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**REDISCOVERING INDIGENOUS BRAZIL:
ECHOES FROM THE QUINCENTENNIAL**

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Rediscovering Indigenous Brazil: Echoes from the Quincentennial

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My main purpose here is to explore some distinctions between Brazil and other Latin American countries against the background of the events that took place during the 500th anniversary of Brazil's discovery in April 2000. The descriptive mode of the paper aims at highlighting both the unexpected twists and turns of what should have been a straightforward civic festival, and the implications of those events for indigenism both in Brazil and in Hispanic America.

State and people at cross purposes

It would be fair to say that the recent history of Brazil is a history of public indifference towards events that turned out to be decisive for the country. The very change of Brazil from colony to independent nation went unnoticed by the population as Independence from Portugal was solitarily proclaimed by the Portuguese Regent Prince Pedro I on September 7, 1822 under pressure from the Brazilian elites, but away from the public eye. His son, Pedro II, Brazil's second and last emperor, was ousted on November 15, 1889 by a military coup in Rio de Janeiro that installed the republican regime. The non-participant populace followed the military maneuvers believing they were watching a festive parade (Carvalho 1990). On April Fool's Day, 1964, again the inhabitants of the same city of Rio de Janeiro witnessed a military coup d'état unaware that a long and cruel dictatorship was beginning before their baffled eyes.

In turn, state indifference is often the response to public demands. One of the most glaring examples of this mismatch of wills between the public and state authorities was the massive popular engagement in the 1984 campaign for direct elections. While thousands of citizens filled urban squares all over the country demanding a definitive stop to the 20-year long military regime, the majority of national congressmen ignored the roaring shouts of *diretas já* (direct elections now) and voted for a compromise solution, US style: the first civilian to become president in two decades would be chosen by an electoral college. The civic disappointment that ensued only enlarged the chasm between the demands of the people and the decisions of state powers. A short respite in this public retreat was the uproar against President Fernando Collor de Mello whose hyperbolic corruption led to his impeachment in 1992 after two of the stipulated four years in office.

The quincentennial of Brazil's discovery, celebrated on April 22, 2000, would have been yet another example of popular indifference were it not for the extraordinary overreaction on the part of state officials against the organized protests by minority groups, especially indigenous. This paper explores the implications and surreptitious meanings of the, so to speak, rituals of rebellion, or rather social dramas, in which the country's 500th anniversary was transformed. What happened at the site of the commemorations not only confirmed the love-hate relationship the Brazilian state has maintained with its indigenous minorities (Ramos 1998: 284-92), but reaffirmed Brazil's position as an odd fellow in Latin America. It is common knowledge that the country's oversized territory and the Portuguese official language sharply distinguish it from its Spanish-speaking neighbors. But what fewer people realize is that Brazil has a birth date of its own and that it has become a symbol of its individuality as distinct from Hispanic nations. Is

Columbus, the generic discoverer of the Americas, revered in Brazil for having unveiled the future Brazilian nation to the Old World? Not at all, Brazil has its exclusive discoverer in the figure of Portuguese Admiral Pedro Álvares Cabral who anchored his caravels ten days after Easter Sunday, 1500 (Galvani 2000; Schüler 2001)¹, at Porto Seguro on the coast of today's state of Bahia. Whether Cabral, like Columbus, came upon the new massive continent on purpose or by accident is a matter of interest to historians, but is virtually irrelevant as far as national identity is concerned. What matters is that, for better or worse, Brazil has its own discovery calendar, its own style of colonization, its own way of treating its minorities, and its own ideological script about cultural diversity. For sure, there are in this respect certain family resemblances between Brazil and its neighbors, but both their linguistic and political idioms are so different as to be often mutually unintelligible. Hence, comparing the Brazilian situation to others in Latin America is frequently an exercise in deciphering contrasts. Obviously, the full implications of such a comparison cannot be undertaken here, for they would mean voluminous writings resulting from intense research².

