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From Models for the Nation to Model Citizens: *Indigenismo* and the 'Revindication' of the Mexican Indian, 1920–40[1]

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Abstract. This article examines the creation of an Indian ideal within *Indigenismo* in the years 1920–40. While scholars argue that *Indigenismo* described a degenerate Indian 'other', this article shows that it often represented the Indian as a model for revolutionary politics and culture. This is evident first in *Indigenista* celebrations of Indian cultures during the 1920s, and in their valorisation of Indians as rational political actors with modern sensibilities during the 1930s. In validating this 'modern' Indian, *Indigenistas* created a limited framework for legitimate 'Indian politics' which took place within the national culture. However, they also labelled Indians who challenged revolutionary programs as 'primitive' and 'pre-political'.

Few Latin American social or aesthetic movements have ever attained the power that Mexican *Indigenismo* enjoyed between 1920 and 1940. Reversing a century of 'liberal scorn' for the Indian, post-revolutionary *Indigenismo* gained prominence as nationalist endeavour in a society seeking to recreate itself after a decade of civil war. Drawing their symbolic capital from the increasing authority of social scientific methods, the activism of an interventionist state, and the Mexican Cultural Renaissance, *Indigenistas* were uniquely situated to redefine the relationship between 'nation' and 'Indian' in Mexico.[2] From this privileged position

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[2] Mexican *Indigenistas* spoke from a uniquely powerful perspective in post-revolutionary Mexico. Although not all Indian advocates spoke as anthropologists, as a group *Indigenistas* spoke with the social scientific and 'cultural' authority which made them experts on the Indian's place within the nation. For general discussions of the broader power and importance in *Indigenismo*, both in a cultural and bureaucratic sense, see Mechthild Rutsch, (comp.), *La historia de la antropología en México. Fuentes y transmisión*, (Mexico, 1996); Helen Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue of Things Mexican: Cultural Relations Between the United States and Mexico* (Tuscaloosa, 1992); Alan Knight, 'Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo', in *The Idea of Race in Latin America*, Richard Graham, ed. (Austin, 1990); Sylvia Bigas Torres, *La narrativa indigenista mexicana del siglo xx*

they not only celebrated the ancient Indian past as the source of the Mexican nation,[3] but also connected living Indians to that past, and acclaimed them for the first time as an integral part of the modern nation.[4] In doing this, *Indigenistas* became one of the most powerful voices in explaining culture and society in post-revolutionary Mexico.

Like most reformist movements during this period, *Indigenismo* operated in highly contested public spaces on the national, regional, and local levels.[5] Nevertheless, during this period *Indigenista* concerns slowly

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(Mexico, 1990); Manuel M. Marzal, *Historia de la antropología indigenista: México y Perú* (Lima, 1989); Carlos García Mora, (coord.), *La Antropología en México. Panorámico histórico* (Mexico, 1988); Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara, *Anthropological Perspectives on Rural Mexico* (London, 1984); Martin S. Stabb, *In Quest of Identity: Patterns in the Spanish American Essay of Ideas, 1890–1960* (Chapel Hill, 1967); Jean Charlot, *The Mexican Mural Renaissance*, 1920–1925 (New Haven, 1963).

[3] See, for example, Carlos Basauri, *La situación social actual de la población Indígena de México, y breves apuntes sinteticos sobre Antropología, ye etnografía de la misma* (Mexico, 1928), pp. 13–14; Mendieta y Núñez, in *Ethnos* vol. 1, no. 1 (1920), pp. 21–2, Javier O. Aragon, 'Expansion territorial del Imperio Mexicano', *Anales del Museo Nacional de Antropología y Historia*, (hereafter *Anales del MNAHE*), vol. 7, no. 1 (1931), pp. 5–64; Alfredo Barrera Vázquez, 'La cultura maya', *Anales del MNAHE*, Ep. 5a, vol. ii (1935), pp. 336–41; Roque J. Ceballos Novelo, 'Las instituciones aztecas', *Anales del MNAHE*, 5a ep., vol. ii (1935), p. 288–99. *El Maestro Rural* also regularly published stories which were designed to show Indians the glories of their past. See *El Maestro Rural* (hereafter *MR*), vol. 8, no. 4 (15 Feb. 1936), p. 29. See also Nicolás Rangel, 'Acualmetztli: Un gran rebelde Azteca', *MR*, vol. 6, no. 11 (1 June 1935).

[4] Colonial and nineteenth century *Indigenistas* such as Francisco Clavijero, Fray Servando Teresa de Mier and Carlos María de Bustamante claimed the Indian past as their own as a means of celebrating the classic roots of American civilisation. However, they saw no connection between living Indians and the past that they celebrated. *Indigenismo* also did not represent a hegemonic ideology in nineteenth century Mexico, and was largely discarded by Mexican liberals such as Lorenzo de Zavala, José María Luis Mora, Ignacio Ramírez and Francisco Bulnes who, following 18th century European leads of William Robertson and Abbé Raynal, simply dismissed the Aztecs as savages and understood Indians as irredeemable. This view was popular during the *Porfiriato*, and is present in school textbooks well into the 1920s. See David Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 50–1, 83–4, 90–4; Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination: Studies in European and Spanish–American Social and Political Theory* (New Haven, 1990), pp. 92–7; David Brading, 'Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, vol. 7, no. 6 (1988), p. 75–9; Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, pp. 73–4, 96; William Dirk Raat, 'Los intelectuales, el positivismo y la cuestión indígena', *Historia Mexicana*, vol. xx (1970), pp. 414–21; Mary Kay Vaughan, *The State, Education, and Social Class in Mexico, 1880–1928* (Dekalb, 1982), pp. 239–66; Mary Kay Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution: Teachers, Peasants, and Schools in Mexico, 1930–1940* (Tucson, 1997), pp. 29, 37.

[5] Their celebration of the Indian did not go uncontested. Many *Indigenistas* faced enormous challenges in asserting the Indian past and Indianness of the nation in their work. See, for example, Delpar, *The Enormous Vogue*, pp. 84–85, 150–2; Vaughan, *Cultural Politics in Revolution*, pp. 37–8, 47–66, 191–4.

generated the public interest and bureaucratic authority to emerge as a hegemonic perspective within Mexico. *Indigenismo* found a popular voice in a variety of publications, including journals such as *Ethnos* and *Mexican Folkways*, and the public art of artists such as Diego Rivera.[6] It also found a place in the official bureaucracy as early as 1917, with the founding of the *Dirección de Antropología*.[7] Within this agency, *Indigenistas* such as Manuel Gamio (known as the 'father of Mexican anthropology'),[8] Lucio Mendieta y Núñez, Carlos Basauri, and Miguel Othón de Mendizábal combined social scientific authority and nationalist zeal to document and promote the Indian cultures of Mexico.[9] Though the *Dirección de Antropología* would fall victim to ideological conflicts in the mid-1920s,[10] during the following years *Indigenista* concerns would reach public prominence in numerous institutions, including the *Misiones Culturales* (1922), the *Casa del Estudiante Indígena* (1926), *Educación Socialista* (1934), the *Departamento Autónomo de Asuntos Indígenas* (DAAI) (1936), and the *Instituto Nacional de Antropología y Historia* (1938).[11]

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[6] Examples include Gerardo Murillo, *Las Artes Populares en México* (Mexico, 1992); Rubén M. Campos, *El folklore literario de México. Investigación acerca de la producción literaria popular (1525–1925)*; Gregorio López y Fuentes, *El Indio* (Mexico, 1936). We also see this in Adolfo Best Maugard's *Método de dibujo* (which used Aztec artistic traditions as the sole method of instruction in Mexico City's public schools in the early 1920s). Adolfo Best Maugard, *Metodo de dibujo: tradición resurgimiento y evolución del arte mexicano* (Mexico, 1923). See also Octavio Paz, *Essays in Mexican Art* (New York, 1993), pp. 116–68.

[7] It was founded as a dependency of the *Secretaría de Agricultura y Fomento*. For Gamio's nationalist agenda, see Manuel Gamio, *Forjando Patria* (Mexico, 1916). For his plans to mix social science and nation building, see Manuel Gamio, *El Gobierno*, *La Población*, *y el Territorio* (Mexico, 1917); Manuel Gamio, *Programa del la Dirección de Antropología para el estudio y mejoramiento de las poblaciones regionales de la república* (Mexico, 1919). For the interest this generated, see Angeles González Gamio, *Manuel Gamio. Un lucha sin final* (Mexico, 1987), pp. 45–7.

[8] He was the first Mexican to receive a Doctorate in anthropology outside of Mexico, under Franz Boas at Columbia University. See González Gamio, *Manuel Gamio*, pp. 39–78.

[9] He did this both through self-consciously social scientific texts, such as La Población del Valle de Teotihaucán (Mexico, 1922), and through popular reviews such as *Ethnos* and *Mexican Folkways*. By 1940 his colleague Carlos Basauri was able to complete the process, publishing a three volume study titled *La Población indígena de México. etnografía* (Mexico, 1940).

[10] Because of conflicts that he had over social policy with leaders including José Vasconcelos and Plutarco Elías Calles. Gamio favoured more individualised approaches to solving social problems while Vasconcelos favored generalised approaches. See Vaughan, *The State*, *Education and Social Class*, pp. 138–9, 239–66. See also González Gamio, *Manuel Gamio*, pp. 79–85.

[11] Many of these institutions were either created or directed by prominent *Indigenistas*, including Moisés Sáenz, Luis Chávez Orozco, Graciano Sánchez, Vincente Lombardo Toledano, and Lázaro Cárdenas. See, for Example, Moisés Sáenz, 'Sobre la creación de un departamento de población indígena', Lázaro Cárdenas del Río (hereafter LCR), vol. 533.4 exp. 1 (6 Nov. 1935). See also Robert Kemper, 'From Nationalism to

The *Indigenistas* who gained a public forum through these mediums did not all speak with one voice, from one ideological perspective, or even describe the Indian and the nation in similar terms.[12] However, collectively these *Indigenistas* were singularly important in creating a public place for the Indian in post-revolutionary Mexico. Through their art, written texts, and bureaucracies, *Indigenistas* constructed a series of archetypes of the Indian which radically reinterpreted both the Indian and the Mexican nation. Furthermore, these archetypes ultimately became important signifiers of the political spaces and possibilities which were opened up to Indian actors in the post-revolutionary period.

