

WHO ARE THE INDIANS?

Reconceptualizing Indigenous Identity, Resistance, and the Role of Social Science in Latin America

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STRATEGIES FOR SURVIVAL: THE PSYCHOLOGY OF CULTURAL RESILIENCE IN ETHNIC MINORITIES. By Peter Elsass. (New York: New York University Press, 1992. Pp. 263. \$35.00 cloth.)

PORTALS OF POWER: SHAMANISM IN SOUTH AMERICA. Edited by E. Jean Matteson Langdon and Gerhard Baer. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992. Pp. 350. \$35.00 cloth.)

'TAMBO: LIFE IN AN ANDEAN VILLAGE. By Julia Meyerson. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990. Pp. 265. \$30.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)

I SPENT MY LIFE IN THE MINES: THE STORY OF JUAN ROJAS, BOLIVIAN TIN MINER. By June Nash. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992. Pp. 390. \$49.00 cloth, \$18.50 paper.)

DOMINATION AND CULTURAL RESISTANCE: AUTHORITY AND POWER AMONG AN ANDEAN PEOPLE. By Roger Neil Rasnake. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1988. Pp. 321. \$39.95 cloth.)

NATION-STATES AND INDIANS IN LATIN AMERICA. Edited by Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991. Pp. 355. \$37.50 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)

Social science analysis and representation of the indigenous peoples called "Indians" is undergoing an important transformation.¹ A new literature is challenging the more established conceptualization of indigenous peoples as precariously balanced on the precipice of cultural extinction. This body of work is represented by several of the titles grouped here for review. The newer perspectives focus on the processual nature of indigenous identities, those always transforming collective self-representations of particular social groups as indigenous. Such identities are

1. Indigenous peoples and movements in Latin America employ the term *indígena* as a self-description, while *indio* (Indian) is a deprecating term—except when used to defy hegemonic stereotypes in the same manner that words like *nigger* or *queer* are used by radicalized artists, intellectuals, and others in the United States. I am using *indigenous people* here as a neutral term and *Indian* only in an ironic and critical sense.

determined through specific and varying forms of resistance to domination by the political and economic power structures of Latin American nation-states. At present, both the newer and older styles of analyzing indigenous ethnicity in Latin America are increasingly aligned with political movements for indigenous rights, led by a new generation of indigenous leaders. These resistance movements embody struggles over identity and thus are living proof that indigenous peoples are not necessarily disappearing.

The more established school, or what I call the “cultural survival position,” is exemplified here by Peter Elsass and a number of the contributors to the Urban and Sherzer and the Langdon and Baer collections.² Social scientists working from this stance assume the authority to identify discrete, named indigenous societies that exist in given locations and to assign to these societies fixed cultural traits, particularly language, worldview and its rituals, social organization, and leadership. The cultural survival perspective embodies an essentialism in which cultural traits or traditions constitute the “essences” of being Indian and function as Cartesian coordinates against which the degree of “Indianness” of a group can be determined by social scientists. To the extent that the coordinates change or remain stable over time, they determine the chances for the survival or assimilation of any specific Indian group in the larger society in which the Indians find themselves embedded.

This position evolved from two sources: the problematic set forth by Franz Boas in the United States, which tightly bound language, material culture, and cultural identities together; and British structural functionalism, which imagines social relations as a homeostatic organism in which individual and collective behaviors are defined by cultural norms and values in order to maintain social equilibrium. In contrast to earlier traditions in anthropology, the cultural survival school is innovative in bringing with it a morality that motivates anthropologists and other social scientists to act as advocates for the survival of indigenous cultures. Turning indigenous peoples into objects for research and believing that any culture is discrete only insofar as it remains “uncontaminated” by other cultures have both come under strong attack from postmodernists, especially James Clifford.³ But the political sea change toward advo-

2. In calling the established essentialist position the “cultural survival school,” I am in no way implying that this position represents the views of Cultural Survival International or its journal. *Cultural Survival Quarterly* has increasingly become a forum for authors, both academic and indigenous, who are writing from pronounced resistance perspectives.

