

organizational unit, which sends delegates to the assembly of all communities of the same ethnic group, which in turn sends representatives to the regional assembly. The highest level political unit, the *Comité Clandestino Revolucionario Indígena* (Clandestine Revolutionary Indigenous Committee), consists of one representative from each of the ethnic groups participating in the zapatista movement.

EZLN

Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional

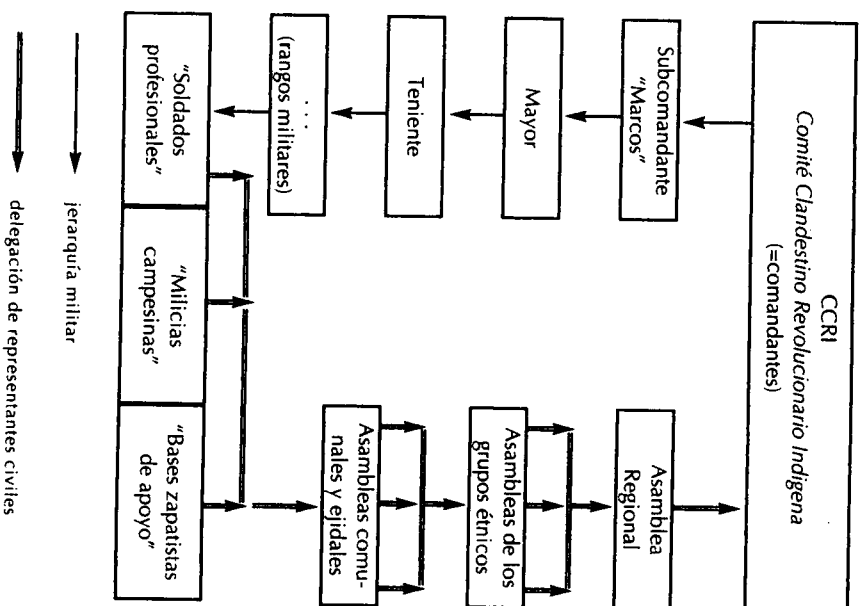


Figure 1.4 The Internal Structure of the EZLN (Dietz 1999:403)

This dual structure reflects the origins of the EZLN as a training and co-ordination group created by different communal self-defense units against external intruders threatening the communal and ejidal lands. Particularly threatening were the *guardias blancas* (white guards), the paramilitary groups maintained by the landlords of cattle and coffee estates, whose expansionist tendencies were stimulated by the government's land privatization policy. The common resistance against these forces has grown since the 1980s in the form of village defense units and small and isolated guerrilla groups. Re-functionalized as military training units, the EZLN abandoned their original avant-garde approach, and external members of the nascent EZLN such as Subcomandante Marcos were integrated and subordinated to the already existing informal political structures of the indigenous communities.²⁵

The Widespread Emergence of Ethno-Regional Movements

The political structure of the EZLN has evolved simultaneously with and parallel to the new indigenous movements appearing since 1991 in other regions of Mexico. In several regions the defensive, reactive nature of the communities' responses to official privatization efforts have been transformed into innovative, pro-active mechanisms. The communities have undertaken a similar process of regionalization in order to overcome their habitual political isolation (Dietz 1999). The starting point for the emergence of a more permanent regional convergence of the communities' interests has been formed once again by the local indigenous intellectuals, commissioned by their respective local assemblies to represent their communities and their projects to external agents. Together with some experienced local authorities, these returnees have built up an informal network of relations which have led to the establishment of a "coalition" of the different communities' shared interests. During the periodic assemblies held at the regional level, the local authorities and their external affairs representatives join the nascent network, exchange their main problems and claims, and discuss possible solutions.