While their contribution to the 'incorporation' of Indian cultures into the national culture was celebrated for several decades within Mexico, since the late 1960s historical revisionists have significantly altered the reputations of these early *Indigenistas*. Asserting that fundamentally *Indigenismo* required the negation of Indian identities within a Europeanised ideal, scholars such as Arturo Warman, Marjorie Becker, Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, and Mary Kay Vaughan contend that *Indigenistas* actually projected the annihilation of a degenerate Indian 'other' in post-revolutionary Mexico. These scholars argue that *Indigenismo* disparaged the Indian, while holding up the *mestizo* (a combination of Indian artistry and European rationality) as the ideal national type.[13] Moreover, Becker argues that the *Indigenista* view of the Indian was almost completely negative,[14] claiming that the use of the term 'primitive' in *Indigenista* thought:

implie(d) a literal association between nature and brutishness, suggesting that

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Internationalism: The Development of Mexican Anthropology, 1934–1946', *The Social Contexts of American Ethnology* (Washington, 1984, pp. 139–46.

[12] In fact, Sáenz ascendance in the 1920s was the direct result of Gamio's downfall, and was related to differing perspectives on the Indian problem. See Hewitt de Alcántara, pp. 10–16.

[13] See Marjorie Becker, *Setting the Virgin on Fire* (Berkeley, 1995); Claudio Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits From the Labyrinth: Culture and Ideology in the Mexican National Space* (Berkeley, 1992); Manuel Marzal, 1989, p. 404; Knight, 1990, pp. 76–7, 82–3, 85–6; Vaughan, 1997, pp. 25–9, 85–105; Arturo Warman, 'Todos santos y todos difuntos', *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* (Mexico, 1970), p. 36; Guillermo Bonfil, 'Del indigenismo de la revolución a la antropología crítica', *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* (Mexico, 1970), pp. 43–6; Margarita Nolasco Armas, 'La antropología aplicada en México y su destino final: el indigenismo', *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* (Mexico, 1970); Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley, 1995), p. 283; Guillermo Palacios, 'Post-revolutionary Intellectuals, Rural Readings, and the Shaping of the "Peasant Problem" in Mexico: El Maestro Rural, 1932–1934,' *Journal of Latin American Studies*, this issue.

[14] She refers to Cardenista Indigenistas specifically. Becker, *Setting the Virgin*, pp. 61–76, 102–15.

those who live close to the soil could be nothing but animals. The soil had overwhelmed them, making them its creatures, 'covered with dirt, on their faces, their clothing'. And they were slow moving creatures at that. 'Lacking a spirit of initiative, they are lazy or indolent, they have no forethought.'[15]

Taken from an 1935 essay in *El Maestro Rural*,[16] the excerpt certainly validates Becker's assessment of the *Indigenista* view of the Indian. Titled 'Los Huicholes', the essay describes an isolated, primitive group which maintained the same 'pristine' life that their ancestors had known.[17] As such, they were not viewed as a part of the national culture, and were destined to the mere recipients of the benefits of the Revolution and civilisation.[18]

This was clearly a powerful perspective in describing select Indian and *campesino* cultures during the years following the Revolution.[19] However, it was not the only, nor perhaps even the most significant, image of the Indian that emerged in post-revolutionary *Indigenismo*. This article explores a competing image of the Indian that appears in *Indigenista* texts, an image which acclaimed the Indian as a model for the future of the nation. While it was generally limited to those Indians whose cultures could be linked to a glorious pre-Columbian past,[20] the idealised Indian who emerged from this perspective was not simply a cultural icon, but at times became the very model of egalitarian politics, social conscience, and virtue that *Indigenistas* (and revolutionaries in general) sought to use to construct a modern, revolutionary order. Far from being an 'other', this Indian was clearly an integral member of the national community.[21]

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[15] The *mestizo*, on the other hand, was the yeoman farmer, an 'Indian without soul'. See Becker, *Setting the Virgin*, p. 67.

[16] The most important educational publication in the early 1930s was *El Maestro Rural*. It was designed to set up a line of communication between the SEP, rural teachers, and the communities they served. See Engracia Loyo, 'Lectura Para el Pueblo, 1921–1940', *La educación en la historia de México* (Mexico, 1992), pp. 277–85. Given the recurring interest in the 'Indian problem' and Indian cultures that contributors to the journal showed, MR can be fairly interpreted as exhibiting an *Indigenista* perspective.

[17] 'Los Huicholes', *MR*, vol. 7, no. 5 (1 Mar. 1935), pp. 16–7.

[18] 'Los Huicholes', pp. 16–7.

[19] Particularly when writers were describing Indian groups of the far North (as in the Tarahumaras) and the far South (as in the Lacandones). Indigenous cultures from these regions were condemned for unhealthy social practices and described as having the type of primitive (or, in some cases, non-existent) spiritual life indicative of nomads, savages, and barbarians. See 'Las razas indígenas de la Baja California', *MR*, vol. 9, no. 5 (Oct. 1936), pp. 17–18, 38. See also, Carlos Basauri, 'The Resistance of the Tarahumaras' *Mexican Folkways* (hereafter *MF*), vol. 2, no. 4 (Oct.–Nov. 1926), pp. 40–4; Carlos Basauri, 'Beliefs and Practices of the Tarahumaras', *MF*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Aug.–Sep. 1927), pp. 218–34. See also Palacios (forthcoming); Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, pp. 11–2. *Mexican Folkways* was a bilingual Journal published with the aid of the SEP during the late 1920s and early 1930s, and was targeted to Mexican and United States school children.

[20] This includes the Nahua Speaking peoples of Central Mexico, along with many of the cultures, including Tarasca, Huaxteca, Mixteca, and others, which Indigenistas linked to that past. It generally excluded groups whose existence had always been peripheral to the history of Central Mexico, such as the Tarahumara, Yaqui, and Chamula.

While initially simply a an object of praise, during the Cárdenas *sexenio* the Indian described in these texts ultimately became a subject of political mobilisation. As *Indigenismo* moved from the assimilationist goals of the 1920s to the radicalism and emergent pluralism of the late 1930s, one can see a growing assertion of the inherent values of Indian cultures, and later of Indian actors themselves. While it coexisted with another current within *Indigenismo*, which continued to describe a 'miserable' and 'pre-political' Indian, this *Indigenista* perspective ultimately became the basis for the selectively valorising Indian actors as political agents in their own right.

High Indian virtues

Positive representations of Indians during the post-revolutionary period frequently asserted that the cultures, values, and virtues that Indians possessed made them ideal potential citizens. While often vague and general, these celebrations of Indian virtue nevertheless created an image of an Indian who was redeemable, and valuable to the nation. During the 1920s intellectuals as diverse as José Vasconcelos and Manuel Gamio suggested that the Mexican Indian possessed certain inherent or essential qualities which made Indians a superior national 'stock'.[22] These claims were genealogically related to nineteenth century racial ideologies, although they inverted these ideas to celebrate the biological make-up of the Mexican (highland) Indian. Speaking in 1926, Vasconcelos stated:

> The Indian races of the tropics at least, do not constitute a primitive stock…a decayed stock, but not a primitive stock. The Mexican Indian may be primitive, although I would rather say, instead of being primitive he is provincial…Our Indians then are not as primitive as the Red Indian, but old, century-tried souls who have known victory and defeat, life and death, and all the moods of history…The Indians of Mexico and Peru represented a certain type of civilization and consequently were not as the North American Indian simply tribes of natives, wandering tribes of hunters, because this in itself perhaps

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[21] Certain scholars argue that the 'other' is an essential element in self-definition. James Clifford suggests that the 'other' in anthropology is in fact a part of the self. Clifford argues that ethnography is 'inescapably allegorical', in that it connects the subject of study to the reader through 'controlled fictions of difference and similitude' in which 'the (different) parts combine to form a consistent whole'. James Clifford, 'On Ethnographic Allegory', in *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, 1986), pp. 99–101.

[22] However, Vasconcelos did not consider himself an *Indigenista*, and clashed with Gamio on social programmes and priorities. See González Gamio, *Manuel Gramio*, pp. 79–85.

explains why the Spaniard had to mix with the Indian, while the Englishman did not mix but simply forced the Indian back.[23]

Carlos Basauri, a colleague of Gamio in the early 1920s who went on to prominent positions in the Secretaría de Educación Pública (SEP) and DAAI,[24] echoed this type of racial categorisation. He highlighted an Indian subject, who in spite of living in a European-dominated society, had achieved innumerable individual accomplishments.

> We base our assertion that the Indian has many latent virtues and energies in the experience of our own history. In the pre-Cortesian, colonial and modern epochs, one can find many Indians who always distinguished themselves, not only among individuals of their own race, but also in competition with whites and *mestizos*. They have shown their talents and other moral physical and intellectual qualities in the arts, sciences, politics, etc.[25]

Furthermore, while during 1920s they did not usually describe Indian cultures as modern, *Indigenistas* often noted numerous positive attributes of these cultures. Indian societies, they argued, had evolved with a number of important and fundamental characteristics which made Indians ideal citizens. These included bravery, fidelity, frugality, virtue, moral character, and most signifcantly, their ability to adapt to change.

> Their intelligence give them a great capacity for the acquisition of scientific knowledge. Their discipline, love of hard work, and innate constancy facilitates their success in many endeavors. Their moral moderation separates them from the common vices of other races. However, the Indian, as a member of a social group belonging to a lofty civilization, has always maintained characteristics, both physiological and psychological, which intimately reflect the weight of his ancestral heritage. While these racial characteristics make the Indian different from other groups, they could be beneficial. If they were adapted to modern civilization, these virtues would be converted into a potent and unquestionably valuable element for human society.[26]

In terms of physiology, Basauri asserted that the Indian was actually the racial ideal for Mexico. He claimed that over the centuries Indians had acquired many adaptive organic features which gave them a high biological value, and that 'the Indian race is vigorous and maintains many latent energies which, given favourable conditions, would manifest and lead to their normal development'.[27] Proof of this was the constant growth of the population, and the fact that 'many of those tribes which have ended their isolation and established contact with the rest of the population no longer manifest the stigma of degeneration which is attributed to the majority of Indians'.[28] 'Sturdy', 'resilient', and 'powerful', were words often used to describe the Indian. Moisés Sáenz (then under-Secretary of Public Education) repeated this claim, commenting that 'many of the indigenous groups in Mexico are quite different (from the primitive, brutish stereotype), being sturdy and assertive, self-reliant among themselves, physically clean and vigorous, strong and dignified'.[29]

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[23] José Vasconcelos, 'The Race Problem in Latin America' in *Aspects of Mexican Civilization: Lectures of the Harris Foundation* (Chicago, 1926), pp. 77–9.

[24] His career is detailed in María de la Luz del Valle Berrocal, 'Carlos Basauri', *La antropología en México. Panorama histórico, vol. 9, Los protagonistas (Mexico, 1988), pp. 226–241.*

[25] Basauri, *La situación social*, p. 13.

