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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Forging Mixtec Identity in the Mexican Metropolis: Race, *Indigenismo* and Mixtec Migrant Associations in Mexico City, 1940–70

David Yee*

Assistant Professor, Metropolitan State University, Denver
*Corresponding author. Email: dyee2@msudenver.edu

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Abstract

This article presents a social history of the Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños (Coalition of Mixtec Oaxacan Communities, CPMO), a grouping of mutual-aid associations formed by Indigenous migrants in Mexico City during the middle of the twentieth century. It draws on the coalition's archives to demonstrate how years of migration to Mexico City eroded traditional inter-village conflicts and created the conditions for a broader ethnic identity among Mixtec migrants in the capital. In addition, the coalition's collaboration with the federal government's Instituto Nacional Indigenista (National Indigenous Institute, INI) challenges common depictions of Indigeneity and modernisation as being inherently antagonistic with one another. The coalition's collaboration with the INI led its members to more consciously and visibly identify with their Indigenous roots; they had to become more Indigenous in order to become more modern.

Keywords: Mexico; development; Indigeneity; migration; voluntary associations; ethnohistory

Introduction

In the early 1950s, a new roadway traversing Oaxaca's mountainous terrain gave concrete expression to a collective vision for a Pan-American future. Modern and efficient, the new stretch of road was simply one part of the larger Pan-American Highway – a massive undertaking that would ultimately connect 17 countries through 30,000 kilometres of paved road.[1] Along the same mountain chain, only a few kilometres away from the Pan-American Highway, local labourers were beginning to carve out a small roadway designed to link their respective villages in Oaxaca's Mixteca area to a transregional highway network in southern Mexico. Led by Raúl Ruiz Bautista, a native Mixtec who moved to Mexico City in 1942, the road project was a joint collaboration between the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (National Indigenous Institute, INI) and a coalition of Mixtec migrant associations based in Mexico City. From a historical

[1]See Eric Rutkow, *The Longest Line on the Map: The United States, the Pan-American Highway, and the Quest to Link the Americas* (New York: Scribner, 2019).

vantage point, the two parallel roads winding down Oaxaca's mountainous sierra serve as a metaphor for two distinct scales of analysis: the transnational and the transregional. While the transnational scale of analysis has enriched scholarship on foreign immigration, the disproportionate attention given to US–Mexican immigration has overshadowed the domestic, internal migrations within Mexico, leaving histories of transregional networks and identities unexplored and unintegrated into Mexico's historiography.[2]

This article explores Mexico's internal migrations through a close study of the Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños (Coalition of Mixtec Oaxacan Communities, CPMO). Founded in 1951, the CPMO was a coalition of 95 hometown associations formed in Mexico City by Indigenous migrants from the Mixteca region of Oaxaca in southern Mexico. I focus on two features of the CPMO in order to contribute to a broader study of *indigenismo* and modernisation in Latin America. The first feature concerns migration and identity, particularly how years of migration to Mexico City eroded traditional inter-village conflicts and created the conditions for a broader ethnic identity among Mixtec migrants. The second feature centres around national development and identity, specifically focusing on the CPMO's collaboration with the INI on a series of development projects in the Mixteca region between 1953 and 1972. Together, these two features represent an example of how regional identity can be forged from afar.

Drawing from recent advances in migration studies, this article examines the identity formation of Mixtec migrants in Mexico City as a multi-sited process. While the recognition of multiple identities existing simultaneously has been more widely accepted and applied to cross-national immigration studies ('hyphenated identities'), it has made less inroads into scholarship on Indigenous communities in the modern era.[3] In this light, I utilise Michael Kearney's pioneering

[2]For overviews on debates, see Mae Ngai, 'Immigration and Ethnic History', in Eric Foner and Lisa McGirr (eds.), *American History Now* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2011), pp. 358–75. For transnational studies of immigration from Oaxaca, see Laura Velasco Ortiz, *Mixtec Transnational Identity* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2005); and Lynn Stephen, *Transborder Lives: Indigenous Oaxacans in Mexico, California, and Oregon* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). The issue of rural-to-urban migration in Mexico has been the subject of a large number of studies by anthropologists and sociologists since the 1960s and 1970s. Some key works include Oscar Lewis, 'Urbanization without Breakdown: A Case Study', *Scientific Monthly*, 75: 1 (1952), pp. 31–41; Larissa A. de Lomnitz, *Cómo sobreviven los marginados* (Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1975); Lourdes Arizpe, *Migración, etnicismo y cambio económico: Un estudio sobre migrantes campesinos a la Ciudad de México* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1978); more recently, Iván Sandoval-Cervantes, 'Navigating the City: Internal Migration of Oaxacan Indigenous Women', *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 43: 5 (2017), pp. 849–65; and M. Bianet Castellanos, *Indigenous Dispossession: Housing and Maya Indebtedness in Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021). Despite the wealth of ethnographic studies, the subject lacks archival research conducted by historians.

[3]For a few key works where this approach has been applied, see Nancy Foner, *From Ellis Island to JFK: New York's Two Great Waves of Immigration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000); Jesse Hoffnung-Garskof, *A Tale of Two Cities: Santo Domingo and New York after 1950* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008); Mark Wyman, *Round-Trip to America: The Immigrants Return to Europe, 1880–1930* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993); and Freddy González, *Paisanos Chinos: Transpacific Politics among Chinese Immigrants in Mexico* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2017). The article draws from Stephanie Newell in its definition of cultural politics as the 'way that culture – including people's attitudes, opinions, beliefs and perspectives, as well as the media and arts – shapes

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studies of Mixtec migrants in the United States to help evaluate the relationship between migration, politics and ethnic identity among Mixtecs on a domestic, transregional level (Mexico City–Mixteca).[4] In the case of the Mixtec migrants in Mexico City, the various associations and coalitions formed by former villagers attest to how the contrast of different cultures and classes in a city's diverse population can magnify a sense of local identity and encourage migrants to maintain links with their native towns. In particular, the proliferation of hometown or migrant associations formed in Mexico City reveals how life in the capital reinforced local identities and, in some cases, strengthened social bonds along ethnic lines among migrants from Indigenous communities.

Although many of the CPMO's migrant associations were originally formed out of the independent initiative of their members, they eventually grew to be shaped by their collaboration with the INI.[5] In Mexico, the post-revolutionary period (1920–40) witnessed a growth in appreciation for Mexico's 'Indian past' and stronger state-led attempts to integrate Indigenous communities into the nation-state. This general orientation concretely manifested itself in the INI, established in 1948. Initially a utopian project spearheaded by Mexico's leading anthropologists, the INI grew increasingly bureaucratic and paternalistic as it implemented a broad range of projects across Mexico.[6] Ironically, the critical summations of the INI's top-down nature have typically been based on documents produced by state officials or former INI leaders. In the CPMO, we find a rare case where the ideas, debates and attitudes of Indigenous workers toward state-led modernisation projects were documented in letters, meeting notes, speeches and a monthly newspaper (*Monte Alban*). Most notably, a memoir by CPMO member Ruiz Bautista provides a crucial source for this article. The CPMO's archives challenge common depictions of local Indigenous opposition to elite modernisation projects. Instead,

society and political opinion, and gives rise to social, economic and legal realities'. (Stephanie Newell, 'What is Meant by Cultural Politics?', *DirtPol*, 1 April 2014, available at https://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/dirtpol/2014/04/01/what-is-meant-by-cultural-politics-by-prof-steph-newell/, last access 11 Nov. 2021.)

[4]Michael Kearney, 'Transnational Oaxacan Indigenous Identity: The Case of Mixtecs and Zapotecs', *Identities*, 7: 2 (2000), pp. 173–95.

[5]The meaning of *indigenismo* has varied over many years; here it refers to the attempts by the state to integrate Indigenous populations into the modernising process, an elevation in the role of Indigenous communities in Mexican history, and a stronger emphasis on cultural markers as opposed to racial categories. See Alan Knight, 'Racism, Revolution, and Indigenismo', in Richard Graham (ed.), *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870–1940* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990), pp. 71–103; and María L. O. Muñoz, *Stand Up and Fight: Participatory Indigenismo, Populism, and Mobilization in Mexico, 1970–1984* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2016).

[6]The INI was created in 1948 as the main federal agency responsible for Indigenous matters. See Stephen E. Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo: The INI's Coordinating Center in Highland Chiapas and the Fate of a Utopian Project* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2018). The intellectual origins of the INI are traced in Paula López Caballero, 'Anthropological Debates around the Indigenous Subject and Alterity', in Paula López Caballero and Ariadna Acevedo-Rodrigo (eds.), *Beyond Alterity: Destabilizing the Indigenous Other in Mexico* (Tuscon, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2018), pp. 199–221. In some cases, the negative criticism of the INI asserted that national governments did not respect the integrity and autonomy of Indigenous cultures and that *indigenismo* projects simply were intended to assimilate Indigenous communities into the nation-state for economic and political reasons mainly beneficial to the state. For criticism, see Arturo Warman, Margarita Nolasco, Guillermo Bonfil, Mercedes Olivera and Enrique Valencia, *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana* (Mexico City: Editorial Nuestro Tiempo, 1970).