Differences and similarities

Unlike South American countries such as Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia whose indigenous populations are very large, if not demographically predominant, Brazil displays the miserable record of having the smallest Indian population in the Americas and perhaps the Caribbean as well. Even in Argentina, after the brutal warfare against indigenous peoples euphemistically known as the *Conquista del Desierto*, there are perhaps more Indians than in Brazil in absolute terms, and certainly more in proportion to the national population. Whereas in Brazil the Indians represent 0.25 percent (about 350 thousand in a total of nearly 170 million people), in Argentina they are estimated to be one percent of the country's population (Hernández 1995 :267, note 14; see also Hernández 1992). Although there has been a steady demographic increase since the 1950s when Indians numbered less than 100 thousand, the indigenous population in Brazil is far from representing a serious political or geopolitical threat to the state. There are over 200 different ethnic groups speaking about 170 different languages living in highly dispersed communities that occupy approximately 11 percent of the national territory. Their formal education is extremely deficient and very few complete higher education. "Recently ... over 200 Indians were admitted to Brazilian universities ... Most of the time they have to leave their villages to study in town ... without a job and nowhere to live ... Sometimes they manage to complete one semester and have to interrupt, abandon [the university]" (Terena 2000). For all these reasons, Brazil's indigenous peoples have no demographic, intellectual, or political impact on the nation's affairs. Whereas in countries like Ecuador the strength of indigenous protests can depose presidents, and in Bolivia the majority Indian population cannot be ignored by the state, in Brazil the effect of indigenous political pressures is practically limited to its symbolic power. It is

¹The letter addressed to the King of Portugal by Pero Vaz de Caminha, Cabral's scribe, was dated May 1st. In his letter, Caminha reported his impressions during the short week Cabral spent offshore. This means that the landing occurred after April 22. In the absence of a precise logging of Cabral's arrival on the coast of Bahia, the date of discovery has been the object of historical controversy and represents one more example of how history is reinvented according to political interests. The 1582 Gregorian Reform of the Christian calendar was the reason for a lively dispute in late nineteenth century between the Fourth Centenary Association and the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute over the effects of the sixteenth-century correction on the Brazilian discovery date. While the Association favored May 3rd, the Institute insisted on April 22 which, in 1900, coincided with Easter Sunday, a propitious coincidence that certainly contributed to the final decision (Oliveira 2000: 188-89).

²Indeed, my current research interests aim at a careful analysis of the genesis of indigenism in South American countries where indigenous populations are demographic minorities. A timid beginning of this long term project can be found in Ramos 1999.

a power that affects the country's image rather than its *realpolitik*.

Nevertheless, small as this minority is, its symbolic presence has populated the minds of the majority society with rare potency. If it were not for exceptions such as Argentina, one might even risk a sweeping statement: the smaller the indigenous population the larger its place in the national imagination. Consider, for instance, this: "In a country like Colombia where all the people classified by government censuses as Indian would fit into a few city blocks, the enormity of the magic attributed to those Indians is striking" (Taussig 1987: 171).

Part of the mental resources that feed the national imagination regarding internal minorities is the country's creation myth according to which nationality has been the result of the happy mixture of three races: Indian, Black, and White. But neither the Brazilian *mito das três raças* nor, for instance, the Colombian *tres potencias* was created to accommodate racial or ethnic legitimate differences. What the bricoleurs of these myths expected was that the genetic vigor of the whites would overwhelm the others in a process that has been described as *branqueamento* or *blanqueamiento*. The very fact of the demographic imbalance when, along the process of colonization, the Indians were outnumbered by Portuguese and Spanish colonizers and, to a lesser extent, by Black slaves, has helped the national intelligentsia maintain this fantasy. But again Argentina sticks out as a sobering exception: while rendering generalizations inadequate, the Argentine case provides a useful contrast for the analysis of nationality formation. Whereas Brazil, Colombia, and Venezuela among other countries in the continent admit to having obvious ethnic differences, albeit as raw material for the development of a uniform and unique national population, Argentina has been reported for having established as a dominant policy the outright denial of differences of any kind. Its model might be comparable to the French republican principle of uncompromising national equality were it not for the missing aspect of state protected universal rights to citizenship. The problem with minorities in Argentina is that before they aspire to having their alterity legitimated, they must make it visible (Briones 1998, Grosso 1999, Segato 1991).

The apparently benign way the Brazilian state has treated its Indians in the twentieth century by approaching uncontacted peoples with gifts rather than guns (Ramos 1998, Chapter 5), by drafting protective legislation according to which the Indians are its official wards, and by assigning them often generous amounts of land may deceive a distant observer. These protective measures have cost the Indians their autonomy, their right to proper health and education, and, perhaps worst of all, their civil agency. The infantilization that goes with the condition of "relatively incapable" as defined in the obsolete but still extant 1916 Civil Code, and the attendant legal device of the *tutela* have been colossal barriers for indigenous empowerment. Faced with such tremendous obstacles to achieve citizenship without loss of ethnic identity, many indigenous peoples have resorted to instrumentalizing cultural traditions, be these long established, recently invented, or simply borrowed, to impress upon the national consciousness their right to ethnic dignity (Ramos n.d.). In short, Brazil's style of conquest conceals a devastatingly effective control mechanism behind the façade of a humanitarian state policy. The fact that Brazilian Indians are now the fewest in the continent belies the benevolence that public figures such as the Villas Bôas brothers have spent decades impinging upon the world.