[26] Basauri, *La situación social*, pp. 5–6. See also Prof. Rafael Molina Betancourt, 'al margen de las afirmaciones presidenciales sobre el problema social de la incorporación indígena a la vida nacional', LCR vol. 545.3 exp. 147, nd., p. 3. Betancourt was a rural teacher during the 1920s whose experience in the countryside transformed his view of the Indian. See Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, p. 31. See also Carlos Basauri, *La población indígena de México* (Mexico, 1940), p. 46. For similar comments, see Francisco Ramírez, 'El Indio', MR vol. 1, no. 3 (1 April 1933), p. 7. This article was reprinted in the journal several times. See also, Enrique Juan Palacios, 'In Maya Land,' MF vol. 5, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1929), pp. 176–8.

Basauri applauded the work of the *Casa del Estudiante Indígena*[30] for showing that 'Indians could easily assimilate to a superior civilization', and for demonstrating that they were as good as, and often even more adept than, *mestizo* and white students from Mexico City at learning scientific disciplines.[31] Showing the potential of the Indian and their modern soul, Basauri commented:

> In willingly and enthusiastically accepting the scholastic teachings and social practices diffused by their teachers, Indians have already demonstrated a capacity to assimilate into a superior civilization.[32]

In other cases, writers focused not on the Indian's capacity for assimilation, but on the valuable features of Indian cultures themselves, such as marriage and family life. In one particularly striking example of the high moral values inculcated by Indian culture, Javier Uranga described the marriage vows of the Mazateca Indians. The following are the admonitions made to the newly-wed couple by the presiding priest:

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[27] Basauri, 1940, pp. 38–40. Indian physical strength was mentioned repeatedly. see, for example, Moisés Sáenz, *Mexico: an Appraisal and a Forecast* (New York, 1929) p. 8.

[28] Basauri, *La población indígena*, p. 40.

[29] Sáenz, *Mexico: an appraisal*, p. 8.

[30] The Casa was Established in the 1920s to educate an Indian elite. It was essentially a model school in which Indians were to be educated and then sent home to their pueblos to further the work of the Revolution.

[31] Basauri, *La situación social*, p. 13. Interestingly, Nicolás León agreed with this perspective in his study of the Tarascans of Lake Pátzcuaro, but also asserted that the Indian capacity for modernity did not imply that the Indians had to lose their culture. See Nicolás León, 'Los indios Tarascos del lago de Pátzcuaro', *Anales del MNAHE*, Ep. 5, vol. 1 (1934), p. 164. Frances Toor echoed this assertion, arguing that even the more primitive Indians found it easy to adopt to modern cultures without losing their 'dignity'. Frances Toor, 'The Dignity of the Indian', *MF*, vol. ii, no. 4 (Oct.–Nov. 1926), p. 4.

[32] Basauri, *La situación social*, p. 18. The capacity of Indian children for Spanish literacy, and their enthusiasm for acquiring the skills needed for modern living was repeatedly mentioned. See Moisés Sáenz, 'Our Rural Schools', *MF*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Feb.–Mar. 1927), pp. 44–52.

> Marriage is not something to play with as when you were children … cherish one another … treat your parents with reverence …. Have respect for the government, both that of the state and of the country. Take deep thought as to your work and shape carefully your future. Fulfill religiously the mandates of authority and never oppose them; and when you have occasion to comply with a demand upon you, forget your own work …. Do not incur intoxication …. Comport yourself well … the law has given you but one wife. Be respectful of her. Rear well your children. Teach them to work, that of the well being which you attain your children may be … and the best of your inheritance will be what you have taught them, as also you will be responsible for their deficiencies …. Keep vigilant charge of the fruit of your husband's labour which should be sacred to you. Be faithful to him unto death. Love and respect the father and mother and relatives of your husband as if they were your own ….[33]

These people were unquestionably governed by a highly civilized moral code, something that was essential for good citizens. Coupled with other moments in which the level of democracy and equality in these communities was celebrated,[34] these descriptions gave the reader a sense that, far from being primitive or barbaric, Indian cultures and cultural institutions provided models for the Mexican future.

One of the most striking examples of this type of attempt to idealize the Indian came with the publication of *Valores espirituales de la raza indígena* by Antonio Gutiérrez y Oliveros in 1929. A teacher in the *Casa del Estudiante Indígena*, Gutiérrez y Oliveros identified twenty-eight positive features of the Mexican Indian, all of which were said to be shared by both the ancient and modern Indians.[35] The physical features described a strong, robust, racial type, with no deficiencies from a physiological point of view.[36] Gutiérrez y Oliveros also noted the Indians' aptitude for science and the arts, their enormous repository of skills, and their 'great talent for imitation … the Spaniards could not make anything which the Indians did not imitate immediately'.[37]

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[33] Javier Uranga H., 'Some Mazateca Customs', *MF*, vol. III (Feb.–Mar. 1927), pp. 21–2.

[34] See for example, Catherine Vesta Sturges, 'Along the way with Rural Institutes (Misiones Rurales),' *MF*, vol. 3 (Feb.–Mar. 1927), pp. 165–6.

[35] Eight were physical, three intellectual, and seventeen moral, and, he notes that all could also be seen in students at the 'Casa del estudiante indígena', Antonio Gutiérrez y Oliveros, *Valores espirituales de la raza indígena* (Mexico, 1929), pp. 11, 16.

[36] Gutiérrez y Oliveros, *Valores Espirituales*, pp. 11–2. His description is reminiscent of the somatological style which was popular prior to the revolution, describing such things as excellent vision and hearing, strong, white teeth, and well proportioned limbs.

[37] Gutiérrez y Oliveros, *Valores espirituales*, p. 13.

Indians as a model for social reform

Beyond simply promoting an Indian subject, expositions of Indian virtues also represented some Indian cultural practices as models for specific revolutionary social reforms. Like other Western anthropological traditions, this valorisation sometimes took the form of a melancholic remembrance of a disappearing *gemeinschaftlich* ideal,[38] but was in no way limited to a simple celebration of the rural past. While certain traditions, such as the use of witch-doctors, represented an impediment to progress, other facets of Indian social organisation, such as their communal traditions, could serve as a model for a more equitable and 'progressive' nation. Sáenz made precisely this point in declaring that the Indian community should be the model for creating a new, and more humane modernity.

> Our ethnologists tell us that the sense of community which sociologists stress as the need of modern society, is nowhere stronger than among our Indians of Mexico, and that a democratic organization is found in no purer form than in thousands of Indian villages of this country.[39]

Though most understood the Indian as economically backwards, early in the 1920s *Indigenistas* began to argue that Indian cultures were actually models of socialism. When, in 1920, the Secretary of Agriculture established the *Dirección de Cooperativas Agrícolas*, this agency was rationalised as the logical successor to the system of the Indian communal villages which existed in the colonial and early national periods. The *Dirección* was supposed to educate the Indians and organise cooperatives which would operate in concert with the cultural and social values of their

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[38] While more secular and scientific, the 'modern' world included a loss of a more human, harmonious, and spiritual way of life. In one particularly striking example of this view, Julio de la Fuente described the effects of modernity on a number of Zapotec villages. In the villages which maintained their traditional structures, de la Fuente saw family unity, respect for elders, an efficient and just government, and general equality among villagers. In these villages women even had an important and powerful role to play in village affairs. On the other hand, as a consequence of modernisation certain Zapotec villages had been transformed and many Zapotecs (being apt businessmen) had amassed considerable capital. In these villages respect for authority had lessened, old systems of justice and equality had broken down. Conflict increased and family relations had collapsed, leading to divorce, abortion, and the spread of venereal diseases. Prof. J. de la Fuente, 'Conflictos en la organización social y política de los Zapotecos', *Primer Congreso Indigenista Interamericano* (hereafter, *PCII*), (Pátzcuaro, 1940), pp. 1–9. See also Concepción Michel, 'La mujer indígena y la civilización moderna', *PCII* (Pátzcuaro, 1940).

[39] Sáenz, *Mexico: an appraisal*, p. 8. In certain cases *Indigenistas* argued that, when they were allowed to preserve their ancient forms of land-holding and care for their needs through traditional means, Indian communities maintained a level of prosperity and equality that was better than any example from European society. See Frances Toor, 'The Dignity of the Indian', *MF*, vol. ii, no. 4 (Oct.–Nov. 1926), p. 4.

Indian clients. As the editors of *Ethnos* wrote, the Indians had historically practiced a form of 'agrarian communism',[40] and thus:

> the implantation of agricultural cooperatives is not an artificial measure, forced and illogical, but designed by individuals using a carefully conceived sociological method, yet one in accord with the historical antecedents of the population, and today's social structure.[41]

While it was clearly a mythologised construction of the relationship between the Indian communal past and the agrarian reform promised by the Revolution,[42] this perspective rested on an understanding that Indians possessed a deep proprietary love for the land, and that simple changes in economic organisation could unleash their potential for effective economic development.[43]

The claim that the agrarian reform programme was well suited to pre-existing forms of Indian society rationalised the reform process, and suggested that Indians would (or should) support collectivist agrarian reforms.[44] This idea gained further acceptance in the Cardenista discourse of the 1930s, when officials from a variety of government agencies celebrated the passing of individualism and the emergence of a new ethos that favoured the interest of the collectivity (a socialist awakening); a collectivity which Indians had always, if only internally, possessed.[45]

Beyond applauding Indian communalism, *Indigenistas* also looked to the Indian as an ideal model for the nation in other areas. This 'Indian ideal' was often held up as a part of a critique that juxtaposed certain positive aspects of Indian society to the restrictive culture of Mexican Catholicism and authoritarianism. For instance, Carlos Basauri generalised that in Indian communities family morality was strict, divorce rare, and prostitution virtually non-existent,[46] which provided a sharp contrast to the ills of *mestizo* and white society. Basauri also applauded the absence of Catholic domination in these communities by commenting that 'among some tribes the virginity of women is not held in the same high esteem as can be seen among Western cultures'.[47] This fact showed that indigenous peoples were in some sense far more liberated than most Mexicans, and offered a future course for possible change. The modernistic quality of this assertion was complex, in that it described a 'primitive' subject who possessed certain cultural characteristics which anti-clerical intellectuals found highly appealing. In this, it celebrated both the modernity of the Indian and the primitiveness of that Indian simultaneously.[48]

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[40] Lic. Alfonso Toro. *Ethnos*, vol 1, no. 5 (Aug. 1920), pp. 107–110.

[41] Los Cooperativas Agricolas, *Ethnos*, 2nd. Ep. vol. 1, no. 1 (1922), pp. 4–7.