These regional assemblies proceed in a ritualized and diplomatic if often tense manner. Above all in Michoacán, Oaxaca, and Veracruz, ancient conflicts persist over the boundaries of communal lands. Consequently, during the regional sessions the generation of younger teachers have tried to stress the region's common features and downplay local particularities, whereas the older cargos tend to highlight their localism and their differences from neighboring communities. As a compromise, in this first phase of the regional network the assemblies have limited themselves to formulation of shared concerns and claims *vis-à-vis* government bureaucracies, development agencies, and NGOs. These regional assemblies are retrospectively interpreted as the founding moment of an entirely new type of

ethno-regional organization. *Ireta P'orhecha / Nación Purhépecha* (Purépecha Nation) in Michoacán, the *Consejo de Pueblos Nahuas del Alto Balsas* (Council of The Nahuá Peoples of Alto Balsas) in Guerrero and the Oaxacan organizations *Asamblea de Autoridades Mixes* (Assembly of Mixes Leaders) and *Movimiento de Unificación de la Lucha Triqui* (Unification Movement of the Triqui Struggle) are examples of this new type of organization, which rises from an informal coalition of communities that declare themselves sovereign before a nation-state which defies the customary essence of the community's self-definition.

As communal sovereignty remains unassailable by regional organizations, they are still considered to be merely inter-communal alliances, which are not allowed to create centralized agencies beyond the regional assembly of local representatives and its ad hoc commissions of delegations appointed by the assembly. The rotating and decentralized organization avoids the consolidation of internal hierarchies which would be easily co-optable and/or repressible by government institutions. Moreover, the permanent rotation of ranks and assembly locations strives to promote and strengthen a comprehensive ethnic identity that overcomes the limitations of communal identities.

The regional organizations suffer from the same central problem as its member communities: they lack an officially recognized legal status. Accordingly, their range of activities is limited to two different spheres. On the one hand, the regional coalition continues to function as a catalyst for local claims. The assemblies held in different communities bring together a variety of demands – i.e. the enlargement of a primary school, the drilling of a well for drinking water, the extension of electricity, or the recognition of communal boundaries – and present them on a common platform to the institutions concerned with each of the respective demands. The obvious advantage of this procedure is the collective capacity of an entire region, and not only a single community, to counter governmental and bureaucratic negligence or unwillingness to solve local problems which have worsened in the era of neoliberal retreat. In order to put pressure on the responsible agencies, the regional assembly's measures include massive "visits" to the institution's headquarters, press conferences and rallies in the respective state capital or in Mexico City, and the blocking of vital roads surrounding the indigenous region. It is due to this explicitly political practice that the younger bilingual teachers have succeeded in taking up the mentioned *ciudadanización* process, merging it with ethno-regional demands, and thus stimulating a switch in attitude among their neighbors from submissively asking the government for help to actively claiming rights they have as Mexican citizens *vis-à-vis* "their" nation-state. The formerly "poor Indians" are thus becoming self-conscious citizens struggling for their legitimate demands.

In addition to jointly requesting governmental development initiatives,

in the last few years a new terrain for collective action has emerged. As the majority of agencies have retreated from rural development, the regional coalitions have been forced by their member communities to expand their range of actions to include the elaboration of projects and the search for financial support. The communal assemblies and authorities prefer to pass on these new tasks to the regional assembly and its specialized commissions in order to take advantage of the professional and technical know-how existing in the respective region as a whole and not only in their own community. Thus, the regional organizations are being transformed into new and influential agents of development, carrying out such projects as the establishment of supralocal craft training and trading centers, the creation of bilingual and bicultural secondary schools for agro-forestry, and the promotion and recovery of family-based subsistence agriculture.²⁶

The Struggle for Territorial Autonomy

Although their economic and social impacts have been limited so far, these pioneering regional projects, which are jointly self-managed by representatives of different indigenous communities, are very important politically. Given that organizations no longer confine themselves to the articulation of specific demands directed toward the state, and begin implementing their own development projects as coalitions of communities, the respective state governments tried to counteract this potentially new concentration of power. However, since their potential to recover their protagonist role in rural development is limited by the prevailing neoliberal strategy, the state and federal administrations were finally forced, after massive mobilizations carried out throughout 1993 and 1994, to recognize the regional indigenous organizations as legitimate (if informal) representatives of the local population.