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the respective histories of the CPMO and the INI present two distinct discursive frameworks for development which tended to overlap more than diverge as they collaborated to construct roads, schools, medical clinics and irrigation systems throughout the Mixteca.

Like the migrants in this study, the article moves back and forth between the Mixteca and Mexico City. It begins with an overview of the Mixteca region before turning to its migration patterns in the 1940s and 1950s. Next, it analyses Mexico City as a space for Mixtec migrants to reimagine and formulate a new sense of identity along ethnic and racial lines. As part of detailing the CPMO's projects in the Mixteca, the article goes back to the local road project constructed near the Pan-American Highway. In doing so, the article applies a methodological approach focused on archival material that can elucidate the social experience of participants (mainly non-state actors) in their interactions with federal agencies.

The Mixteca: Land and Identity

The Mixteca is a land of contrasts. Oak forests and semi-tropical valleys hug the mountain chains until they reach a desolate stretch of the Pacific coast. Its territory pre-dates the political boundaries of the three states it currently occupies: Oaxaca, Puebla and Guerrero. In the years covered in this article (1940–60), the Mixteca's population averaged between 350,000 and 400,000 people. Typically, the Mixteca is divided into three zones: Mixteca Alta, characterised by its rugged mountains; Mixteca Baja, generally composed of low-lying hills and valleys; and the Mixteca de la Costa on the Pacific coastline.[7] Of the three zones, a majority of the CPMO's hometown associations were formed by migrants from the Mixteca Alta. Although the CPMO's literature never addressed why the coalition was mainly composed of Mixtec towns from the state of Oaxaca, it seems as though the origins of the grouping reflected in its name (Coalition of Mixtec Oaxacan Communities) set the orientation for the participating towns and leaders.

One of those original participants, Ruiz Bautista, was from a town in the Mixteca Alta which exemplified the area. At the time of Ruiz Bautista's birth in 1922, San Juan Achiutla was a small town of roughly 2,000 inhabitants who were mainly engaged in farming and animal husbandry.[8] Although the town's population declined after the 1590s, the Mixtec language, its traditional social hierarchy, artisan practices and daily life based around subsistence agriculture remained largely intact and survived under Spanish rule in the colonial period.[9]

[7]Ronald Spores and Andrew K. Balkansky, *The Mixtecas of Oaxaca* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013), pp. 16–20; Peter Guardino, 'Connected Communities: Villagers and Wider Social Systems in the Late Colonial and Early National Periods', in Caballero and Acevedo-Rodrigo (eds.), *Beyond Alterity*, pp. 61–83.

[8]Raúl Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca: Un testimonio y documentos para la microhistoria de San Juan Achiutla y la Mixteca Alta en el estado de Oaxaca* (Mexico City, 2010), p. 295 (this book was self-published). Earlier statistics can be found in Léon Diguet, 'Le Mixtécapan', *Journal de la société des américanistes*, 3: 1 (1906), pp. 17–18.

[9]Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo*, p. 18. Currently the Mixtecs constitute one of the 15 major ethnolinguistic groups in Oaxaca, a state which boasts the largest Indigenous population in Mexico.

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Ruiz Bautista, like the majority of Mixtecs, possessed several overlapping identities. Radiating outward from the micro to the macro, he was part of a family (Ruiz Bautista); a town (San Juan Achiutla); a region (Mixteca); a race (Indigenous); and a nation (Mexico). These overlapping identities were not rigidly structured in a fixed schematic but open to shifts and realignments. Nevertheless, among the array of various categories, the town (*el pueblo*) was *the* most fundamental and primary source of identity for the inhabitants of the Mixteca.[10] The key distinction of this study is to examine how this town- or village-based identity was realigned when significant numbers of Mixtecs settled in Mexico's urban metropolis in the 1950s and 1960s.[11]

Land disputes were central to the development of the Mixteca's highly localised identities. Prior to Spanish rule, disputes over land occasionally surfaced and required the mediation of noble lords. By the seventeenth century, what had been infrequent disputes grew into fully fledged land conflicts between neighbouring villages.[12] In his research on colonial Mixteca, historian Kevin Terraciano identifies the last quarter of the seventeenth century as a period when population growth, demands for land, and the weakening of traditional authorities (caciques) intensified competition and legal conflicts over the use of land.[13] In addition, the Spaniards' introduction of livestock to the Mixteca had a dramatic impact on the natural environment and land use.[14] Herds of goat and sheep damaged neighbouring fields and overgrazing led to soil erosion. For a region already characterised by scattered villages and hamlets, land conflicts further divided neighbours, thus hampering the development of a broader Mixtec identity. While conflicts over land and town borders were not universal, they were prevalent enough to act as a barrier to a wider cultural diffusion and cohesion in the region.

Nevertheless, even the Mixteca's provincial character was challenged by its multiple connections to other parts of Mexico and the world at large. These connections were primarily fostered through the Catholic Church, trade and migration. Although the Church helped to maintain the Mixteca's strong provincialism, the Church itself was also a global entity. In the case of the Mixteca, the Church installed priests from outside of the region into its dioceses.[15] In addition to its connections to the Church, migration was also a factor in opening up and connecting the Mixteca to broader influences. At the end of the nineteenth century, migration started with mostly men travelling to work in other parts of Oaxaca and also the

[10]Spores and Balkansky, *The Mixtecas of Oaxaca*, p. 143. Also found in Donato Ramos Pioquinto, 'Migración y cambios socioeconómicos en la comunidad de Zoogocho, Oaxaca', *Estudios Demográficos y Urbanos*, 6: 2 (1991), p. 337.

[11]Aspects of these circumstances can be found in a recent study on female migrants from Oaxaca in Sandoval-Cervantes, 'Navigating the City'.

[12]Philip Adams Dennis, *Intervillage Conflict in Oaxaca* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pp. 39–41.

[13]Kevin Terraciano, *The Mixtecs of Colonial Oaxaca: Ñudzahui History, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 227.

[14]Michael Kearney and Carole Nagengast, 'Mixtec Ethnicity: Social Identity, Political Consciousness, and Political Activism', *Latin American Research Review*, 25: 2 (1990), p. 72.

[15]Guardino, 'Connected Communities', p. 67. For the conservative and provincial character of the area, see Benjamin T. Smith, *The Roots of Conservatism in Mexico: Catholicism, Society, and Politics in the Mixteca Baja, 1750–1962* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2012), p. 2.

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state of Veracruz.[16] The streams of migration that began in the nineteenth century gained momentum and accelerated in the mid-twentieth century. The hope of a better life in the city became more pervasive as new roadways and train lines made travel to urban centres more possible than ever before.[17] Internationally, a temporary guest-worker programme established by the United States attracted Mexican workers, known as *braceros*, including men from the Mixteca region.[18] The Bracero Programme did not directly contribute to migration from the Mixteca to Mexico City, but it did lead to an overall increase in the movement and mobility of people in the region. The following section primarily focuses on migration from the Mixteca in the years surrounding the creation of the CPMO when travel expanded beyond Oaxaca and Veracruz to include Mexico City and the United States.

Migration from the Mixteca in Post-Revolutionary Mexico

The 1940s constituted a transitional period for Mexico. The widespread agrarian reforms of the 1930s began to lose momentum and a new generation of Mexican leaders looked to the cities as the future of Mexico's economy.[19] Investment into farming technologies increased and rural communal land holdings (*ejidos*) remained in operation, yet the drive toward building domestic industries in urban centres (import substitution industrialisation) emerged to the forefront of Mexico's overall economic policy.[20] Under presidents Manuel Ávila Camacho (1940–6) and Miguel Alemán (1946–52), a series of bills were passed to favour industrialisation in Mexico City as opposed to Monterrey. Between 1945 and 1955, fiscal incentives were extended to heavy industries to establish operations in Mexico City. In order to offset low wages, the federal government subsidised tortillas, bread, electricity and public transportation in the capital. A 'rent freeze' on working-class tenements in the city centre and public subsidies on basic goods were reforms intended to attract and maintain low-paid labour at a time of urban-based industrialisation.[21] As the hope of new jobs in the capital exerted a strong pull on families in the Mixteca, the persistence of poverty and new competition with larger companies (emergent agribusiness) pushed them even harder to consider leaving their native lands.

[16]Moisés de la Peña, *Problemas sociales y económicos de las mixtecas* (Mexico City: INI, 1950), pp. 7–10. Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 22.