[42] As Daniel Nugent, John Gledhill, and Marjorie Becker (among others) show, much of the agrarian reform directed by the state during this period had limited support in the communities it was directed towards, particularly because of the ways in which the state sought to dominate these communities through the reform. See Becker, *Setting the Virgin*, Daniel Nugent, *Spent Cartridges of Revolution: An Anthropological History of Namiquipa, Chihuahua* (Chicago, 1993) and John Gledhill, *Casi Nada: A Study of Agrarian Reform in the Homeland of Cardenismo* (Albany, 1991).

[43] This was in marked contrast to pre-revolutionary thinkers, who saw Indians as lazy and indolent. Manuel Gamio, 'Algunas Sugestiones a los Misioneros Indígenas', *Ethnos* 2 Ep. vol. 1 no. 1 (1922) p. 62.

[44] See Carrillo Puerto, 'The New Yucatan', p. 139; Basauri, *La situación social*, p. 7; Carlos Basauri, *Tojolabales, Tzeltales, y Mayas: breves apuntes sobre antropología, etnografía, y linguística* (Mexico, 1931), p. 33.

[45] Particularly the SEP and DAAI. See DAAI, *Memoria del Primer Congreso Regional Indígena celebrado en Ixmiquilpan, Hgo., 26–27 Sept 1936* (Mexico, 1938), p. 13. Scholars regularly argued that this 'collectivist ethos' needed to be reinforced through the types of organisations and education introduced in Indian villages. See, for example, Betancourt, 'Al margen…'; Basauri, *La población indígena*,, pp. 108–109; 'Los Centros de Educación Indígena', *MR* vol. 10, no. 1 (July 1937), pp. 6–10; 'El despertar socialista indígena', *MR* vol. 7, no. 3 (1 Aug. 1935), pp. 25–6.

Manuel Gamio initiated this assertion in his 1920 article 'El celibato y el desarrollo de la población de México',[49] where he argued that Indian women, who were not celibate from an early age, were healthier and lived more 'naturally' than white women, and that celibacy among white women actually promoted sexual perversion, prostitution, and slow population growth in white society.[50] Gamio suggested that whites should imitate this Indian practice in order to rid the country of the terrible celibacy problem, with the direct benefit of an immediate and palpable rise in the white population. Although he invoked a 'primitive' practice in the article, Gamio saw its suitability in a modern context as unquestionable.

Race and culture

As Alan Knight notes, the 'racist' genealogy and implications of these types of statements are unmistakeable.[51] Much like nineteenth century racial ideologies, the repeated focus on an Indian 'race' in these texts seems to indicate an innate difference between whites and Indians, even if this difference took the form of an inversion of the old stereotypes. Knight contends that anthropologists still wrote in terms which implied the existence of racial characteristics when they asserted the innate quality of positive Indian attributes.[52] However, I believe that this focus on positive Indian capabilities took place in so substantially different a context from earlier assertions of Indian irredeemability as to make them incomparable as 'racist' perspectives.

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[46] Basauri, *La población indígena*, p. 99.

[47] In this Basauri saw no connection between family morality and virginity, clearly substituting a 'modernist' conceptualisation of morality. Basauri, *La población indígena*, p. 99.

[48] Indigenistas were highly critical of the ways in which the Catholic Church had supposedly created deviant cultural and social practices which were stifling the development of Mexican civilisation. See for example, Alfonso Caso, *The Religion of the Aztecs* (Mexico, 1936). See also Manuel Gamio to Frank Glass Jr., Obregón/Calles, vol. 713, exp. G-26, 20 April 1926.

[49] *Ethnos*, 2nd Ep, vol. 1, no. 2 (1920) p. 67.

[50] *Ethnos*, 2nd Ep, vol. 1, no. 2 (1920) p. 70.

[51] Knight, 1990, pp. 71–113.

Post-revolutionary *Indigenismo* clearly departed from the exclusionary ideas of leading Porfirian intellectuals such as José Limantour and Francisco Bulnes, but also diverged from the ideas of more sympathetic intellectuals, such as Justo Sierra.[53] While he believed in the educability of the Indian, Sierra and other 'conservative *Indigenistas*' during this period did not see any value residing in the cultures or living Indians in the republic, nor did he believe they were suited to the kinds of social programmes that post-revolutionary *Indigenistas* favoured.[54] In this, these thinkers were predecessors to men such as Vasconcelos, but distinct from intellectuals such as Gamio, Basauri, Rivera, and Sáenz.[55]

Furthermore, during this period racial stereotypes were used for strikingly different ends than in previous eras. Inasmuch as post-revolutionary *Indigenistas* sometimes used the notion of race to validate the Indian, these racial stereotypes were used to guarantee a place for the Indian within the nation, rather than towards the elimination of the Indian. In this new formulation the Indian was a model for, and subject of, democratisation, not an obstacle to development. Having inherited a tradition which relied on racial categories to describe Indian difference, *Indigenistas* still used some of these terms, but did so in search of inclusion and equality. These texts are replete with references to the fact that in terms of their intellect and capacity for modernity, Indians were just as capable as *mestizos* and whites. Yet in order simply to argue for Indian equality, it is clear that *Indigenistas* sometimes chose to argue for

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[52] Knight, 'Racism, Revolution and Indigenismo', pp. 87–95.

[53] William Raat argues that such ideas did not necessarily reflect a strictly racist perspective (particularly compared to other racist ideas present in the West during this period), but these Social Darwinists and modernising Liberals favoured massive immigration and the gradual disappearance of the Indian as a biological factor within the national population. While this was not the only perspective in Porfirian Mexico, it dominated most influential circles. See Raat, 'Los intelectuales, el positivismo, y la cuestión indígena', *Historia Mexicana*, vol. xx (1970), pp. 415–21.

[54] The difference in political power can be seen in the sheer volume of resources devoted to Indian issues (rural education, land reform, credit, and government bureaucracies).

[55] William D. Raat, 'Ideas and Society in Don Porfirio's Mexico', *The Americas*, vol. 30 (1973), pp. 44–5, 48–9; William D. Raat, 1970, pp. 426–7. See also T. G. Powell, 'Mexican Intellectuals and the Indian Problem, 1876–1911', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, vol. 48 (1968), pp. 19–36. Brading sees intellectuals such as Gamio and Vasconcelos as the heirs to Justo Sierra, who in the pre-revolutionary period argued from a social darwinist perspective that the *mestizo* was the 'dynamic' element within the nation. See Brading, 'Manuel Gamio', pp. 75–79; Brading, *The Origins of Mexican Nationalism*, pp. 4–23, 101; Gamio, 'Algunas Sugestiones', pp. xviii, xli, lii–liv.

Indian racial superiority, and based their concept of the nation on an Indian ideal.

In contrast to this, Lomnitz-Adler asserts that the ideal racial type in *Indigenismo* was actually *mestizaje*.[56] While certain *Indigenista* texts bear this out,[57] one can find ample evidence within these same texts of the celebration of a specifically Indian ideal. The explanation for this apparent contradiction lies in understanding that *Indigenistas* used the terms 'Indian' and '*mestizo*' as somewhat fluid, de-essentialised categories during this period. Depending on their material circumstances, Indians could be described as *mestizo*, just as *mestizos* could be described as possessing indigenous culture. Further, in some contexts Indians and *mestizos* were celebrated as distinct cultures, while at other moments Indigenistas aggregated the poor Indian and *mestizo* into the same social class. This created the possibility of valorising either the Indian, the *mestizo*, or the Indian/*mestizo*, depending on the purpose of a given text.

This highlights a more subtle, but possibly more important aspect of the shift away from nineteenth century ideologies; the changing emphasis from 'race' to 'culture' in *Indigenista* texts. While the term 'Indian race' remained a part of common parlance in post-revolutionary Mexico, the continued usage of the word 'race' belied significant transformations in its meanings during these years. Beginning with Manuel Gamio in the 1910s, *Indigenistas* gradually modified the focus in their work from a concentration on race to a concentration on Indian cultures. On obtaining his Ph.D. in anthropology under Boas at Columbia University in New York, Gamio adopted an emerging culturalist perspective in his work that denied the concept of superior and inferior races, accepting instead the principle that all human cultures possessed the same abilities.[58] Though he would misapply Boasian principles,[59] Gamio was careful to construct his critique of Indian peoples around the idea of 'retrograde' cultures, rather than suggesting that Indian problems were rooted in their 'race'.

One can see this idea clearly in Gamio's three volume study of the Valley of Teotihuacán, published in 1922. While in this study Gamio reiterated numerous ideas about a retrograde Indian race, he described the population of the valley in ways that clearly showed a shift from the concept of race to that of culture. After determining the races of the people of the valley with somatological measures,[60] he went on to categorise the inhabitants based not on their 'race', but on their 'level of culture'. Gamio described three levels of culture in the valley; retrograde, mixed, and modern, and placed individuals into those levels without reference to their race. While most people fell into levels which described them racially, significant numbers of Indians and *mestizos* were fitted into categories which did not. This showed that the three levels of culture were not racially predetermined,[61] and supported arguments that isolation, exploitation, and priestly oppression were the real keys to Indian backwardness.[62] Indicative of this transformation was Gamio's assertion that once they were introduced to a modern forms of knowledge and practices, Indians found it just as easy to succeed in society as whites.[63] In fact, his idea of the *mestizo* nation was primarily cultural, not biological.[64]

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[56] See Lomnitz-Adler, *Exits from the Labyrinth*, pp. 261–81.

[57] See, for example, Manuel Gamio, 'Nacionalismo e internacionalismo, *Hacia un México Nuevo*, (Mexico, 1935), pp. 21–3. This was reprinted from *Ethnos*, where it appeared in 1920.

[58] See Brading, 'Manuel Gamio', p. 79. See also Ann Cyphers and Marci Lane Rodríguez, 'Franz Boas', *La antropología en Mexico. Panorama Histórico, vol. 9 Los protagonistas* (Mexico, 1988), pp. 323–46.

[59] Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara and David Brading argue that Gamio's work showed racist overtones. See Hewitt de Alcántara, *Anthropological Perspectives*, pp. 10–3 and Brading, 'Manuel Gamio', p. 83.