Regional coalitions are still striving for official legal recognition by state agencies, which would not only entitle them to obtain governmental as well as non-governmental financial support for their projects, but also would imply access to channels of participation inside the remaining state-dominated and indigenous institutions. In the long run, this process of consolidation is likely to result in the establishment of a new, intermediate level of regional administration between municipal government and the state level. This regional council of self-administration formed by all indigenous communities of a particular area, however, requires constitutional reform, since the political project of autonomy aims to explicitly legalize two already existing actors: community and regional organization.

LA COMUNIDAD INDÍGENA EN LA JERARQUÍA ADMINISTRATIVA MEXICANA

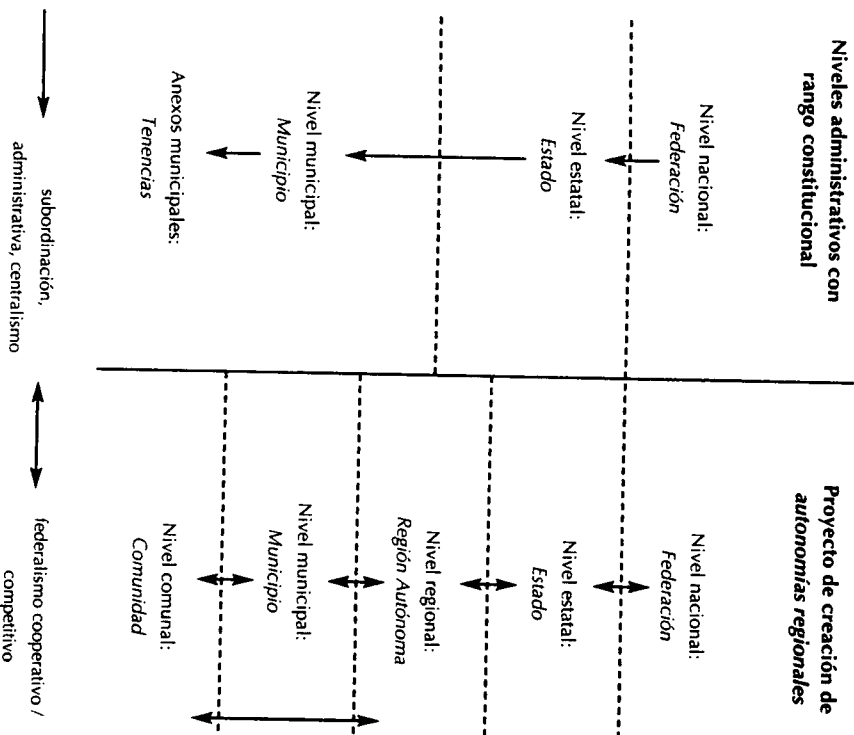


Figure 1.5 Community and Autonomy Inside the Mexican State (Dietz 1999: 406)

Zapatismo as National Confluence of Ethno-Regional Movements

Although these regional coalitions have emerged since 1992 in different indigenous areas of Mexico, the debate on regional territorial autonomy and constitutional reforms was definitely boosted by the appearance of

the EZLN in 1994 and by the subsequent process of negotiations over the legal reforms necessary to recognize, protect and develop indigenous rights (CNI 1994: 1). While the programmatic proposals of the 1992 anti-Quincentennial campaign had been formulated without the involvement of local and regional indigenous movements, the 1994 negotiations between the EZLN and the government prompted a swift process of national convergence, bringing together the ethno-regional coalitions of communities that had been formed in the previous years. Immediately after the armed uprising in Chiapas, a *Consejo Estatal de Organizaciones Indígenas y Campesinas de Chiapas* (CEOIC – State Council of Indigenous and Peasant Organizations of Chiapas) was created under the auspices of the *Frente Independiente de Pueblos Indios* (FIPI – Independent Front of Indigenous Peoples), an umbrella organization which had been leading the above-mentioned struggle for reforming Article 4 of the Mexican Constitution.²⁷

Both the FIPI and the newly created *Asamblea Nacional Indígena Plural por la Autonomía* (ANIPA – National Assembly of Indigenous Pluralities for Autonomy) started elaborating a detailed proposal for amending the Mexican Constitution in order to legalize the autonomous entities of indigenous self-government, which were already being created above all in the zapatista-controlled region of Chiapas.²⁸ Nevertheless, the main obstacle to these national initiatives still stems from their 1992 origins. They are promoted in Mexico City by dissident indigenous intellectuals and scholars who are well integrated into the national political arena, most of them belonging to the PRD opposition party, but who lack direct contact to the new regional movements.