3. See James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1986). The postmodernist critique is turning out to be an ever-expanding industry. Two other important and insightful views are found in Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983); and George W. Stocking, *Observers Observed: Essays in Ethnographic Fieldwork* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

cacy has perhaps buttressed the essentialism inherent in the cultural survival position. More telling still, alliances between social scientists of the cultural survival school and particular indigenous political movements are highlighting the current of essentialist thought flowing through the ideologies of these movements.⁴

The analyses of the “resistance school” take a variety of stances concerning the dynamics of constructing indigenous identity, many of which are mapped out in the Urban and Sherzer collection as well as in the studies by Roger Rasnake and June Nash. The term *resistance*, as used in these works, denotes centuries of varying kinds of struggle that began when Europeans successfully destroyed precontact polities and the positions of authority and control that precontact leaders had maintained over territory and resources. Such struggles continued in new forms as colonial and republican regimes confiscated indigenous territories and resources, legislated against indigenous languages, worldviews, and religious rituals, and erased the distinctive identities of indigenous peoples from the constructing of nation and nationality. For many authors, the development since the conquest of numerous forms of indigenous struggle—armed conflicts, cultural revitalization, religious movements, repossession of resources, and other manifestations—derive from the characteristics of sociocultural difference that antedate contact.

In departing from the cultural survival position, several authors argue that the struggle to resist confiscation of territory and resources as well as social and cultural assimilation into the bottom-most economic strata of colonial and republican social orders has been molded so strongly by the institutions of colonialism that “being Indian” may have little or no connection to precontact sociocultural forms. According to this argument, the resistance struggle itself has become the primary characteristic of Indian ethnicity. Such authors describe anti-essentialist sociocultural dynamics within Latin American nation-states in which the self-identified indigenous social groups continuously redefine (and often reinvent) their identities in extremely fluid ways. But even while doing so, they are always constrained by a struggle for resources waged between hegemonic socioeconomic institutions of the nation-state and the social organizations of indigenous communities.

In the introduction to *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America*, editors Greg Urban and Joel Sherzer make several caveats that undercut

4. As social scientists encounter, analyze, and represent what they identify as essentialism in the ideologies of indigenous political movements, they are being challenged to enlarge their discourses theoretically and politically while retaining their capacity for constructive critique. For a fascinating, intellectually honest encounter with Mayan nationalist ideology in Guatemala, see Kay B. Warren, “Transforming Memories and Histories: The Meaning of Ethnic Resurgence for Mayan Indians,” in *Americas: New Interpretive Essays*, edited by Alfred Stepan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

the cultural survival position to a certain extent. They are concerned with conceptualizing usage of the terms *indigenous ethnicity* and *ethnic group* more precisely.⁵ Just as “Indians” did not live in the Americas until Europeans invented the term and its social positioning, the myriad distinctive indigenous societies of these continents became “ethnic groups” only as their territories were incorporated into colonial and later republican national regimes of power. Thus *ethnicity* and *ethnic group* should be understood as processual terms that signify changing identities in relation to colonialism through history, rather than as a set of more or less fixed social categories.⁶

One cannot dispute that certain indigenous cultures have disappeared entirely, certain indigenous populations have been genocidally exterminated, and sociocultural assimilation has eliminated certain indigenous ethnic groups. These events doubtless underlie the cultural survival paradigm, as represented in the Sherzer and Urban volume by David Maybury-Lewis and by Richard Adams to a lesser extent. In these essays, the authors name endangered Indian cultures (*the Mapuche, the Miskitu*) and their respective cultural characteristics without foregrounding that naming or those markers historically, regionally, or in reference to how or whether people within that group identify themselves as a social unit.⁷ This mode of analysis locks indigenous cultures and identities into

5. Urban and Sherzer accept Jean Jackson's view of ethnic groups (influenced by Fredrik Barth) as interest groups operating within larger societies, among whom markers of ethnicity are produced through interactions with other social sectors. This definition assumes the hegemonic domination of nation-states and their sovereignty over the territorial, collective, and individual rights of the ethnic groups embedded within each nation-state. Brackette Williams has greatly enriched this discussion through insightful considerations of the theoretical implications of class, race, and resistance in the construction of ethnicity. See Williams, “A Class Act: Anthropology and the Race to Nation across Ethnic Terrain,” *Annual Review of Anthropology* 18 (1989):401–55.

