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Autonomy, Community and Caciquismo: Ethnicity, Social Control and Violence in a Mixe Village in Oaxaca, Mexico

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Ignacio Iturralde Blanco received both his BA degree in Social and Cultural Anthropology and his master's degree in Anthropology and Ethnography from the *Universitat de Barcelona*. He completed a BA in Philosophy at the *Universidad Nacional de Educación a Distancia* and a BA in Business Administration at the *Universitat Ramon Llull*. He holds a MBA from the *Escuela Superior de Administración y Dirección de Empresas*. He has a pre-doctoral research fellowship from the *Institut Català Internacional per la Pau* in the Ph.D. program of Advanced Studies in Social Anthropology at the *Universitat de Barcelona*. He is currently carrying out fieldwork on the *usos y costumbres*, indigenous customary law and violent conflict resolution in different Mixe villages in Oaxaca, Mexico. He is a junior researcher in the *Grupo de Estudios sobre Reciprocidad* and his current research interests include political and legal anthropology in the context of indigenous rights, legal pluralism, the coordination of state and non-state controlled legal systems and communal forms of social control, conflict resolution and conflict prevention.

ABSTRACT

The ethnography of the Mixe community Salto de la Tuxpana and the serious conflict that arose between 2005 and 2007 is the starting point of this article. The research carried out yielded the discovery of a violent *caciquismo* system, ideologically legitimated on community autonomy, ethnic identity and the claim for its own jurisdiction. It is firmly grounded on three mechanisms of social control: protection through Armed Community Police, access to land and access to «development» programs. *Caciquismo* is the personal political rule, based on patronage structures, which monopolizes and controls resources and votes. Finally, the following hypothesis is proposed: most of the violence produced by *caciques* is the result of the social reproduction of this regime, when a symmetrical factionalization of the community occurs after a period of complementary stability.

Keywords: *Caciquismo*, community autonomy, *usos y costumbres*, Mixe indigenous group, mechanisms of social control, violence.

RESUMEN

La etnografía de la comunidad mixe de Salto de la Tuxpana y del grave conflicto que se produjo entre 2005 y 2007 es el punto de partida del presente artículo. La investigación realizada arrojó como resultado más destacado el descubrimiento de un violento cacicazgo, legitimado ideológicamente en la autonomía comunitaria, la identidad étnica y el reclamo de una jurisdicción propia, y asentado firmemente sobre tres mecanismos de control social: protección a través de la Policía Comunitaria Armada, acceso a la tierra y acceso a los programas de «desarrollo». El caciquismo se define como el régimen político personalista, basado en estructuras clientelares, que monopoliza y controla recursos y votos. También se propone la hipótesis de que la mayor parte de la violencia desplegada por los caciques es el resultado del proceso de reproducción social del mismo sistema político, cuando se genera una faccionalización simétrica de la comunidad, después de un periodo de estabilidad complementaria.

Palabras clave: Caciquismo, autonomía comunitaria, "usos y costumbres", indígenas mixes, mecanismos de control social, violencia.

RESUM

L'etnografia de la comunitat mixe de Salto de la Tuxpana i del greu conflicte que es va produir entre 2005 i 2007 és el punt de partida d'aquest article. La investigació realitzada va donar com a resultat més destacat el descobriment d'un violent cacicatge, legitimat ideològicament en l'autonomia comunitària, la identitat ètnica i el reclam d'una jurisdicció pròpia, i assentat fermament sobre tres mecanismes de control social: protecció a través de la Policia Comunitària Armada, accés a la terra i accés als programes de «desenvolupament». El caciquisme es defineix com el règim polític personalista, basat en estructures clientelars, que monopolitza i controla recursos i vots. També es proposa la hipòtesi de que la major part de la violència desplegada pels cacics és el resultat del procés de reproducció social del mateix sistema polític, quan es produeix una faccionalització simètrica de la comunitat, després d'un període d'estabilitat complementària.

Paraules clau: Caciquisme, autonomia comunitària, "usos y costumbres", indígenes mixes, mecanismes de control social, violència.

CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION*

Peace studies cannot be conducted without direct reference to conflict resolution, security assurance and control of violence. Furthermore, peace and violence cannot be understood or conceptualised in an abstract and generalised manner. The social and historical context of every single situation, be it peaceful or violent, must be taken into account. Similarly, the different actors, and sides as well as the specific balance of powers and interests at stake should always be born in mind. If social scientists, do not consider social and cultural specifics when explaining such social phenomena, we are at risk of promoting a new form of logical deduction, based on a *reductio ad absurdum*, where anything can be justified when the ultimate goal is maintaining peace and avoiding violence at all costs. Alternatively, it is possible to make the erroneous conclusion that violence in its diverse multiplicity of causes and expressions can be placed into just one category of human behaviour: a cultural response to a dark blood lust within a mechanistic offence – revenge logic.

Violence has become the greatest rational contradiction of our time. According to the prevailing political discourse, especially in Mexico, as soon as violence breaks out it is possible to implement any kind of centralist policies. These include 'exceptional' operations that challenge the legal limits and the rule of law. Therefore it is imperative to review the concepts of peace, conflict and violence as expressions of an underlying social context, which can and must be described anthropologically. By reinserting the social, cultural and historical con-

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* This text is based on my master's thesis in Anthropology and Ethnography. I summarise some theoretical concepts and most of the empirical data that was included in *Abusos y costumbres: la interacción entre el caciquismo y las instituciones locales en una comunidad mixe de Oaxaca* (Iturralde Blanco 2011a) which was handed in to the Department of Social and Cultural Anthropology, Faculty of History and Geography of the *Universitat de Barcelona*, under the direction of Prof. Dr. Ignasi Terradas Saborit, on 1st July 2011. This research was supported by the *Institut Català Internacional per la Pau (ICIP)*. I would like to thank Layla Merloo from the University of Manchester for helping me with this English translation.

text into peace and conflict studies, all deeply rooted in concepts of social relationships, these topics can become the object of anthropological studies. Therefore I propose to re-locate them, both temporally and geographically, in order to understand the values as well as the structures that motivate and promote violent conflicts.

Anthropology can make three major contributions to the so-called culture of peace: first, ethnography has the power to explore and describe the specific social logic that causes confrontation and violence; second, it can help us to analyse peace, conflict and violence as concrete social relations, rather than fundamental or essential objects, as relationships that exist between specific actors and, moreover, that affect the way in which communities articulate themselves politically; third, it can prevent peace research and peace promotion from falling into ethnocentrism and ethical relativism.

Ethnographic fieldwork and ethnohistorical reflection fundamentally shaped the conclusions of this article. It is very likely that without them the initial hypothesis, which I formulated before carrying out fieldwork, would have been confirmed. The first hypothesis was based on an account given by the indigenous lawyers of the *SERvicios del Pueblo Mixe*[1], who were the legal representatives of the local authorities during the multiple trials that took place in state courts. This version is the one that I could read in the very extensive legal documentation. The original assumption was based, firstly, on the existence of real ethnic autonomy and a community-based egalitarian political and regulative system in Salto de la Tuxpana[2]. Secondly, it was based on the idea that this Mixe village's unique local government had managed to resolve a seriously violent conflict caused by an uncooperative family that had tried to establish a *caciquismo* system. In other words, the theoretical focus was originally on how through local *usos y costum-*

1. SERvicios del Pueblo Mixe, A. C. is the non-governmental organization (NGO) founded by the Mixe anthropologist Floriberto Díaz Gomez. It gives free support to civil and agricultural authorities of the Mixe region in political, legal, economic, environmental and gender issues. The organization is known by this name, also as SER Mixe or just SER. Henceforth, I will use SER Mixe.
2. The actual name of the community and all the citizens mentioned in this article are to remain anonymous by using pseudonyms.

bres[3], so often criticised, a community had successfully confronted and solved the most serious problem facing president Calderon's Mexico: the fight against drug trafficking or *narcos*.

A priori there were other characteristics which made Salto de la Tuxpana anthropologically distinctive and theoretically engaging: on the one hand, the existence of the *Policía Comunitaria Armada* or Armed Community Police, a three-year unpaid community service, and, on the other hand, the survival of a very large, active and effective *Consejo de Ancianos* or Council of Elders, something that has disappeared, or is in the process of doing so, in other Mixe villages. Additionally, an in-depth study of this indigenous village would broaden ethnographic knowledge of the Mixes living in the lowlands around the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, as almost all current literature is concentrated on the highland communities, which have distinct environments, customs, regulatory systems and dialects to Salto de la Tuxpana.

Eleven-months of fieldwork were conducted during 2010 and 2011 and were divided between periods living in Salto de la Tuxpana and periods of voluntary work with the indigenous rights department of SER Mixe in Oaxaca City. This double-pronged research approach helped to reveal a very different reality to that of the official narrative. What had been explained to me at first as a conflict caused by a criminal family that cultivated and trafficked marijuana, was exposed through ethnographic fieldwork as a clash between two factions, one rising up against the established family, which had been legitimated by the indigenous regulatory system and discourses of ethnic identity and community autonomy. So, what was presented at first as a legitimate and independent local regulatory system, when analysed and theorised through long-term fieldwork, actually appears to be an unjust and criminal *caciquismo*, maintained through decades of violence and supported from outside of the community by politicians, NGOs and drug cartels.

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3. *Usos y costumbres*, in English customs and traditions, is the Mexican term denoting indigenous customary law. It is extensively defined and described in section 4.2.

After collecting ethnographic data first hand, it was clear that, as far as its residents could remember, the community of Salto de la Tuxpana has always been managed politically in a very particular manner. Suffering from serious internal conflicts, which involve *caciques*, both local and regional, confrontations between factions, firearms, bloodshed and, more recently, drug-related crimes. The most recent violent events from 2005-2007 have profoundly changed the socio-political local organisation and help to explain the community as it stands in 2011. Before that time, for example, there was no Armed Community Police, which holds a collective license for firearms and is registered with the Police Registry of Oaxaca (RUPO)[4], nor was access to the village permanently controlled through a checkpoint, which is now known locally as *la cadena*, or the chain.

