

Introduction

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On January 3, 1994, *The Arizona Daily Star*, Tucson's morning paper, headlined an AP wire story on the front page above the fold, "Indian rebels seize 4 towns in S. Mexico."¹ The account told readers that "[a]rmed Indian peasants battled soldiers yesterday on the second day of an uprising in one of Mexico's poorest states." In a brief commentary that seemed intended to reassure readers rather than alarm them, the report went on to state that "[t]he unrest was the latest of many peasant uprisings over the years in Chiapas, one of Mexico's most impoverished and isolated states. It is also the country's most southern state." That last *non sequitur* aside, the reporter's confidence in the categories that they used to describe the event and the place where it was happening was impressive. Couched in terms that North Americans (and Europeans) would find very familiar, it all seemed so simple. After all, Indian peasants south of the border were always rebelling, weren't they? Readers across Tucson, where a statue of Pancho Villa on a rearing stallion dominates a small park across the street from the country courthouse, must have shrugged their shoulders at the story and muttered to themselves, "So, what else is new?"

Of course, it was not so simple after all. Within days, conflicting reports of government actions against the rebels began to complicate the story. Did the army bomb villages or not? How many noncombatants died in the battle for Ocosingo? What really happened on January 7th in Ejido Morelia? As Subcomandante Marcos emerged as spokesperson for the rebels, still more questions were raised. Who is he? What does he want? Why is this *ladino* (in general: non-Indian) commanding a band of Indian rebels? Accounts of the early years of the *Zapatistas*, as they were soon called, in the frontier zone of Las Cañadas on the edge of the Lacandón rainforest raised doubts about whether or not this was really an Indian rebellion at all. What ties did the rebels have to Maya villages

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in the highlands? Were Guatemalans involved? And what about the *narcotraficantes*, who were active in the region? And finally, when the Mexican stock market collapsed, when tens of thousands marched in Mexico City's *zócalo* (central plaza) in solidarity with the rebels, and when, on March 23, Luis Donaldo Colosio, the ruling party PRI candidate for President, was murdered in Tijuana, everyone understood that this was not a simple Indian rebellion in an isolated corner of southern Mexico. The Zapatista uprising was part of a political and economic crisis of extraordinary and quite unexpected proportions.

Arij Ouweneel convened our seminar eleven months later, in November 1994. In Mexico, a new president had been elected, a fragile ceasefire was in force in Chiapas while negotiations continued, and a new movement was emerging, the National Democratic Convention, that would link the Zapatistas to a broad coalition of intellectuals and opposition politicians. But nothing was settled. Hostilities in the south seemed ready to resume at the slightest provocation, and each morning's newspaper seemed to carry news that might upset the delicate peace. The value of the *peso* was falling. These events, whose outcomes remain uncertain more than a year, formed the backdrop to our seminar. We met to discuss historical precedents for Indian rebellion in Chiapas, and to examine comparable movements in the Andes that might help to raise interesting questions.

The course of the Zapatista uprising brought home to all of us that these movements rarely run true-to-form. Despite an extensive academic literature that has identified common patterns and articulated a sophisticated body of theory to explain them, when it comes to cases, indigenous revolts and peasant rebellions always have at least some divergences and contradictions that defy the conventional paradigms.² Andeanists, confronted with the terrifying puzzle of Sendero Luminoso, have recognized this for some time. Our papers, consequently, focus on the particular, setting the idiosyncracies of real-life against the models that provide common frames of reference. This, after all, is the analytical tension that promises to keep the whole topic fresh.

Our volume spans some 470 years of history, beginning with Jan de Vos' reconstruction of the revolt of the Chiapanecos in 1524 that climaxed in a massacre in Sumidero canyon. His account, like my essay on the 1712 Tzeltal Revolt and Jan Rus' study of the so-called Caste War of 1869, challenges popular memory of these dramatic events among the citizens of modern-day Chiapas. Arij Ouweneel and Gary Gossen, in the contributions that follow, also invite readers to take the long-view of contemporary history, and provocatively link the Zapatista uprising to processes of cultural and political life that extend back before the Spanish Conquest. Mariano Peres Tsu's first-hand account of events in January and February, 1994, closes Part One, and adds an indigenous voice to the collection that we regret was absent during our seminar.