6. This point is stressed by Urban and Sherzer in the crucial distinction they make between highland and lowland peoples in South America: highland groups compose numerically large populations that have internalized European social and cultural forms since contact, while lowland peoples (in much smaller groups) remained more isolated and closer to precontact conditions for a long time. Urban and Sherzer also distinguish between the peoples living on the Pacific and Atlantic Coasts in Central America: the native societies of the Pacific Coast were incorporated early on into the Spanish empire and became part of the new Hispanic nation-states, while the Atlantic Coast peoples fell under the influence of the British empire and eluded incorporation into Hispanic nation-states until the twentieth century.

7. In several instances, anthropologists employed terms for indigenous groups for a long time that in no way corresponded to those people's self-identity and consciousness. It is interesting to note that the contemporary politics of resistance have created conditions under which indigenous peoples have adopted and adapted such terms. In the case of the “Mayans” of Guatemala, see Carol A. Smith, *Guatemalan Indians and the State, 1540–1988* (Austin: University of Texas Press 1990). On the “Mixtecs” of Oaxaca, see Michael Kearney, “Mixtec Political Consciousness: From Passive to Active Resistance,” in *Rural Revolt in Mexico and U.S. Intervention*, edited by Daniel Nugent (La Jolla, Calif.: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies), 113–24. On the “Ohlones” of California, see Les W. Field, Alan Leventhal, Rosemary Cambra, and Dolores Sánchez, “A Contemporary Ohlone Tribal Revitalization Movement,” *California History* 71, no. 3 (Dec. 1992):412–31.

a dualism of survival versus extinction in which social scientists inevitably play the role of experts. Other essays in *Nation-States and Indians* clearly suggest that such a dualism is not useful in analyzing many, if not most, historical indigenous groups, whose existence should be seen more as an ensemble of possibilities for transformation.

Peter Elsass, a psychologist and anthropological field-worker, develops a sophisticated cultural survival perspective based on research among several Indian and African-American populations.⁸ In *Strategies for Survival: The Psychology of Cultural Resilience in Ethnic Minorities*, he seeks to identify how and why particular groups survive assimilation into national societies (which are represented in his cases by Christian missionaries and state bureaucracies) better than others. Working in the distinctive, mixed highland-lowland region of northeastern Colombia dominated by the massive Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, Elsass examined the divergent fortunes of the highland Arhuacos and the lowland Motilon. He finds that the Arhuacos' hierarchical social organization, characterized by the leaders' coercive powers and control over knowledge of ritual and group history, serves as a far better basis for cultural survival than the egalitarian social relations and communal living arrangements of the Motilon. Using the central symbols of the Arhuaco loom (structure, control) versus the Motilon longhouse (anarchy, chaos), Elsass argues eloquently that the acculturation of an indigenous people produces mental states akin to clinical depression and acute anxiety. His case study of the village of Chemesuca, populated by "halfway assimilated" Arhuacos, illustrates this analysis with haunting images of social and individual anomie and alienation, particularly in relations between men and women.

While one may dispute or defend Elsass's conclusions about hierarchy, social control, and the survival of Indian cultures, his analysis is problematic in its stance on culture and history—that is, tradition. He perceives that indigenous groups invent and reinvent traditions as a part of the reproduction of their identities but finds the fact that the Arhuaco wear more traditional clothing and speak their language more fluently now than fifty years ago unsettling rather than analytically illuminating. He explains, "In trying to understand Indian survival, it is difficult to unveil structures they have always possessed, one reason being that Indians do not present their past in such a way that it can be included in historical research with time as a linear measure" (p. 94). Aside from the inability to establish "structures they have always possessed" for any social group anywhere, Elsass's approach implies that European and Euro-American observers must leave behind questions

8. For the purposes of this essay, I am not discussing Elsass's African-American case studies, which form an important part of his argument.

about the historical construction of tradition and “read Indian culture here and now.”⁹

Elsass’s analysis returns several times to shamanism, which he considers the most important foundation for Indian identity and its survival. The contributors to *Portals of Power: Shamanism in South America*, edited by Jean Matteson Langden and Gerhard Baer, also portray shamanism as central to indigenous identity and a rational and practical instrument for achieving and reestablishing social harmony and individual health. In the first nine essays in the book, contributors document the key role of shamanism in indigenous cosmovision (Donald Pollock, Jean Langdon, Bruno Illius, Gerhard Baer), the nature of shamanic powers in the clearly visionary experiential world of shamans (Waud Kracke, Pablo Wright, Michel Perrin), and the aesthetic dimensions of shamanic ritual practice in the mediums of music, incantation, and the plastic arts (Jonathan Hill, Dominique Buchillet). Most impressive in this collection are Langdon’s detailed cosmology of the Siona of the Colombian Putumayo, in which shamans have developed a will to power through visionary knowledge; Perrin’s analysis of gender, sexual deviance, and dreams as power bases for Guajiro shamans; and Hill’s revisionist assessment of Wakuénai curing rituals, which challenges the scientific and artistic canons of Western culture.