This context demonstrates another side to the struggle for indigenous rights. Through applying a multilayered ethnohistorical method (as described below), it has been revealed that what seemed to be an example of community autonomy, is actually a regulatory system that acts as a jurisdictional boundary against external interference and rival factions. Similarly where the Armed Community Police could previously be explained as a grassroots security institution with state recognition, it now becomes exposed as a repressive body, subject exclusively to the will of the *cacique* Don José Ramírez Facundo. Ultimately, this is a case of false community autonomy where a single patron has used both the ideals of ethnicity and indigenous community to justify a criminal resolution to a conflict that threatened his regime, a regime, which was strengthened as a consequence.

The final result of the clash between the two rival factions was the victory of Don José Ramírez and the expulsion of Camilo Enríquez Antúnez's family and clients. It was grounded on the use of violence, corruption and harassment, both from local and external institutions, as well as on the use of false testimonies, pressures and threats,

4. Other Community Police forces organized by the indigenous communities themselves are found in the Costa Chica and Montaña of Guerrero State, but these, unlike that of Salto de la Tuxpana, do not have official state recognition.

in subsequent trials and investigations by the Human Rights Commission.

The final toll of the confrontation has been two murders, the death of a boy in suspicious circumstances, four attempted homicides –reported and investigated–, the banishment of many families who were deprived of all their rights, and several shootings, robberies, damage to properties and threats.

In the following pages I will present an abbreviated version of my ethnography on Salto de la Tuxpana. This is an example of a social conflict and domination, which demonstrates both sides of the political struggle around community autonomy and *usos y costumbres*, a case that exposes both sides of the struggle for so-called indigenous rights, among the Mixes. Revealing how laudable goals and an ideology of resistance may, in a particular community and through the asymmetrical intermediation of a *cacique*, turn against the oppressed and end up serving the interests of the ruling oligarchy. A social reality, in short, that illustrates how a few people, using unjust and corrupt political institutions and structures– which are fully integrated within the Mexican state where they reproduce–, can manipulate rights originally set to provide spheres of freedom and concrete benefits to populations that have been historically subordinated and colonised. Unfortunately, in such a situation, the sacred connection with territory, rights for self-determination and the collective subject 'community' –the backbone of the struggle for the recognition of indigenous rights–, instead of favouring local populations, serve to perpetuate control and domination of the indigenous citizens by *caciques* and, indirectly, by the creole and mestizo oligarchs. Therefore, with the interference of *caciquismo*, the outcome of movements for empowerment through community autonomy and "ethno-development" reproduces in rural villages the worst elements of discrimination, exclusion and social control found in larger societies.

2. THE MIXE REGION AND SALTO DE LA TUXPANA

Mixe people have been an interesting object of research for several reasons. Firstly, its geographic concentration in a mountainous and inaccessible region. Secondly, as a group they have a strong ethnic identity with a long history of protest and a high degree of political organisation. These aspects have drawn the attention of several social scientists (Castro Rodríguez 2000; Hernández-Díaz 2001; Kraemer Bayer 2003; Nahmad Sittón 2003; Recondo 2001; Vargas Collazos 2001). The Mixes are also one of the indigenous groups in Mexico that still practices their rituals and sacrifices. Thus, they have been the subject of numerous studies for anthropology of religion (Beals 1973; Castillo Cisneros 2009; Kuroda 1984; Lipp 1998; Münch Galindo 2003). Also, the relative proximity of major highland Mixe villages, such as Tlahuitoltepec or Ayutla, to larger cities like Mitla and Oaxaca, makes it very convenient for anthropologists to dive into *ayuuk* culture[5].

2.1. THE MIXES

Mexico's indigenous population –almost 12 million[6]– is the largest of all Latin American countries. Oaxaca's indigenous population is nearly 2 million out of a total population of 3.8 million, being the state with the highest number of indigenous people in the country. Furthermore,

5. '*Ayuuk*' is the autonym used by individuals in their own language, while '*Mixe*' is the exonym by which they are known in other languages, including Spanish and English.
6. Estimates of the *Consejo Nacional de Población de México* (CONAPO) based in the XII General Census of Population and Housing of the year 2000 indicate that "nearly 11.9 million people in the country would have been indigenous according to our inclusion criteria, 10.8 million from the language perspective and 1.1 million were recovered thanks to the question of membership" (Consejo Nacional de Población (CONAPO) 2005). Therefore, the criterion for determining this estimate is the self-identification, the same in the ILO's 169 Convention and the Constitution of the United States of Mexico.

with an indigenous population of 55.7% they represent the majority in the state[7].

The Mixe population is relatively small. It consists of a little less than 130,000 people[8], which accounts for 1.09% of the total indigenous population and just 0.13% of the Mexican national population.

The Mixes inhabit a relatively small but very mountainous region of around 5,000 sq. km, in the northeastern part of the state of Oaxaca, in the Sierra Norte and the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. It is divided into 19 municipalities, with 240 communities.

The Mixe region has also received political recognition, 17 out of the 19 municipalities join to make up the Mixe district which was officially recognised in 1938, with its own administrative centre located in the town of Zacatepec. Such recognition as an indigenous group and a politically defined district is unique in Mexico. The geographic isolation of the villages along with poor communication has resulted in a highly developed community-based autonomy among the Mixes, to which regional and ethnic autonomy has been added.

It is clear that the Mixes have a high level of both regional and community based political autonomy. The strength of their resistance, based on a strong identity and their force as a political subject, have made the Mixe people gain recognition far beyond that of other much larger ethnic groups, such as the Zapotecs or Mixtecs. Their most outstanding political achievements range from educational and cultural programs to economic "development" programs and political self-determination –including their own legal institutions. There are abundant examples in the communities. For instance, in terms of education, there are bi-lingual Community High Schools –*Bachillerato Integral Comunitario* (BIC)– in Tlahuitoltepec, Alotepec or Tepuxtepec, among other villages. There is also the *Ayuuk* Intercultural Indigenous University (UIIA), in the community of Jaltepec de Candayoc, and more recently,

7. Only the state of Yucatán has a higher percentage with 65.5% of the total population.
8. According to the same census data from the *Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática de México* (INEGI), according to residency in one of the Mixe municipalities. If the criterion is language, this figure drops to 115,000 Mixe speakers (Instituto Nacional de Estadística (INEGI) 2000).

the Bachelor in Secondary Community Education in Alotepec. The state of Oaxaca has put certain elements of legal jurisdiction into the hands of the communities, but it is limited to the handling of minor offences. There are also some communities, as in Salto de la Tuxpana, where they have had their Community Police officially recognised. Mixes also have their own ethno-political organisations, such as the NGO SER Mixe, which wields great influence throughout the region.

The creation and recognition of an administrative, fiscal and judicial district in the Mixe region in 1938 is also connected to one of the most enduring characteristics of the Mixe political life: *caciquismo*. In the 1930s two Mixe *caciques*, Daniel Martínez from Ayutla and Luis Rodríguez from Zacatepec requested that the Governor Constantino Chapital create a district that would group together most of the Mixe municipalities. For several months before Decree 203 was put in place to recognise this new geopolitical division the decision of which village would head the district became the cause of violent confrontations between the two *caciques* and their clienteles. This was exacerbated by the clashes at the time between Rodríguez and Martínez as Rodríguez fought to succeed the ruling Martínez as the top regional patron. Finally, Luis Rodríguez convinced the Governor, who placed the district headquarters in Zacatepec, hometown and residence of the *cacique* –which is neither the largest town, nor the most accessible, not even the most central in the region. "In 1938, Luis Rodríguez managed to turn his hometown Zacatepec into the centre of regional political power with the establishment of legal, civil and tax-collection district offices" (Díaz Gómez 1994, 556). Quite simply Zacatepec was Rodríguez's home village and gained significance because of his role as the most important Mixe intermediary and the maximum political representative for the governmental bodies until his death.

The violence perpetrated by various armed forces in the Mixe territory, much of it organised by the indigenous themselves, has been constant over the last century. These armed forces are groups that have some kind of relation with the state of Oaxaca or the Federal Government. Created in communities, they maintain the appearance of being official, with military discipline and some legal formalities

–which has helped the *caciques* to justify these corps outside the region. These paramilitary law enforcement bodies have been the underlying cause of the bloody violence perpetrated by the *caciques* in their struggles, revenges and vendettas. They have also ultimately served to reinforce the absolute and despotic power of these patrons by means of assault, kidnap, arson, robbery, forced labour, torture, and murder. Such long-term violence, since the inception of the district, is also the result of the ubiquitous presence of firearms in the region.

Armed groups organised by the *caciques* do not hesitate to use violence to subdue the population, which is the case in the whole Mixe region, as well as in Salto de la Tuxpana. The *cacique* guard groups have intentionally kept some formal resemblance to the State Police and Army in order to gain legal recognition and official sanction for the *caciques*. Such is the case of Daniel Martínez, with his group of 400 armed men and with Don José Ramírez and the Armed Community Police of Salto de la Tuxpana. Even the appointment of Luis Rodríguez Jacob as Police Commander of the Mixe district in 1956 must be understood within the same political dynamic. Both regional and community based Mixe *caciques* need the paramilitary groups to protect themselves from enemies and to dominate and control the population in their own communities.

Although individual *caciques* are removed periodically and they seldom achieve hereditary succession, *caciquismo* as a political system does have a great capacity for social reproduction, which is proved by their dominance in the region for more than a century. The people who hold this political position change, but the power structures, both intra-community and exogenous, that allow its existence do not. The quantity and ready availability of firearms is one of the most important factors in enabling the situation to continue.

2.2. THE COMMUNITY OF SALTO DE LA TUXPANA

Salto de la Tuxpana is located in the lowlands of the Mixe region. It is a rural community where nearly everyone has two jobs. On the one hand, men take care of the *milpa* cornfields, where they grow corn,

beans, chilli peppers and squash for their own consumption. On the other hand, many villagers also have 5 to 20 heads of bovine cattle, which they raise to be sold to external meat markets[9]. Furthermore, Salto de la Tuxpana has a lot of small businesses run by women who combine business activities with housekeeping and caring for the numerous children. More specifically, in addition to a small stationery shop, there are 14 grocery stores in the community, a satellite Internet business and the phone booth, with the village's only telephone lines.