This obstacle was overcome during the EZLN-government negotiations in San Andrés Sacam Ch'en, convened by the new president Ernesto Zedillo (1994–2000) and for which the zapatista negotiators successfully summoned the entire spectrum of new indigenous organizations, intellectuals, and scholars as part of their negotiation team. In order to prepare for the subsequent rounds of these negotiations centered on the recognition of indigenous rights, the first *Convención Nacional Indígena* (CNI – National Indigenous Convention) was held in Tlapa, in the mountains of Guerrero, in December 1994 (CNI 1994). Since then, three large National Indigenous Congresses have been held in different regions, thus transforming the CNI into the most representative forum of indigenous organizations currently in Mexico.

Toward the Recognition of Indigenous Rights

According to the ethno-regional organizations represented at the CNI, regional autonomy would not mean territorial segregation, but rather a redefinition of the Mexican nation-state and its relationship with indige-

nous communities (CNI 1994: 3). In several local and regional assemblies, local authorities warned the external affairs representatives that autonomy begins at the communal level and that the future regionalization of local autonomy must not relieve the nation-state of its development obligations in the indigenous regions (Dietz 1999).

Since the first CNI and the *Diálogos* (Dialogues) of Sacam Ch'en in 1995, two positions emerged among indigenous movements regarding the question of autonomy. On the one hand, local authorities, urban social movement activists and even some INI representatives at the San Andrés negotiations favored a model of territorial autonomy that recognizes the community as the basic unit of political organization and the legalization and recognition of indigenous customary law.²⁹ While some urban activists aimed to extend the notion of community to their local struggles for recovering control of barrios such as Tepito in Mexico City, most advocates of communal autonomy limited their claims to indigenous regions, justifying these claims on the basis of International Labor Office Convention 169 on "Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries," signed by the Mexican government in 1990, which ensures territorial rights to indigenous populations (OTT 1992). As customary law is only practiced locally, they argued that regional-level autonomy would create a legal and political vacuum which could easily be exploited by external actors such as political parties.

On the other hand, many activists of the new ethno-regional coalitions, as well as a few professional indigenous politicians and deputies, prefer a broader reform which would introduce communal and regional autonomy into Mexico's current federal structure (cf. figure 1.5). In their view, limiting the territorial dimension of indigenous self-government to the local sphere would only serve to extend the colonial heritage (Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena *et al.* 1994: 3–4). Thus, they advocated that the ethno-regional coalition of communities should evolve toward a regional council of self-government that would be competent in administrative, political, and cultural terms and which would allocate and supervise any resources invested in a given indigenous region.

These regions would not be defined through strictly ethnic criteria, since it is clear that in Mexico there is no region inhabited solely by indigenous populations. Therefore, the ANIPA assembly promotes a definition and delimitation of *regiones autónomas pluriétnicas* which would encompass *mestizo* municipalities as well (ANIPA 1995). These regions would be part of a broader structure of political and administrative decentralization.³⁰ As said before, this view invokes ILO Convention 169 as its international legal basis; together with the Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which is being elaborated and negotiated through the Geneva-based United Nations Working Group on Indigenous Peoples, and asserts indigenous peoples' right to territorial integrity (Sofstad 1993, Concha Malo 1995).

