREZ DE DE LA FUENTE

José Luis Valdés-Ugalde

CISAN DIRECTOR

University City, Mexico City, June 22, 2005.



Chiapas Textiles