In contrast, there are no lodgings available in Salto de la Tuxpana, nor any nearby weekly market, where traders and local buyers can meet. The community is partly supplied by a large number of vendors and the nearest town's market, which is about two hours away in an all-terrain vehicle. The transport of both cargo and passengers, once the Enríquez Antúnez family was expelled, is carried out by the community transportation company's vans, owned and managed by the *Comisariado de Bienes Comunales* and driven by chauffeurs nominated by *usos y costumbres*[10].

As for community facilities, Salto de la Tuxpana has a rural medical unit, three schools –nursery, primary and secondary– and a high school.

The population has suffered a sharp decline as a result of the studied conflict and the subsequent expulsions. In 2006, before the banishment of the rival faction and many of its clients, the population was at 1,239, the following year, this figure suddenly dropped to 1,040, representing a reduction of over 16%. According to the latest census

9. Since there is no slaughterhouse in the community, intermediaries, mostly mestizos, come from nearby cities to purchase cows, that are then carried by trucks to slaughter. Paradoxically, although Salto de la Tuxpana has become a cattle raising centre, there is little domestic meat consumption, all of which is bought and transported from outside. Only when there are civil or religious celebrations, *mayordomos*, *capitanes de banda*, incoming or outgoing authorities, do they kill one or two cows in order to invite all the citizens to broth and *tamales*.
10. This is one of the few exceptions where a small salary is paid for the undertaking of communal duties or *cargos*.

data I consulted in the clinic[11], in December 2010 the village had only 976 inhabitants.

The regulatory system of this community and the final outcome of the conflict are considered, by the lawyers of SER Mixe, as a paradigmatic example of autonomy. Specifically, the force and power of the *Consejo de Ancianos* is something that the NGO itself would like to broadcast, as it is considered a pre-Hispanic institution, "essentially" indigenous, and something that must be "reconstituted" in communities where it has lost its vitality or has simply disappeared. They also highlight the General Assembly, as they call it in SER Mixe, considered to be the ultimate authority and final instance for appeals. But the complete name of it should not be missed: *Asamblea General de Comuneros*[12] which reflects its male bias. In Salto de la Tuxpana, the members of this assembly are almost exclusively male heads of families, all relevant political positions or *cargos* are also held by men. *Cargos*[13] are the corner stone of *usos y costumbres* – for civil authorities they last a year and in both the agricultural authorities and in the Armed Community Police they last three years. With very few exceptions, there is no remuneration for these roles, since they are considered a service and a duty to the community and they must be undertaken, and with pride, within the logic of prestige and recognition.

The regulatory framework of Salto de la Tuxpana is partially regulated and explicitly written down in the yearly *Ordenanzas Municipales* and the *Estatuto Comunal* (1993). This is one of the most outstanding formal peculiarities of the local customary law, otherwise oral. As for the rules, these include the prohibition of the sale of all al-

11. Every year the *Instituto Mexicano del Seguro Social* (IMSS), through its rural medical units, produces a detailed census that is linked to the "*Oportunidades*" developmental program and ultimately to the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations.
12. In Spanish, it is possible to determine the gender of some plural words. In this case, *comuneros* may refer exclusively to men or to men and women together. In any case, it contains a male bias that actually reflects a social reality.
13. Literally, *cargo* means burden but the word stands for the different compulsory community duties undertaken by individuals over a specific period of time from a year to three years.

coholic beverages and a 10:00 pm curfew both rules were passed prior to the 2005-2007 conflict.

It is common that in most municipalities in the state of Oaxaca political parties are not allowed to take part in local elections. Salto de la Tuxpana is no exception. Moreover, in this community it is common practice that during the meeting for the *Asamblea General de Comuneros* the whole community makes a decision to vote *en bloc* for a single party in non-local elections. Actually, the inhabitants of Salto de la Tuxpana have always voted as a whole for the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI). This practice, which may well seem to be an act of protest and resistance, in the despotic political context of *caciquismo* what it actually means is that entire communities are forced to vote for one political party. Therefore, this should also be considered to be a mechanism for interaction between local *caciques* and the state.

If a detailed description of *usos y costumbres* in Salto de Tuxpana is to be made, it is worth mentioning that the community is divided religiously. Following the entry of various Protestant Churches, the political system underwent a process of secularising the *cargos* and the social hierarchy, to the point that all positions related to religion –*mayordomos* , *capitanes de banda* and other functions– have been separated from the official ones. For the same reason, certain relationship networks are no longer in use, despite their traditional importance in Mexico and indigenous societies –such as those based, for example, in ritual kinship or *compadrazgo*.

3. MULTILAYERED ETHNOHISTORICAL METHODOLOGY

The research objective was to describe the social organisation and the political configuration of Salto de la Tuxpana in 2011. My starting point was the empirical confirmation that they are both the consequence of a historical process that has allowed a modern *caciquismo*

to manipulate the local and state legal systems. Therefore it was not possible to just take into account the ethnographic present or one type of social actor. This political system of domination and patronage, which can be analysed from a synchronic point of view as the result of asymmetric and absolute power, is also the outcome of a long and complex historical process, inside and outside the community. A process that led to the serious violent conflict between 2005 and 2007, in the ethnic, political, economic and social context of Salto de la Tuxpana. It has been necessary to put into practice a methodology and analysis that accounts for such polyphony and multidimensionality. Which is why I applied the multilayered or multidimensional ethnography research method. I think that this type of ethnography fits well into the current social and political reality of Mexican rural communities, it is non-stationary, process-driven and global, and takes into account the result of the interconnection of multiple levels, dispersed centres and a variety of actors and voices.

As it is usual in Legal Anthropology, the starting point for the analysis was in the data collected on the law and the socio-political context in which rules were dictated. This context is the complex result of the coordination of different structures, the interaction of multiple forces and the negotiation between different actors, who are not confined to the community. Moreover, accounting for the social reality in which these rules were produced and understanding the logic of the political will behind them, it is not only necessary to go beyond the legal and local dimensions, even political and supra-community ones, but it is also crucial that we look back into the past of the community and its institutions.

While I was in the field, one of the first tasks was to produce an ethnohistorical reconstruction of the history of Salto de la Tuxpana, which was largely oral, from the early twentieth century until present time. Later, after analysing evidence and complementing direct sources with other documents, I proceed to divide the community's history into the most significant periods according to the *caciquismo* regime, any significant information discovered and the theoretical objectives of the research. This was the first axis that I defined in the Analysis Matrix (see Appendix).

To understand local political processes in Oaxaca –at state, municipal and community levels–, we "must recognise the 'Oaxacan normality', i.e. the underlying form of domination that, on the one hand, is rooted in ancient authoritarian practices and customs, but, on the other hand, gives content, meaning and direction to emerging institutions" (Bautista Martínez 2010, 19). This 'Oaxacan normality' refers to the history of *caciquismo*, which is especially relevant in the Mixe region. Firstly, it was the main reason for the economic and geopolitical formation of the Mixe district. Secondly, in Salto de la Tuxpana, the evolution of this local system of patronage, with its different manifestations, patrons, phases, and institutions, shows how it has been able to adapt to the different challenges of each historical period and exploit the most profitable resources in each time. Therefore, since the dawn of the Mexican Revolution until the aftermath of the 2005-2007 conflict, local and regional history has been influenced by *caciques*. Their "official" and written account has provided the basis for supplementing the oral reconstruction of this Mixe community's history.

Application of this historical approach has provided an important opportunity to analyse *caciquismo* diachronically, i.e. as a dynamic process of factionalisation in communities. We can introduce conflict and the constant struggle to win the top political position into the equation, making it possible to understand that this position, although very stable in a synchronic and structural analysis, is by no means guaranteed nor permanent, for the patrons that hold the position. It is precisely this evolutionary aspect of the anthropological reflection which makes the interconnection of *caciquismo* to the outside of community and its integration in the state.

I then reviewed every supra-community dimension and themes during the most relevant periods of the community's history, to uncover possible connections between different levels of analysis. I then created a conceptual matrix in which various documental and ethnographic sources were classified. In other words, the second step in the methodology was to establish the second axis of the Analytical Matrix, i.e. the multiple legal and political levels. When crossing this axis with the previously defined historical axis, a large number of matrix entries

were created for every individual topic in every time period. This exercise served not only as a guide to reflect on all possible intersections, but also forced a deeper analysis of some topics that had been overlooked mainly because of the erroneous initial perception that their physical and conceptual distance from Salto de la Tuxpana made them irrelevant or disconnected. This grid, as shown in the Appendix, is the methodological basis on which all subsequent theoretical and conceptual development rests.

In short, this is a double-pronged methodological approach, ethnohistorical and multilayered. As explained above, first I established the most important periods of local history and secondly the most important issues for the research objectives. Then I proceeded to cross both analytical dimensions. By doing so, the issues that were found to be relevant –and were analysed in detail and connected to the current situation of the community– were multiple and not necessarily local. Moreover, the use of this methodology allowed me analyse topics, which appeared to be very distant spatially, temporally, conceptually and even philosophically to this small village in Oaxaca. This also made it possible to use a theoretical perspective with much less romantic and much more critical view of the origin and foundation of particular political discourses, such us those of some indigenous leaders, communalist theorists and traditionalist scholars.

It is not possible to list all of the data contained in the Appendix or in the thesis –which exceeds the scope of this article[14]– however, it is necessary to highlight the topics that were considered most relevant *a priori*. These topics were largely my personal choice as researcher and it is important to state that they also helped to determine some of the conclusions of the research. Thus, the three dimensions that I focused on were:

1. First, the emerging social and political indigenous movements and its new leaders have become crucial for understanding the configuration of new political subjects, such as indigenous peoples and communities.

14. For the whole empirical material and detailed breakdown, see my master's thesis (Iturralde Blanco 2011a).

Since the 1970s the language and conceptual construction of this movement should be understood as a political contention (Roseberry 1994). A dispute that seemed to culminate –but did not end– with the 1996 San Andrés' Agreements and the 2001 Constitutional reform in Mexico, and internationally, with the 2007 UN Declaration On The Rights Of Indigenous Peoples. In addition to the history of these political leaders, their claims and victories, we must pay special attention to a new kind of actor that has arisen: the Mixe indigenous organisations. Not surprisingly SER Mixe, a Second Grade NGO (SGO),[15] supported the resolution of the conflict of this community in the State Courts and in the Oaxacan Human Rights Commission. This organisation was created by and is managed by Mixes and can be described as the outcome of "ethno-development" and Social Capital and Self-reliance theories. All of them are typical of what has been called the Post-Washington Consensus (Bretón 2007). In the context of Oaxaca, it is also necessary to analyse the role of anthropologists in relation to the emergence of these movements, especially considering the role of ethnographers as concept creators, cultural intermediaries and in particular, producers of local and community ideology (Appadurai 1996). Thus, by keeping intellectuals at the centre of analysis, it has been easier to grasp the political implications of anthropology and her role as creator of a dual consciousness –or potentially multiple– through continuously reconfiguring the subject of study and also changing theoretical trends (Hale 1997, 569).

