Chapter 4

THE RENAISSANCE OF AFRO-MEXICAN STUDIES[1]

Odile Hoffmann

The black Mexican population, a relatively unexplored field of research that is problematic in more than one respect, has in recent years been the subject of a proliferating number of academic studies, which in themselves prompt two sets of questions. The first derives from the lack of consensus in Mexico over the very existence of a "black population" or "black population groups." Although most Mexicans are unaware of such a population, and some authorities argue that blacks disappeared long ago as a result of *mestizaje* (racial mixing) and "fusion" with the national society (Velasco 2002), others do recognize the phenomenon, including "Afro-Mexicans," in the long list of contemporary Mexican "ethnic groups" (Barabas and Bartolomé 1986).

Debate on this subject resembles a dialogue of the deaf, so poorly delineated are its terms; both sides seek to recognize, for opposite reasons, an established "ethnic group" that can be defined by objectively describable "cultural" traits distinct from those of "others," generally identified as whites or Indians. Notable here is an essentialist tendency widely criticized in

anthropology and relatively easy to challenge, since "cultural characteristics" can be borrowed and transformed, acquiring meaning only in given historical and sociopolitical configurations, through the actions and interactions of coexisting social protagonists. The authors cited above themselves espouse a "procedural" model and seek to record "realities" insofar as the group adopts certain specific collective descriptors for itself (Barabas and Bartolomé 1986), occasionally invoking a strategic essentialism needed for political-ethnic negotiation and mobilization.

The question remains as to whether, in the Mexican context, a "black identity" or specifically "black" characteristics can reasonably be cited to explain more general social processes; and if so, why and for whom? How, where, and when might this "identity" be expressed, and what does it cover? The instrumentalist approach to identity (Glazer and Moynihan 1975) is unsatisfactory here, since Mexico has no external, institutionalized categorization that recognizes the "black identity" and associates it with specific measures or material, political or cultural advantages. Thus, any expression of or claim to black identity should be understood independently of any identity strategy directly linked to multicultural policies or power relations between established "communities."

A possible alternative to the radically essentialist and instrumentalist options might be a middle course that, clearly situated within a constructivist perspective, takes advantage of the life experience of those involved in order to understand the processes of identity construction "from the inside" – rather than the margins – of that group constituted by people claiming to be "different" because they are "black" (rarely)[2] or, more commonly, "*morenos*" (brown or dark-skinned). This is concordant with the ideas put forward by Hal Levine, who, although recognizing the impact of external categorizations, seeks to rehabilitate a vision of ethnicity that comes from within the group. He defines ethnicity minimalistically as "that method of classifying people (both self and other) that uses origin (socially constructed) as its primary reference" (Levine 1999, 168). The classification of people by their origins determines the boundaries as well as the

contents of the groups thus catalogued, and both processes are equally important. Although in recent times anthropology has stressed boundaries over content, we must also consider the mechanisms by which the people themselves signify ("fill up") these categories (Levine 1999, 171). Barth himself, returning to the subject of his famous 1969 article, has clarified that it is not enough to analyze boundary processes, and that "central and culturally valued institutions and activities in an ethnic group may be deeply involved in its boundary maintenance by setting internal processes of convergence into motion" (Barth 1994, 11-32). Ethnicity is thus a process and result of categorization – a categorization that is constantly being revised to reflect the contexts and spaces in which it takes place. If we apply these few analytical principles, the case of the Afro-Mexicans is particularly interesting since the categorization of this group is still a fluid work in progress, in contrast to Latin-American countries such as Colombia, for example, where the existence of a "black ethnic group" is no longer disputed (even if the group's boundaries and content are and should be open to discussion).

In Mexico, we must begin by wondering whether the concept of "ethnicity" is the best way of accounting for the current dynamics of identity, and what agents and discourses are driving this orientation. The fact is that the local Afro-Mexican populations seem less interested in defining their "ethnic status" than in denouncing the discrimination against them and in demanding acknowledgement of their "Mexican" identity, which is often challenged (Lewis 2000). Their claim to difference can be interpreted in terms of collective rather than ethnic identity. As Wachtel has noted in a different context (Andean communities), "you can't see ethnicity everywhere," and we must avoid confusing ideas that, under the common rubric of "identity," are in fact dealing with separate questions (Wachtel 1992. On this confusion, see also Wieviorka 2004).

The intersection of these questions – ethnic identity and collective identity, the endogenous and exogenous dimensions of identity – necessarily involves analyzing the spaces where the processes of identity construction are forged and revealed. In this context space is understood in both its senses: as a scale or

level of identity expression (individual, group or collective), and as a concrete geographical place around which identification is organized. This is not the same thing as identifying oneself as "black" to the neighbour or the researcher, or the same as doing so in the village, or in a neighbouring village in the same region, let alone in the capital. Any analysis of the contexts (particularly institutional ones) in which identity is expressed must therefore take that spatial dimension into account – an approach that may help us clarify, for example, the relations between collective identity and ethnic identity, or between identity and territory.