[17]Ian Scott, *Urban and Spatial Development in Mexico* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University, 1982), pp. 235–8.

[18]For specifics on the Bracero Programme in Oaxaca, see Lynn Stephen, *Zapotec Women: Gender, Class, and Ethnicity in Globalized Oaxaca* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), p. 36. For Ruiz Bautista's experience as a *bracero*, see Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, pp. 113–17.

[19]For overviews on agriculture, see Jesús Carlos Morett Sánchez, *Reforma agraria: Del latifundio al neoliberalismo* (Mexico City: Plaza y Valdés, 2003); Joseph Cotter, *Troubled Harvest: Agronomy and Revolution in Mexico, 1880–2002* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003).

[20]Stephen Niblo, *Mexico in the 1940s: Modernity, Politics, and Corruption* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1999).

[21]David Cymet, *From Ejido to Metropolis, Another Path: An Evaluation on Ejido Property Rights and Informal Land Development in Mexico City* (New York: Peter Lang, 1992), p. 23.

The Mixteca witnessed little investment in the years after the Revolution. An INI study of the Mixteca in 1949 painted a bleak picture of the region. The author, Moisés de la Peña, attributed the area's extreme poverty to the absence of infrastructural development and a lack of arable lands. De la Peña witnessed the detrimental consequences for the region's artisans in the decline of cottage industries such as palm-weaving, pottery and woodworking.[22] The various anthropological studies carried out in the 1950s and 1960s reinforce de la Peña's bleak portrayal. Anthropologist Douglas Butterworth reported the town Tilantongo had no roads, no electricity and no doctor to serve the needs of the village.[23] In San Juan Achiutla, the same material deprivation and geographic isolation forced villagers to walk four-to-five hours to the closest doctor or marketplace.[24] Butterworth's description of Tilantongo in the 1960s was applicable to hundreds of small villages in the region: 'The Mixteca Alta is one of the poorest regions in Mexico. Uncertain rainfall and severe erosion have left much of the land barren and arid, and most communities exist at a bare subsistence level.'[25] Based on these conditions, de la Peña proposed migration on a grand scale.[26]

Beyond the Mixteca region, migration to major cities as a means to escape similar conditions grew increasingly popular among millions of farmers and rural labourers throughout Mexico as a whole. Internal migration to Mexico City had existed for centuries, yet never on the scale witnessed in the 1940s. Between 1940 and 1950, 845,000 people migrated to Mexico City, accounting for roughly one-third of the total population.[27] In the poor neighbourhood La Merced, studies found 70 per cent of residents were born outside of Mexico City.[28] People arrived from every state in the country, with most hailing from Hidalgo, Guerrero, Veracruz, Guanajuato, Michoacán, Morelos and Oaxaca.[29] In the 1950s and 1960s, as migration steadily grew, the portion of migrants from a single state never rose above 15 per cent of the total number of migrants.[30] Overall, the absolute number of people moving to the capital peaked in the 1960s, with census data recording 1.2 million migrants arriving in the Mexico City metropolitan area between 1960 and 1970.[31]

[22]De la Peña, *Problemas sociales y económicos de las mixtecas*, p. 52. For more on academic studies of the area, see Paula López Caballero, 'Domesticating Social Taxonomies: Local and National Identifications as Seen through Susan Drucker's Anthropological Fieldwork in Jamiltepec, Oaxaca, Mexico, 1957–1963', *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 100: 2 (2020), pp. 285–321.

[23]Douglas Butterworth, 'Rural–Urban Migration and Microdemography: A Case Study from Mexico', *Urban Anthropology*, 4: 3 (1975), p. 66.

[24]Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 17.

[25]Butterworth, 'Rural–Urban Migration', p. 266.

[26]De la Peña, *Problemas sociales y económicos de las mixtecas*, p. 253.

[27]Ana María Goldani, 'Evaluación de los datos de la población total y de la población inmigrante captados por la encuesta', in Humberto Muñoz, Orlandina de Oliveira and Claudio Stern (eds.), *Migración y desigualdad social en la Ciudad de México* (Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1977), pp. 43–7.

[28]Enrique Valencia, *La Merced: Estudio ecológico y social de una zona de la ciudad de México* (Mexico City: Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1965), p. 240.

[29]Goldani, 'Evaluación de los datos de la población', p. 133.

[30]Oaxacans, although not one and the same as Mixtecs, generally comprised 10 per cent of Mexico City's migrants. See *ibid.*, p. 132.

[31]*Ibid.*, p. 40.

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In the period under review, figures on migration from the Mixteca to Mexico City have been divided by census-takers into three phases (1935, 1935–54, 1955–70). While census data indicates 6,000 migrants from the state of Oaxaca resided in Mexico City in 1935, none were officially recorded as Mixtec. Between 1935 and 1954, 19,400 Mixtecs migrated to Mexico City, followed by 24,000 more over the next 15 years. In total, approximately 43,400 people left the Mixteca region for Mexico City between 1930 and 1970.[32] Reports on migration trends from the Mixteca tend to echo studies carried out in the states of Jalisco, Morelos, Michoacán and Querétaro. In general, the first migrants to leave a village or town were relatively younger, more educated, and male.[33] Butterworth's detailed survey of Tilantongo in the Mixteca Alta is illustrative of this larger trend. Between 1950 and 1960, Tilantongo had a net out-migration of 1,536 people from a population of 3,941. Of Tilantongo's migrants, Butterworth found the poorest sector tended to migrate temporarily as seasonal labourers and only accounted for 27 per cent of the area's permanent out-migrants.[34]

More recently, Ruiz Bautista's memoir has contributed a more personal account of the migration process between Oaxaca and Mexico City studied by social scientists in the mid-twentieth century. Ruiz Bautista was the second person from San Juan Achiutla to migrate to Mexico City. Before the 1930s, those who travelled out of the Tlaxiaco district (where San Juan Achiutla is located) left to work in the coastal regions of Oaxaca or the Río Blanco area of Veracruz as seasonal labourers. However, these migratory patterns were largely confined to a limited number of agricultural centres, with the notable exception of a few villagers who left to work in Orizaba's factories in the 1920s. According to Ruiz Bautista's memoir, it was not until 1936 that the first person left from the town to live in Mexico City permanently. Only two years later, in 1938, Ruiz Bautista and his childhood friend Natalio left San Juan Achiutla to attend a teacher-training school in Oaxaca's capital city. They left two hours before daybreak when the moon was full in order to take advantage of its light as they walked across Mixteca Alta's rugged terrain. After two days of walking through the sierra, they arrived at a train station that connected them to Oaxaca's capital city. Ruiz Bautista's time in the teacher-training programme eased the transition he experienced when he moved to Mexico City in 1942. This time, after making his way through the crowds at the San Lázaro Train Terminal, he wandered through the capital city's industrial zone until he reached the home of a fellow

[32]Claudio Stern, 'Cambios en los volúmenes de migrantes provenientes de distintas zonas geoeconómicas', in Muñoz *et al.*, *Migración y desigualdad social*, p. 118. There were slightly more men who migrated, however there is only a small difference between the number of men and women who migrated to Mexico City.

[33]For Michoacán, see Robert V. Kemper, *Migration and Adaptation: Tzintzuntzan Peasants in Mexico City* (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 1977). For Jalisco, see David Fitzgerald, 'Colonies of the Little Motherland: Membership, Space, and Time in Mexican Migrant Hometown Associations', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 50: 1 (2008), pp. 145–69.

[34]Douglas Butterworth, 'Selectivity of Out-Migration from a Mixtec Community', *Urban Anthropology*, 6: 2 (1977), pp. 132–4; Carlos Orellana, 'Mixtec Migrants in Mexico City: A Case Study of Urbanization', *Human Organization*, 3: 32 (1973), p. 275.

Mixtec *paisano* (a person from the same locale) who gave him a job as a street vendor in Mexico City.[35]

When Ruiz Bautista arrived in Mexico City in 1942, migrants from Oaxaca were scattered around the city. He would not encounter a 'Little Mixteca' or 'Oaxaca Town'. After anthropologist Carlos Orellana carried out a study of Mixteca migrants from Soyaltepec living in Mexico City, he posited that the scarcity of housing vacancies in the city centre, combined with the relatively small number of families from Soyaltepec, explained the lack of a unified territorial base among the migrants.[36] In fact, scholars who have researched migrant associations in Mexico City representing members from Michoacán, Jalisco and Morelos failed to find any substantial spatial concentration of migrants based on common ethnicity, race or region.[37] Still, for migrants from Mexico's countryside, their village or town tended to define the limits of their social contacts when they first arrived in Mexico City.