2. Second, it is not possible to make a complete ethnographic description of any human society without observing both the domestic and external economic background. Integration into international capitalist markets and the economic value of diverse natural resources largely explain the current social organisation of Salto de la Tuxpana. Therefore, economics partly motivated the conflict and also influenced its resolution, as well as the subsequent realignment of political, economic and social bonds. Accordingly, the analysis has taken into account: the major economic para-

15. SGOs are the NGOs founded and promoted by the own members of "target" populations—in this case, Mixes–, which aim to improve the living standards from their own cultural perspective.

digms and their macroeconomic policies, the position and pressure from international markets, and the most influential transnational capital movements. Besides capitalist market connections, these processes also influence aid programs for economic "development" and fighting poverty –all of which are clear examples of how the global impacts on the local. Moreover, as shown by the case of Salto de la Tuxpana, these programs can be manipulated and turned into mechanisms of oppression and exclusion if they do not come with an effective institutional evaluation.

3. Third, in every legal ethnography the political system is always a major topic. International and national politics –with all of its unique features and vicissitudes in Mexico– has been one of the most fruitful dimensions to explore when connected to local social reality, allowing a much better and deeper ethnographic description. As already mentioned, the political processes transcend the boundaries of the community, the Oaxacan state and, in many cases, the Mexican Republic itself. More specifically, these processes, interactions and connections happen in five jurisdictions, which are the ones that have received special attention: the local community of Salto de la Tuxpana and those above it, i.e. the Mixe region, which includes the municipality, the state of Oaxaca, the Mexican federal state and the international context.

The documentary information that I used for this research came from three different archives: the one in the *Agencia Municipal*, the one in *Comisariado de Bienes Comunales*, both in Salto de la Tuxpana, and the one in SER Mixe, where I could access all the legal and judicial files. In order to understand this lengthy legal process, a selection of 1,700 folios –out of a total of over 4,000– has been studied in depth. These complex and bulky legal records contain 14 preliminary investigations, five criminal records, eight *tocas penales* –second instance trials, according to the Mexican legal terminology–, four *amparo* trials –appeals for legal protection after infringements of fundamental rights and freedoms– and four complaints to the Human Rights Commission (CDDH) of Oaxaca.

Meanwhile, due to the characteristics of the local *usos y costumbres* in Salto de la Tuxpana and the conflict of 2005-2007, I reviewed re-

cords of 107 meetings of the *Asamblea General de Comuneros* and 210 judicial cases that were initiated and in most cases resolved within the jurisdiction of the community.

4. COMMUNITY, "USOS Y COSTUMBRES" AND AUTONOMY

In the case of this small Mixe community, autonomy realised through *usos y costumbres* constitutes a political and ethnic border, a kind of jurisdictional boundary, that needs to be analysed under two perspectives: internal and external. Discourses exposed in Salto de la Tuxpana, such as those about local autonomy, *comunalidad* and indigenous regulative systems, transform into ideologies of resistance against potential state interference. They are also symbolic drivers for conveying some very specific claims from non-indigenous politicians. However, for residents within the community, these very same discourses are perceived as sources of legitimacy for the *cacique* and are used as mechanisms of social control and oppression of any possible internal opposition.

4.1. COMMUNITY AND "COMUNALIDAD"

The principal meaning of the word 'community' in Mexico is village or town. It is used mainly to describe nuclei of human settlements of diverse size and administrative classification. In this regard, it is important to note that the state of Oaxaca is divided into 570 municipalities, a number representing nearly 25% of the national total –Mexico has 2,438 municipalities and 32 states. These 570 municipalities have several thousands of communities that are administratively categorised as *municipio*, *agencia municipal* or *agencia de policía*[16].

16. According to the Municipal Act of the state of Oaxaca, 2001, *agencias* are municipal entities dependent to a head town with council, a *municipio*. There are two types of *agencias*, *municipal* or *de policía,* according to the population of each village.

On the other hand, 'community' also refers to a type of social bond and the resulting society. In this sense, an "ideal type" of characterising indigenous Mesoamerican villages like Salto de la Tuxpana is as a closed corporate community (Wolf 1955; Wolf 1957; Wolf 1986). "The distinctive characteristic of the corporate peasant community is that it represents a bounded social system with clear-cut limits, in relations to both outsiders and insiders. It has structural identity over time. Seen from the outside, the community as a whole carries on a series of activities and upholds certain 'collective representations'. Seen from within, it defines the rights and duties of its members and prescribes large segments of their behaviour" (Wolf 1955, 456). From this perspective the rural community is partly social and partly cultural, i.e., it stands for both social link and at the same time a representation.

The Mixe leader, ideologue and social anthropologist Floriberto Díaz established a similar division but in more philosophical terms. He distinguished between the visible-phenomenal dimension and the essential-immanent dimension of 'community'. He coined the term *comunalidad* for the second dimension. The principles that define *comunalidad* are communality, community, complementarity and inclusiveness. It consists of the following five elements: a special relationship with the earth, consensus within the Assembly, free and collective work for the benefit of the community and finally, the rites and ceremonies as the expression of the gift of communality (Díaz 2007, 40). *Comunalidad* is primarily an ideology of community that has to be understood as a strategy of political and epistemological resistance against the state, i.e. a symbolic tool for negotiating with the state to the benefit of Mixes.

Finally, 'community' also has an economic dimension, namely collectivism, which is somewhat implicit in the first of the five elements of *comunalidad*. This idea is especially relevant in Oaxaca, where more than 75% of the land is communally owned. It was particularly significant for the Mixe resistance movement organised by Floriberto Díaz, following the Constitutional amendment of article 27, in 1992 by the Government of Carlos Salinas de Gortari. This Constitutional change represented a modification in the status of social ownership of

land. It became possible to issue personal land possession certificates in *ejidos* and agrarian communities, allowing privatisation and market transactions. Díaz created a strategy and launched a campaign to provide as many Mixe communities as possible with their own *Estatuto Comunal*. Although this legal instrument was enshrined in the new Agrarian Law of 1992, Díaz designed them exceeding its original legal objective in order to incorporate the local *usos y costumbres* and ultimately block the potential privatisation of the land.

To sum up, 'community' is an extremely multifaceted word and Anthropology must pay special attention to its diverse meanings and political uses as well as its genealogy. It is also essential to always keep in mind the structural attributes of 'community' in its triple dimensions –relational, economic and imaginary– because they are the "result of some sociopolitical contexts of the larger society" (Greenberg 2002, 132).

4.2. "USOS Y COSTUMBRES"

The indigenous regulatory system is known both by the Mexican public and inhabitants of the communities as *usos y costumbres*, it is one of the fundamental pillars of indigenous autonomy and community lifestyle. *Usos y costumbres* represent the systems of legal, socio-cultural and political relations and are a product of history, worldview and aspirations of indigenous peoples and communities in the areas of political authority, government and political representation. They include rules, principles, authorities and procedures through which these collective subjects exercise jurisdiction within their territory.

In Oaxaca 418 municipalities are governed by *usos y costumbres*, representing over 70% of the state total. In only 250 municipalities, of 418, do the majority of the population speak an indigenous language. Therefore town councils also in majority mestizo or ethnically mixed villages are elected according to their own local systems. In the case of the Mixe, almost all of the 19 municipalities and their 240 communities are ruled by *usos y costumbres*.

The *usos y costumbres* of each community vary slightly, since they are adapted to local idiosyncrasies. However, they all share some gen-

eral similarities. For instance, they are all based on a system of political and religious positions, *cargos*, arranged into a single hierarchy. This is, as mentioned before, with the exception of those communities in which the Protestant Churches are established enough to modify local regulations. Then, as in Salto de la Tuxpana, *cargos* are separated into two hierarchies, civil and religious. So, in these communities it is no longer necessary to occupy any religious positions in order to access to the most important *cargos* in the municipal and agricultural local government.

Another common feature of the *usos y costumbres* is that *cargos* are unpaid and they are completed successively every two or three years throughout a *comunero's* social life. Specifically, in Salto de la Tuxpana, teenagers begin serving the community when they are 18 years old and finish at the age of 55, at which time they are eligible to become life members of the *Consejo de Ancianos*. These functions usually last a year but they can last up to three years. When this occurs, in some villages there is a small salary paid, however, in Salto de la Tuxpana there is no type of remuneration for longer *cargos*.

Apart from the religious *cargos*, the typical composition of the local government in Mixe *municipios* and *agencias municipales* is divided into municipal and agricultural authorities. Both "are named in public assemblies, as eligibility criteria is related to free community service. People accessing municipal positions do so after fulfilling a series of commissions or *cargos* organised in a hierarchical tier" (Recondo 1999, 86). Election of authorities is an annual process that is based on appointments proposed by local bodies and endorsed by voting at the *Asamblea General de Comuneros*. Candidates for various positions are proposed either by the outgoing authority or by the *Consejo de Ancianos*, as in Salto de la Tuxpana. In all cases, the ultimate decision is taken during the Assembly, where the majority of citizens with rights to communal property –almost exclusively male– meet, debate and vote. Political parties are not present in these council election processes and in most cases they are perceived to be a source of disputes and divisions.

The term '*usos y costumbres*' has colonial roots. It is used to refer to the political election process, municipal authorities governance

and the legal system for administrating of justice. It also has a heavy ideological burden in Spanish, as the idea of subordination to written law; the primary source of law is implicit in the term. Only when there is no law should one turn to customary law. Therefore, the use of '*usos y costumbres*' to refer to the community jurisdiction implies a deficiency, something incomplete, partial and imperfect, that hardly serves as a substitute for the other, higher, codified law. In this respect, according to the Peruvian Raquel Yrigoyen, "the term ['*usos y costumbres*'] is defined in opposition to the written law that is produced by the state. It refers to repeated social practices, which are accepted by a community to be compulsory. The doctrine distinguishes three types of "customs" in relation to law: a) lack of law, b) under law, c) against law. State law allows the first two types of customary law. However, if a legal practice is contrary to law or a custom is *contra legem,* it can constitute offence and can even be punished" (Yrigoyen Fajardo 1999, 6).

