

THE SOCIAL SCIENTIST AND THE INDIAN

- CONFLICT, VIOLENCE, AND MORALITY IN A MEXICAN VILLAGE.* By LOLA ROMANUCCI-ROSS. (Palo Alto, Calif.: National Press, 1973. Pp. 203.)
- ZAPOTEC DEVIANCE: THE CONVERGENCE OF FOLK AND MODERN SOCIOLOGY.* By HENRY A. SELBY. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1974. Pp. 166. \$8.50.)
- WHAT ARE NORMS? A STUDY OF BELIEFS AND ACTION IN AMAYA ORAL TRADITION.* By GARY H. GOSSEN. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974. Pp. 382. \$15.00.)
- EL PROBLEMA DEL INDIO.* By VINCENTE LOMBARDO TOLEDANO. (Mexico, D.F.: Sep-Setentas, 1973. Pp. 207.)

I would first like to make clear my own theoretical orientation, so that what I have to say about the works under review can be evaluated in the proper context. My disappointment with all of the authors, except Lombardo Toledano and, to a certain extent, Romanucci-Ross, stems from the rather critical opinion I hold about the theoretical interests of most anthropologists working in Mexico (including those of these scholars), particularly non-Mexican anthropologists, and about the effect these academic interests have had in helping to shape popular and official attitudes about Indians and poor rural mestizos. Since the 1930s, anthropologists have been doing in-depth community studies in Mexico, primarily in so-called indigenous pueblos. Many were originally influenced by Radcliffe-Brown and the structural-functionalists and, later, by a variety of newer theoretical approaches, ranging from Parsons's ideas about the socialized actor to Berger's social construction of reality, and from ethnohistory to French structuralism. Decidedly unrepresented, as a theoretical orientation among the anthropologists under consideration here, is dialectical materialism. Only Lombardo Toledano argues for the necessity of analyzing historically the roles played by economics and political domination in determining the kinds of choices—cultural, economic, social, and political—that have been made by and imposed on the people under study.

Although not necessarily agreeing with everything Lombardo Toledano has said, and believing there is much valuable information in the other works, I maintain that unless we anthropologists orient our studies so that they help contribute to an understanding of the direct and dynamic relationship "our communities" have to regional, national, and international economic and political factors, we are distorting the value and significance of the data we collect. We are not studying isolated communities in Mexico, and in most cases, the subjects of our investigation are, have been, and will continue to be intimately affected by their long history of being dominated by outside forces, by people who have profoundly altered and controlled indigenous cultures and economies, indigenous attitudes about themselves and non-Indians, and even indigenous symbolic/

cosmological systems. It is not sufficient to make a token pass at history in an introductory section; whatever problem may be the focus of a particular study must be analyzed in terms of history and the socioeconomic relationship to the larger society of the people under investigation.

With few exceptions, most of the anthropological studies done in Mexico from a dialectical-materialist perspective have been the works of Mexicans or, occasionally, other Latin Americans and Europeans. Not only do the North American anthropologists continue, in general, to resist dialectical materialism, they rarely even bother to cite the works of such major Mexican anthropologists as Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, Guillermo Bonfil, Arturo Warman, and Rodolfo Stavenhagen. This intellectual provincialism or lack of interest in the research of Mexicans, together with a rising concern about the participation of North American anthropologists in espionage activities (see the Mexican newspapers during December 1974, particularly *Excelsior* and *El Día*), have contributed to the decision of Mexican government anthropologists to join a number of other Third World countries in insisting that foreign investigators receive special permission from the host nation before conducting research. In sum, Mexicans are finally challenging North American anthropologists about the purpose of their work, suggesting that, at best, much of it is irrelevant to the nation's problems and, at worst, some of it may be a front for highly suspect U.S. government activities.

Four of the books under review here suffer in varying degrees from having little theoretical interest either to a Third World country searching for ways to resolve its overwhelming socioeconomic problems, or, for that matter, to the discipline in general. For those interested in additional ethnographic data to be utilized, hopefully, in more challenging theoretical models, perhaps these books will be of some use. The fifth work, a collection of papers written by Lombardo Toledano during his long and active political career, is extremely valuable for students interested in the history and development of indigenist policies in Mexico, particularly with the helpful introduction by Aguirre Beltrán.