While a migrant's village continued to function as their primary source of identity, the history of Mixtec migrants demonstrates the possibility for the contours of that identity to change and expand when in the capital's new urban environment. In the case of Mixtec migrants, new forms of identity would emerge and evolve through social networks which superseded village divisions. Instead of space functioning as a unifying agent (a common neighbourhood), the CPMO functioned as a social hub for Oaxacan Mixtec migrants to meet, socialise and potentially collaborate with their fellow *paisanos*.

Mixtec Migrant Associations and the 'Indian Question' in 1950s Mexico

The CPMO was founded on 10 November 1951 in Mexico City. The formation of the migrant-association coalition was initiated by two prominent figures in Mexico City's Mixtec community, Dr Manuel Hernández Hernández and Miguel García Cruz, an engineer and secretary general of the Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social (Mexican Institute for Social Security, IMSS). The original coalition began with 49 men hailing from five districts in Oaxaca: Tamazulapan, Tlaxiaco, Nochixtlán, Teposculula and Coixlahuaca.[38] Prior to the coalition's establishment, several hometown migrant associations had already been formed, a development which may have led Dr Hernández Hernández to organise the disparate groupings together into a broader collective based on region (Mixteca) and state (Oaxaca). Subsequently founded hometown associations affiliated with the CPMO were largely comprised of towns located in Oaxaca and very rarely from Puebla or Guerrero. From the very beginning, the grouping's structures were vertical and patriarchal. Men dominated both the ranks and leadership positions, occupying

[35]The early history of migration from San Juan Achiutla is found in Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 107–108. The trip is detailed in *ibid.*, pp. 109–10. In terms of his occupation, Ruiz Bautista accompanied a fellow Mixtec migrant in Mexico City to a warehouse (*bodega*) where they would pick up an assortment of clothes and sell them together in different locations in El Centro and La Roma.

[36]Orellana, 'Mixtec Migrants', p. 278. A similar finding is documented among migrants from Zoogocho who settled near the airport in Mexico City. See Ramos Pioquinto, 'Migración y cambios socioeconómicos', pp. 335–6.

[37]David Fitzgerald, 'Colonies of the Little Motherland', pp. 145–69; Arizpe, *Migración, etnicismo y cambio económico*; and Kemper, *Migration and Adaptation*.

[38]'Editorial', *Monte Alban*, 31 Oct. 1965, p. 3.

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positions of authority in both migrant/hometown associations and the coalition's organising bodies.

From its earliest inception, the CPMO worked closely with the INI's director Alfonso Caso. When the CPMO began to work with Caso in 1951, he was one of Mexico's leading figures in archaeology and anthropology.[39] Caso was the foremost authority on pre-Hispanic symbols (glyphs) from central Mexico and gained world renown for his discovery of golden artefacts in the tombs of Oaxaca's Monte Albán. Though his methods stoked controversy, he was able to leverage his acclaim in academia to secure several prominent positions within the federal government. The most consequential of these appointments was his long-standing role as the director of the INI from 1948 to 1970. Caso's affinity for Mixtec culture and Dr Hernández Hernández's desire to align the CPMO with powerful public officials made the collaboration a natural fit. After a series of irregular meetings at the INI offices and Casa Neri, a restaurant owned by a family from Mixteca Alta, the new leadership of the CPMO began to consider working with the INI at the urging of Caso.[40]

The CPMO's internal structure was hierarchical and vertical, resembling a continuation of political councils in each of the hometown associations' villages and districts. The coalition's highly patriarchal nature was also a continuation of hometown political councils.[41] Records of migrant associations (for example San Juan Achiutla and San Miguel Tixá) demonstrate that leadership positions were occupied exclusively by men. Similarly, the coalition's leadership seats were also the exclusive domain of married men in Mexico City. In a development found among many civic and political organisations at the time (circa 1950s), the CPMO and its affiliate associations did establish women's branches such as the Secretaría de Acción Femenil (Secretariat of Women's Action). Despite this slight advance in civil participation, women were still relegated to 'feminine' tasks such as organising fundraiser parties and child-related projects.[42]

In both the central committee and local associations, a level of reciprocity existed within this organisational hierarchy, finding expression in the coalition's overall social relations. In two well-documented case studies, members of each respective village association found employment through the assistance of the village association's main leader. In the case of the Vanguardia Progresista de San Juan Achiutla – Distrito Federal (Progressive Vanguard of San Juan Achiutla – Federal District), ten of the 14 members were employed by IMSS or a Canada Dry distributor site, all based on a recommendation from leader Ruiz Bautista.[43] For the migrants from Tilantongo, 21 of

[39]Manuel Hernández Hernández, 'Los 15 años de la CPMO', *Monte Alban*, 30 Nov. 1966, p. 1.

[40]In one example of those controversial methods, Caso's dating of Zapotec artefacts led to his postulation of dates and eras that were widely disputed by other archeologists. In addition, his claims of strong Zapotec rule or hegemony over neighbouring areas were also criticised in the years he was active. See Ernesto González Licón, 'Social Inequality at Monte Albán Oaxaca: Household Analysis from Terminal Formative to Early Classic', unpubl. PhD diss., University of Pittsburgh, 2003. For more on Caso's connection to the early formation of the CPMO and its decision to collaborate with the INI, see Hernández Hernández, 'Los 15 años de la CPMO'; and Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 183.

[41]'CPMO pugna incesantemente por mejorar los pueblos de la Mixteca y otras regiones de Oaxaca', *Monte Alban*, 31 Jan. 1966, p. 1.

[42]Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 154.

[43]*Ibid.*, p. 259.

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the 24 members were employed by the same manufacturing firm in Mexico City due to a leader's management position.[44] In another example, Dr Hernández Hernández kept his medical offices open 'after hours' in the evening to treat and consult CPMO members for free or at a low cost.[45] Though these economic and social links were decisive for each member's adjustment and survival in Mexico City, the CPMO's main organising principles and activities centred squarely on works in the Mixteca.

Shortly after the CPMO solidified its internal structure, it began to collaborate with the INI (and Caso) on a formal basis. The INI brought together various strands of *indigenista* thought, experience and leadership into one centralised federal agency. With official approval and funding from President Alemán, anthropologists Caso, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán and Julio de la Fuente founded the INI in 1948. At its very foundations, the INI's primary mission was to integrate Indigenous communities into Mexican society through state-led acculturation programmes.[46] While the INI celebrated certain aspects of Indigenous culture, it was a selective valorisation accompanied by strong opposition to 'less desirable' cultural practices the INI sought to eradicate. The INI's mission manifested itself in the schools, medical clinics, regional museums and multi-purpose *centros coordinadores indigenistas* (Indigenous coordinating centres, CCIs) it constructed and maintained in the states of Oaxaca, Chiapas, Yucatán, Veracruz and Hidalgo.[47]

The nature of the INI's work had placed it at the centre of various controversies from its inception. In some cases, communities resisted the INI's attempts at assimilation; in other cases, powerful interests who stood to lose from Indigenous empowerment attacked the INI's attempts at reform; and finally, a new generation of anthropologists who came of age in the 1960s led a movement against the official *indigenismo* the INI represented. For several of Mexico's up-and-coming anthropologists in the 1960s and 1970s, the INI's assimilationist programme was paternalistic, exploitive and, in some cases, a form of ethnocide. They claimed its promotion of 'cultural empowerment' obscured a deeper agenda of creating a new demographic of workers and consumers in a modern version of 'internal colonialism'.[48] Despite the INI's very real flaws, particularly as it

[44]Douglas Butterworth, 'Two Small Groups: A Comparison of Migrants and Non-Migrants in Mexico City', *Urban Anthropology*, 1: 1 (1972), p. 42.

[45]Douglas Butterworth and John K. Chance, *Latin American Urbanization* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 143.

[46]More specifically, there were members of the INI who adopted a Marxist approach to the Indian question and consequently rooted their analysis more firmly in class relations. Ricardo Pozas was an example of a Mexican anthropologist who advocated for such an approach. See Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo*, pp. 32–3. See also Manuel M. Marzal, *Historia de la antropología indigenista: México y Perú* (Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, 1993); Sylvia Bigas Torres, *La narrativa indigenista mexicana del siglo XX* (Guadalajara: Editorial Universidad de Guadalajara, 1990); and David A. Brading, 'Manuel Gamio and Official Indigenismo in Mexico', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 7: 1 (1988), pp. 80–1.

[47]For a recent discussion of the CCI centres, see Alan Shane Dillingham, *Oaxaca Resurgent: Indigeneity, Development, and Inequality in Twentieth-Century Mexico* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2021), pp. 39–47.

[48]See Warman, *De eso que llaman antropología mexicana*; Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, 'Admitamos que los indios no nacieron equivocados', in Instituto Nacional Indigenista, *INI, 30 años después: Revisión crítica* (Mexico City: INI, 1978), pp. 149–71.