Because of these colonial roots and some current pro-indigenous discourses, it seems as though the idea of customs as a source of law is rooted to something in the distant pristine and original past. In this regard, it is imperative that Anthropology reviews the customary law concept, especially when ethnography demonstrates that *usos y costumbres* in Salto de la Tuxpana have more to do with a conflict that occurred between 2005 and 2007 than with any alleged ancestral customs, whether pre-Hispanic or more recent. Thus, I conclude that the current configuration of social relations in this community are a direct result of structural and symbolic violence, as well as political strategies used by different stakeholders, especially the *cacique* Don José Ramírez.

A further implication of this terminology is the idea that indigenous regulative systems are somewhat settled in tradition and superstition, and they cannot be separated from ethics and religion. In other words, that *usos y costumbres* keep ancient rules alive, reproduced identically from a very remote past. This representation has little or nothing to do with reality and places customary law in a position of disadvantage when pitted against Enlightenment ideals of Code of Law, Reason and

Equality. However, this image is often encouraged by indigenous leaders themselves, who are concerned about rescuing what supposedly pre-Hispanic traditions may have resisted colonialism and establishing rankings of regulatory systems of different communities, in reference to their supposed degree of "purity". But colonialism distorted or simply removed the original indigenous law and its institutions. Therefore, indigenous political movements' claims to be saving what is left of these legal systems should be understood as a means of getting some positive advantages for indigenous societies under the nation-state (Terradas Saborit 2008, 485).

The contention for community jurisdiction against the hegemonic state system of law becomes more meaningful if it is placed into the bigger political project of indigenous autonomy. This claim is an integral part to the indigenous movement, whose objectives are political and legal, as well as social and cultural (Iturralde Blanco 2011b). This is something that, once again, endorses the use of a method such as the one defined above, and demands in-depth analysis of the concept of autonomy.

4.3. REGIONAL AND COMMUNITY AUTONOMY

'Autonomy' –like '*usos y costumbres*' and 'community'– has more than one meaning. In addition to actual political practices in the communities, i.e. self-government at the community level, autonomy is part of an indigenous ideological discourse of political claims to the Mexican state. Without having to look any further, the project behind SER Mixe advocates politically for the construction of regional autonomy by setting the collective subject of Mixe people (Vargas Collazos 2001, 117).

Autonomy as a social practice of community empowerment, not as a right but as a reality, has –once again, like with *usos y costumbres*– a colonial origin. The Spanish Crown, in order to avoid the costs of direct administration, allowed indigenous villages a relatively high level of political self-determination for their internal affairs. "Although these policies of indirect rule charged the administrative costs to these rural communities, they also permitted the culture the necessary space

to develop defence mechanisms –which often modified the very institutions that were imposed– to resist the new forms of exploitation resulting from their integration into the market economy "(Greenberg 2002, 132). This, in turn, may well be the reason that the process of acculturation was not total and definitive.

'Autonomy', when defined in the Mexican context is an extremely complex concept. It is even necessary to take a political position, whether one considers it to be a means or an end. On the philosophical level, autonomy is a relative term, which refers, even by ellipsis, to another major power, the state, from which one can be autonomous. As a means, it deals with the ability to claim and enforce rights and implement policies independently, i.e. without any interference from external agents to the community or the ethnic group. *Usos y costumbres* as a local political system are the realisation of this self-determination right –although not all scholars think the same way, as we will see in the following paragraph. However, the solution is not so simple. Indigenous autonomy is not claimed as a means to achieve something concrete, especially from indigenous leaders, but as an end in itself. As a political goal is both contradictory and unattainable. 'Autonomy' becomes then a positive bias, in the sense that it constantly negotiates an extra level of independence, self-government and it does so on a moving reference point. Thus, as in one of the paradoxes of Zeno, it is impossible to achieve the final goal, although many steps are taken in that direction. This is the great virtue of 'autonomy' as a political demand: an endless project, timeless and unattainable –especially in the logic of the nation-state–, that has the ability to be automatically renewed and constantly updated.

According to Juan Pedro Viqueira, autonomy is a contradictory goal. Politically, it looks for integration into the state, i.e. community autonomy rests on the right of self-determination at the local level but with the final goal to positively integrate disadvantaged sectors of the population into the state. It is a type of democratic rights that aims for preferential integration into the rule of law. Therefore, autonomy is opposed to *usos y costumbres* in the opinion of this anthropologist, because complying with traditions and the cultural determinism it im-

plies, produces a reduction in indigenous rights and goes against any additional freedom and democracy (Viqueira 2001).

For Laura Nader, autonomy implies solving community problems internally and not having to depend on external forces. A harmony ideology is promoted by the community in order to minimise the importance and transcendence of conflicts that occur within (Nader 1998). But this theory does not seem to apply in the case of Salto de la Tuxpana, since it was the combination of internal customary law and external legal actions and advice from lawyers at SER Mixe, that was instrumental in resolving the conflict by depriving the opposing families of all rights and banishing them. This has not only helped to strengthen internal community ties and political institutions, this final resolution to the conflict has also effectively increased Salto de la Tuxpana's autonomy, defined in Nader's terms. Since then, there is a new law enforcement institution, the Armed Community Police, organised by *usos y costumbres* and officially recognised by the state of Oaxaca.

The political project of Mixe regional autonomy is led from outside by some indigenous intellectuals, especially teachers, anthropologists and lawyers, who have received higher education and dominate both the Spanish language and the laws and procedures of the state legal system. On the one hand, we have a political culture that is developing among young leaders and indigenous organisations, such as SER Mixe, and on the other hand their counter-hegemonic claims are inserted into the aforementioned "Oaxacan normality" and the very particular Mexican political tradition.

To recap, the concepts of 'community', '*usos y costumbres*' and 'autonomy', all have multiple meanings. First, there is the communities' local reality. There, they are respectively the social bond, the legal and political organisation of the councils, and the relative independence of local courts, institutions and some regulatory jurisdiction. This is how it is perceived and understood internally by the citizens of the villages. Second, both the *caciques* and other stakeholders from wider society make political use of these same concepts. They create an instrumental political ideology, which ends up separating it from the local reali-

ty. On the one hand, community life is reified in *comunalidad*, on the other hand, *usos y costumbres* become an academical regulative system and, finally, local idiosyncrasies transform into struggles for the right to self-determination, on a community or regional level. These concepts are, in this symbolic dimension, a discursive technology available to these political brokers –*caciques*, indigenous leaders, politicians or anthropologists–, who are usually more responsible for their meaning than the actual citizens of the communities.

5. "CACIQUISMO" AND SOCIAL CONTROL

5.1. "CACIQUISMO"

Following Ernest Gellner's classical definition, the patron-client relations are based on asymmetry, i.e. unequal distribution of power. *Caciquismo* is based on the trend of forming an extended system, set up on this kind of asymmetrical relationship, which becomes permanent, i.e. with claims that exceed a single transaction. Although it is outside the morals of wider society –in this case Mexican society–, and is therefore an *ethos* among others, patronage becomes the dominant social organising principle in smaller societies, like some rural communities of Oaxaca. The patron becomes then a broker between his clients and the economic and political instances where there is an interaction deficiency. Examples of these instances are an incompletely centralised state, a deficient market or a defective bureaucracy (Gellner 1977, 4).

Joaquín Costa criticised a situation very similar to that of Salto de la Tuxpana, although it was in the late nineteenth century in Spain. According to this jurist inorganic feudalism still existed at that time. *Caciques* were protected by the autonomy that the Municipal Act allowed, and they combined it with customary law in order to control votes. He considered that there was no Parliament, no political par-

ties, but only hidden oligarchies. And they were ideologically disguised in representative government. He defined that political reality as an oligarchic regime served by apparently parliamentary institutions (Costa 1969).

Based on the above theoretical approaches, together with the history of the various *caciques* of the Mixe region and the ethnography of Salto de la Tuxpana, I define *caciquismo* as a personalised political regime based on clienteles, with a classical patron-client structure, that integrates in a core group the patron himself, his patrilineal relatives[17], and his clients, in a reciprocal asymmetric relationship. In addition to the votes, this regime tends to control every economic resource available as well as trade relations. This was the case with transport, valuable wood and marijuana in Salto de la Tuxpana. Grounded on violence, *caciquismo* is usually accompanied by factionalising processes and symmetrical division of communities.

Modern *caciquismo* regimes –like the one in Salto de la Tuxpana– do not stand outside or in the absence of the state. Rather, they depend on their ties with the political oligarchy and the national elite. Therefore, these local political systems should also be considered part of the state. Contacts are multiple and these patrons establish bonds with officials, politicians, NGOs, institutions and public companies, becoming in many cases the middlemen and local managers of programs for economic "development" and government support. Similarly, these social organisations depend on capitalist markets, especially the urban ones, through which their natural resources are valued and monetized.

Caciquismo is a strong structure, precisely because of this integration with the oligarchy and its role as broker between communities

17. Patrilineal groups, i.e. "dad and uncles", are the kinship basis of the *caciquismo* regimes studied. But we must also consider the role of the "mother and aunts" group, in a small community like Salto de la Tuxpana. If some of these women, as it actually happened, get married with men of the rival faction, the following cases are possible: two sisters holding the position of "first ladies" of each of the two opposing groups; an aunt, along with a large group of armed citizens, expelling her brother, nephews, and nieces from their homes; a brother forcing his own sister to leave the community with her children. These are all cases that actually occurred in the course of the serious conflict that hit Salto de la Tuxpana between 2005 and 2007.

and political elite, as well as with capitalist markets. Whilst it is a systematically strong structure, the position for the *cacique* himself is weak. Contrary to the what Íñigo Laviada says about succession by inheritance of patronage leaders (Laviada 1978, 152), social reproduction largely rests on the structural reproduction of political positions, but not on the physical reproduction and hereditary succession within families of *caciques* themselves. On the one hand, the progeny of those patrons do not usually have interest in continuing with their father's activities and relationships. Most of the time, these children have undergone a process of *ladinización*[18], partly because their family has had abundant economic resources and partly because they have gone to school outside of the communities. Moreover, *caciques*, always fearing for their life, do not usually allow anyone in their inner circle to prepare themselves to succeed them. Whether brothers or nephews, the patron feels compelled to distrust and eliminate all opponents who could try to dispute his top power position. This was the case of Don José and his nephew Camilo Enríquez Antúnez[19]. It is important to remember that these are fights to the death, as it was clear in the violent clashes which determined who would succeed Daniel Martínez as the Mixe regional *cacique*. Additionally, patrons have another motivation for eliminating their opponents: avoiding becoming unnecessary for the oligarchy to which they are subordinated.