Outros 500

Most Brazilians, including myself, cannot trace the origin of the prosaic expression *isso são outros 500* (equivalent to "that's another story"). An example of the usage of this expression might be the following hypothetical dialogue:

- "Os políticos do país estão afundando na lama da corrupção. Até quando vão continuar impunes?" ("The politicians in this country are drowning in the mud of corruption. How

much longer will they go on unpunished?"

- "É verdade, mas daí a serem punidos, isso são outros 500!" ("It's true, but whether or not they be punished, well, that's another story!")

The proximity of the quincentennial gave this saying a new depth, as the double entendre added an ironic dimension to the event. In preparation to repudiate the commemoration of Brazil's 500th anniversary, a group was organized in 1999 under the name *Movimento de Resistência Indígena, Negra e Popular - Brasil Outros 500*. Part of their activities was the *Marcha Indígena 2000*, a massive rally of Indians from various parts of the country with stops and protests in Manaus, Brasília, Salvador, and finally in Porto Seguro where President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was to meet Portugal's President Jorge Sampaio for the official ceremonies.

While in Brasília, a group of Indians, mainly Pataxó from the state of Bahia, went to the National Congress seeking support. They ended up in the Senate where they met its all-powerful president at the time, Antonio Carlos Magalhães (also known as ACM), the strong man from the state of Bahia, and mostly responsible for the armed repression that confronted Indians and non-Indians in Porto Seguro a few days later. In the mounting emotional climate of the scene, a Suruí leader from the western state of Rondônia confronted ACM blaming him for the suffering of the Pataxó. He was shown on television and in print pointing an arrow at Magalhães' face who, inflamed, reacted with shouts of *exijo respeito!* ("I demand respect!")³. Less dramatic protests occurred in several state capitals, but nothing as dramatic as the military riots of Porto Seguro.

Before the official ceremonies began on a hill overlooking the ocean, police barriers had stopped all traffic into the zone around Porto Seguro. But thousands of demonstrators, including the resident Pataxó, were already in the area preparing for a peaceful march converging towards the site of commemorations. According to one estimate (*Caros Amigos*, May, 2000: 14-15), there were about 3,000 Indians, 2,000 members of the Black movement, and approximately 5,000 members of the militant MST (*Movimento dos Sem Terra*, Movement of the Landless). Most of these never made it beyond the police barriers.

CIMI, the Missionary Indigenist Council (*Conselho Indigenista Missionário*), a Catholic Church affiliate with a 30 year record of activism for indigenous rights, had apparently intended to bring together MST and Indian militants to the same march, but the police barriers frustrated that plan. With accusations of co-optation, CIMI successfully halted an indigenous delegation in charge of meeting President Cardoso with a letter of demands. There was, then, no encounter of Indians and authorities at the site of the ceremonies on April 22. Only the 15 kilometer march began as planned.

The march of Indians, some Blacks, journalists, and a few leftist congresspersons came to an abrupt halt as 5,000 armed military police advanced on the marchers with strict orders from ACM, as their commander revealed (*Caros Amigos*, May 2000: 14), to stop anyone who attempted to get near the Brazilian and Portuguese presidents and the envoy of the Vatican. The police action lasted the long hours that took the official ceremonies to come to an end. Tear gas, rubber bullets, billy clubs and much pushing and shoving resulted in 140 peoples arrested, some slightly wounded, and the powerful image of a Terena youth kneeling on the wet asphalt with arms wide open in supplication at the feet of the batallion. As he then lay on the road, military boots stepped over him and kept on. Gildo Terena made most of the following day's headlines in

³The flow of political events in Brazil has introduced an overdose of irony to ACM's indignation. In April-May 2001, ACM was entangled in a massive scandal involving breach of parliamentary decorum in the Senate. Accused of tampering with the electronic system of secret voting, he was under severe scrutiny by his peers. Public opinion demanded the cassation of his mandate precisely for his lack of that respect he had commanded from the Pataxó Indian a year earlier. He ended up resigning his senatorial mandate.

a symbolic remembrance of yet another intrepid, but anonymous, youth who one day faced Chinese tanks at yet another sacred site of nationality. Granted that the degree of violence that involved each of these pictures is incomparable, nevertheless, the evocative imagery they represent is quite disturbing.