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grew more bureaucratic and ossified in the 1960s, its experimental projects in bilingual education, herbal medicine and popular theatre did possess a progressive edge when compared to past programmes in Mexico, and in relation to other countries in the Americas at the time.[49] Although the CPMO occasionally constructed a school or medical clinic, its main focus with the INI during the 1950s and 1960s was centred around infrastructure – roads, electric generators and irrigation systems (resolution of land disputes did not involve the INI). Perhaps as a consequence, the CPMO avoided the thornier problems found in sustained social and cultural work carried out in classrooms and communities through education programmes and public health campaigns.

The ideological debates over the 'Indigenous question' within the INI shaped the framework and guidelines for its projects in Mexico. Strands of Marxism, nationalism and cultural relativism contended with each other in the INI's central committee meetings with one crucial commonality: the Indigenous question was primarily a matter of cultural practices as opposed to biological determinants. Trained in an anthropological tradition influenced by Franz Boas, Mexico's most prominent *indigenistas* viewed 'the Indian or Indigenous' as fundamentally a cultural category, open to change through a transformation in daily habits, practices and customs. This underlying ideology found its concrete expression in Caso's leadership of the INI. In a series of conferences on the 'Indigenous problem' hosted by the INI in 1966, Caso proclaimed, 'the Indigenous problem is not a racial problem, considering that, fortunately in our country, there is no racial discrimination since we all have Indigenous blood on one level or another'. He later added that what distinguished the Indigenous from the rest of Mexicans is their culture, their way of being, their lifestyles and particularly their language.[50] In this position we can identify a contradiction the INI never remedied: it attempted to impose its culturalist position onto a country steeped in biological racism. Furthermore, its efforts in national acculturation were predicated on melding an array of distinct cultural ethnicities into one 'Indian or Indigenous race'. Here the point is not to evaluate the accuracy of these approaches but to contextualise the terms of debate and intellectual currents which influenced the CPMO's own history.

Under these circumstances, the fluid nature of Indigeneity was concretised into an official category more rigid and immutable than the lived experiences of its members. In a society where discrimination against Indians was tangible and pervasive, the membership of the CPMO provided a counterpoint to the migrants who sought to shed their Indian roots for the sake of social mobility. Instead, members of the CPMO acknowledged their Indian background, at times even embracing it more than they might have in the Mixteca, in order to seize on any institutional reforms passed by Mexico's post-revolutionary *indigenistas*.

[49]Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo*, p. 8, p. 265.

[50]'Ciclo de conferencias inaugurado por Dr. Alfonso Caso', *Monte Alban*, 30 June 1966, p. 6. For background on the influence of Franz Boas in Mexico, see Alexander Dawson, *Indian and Nation in Revolutionary Mexico* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2004), pp. 6–9. A similar experience in the Papaloapan Basin area was found by Diana Schwartz, who views Indigenous modernisation as a practice that solidifies the category of 'Indigenous' while maintaining an elusive definition. Diana Lynn Schwartz, 'Displacement, Development, and the Creation of a Modern Indígena in the Papaloapan, 1940s–1970s', in Caballero and Acevedo-Rodrigo (eds.), *Beyond Alterity*, p. 237.

For the CPMO, the INI provided an entryway into the state's largesse. Rather than skills and work experience, it was cultural backgrounds which provided an opening to lobby and interact with politicians who could potentially support public works projects in Mixteca. When a hometown association in the CPMO embarked on a project (road construction, electrical powerlines, school, medical clinic), the INI was the main interface between the village and the state to attain funds for the project.[51]

The CPMO held its monthly meetings in the INI's headquarters in Mexico City on the last Sunday of each month. The meetings primarily served as a forum to report back on news from different towns and the details of a particular project – electrification in Coixtlahuaca; corn sold at subsidised rates to Tamazulapan and Chicahuaxtla; the CCI's intervention into a land dispute close to the Oaxaca–Guerrero border, and so on. Towns within the proximity of the INI's coordinating centres (CCI – Tlaxiaco, CCI – Jamiltepec) were frequently featured in reports.[52] The CPMO's various levels of influence and authority were reflected in the meeting notes: CPMO President Dr Hernández Hernández spoke the most at monthly meetings, followed by a secretary of one of the coalition's departments (treasury, education), and finally a 'president' or 'director' of a particular hometown association. In addition, these gatherings were occasions for members to pay monthly dues and socialise among one another. Butterworth, who attended several CPMO meetings in the 1960s, wrote: 'The highlight of any meeting is Dr Hernández' report. A magnetic individual possessed with great rhetorical power and charm, Dr Hernández reviews his activities during the month and his efforts on behalf of Mixtec villages […].' Butterworth noted: 'The meetings of the CPMO end with representatives of Mixtec communities making solemn pronouncements and supplications about their beloved tierra.'[53]

The pages of the CPMO newsletter, *Monte Alban*, demonstrate that the CPMO's identification with Mixteca's Indigenous culture was more than simply a marriage of convenience for the sake of political expediency. Indigeneity was a common theme in the CPMO's newspaper in two important respects. Firstly, the history of Mixteca's Indigenous culture was a source of pride and provided a claim to citizenship. Secondly, the writers for *Monte Alban* identified racial and cultural discrimination against Indigenous peoples as the principal reason for the extreme poverty and miserable conditions found in the Mixteca region. In speeches and editorials, the Mixteca was portrayed as a land with a glorious past that was tragically abandoned and forgotten by Mexican society.

The CPMO members' emphasis on their Indigenous roots was part of laying claim to their rights as citizens. The sentiment grew out of the Mixtecs' long experience of oppression, discrimination, abandonment and stigmatisation. In an article entitled 'The Indigenous Oaxacans and Their Problems', the author outlined the main sources of poverty and degradation in the Mixteca: 'It is well known that where Indigenous cultures once flourished, the people have been abandoned. The white or Mestizo man […] supported by corrupt politicians, has gradually

[51]For an example, see 'Informe anual de actividades de la Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños', *Monte Alban*, 30 Nov. 1967, pp. 1–2.

[52]'Los 15 años de la CPMO', *Monte Alban*, 30 Nov. 1966, pp. 1–3.

[53]Both quotes can found in Douglas and Chance, *Latin American Urbanization*, p. 144.

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appropriated the fertile, low-lying lands and has pushed the Indigenous people to the arid, mountainous regions where they live without schools, medical services, and die from cold and hunger.'[54] At times, columnists reflected on the psychological or emotional harm of the term '*indio*', particularly directed against Indigenous street vendors: '[W]hen people use the term *indio* as an insult against children or youth on the street, they come to believe they are not even Mexicans themselves.'[55] In a poem directed to the CPMO's readership, the author writes: 'Everybody calls you lazy and inept […] Don't walk with an air of sadness or lower your head.' The author implores the reader to look to their roots: '*Indio*, don't worry, Juárez and Cuauthemoc left this land of ours to you. *Indio*, brother of mine; you are the rightful owner of this land.'[56]

While a 'Pan-Indian' identity never emerged among CPMO members, a more expansive and broader sense of identity spanning across the Mixteca region developed among its migrants in Mexico City. The experience of dislocation and the affective need for belonging among Mixtec migrants combined to recast their commonalities and divisions in a different light. Long-standing divisions between former villagers tended to erode amid the hustle and bustle of the city, although not entirely. The coalition of over 95 hometown associations in Mexico City still had to contend with the festering conflicts over land in the Mixteca. Efforts and negotiations to settle disputes over town or municipal boundaries – an issue that could determine access to water sources or arable land – was a top priority for the CPMO's leadership. In one example, Dr Hernández Hernández's role as a mediator in a border dispute between his hometown (San Miguel Tixá) and San Felipe Ixtapa helped settle a conflict that dated back to the Reforma period (circa 1860). At the CPMO's annual convention in 1965, the coalition's leadership boasted of its role in successfully negotiating 15 land disputes over village boundaries.[57]

In recent studies, scholars have focused on ethnicity as a possible component of Mixtec identity in the twentieth century.[58] For the most part, inhabitants of the Mixteca's villages considered their local village as the source of their primary sense of identity and they lacked a broader cohesion needed to be considered an ethnic grouping. However, in a new social environment, and with a more flexible concept of multiple identities, a perceptible change becomes evident. For the Mixtec migrants in Mexico City, the Mixteca represented more than simply a geographic locale. It was also the source of a cohesive cultural identity which consisted of a distinct language (Mixteco), a distinct history that pre-dated the Spanish conquest, common customs and festivals (*pelota mixteca*, artisanal pottery and fabrics, saint celebrations), and affective bonds that simultaneously expanded and tightened in Mexico City.[59] Butterworth observed regular social gatherings of migrants from Tilantongo who would listen to the famous 'Canción Mixteca' ballad and tearfully

[54]Josefat Hernández Reyes, 'El indígena oaxaqueño y sus problemas', *Monte Alban*, 30 June 1966, p. 2.