Caciques also take another risk. They cannot afford to constantly generate too much publicity and do not want to have to use institutions and organisations external to the community for solving their own conflicts. This point fits with the theory of harmony ideology (Nader 1998). The oligarchy that is connected with these authoritarian leaders does not care what kind of practices are carried out in the communities, as long as they do not transcend the local and force external authorities to intervene. Otherwise, careless *caciques* may be left stranded and finally removed and replaced.

18. *Ladino* refers to non-indigenous Mexicans, whereas *ladinización* stands for the process whereby the indigenous become *ladino* like.
19. Although Camilo is not a lineal relative of Don José, he is tough collateral nephew as he is the son of his sister-in-law, i.e. his wife's sister.

For these reasons, violent death is the most common end for these patrons, with very few exceptions. It is the same for the local and the regional Mixe *caciques* I investigated. Moreover, they are rarely caught by the police, since they can become very damaging witnesses against deputies, attorneys, businessmen and other very powerful people. Nor do they reach a very old age, as it is argued below, because the power of their regimes also depends on their strength and vitality. And finally, when eliminated, a substitute quickly shows up, either from a rival faction or from their own clientele.

The strength of a *caciquismo* regime depends on many factors that determine not only its validity but also its life cycle. The most prominent of these factors are the following five: first, the power of the *caciques* comes from the ability to mobilise violence and at the same time, the power to impose a strict code of silence and manipulate justice once violent crimes have been committed. Second, it depends on the power, hierarchical level and influence of community outsiders –i.e. members of the hegemonic oligarchy– with which the local patron is connected through political and commercial relations. These outsiders usually assist *caciques* in exchange for bribes and preferential access to community resources. They help patrons in solving lawsuits that may have been taken out of the community, as could be the case with the three preliminary investigations of 2006 after the banishment of the Enríquez Antúnez group. They also benefit *caciques* by assigning the community with government assistance programs and public works, at municipal, state and federal levels, which patrons use to maintain their clientele satisfied[20]. Third, these patronage systems are largely determined by the physical capacity and vitality of the *cacique*'s own person, not because he must be stronger than his opponents or clients, something that sufficient number of firearms can be made up for, but by showing weakness *caciques* are often challenged

20. The construction of Salto de la Tuxpana's High School is very likely to be an example of this kind of preferential treatment from the *Partido Revolucionario Institucional* (PRI) in exchange for the votes of the community, as reported to me by some informants.

and sometimes removed and replaced[21]. Fourth, *caciques'* power also rests on their effectiveness in producing legitimacy, both internally and especially externally, by taking full advantage of all discursive technology available, from ethnicity and *comunalidad* to autonomy and community jurisdiction. Fifth, *caciques* must also impose mechanisms of social control, i.e. social processes that help them to accomplish the effective compliance to their will and the internalisation of rules in the minds of the citizens of the community.

5.2. MECHANISMS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

The mechanisms of social control used by a *cacique* are multiple and are adapted to the local opportunities and contexts. The three most effective mechanisms in Salto de la Tuxpana are: security, access to land and access to state and federal government's aid programs.

The first mechanism is through security and protection of citizens. It is a direct consequence of the violence mobilised by the *cacique* to get rid of the rival faction. The outcome was the creation of a new body of law and order in 2007, with official state recognition. It is known by all residents as *Policía Comunitaria* and the policemen are heavily armed. This institution exclusively serves the *cacique* Don José –in the four years since its establishment they have never recorded a single drug related crime. So, its overall visibility, patrols and permanent control of community access at the checkpoint, must be understood in terms of domination and structural violence.

Second, strict control of the *Comisariado de Bienes Comunales* has become another important mechanism of social control. This is the *usos y costumbres'* agrarian institution and the only body entitled to issue usufruct titles for land for development and agrarian plots. It can

21. Compare this with the notion of death-sacrifice of priestly kings: "The danger is a formidable one; for if the course of nature is dependent on the man-god's life, what catastrophes may not be expected from the gradual enfeeblement of his powers and their final extinction in death? The man-god must be killed as soon as he shews symptoms that his powers are beginning to fail, and his soul must be transferred to a vigorous successor before it has been seriously impaired by the threatened decay" (Frazer 1998, 228).

therefore limit access to land. Such a situation challenges the idea that social ownership of land is always beneficial to an indigenous population. Similarly, the claim for legal collective subjects made by indigenous leaders outside of the communities, shows an oppressive side, when combined with patronage domination. In this regard, the banishment of nearly 200 citizens in 2006, representing over 16% of the village's population, with the dispossession and occupation of their land and homes, are a reliable and exemplary demonstration of this autocratic power. A power that emanates from the unjust implementation of local *usos y costumbres*, which are often disguised in the promotion of Mixe culture and respect for community autonomy. It is also important to note that this controversial decision, which Don José used to get rid of his competition, has been made legally official twice: first, by customary law, as the decision was made at the Assembly and in accordance to the rules set out in the *Estatuto Comunal,* and second, by positive law, as every case of abuse of authority or violation of individual rights has been dismissed.

The third form of indirect control over the people is exercised by the *cacique* Don José through programs of economic "development". According to the December 2010 census of Salto de la Tuxpana, 825 out of the 976 citizens are beneficiaries of the *Oportunidades* program. This means that almost 85% of the community's population is in a position of economic hardship or food poverty and is dependent on this program. In order to receive this aid program, it is usually required to have some sort of official documents that are issued at the *Agencia Municipal*. Controlling this *usos y costumbres'* civil institution is *de facto* a local instrument of exclusion and stratification.

Community autonomy can also potentially block external operations, like some "development" programs or other governmental or market actions. Specifically, Salto de la Tuxpana's Assembly blocked the *Programa de Certificación de Derechos Ejidales y Titulación de Solares Urbanos* (PROCEDE), which was a federal program providing delimitation and individual certification of land rights in *ejidos* and *comunidades*, both agrarian and urban land– and was a consequence of the aforementioned Constitutional amendment of article 27. Once

again, the rejection of government assistance programs could be analysed as an autonomous decision by the community –laudable from the anti-capitalist perspective of indigenous rights. However, the same decision with the intermediation of *caciques*, becomes means of subjugation, threatening to suppression of peoples principal livelihood and a mechanism for enforcing the regime.

In short, *caciquismo* is a personalised political regime that monopolises the relationship between the state and indigenous communities. It stratifies the population of the latter, by separating the patrilineal kin group of the *cacique*, who are the local ruling class. The rest of the citizens are then compelled to be clients of this patron, establishing an asymmetrical reciprocity bond. In this way the *cacique* becomes the exclusive intermediary between the local and the external. He can then control access to a wide a range of resources and create his own personal network, both of which provide him with important personal benefits. He needs to use violence to subjugate the population and enforce a strict code of silence, so that conflicts do not transcend the community –promoting a harmony ideology outwards. He makes use of diverse symbolic elements to effectively produce legitimacy, both internally and in particular externally. And effective *caciques* use all mechanisms of social control available in order to integrate all citizens into his clientele through indirect domination and intimidation. When this goal of integration is not achieved a rival group often challenges the cacique –but not the patronage regime itself. When that occurs, then the community usually divides into symmetrical factions that tend to imitate each other in terms of resistance and confrontation strategies. Armed clashes and bloodshed are usually signs that a community is either undergoing a process of patronage reproduction or, alternatively, a strengthening of the *cacique* in power.

6. CONCLUSIONS

In Mexico, post-revolutionary *caciquismo* is the result of the combination of factors. On the one hand, the national homogenising project

which emerged from the Mexican Revolution of 1910 –legitimated by both the Enlightenment ideal of unlimited progress and the promotion of capitalist rationality under the paradigm of economic "development". On the other hand, the poverty, illiteracy, monolingualism and isolation of some rural areas which, in turn, had some resources which were attractive enough to interest external stakeholders– especially politicians looking for votes and entrepreneurs needing natural resources.

Caciques act as a link in the transmission chain between the state and markets, on the one hand, and rural and indigenous communities, on the other. They become intermediaries or brokers between their personal interests and those of the regional and national politicians (Costa 1969; Gellner 1977). Their ability to stay in power and maintain their local autonomy, as the cases of the Mixe regional *caciques* demonstrate, depend on two questions: first, internally, they must be able to keep their population dominated by the fear of violence, but without causing publicity or media buzz, something that fits perfectly with the aforementioned theory of harmony ideology (Nader 1998); second, externally, *caciques* need to play a cultural role that is twofold: become the exclusive ethnic broker and produce legitimacy outside of the community.

As it is often verified through ethnography, what unites us is also what divides us. For the *cacique* creating a link between the indigenous communities and the state gives him control of this relationship. And that is key. In such a context, his role becomes not only essential in his own community but also for the Mexican political establishment. And this is something that subsequently provides substantial economic returns for the patron. Through an ethnic or community unity fiction and maintaining this outward harmony ideology, the *cacique* convinces his external partners that they can keep control of voters and natural resources in isolated indigenous communities through his exclusive intermediation. This happened for over forty years throughout the Mixe district with the regional *caciques* Daniel Martínez and Luis Rodríguez, and this is what still lingers on in Salto de la Tuxpana with Don José Ramírez's regime.