This divergence in the definition of autonomy and its levels and territorial extension – local vs. regional – as well as its "sovereign" subject – the community vs. the indigenous people or ethnic group³¹ – was frequently used by government representatives to block the negotiation process lasting from 1994 to 1996 and culminating in the official signature of the San Andrés Peace Accords on February 16, 1996 (Ce-Acatl 1995, 1996; CDHMAP 2000). The main obstacle to successfully implementing the San Andrés accords did not arise from the participating indigenous actors, who were flexible enough to reach a series of agreements with the *Comisión Parlamentaria de Concordia y Pacificación* (COCOPA – the Parliamentary Commission of Concordance and Pacification), the multi-party parliamentary commission which was officially commissioned by the Zedillo administration to negotiate the details of the pending agreements related to "indigenous rights and culture." These agreements, presented in a proposal in 1996 to include both options of autonomy, were accepted by the EZLN and by the indigenous organizations, but were rejected by the Zedillo government (Pérez Ruiz 2001).

As a consequence of this official blockade strategy, during the course of which some reforms were unilaterally introduced in several state constitutions through 2000, the EZLN rejected any further negotiations with the Zedillo government, which then tried to modify the Mexican Constitution without seeking consent from the indigenous organizations. This strategy was interrupted by the defeat suffered by the PRI in the 2000 presidential elections. The current president Vicente Fox, who for the first time is not from the PRI but from the conservative and pro-business *Partido de Acción Nacional* (PAN – National Action Party), succeeded in imposing a constitutional reform and an indigenous law, both of which remain far short of the San Andrés accords and the COCOPA proposal. The territorial rights guaranteed by ILO 169 are not translated into legal standards and procedures, and the indigenous community is not recognized as a legal entity of public law but only as an entity of "public interest" (FIDH 2002). In response, the EZLN together with a wide range of regional indigenous organizations staged a massive "March of Indigenous Dignity," which expressed the ever widening gap between the state and the indigenous communities (Gabbert 2001). During the Third National Indigenous Congress held in the Purhépecha community of Nurió, Michoacán, in March 2001, the common struggle for legal recognition was jointly asserted (CNI 2002).

Conclusion

In their struggle to de-colonize local and regional politics and regain territorial, cultural, and political self-determination, the new indigenous

actors exhibit three key features of what may be called the contemporary re-shaping of the "phenomenology" of modernity:

- 1 the process of re-ethnicization of identities, a process which is not confined to revivalist movements invoking a pre-colonial past, but which includes contemporary phenomena of "ethnogenesis" (Roosens 1989);
- 2 a parallel process of unlocking once relatively self-confined traditional cultures in light of market globalization. These contemporary "hybrid cultures" are not victimizable as simple epi-phenomena of a globalized economy, but constitute vital resources for emerging new social actors (García Canclini 1989a, 2000; Kearney 1996); and
- 3 a common tendency to create, devolve and/or conquer new intermediate social and political spaces, increasingly articulated on a regional level (Díaz-Polanco 1992).

The confluence of these key features of the contemporary face of modernization means that the Mexican and Latin American indigenous movements represent the complexities of the intermixing of ethogenesis, cultural hybridity, and regionalism (Dietz 1999). The transition from local to regional and national activities and mobilizations currently taking place illustrates an important turning-point in the history of Mexican indigenous struggles, leaving behind the historical isolation of the indigenous community. The rooting in specific local problems, on the one hand, and the expansion toward national organizations associated with zapatismismo, on the other hand, will in the long run force any Mexican government to recognize the individual and collective rights of their indigenous citizens. The transition from particular claims – be they educational, linguistic and cultural, or agrarian and economic in orientation – to the general re-negotiation of the *contrat social* between the community and the nation-state has proved decisive to overcoming old divisions between ethnic and peasant priorities, generating not only a completely new political agenda, but also an innovative political actor.

New ethno-regional organizations, ranging from *Nación Purhépecha* and the *Consejo Guerrerense 500 Años de Resistencia Indígena* to the EZLN itself, are achieving the integration of both "tradition" and "modernity," and of communalist and regionalist cultural revivalism and nationally and even internationally experienced cultural hybridity. By reducing ancient inter-communal conflicts over boundaries and consciously promoting an ethno-regional identity beyond local particularities, the regional organization manages to integrate the rural population. Moreover, the community coalition's political activities, particularly its insistence on the nation-state's accountability and responsibility toward its indigenous citizens and its struggle to establish regional councils of self-government, succeeds in strengthening indigenous partic-

ipation in national affairs as Mexican citizens. Hence, it is paradoxically an independent and overtly dissident indigenous movement that achieves what indigenismo had been expected to achieve during the last century of exogenously imposed "development": an equal participation and integration of the indigenous communities and their inhabitants not only into the nation-state – now reluctantly redefining itself as a pluricultural hybrid – but also into multi-ethnic Mexican society.