Meanwhile, members of the Brazilian Catholic Church, according to the latest fad, were piously expressing their apologies and requests of pardon for the genocide that the Church had perpetrated centuries earlier against the Indians. An especially solemn mass took place two days later with high dignitaries of Brazil and the Vatican. Amidst the Christian pomp and circumstance, a young Pataxó man, no longer under police harassment, interrupted the rites and issued a fiery speech against the destruction by the Bahia military police of a monument the Indians had erected a few days earlier, against the metal cross the government had planted nearby, and against the shock troops, the shooting, and the tear gas. "With our blood," he continued, "once more you've commemorated the discovery," and added: "Aren't you ashamed of this memory [of genocide] that is in our soul and in our heart? We shall recount it for justice, land, and freedom" (<http://www.cimi.org.br/jerry.htm>). Referring to the appeals for pardon from members of the Brazilian Catholic Church, he insisted: "I don't forgive this massacre" (*Jornal do Brasil*, April 27, 2000: 6). The 500 years episode had been predictably foretold in a popular phrase: *comemorar o que, Cara Pálida?* (what is there to commemorate, Pale Face?).

At home, facing their TV sets, most Brazilians placidly watched groups of Indians in various parts of the country, true to popular folkloric expectations, engaged in "Indian dances" in a whirl of feathers, straw skirts, bead and teeth necklaces, body paint, and bows and arrows. In order to enhance the native spectacle, or in fear that the Indians might show up in the nude, the minister of Sports and Tourism, Rafael Greca, had the spirited but aborted idea of supplying the dancers with skin color tights! (*Veja*: 44).

The repercussions of the Porto Seguro fiasco were immediate. Headlines from abroad fired (*Veja*: 47): "Brazilians shrug off discovery festivities" (*The Washington Post*), "Indians lead protests as Brazil parties" (*The Observer*), "Police under fire after Brazil celebrations" (*The Boston Globe*), "Brazil celebrates its 500 years repressing its Indians" (*Libération*), "Amargo V Centenario en Brasil" (*El País*). At home, President Fernando Henrique Cardoso was said to have associated the Porto Seguro protests with fascism, denied that the federal government was responsible for the violence, and added: "Provocation is repelled by democracy because it opens the door to fascism, and I come from struggles against authoritarianism" (*Folha de S. Paulo*, April 23, 2000: 1-10; Herschmann and Pereira 2000: 208-209). An old foe of indigenous alterity, political scientist Hélio Jaguaribe complained against the "insolent interruption of the mass celebrated by the papal delegate Angelo Solena, in Cabrália, on April 24th, in celebration of the first mass of Brazil" (*Jornal do Brasil*, May 4, 2000: 3). The minister of Culture, also a political scientist, Francisco Weffort, condemned the protest by declaring: "It was as though someone invited to a wedding party spat on the floor" (*Veja*, May 3, 2000: 42). In short, Brazilian authorities took the 500th anniversary as if it were a private party from which subversive and uncouth trespassers should be banned.

The official pantomime that celebrated the 500 years of discovery reached its deceitful climax with the most spectacular government failure in this turn of century, namely, the replica of Cabral's flagship. Costing the federal treasure and private firms nearly two million dollars, the copy of Cabral's fifteenth-century *Nau Capitânia* never got anywhere due to technical incompetence. Hardly kept afloat, the period piece had to be lined with 14 tons of lead and, when lead ran out, an additional 4 tons of cement (*Veja*: 45). In case the fifteenth-century winds failed to reappear, or the crew bungled the sailing, the ship was equipped with two engines. Even so, it never got offshore and became an instant national joke.

Porto Seguro turned into the scenario and symbol of a huge imposture: a fake battlefield, fake Indian skin, the fake period garments of Cardoso's entourage, fake pardons, and a fake ship that never showed up as planned. It was a superlative farce, that is, a farcical Carnival. Put in a nutshell, "of the whole spectacle set up by the government to celebrate the discovery of Brazil, what will remain are the pictures of Indians and *sem-terra* being forcibly stopped by shock troops and the solemn requests for pardon by Catholic bishops -- and promptly rebuffed by Indian leaders" (*Veja*: 48).