One can even see a subtle shift to an emphasis on culture even in some texts which overtly described an Indian 'race'. While intellectual and physical abilities were clearly a function of biology, these same writers described other Indian attributes (such as their loyalty, sense of community, and honesty) which seemed to be much more a function of Indian cultures.[65] Even Gutiérrez y Oliveros devoted a great deal of space in his study to describing Indian attributes which seemed to be mainly cultural practices. This includes sections where he discussed the importance of religion in Indian societies, and the respect shown towards parents, elders, and other reasonable forms of authority.[66] The same was true where he represented Indians as patriotic, gentle, honest, and loyal friends, who never engaged in the hypocrisy and treachery which was so common among whites.[67] Gutiérrez y Oliveros went even further in validating Indian cultures. The Indian was circumspect, a hard worker, temperate in his drinking and eating (alcoholism was explained as a function of colonial exploitation), persevering, stoic, and an enemy of liars and thieves.[68]

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[60] Gamio, 'Algunas sugestiones', pp. xxii–xxvi.

[61] *Ibid.*, pp. xxxi–xxxiv.

[62] *Ibid.*, p. xliii.

[63] *Ibid.*, p. xxvi. Modernity, to most Indigenistas, consisted of the practices and mentalities which made it possible of be a productive member of the nation.

[64] He showed this repeatedly in his categorisation of the Valley. *Ibid.*, p. xxxiii.

[65] See, for example, Basauri, *La situación social*, pp. 5–6. These views were compatible with those of Alfonso Reyes and Adolfo Best Maugard, who saw a Mexican nation derived from the experience of a common environment, history, and 'spirit', which operated outside of biological categories. Martin Stabb notes that Alfonso Reyes, in 'Visión de Anáhuac' (1917) saw a true link between modern Mexico and pre-Columbian times, 'disregarding all questions of blood, because of the same environment and the same spirit created by that environment'. Adolfo Best Maugard also argued that the Mexican environment connected all Mexicans in one national culture, regardless of ethnic origin; a distinctly non-racial perspective. See Stabb, *In Quest of Identity*, p. 84. See also Best Maugard, *Método de dibujo*, pp. 8–10, 132.

[66] Others confirm that this is a description of culture. See, for example, Basauri, *La poblacín indígena.*

[67] Gutiérrez y Oliveros, *Valores Espirituales*, pp. 13–14.

This focus on culture as opposed to race became much more explicit during the 1930s.[69] With the advent of Cardenismo and the popularisation of Marxist nomenclature, *Indigenistas* increasingly came to describe select Indian cultures as the equals of poor *mestizos*. In a shift which represented a complete abandonment of the idea of 'race' as a discrete category, the Indian who spoke Spanish and lived within the modern economy was described as nothing short of a *mestizo*.

> The Indian who has forgotten his language or who uses and understands Spanish, who has assimilated to the economy and culture of mestizos in all of its manifestations, who is situated in zones with good communications, who has had their lands returned through restitution or is in the process of receiving their lands, and who receives the benefits of schools which they had previously been excluded from, can be found located in a situation of relative equality vis à vis the poor mestizo campesino....[70]

Commenting on the similarities between the cultural practices and values of Indians and those of the lower classes (both whites and *mestizos*) in the cities, Carlos Basauri wrote:

> When studying the socio-economic conditions of the workers colonia in the Federal District... one encounters customs which are very similar to those of the Indians, in nutrition, living conditions, in the use of medicinal herbs, etc., and also in certain aspects of their intellectual life.[71]

Basauri used the striking similarity of these two groups, both of which constituted exploited and impoverished segments of society, to argue that the only real differences between the Indian classes and the white and *mestizo* urban poor lay in the difference between urban and rural living.[72]

In grouping Indians and *mestizos* together, many writers also suggested that the 'Indian problem' was a class issue, as opposed to a spiritual or essential conflict. Indians needed to be reintegrated, but:

> This rehabilitation and integration should be applied to this part of our society in toto, and not simply the Indian segment, for otherwise we will leave other

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[68] *Ibid*., p. 14.

[69] Gamio's own tripartite categorisation remained popular well into the 1930s. See, for example, 'Aspiraciones de la revolución', *MR*, vol. 11, no. 9 (Sep. 1938), p. 17.

[70] Lic. M. T. de la Peña, 'Panorama de la economía indígena de México,' Sección Segunda, Economía, *PCII* (Pátzcuaro, 1940), p. 1.

[71] Basauri, *La población indígena*, p. 101.

[72] *Ibid*., p. 101.

segments, whose economy and culture is at the same level of the Indians, at the margins.[73]

By this reasoning, there were 5.5 million *mestizos* who were 'also socially, culturally, and economically backward', and thus the government 'should not conceive of the Indians as a special group and maintain them apart from other groups of mestizos who live in exactly the same conditions'.[74] Part of a larger current in Cardenismo which valorised the Indian as central to the nation while decrying the effects of class exploitation,[75] this viewpoint made Indians members of a single proletariat which included the urban poor and other *campesinos*. As a class, Indians (like other rural poor) were oppressed, backward, and in need of vast amounts of financial and other assistance,[76] but they existed clearly within the framework of a nation in which their cultural 'otherness' was really only a matter of economic problems created by their oppression.[77]

Indians and revolutionary modernity

In constructing *mestizaje* as a cultural phenomenon, and in fact as a process which had affected Indian cultures long before the arrival of Europeans in Mexico,[78] *Indigenistas* created an image of many Indian cultures which was far from the 'static', 'isolated' Indian of the sierra.[79] Rather, *Indigenistas* frequently portrayed cultures which had gone through many transformations since the Conquest, and which had already assimilated many of the values of modern civilisation.[80] In some cases this was as simple as noting the growing tendency of many Indians to speak Spanish,[81] utilise western forms of dress,[82] or play western sports,[83] but in many instances the descriptions of transformed Indian cultures implied that, while these Indians maintained their great cultural and artistic tradition[84] they had also undergone a significant 'modernisation'[85] in their way of life.

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[73] *MR* vol. 13, nos. 3–4 (Mar.–Apr. 1940), p. 10.

[74] *MR* Vol. 13, nos. 3–4 (Mar.–Apr. 1940), p. 10.

[75] See, for example, Cárdenas' address to the *PCII* (Pátzcuaro, 1940).

[76] Prof. Rafael Ramírez, 'Formación y capacidad de los maestros rurales para hacer eficaz la acción de la escuela en los pueblos indígenas', *MR* vol. 7, no. 7 (1 Oct. 1935), pp. 11–2.

[77] With the exception of the small number of *Indigenistas* advocating pluralism, during the Cardenista period culture was understood as diet and nutrition, hygiene, domestic health practices, and other poverty driven issues. Primitive economies, practices, and other subsistence issues were the keys to the Indian cultural problem, and needed to be resolved through economic and educational programmes. When writers in the 1930s spoke of the 'formación del alma nacional por medio de la enseñanza', they meant new agricultural methods, the improvement of industry, and the general elevation of Indian standards of living. Education in the 1930s increasingly served primarily economic ends. Culture then, was essentially the products (reading, writing, modern methods) of a progressive education. See, for example, 'Los Nuevos misioneros de la cultura y de la civilización', *MR*, vol. 4, no. 8 (1 Apr. 1934), pp. 8–9; 'Acción Federal en favor de la cultura obrera y campesina', *MR* vol. 3, no. 4 (15 Feb. 1933), pp. 3–4; Prof. Rafael Ramírez, 'Formación y capacidad de los maestros rurales…', pp. 11–2.

[78] In fact, noting the long history of Indigenous culture emerging out of a mixture of earlier civilisations, some *Indigenistas* argued that *mestizaje* was an millenia old process which had always occurred without reference to race. Caso, *The Religion of the Aztecs* (Mexico, 1936). Basauri, *La situación social*, p. 6–7. Chávez Orozco credited Mendizábal for originating the concept that all nahua speaking peoples were part of one culture. Luis Chávez Orozco, *La civilización nahua* (Mexico, 1933), pp. 6, 15, 28.

[79] The sierra, like the far North and South, remained a place where *Indigenistas* identified isolated Indian cultures.

These descriptions often focused on Indians who were impatiently demanding the benefits promised by the 1910 Revolution, and by implication, modernity.[86] Even in the late 1920s, long before Cardenismo necessitated a mobilisation of popular support for the regime, writers such as Moisés Sáenz regularly commented on the popularity of revolutionary programmes in Indian villages. Writing in 1929, Sáenz declared:

> We catch in the eyes of these people the same eagerness, the same hopeful trust, which we see in the children. They are all children, the parents and the sons.... Very little is said; very little need be said; such is the perfect understanding of all. High officials of the government, school supervisors, the teacher, children, parents, (are) all together on the same footing.... It is the spirit of the 'Revolution'.[87]

Interestingly, several years earlier José Vasconcelos had already argued that Indian activism and engagement in political struggles were indications of the modern impulses present in contemporary Indian leaders. Criticising the idea of any movement to reinstate 'Indian' standards Vasconcelos stated:

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[80] Interestingly, certain writers even suggested that *mestizaje* in the Yucatán was seen in the way that criollo had adopted the Mayan language, culture, and customs, and not the other way around. See, for example, Enrique Juan Palacios, 'In Maya Land', *MF*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Oct.–Dec. 1929), pp. 176–7. See also Felipe Carrillo Puerto, 'The New Yucatan', *Survey Graphic* (1 May 1924), pp. 138–42.

[81] See, for example R. Ramírez, 'La política educativa de nuevo trato hacia los los indios', *MR* vol. 12, no. 9 (Sep. 1939), pp. 22–3.

[82] Basauri, *La población indígena*, p. 57.

[83] Such as baseball, tennis, or basketball. Carrillo Puerto, 'The New Yucatán', p. 141.

[84] This seems to reflect an understanding of culture which did not see the interconnectedness of all component parts of that culture. This only really began to change with the early pluralistic writings of the late 1930s. See, for example, Nicolás León, 'Los indios Tarascos', p. 164. See also Silicio Pauer, 'The Apparel and Hair Dressing of the Women of Yalalag', *MF*, vol. 1, no. 3 (Oct.–Nov. 1925), pp. 23–4.

[85] 'Modern' was a somewhat open ended concept, but generally indicated the sensibilities, values, and knowledge (such as Spanish and literacy) that allowed a person to function in the 'modern world' as a productive citizen.

[86] At times this was expressed in terms of the malleability of the Indian (as in Francisco Ramírez, 'El Indio', *MR*, vol. 1, no. 3 [1 April 1933], p. 7.), but I believe that the more significant aspect of this trend described Indians demanding modernity.

[87] Sáenz, *Mexico: an appraisal*, pp. 10–1. Sáenz articulated this view prior to his experiences at Carapan, where he came to view revolutionary programmes as failures, but where he also developed a more subtle understanding of Indian cultures. Frances Toor also wrote that Indians were 'clamoring for the freedom, land and schools for which the Indians have suffered and fought during ten years of revolution'. Frances Toor, 'The Dignity of the Indian', *MF*, vol. ii, no. 4 (Oct.–Nov. 1926), p. 4.