[55]Feliciano Morales Cruz, 'Tu no eres indio', *Monte Alban*, 31 Oct. 1965, p. 6.

[56]Carlos Bences, 'El Dueño', *Monte Alban*, 28 Feb. 1966, p. 6.

[57]Manuel Hernández Hernández, 'Histórico informe de Dr. Manuel Hernández Hernández en el aniversario de la Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños', *Monte Alban*, 30 Nov. 1965, p. 1.

[58]Kearney, 'Transnational Oaxacan Indigenous Identity'; Spores and Balkansky, *The Mixtecas of Oaxaca*, pp. 221–3; Ortiz, *Mixtec Transnational Identity*.

[59]Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 114.

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shout 'I am Mixteco' at the end of the song.[60] Although the Mixtec regional identity never superseded the village in importance, the case of the CPMO counters the notion that one's identity is absolute and frozen in time.

To Modernise the Mixteca

The CPMO viewed the preservation of its cultural identity as bound up with the material development of its home communities. The installation of roads, electrical power grids and schools was not viewed as a threat to their way of life but as a means to stem the steady deterioration, and outward migrations, of their hometowns. Its leaders embodied the spirit of 'progress through modernisation' for the purpose of improving the villages and towns they left behind in the Mixteca. Unlike the experience of the Mixtec migrant associations Kearney studied in Sinaloa and California in the early 1980s, the CPMO did not mobilise its constituents to rebel against the state or act independently of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (Institutional Revolutionary Party, PRI).[61] Instead, it worked closely with state agencies and ran for PRI political positions in order to further its cause.

Ruiz Bautista's memoir offers us invaluable insights into this process. Despite the long hours spent as a tramway conductor and an IMSS office worker, he managed to find time to gain political support and financial backing for a road project in the Tlaxiaco district (detailed later in the article). At the end of August 1952, he used his vacation time to travel to the Mixteca Alta with engineer Ramiro Valero (of the Secretaría de Comunicaciones y Obras Públicas (Ministry of Communications and Public Works, SCOP)) to map out the road and meet with municipal authorities. Over the course of one week they travelled by both horse and car to five towns to gain support for the road project and resolve any issues with local town councils.[62] Ruiz Bautista's knowledge of the terrain and key actors were decisive in the process. Unlike many of the INI's education initiatives in southern Mexico, the CPMO did not have cultural promoters (*promotores culturales*) or, more generally, a cadre of Indigenous representatives trained at an INI facility.[63] By and large, the dues-paying members in the CPMO were workers in Mexico City who carved out time from their jobs to meet with their fellow *paisanos* and contribute to projects intended to benefit their hometowns.

[60]Butterworth, 'Two Small Groups', p. 39.

[61]Kearney and Nagengast, 'Mixtec Ethnicity', p. 65. The PRI is a Mexican political party that was founded in 1929, first as the Partido Nacional Revolucionario (National Revolutionary Party, PNR), then as the Partido de la Revolución Mexicana (Party of the Mexican Revolution, PRM) and as the PRI in 1946. The PRI would hold on to power as the ruling party until 2000.

[62]Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 186.

[63]Lewis describes cultural promoters as 'bilingual indigenous cultural brokers' drawn from native communities and utilised to negotiate INI development policies in education, road construction, agriculture and public health in their home communities. Although there are examples of antagonistic relations concerning road construction and electrification projects, cultural promoters tended to experience more controversy and tensions in educational and medical settings. See Stephen E. Lewis, 'Mexico's National Indigenist Institute and the Negotiation of Applied Anthropology in Highland Chiapas, 1951–1954', *Ethnohistory*, 55: 4 (2008), p. 610. For more background on cultural promoters, see A. S. Dillingham, 'Indigenismo Occupied: Indigenous Youth and Mexico's Democratic Opening (1968–1975)', *The Americas*, 72: 4 (2015), pp. 549–51.

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For the most part, the CPMO's agenda closely aligned with the dominant political orientation of state actors: road construction, expansion of public schools, electrification of small hamlets, and improved crops through irrigation systems. However, the key question, and potential point of divergence, for the CPMO was who would take the lead and direct these projects. For CPMO members, the introduction of new roads required the approval of each village's local council (*cabildo*), school curriculums needed the input of local leaders, and agricultural projects had to benefit farmers from the area. They argued that leadership of these projects would have to come from within.[64] At times, however, the distinction between 'within' and 'outside' blurred because CPMO leaders themselves became elected PRI officials. For example, in 1952 García Cruz became a federal deputy (*diputado federal*) for the seventh district of Oaxaca (Teposcolula, Tlaxiaco, Purtla), and later Dr Hernández Hernández was elected to the same position in 1967.[65] On one level, they were acting on behalf of a local district in Oaxaca. On another level, they were individuals who resided in Mexico City and who collaborated with federal agencies (i.e. INI) to implement projects which did not originate from their constituents.

The CPMO collaborated with the INI on a diverse range of projects in the Mixteca. The projects were either ones initiated by village associations in the CPMO or, alternatively, part of a larger campaign carried out by the INI in which the CPMO served as an intermediary between the federal government and the local community. The 1965–6 period contains the most documentation of the CPMO's activities and provides a representative snapshot of its work with the INI. During this period, the CPMO worked with 334 communities to help establish electric-generator stations, schools, medical clinics, farms, livestock centres and roads.[66] In addition, it coordinated the distribution of 6,000 kilograms of fertiliser, 2,036 kilograms of corn seed, and 5,000 roosters.[67]

A breakdown of the CPMO–INI's work on road construction, electrification and basic-goods stores reveals the strengths and weaknesses of their operations. In a speech to village association representatives at the 1966 annual convention, Dr Hernández Hernández highlighted the 44 road-construction projects under the supervision of the CPMO.[68] Yet, under closer inspection, the report indicates that only 12 were actually under construction, while 32 were approved but lacking funds. Of the 12 'under construction', this category simply meant a large supply of tools (picks, shovels, dynamite, trucks) were sent to local villagers to carry out the work themselves.[69] In the case of the basic-goods stores, the process was equally slow and burdensome. The government approved the creation of several Compañía Nacional de Subsistencias Populares (National Company for Subsidies for the Population, CONASUPO) stores – a national network of stores which

[64]Serafin Bazan,'¿Qué es la Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños?', *Monte Alban*, 31 Dec. 1965, p. 1.

[65]Roderic Ai Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies, 1935–2009* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2011), p. 353.

[66]CPMO, *Resumen de labores de la Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños, durante su ejercicio social* (Mexico City: CPMO, 1966), pp. 3–5.

[67]*Ibid.*, p. 138.

[68]Hernández Hernández, 'Los 15 años de la CPMO', pp. 2–3.

[69]CPMO, *Resumen de labores*, pp. 145–6.

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subsidised the distribution and sale of basic goods (corn, milk, rice, cooking oil) to poor communities throughout Mexico.[70] Overall, the scope of activities was geographically uneven and generally correlated to where the INI was strongest in Oaxaca. A closer look at the history of one town allows for a more detailed account of the dynamics between a local community and the federal government over the course of several years.

No Roads Lead to San Juan Achiutla

After working for a year as a *bracero* in California in 1945, Ruiz Bautista returned to Mexico City where he started a family and found a job as a tram conductor. His educational training at the *escuela normal* (teacher-training school) made him eligible for a civil-service job and he soon found employment in one of the auxiliary offices for the IMSS. Each morning Ruiz Bautista would work in the IMSS offices until 1.00 p.m., return home to sleep for a few hours, and then leave again to begin his night shift as a tram conductor.[71]

If Ruiz Bautista's experience as a conductor was the initial catalyst for his ambitious road project, his job in Mexico's state bureaucracy was his entry point into a circle of government functionaries capable of channelling funds toward his idea for a road in the Mixteca Alta. Most importantly, Ruiz Bautista developed close ties with García Cruz, an economist and politician who occupied a leading role in the IMSS for over 20 years. García Cruz himself was from Cuanana, a Mixtec village similar to San Juan Achiutla and later included in the plans for Ruiz Bautista's road project. Although from a poor Mixtec village, García Cruz slowly established himself as an expert on social security (social welfare programmes) and rose through the ranks of the post-revolutionary state.[72] Ruiz Bautista worked in the same building as García Cruz and was gradually taken under his wing. In his first years as an IMSS employee, Ruiz Bautista would observe scores of local officials from various Mixtec towns who regularly travelled to Mexico City to meet with García Cruz in search of advice, favours, council for land disputes, and even jobs. García Cruz's office was a crucial link in a chain that stretched from Mexico City to the Mixteca and, at times, to the capital of Oaxaca. Fortunately for Ruiz Bautista, he simply had to walk downstairs to meet with his fellow *paisano*.