The worst casualties were not, however, among the few lightly injured Indians and other protesters, but government officials: Minister Greca was fired, and the president of the National Indian Foundation (FUNAI), lawyer Carlos Marés, resigned after the frustrated meeting with President Cardoso. Having counted on accompanying the Indian delegation to the official site, Marés ended up at the Porto Seguro melee amidst the demonstrators and the tear gas.

President Cardoso's remark on fascism and his declaration to the press just before the ceremonies at Porto Seguro that he was not willing to put up with offenses from the MST (*Jornal do Brasil*, April 22, 2000: 5) imply that the nervousness of both federal and state of Bahia officials was caused by the significant attendance of MST militants who represent the most tangible challenge to today's power in Brazil. But, true to form, it was the Indians in their hyperreality (Ramos 1984) that stole the show. Landless peasants, on the other side of the barriers, could not compete with feathers and bright body paint for the hundreds of cameras that recorded that unforgettable civic parody. It was the indianization of the quincentennial.

Echoes from Latin America

While an echo does not reproduce the original sound literally, it retains and amplifies the initial message despite a certain warp caused by distance. We might say that the quincentennial in Brazil was a delayed and intensified echo of the Latin American version eight years earlier. The ingredients were the same: 500 years of ethnic injustice, loss of indigenous territory, religious defilement, severe impoverishment, and nation-states in the defensive. Like Spanish America, Brazil was the satiating spring for Europe to quench its thirst for space and for utopia (Fuentes 1990). Like Brazil, Spanish America created the "celebrations of the 'Meeting of two Worlds'" as a utopian fantasy of their elites. But unlike Brazil, the other Americas reacted with indignation in the form of popular protests. Where they converged was in the angry response of the original nations "that challenged the celebration by converting it into a 'commemoration' of the 500 years" (Delgado 1996: 34).

The distinction between commemoration and celebration is worth noticing. Although both in popular and academic contexts both terms seem to be freely interchangeable (see, for instance, Trouillot 1995: 132), for purposes of the analyses such as this, it is useful to differentiate them: official celebrations emphasized the joyous, festive aspect of the occasion, whereas the people's commemoration stressed the component of grief in the co-memory, the remembrance of miseries past ... and present. However, the outcome of these calendric ceremonies was distinct in many ways. Hispanic America took the events of October 12, 1992 (which, incidentally, were preceded by the widely publicized indigenous demonstrations during the Rio Earth Summit) as a direct reflection of the frank antagonism that exists in normal interethnic co-existence. A plethora of books before and after the American quincentenary marked the long season of cathartic analyses and accusations of interethnic justice along 500 years.

Yet, news items of October 12, 1992 from various Latin American countries report nothing exceptional in terms of political demonstrations against Western domination. In turn, Brazil, as though intent in establishing its distinctness in the continent, lived its 2000 discovery

date as a dramatization of its hidden, hence, unresolved ambivalences.

To begin with, the rather vacuous intercourse of President Cardoso with Portugal's President Sampaio, epitomized by the trite pictures of both, shovel in hand, planting a tree together surrounded by an indulging court contrasted with the less than idyllic relations between the two countries after Portugal entered the European Union and created embarrassing problems regarding Brazilian immigrants. It is worth pointing out the irony with which the press treated the tree-planting scene. The daily *Jornal do Brasil*, for instance, juxtaposed the photograph of the smiling presidents in the act of holding their shovels with the headline "Violence explodes in Porto Seguro" (April 23, 2000: 10A). The subtle use of irony by the press (Brait 1996) has been analysed as a major trope for disclosing contradictions, deception or fraudulent attitudes on the part of power holders. Hence, it is not surprising to see how irony marked its potent presence as a rhetorical whip at the quincentenary as it does nearly everyday in the country's public life.

Perhaps unique in the Americas is the self-ascribed image of the Brazilian as a "cordial man" (Buarque de Holanda 1989). It represents a veritable Bakhtinean chronotope of the national character and refers, not to gentleness of manners as the word may indicate, but to the compulsive inclination to mix private and public spheres, to praise the law so long as it is applied only to one's enemies (DaMatta 1979, Chapter 4), and, as a consequence, to engender an uncomfortable double bind among the citizenry. Indians are legally declared as minors and wards of the state, their official protector, but in full view of the nation's and the world's cameras, the very same state unleashes armed police on the peaceful indigenous marchers in perhaps one of the most spectacular cases of transference, if the main target was indeed the MST.