Most of the contributors to *Portals of Power*, like Elsass, treat Indian cultures as discrete and historically continuous units and shamanism as a marker of indigenous identity, perhaps implying that changes in shamanistic activities in any given indigenous society could endanger its cultural survival. Such an assessment is questioned by the last three essays in the volume (those by Luis Eduardo Luna, by Robin Wright and Jonathan Hill, and by María Clemencia Ramírez de Jara and Carlos Ernesto Pinzón Castaño). Luna describes indigenous shamanism as practiced among Amazonian mestizos, suggesting that the rituals and cosmovision of indigenous shamanism are not necessarily bound up with the identity or survival of any indigenous group per se. Hill and Wright document a syncretic millenarian movement among the Wakuénai that spread to many different ethnic groups in one Amazonian region, manifesting itself as both a political and spiritual movement. Finally, Jara and Castaño detail the role played by shamanism in the contemporary creation of the Sibundoy ethnic group, primarily through the relationship between sha-

9. Recent influential work has strongly legitimated indigenous systems that recount historical information, both as historical literature and as data that can be used to analyze and confirm the construction of indigenous traditions and identities. See Joanne Rappaport, *The Politics of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Frank Salomon, *Native Lords of Quito in the Age of the Incas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and *Rethinking History and Myth: South American Perspectives on the Past*, edited by Jonathan Hill (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988).

mans from the Sibundoy valley and the dynamics of popular culture in Colombia. These articles disentangle shamanism from the idea of “pure” and distinct indigenous cultures and underscore shamanism’s complex role in transforming and inventing indigenous identities.

Several thought-provoking essays in Urban and Sherzer’s *Nation-States and Indians in Latin America* stress the complex relationships among indigenous ethnicity, its cultural markers, and the politics of identity. Jean Jackson shows how CRIVA, an activist political group, is attempting to construct a common ethnic identity among previously distinct Tukanoan-speaking groups in the Colombian Amazon. Using a pan-Indianist ideology borrowed largely from indigenous confederations operating elsewhere in Colombia, the leadership of CRIVA is working to graft a new political agenda onto the traditional social organization and leadership of disparate Tukanoan groups whose territories remained isolated into the twentieth century. Because CRIVA’s leaders are in fact Tukanoans, they are caught on the horns of a dilemma between these two contradictory agendas. In a contrasting case, Antônio Carlos de Souza Lima shows how the Brazilian state “Brazilianized” indigenous Amazonian groups by using indigenist ideologies.¹⁰ He explains how employing an assimilationist form of *indigenismo* to build the Brazilian nation-state required the state to define the special citizenship rights of the people called “Brazilian Indians,” which defeated the ultimate goal of assimilating indigenous peoples.

In two important contributions, Greg Urban and Jane Hill effectively challenge the assertion that language is a marker of indigenous identity. Urban skillfully contrasts the situations in Paraguay and Peru by using census statistics. In 1981, 40 percent of the Paraguayan population spoke only Guarani (the indigenous language) while 52 percent were bilingual in Spanish and Guarani. Yet only 1 percent of Paraguayans identified themselves as indigenous. In the same year, 73 percent of Peruvian citizens spoke only Spanish, 16 percent were bilingual with an indigenous language (mostly Quechua), and only 9 percent were monolingual in an indigenous language. But most sources cite the indigenous population in Peru as accounting for 35 to 45 percent of the total population. Hill’s case is even more startling. She describes a large population of speakers of Nahuatl located in the Malinche region of central Mexico who neither identify themselves as indigenous nor are identified as such by the Mexican state. Rather, the Malinche folk call themselves “Mexicanos” and their language “mexicano.” And they brag that they are

10. Indigenism (*indigenismo* in Latin America) connotes a heavily romanticized idealization of the pre-Columbian civilizations of the Americas. *Indigenismo* in the past has characterized anti-hegemonic intellectual currents in Mexico, Nicaragua, the Andean countries, and Brazil. But it may have played a more significant role in serving as a means for political and economic elites to appropriate indigenous cultures for nation-building ideologies that end up maintaining the subaltern status of indigenous peoples.

the “true Mexicans” in order to assert a special relationship with the state that exploits their labor.¹¹ After examining these cases, assimilation of indigenous identities into nation-states looks (and sounds) curiously and curiously, at least to social scientists.