> …the Spanish spirit is still gaining victories over the native Indian spirit through its language, through its religion, and its social forms of living. Even the more radical leaders of the Zapata revolt, pure Indians like the school-teacher Montaño who was the brains of the group, were expressing themselves in good Spanish and were basing their economic theory of the distribution of the land, etc., on the terms of the European manner of life. At the same time the mass of the revolting Indians was carrying, as in the days of Hidalgo, the image of the Virgin of Guadalupe as a banner. They were being Spaniards even against their will and their knowledge….[88]

In contrast to the idea of a reform programme which simply affected the Indian, passages such as these (whether they credit the Spanish spirit in the Indian or an innate Indian desire for progress) created the impression that Indians were actors in their own redemption. Of course, the nature of that redemption, and in particular the types of actions that could be understood as redemptive, were prescribed within an *Indigenista* conceptualisation of modernity. In the mid-1920s certain SEP officials adopted the practice (which would become much more important later) or arguing that the government's conception of the reform process was very popular and even aggressively demanded in a countryside which was already undergoing great changes.

> Credit, production, and consumption cooperatives are no longer rare, but are being established in the most forgotten corners of the Republic. We are receiving more petitions now than we ever have before from people demanding the advantages of civilisation. In the past these demands came from governors and inspectors, but now they come directly, from parents groups and worker and campesino organisations. All parts of the country are awakening and longing for improvement. Everywhere we can see a burgeoning desire to reach the heights that people know they have the capacity to reach.[89]

Although not all Indians spoke Spanish, Sáenz reported the desire to learn the language among young and old.

> (The) most informal atmosphere in the world exists in this little school. The work is individual, although there are many collective activities. The children read and write marvellously well and all can count. Everywhere the Indian blood is in evidence…. We are, without doubt, on the borderline, but the official language is Spanish and the children are delighted to speak it, while the parents themselves, slow in this beautiful tongue, are delighted to hear them.[90]

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[88] Vasconcelos, 'The Race Problem', p. 90.

[89] *El sistema de Escuelas Rurales en México* (Mexico, 1927), p. xxv.

[90] Moisés Sáenz, 'Our Rural Schools', *MF*, vol. 3, no. 1 (Feb.–Mar. 1927), pp. 45–6.

The idea that Indians were actively seeking 'modernistic' social reforms was ultimately transposed into the argument that Indians had actively participated in their own 'redemption', not only through their cooperation with federal programmes, but also through their contribution to the great 'national' struggles in Mexican history.[91] As a part of a much larger discourse which nationalised Indigenous symbols and established the Indian as a part of the national folk culture,[92] assertions such as these established the fact that Indians (at least those Indians who had participated in the formation of the nation) had the same rights to citizenship and national identity as other Mexicans. The Indian, a powerful and capable element in the nation, would not really be integrated but 'reintegrated'; not vindicated, but 'revindicated'.[93] Indians were not simply accepting the accoutrements of modernity, but enthusiastically demanding these improvements to their lives, and thus had a clear place in the Revolution.[94]

Manuel Gamio's indifferent and isolated Indian of the early 1920s[95] thus gave way by the early 1930s to an Indian who was struggling actively against the conditions of his or her oppression. Increasingly *Indigenista* scholars sought out exmples of Indians who were enthusiastically cooperating in the construction of revolutionary projects such as schools, roads, and social programmes, and all that they needed to 'march in unison with all other elements of Mexican society'.[96] Where Indians had to be won over from their distrust of outsiders, this did not reflect Indian resistance to progress, but was rather the product of a history of exploitation.[97]

Indians and politics

At times this conceptualisation of Indian identities was extended to indicate that Indians were rational political actors in their own right. This did not, however, imply that Indians were engaged in a political life which was a simple reflection of a European model. Writing of the Mazateca political culture in Oaxaca, Javier Uranga stated:

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[91] This included the Wars for Independence and the Revolution of 1910. See for example, María de los Angeles Azcarate de Chávez Orozco, 'Ponencia del comité nacional de ayuda al niño indígena ante el Primer Congreso Indigenista Interamericano', *PCII* (Pátzcuaro, 1940) p. 2; DAAI, *Memoria del Tercer Congreso Regional Indígena* (*Azteca*) (Mexico, 1938). p. 18; Prof. Rafael Molina Betancourt, 'Al Margen de las Afirmaciones Presidenciales…' p. 2.; Francisco Ramírez, 'El Indio', p. 7.

[92] I explore this elsewhere in my current research.

[93] See, for example, Carlos Basauri, *La situación social*, p. 18.

[94] See, for example, Letter from Sáenz to Cárdenas, LCR, vol. 533.4, exp. 1 (5 Jan. 1939), pp. 2–3.

[95] Gamio, 'Algunas sugestiones', p. xviii.

[96] *Memoria del Tercer Congreso Regional Indígena* (*Azteca*), p. 18.

[97] In some cases, this history of exploitation included actions by those who claimed to be the benefactors of the Indian, a fact which Indians perceived , and which made them distrust outsiders even more. See, for example, Basauri, *La situación social*, pp. 140–2. See also *Memoria del Tercer Congreso Regional Indígena* (*Azteca*), p. 18.

> Nowadays a striking characteristic of the Mazatecans is their fondness for political activity. They are well-informed on political events both in the state (Oaxaca) and likewise on those which affect general conditions in the country at large. Struggles for local political control are bitterly contested, and the incidental practice of public discussion makes them possessors of a notable facility of verbal expression. Even without being able to understand, one listens with delight to their discourses in the language of the people, which is as beautiful in rhythm as Italian. The Mazateca tongue has moreover lost none of its integrity. In these debates, not a word of Spanish is heard, in contrast to the case among the Aztecs, Mixtecans, and Zapotecans. One perceives the ebb and flow of its eloquence, and its oratory must comprise periods of elegance and finish.... Their very inclination to politics throws light upon past epochs in which we glimpse their lively struggles to conserve their independence, wedged between three powerful States given to interminable series of bloody wars.... The Mazatecans are at the very moment of rennaiscence as a people. They are like a vigorous new off-shoot from a splendid fallen tree. Of all the indigenous groups of Oaxaca they are the most anxious to incorporate themselves in present day civilisation of European mould. Yet, despite this fact, their own language continues to be their mode of expression; and their women still wear with pride upon the bosom of their huipils, in gorgeous embroidered figures, the time-honoured coat-of-arms of Huautla, a beauteous convention of an eagle in a flowery nest.[98]

This last aspect of Uranga's description introduces a very interesting aspect of the process of *mestizaje* as articulated by the Indigenistas. He implied that a 'European' style of politics could be adopted by an Indian culture without destroying that society. Uranga's description of Mazateca culture was very much in concert with the general view of cultural transformation advocated within the SEP during this period; that a new national culture could be constructed which, while resting on indigenous foundations, must be modern and Western in its sensibilities.[99]

While largely unsystematic during the 1920s, images of Indian political identities became more common during the 1930s. During this time many *Indigenistas* moved towards the radical model of political mobilisation that informed Socialist Education, and that underpinned worker, student, and agrarian unrest. Building on a discourse which had already created a basis for valorising the Indian as a national model, *Indigenistas* began describing Indians as mobilised, political, and prepared to be productive citizens.

In part this practice seems to be related to the growing numbers of teachers, government agents, and ethnographers whose experience in

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[98] Uranga 'Some Mazatecan Customs', pp. 19–20.

[99] On this view, the West contributed the market, liberal democratic politics, and justice. See Warman, 'Todos santos', pp. 28–35. Vaughan notes that the SEP's notion of Indigenous society was that it was insular, religious, and subsistence oriented, 'abjuring the modern market and the *Patria*'. Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, p. 46.

Indian communities radicalised their own ideas and led them to a more sympathetic approach to their Indian subjects.[100] Some *Indigenista* anthropologists and linguists responded to these problems by moving towards a pluralistic perspective which favoured greater autonomy for indigenous peoples, but by the mid-1930s, the dominant strain within *Indigenismo* was connected to Cardenista nationalism and favoured a mobilisation of Indians within a clearly defined corporatist national community.[101]

This was a new national community, informed by inclusive ideas of citizenship and interpretations of the revolution which placed much greater emphasis on the legitimacy of revolt, the valour of the *campesino*, and the Indigenous nature of the nation.[102] While the conservative, Catholic *campesino* remained a source of disdain, the 'modernist' *campesino*, with Indian, *mestizo*, or mulatto heritage, emerged for the first time as a Mexican ideal.[103] Furthermore, this ideal citizen had certain clearly defined political and economic views. Like other revolutionaries, this was a 'rational' Indian actor, who sought an end to exploitation, together with integration and progress for the Mexican nation.

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[100] Moisés Sáenz was clearly transformed by his experience among the Indians of Carapan, where he witnessed a total failure of SEP rural programme and came to have a much deeper understanding of rural problems and greater sympathy for his subjects. See Moisés Sáenz *Carapan* (Lima, 1936). This does not seem to be a unique response, as Vaughan argues that growing numbers of rural teachers changing from complaining about local savages to softening state directives to make them more palatable to the communities they served. Vaughan attributes this both to experience and the teachers' internalisation of the principles of social justice which were more prominent during the 1930s. Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, pp. 19–20, 29–31, 103, 196. Eitan Ginzberg suggests that this more sympathetic approach to campesinos was also evident in the Adalberto Tejeda's governorship in Veracruz, arguing the Tejeda envisioned truly democratic inclusion of campesino elements in the government. See Eitan Ginzberg, 'State Agrarianism versus Democratic Agrarianism: Adalberto Tejeda's Experiment in Veracruz, 1928–34' in this issue of *JLAS*. For the Marxist interpretation of the Indian problem in Mexico, see, for example Lombardo Toledano, *Un viaje al mundo del provenir*, (Mexico, 1936). For Cardenista mobilisation of the popular element see Alan Knight, 'Cardenismo: Juggernaut or Jalopy', *JLAS*, vol. 26 (1994), and Enrique Semo, *Mexico: un pueblo en la historia T. 4* (Mexico, 1989).

[101] The Cardenista perspective is clearly shown in Cárdenas' 'Address to the *PCII*', while an emergent pluralist perspective can be seen in such texts as Moisés Sáenz, *México Integro* (Lima, 1940); Prof. Luis Alvarez Barret, 'La política de educación indígena de la revolución mexicana', *PCII* (Pátzcuaro, 1940), and Alfonso Villa Rojas, 'Sobre la organización política de los indios Tzeltlales del estado de Chiapas, Méx', *PCII* (Pátzcuaro, 1940).