Throughout Brazil's history numerous violent rebellions and uprisings have marked the extreme discontent of the people in various parts of the country. Yet, official history has taken great pains to conceal these facts and encourage the popular illusion that Brazil is a peaceful and harmonious society, as placid as its nature, free as it is of earthquakes, tornadoes, blazing volcanoes, and other calamities that periodically storm our Latin American neighbors. However, like Freudian slips of the tongue, bursts of violence such as the crass police action in Porto Seguro belie the cordiality of the Brazilian archetype. It is true that one should not take government deeds as representing the people's will (which is seldom the case), but a great deal of Brazilians overtly express their anti-indigenous feelings, despite the surprising results of a recent poll in which 78 percent of a sample of two thousand men and women around the country indicated a sympathetic bent towards the Indians (ISA 2000, Santilli 2000: 51-85).

Whereas some, if not most, but certainly not all (Trouillot 1995: 136 n. 55) Hispanic American countries have elected October 12 as the celebration of nationality under the name *Dia de la Raza*, mostly dedicated to praise New World ethnicity⁴, Brazil has diluted its civic mementoes by routinely celebrating its independence rather than its discovery. The social irrelevance of the official date was reaffirmed by the absolute silence that surrounded April 22, 2001. In contrast, the widely celebrated national days are April 21 for the execution of Tiradentes, an eighteenth-century fighter for independence (and, in 1960, the foundation of Brasília), and September 7, for the actual declaration of Independence in 1822. The Indians have been allotted a "Dia do Índio" on April 19, and, almost as a footnote to the nation's celebratory calendar, the Blacks are mutely honored on May 13 for the termination of slavery in 1888. *Raza*, or rather *raça*, is thus an ungrammatical term in Brazil's idiom of nationality. In the Brazilian version of the "myth of the three races," it is not the idea of race that is exalted, as the Porto

⁴ Much as this theme our full attention, This is not the appropriate moment to expand it. In fact, the various conceptions of race in Latin America represent an extremely fertile field of research on its own right. As Trouillot perceptibly points out, "*La Raza* has in Merida or Cartagene accents unknown in San Juan or in Santiago de Chile, and Columbus wears a different hat in each of these places" (1955: 136).

Seguro disaster made quite clear, but of society, a hybrid by all means, but docile, "cordial" community imagined by its governors to be under the wardship of the state, like the Indians themselves. What the ideal Brazilian nation-state needs is not real Indians, real Blacks or real poor, but a palatable, hyperreal image of the Indian, of the Black, and of the stoic humble populace the combination of whom might elevate the country to an enviable racial and social democracy. When hyperreality threatens to become real, the state reacts violently as though against an enemy. As long as ethnicization remains within the bounds of folklore, everything is fine and fun, but when it becomes a political instrument, it activates the state's antibodies, whether in the form of police repression or of subtler disempowering mechanisms such as discriminatory policies and actions, among which the state's tenacious negligence regarding proper education.

This issue unveils yet another set of differences in Latin America. Although it would be thoughtless to attempt an analysis of the concept of race without a meticulous research on the subject, it is possible to read some signs of how different countries elaborate their own conceptions. For instance, Mexico commemorates its *Día de la Raza* in praise of *mestizaje* and in detriment of the Indians or what Bonfil Batalla called *México profundo* (Bonfil Batalla 1990). In Peru, in turn, national pride does not hinge on idealized *mestizaje*, but on the morality of *gente decente*, that is, people with access to higher education and all the other benefits of full citizenship (Cadena 1998). It is thus not entirely surprising that the Peruvian national holiday is not October 12 but 9, in celebration not of race but of National Dignity (Trouillot 1995: 136 n. 55). In either case, the concept of race is not built on postulates of natural, biological differences. Unlike these two countries, where racism is based on sociocultural differences, Brazil, despite various sorts of metaphorical usages, has basically taken the concept of race to be closely associated with racism. More recently, perhaps influenced by the revival of the race concept among Blacks in the United States, the Brazilian Black movement has recuperated the notion of race as a political emblem.

Politicized minorities are anything but passive puppets in the nation's power games. One path indigenous peoples have taken to mobilize their political energy is to appropriate the anthropological concept of culture as a platform in what academics have called essentialism, itself a conceptual battlefield. Essentialization is a widespread political device among indigenous peoples in Brazil and elsewhere (Ramos n.d.)