Such findings are not necessarily problematic for authors of the resistance school because from their perspective, the assimilation of European institutions and sociocultural forms can actually play a key role in resistance struggles. In *Domination and Cultural Resistance: Authority and Power among an Andean People*, Roger Rasnake focuses on the Yuras, an indigenous ethnic group of the southern Bolivian altiplano. Among the Yuras, transformation of the role of traditional indigenous leaders, or *kurakas*, during the five centuries of European political and economic domination has been central to ethnic identity. The Yuras became a distinct social entity based on the *ayllu*, the local kin group widespread in the Andes, following the historical fragmentation of large indigenous polities produced by the Spanish throughout Latin America. During the colonial and early republican periods, the *kurakas* acted as agents of the state in extracting resources and labor from their fellow Yuras while attempting to influence the policies of the state elite. In the contemporary era, although the *kurakas* (now called *kuraqkuna*, or elders) still serve the state, they also function as symbols of Yura resistance to assimilation into the social and cultural mainstream who “create and recreate a model of Yura organization and ethnicity.” The analytic strengths of Rasnake’s ethnography lie in two areas: his meticulous historical recounting of consent and contestation by individual *kurakas* when faced with the implantation and maintenance of colonial and republican regimes in the Yura region, and his insightful symbolic analysis of how contemporary *kuraqkuna* mobilize resistance to assimilation through communal rituals.

Rasnake’s work in the Yura region, where indigenous identity and resistance are crisply defined and powerful (if not “pure”), typifies anthropologists’ preference for describing the “most Indian” sociocultural areas. Historian Thomas Abercrombie insightfully explores (in the Urban and Sherzer volume) the dynamics of resistance and cultural interface elsewhere in Bolivia, where the lines between indigenous and nonindigenous identities are much less sharply drawn. Abercrombie finds that what defines Indian and Hispanic identities in highland Bolivia involves considerable mutual internalization of the cultural characteristics attributed to each group. The relationship between ethnic identity on the one hand and language, cosmology, and social organization on the other are played out in an arena of contention. As he explains, indigenous tactics of resistance derive from “the very institutions and doctrines that the colo-

11. Hill’s analysis is developed in Kenneth Hill and Jane Hill, *Speaking Mexicano: Dynamics of Syncretic Language in Central Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1986).

nizers imposed to erase the past and destroy resistance,” with the result being that “modern day ‘indigenous ethnic groups’ and ‘indigenous cosmologies’ are unintelligible apart from their struggle with the state” (p. 111). While Christian symbols and rituals have become integral parts of being “Indian,” urban Hispanic Bolivians act out partly imagined pre-Christian Indian rituals at Carnaval and other festivals. Such public embraces of precontact spirituality are, in turn, part of the way that urban Bolivians manifest their identity as Bolivians.

Ethnomusicologist Thomas Turino corroborates this overlapping between ethnic and national identities in his analysis of indigenous music in Peru. He finds that contemporary indigenous music is both highly derivative from European forms and yet a symbolic basis for resistance to state policies designed to assimilate indigenous peoples. Twentieth-century *indigenista* intellectuals have turned to this syncretic postcolonial Andean music to represent the vitality of indigenous culture and its role in shaping a uniquely Peruvian national identity. Ironically, since such indigenismo became state policy, it has legitimized indigenous cultural forms and mainstreamed these forms as Peruvian. In a similar vein, Carol Hendrickson shows how Guatemalan indigenous clothing (*traje*) functions both to label the economically, politically, and socially inferior position of Indians and to identify the Guatemalan highlands as touristically attractive, thus defining the Guatemalan nation as culturally remarkable and exotic.