Notes

This chapter presents the results of ethnographic research carried out in the Western Mexican state of Michoacán (cf. Dietz 1999), which is contrasted with indigenous movements from other Mexican states such as Chiapas, Oaxaca, Veracruz and Guerrero.

- 1 The term "indigenous movements" refers to any organization which is shaped by a majority of indigenous leaders, members and/or followers; thus, according to its respective programmatic emphasis, some indigenous movements define themselves as agrarian organizations (as part of peasant movements), while others present their activities and struggles in ethno-cultural terms (as *Nahua*, *Purépecha* etc. movements).
- 2 Cf. Malhotra (1986), Vasconcelos and Carballo (1989), Esteve-Fabregat (1995) and Wade (1997); the Spanish peninsular roots of this dichotomy are analyzed by Stallaert (1998).
- 3 A comparative study of the changing and conflictive relations between nation-states and communities in the nineteenth century is provided by Reina (1997).
- 4 These processes are detailed in Lomnitz-Adler (1995), Mallon (1995), Fowler (1996) and Guardino (1996).
- 5 Cf. Mendieta y Núñez (1946), Turino (1986) and Rugeley (2002).
- 6 Details on the local actors and their role in the Revolution are provided by Turino (1986), Taylor (1993) and Joseph and Nugent (1994), whereas P. H. Smith (1981) analyzes the formation and regeneration of national political elites in Mexico.
- 7 Warnan (1985) and Knight (1986, 1997); see figure 1.1, chapter 2, present volume.
- 8 *Mestizaje* as a project of "anti-imperialist" national identity was first expressed in 1892 during the *IV Centenario* of the Colón discoveries; from this date on, the official hispanism of the "Day of the Race" starts being redefined and re-appropriated by a still weak national actor, the "integrantes de la raza cósmica que luchan contra el materialismo del Norte" (Rodríguez 1994: 161).
- 9 Cf. Becker (1995), Lomnitz-Adler (1995) and Mallon (1995). As illustrated by Adler-Lomnitz and Lomnitz-Adler (1994), the symbolic importance of the negotiated and ritualized character of the relations between the Mexican state and the indigenous communities is even maintained in the presidential election campaigns of the neoliberal era.
- 10 For details on the systems of *cargos* and their often diverging