Lola Romanucci-Ross has been more careful than the other three anthropologists to discuss in detail the relationship of the Morelos mestizo village in which she conducted her research to the larger society. Her main purpose is to describe and analyze the kinds of situations that lead to conflict in this rural ejido community, where the people are in the process of defining a new postrevolutionary morality for themselves—a morality based primarily on urban values. We learn of the unique history of the pueblo, composed almost entirely of immigrants who came from other parts of Mexico after the Mexican Revolution, when confiscated hacienda lands were distributed to landless peasants. After explaining what she means by conflict and how one should analyze it, Romanucci-Ross describes how conflict emerges in group and social relations, reviewing the various social divisions and networks found in the village—in group/outgroup, village factions, family, friends, compadres, and patrons. Then she discusses, in perhaps the most original section of the book, the relationship between conflict and morality—how social status affects one's opinion of the behavior of others—and she analyzes in an interesting way the attitudes about Indians in this mestizo village: Race (i.e., color), not culture, identifies one as Indian. Finally, after discussing morality and

violence and morality and the church, Romanucci-Ross documents a major, village-wide conflict that had been taking place during her three years of fieldwork: One villager, with the aid of a rich Mexico City lawyer, tried to convert a mineral spring found on village lands into a private tourist bathing resort. In her analysis, she demonstrates how formal social institutions are used in time of conflict.

Although the case material is interesting and her study does link the village to the Morelos region and national concerns, I am still left with some objections. First, having chosen conflict as her major theoretical problem, she spends too much time cataloging the possible kinds of conflicts that might occur, instead of analyzing in greater detail the one major conflict she promises repeatedly to discuss from the very beginning of the book. Second, although we are given an excellent review of the history of the area—particularly of the Mexican Revolution in Morelos—we receive little help in evaluating the significance of this village's unique history in comparison to the surrounding communities. In sum, Romanucci-Ross is not sufficiently thorough in her discussion of the village-wide conflict and too thorough elsewhere, especially as she leads us through description after description of conflicts. Whereas her case study is extremely insightful, as far as it goes, in showing how the village is economically and ideologically influenced by national affairs, we do not really need her extensive and rather unoriginal analysis of conflict situations in order to understand her major ethnographic contribution.

Henry Selby suggests that the Zapotecs are interactionist sociologists. The Zapotec Indians of a small community in the Valley of Oaxaca define deviance, he claims, in the very terms sociologists have taken years to figure out. Both the Zapotecs and interactionist sociologists recognize that an individual is deviant not because he/she necessarily suffers from an inherent psychological problem, but because society has labelled the person as such. Interested in improving on the sociological literature concerned with deviance by adding a non-Western case study, Selby wanted to work in a traditional indigenous community that had not been drastically changed since the Spanish Conquest. He found such a community, he says, in the Valley of Oaxaca—how far from the major tourist center of Oaxaca City he does not tell us. Although he spent from 1965 to 1971, on and off, doing fieldwork, Selby admits that he never learned Zapotec well enough to speak it—a rather serious methodological problem in a virtually monolingual community, particularly for a fieldworker who places such importance on doing research in a traditional society.

Selby gives a brief ethnographic sketch and discusses the major values and social groups. We learn that a good person has humility and can be trusted and respected; an evil person, on the other hand, is envious. We also learn that the Zapotecans trust those closest to them. Then Selby presents rather straightforward structural-functionalist explanations for why certain kinds of behavior are considered deviant. Furthermore, he offers rather gratuitous comparisons between Western and Zapotecan thought. Next, he systematically employs the interactionist model for studying deviance and introduces rank ordering. Witchcraft is attributed to envy, we learn, and those people who are geographically and

socially distant from Ego are more likely to be considered witches than close kin who live nearby. Finally, he gives a brief history of the area and argues once again that the village has changed very little since the Spanish Conquest.

Not only do I find Selby's observations about deviance and witchcraft unenlightening, but I consider his insistence on traditionalism embarrassing, especially from one who must have had questionable success developing the necessary insight to arrive at such a conclusion. As already noted, he could not speak to the people directly, but had to rely on interpreters and written questionnaires. The long tradition, among North American anthropologists working in Mexico, of thinking in terms of continuity, not change, and often forcing the data to conform to static models, has had rather detrimental effects on the Indians in Mexico who have been manipulated in many cases to stay "Indian"—whatever that means—so that tourists looking for a bit of exotica would continue to come to Mexico in search of people untouched by time.