El esencialismo cultural indio, se concentraría en la reposición de la espiritualidad nativa, la manutención de las religiones nativas o de sus formas de concebir lo sagrado, la reinstauración de las lenguas nativas, la territorialidad, la utilización de sistemas tradicionales de producción agrícola, y el sentido de 'nación india' al interior de las sociedades 'nacionales' (Delgado 1996: 56-57).

The Porto Seguro happenings provided splendid examples of essentialization on the part of all participants. State power was displayed in exuberant details such as the joint venture of tree cultivation by the two presidents, the period attire of their escorts, and, above all, the disconcertingly lame flagship. On the Indian side, cultural diacritics were visible all the way from the profusion of bright red body paint, feather and bead ornaments to the monument the police destroyed and the Indians reconstructed before the fateful day.

While much of the display of cultural alterity was based on longstanding traditions, there were some interesting cases of invented history. For instance, the Pataxó, who have lived in the Porto Seguro region for less than a century, emerged on the quincennial scene as those who first met Cabral and his seamen. By a prestidigitatory feat of co-memory, the Pataxó

replaced the extinct Tupinambá and acted as if they had themselves been there for the past 500 years. Believed or not, the Pataxó played historical hosts, even though Tupinambá ancestry is now being claimed by a group of people in south Bahia (Marmelo 2000). Núbia, a "Tupinambá" spokeswoman, has thus been described as having the "physical type of the Indian woman -- who in hair and nose equals that [depicted] in the letter by Caminha [Cabral's scribe]" (Viegas 2000). But the quincennial moment was not limited to the rather predictable demonstration of the political force of cultural essentialism. It also created the conditions for an Indian cry of independence from the historically powerful influence of the Catholic Church. In the aftermath of the Porto Seguro events, representatives of 25 indigenous organizations all over the country circulated via internet a document sent from Brasília, dated May 17, in response to another electronically disseminated text by CIMI titled "The many faces of a war." It was in this text that CIMI accused a number of unnamed Indians, presumably Pataxó, of having been co-opted into playing a pro-government role during the official ceremonies in Porto Seguro -- the planned meeting of an Indian delegation with the president. The document signed by the Indians with the title "The dark faces of missionary indigenism" addresses several issues. It describes the long preparatory activities of the Indigenous Conference steered by the *Conselho de Articulação dos Povos e Organizações Indígenas do Brasil* (CAPOIB), repudiates CIMI's accusations of co-optation, and, most importantly, denounces the missionary council for imposing exclusive rights over the Indians' initiatives, particularly regarding agreements with government bodies such as the National Health Foundation. Under the heading "CIMI's identity crisis," the undersigned expose what they regard as the missionaries' severe paternalism and gradual loss of power:

Little by little CIMI has seen its prominent role as defenders of indigenous rights die out without having defined clear strategies for a new relationship with the indigenous movement, and desperately clinging to a practice that, unfortunately, is not so very different from the state wardship of the National Indian Foundation - FUNAI, it so intensely criticizes. CIMI continues to insist on speaking for indigenous peoples and deciding on the Indians' destiny. This is inadmissible. It is each Indian, belonging or not to some organization, who has the legitimacy to speak for him/her or for his/her people.

This is a far cry from the 1970s when the contemporary indigenous movement took its first steps guided by CIMI.

The deep involvement of the Catholic Church with indigenous movements in Brazil has parallels in other countries. Suffice it to evoke the crucial role of the Salesians in the first phases of political organizing among the Shuar which culminated in the influential Shuar Federation in the early 1960s (Salazar 1977, Hendricks 1991). In a pattern that has notable similarities with the CIMI experience, the initial thrust that propelled the Shuar on to Ecuador's political scene was followed by an affirmative cry of independence on the part of the Indians.

Over and above the instrumentalization of culture, Brazilian Indians have learned the political and economic value of organizing in formal associations for the purpose of dialoguing with the state, confronting it, or supplying the services the state should but often fails to provide, such as education, health, and economic projects. In just over a decade, about 200 indigenous organizations emerged on the scene of Brazilian indigenism (Albert 2000, Ramos n.d.). As the number of their partners increased, particularly with the advent of non-governmental organizations, the political options of indigenous peoples in Brazil have diversified, and they are no longer the helpless pawns of either state or Church, or both.