The close relationships among colonialism, resistance, and indigenous identity and the strange interplay between nation-states’ suppression of indigenous ethnicity and appropriation of indigenous cultural markers found in these examples from highlands regions are not necessarily duplicated in the lowlands. Janet Hendricks’s contribution to Urban and Sherzer on the Shuar of Amazonian Ecuador details how a contemporary organization, the Shuar Federation, has successfully opposed expansion of state authority into Shuar territory and constructed a cultural counter-hegemony. Inspired partially by the influence of Salesian missionaries, the federation is a Western-type political organization that promotes economic development projects recognized as “modern” by the state. In Hendricks’s view, Shuar identity is processual rather than fixed, and therefore the federation is a creative form of resistance that springs from Shuar cosmovision and symbolic understanding. In this instance, cultural identity is not the same as resistance; rather, cultural identity provides the raw materials for resistance.¹²

12. For the perspectives of the indigenous leadership on this process (among the Shuar and other indigenous Ecuadorian nationalities), see Confederación de Nacionalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE), *Las nacionalidades indígenas en el Ecuador* (Quito: Ediciones Tincui Abya-Yala, 1989). Another recent consideration of the processes involved in constructing indigenous identity is found in *Persistencia indígena en Nicaragua*, edited by Germán Romero Vargas et al. (Managua: CIDCA-UCA, 1992). This work focuses on western

James Howe's essay on the Kuna of Panama in the Urban and Sherzer collection resonates to a certain extent with Hendricks's observations on the building of resistance through cultural difference, rather than vice versa. Howe describes the nuanced emergence of contemporary Kuna identity shaped by contact with the Panamanian state, resistance to that state, and the intervention of an outside power (the United States). Every attempt by the Panamanian state to assimilate the Kuna provoked resistance that emphasized those cultural markers differentiating the Kuna most sharply from mainstream Panamanian society. As Kuna resistance became a struggle over land rights and political self-determination, Kuna cultural identity drew strength from the intervention of the United States, especially in the form of bizarrely idealized racist representations of the Kuna created by individual U.S. interlopers.¹³ Howe's case thus draws attention to the power of outsiders and their representations, an appropriate focus for social scientists engaged in studying indigenous identities.

The issue of how to represent indigenous identities is clearly related to the different ways that social scientists are theoretically and politically positioning themselves with respect to cultural survival and resistance struggles. In *I Spent My Life In the Mines*, June Nash provides a highly personal testimonial of her relationship with the family of Juan and Petrona Rojas, key informants in her classic analysis of resistance among Bolivian tin miners, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us*.¹⁴ In her new book, Nash explains the dynamic between her methods of inquiry and the kinds of information produced. As *comadre* to the Rojas family, Nash was drawn into the action of her ethnographic investigation and the life histories of her adopted family. Her empathic, yet never self-indulgent, exposition of these lives and her involvement in them permits Nash to pursue her own theoretical agenda even as the book is in many senses taken over by Juan's and Petrona's telling of their own stories.

In neither *We Eat the Mines* nor *I Spent My Life in the Mines* does Nash emphasize issues of ethnic identity, although the miners are bilingual speakers of Quechua or Aymara and Spanish. Their families migrated from rural areas where, as with the Yuras, individuals identify themselves and are acknowledged by outsiders as ethnically indigenous. Rather, Nash's concern has been to generate analyses of contradictory consciousness among the miners. Resistance to the state and to economic

Nicaragua, where twentieth-century elite ideologies have claimed the extinction of indigenous identity notwithstanding the persistence of self-identified communities.

13. Howe focuses in particular on one interloper, Social Darwinist Richard O. Marsh. During the 1920s, Marsh, in alliance with several notable anthropologists from the Smithsonian Institution, represented the Kuna as "a white tribe," quite possibly the descendants of Vikings. According to Marsh et al., Kuna ancestors constructed the pre-Columbian architectural monuments found in Latin America.

14. See June Nash, *We Eat the Mines and the Mines Eat Us* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

exploitation, she shows, manifests itself in various forms as ethnic, class, gender, and family consciousness, each one establishing mutually conflicting loyalties and behaviors held in temporary check by individual calculation of self-interest. Nash's choice of ethnographic testimonial representation is intended to advance understanding of the historical resistance struggles of the miners at the heart of their lives, the place of these struggles in Bolivian history, and their significance in the overall transformation of indigenous peoples in the Andes.