As mentioned earlier, in relation to outside of the community it is relevant that *caciques* are able to negotiate using their identity. They must, therefore, have the ability to perform the role that interests the majority of the external dominant class, i.e. the mestizo and creole oligarchy. As Pedro Pitarch argues, the problem is that "identity politics is based on a fiction. It requires no Indian population, but an unreal Indian. To use Baudrillard's expression, used by Alcida Ramos, the 'Indian' functions here as a "simulacrum". It rests on an operation that provides all the signs of the real, but without showing any of its contradictions and vicissitudes. Maybe all identity politics need this fiction. But in the case of Chiapas –as is the case of the rest of American Indians– the Indian archetype is also the result of the western projection" (Pitarch 2001, 5). Therefore, the "best" *caciques* are also avid psychologists and ventriloquists, able to reflect with sufficient likelihood this Western projection of the indigenous world and its changing imagery. In conclusion, these autocratic leaders are capable of wearing many different ideological masks: ethnic, communalist, autonomist, democratic and, more recently, environmentalist and ecological, returning the inverted mirror reflection of ourselves that we project onto these societies. Again, the "good" *caciques* are those who are able to use symbolic technology to seduce powerful partners, external to their group, with a *mise–en–scène* of ethnicity that conveys certain dramatic expectations of the audience itself: bucolic and romanticising elements, a language rich in naturalistic and ancestral adjectives, reifying and essentialist concepts, multiple personifications, pantheistic metaphors and the use of parabolic narratives.

Caciquismo and factionalism seem to be inseparable. As was accurately pointed out by Alan Knight, factionalism is a process produced by "social and political conflicts around patronage networks of some longevity" (Knight 2000, 17). This author also established two types of factionalism, which, in my opinion, should not be considered to be mutually exclusive: spatial factionalism –within a political-administrative structure of formal control over some resources–, and family factionalism –organised around a few key families and their clienteles. The conflict of Salto de la Tuxpana, could well be considered a case

that fits into both of these categories: a process of spatial factionalism that happened inside a single family, although within the extended family.

This confrontation and factionalism, typical of *caciquismo* also produce a series of symmetrical duplications inside communities. This process was studied and theorised by Gregory Bateson, specifically in a ritual of Iatmul culture (Bateson 1990). He named this division 'schismogenesis' and he defined two types of processes: complementary and symmetric. The first, complementary schismogenesis, includes all cases in which the behaviour of individuals A and B are different, but they eventually find equilibrium– as, for example, in sadomasochistic, boss-subordinate, master-slave and similar relationships. The second type, symmetric schismogenesis, includes all those sequences in which individuals A and B have the same aspirations and behaviour patterns, but with a different competitive orientation, like in Salto de la Tuxpana before the conflict. It is as though two cells were dividing, they split and reproduce to create an identical body. Symmetric schismogenesis causes a community to divide into two opposing groups or factions that are very similar. This process is the outcome of competitive groups adopting the same strategies and copying the actions of their rivals, in order to monopolise the same resources and relationships. A clear example of this, during the conflict in Salto de la Tuxpana, was the two transportation companies and the two livestock associations, each created by one of the rival *caciques* and where the respective clienteles were forced to become users.

Based on this schismogenesis theory, I suggest the following hypothesis: factionalism processes in communities dominated by *caciques* can and should be understood as a means of reproducing this political regime. Therefore, a well established *caciquismo* would be in an ongoing complementary schismogenesised community. On the contrary, in the case of rivalry, with opposing patrons it promotes factionalism and produces a symmetric division. This confrontation will continue until one group achieves the final victory, and then re-establishes stability and the complementation of segments. A diachronic methodological approach is needed to analyse these pro-

cesses as local succession of patrons, i.e. alternation of *caciques* and their clienteles, but with a perpetuating oligarchy that does reproduce hereditarily.

In addition to the above, very often these factionalism struggles also represent some kind of collective identity (Knight 2000). Besides violent confrontation for the control of the community, *caciques* also promote some behavioural aesthetics that justify these clashes and oppression. Just as the causes of factionalism are complex, identities, discourses and symbols used to this ideological end are also multiple, from ethnicity to religious fragmentation. This, again, makes *caciques* perform these sociopolitical roles claiming to be unifiers of these identifying features.

In conclusion, *caciques* always stand for some kind of symbolic values for the citizens in their communities. They always represent an ideology, although sometimes minimal and unsophisticated. For instance, Don José Ramírez Facundo legitimises his power by referring permanently to the principle of authority and compliance with local regulatory system and the community duties that it prescribes. He is also a conservative and likes to present himself as Mixe and Adventist –so, in this case, religion plays also a part in all this discursive construction.

All political authority –even when criminal in nature like dictatorships or *caciquismo* regimes–, needs legitimacy. If patronage were an autocratic and authoritarian political system, located on the margins or simply outside of the state, *caciques* would only worry about the internal domination of his population. But from my theoretical perspective, in which the patron's main function is to act as a link between two political levels, local and external, these leaders also have to worry about justifying their position externally[22]. As Max Weber argues, domination can be based on several pillars, from a communi-

22. It is in this duality in mind that the practices described in the *La Jornada* national newspaper about the drug cartel known as *La Familia Michoacana* should be understood. In a piece of news it is argued that this criminal group has created a parallel system of rough justice administration for the citizens of the Michoacán state, as a consequence of the withdrawal of the rule of law (Cano 2010).

ty of interests, to custom or psychological inclination of the subject. But the most stable type of domination is the one internally based on legality: legitimacy. The legitimacy of community political action is vested with a "special sacred character, even when it represents physical coercion and the right to dispose of life and death" (Weber 1964, 663). In Salto de la Tuxapana, following Weber's classification of "ideal types", we find the purest form of traditional domination, the patriarchal one, but with the aspiration to become, through the *Estatuto Comunal* and local jurisdiction, a kind of legal domination, i.e. legitimised.

Internally, acceptance of community duties –*cooperaciones*,[23] *cargos* and *tequio*[24]–, are the basis of political legitimacy in the local community culture. They are a sort of *sine qua non*. Therefore, the difference between the two generations of the Enríquez Antúnez challenging group, the ones headed by father Norberto and son Camilo, was precisely the rejection of these community obligations. When the latter stopped being legitimised, it became an unbearable situation and conflict broke out. Even the defence strategy of Don José's local authorities set by SER Mixe's attorneys was based on that same idea of not complying with local customary law established in the *Estatuto Comunal*. So, instead of respecting the *usos y costumbres* and organising an opposing *caciquismo* from the inside of these institutions, the new Enríquez generation felt that they did not have to respect local authorities, institutions and law enforcement bodies any longer. In this way, this faction's position became politically illegitimate, a disadvantage that Don José used to precipitate conflict, factionalism and the violent final resolution.

Externally, the legitimacy and sustainability of *caciquismo* regimes have to do with the articulation of the ambiguous representation of

23. *Cooperaciones* are the local monetary taxes.
24. *Tequio*, from *tequitl* in Nahuatl language, means work or duty, and it is an organized compulsory labor for collective benefit. The male members of a community should provide their labour for free for community public works, for example, building a school, a well, a fence, a road, a piped water line, and so on. It is therefore a form of social and political organisation of indigenous peoples and communities, not only in Oaxaca, but in many societies of the American continent.

indigenous community as an autonomous, participatory and democratic space, where ethnicity unfolds locally. The *cacique* and his discursive apparatus should encourage this ideological ambiguity, although he is aware of being politically and economically dependent. *Comunalidad*, indigenous regulative systems and traditional lifestyle all serve as symbolic support of community autonomy, a discursive realm needed for permitting situations like the patronage of Salto de la Tuxpana.

One of the main political objectives of the *caciquismos* studied, as mentioned in the introduction, is transforming their repressive law enforcement institutions into official bodies for both the customary and the state law. Just trying to do so demonstrates the inconsistency of community autonomy's political objectives, or, in other words, it shows the contradiction of advocating for self-government and self-jurisdiction, while aspiring to state recognition. And, when *caciques* finally achieve this objective there is no doubt that community autonomy is a fiction and that their regimes are integrated into the state. Moreover, state law by allowing these *caciques* to exist and legalising their armed groups, is ultimately allowing an unjust, violent and oppressive political structure.

Geopolitical configuration of the physical space, the territory –which is the axis of autonomy– is configured by political and economic interests. Unfortunately, these interests have more to do with some individual desires and the value of natural resources in market terms, than with the interests of the general population. Once again, the creation in 1938 of the administrative district in the Mixe region becomes a very good example in this regard. The spatial logic, that some authors relate primarily to cumulative dynamics of international capital (Harvey 1990), responds equally –and consistently to those movements–, to an act of power, an individual's political will. This was the case with the road leading to Salto de la Tuxpana. It was designed by state politicians and the Fapatux paper company –then it was still a public institution. They decided the final layout pursuing their own economic interests and illicit enrichment through the exploitation of a natural resource owned by the community, in this case the precious woods in

Salto de la Tuxpana. Furthermore, the moving of the village from the old settlement of Viejo Salto de la Tuxpana, where coffee was grown, was the result of two exogenous forces to the community: first, the fluctuating price of coffee in an international market controlled by a few multinational corporations, and, second, the location of this new road, which was far away from their homes.

As the case of Salto de la Tuxpana shows, some *usos y costumbres* can shelter corrupt and authoritarian political regimes. *Caciques* like Don José are legitimised by local autonomy for taking actions like imposing candidates, eliminating opposition, converting *tequio* into slavery, and *cooperaciones* into mob tax. It is, ultimately, the use of community duties for personal benefit, private works, bribery, blackmail, and so on. The use of discursive tools available in regulatory system and community ideology also serves to justify these systems of patronage, especially outside of the communities.

For several decades the presence of ethnic-based organisations has been common in the Mixe region, they are controlled by regional *caciques* themselves or, more recently, by new indigenous university-educated leaders. It is, in both cases, those who successfully interpret the aforementioned ventriloquism and are able to offer a suitably ethnic performance for the tastes of every time period and audience. This political contention, as a game of seduction with governmental officials and politicians, has occurred at both national and state levels since the Mexican Revolution, and internationally since 1970s. In this regard, the *cacique* Daniel Martínez from Ayutla created a Committee on Traditional and Cultural Affairs of the Mixe Region, with the support of the *Dirección de Educación Federal*. His successor, Luis Rodríguez Jacob from Zacatepec chaired the Regional Council for the Promotion of Mixe Culture. As the *cacique* himself wrote in a letter to the mayor of Tamazulapan, the objective of such a council was to "organise and promote patriotism, energy, solidarity, and will, that this Mixe race of Oaxaca has" (Arrioja Díaz-Viruell 2009, 42-43). According to the testimonies of that time, this regional patron was obsessed with using Mixe culture and identity to impress politicians as well as other powerful external observers visiting the region (Smith 2008, 219 and

223). Nowadays, Adelfo Regino Montes, once SER Mixe's political leader and follower of the path opened by Floriberto Díaz, does not hesitate to offer such ethnic representations to politicians and the mass media [25].