From a historical vantage point, it becomes apparent that Ruiz Bautista's own personal initiative was tempered by the tenor of the times. Not only did Ruiz Bautista's dreams of a new road coincide with the founding of a federal agency dedicated to road construction in rural areas (Departamento de Caminos Vecinales (Department of Local Roads)), but it was also an integral component of the INI's overall mission. For Mexico's *indigenistas*, their plans for new medical clinics, schools, agricultural centres and consumer cooperatives were not possible

[70]'Acto de gran emotividad fue el XVII aniversario de la Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños', *Monte Alban*, 30 Nov. 1969, p. 1. CONASUPO was created in 1962 as a state-led agency responsible for purchasing local crops and selling basic staples (corn, milk, cooking oil) at a low, fixed rate.

[71]Ruiz Bautista writes about his thoughts from this period in his memoir, *Camino por la Mixteca*, pp. 120–1.

[72]Camp, *Mexican Political Biographies*, p. 353.

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without a modern roadway system to transport necessary materials, goods and people.[73]

In May 1949, Ruiz Bautista took the initial steps to set his road project in motion. He contacted a former teacher who still lived in San Juan Achiutla, Rutilio Ruiz Hernández, who he hoped would agree to serve as the main representative for the project in San Juan Achiutla. Aware the position would entail considerable effort and time, Ruiz Bautista was relieved when Ruiz Hernández responded positively, writing, 'I couldn't think of a more noble idea'.[74] In August 1949, Ruiz Bautista launched what he called 'The Manifesto for the Ixtapa–Tlacotepec Road' and mailed it to the municipal presidents, deputies and teachers in the eight towns located along the proposed route. In it, Ruiz Bautista proclaimed, 'the Revolution has not helped our people who have been forgotten […] who live in misery with no hope other than the possibility their children will open up a new path to a better life'.[75] The road was planned to pass through eight towns (including San Juan Achiutla) along a north–south axis and connect them to the main road leading to the commercial centre of Tlaxiaco. After a lengthy process of speaking at town assemblies to gain approval for the road project, Ruiz Bautista was able to secure permission from the necessary municipal officials and village elders.[76] However, local approval did not automatically generate federal funding and the project soon reached an impasse.

The project stagnated until two important developments revived its momentum in 1951. First, the founding of the CPMO in November 1951 created an extensive network of migrant associations who shared the same goals as Ruiz Bautista. Second, García Cruz was nominated to become the next federal deputy for Oaxaca's seventh district in 1952 and introduced Ruiz Bautista to key figures in SCOP as García Cruz prepared to assume his term in office. Back in the Mixteca Alta, Ruiz Hernández successfully negotiated with various municipal authorities to grant a total of 896 men for volunteer labour on the weekends (future reports on road work indicate this figure was probably inflated but it helped legitimise the project in the eyes of federal bureaucrats).[77] On 1 August 1951, SCOP approved an initial budget for the road and in October sent the first shipment of tools (shovels, picks, dynamite, wheelbarrows) to each town along the route.[78]

The work carried out on the Ixtapa–Tlacotepec Road exemplifies the realities of 'public works projects' in Mexico's neglected Indigenous communities. Rarely did

[73]See Michael K. Bess, 'Revolutionary Paths: Road Building, National Identity, and Foreign Power in Mexico, 1917–1938', *Mexican Studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 32: 1 (2016), pp. 56–82; and Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo*, pp. 35–6.

[74]Letter from Rutilio Ruiz Hernández to Raúl Ruiz Bautista, 22 June 1949, Personal Archive of Raúl Ruiz Bautista (hereafter PA/RRB). Ruiz Bautista's personal archives have been deposited in the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (National Autonomous University of Mexico, UNAM)'s Biblioteca Nacional (National Library) and digitally uploaded to Open Library. The author has consulted the papers from both locations. Digital archives are available at https://openlibrary.org/works/OL15824306W/Camino_por_la_Mixteca, last access 11 Nov. 2021.

[75]Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 138.

[76]Letter from Raúl Ruiz Bautista to Vicente Arias, municipal president of Teposcolula, Oaxaca, 3 Jan. 1950, PA/RRB.

[77]Letter from Rutilio Ruiz Hernández to Raúl Ruiz Bautista, 3 July 1951, PA/RRB.

[78]Internal Memo by Rutilio Ruiz Hernández, 6 Oct. 1951, PA/RRB.

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one find teams of hired workers operating large machinery under the supervision of an official foreman. Instead, one was more likely to witness local villagers offering their labour as part of fulfilling traditional social obligations called the '*tequio*' – a Nahuatl word used to refer to a form of collective work carried out among community members. Due to these circumstances, road work was sporadic and unorganised. Over the years, after volunteer *tequio* labour had been exhausted, young men from the area were hired and paid next to nothing. A worker later interviewed about the road in 2009 recalled: 'I began to work on the road when I was 14 and I worked on it for several years […] First I started out loading dirt and rock into the backs of trucks and then later I drilled […] it was five pesos each day or 30 pesos for a week.'[79]

As Ruiz Hernández and Ruiz Bautista endeavoured to push the project forward, local politics proved to be just as challenging as the local topography. When village authorities ruled against the road project, work crews were forced to change course and reconfigure the route. Reasons for opposition to the road varied, yet a common set of responses emerged in the years of construction. The primary reason for opposition to the Ixtapa–Tlacotepec Road was that it encroached upon private lands utilised for crops or livestock. In October 1951, when work on the road began, Ruiz Hernández wrote to Ruiz Bautista that 'the towns San Felipe Ixtapa, Santo Tomás Tecolotitlán, Santa Maria Nduayaco, are blocking the current route planned by the engineers, they oppose the conversion of private property into a road even though the engineers' route scientifically makes the most sense'.[80] Authorities in San Felipe Ixtapa were convinced to allow the road to run through the centre of town in October 1951, only to reverse their position until they were persuaded to permit construction again in January 1953.[81] On a state level, Oaxaca's governors oscillated between indifference and opposition to the road project, either because they viewed it as a futile effort or a potential opening for new political forces to threaten their hegemony. Local opposition to the road project only encouraged Ruiz Bautista to work more closely with the CPMO and federal entities such as the INI and SCOP. In the years after Ruiz Bautista began to work more closely with the CPMO and INI, the documents pertaining to the Ixtapa–Tlacotepec Road project spoke less of 'the Revolution' and more about Mexico's 'native' or 'Indigenous' peoples.[82]

By 1953, Ruiz Bautista had begun to divide his time between the Ixtapa–Tlacotepec Road and the establishment of a voluntary association for migrants from San Juan Achiutla in Mexico City. Formed in 1953, the Progressive Vanguard of San Juan Achiutla (Federal District) was part mutual-aid society,

[79]Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, pp. 293–4. More recently, historian Benjamin T. Smith has pointed the exploitive use of the *tequio* in road-building projects. While there was no explicit record of this in Ixtapa, it is possible forced labour was used in clearing out rocks and debris to make the road. See Benjamin T. Smith, 'Communal Work, Forced Labor, and Road Building in Mexico, 1920–1958', in David Nugent and Ben Fallaw, *State Formation in the Liberal Era: Capitalisms and Claims of Citizenship in Mexico and Peru* (Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2020), pp. 273–98.

[80]Letter from Rutilio Ruiz Hernández to municipal authorities of San Juan Achiutla, 3 Oct. 1951, PA/RRB.

[81]Letter from Rutilio Ruiz Hernández to Raúl Ruiz Bautista, 21 March 1953, PA/RRB.

[82]Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, p. 125.

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part migrant association – its members stood to gain material benefits through their participation in the association even though their main activities were focused on San Juan Achiutla. In its founding document, the San Juan Achiutla association stated: '[O]ur mission is to unify the sons and daughters of our town who currently reside in the Federal District, to provide mutual-aid funds to members in case of lack of employment or illness, to celebrate our Indigenous heritage, and to actively participate inside of the Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños.'[83] Along with material benefits, the San Juan Achiutla association functioned as a social hub for the dozens of former San Juan Achiutla villagers now in Mexico City. Monthly meetings were held in Ruiz Bautista's apartment or the Casa Neri restaurant. Along with meetings, members also attended birthday parties, saint days, and baptisms of fellow members and their families.[84]

Each June, the association organised an annual party (*gran baile*) in Mexico City to raise funds for San Juan Achiutla's *fiesta patronal*. Beyond the money raised for the occasion, the traditional festivities for San Juan Achiutla's patron saint continued to be held in high esteem among former villagers and provided an opportunity to gather together in a banquet hall (*salon de fiestas*) filled with decorations, food, live bands, dancing and raffle contests.[85] Each year, a handful of association members in Mexico City were selected to actually go to San Juan Achiutla's patron-saint festival to bring money, tequila, letters for family members and, in 1962, a turntable and speakers.[86]

The long lulls in road construction were directly tied to fluctuations in the INI's budget. With no funding from the municipal or state (Oaxaca) governments, Ruiz Hernández and Ruiz Bautista were dependent on funds from the INI and/or the Roads Division of SCOP. On numerous occasions (for example April 1955 and November 1962), Ruiz Hernández wrote from San Juan Achiutla to inform Ruiz Bautista that work had stopped on road construction due to lack of funds.[87] A letter from Ruiz Hernández on 14 January 1959 exemplifies this general characterisation: '[I]n reality I could only build four kilometres of the road this past year because of budget shortages […] the work last year was done with Mex$52,000 of which we only received half of what SCOP promised [SCOP initially promised MX$46,000] and the rest was covered by the INI […] the cooperation of private work [*tequio*], as you well know, has been completely exhausted.'[88]

For a project continuously hanging by a thread, the funds from the INI were decisive. The INI itself operated on a decreasing budget until it reached its own financial crisis in the beginning of the 1960s.[89] Thus, the San Juan Achiutla association's alliance with the leadership of the CPMO was highly beneficial for the

[83]*Ibid.*, p. 205.