Francesca Cancian takes us through an extremely careful description of her attempt to develop a methodology that would permit the anthropologist/sociologist to measure norms independent of action. We are led through her own intellectual history as she successfully frees herself from Parsons's perspective of the socialized actor and discovers the more satisfactory social construction-of-reality approach. Unfortunately, all her field data were collected while she was testing the Parsonian model and could not be used for her newer hypothesis. As a result, we are asked to bear with her as she meticulously and successfully disproves Parsons and then must accept a "how I would do it the next time" chapter, describing in some detail the merits of the social construction-of-reality model.

Cancian did her research in the Maya community of Zinacantan, participating in the well-known Harvard University Chiapas Project. She gives an excellent review of the theoretical methods used in the past to analyze norms and then presents her own strategies for describing and measuring norms, arguing in particular that ethnoscience should be used in order to insure that native categories are obtained. She describes the research setting and introduces her frame-sorting method for describing norms: The domain of norms is defined by eliciting normative statements with substitution frames; then the structure of the domain is examined by three informants, with what is called a "sorting task," so that the original statements can be organized into clusters of norms.

Cancian is very straightforward about the limitations of her methodology and careful to point out its weaknesses. Furthermore, she even suggests that readers not particularly interested in problems of methodology should skip certain chapters. Nonetheless, with all due respect to the importance of systematic research, after reading chapters 5 through 8, I wished that she had relieved the reader of the burden of having to follow her every step of the way. Even for those interested in methodology or in Zinacantan norms, Cancian's conclusions—people do not behave as they say they do (should)—did not require such detailed review of her methodology. Since we knew from the outset that she had rejected the Parsonian hypothesis and wished she had the field data to test the more interesting model described in chapter 9, I felt she should have reduced the first

eight chapters to an article and returned to the field to collect the material she really needed.

Finally, I doubt the utility of employing ethnoscience to obtain native categories when so little care is taken to preserve a native environment for interviewing. If, as Cancian suggests, paraphrasing the social construction-of-reality position, "people conform to norms in order to obtain validation for particular identities from certain others" (p. 146), then she should take into consideration in future fieldwork the effect her race and class will have on responses from the strongly caste/class-conscious society of Highland Chiapas. Indian informants invited to a fancy house (Harvard's center) in San Cristóbal de las Casas (a Ladino center), paid by rich North Americans for their services, most probably will respond differently to the same questions than they would back home, talking to a *compadre*, even if they are being interviewed by Tzotzil-speaking, Harvard-trained assistants. Although Cancian does mention the possible distortion caused by her selection of informants and interviewing environment, and despite her new commitment to the social identity approach, she still gives more credence to the utility of her data than might be merited.

Gary Gossen writes, as Cancian does, about Tzotzil-speaking Mayas of Highland Chiapas (he, too, worked with the Harvard Project). His aim is to analyze oral tradition as a complete information system. According to Gossen, anthropologists usually treat oral traditions in one of two ways: Appending them to the back of a book; or, following Freud and Lévi-Strauss, imposing on a particular kind of verbal behavior, such as myths, an outside paradigm. Gossen, on the other hand, uses a "holistic" approach. He looks at all types of verbal behavior and then lets this body of material speak, in a sense, for itself. With this approach, Gossen argues, he can demonstrate how an oral tradition reflects a culture's world view, and this he sets out to do, concentrating particularly on the Chamulas' concept of time and space.

Gossen provides an excellent historical and ethnographic summary of Chamula, a village located between San Cristóbal de las Casas and Zinacantan. He points out that, because of their long history of being controlled economically by the Ladinos, the Chamulas' "independent spirit and ideals of separatism do not reflect an economic reality" (p. 7). After describing how the people are forced to participate in the larger society, however, Gossen retreats into his problem of revealing the Chamulas' world view through oral tradition, rarely returning to evaluate how their concepts of time and space relate to the cultural/socioeconomic reality in which they are forced to live. Gossen defines the difference between oral tradition—fixed verbal behavior, and ordinary language—and an open communication system. He also discusses the various genres of verbal behavior. Then, he analyzes texts, that are given in full, both in Tzotzil and in English, in order to reveal the Chamulas' ideas about time and space. Finally, he ties up the theoretical model and summarizes his ethnographic findings.