Echoes from afar

The events described here demonstrate the extent to which the instrumentalization of

indigenous culture can create the conditions of possibility for the emergence of a power field where indigenous peoples can engage in a political conversation, tense and non-dialogical as it may be, with the national society and, more specifically, with the national state. As recent contentions over the concept of culture have amply demonstrated (Abu-Lughod 1991, Fitzpatrick 1995, Hannerz 1995, Stolke 1995), culture is far from being a neutral invention safely kept within academic walls. In contexts as explosive as Brazil's quinquennial feast, cultural diversity was most forcefully instrumentalized both by Indians and non-Indians as each party unfolded its political agenda. The colossal overreaction on the part of state authorities dramatically revealed this point and greatly contributed to the reinforcement in the public's awareness that Indians and Blacks, qua political agents, like MST militants, are here to stay. At the exact moment when the expression of cultural and ethnic diversity was being exaggeratedly repressed -- and perhaps for this very reason -- the visibility and legitimacy of that diversity was being impressed upon the population at large via the strong images that television brought into Brazilian homes. On account of the quinquennial fiasco, which resulted in a general sense of indignation, the cause of ethnic justice won a few points. In the dialectical spiral of state thesis of uniform obedience and ethnic antithesis of defiant plurality, one more turn toward a new synthesis was made as the double bind in which the state attempts to trap indigenous peoples was painfully exposed.

What comes to my mind as inspiration to unravel the meaning of the misfired quinquennial festivities is a modern classic of the ethnographic tradition, namely, Victor Turner's analysis of ritual symbolism among the African Ndembu (Turner 1957). Among the Ndembu, social unrest is usually interpreted as the revenge and punishment of ancestors who feel insulted by unsocial behavior on the part of the living. In order to appease their forebearers' anger, the people need to perform certain placating rituals during which social conflicts are, as it were, exorcised. By means of what Turner called drama analysis, it is possible to identify contending actors and actions against the background of the society's structure and history.

Like Turner, I find in the fields of drama analysis a fitting thread to untangle the Porto Seguro occurrences. Indeed, in good Turnerian fashion, the nationality ritual as acted out during Brazil's 500th anniversary appears as a New World version of those African dramas of affliction. Porto Seguro echoes Turner's "community of suffering" (Turner 1957), complete with farcical ancestor *wor-ship* (the pun notwithstanding), theatrical wars, religious performances, and a great deal of civil resentment. As many times before in the history of the country, in exposing its troubled identity, the Brazilian state selected the Indians as scapegoats for its seemingly perpetual malaise regarding internal differences. The "marvellous fiasco" (*Veja* 2000) of the fervently anticipated 500 years only confirms how disturbing indigenous proximity is for the nation's self-consciousness. Reminiscent of Ndembu rituals for soothing the wrath of the ancestors, the Indians seem to represent, no matter how unconsciously, the irate ancestors of Brazilianness who emerged in the civic scene to claim redress for five centuries of disrespect. But here the Ndembu analogy stops. In re-enacting a long tradition of tense co-existence with social contradictions generated primarily by the juxtaposition of rules of matrilineality and patrilocality), the Ndembu transfer to their dead foreparents both the source of discord and its remedy by means of certain powerful rites of conviviality. But what makes the ancestors angry? It is precisely the misbehavior of their living offspring whose misfortunes and illnesses are no more than the ancestors' signal that there is something very wrong in the realm of social affairs and in need of repair. It is the profound respect the Ndembu people have for their forebears that drives them to correct the course of their social life.

In the case of the relationship between Brazil and its indigenous peoples, it is as though the living posterity of the ancestral Indian, now metamorphosed as Brazilian citizens, rebel against this ancestry and punish the flesh and blood Indians for reminding them of a social origin

they would rather not have. In creating the myth of the three races, the Brazilian imagination, as acted out in state praxis, fell in its own trap: it engendered an ideal Indian ancestor only to repel him. It is against the background of this profound ambivalence that Brazil has forged its national ethos and branded its type of indigenism. The dialectical spiral that intertwines the state thesis of uniform obedience with the ethnic antithesis of defiant plurality completed one more turn towards a new synthesis. In so painfully exposing the double bind in which it attempts to trap indigenous peoples, the Brazilian state unveiled a little more of its ambivalence towards its internal differences. At the same time, it is precisely in the context of this ambivalent ethnoscape that the Indians impress their political agency upon the nation and upon the world.

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