By contrast, Julia Meyerson's *'Tambo* is an ethnography out of which a cultural survival position could organically grow. An artist married to anthropologist Gary Urton, Meyerson offers a detailed portrayal of daily life in a small indigenous village near Cuzco. Her descriptions of farming, toolmaking, and other aspects of daily life conflate her own experiences with those of the people of 'Tambo. The full title of her account is not "My Year in 'Tambo" or "My Life in 'Tambo" but *'Tambo: Life in an Andean Village*, which thus imbues the village and its people with a static character. Lacking historical, regional, and theoretical contexts, *'Tambo* tends to reinforce objectifying views of indigenous identities and traditions. Readers would be shocked to discover later that Sendero Luminoso was an active force in and around the village, a fair probability.¹⁵ The portrayal of the village in *'Tambo* encourages anthropologists and others to imagine that such places exist as independent cultural units and should survive as such.

The considerable theoretical and representational differences between the cultural survival and ethnicity-as-resistance schools yield predictably contrasting forms of advocacy for indigenous peoples' rights in Latin American countries and for particular indigenous political movements. Elsass contends in *Strategies for Survival* that advocacy is "incompatible" with anthropology "because no cause can be legitimated in anthropological terms per se . . . ; the rationale for advocacy is never ethnographic; it remains essentially moral" (p. 212). Such a moral positioning, if not ethnographically based, derives nonetheless from a closed academic discourse that establishes what constitutes indigenous identity according to social scientific criteria. Elsass, to his credit, has acted as an advocate for the Arhuaco at their invitation. He reflects, "Cultural survival, therefore, does not imply conservation of a preconceived identity which once and for all is anchored in an objectively existing, reified culture. It implies that the agents of a particular culture remain in charge of the shaping of local history" (p. 233).

Martin Diskin argues in Urban and Sherzer's *Nation-States and*

15. An insightful critique of the Andeanist literature that *'Tambo* is part of and this literature's role in obscuring the conditions surrounding the revolutionary war in Peru is found in Orin Starn, "Missing the Revolution: Anthropologists and the War in Peru," *Cultural Anthropology* 6, no. 1 (Feb. 1991):63–92

Indians that anthropologists must come to terms with the political implications of the discourse about ethnicity, culture, and identity in which they and indigenous leaders are currently participating. Such a coming to terms stresses the necessity for empowering the intellectual voices of indigenous movements and their leadership. Having worked among the Miskitu of the Nicaraguan Atlantic coast during the Sandinista era—a situation that perhaps more than any other required anthropologists to define themselves politically—Diskin concludes, “Part of the political dimension of fieldwork is advocacy.”¹⁶ In the course of his fieldwork, the Miskitu with whom Diskin worked took up arms against the Sandinistas, with Miskitu leaders representing their struggle for self-determination and land rights as an inseparable part of Miskitu identity. For Diskin and for many social scientists of the resistance school, academic representations of such indigenous struggles must reflect the multiple dialogues between social scientists, indigenous intellectuals, and the peoples living out their indigenous identities. From an academic vantage point, this polyvocal discourse is the most likely to produce fruitful ethnographic work and analytic thinking about indigenous identities in the years to come.¹⁷ Whether indigenous political movements will benefit from the advocacy and activism of social scientists and from their innovations in producing social science texts remains to be seen.

In conclusion, the current state of social science literature on indigenous ethnic identity is certainly leading toward a more historical and processual view of ethnicity and away from emphasis on fixed ethnic markers. More and more, the arena of the nation-state and the relationship between indigenous peoples and nation-states is the central one for analytic as well as political activity. This trend implies that when social scientists increasingly couch their work in openly partisan language and contexts, the relationship between social science research and the state apparatus will likely lose the legitimacy of scientific neutrality that helped authorize social scientists to define who and what is Indian. Whether social science in Latin America has been wedded until recently to an analysis of indigenous ethnicity that is inseparable from nation-building and whether divorce proceedings should now be filed are the subjects of another much more lengthy discussion.

16. The politics of ethnography among the Miskitu forms the foundational subtext in Charles Hale, *Resistance and Contradiction: Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894–1987* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, forthcoming.)

17. An outstanding and innovative example of the possibilities for such a reconfigured discourse is found in *Zapotec Struggles: Histories, Politics, and Representations from Juchitán, Oaxaca*, edited by Howard Campbell, Leigh Binford, Miguel Bartolomé, and Alicia Barabas (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1993).