The essays on the Andes also begin with the colonial era. Ward Stavig's analysis of the Thupa Amaro insurrection looks beyond struc-

tural relations between large social groups and the state, and invites readers to confront the diversity of individual experiences and to contemplate the obstacles to generalizing that this diversity poses. The three articles that follow emphasize the variety of forms that Andean rebellion has taken as well as the varied modes of production and systems of political domination that characterize the Andean countryside across time and among regions. John Dawe examines conditions specific to the Araucanian frontier in Chile. Lewis Taylor links unrest in the Peruvian highlands to the commercialization of rural agriculture and artisan production that pushed male peasants into migrant labor and women into more intensive work as weavers and garmentmakers. Michiel Baud studies Cuenca, an area in Ecuador that by contrast was not dominated by large commercial landholdings. Here rebellion was linked to increases in taxes and the labor demands of the state for public works projects. Finally, Dirk Kruijt casts the Shining Path movement against political and economic changes imposed by a series of military governments from 1968 to the present.

We recognize that by focussing on overt, armed forms of indigenous revolt, we are returning to the study of events that many scholars feel have already gotten too much attention. Since the mid-1980s, the literature on resistance has shifted to concentrate on forms that are less violent, more subtle, and often hidden. Several factors have contributed to this trend.³ One is that regional political economy studies so dominated the social history of Latin America throughout the 1970s that the approach, which set the context for most research on rebellion, had become predictable. Historians and anthropologists also faced the fact that organized violence was a rare thing and almost always failed, with heavy consequences for the peasantry. To continue to focus on full-scale rebellion, then, risked inflating their long-term significance and invited accusations that scholars romanticized them. And finally, as social scientists began to reexamine the fundamental epistemologies of their disciplines in wide-ranging debates about postmodernist theory, conventional premises about cultural and political processes that shaped resistance studies were no longer adequate. These premises needed to be reconceptualized for the field to move forward.

Some urged that so-called accommodation and resistance approaches be abandoned altogether. In 1991, Patricia Seed published an essay in the *Latin American Research Review* in which she examined several recent works by historians, anthropologists, and literary critics that have contributed to the much-discussed turn toward poststructural discourse analysis.⁴ Her essay began with a broad critique of "*traditional criticisms of colonialism*" in terms that echoed the self-critiques of scholars who had worked within the paradigm, but in language that was stronger and more dismissive:

"In the late 1980s, these tales of resistance and accommodation were being perceived increasingly as mechanical, homogenizing, and inadequate versions of the encounters between the colonizers and the colo-

nized."⁵

Seed did not identify any example of this literature, and consequently, she exposed herself to arguments that she had overstated and overgeneralized her case. Rolena Adorno offered just this rebuttal in an otherwise sympathetic commentary published two years later.⁶ Adorno stressed:

*"Frankly, it would be difficult to proceed with any sort of cultural or literary study involving autochthonous Andean society or consciousness without taking into account studies like those of [Steve] Stern, Karen Spalding, and Brooke Larson, works that I would identify with the themes Seed mentions."*⁷

A Mexicanist might have added monographs by Inga Clendinnen, Nancy Farriss, William Taylor, and John Tutino to Adorno's list.⁸ Seed, in response, reaffirmed her argument in even stronger terms:

*"[...] what narratives of resistance and accommodation cannot do is explain the world as it is today. Nor can they explain how we arrived at our contemporary state."*⁹

Again, she declined to discuss specific works, inviting further criticism, which arrived in an important essay by Florencia Mallon that is sure to extend and redirect the debate, "The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History."¹⁰

One need not accept Seed's verdict on the value of accommodation and resistance approaches to acknowledge that her reading of intellectual trends in colonial and postcolonial Latin American history was probably accurate. Excellent new studies of rebellion that fall within the broad paradigm continued to appear after the late 1980s. See, for example: R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination*; Todd A. Diacon, *Millenarian Vision. Capitalist Reality*; Grant Jones, *Maya Resistance to Spanish Rule*; and Erick Langer, *Economic Change and Rural Resistance in Southern Bolivia*.¹¹ But the talk at academic conferences, in graduate seminars, and during faculty cocktail parties, especially in the United States, was more likely to be about the implications of poststructuralism than the nuances of regional political economy or the cultural origins of agrarian ideologies. The Quincentenary brought a wave of new scholarship centered on textual analysis, though perhaps the best of this literature (D.A. Brading, *The First America*; Stephen Greenblatt, *Marvelous Possessions*; Anthony Pagden, *Spanish Imperialism and the Political Imagination*) owed at least as much to conventional intellectual history as it did to new critical theory.¹²

The Zapatista uprising, however, thrust questions about resistance and political economy back into the spotlight. While the black ski-masks, the clever and sophisticated correspondence of Marcos on the Internet, and the rebels' requests for laptops and fax machines offered a banquet of material to be deconstructed by the postmodernists, textual analysis did not seem, by itself, to hold much promise of explaining who was fighting and why. To do that, and to begin to talk about the social construction of cultural forms, requires careful analyses of material life.