My second set of questions concerns the manner in which research on this subject is conducted today and how it has been conducted in the past. An examination of the "pedigree" of specialized studies in this field will clarify the antecedents and interpretative trends that have left their mark on current issues, explain their strong and weak points, and, ultimately, suggest some avenues of research.

These two sets of questions obviously overlap. My aim here, in reviewing the literature, is to approach the more theoretical and methodological questions while not losing sight of my double objective, namely, to determine the current status of Afro-Mexican studies within the context of intellectual discourse on black populations, and to decide how analysis of this "social group" should be approached. This article is divided into three parts. The first establishes the context of the issues involved in Afro-Mexican identity. The second part traces the history of research on the subject, pointing out a strong tendency to essentialization, while the third part analyzes the agents of today's ethnicization. In conclusion, I will explore some possible avenues of research.

The Black Population of Mexico: The Missing Link?

The existence and importance of the black populations on the Latin-American subcontinent are no longer topics confined to specialized academic circles; these populations are the subject of wide-ranging national and international debates, in political as well as academic forums. "Afrodescendants," a term

used since the International Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance (Durban, 2001) by black organizations to distinguish themselves from the African Americans of the United States, are recognized as "ethnic communities" in the constitutions of several countries that are laying down specific measures designed to combat discrimination and promote an integration that recognizes individual differences (in Colombia, for example[3]).

Mexico comes to these debates from a singular position. Although the Mexican state recognized the country's multiethnic and multicultural nature in the constitutional reform of 1992, no executive law ever followed. The political options ratified by the country in the 1990s (adherence to the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development, the North American Free Trade Agreement with Canada and the United States) hamper its ability to frame laws benefiting specific groups, primarily the Indians,[4] since such laws would contravene the principle of free circulation of goods and services (Hoffmann 2001). Despite political mobilization, social demands, protests, and the neo-Zapatista insurrection of 1994, the political ambiguities have not yet been resolved, and the multiculturalism trumpeted at the federal level is not reflected in any concrete measures.

With respect to the black population, or "population of African origin," the Mexican attitude is even more ambiguous. Although in most of the country the magnitude of slavery and of the black presence in history is a confirmed and well-documented fact, the same does not apply to contemporary black populations, whose existence as individuals and, especially, as a social group is not recognized by any legal document. Nevertheless, the cultural institutions, certain researchers, and some militants for the black cause – not necessarily operating from the same perspective – are helping to construct a new field of study or interpretation concerning the black population in Mexico. I would here like to explore the ins and outs of this recent intellectual and political construction, this "renaissance" of Afro-Mexican studies,[5] by putting it in its institutional, political, and social context.

Some strong hypotheses guide this analysis. The first one has already been widely confirmed – namely, that in Mexico the identity spectrum is entirely taken up by national identity on one hand and the Indian identities on the other.[6] The two identities – the national identity symbolizing the country's unity and the indigenous identities legitimizing and organizing cultural diversity – are integrated by the discourse of *mestizaje*, which is not new; it has been around since the end of the nineteenth century and was revived after the Revolution of 1910-1920. The emergence of other identity claims must, in this context, come under the heading of either exception or exoticism, applicable to populations of very specific origins (the Chinese who arrived from the Philippines in the seventeenth century, the Japanese forced labour, or, more recently, the Moslems, Koreans, and others). For a long time, studies on black populations were forced into this mould, making the "black" inhabitant a purely historical and extinct figure.

With the renewal of interest in contemporary black populations, the question arises as to what conceptual framework should be adopted. This brings me to my second hypothesis: the black population's historical development makes Mexico a unique case in Latin America, to which the most modern interpretations can be applied only with difficulty. This would partially explain the relatively impoverished theoretical basis of research in this field, but it could also become a powerful impetus if the dynamism of such studies continues and grows.

Unlike other Latin-American countries, Mexico has no social movement of black identity that might justify analytical approaches based on social and political movements (Touraine 1988). The population in question is numerically very small (a few tens of thousands, out of Mexico's 100 million inhabitants in 2000) and politically non-existent. It displays no cultural or religious practices indicative of an "Afro identity" that could be mobilized for political purposes, as might be the case in Brazil or Cuba (Argyriadis and Capone 2004). Nor are there any specific measures (except for a few exceptions referred to below) around which the demands of "black" groups or collectives could be organized, a situation that militates against the now

classic interpretations of identity construction and instrumentalization: there is objectively no advantage – political, ideological, or material – in "being" (becoming, claiming to be) black. If there is any construction, it will come from elsewhere. Neither the official discourse nor those political actors with national influence have any specific way of referring to the populations that define themselves as "*morenos*" or "*afromestizos*."