[102] As Vaughan notes, textbook writers now represented rebellion, struggle, and right to social justice as at the core of the Mexican cultural nation and intrinsic to the national identity. *Campesinos* were 'energetic workers who created wealth under oppressive conditions, and active subjects who sought justice through association and struggle'. Vaughan contrasts this to the privatised and middle class notion of citizenship that had previously prevailed. See Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, pp. 38–45.

[103] A far cry from the ideals described by earlier generations of intellectuals, it was initially resisted by many powerful elements of Mexican society. However, it emerged as a dominant image of the Mexican nation by the late 1930s. See Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, pp. 44–5.

While that Indian was not given the opportunity to reject membership in the national community, *Indigenista* texts did represent Indians as contesting revolutionary authority. Indians might speak their ancient languages, and in many cases maintained some vestiges of their ancient patterns of political organisation, but at the same time many of these cultures had developed 'modern' political sensibilities and modern institutions.[104] Writing of this phenomenon *vis à vis* the Tarascans of Lake Pátzcuaro, Nicolás León commented:

> They have a precise understanding of their political rights and responsibilities, and they are always informed about the workings of the national government. However, the influence and government of the ancients has not been extinguished in these villages, which continues in its pre-columbian fashion.... Though they reject many reforms, (the women) have adopted modern ways, and for the most part all of the villages have primary schools for both sexes.[105]

Another particularly interesting instance of representing Indian political sensibilities comes from a study of the redistribution of Indian groups in Mexico from the late 1930s.[106] In examining the reasons why most Indians resisted relocation, Gilberto Loyo identified a number of rational, calculated responses by political actors to the promises of the Cárdenas regime.[107] After noting a limited number of reasons based in 'ignorance',[108] most of the reasons given for resisting appeared to reflect a deep understanding of the past and present place of the Indian within

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[104] Carlos Basauri noted that many Indian municipalities had established democratic institutions in accord with Mexican laws and political traditions. These groups, he believed, should be considered as 'Mexican citizens'. Basauri, *La población indígena*, pp. 99–100.

[105] Nicolás León, 'Los Indios Tarascos del lago de Pátzcuaro' *Anales del MNAHE*, Ep. 5, vol. 1 (1934), p. 164.

[106] Gilberto Loyo was promoting the redistribution of Indian groups as a means of integrating the country by removing the environmental factors which hindered the progress of Indian communities. He suggested that, given their familiarity with the conditions of the countryside, Indians made the best colonisers of fertile lands which were currently under-utilised. The report was written and conceived in the fundamentally patriarchal tradition of anthropology, in that it assumed that the state could determine that Indian groups should be relocated when 'the external evolutive factors (climate, soil, flora, fauna and mineral resources) are fundamentally unfavourable to the progressive integral evolution of this group'. Lic. Gilberto Loyo, 'Report on the Redistribution of Indian Groups in Mexico', *PCII*, 1940, pp. 4–7. Loyo was the National Census Director.

[107] Loyo noted that of 392,464 heads of household polled on the matter of relocation, 80% replied that they did not wish to be moved. Loyo, 'Report on the Redistribution,' pp. 13–5.

[108] Such as fear of change and the unknown, reluctance about leaving the familiarity of their villages, and the fear of damnation from priests.

Mexico. Rational reasons for resisting relocation included the following: the lack of organisation on the part of bureaucrats, an abscence of information regarding the place to which they were to be taken, the fact that they owned their homes in their present location, the prohibitive cost of moving, the fact that in their current location they had access to a number of means of livelihood, concern over the conditions of the proposed new location, and worry about conflicts in the new area.[109]

In general, each of these concerns reflected an understanding that however badly off they were in their current situation, they could be worse off elsewhere. Many even suggested that they needed guarantees that their new home would not be infested with illnesses or conditions which would make their lives even worse.[110] In describing people who did not trust their government to have their best interests at heart, Loyo echoed numerous other *Indigenistas*, who understood Indian distrust of outside authorities as the rational response of people who knew that they were oppressed and exploited by outsiders.[111] In his conclusions he offered a solution to this problem which addressed these 'rational' concerns directly. In the first place, he recommended that the relocation process be better organised and funded, so that the concerns that Indians expressed over financial questions might be alleviated. He also suggested that the bureaucrats make more effort to consider the needs, dignity and culture of the Indians. Most significantly, however, he suggested that:

> To overcome the psychological resistance of the Indians, keep in mind their real causes and the pretexts used, and make use of the convincing force of example, having the *caciques* and Indian authorities, as well as the most outstanding persons of both sexes as each Indian group to be relocated, visit personally one or more Indian communities, which would be estabished with the character of model colonies.[112]

Even though he used the term 'psychological resistance' here, Loyo indicated that this resistance was the valid behaviour of a rational being when he noted that this resistance lay in 'real causes' which required amelioration in order to make Indians into willing participants.

Nowhere is this aspect of *Indigenismo* more apparent than in the petitions that self-described Indians took it upon themselves to write to Cárdenas. During the sexenio Cárdenas received countless petitions from Indian communities, often written by rural teachers or DAAI authorities, but represented as the unmitigated words of Indians themselves.[113] Commonly marked by the thumb-prints of illiterate community authorities, these petitions consistently demanded the types of improvements and reforms that would integrate Indian communities into the modern nation as equal members.[114] Constructed as the public declarations of these communities before the president, these petitions and letters were clear statements of the modern political identities of these communities. Furthermore, these were not the compliant supplications that one might expect of correspondence designed simply to curry favour or represent the Indian in a favourable light. While insisting on the capability of Indian actors, petitioners consistently decried the reactionary, corrupt, and regressive practices of the bureaucrats, teachers, and land-owners that they attacked.[115]

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[109] Loyo, 'Report on the Redistribution', p. 15.

[110] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

[111] The concept that Indians distrusted outsiders because of exploitation was general wisdom among *Indigenistas* by the late 1930s. See, for example, DAAI, *Segundo Congreso Regional Indígena* (Mexico, 1938), pp. 13–22.

[112] Loyo, 'Report on the Redistribution', pp. 22–5.

This sense of the Indian as a rational political being came to its apogee with the *Indígena* congresses which were organised by the DAAI between 1936 and 1940. Part of the general Cardenista push towards popular mobilisation, these congresses were designed to assemble prominent leaders from a variety of indigenous ethnicities, with the express purpose of allowing these Indians to articulate their authentic voices and demands. Although organised and directed by personnel from the DAAI (in particular, Luis Chávez Orozco), the public discourse of the Congresses made it clear that the voices represented were 'authentic' Indians.[116] Organisers made repeated attempts to assure audiences that delegates to the congresses spoke 'with absolute liberty', and 'without reticence, without fears, without suspicions' of any kind of retribution.[117] Like the Indians described by earlier *Indigenistas*, the voices which were made 'official' in these Congresses were those of Indians who understood the conditions of their oppression, and who (as members of the Mexican nation as well as Indians) demanded the benefits of the Revolution for themselves. Almost every demand made and petition filed in these

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[113] Petitioners used their Indian identities as a source of both legitimacy and access. See, for example, Lic. Timoteo Guerrero to Cárdenas, LCR, vol. 533.4, exp. 1 (13 May 1935); Adolfo Velasco to Cárdenas, LCR vol. 533.11, exp. 3 (17 May 1936); Pablo Baez and Cirilo Jacinto to Cárdenas, LCR vol. 542.1, exp. 2213 (11 April 1939).

[114] Some of these petitions and the responses to them can be found in LCR, vol. 151.3, exp. 1124, Nov. 1938; LCR vol. 433, exp. 303 (Aug. 1938); LCR vol. 404.4, exp. 8, (1934–8); LCR vol. 533.11, exp. 3 (Oct. 1936); LCR, vol. 533.4, exp. 12 (nd); LCR, vol. 534.4, exp. 1217 (Jan.–Oct. 1939).

[115] Excellent examples of this come from the petitions presented at the *Tercer Congreso Indígena*, in Tamazunchale, SLP. See LCR, vol. 433, exp. 303 (17–18 March 1938).

[116] Authentic, as opposed to government agents, intermediaries, or interlopers speaking on behalf of Indians.

[117] *Memoria del Primer Congreso Regional Indígena* (Mexico, 1938), p. 9., *Segundo Congreso Regional Indígena: Memoria*, p. 33.

Congresses confirmed the assertion that these Indian delegates were both rational political actors and that they wanted full membership in a 'modern' Mexican nation.[118]

Far from representing anomalies in the 1930s, these congresses clearly represented a standard Cardenista practice. In their public representations of Indian communities and in their intra-governmental correspondence, ethnographers and bureaucrats increasingly couched their representations of Indians and requests for aid in terms that implied that they were merely passing on the demands of Indians themselves. Limiting and at times removing their own authorial voices, these *Indigenistas* often created an impression that the Indian was speaking directly to the Mexican executive, or the Mexican public.[119] Government action was thus no longer undertaken simply to benefit Indians, but was regularly justified as the response to legitimate requests and petitions from Indian communities.[120] This understanding was embedded in the very design of the DAAI, which gave serious consideration to the political capabilities of the large numbers of Indians who came from those highland cultures with long histories of Spanish contact.[121]

This period also saw the 'Indian' emerge on the national stage as a key political issue. With the shift to *Indigenista* politics at the national level, growing numbers of individuals and organisations actively articulated an *Indigenista* agenda. While in some cases the adoption of *Indigenista* programmes seems to have been part of a cynical effort to curry favour with the regime or maintain old systems of exploitation,[122] grass-roots organisations increasingly entered in the *Indigenista* fray during the 1930s. Agrarian Leagues, which had typically ignored any reference to ethnicity during the 1920s,[123] increasingly sought to achieve their goals by claiming to represent Indian interests or by claiming Indians as members. Numerous *campesino*, worker, and political movements, adopted the Indian both as a symbol and (theoretically) as an active participant.[124] *Indigenistas* facilitated this process in fundamental ways, first by bringing a positive model of Indian society and culture into the national space, and then by creating contexts in which Indian voices could be heard and interpreted for a national audience.

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[118] See, for example, *Memoria del Primer Congreso Regional Indígena*; *Segunda Congreso Regional Indígena: Memoria*; *Plan de Trabajo aprobado en el Primer Congreso Regional de la Raza Chontal celebrado en la ciudad Villahermosa*, *Tab*., *del 20 al 22 de Diciembre de 1939* (Mexico, 1939); *Memoria del Primer Congreso Indígena de la Raza Huaxteca del 26 al 30 de Octubre de 1939* (Mexico, 1940).