Moreover, Marcos himself has reminded us that the costs of resistance do not play out in discourse or rhetorical gamesmanship, but in the hard physical cruelties of modern warfare. Scolding a journalist who had sent him an angry letter after being denied an interview, Marcos wrote:

*"We are at war. We rose up in arms against the government. They are searching for us to kill us, not to interview us."*¹³

The essay by Florencia Mallon cited above is one of four new works on peasantries and indigenous peoples in Latin America to appear since 1994 that explore new conceptual designs for the study of resistance and power. The others are *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico*, edited by Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru*, also by Florencia Mallon, and *The Secret History of Gender: Women, Men, and Power in Late Colonial Mexico*, by Steve Stern.¹⁴ Each has emerged out of the theoretical debates of the last decade to integrate current ideas about power, state formation, and hegemony with ongoing research on political economy, ethnic conflict, and class struggle. They also integrate study of episodic, organized forms of agrarian violence with explorations of more common, everyday forms, and thus move away from approaches that tend to emphasize the importance of one at the expense of the other.

These pathbreaking works mark a new stage in the literature on colonial and postcolonial resistance. None were available to us as we prepared the papers for this volume, but we look forward to making a contribution to a revitalized literature on indigenous revolt as new scholarship continues to appear, and as events in Chiapas, the Andes, and elsewhere in the rural hinterlands of Latin America wind their tortuous, unpredictable way into the future. To conclude, on behalf of Jan de Vos, Jan Rus, Gary Gossen, Ward Stavig, Lewis Taylor, Michiel Baud, and Dirk Kruijt, I want to offer deep and sincere thanks to Arij Ouweneel and the community of scholars at CEDLA who treated us with such extraordinary warmth and generosity during our stay in Amsterdam. The volume our seminar has produced is only a small measure of what we learned from each other.

Endnotes

1. *Arizona Daily Star*, January 3, 1994, pp. 1A-2A.

2. In an effort to avoid redundancy, rather than include a lengthy introduction to the bibliography on indigenous revolt here in the introduction, I direct readers to consult the footnotes of each of our contributors.

3. Two scholars offered especially useful critiques that contributed to the shift. The first was James C. Scott, who wrote:

"[...] it occurred to me that the emphasis on peasant rebellion was misplaced. Instead, it seemed far more important to understand what we might call everyday forms of peasant resistance—the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to extract labor, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them. Her I have in mind the ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: foot dragging, dissimula-

tion, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth."

See his *Weapons of the Weak*, p. 29. For the further development of Scott's ideas see his *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*. The second, especially for Latin Americanists, was Steve J. Stern, whose introduction to an anthology on resistance in the Andes explicitly offered suggestions for future research. Among other points, he wrote, "*that studies of peasant rebellion should treat peasant consciousness as problematic rather than predictable, should pay particular attention to the 'culture history' of the area under study, and should discard notions of the inherent parochialism and defensiveness of peasants.*" In "New Approaches," p. 15. See also his "Struggle for Solidarity."

4. Seed, "Colonial."

5. Seed, "Colonial," p. 182.

6. Adorno, "Reconsidering Colonial Discourse."

7. Adorno, "Reconsidering Colonial Discourse," p. 137. Larson, *Colonialism; Spalding, Huarochirí; Stern, Peru's Indian Peoples*.

8. Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquest*; Farriss, *Maya Society*; Taylor, *Drinking*; Tutino, *From Insurrection*.

9. Seed, "More Colonial."

10. See bibliography.

11. See bibliography.

12. For Brading, Greenblatt, and Pagden, see bibliography. Examples of the literature on textual analysis include Cevallos-Candau *et al.*, *Coded Encounters*; and two collections edited by Jara and Spadaccini, *1492-1992*, and *Amerindian Images*.

13. Letter to *El Sur*, *XXI-Century Journalism*, February 11, 1994, in Subcomandante Marcos, *Shadows*, pp. 125-126.

14. See bibliography.