- anthropological interpretations, cf. Carrasco (1961, 1990), Chance and Taylor (1985), Korsbaek (1992) and the monographic volume edited by Korsbaek & Topete (2000).
- 11 A general appraisal of Mexican *indigenismo*, its continuities and discontinuities is offered in Dietz (1995).
- 12 For illustrative case studies, cf. Köhler (1975), Strug (1975), Friedlander (1977), Medina (1983), Bonfil Batalla (1988) and Dietz (1995).
- 13 For the following, cf. CNPI (1980), Barre (1982, 1983), López Velasco (1989) and Garduño Cervantes (1993).
- 14 For details on this organization, cf. ANPIBAC (1979), Hernández Hernández and Gabriel (1979), CNPI and ANPIBAC (1982) and Barre (1983).
- 15 General aspects of these peasant movements are analyzed by Reimer (1990) and Bartra (1985), while details on the UCEZ are presented by Zepeda Patterson (1984), UCEZ (1984) and Zárate Hernández (1991, 1992) and on the OCEZ are offered by Marion Singer (1987) and Harvey (1990, 1998).
- 16 Fernández and Rello (1990) analyze in detail the legal implications of these new modalities of peasant organization.
- 17 For details on UNORCA, cf. Marion Singer (1989), Hernández (1992) and Concheiro Bórquez (1993), and for the sectoral organizations cf. García (1991), Alatorre *et al.* (1992), Valencia (1994) and Varese (1994).
- 18 Cf. Canabal Cristiani (1991), Cornelius, Craig, and Fox (1994), Fox and Aranda (1996) and Piñar Alvarez (1999, 2002).
- 19 Cf. Harvey (1990), Cornelius (1996) and Dietz (1999).
- 20 For details, cf. Bartra (1992), Durand Ponte (1994), Amnistía Internacional (1995), Ramírez Casillas (1995).
- 21 The international political and scholarly debate on the Quincentenary is presented and analyzed by Sumnerhill and Williams (2000).
- 22 These *barrios* are intralocal residence units into which the community is divided and whose members share a common, sublocal identity and – apart from the local patron saint – worship an own *barrio* saint; for ethnographic examples, cf. Dietz (1999).
- 23 For the Purhépecha region of Michoacán, these self-managed projects of community development are analyzed by Dietz (1999).
- 24 Cf. figure 1.4; the subordination of the military under the political structure is symbolically expressed in the terms used for each of its highest ranks: *subcomandante* for the military one and *comandante* for the political and civil one.
- 25 Summarized from Collier (1994), EZLN (1994, 1995, 1997), Rovira (1994), Tello Díaz (1995), Castells, Yazawa, and Kiselyova (1996), Dietz (1999), Le Bor (1997), Legorreta Díaz (1998), Nugent (1998), Gabbert (1999) and Gómez (2002).
- 26 These projects from the Purhépecha region are detailed in Dietz (1999).
- 27 Cf. CEOIC (1994), Dietz (1994), Harvey (1994, 1998), Moguel (1994), Ruiz Hernández (1994) and ANIPA (1995).
- 28 Cf. ANIPA (1995), Díaz-Polanco (1995), López y Rivas (1995), Burguete Cal y Mayor (1999a) and Ruiz Hernández (1999).
- 29 Cf. Esteva (1994a, 1994b), López Bárcenas (1994) and Dietz (1999); the notion of indigenous customary law is analyzed and discussed by Sevenhagen (1988), Gómez (1993) and López Bárcenas (2002).
- 30 The close relation between process of decentralization and new regional

- indigenous autonomy movements is illustrated by Burguete Cal y Mayor (1999b) and by Cornelius, Eisenstadt, and Hindley (1999), who offer regional case studies from Oaxaca, Guerrero and Chiapas.
- 31 Sevenhagen (1999) provides details on the different definitions and concepts of autonomy.

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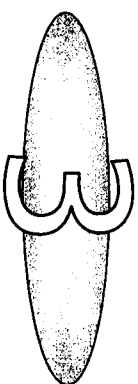
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Beyond Victimization

Maya Movements in Post-War Guatemala

Edward Fischer

The Maya of Guatemala have long been victimized. Witness the brutalities of Spanish conquest, the impositions of colonial rule, the institutionalized discrimination of authoritarian and democratic governments alike, violence both extraordinary and quotidian. For those of a certain age and political sympathy, Guatemala is best remembered for the civil war of the 1970s and early 1980s (of almost unimaginable proportions in its intensity and brutal excesses), which made the country a poster child for human rights causes. While Marxist rebel forces blockaded roads, blew up bridges, and assassinated ("justificaron") plantation owners and minor politicians, the US-supported Guatemalan army kidnapped and tortured thousands of suspects, massacred untold numbers of civilians, and razed hundreds of villages, burning houses and fields, scattering and killing the populations. Exactly how many were killed we will never know—tens of thousands at least. The UN-supported Historical Clarification Commission, set up after 1996 Peace Accords, found that over 90 percent of the 42,000 human rights violations they documented were attributable to the Guatemalan military. The overwhelming majority of these victims were Maya Indians, leading the commission to conclude that the Guatemalan military intentionally targeted Maya populations and thus, like the German Gestapo, was guilty of "acts of genocide."¹

La violencia (the violence) permeated everyday life in the Guatemala of the early 1980s; it became routinized and internalized, normalized in a