The book contains so much detail that it is difficult to read without getting lost. If the reader is interested in Mayan linguistics and/or more examples of Highland Chiapas oral traditions, there is a wealth of valuable information. For the nonspecialist, however, it would have been helpful had Gossen done a

comparative analysis with the oral traditions of other Mayan groups so that the reader might evaluate the significance of the Chamula findings. As the book stands now, anyone, other than a Mayan scholar, might find the detail overwhelming and conclude, as I did, that this work supports an argument against using a holistic approach, or at least against drowning the reader with too much data. As a final criticism, it is extraordinary that Gossen could present a number of narratives that clearly reflect the close relationship of the Chamulas to Ladino society and yet imply in his analysis that we are getting a glimpse at a non-Western, indigenous world view.

El Problema del Indio, a collection of papers by Vicente Lombardo Toledano, allows the reader to follow the development in the thinking of this important Communist leader on the issue of the Indian in Mexico. As Aguirre Beltrán points out in the introduction, Lombardo Toledano nationalized Marxist ideas and helped provide Mexico and the Americas with an indigenist theory. Today, the National Institute of Indigenism (Instituto Nacional de Indigenismo—INI) continues to function with a Marxist orientation, Aguirre Beltrán claims, recognizing at the same time that historically there are major differences between the situation in Europe and in Latin America. As Lombardo Toledano suggested as far back as 1936, the fact that Mexico has a mestizo class necessarily changes its experience from the European.

The papers, fourteen in all, cover the years from 1924 to 1961, and range from presentations made at the Inter-American Indigenist Congresses to a speech given in 1952, when Lombardo Toledano was running for president. Over the years, his major concern was to develop programs for indigenous people that would educate and help incorporate them socioeconomically into the mainstream of Mexican society. He was committed to the idea that the Indians should not have to sacrifice their traditional customs and determined as well to end their long history of oppression. Lombardo Toledano suggested that indigenous languages should be used in the schools, to facilitate the learning process and give the people pride in their heritage, yet that it was imperative at the same time that all Mexicans be fluent in the national language. He maintained that Indians needed land and the opportunity to learn modern agricultural techniques; but as a leader in the International Labor Office (Oficina Internacional de Trabajo—OIT), he also insisted that Indians did not have to be farmers, that there should be both a proletarianization of the Indians, and the construction of factories in the countryside.

The point here is not to glorify the programs outlined by Lombardo Toledano or to maintain that his vision has successfully been put into practice by the INI. Indeed, I was struck by the inherent contradiction in his ideas on bringing socialism and modernization to the oppressed Indians while permitting indigenous customs to continue. All the same, his insistence on discussing the Indian problem in historical terms, with an eye to dealing with the devastating socioeconomic problems of these marginal peoples, renders his work theoretically and methodologically contemporary and useful in the context of the interests and concerns of many Mexican and Latin American social scientists. Furthermore, what Lombardo Toledano had to say about *Indigenismo*, in his paper "Falso

Indigenismo," is still appropriate today, as is his campaign promise of 1952: "No he de permitir que las comunidades indígenas de nuestro país sigan siendo objeto de curiosidad para los turistas extranjeras, [y] *de motivo de investigaciones que jamás llegan a conclusiones concretas*" (p. 170, italics mine).

It is regrettable that Lombardo Toledano's opinions have not been taken more to heart by the Mexican government, so that the Indians of Mexico might finally be freed from being, both for the social scientist and the tourist, "objects of curiosity." If Lombardo Toledano had been president in 1975, perhaps, we would not have had to endure an unfortunate bit of folklore at the United Nations International Year of the Woman Conference. Indian women, dressed in regional costumes, were bussed into Mexico City to greet the official delegations that had come from all around the world. Two women, inhabitants of a Nahuatl/Spanish-speaking village in the state of Morelos, enthusiastically came to Mexico City after receiving an invitation with a false promise to meet Mrs. Echeverría. When they realized it would be impossible to speak with her at the two conference centers, the women, at their own expense, went to the Echeverrias's home with a box of fruit and a petition from their pueblo asking the first lady to help the village get a new road, a health center, and a secondary school. The doorman took the fruit, but did not invite the Indians in. Thus, while the women and their pueblo received no help, the U.N. delegates—many of whom were social scientists—and the tourists had the opportunity to be charmed by the quaint Indians, right in the halls of the congress. The foreigners did not even have to go out into the countryside this time to catch some ethnic color.

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