At the same time, postmodern reflections on the invention of identity and individuals' capacity for negotiating their multiple identities in the context of relationships and situations (Hall 1994) run aground on the fact that these identities can only be expressed where there are legitimizing frameworks—precisely what "black" Mexicans lack, since they have no place on the national identity chessboard. With no possibility of dialogue with some "other" who would recognize their own alterity, and particularly not with the state, Afro-Mexicans have no border they could cross to integrate into another available identity category (Indians, *mestizos*, whites). They remain in a kind of limbo that they accept as "*afromestizos*" or "*morenos*" or, most often, as "Mexicans" (Lewis 2000)—that is, in either case, outside the prevailing ethnic categorizations.

However, at both extremes of the social space, contexts still exist where "being black" may become a relevant part of social dynamics. At the local level, where differences are negotiated day to day with or without an explicit conceptual system, "*morenos*" suffer racism and discrimination from their non-black neighbours in the most trivial as well as the most complex acts and words (Castillo Gómez 2000). This shared experience of routine racism is the surest way to cement an "identity." or at the very least an alterity that is constantly brought up by those around them.[7] This can then give rise to all kinds of individual strategies for evading the stigma (negation/denial), reversing it (affirmation) or ignoring it (avoidance). The approaches to human interaction developed by Erving Goffman, used notably by Cunin in similar contexts in Colombia (Cunin 2004), can help us understand the ambiguities and contradictions that often characterize the identity positions taken by *afromestizos* – ambiguities that preclude

any talk of an obvious or "natural" identity but that nevertheless always bring into play the "racial" dimension of difference.

At the other end of the social space, international forums propose their own operational categories for thinking about black identity. The networks of Afro militants, the specialized international agencies against racism, and the United Nations documents on slavery all offer legitimate sources of categorizations that do not exist at the national level. One recent conceptualization is the diaspora, a model that its proponents say is warranted by the traumatic original de-territorialization and subsequent dispersion of slaves to the four corners of the earth, mainly America. There is no consensus on this, however. What are the common myths that would give coherence to a supposed "black diaspora"? What are its instruments (rituals, for example) and modes of expression? Without entering into this debate, let us simply say that most American black or *afromestizo* societies do not share this globalized arena but are anchored instead in extremely localized and territorialized realities, grappling with alliances and rivalries that affect their material and spiritual survival. The door does remain open for a handful of activists who, although a minority, exert remarkable influence over collective representations through their participation in debates and international mobilization. For the time being, however, the diaspora concept remains largely alien to the Afro-Mexican population and cannot be said to provide a truly operational theoretical framework.

This rapid overview of the current situation of Afro-Mexicans offers a few useful points of reference for the rest of our argument: Mexico is apparently the "missing link" in Latin America. The term was coined by a black activist who was expressing his view that Mexico's unique character (its absence of both any black ethnic movement and any conventional ethnic categorization, whether endogenic or exogenic) in fact excluded it from the collective agenda adopted by the international Afro networks. However, both the micro and macro levels present a number of sources of "black" identification that could be mobilized for some future ethnogenesis. Although it may be presumptuous today to speak of a "black ethnicity" in

Mexico, it is impossible to deny the experience of alterity and expressions of collective identity assumed by the *afromestizos*.

The specifics of the contemporary Mexican situation derive in large part from the way the black population established itself in the country. In Mexico, like everywhere else in Latin America, the black inhabitants are the descendants of individuals brought to the country as slaves. These slaves were employed in many sectors, sometimes concentrated by region (mines, sugar-cane plantations, cattle ranches), but more often scattered in both cities (crafts, domestic service, manual labour) and rural areas, virtually all over the country (Martínez Montiel 1994). During the colonial period, they lived through the classic, dramatic history of resistances, revolts, escapes, and the establishment of *palenques* (communities of free blacks and escaped slaves),[8] especially in plantation regions such as Veracruz, where slavery persisted until the nineteenth century (Naveda Chávez-Hita 1987, Caroll 1991). Elsewhere, from the beginning of the eighteenth century, as the Indian population began to grow again, the influx of slaves dwindled (Aguirre Beltrán 1972, 85) and black *mestizaje* increased, particularly – although not exclusively – with the Indians, with whom the Afro-Mexicans shared their subjugation to the Spanish, creoles, and *mestizos*. The main consequences of this "early" termination of black slave importation were an intensified rate of *mestizaje* and a rapid decline in the percentage of slaves in the black population, two characteristics that set the black population of Mexico apart from those of other Latin American countries.[9] At the time that slavery was outlawed (first prohibited in 1810, it was abolished in 1817, but the final decree of abolition was signed by Vicente Guerrero only in 1829[10]), the black populations (described as *negros, pardos y mulatos* in the censuses) of Mexico were already largely of mixed race, comprising peasants, labourers, and "free" artisans (one option for the poor classes of the eighteenth century, although they were usually subject to harsh mechanisms of bossist, clientelistic, or paternalistic rule).[11]