[119] See, for example, Luis Chávez Orozco, 'Informe rendido al c. General Lázaro Cárdenas, Presidente de la República', from the *Comisión Intersecretarial de estudio y planeación en el Valle de Mezquital*, LCR, vol. 609, exp. 280 (26 Sept. 1939).

[120] The DAAI regularly published accounts of its actions in Indian communities that made it clear that government initiatives were responses to local demands. See DAAI, *Memorias*, *1 Jan–31 Ag 1936 y 1 Sep 1936–31 Ag 1937* (Mexico, 1938), p. 37; DAAI, *Memoria del Departamento de Asuntos Indígenas*, *Sept 1937–Ag 1938* (Mexico, 1938), pp. 13–4.

[121] Sáenz commented that many Indians, such as those in Toluca and Texcoco, were well acquainted with the modern economy and scientific technologies, and had even travelled as far as the United States. These he believed should be treated much like any other *campesino*. See Moisés Sáenz, 'Sobre la creación de un departamento de población indígena', LCR vol. 533.4, exp. 1 (Sept. 1935), pp. 18–9.

[122] We see in some cases the refusal or corruption in the implementation of *Indigenista* policies, and continued racism. See, for example, F. Rodríguez Cabo to Cárdenas, LCR, vol. 533.4, exp. 12 (30 Sept. 1935). Chiapas remained a real problem, as local authorities repeatedly clashed with the DAAI. See LCR, vol. 433, exp. 482 (various dates).

Resistance as an abscence of politics

The Indian who spoke in these texts was a far cry from a brutish, primitive 'other'. Though described as oppressed and in need of education, this Indian clearly had an immense capacity for both modernity and membership in the nation. This Indian was an adaptable, intelligent, and highly progressive individual. As such, this subject served as a model for the future of Mexico, while at the same time also representing all that was worthy of the Mexican past. However, this Indian relied on all of these factors in order to be considered a citizen. In moments where Indian actors refused to submit to the model of revolutionary culture constructed through these texts, such Indians were described in ways which brought their membership in the national citizenry into serious doubt.

Even at the height of Cardenista mobilisation of Indian citizens, *Indigenistas* clearly defined the body of Indian political actors in a limited manner. From its very inception, the DAAI divided the Indian population of Mexican primarily into two groups; those that deserved the rights of citizenship, and those that did not. That division was justified by differentiating between cultures that needed substantial tutelage from the state (such as the Yaquis and Mayos of the North, specific sierra cultures of Central Mexico, and southern groups, such as the Lacandones and Chamulas), and those that did not need specially tailored aid (highland cultures with a long history of contact). Of course, the DAAI could have just as easily divided Mexico's Indians into those groups which had cooperated with revolutionary programmes in some ways, and those that had rejected revolutionary programmes as unacceptable invasions into their ways of life.[125] The Cardenista state saw the idea of any sort of substantial or permanent Indian autonomy as anathema to its concept of the modern nation-state. Though the nation might be multi-ethnic, in this perspective it had to find a way of including even those indians who wished to be excluded.[126] Inasmuch as they participated in broad revolutionary programmes and shared in the symbolic life of the nation, Indian communities from the highland regions of Mexico could maintain certain aspects of their distinct identities. Those who chose to avoid this would be forcibly incorporated into the national community.[127]

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[123] See, for example, various publications by the Confederación Nacional Agraria, Obregón/Calles, vol. 818, exp. E-28 (1922); Ruben Ortiz, 'El Problema Agrario Mexicano', Obregón/Calles, vol. 818, exp. E – 28 (4 Dec. 1921).

[124] Examples included the 'Congreso Regional Trabajadores Mixtecas', which sought guarantees for the 'clase trabajadora y campesina', LCR, vol. 433, exp. 393 (23 March 1939); the 'Primer Centro de Educación Popular', in Tamazunchale, SLP, LCR, vol. 433, exp. 303 (August 1939); the 'Consejo Regional Pro-Desarollo', in SLP, LCR, vol. 433, exp. 303 (Feb. 1938); The 'Primer Congreso Obrero Campesina Indígena', in Oaxaca, LCR, vol. 433.1, exp. 6, Oax. (25–30 Dec. 1935). We also see organisations such as the 'Indígena grupo Proletariada', which emerge in Oaxaca, LCR, 404.1, exp. 9067 (Feb. 1938).

In creating this dichotomy, *Indigenistas* made clear distinctions between their understandings of the 'political' citizen and the 'non-political' primitive. They used their authority to determine the meanings of the actions of subaltern groups, only ascribing political meanings when those actions fitted within their understanding of acceptable political expressions. For example, when peasants boycotted and deserted schools, murdered teachers, and struggled aggressively to have their Catholic icons restored to positions of power, their actions were understood in starkly different terms from the 'modern', 'rational' *campesino*.[128] Although the question of whether these actions led to any real changes on the part of the regime remains a subject of some debate,[129] I believe that when contrasted with legitimised Indian voices, the representation of these Indigenous actors illuminates the meaning that these acts had on the national stage.

Beginning in 1933, the publication *El Maestro Rural* began publishing reports on the assassination of rural teachers in various regions of the country.[130] While the editors of the journal admitted that teachers in certain parts of the country were engaging in a mode of political proselytising which was inappropriate to their charge,[131] *El Maestro Rural* made it clear that violent responses to these abuses were not 'political' acts. Rather than just representing them as villains or assassins, the murderers became barbarians, fanatics, and 'more like inhabitants of the jungle than like citizens of a republic'.[132] In contrast to the modern Indians who spoke at the Regional Congresses, these were primitives who needed to be dragged into the twentieth century.

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[125] Sáenz used the term citizen here, dividing these groups according to their capacity for citizenship. Sáenz, 'Sobre la creación…', pp. 19, 22.

[126] See Sáenz, 'Sobre la creación…', and Cárdenas, 'Address to the PCII'.

[127] Thus Sáenz suggestion that the DAAI be given special authority in those areas with the most unincorporated Indians. See Sáenz, 'Sobre la creación…', pp. 18–23.

[128] See, for example, Becker, *Setting the Virgin*, p. 127.

[129] Becker argues that it had limited success, but also concedes that the Cardenista move away from anti-clericalism is better explained as a result of pressures from the Church and national bourgeoisie. See Becker, *Setting the Virgin*, pp. 126–32, 135. Vaughan also argues that these actions had a significant impact on state formation. Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, pp. 189–201.

[130] Guillermo Palacios notes that during this period *El Maestro Rural* displayed a generally negative attitude towards campesino mentalities, but these representations stand out even among the generally paternalistic texts that *MR* published.

The concept of fanaticism, a feature of 'primitive' societies, was central to *El Maestro Rural*'s description of rural resistance.

> Only fanaticism, brother of ignorance, is capable of inspiring these acts.... These (acts) could never be the result of the implantation of new concepts, but arose simply because this squad of armed men, ignorant of what a teacher represents for society, was absolutely unfamiliar with the utility that their services has for the progress and culture of the nation....[133]

The very act of resisting or failing to recognise revolutionary authority made cultures such as the Tarahumaras, Cochimis and Guaycuras of Baja California 'nomads and savages'.[134] Resistance, if expressed in terms that conflicted with the 'progressive' goals of the state, inevitably made the resister a pre-political primitive in post-revolutionary Mexico.

This image of the Indian stood in stark contrast to those Indians who cooperated with revolutionary authorities during these years; a polarity which reinforced both the otherness of the primitive, and the 'Mexicanness' of those highland Indians who showed their capacity for citizenship. This was an inclusive notion of citizenship, in that it could include Indians from a variety of cultures in a multi-ethnic nation, but it was restrictive in that it demanded a certain modernistic orientation from those subjects who would be awarded full citizenship.[135] In creating an Indian ideal, and showing Indians cooperating in and even demanding revolutionary reforms,[136] *Indigenismo* elaborated the ways in which these Indians could participate in life of the nation as citizens. However, *Indigenismo* also delineated ways in which resistance to these state impositions could be discredited, and read as the irrational acts of primitives.[137]

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[131] See, for example, 'Los Maestros Rurales no deben actuar como politicos' *MR*, vol. 3, no. 2 (15 June 1933), p. 5. Engracia Loyo notes that it was precisely the aggressive imposition of socialist educational programmes which led to increased *Cristero* violence and attacks on teachers during this period. Engracia Loyo, 'Popular Reactions to the Educational Reforms of Cardenismo', in Beezley, et al., *Rituals of Rule, Rituals of Resistance: Public Celebrations and Popular Culture in Mexico* (Wilmington, 1994), pp. 253–6. See also Engracia Loyo, 'Lectura Para el Pueblo, 1921–1940', in *La educación en la historia de Mexico* (Mexico, 1992), p. 279.

[132] *MR*, vol. 3, no. 1 (1 June 1933) p. 3; *MR*, vol. iii, no. 2 (15 June 1933), p. 3; *MR*, vol. 3, no. 3 (1 July 1933), p. 3; *MR*, vol. iii, no. 13 (1 Dec. 1933), p. 4; *MR*, vol. 6, no. 4 (15 Feb. 1935), p. 8.

[133] 'Protesta por los asesinatos de Maestros Rurales', *MR*, vol. 6, no. 4, (15 Feb. 1935) p. 8.

[134] 'Las Razas Indígenas de la Baja California', *MR*, vol. 9, no. 5 (Oct. 1936), pp. 17–8, 38. See also, Carlos Basauri, 'The Resistance of the Tarahumaras', *MF*, vol. 2, no. 4 (Oct.–Nov. 1926), pp. 40–4; Carlos Basauri, 'Beliefs and Practices of the Tarahumaras', *MF*, vol. 3, no. 4 (Aug.–Sep. 1927), pp. 218–34. See also 'Los Centros de Educación Indígena', *MR* vol. 10, no. 1 (July 1937), pp. 6–10.

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[135] The Mexican nation would be multi-ethnic, committed to social justice and the preservation of certain types of local identity, but it also called for a commitment to a modernising, integrationist state. Vaughan argues that local communities played a significant part in constructing this hegemony. Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, pp. 195–8.

[136] This is most evident in the proceedings of the Regional Indígena Congresses of the late 1930s. See, for example *Segundo Congreso Regional Indígena: Memoria*; *Memoria del Tercer Congreso Regional Indígena* (*Azteca*); *Memoria del Primer Congreso Indígena de la Raza Huaxteca*.

[137] Vaughan sees a 'revolutionary language' coming out of this process, based on a contestation between the preservation of local identities and national economic development. She argues that this language was still used in the 1994 rebellion in Chiapas. Vaughan, *The Enormous Vogue*, pp. 6–7, 8–9, 15.