On the other hand, some indigenous ethno-political organisations, even having been created largely as resistance to these *caciquismo* regimes, often follow the same logic: integration with the political elite. Often, they become springboards from which these leaders can access important positions and offices. Unfortunately, when that happens these SGOs also spread the political rationality of *caciquismo*: asymmetric intermediation and external dependence. Through this processes, these organisations often do not end up delivering in terms of the function for which they were created and ultimately serve the dictates of the external ruling classes. This dynamic often creates a second type of intermediary – which came after the post-revolutionary *caciques*–, who are very influential in the Mixe region and the Oaxacan state nowadays: "a different kind of patronage arises when a modern or semi-modern state operates an idiom as yet unintelligible to a large part of its population, who then need brokers (lawyers, politicians, or characteristically both of these at once) to obtain benefits and avoid persecution" (Gellner 1977, 5). An example of this kind is again Adelfo Regino Montes, a Mixe lawyer and politician, former leader of SER Mixe and co-opted in late 2010 to one of the most relevant political positions in the Oaxacan state government of Governor Gabino Cué: Secretary of Indian Affairs[26]. Meanwhile, SER Mixe was founded in 1988, from previous organisations, to support Mixe community authorities.

The main conclusion of this ethnographic research is the empirical confirmation of an oppressive and unjust reverse to the claim for recognition of indigenous rights. Empowerment and "development" of

25. For instance, Adelfo Regino offered in Cancun to the highest authorities attending the UN Climate Change Conference (COP16), in November 2010, a Mixe traditional ritual to beg for that meeting to be a success.
26. This is a position equivalent to that of *Conseller* of the *Generalitat de Catalunya* or Secretary of one state in the USA.

some communities, like Salto de la Tuxpana, transforms to exclusion and stratification of these "target" populations through the corruption of customary local *usos y costumbres*, indiscriminate use of violence, drug dealing and the fostering of despotic political regimes.

Through long-term first-hand ethnographic fieldwork I discovered that, what seemed as an autonomous community, with a powerful and organised regulatory system was actually ruled by a very ingrained *caciquismo* regime, especially after banishing the rival faction that disputed its hegemony. Even well-defined and active local political institutions are part of this patronage system, in which the *Consejo de Ancianos* –with lifetime positions[27]– has become a personalised, despotic and absolute decision-making club. It is precisely this Council of Elders, a body presented by local leaders and some scholars as pre-Hispanic, which was recently revitalised as a local institution by the *cacique* Don José to perpetuate his domination. This governing board strictly controls everything from community affairs and the Armed Community Police, to blocking "development" programs to provide access to lots and agrarian land.

In this way, institutions and regulatory bodies for Salto de la Tuxpana become legal instruments of political domination and the exclusion of citizens. Indigenous rights, rather than creating a space for protection and justice, are turned into the opposite, showing its most oppressive and authoritarian facet. In a place like Salto de la Tuxpana, *tequio*, *cooperaciones* and *cargos*, through the manipulation of the Council of Elders by the *cacique* Don José Ramírez, become slave labour, robbing of poor peasants and enforcement of burdensome obligations. Therefore, these *usos y costumbres*, instead of a grassroots form of radical democracy, end up becoming manipulation, autocracy and subjugation.

Given the above, the mystification of indigenous regulatory systems as traditional and democratic ultimately serves to justify community autonomy, which in some cases like the present one, ends up permit-

27. This the only body of Salto de la Tuxpana's local government where the positions are not annual (like the civil authorities) or triennial (like agrarian authorities and Armed Community Police).

ting a political regime so nefarious as *caciquismo*. And this is partly because of the discourses promoted by some activists in the indigenous movement and some uncritical pro-indigenous anthropologists.

It is in this political negotiation, where the respect for pristine, pre-Columbian and ancient traditions, is often used as an ideological excuse to conceal unjust and asymmetrical practices. Such practices are designed to exploit contemporaneous financial and natural resources. Then relationships with the earth, community autonomy and the collective subject of rights, all of which are pillars of indigenous rights, rather than favouring historically oppressed and colonised populations, serve to perpetuate their control and domination by *caciques*.

Unfortunately, over the years this situation has become customary in some villages through the inherent ambiguity of community autonomy. It is endorsed by the conservationist logic which is promoted by *caciques* themselves, university-educated Indian leaders and some anthropologists. It is turned into something that should be respected and protected as a legacy of indigenous culture, when in fact they are political systems of abuse and are not an adequate means of managing a just society.

At this final point, it is time to pick up the initial reflections of this lengthy paper. Is it true that peace and violence, conflicts and resolution, cannot be understood without a special observational focus on local circumstances, which are both socially and historically located? Therefore, is Anthropology one of the most appropriate social sciences to reflect on peace? The answers to these two questions are the same: yes. The final conclusions would have been very different without the findings gained through cultural immersion and a flexible methodological design which ethnography and long-term fieldwork provide. Or, on further consideration of the second question, what would the report on Salto de la Tuxpana's conflict be, if I had only used indirect methods, quantitative analysis and secondary sources, such as legal and judicial documents? To conclude, a fundamental aspiration of this article was to demonstrate the suitability of ethnographic method –conveniently tailor-made to be adjusted to local history and the multidimensionality of each subject of study–, to carry out the theoretically and morally important task of peace studies.

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8. APPENDIX

Key Elements in Salto de la Tuxpana's Social Context in 2011

	1910-1959	1960-1976	1977-1992
INDIGENOUS MOVEMENTS			
Claims	*Indigenismo* / Progress National Integration	*Indianismo* born inside indigenism	Natural resources
Recognitions	1957 ILO C107 Cultural Assimilation	Subject of rights: Minorities	1989 ILO C169 Subject of Rights: Indigenous Peoples / Rigoberta Menchú
Ethnicity	Pejorative	Popular	Colonised
Imaginary	Underdeveloped Primitive	Peasant Proletarian	Cultural resistant
Leaders	Daniel Martínez Luis Rodríguez	Floriberto Díaz	Floriberto Díaz
Organisations	Local / INI	Agrarian / INI	ONGs / OSGs / INI
Anthropologists	Manuel Gamio SIL / Ralph Beals	Barbados Declaration Etsuko Kuroda	Barbados II Frank Lipp
Autonomy	Mixe district creation	Local road construction	Nicaragua & Panamá
ECONOMIC BACKGROUND			
Paradigm	State interventionism	"Development" Industrialisation	Structural adjustments
Markets	Decolonisation 1929 Crack Bretton Woods	Import substitution External debt IMF / WB / IADB	Fordism collapse Demand Fragmentation Washington Consensus
External Dependency	Self-sufficiency Coffee introduction	Hardwood exploitation Coffee dependence	Drug trafficking Coffee price drop
"Development" Theories & Programs	1949 Truman Third World	Modernisation Trickle down	Self-reliance Ethno-development HDI
POLITICAL SYSTEM			
International	Emergence of USA WWI & II UN Creation	Yom Kippur War Petrodollars Credit availability	Second Oil Crisis Lost Decade
Mexico	Mexican Revolution Agrarian Reform Mestizo national ideal PRI	PRI Big infraestructures construction	PRI 1982 Debt Crisis 1992 Neoliberal reforms: art. 27 Const & *Ley Agraria*
Oaxaca	*Movimiento por la Soberanía* (Secessionism)	People displaced by big infrastructures construction (dams)	Constitutional amendments Official Recognition of *Usos y Costumbres*
Local	*Caciques* Cirilo S Bonifacio R	Cirilo MB Fapatux Moving of the village	"*Michoacanos*" Marihuana Norberto EA & Don José

1993-2004	2005 - 2007	2008 - 2011
Autonomy Territory claims	Autonomy Environmentalism	Autonomy Environmentalism
Latin American Constitutions Cultural diversity	2007 UN Declaration Rights Indigenous Peoples	Right to prior consultation
Original Mexican	Sustainable	Sustainable
Armed cultural resistant	Ecological Lifestyle Integration into ecosystem	Ecological Lifestyle Integration into ecosystem
SER Mixe	Adelfo Regino	Adelfo Regino
OSGs / INI	OSGs / CDI	OSGs / CDI / SAI
Barbados III Nahmad Sittón	-	-
EZLN *Estatuto Comunal*	"*Cadena*" Checkpoint Armed Community Police	Trials, investigations, HR complaints: all favourable or dismissed
Neoliberalism Globalisation	Neoliberalism Globalisation	Fiscal Consolidation
World Trade (NAFTA) Privatisation Migration	World Trade BRICs	Sub-prime Crisis Financial system collapse
Drug trafficking Livestock & meat markets	Drug trafficking Livestock & meat markets	Drug trafficking Livestock & meat markets
SAGARPA / PROCAMPO PROCEDE	Fighting poverty Millenium goals "*Oportunidades*"	Fighting poverty Millenium goals "*Oportunidades*"
War on drugs Plan Colombia War on terrorism	Climate Change Evo Morales	International Recession
PRI / "*Tequila*" Effect & New Mexican peso "*Zetas*" cartel PAN - 2000 Fox art. 2 Const. amendment	PAN - 2006 Calderón AMLO impugnates election War on drugs and narcos	PAN - 2006 Calderón War on drugs and narcos H1-N1 Influenza
1998 *Ley Indígena* *Estatutos Comunales*	PRI - Ulises Ruiz 2006 APPO conflict	Convergencia - 2010 Cué 2010 Municipal Act
Caciquismo Don José Vs. Camilo EA Factionalism: Farmers Associations & Transport	Don José / Violent conflict Murders & banishment Trials, investigations, HR complaints	Don José / Post-conflict Off. Rec. Armed Police Strengthening of *Usos y Costumbres* & Autonomy

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