[84]*Ibid.*, p. 217, p. 234.

[85]See, for example, 'Vanguardia Progresista de San Juan Achiutla en el D. F. Solicitud de Licencia con folio 3584, Oficina de Espectáculos del DDF', 30 May 1957, PA/RRB.

[86]Letter from Vanguardia Progresista de San Juan Achiutla en el D. F to Rutilio Ruiz Hernández, 6 Dec. 1962, PA/RRB.

[87]Letter from Raúl Ruiz Bautista to Rutilio Ruiz Hernández, 27 April 1955, PA/RRB; Letter from Rutilio Ruiz Hernández to Raúl Ruiz Bautista, 19 Nov. 1962, PA/RRB.

[88]Letter from Rutilio Ruiz Hernández to Raúl Ruiz Bautista, 14 Jan. 1959, PA/RRB.

[89]Lewis, *Rethinking Mexican Indigenismo*, pp. 175–9.

hometown association when the INI (headed by Caso) had to decide which projects to fund. In this light, the road work was one example of how a hometown association's involvement with the CPMO could connect it to the INI over the course of several years. In the case of the Ixtapa–Tlacotepec Road, members were motivated by their collective desire to improve San Juan Achiutla, yet that motivation brought the association into an ongoing relationship with other Mixtec groupings and gradually cultivated a stronger sense of Pan-Mixtec identity. The cultivation of a broader Mixtec identity was partially fostered by the hometown association's membership of the CPMO. It was also partially fostered by its reliance on the INI for funds and the need to clearly identify as 'Indigenous' for access to those funds. Over the years, the San Juan Achiutla migrant association increasingly framed its road project as part of benefiting a 'forgotten Indigenous pueblo'.[90]

After ten gruelling years, the Ixtapa–Tlacotepec Roadway was inaugurated on 18 March 1963. Caso, Dr Hernández Hernández, Ruiz Bautista and Ruiz Hernández were all on hand to greet the crowds of onlookers from San Juan Achiutla and surrounding towns. In the end, the road stretched for approximately 50 kilometres and connected nine towns together. The total cost amounted to MX$623,640, with funds split evenly between SCOP and INI. The completion of the road represented the culmination of a series of federal projects in San Juan Achiutla in 1962–3 which included the introduction of a running-water system (MX$18,000), an electric generator (MX$18,500) and an elementary school (MX$40,000).[91] Forty years after the Mexican Revolution, the first road and electrical generators were established in San Juan Achiutla.

Conclusion

Currently, the Ixtapa–Tlacotepec Road is largely unpaved. The road is worn down and neglected; trucks and buses slowly wind around its curves toward Tlaxiaco or Huajuapan. Since the 1980s, migration from San Juan Achiutla and the Mixteca has increasingly shifted to agricultural centres in California and Oregon.[92] After the CPMO disbanded in 1979 and public works projects in the area began to lose momentum in the 1980s, microfinance networks (national and international) partially filled the void in regional investment although it continues to be woefully insufficient.[93] Additionally, a rise in financial remittances sent from immigrants in the United States has also helped alleviate dire conditions.[94]

The history of the CPMO unsettles the notion that Indigeneity and modernity are inherently incompatible or antagonistic. Contrary to conventional wisdom, the Mexican metropolis did not always act as a homogenising force where local, Indigenous identities melded into a Mestizo mass and simply faded away. This

[90]Ruiz Bautista, *Camino por la Mixteca*, pp. 219–20, pp. 229–31.

[91]The opening and road details can be found in 'Speech of Rutilio Ruiz Hernández', 18 March 1963, PA/RRB.

[92]See Stephen, *Transborder Lives*, pp. 63–6.

[93]John Paul Jones, Susan M. Roberts and Oliver Fröhling, 'Managerialism in Motion: Lessons from Oaxaca', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 43: 4 (2011), pp. 633–62.

[94]For an overview that includes Oaxaca, see Jonathan Fox and Xochitl Bada, 'Migrant Organization and Hometown Impacts in Rural Mexico', *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 8: 2/3 (2008), pp. 435–61.

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article demonstrates that Mexico City was an urban environment where a Mixtec identity did not disappear but was altered. That alteration has been described here as a process where a village-based identity increasingly broadened out to encompass other villages and towns in the Mixteca region to form a more cohesive regional identity. Moreover, this process was shaped by the CPMO's collaborative work with the INI. As discussed in this article, although motivated by different intentions, the CPMO ultimately expanded the reach of the Mexican state in the region through road construction, electrification projects and public schools. The numerous developmental projects documented in the CPMO's archives were not always accepted by town councils, yet the hometown associations' desire to modernise the Mixteca as a means to prevent further deterioration and migration defies a more common viewpoint which pits Indigeneity against modernity.

Finally, how representative was the CPMO of the Mixteca and Indigenous communities in Oaxaca more broadly? At its core, the CPMO was composed of migrants who left the Mixteca for Mexico City. Ethnographic studies carried out in Mixtec villages from this period recognise migration as a selective process, and suggest villagers who left their homes for the city were more open and inclined to support modernisation projects than villagers who did not migrate.[95] Due to the filtering process of migration and its selective nature, the case of the CPMO does not fundamentally overturn previous studies on *indigenismo* in Mexico. Instead, the experience of the CPMO adds another layer to this historiography and highlights the existence of a segment of Mixtecs who were more open to modernisation projects. It was a segment that co-existed and contended with a broader set of sensibilities and communities located throughout southern Mexico. For the CPMO itself, the coalition's collaboration with the INI led its members to more consciously and visibly identify with their Indigenous roots; they had to become more Indigenous in order to become more modern.

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Spanish abstract

Este artículo presenta una historia social de la Coalición de los Pueblos Mixtecos Oaxaqueños (CPMO), una agrupación de asociaciones de ayuda mutua formadas por migrantes indígenas en la Ciudad de México a mediados del siglo veinte. Se basa en los archivos de la coalición para demostrar cómo años de migración a la Ciudad de México fueron diluyendo conflictos tradicionales entre comunidades y crearon las condiciones para una identidad étnica más amplia entre los migrantes mixtecos en la capital. Además, la colaboración de la coalición con el estatal Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) desafía descripciones comunes de que tanto la indigeneidad como la modernización son inherentemente antagónicas entre sí. La colaboración de la coalición con el INI llevó a sus miembros a una identificación más consciente y visible con sus raíces indígenas; tuvieron que hacerse más indígenas con el fin de volverse más modernos.

Spanish keywords: México; desarrollo; indigeneidad; migración; asociaciones voluntarias; etnohistoria

[95]Butterworth, 'Selectivity of Out-Migration from a Mixtec Community', p. 130; Orellana, 'Mixtec Migrants in Mexico City', pp. 275–7.

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Portuguese abstract

Este artigo apresenta a história social da Coalizão das Comunidades Mixtecas de Oaxaca (CPMO), um agrupamento de associações de ajuda mútua formadas por migrantes indígenas na Cidade do México em meados do século vinte. O estudo se baseia nos arquivos da coalizão para demonstrar como os anos de migração para a Cidade do México corroeram os conflitos tradicionais entre as aldeias e criaram as condições para uma identidade étnica mais ampla entre os migrantes mixtecas na capital. Além disso, a colaboração da coalizão com o Instituto Nacional Indígena (INI) do governo federal desafia representações comuns de indigenismo e modernização como sendo inerentemente antagônicas entre si. A colaboração da coalizão com o INI levou seus membros a se identificarem de forma mais consciente e visível com suas raízes indígenas; eles tiveram que se tornar mais indígenas para se tornarem mais modernos.

Portuguese keywords: México; desenvolvimento; indigeneidade; migração; associações voluntárias; etnohistória

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