However, these trends were unequally distributed, and gave rise to distinct socio-geographic systems. In certain regions where hybridization was delayed and the proportion of blacks

was higher, different regional identities have integrated, evoking the population's black origins without being limited to them: *jarochos* in Veracruz, *guaches* in the warm lands of Morelia, *mascogos* in Coahuila. In other places black phenotypes (skin colour, hair type) may be common without having given rise to any distinctive identity constructions. The only exception is the Pacific coast of Guerrero-Oaxaca (Costa Chica), a "multi-ethnic" region where groups of self-identified Indians, *morenos*, and *mestizos* live in proximity.[12] The total population comes to several tens of thousands of people (unlike the Indians, the black population is not the subject of a specific census). This is the region where the main claims of black identity in Mexico today are expressed and studied. It is also the place where the first ethnographic study on the black populations in Mexico was carried out (Aguirre Beltrán 1989).

The Scientific and Institutional Framework

Research Pedigree

The father of Afro-Mexican studies is unquestionably Gonzálo Aguirre Beltrán. A physician by training, Aguirre Beltrán was already an established anthropologist when, in 1942, Manuel Gamio, head of the Demography Department in the Interior Ministry, commissioned him to conduct a study on the black population in Mexico. This was the beginning of a remarkable historical project that, using archival sources, for the first time meticulously traced the origins and extent of the slave trade, the rates at which slaves arrived, their distribution in the country, the sectors of slave activity, and the process of *mestizaje*; conclusions were also drawn concerning the magnitude of the contribution that the populations of African origin had made to Mexican culture and history (Aguirre Beltrán 1972).

A few years later, following a visit to the US, where he studied with Melville Herskovits, Gonzálo Aguirre Beltrán carried out his first ethnographic study, in the village of Cuajinicuilapa on the coast of Guerrero (published in 1958). At the time still geo-

graphically isolated (the Pan-American Highway was not built until the 1960s) and inhabited mainly by populations of largely unmixed race, the Costa Chica seemed the last preserve of a black population that was gradually disappearing through racial intermixing. The reason Aguirre Beltrán spoke of "blacks" and forged the concept of "*afromestizos*" in this connection[13] was to better underline their exceptional nature and to reaffirm his thesis on the integration of "blacks and their mixtures" (*negros y sus mezclas*) in Mexican national society.[14]

In this view, integration was founded historically on two processes that differentiated blacks from other subordinate groups, in this case the Indians. For one, the cultural characteristics of the black population were not considered sufficiently distinctive to serve as criteria of ethnic identification; at the same time, their racial characteristics disappeared rapidly as a result of repeated *mestizaje.* At the end of the colonial period, it was not possible to base severe discrimination (*incapacidades asignadas*) on these tenuous differences. One by-product of this was that there was no solid support for forming or maintaining separate groups for the black and mulatto populations (Aguirre Beltrán 1972, 287). In contrast, the caste system of colonial society assigned a subordinate but recognized status to the Indians, who continued to live in a separate world during the early days of national independence. In contrast, the *afromestizo* and *mestizo* populations, unrecognized by the colonial system, were to become the foundation of a new independent system that, aspiring to a "national" population base, needed these masses, which although previously marginalized did not form a clearly separate caste (Aguirre Beltrán 1972, 291). Thus, Aguirre Beltrán theorized, political-structural mechanisms – the need to integrate the working classes in order to create a post-colonial "national society" – and socio-cultural mechanisms – the mixture of racial and cultural traits – converged to promote an almost complete integration of the black and mulatto populations into the national population and their consequent disappearance as a specific group within contemporary society. It should be noted that in his analyses, Aguirre Beltrán maintained that for both blacks and Indians ethnic differences were created and transformed through power relations.

Although this anti-essentialist approach was before its time, it was not emulated or even noticed for many years.

This theory of integration was so popular that for a long time it blocked any study of contemporary black populations, which were considered "not really authentic" and in any case were fated to disappear very quickly. It should be mentioned that during the same period (1940-1960), Mexican anthropology was focusing on the study of Indian groups, being doubly influenced by indigenist public policy[15] and the theoretical and methodological development fostered by several Mexican and foreign researchers who established national anthropological thinking on the basis of case studies undertaken in Indian regions.[16]

This lack of legitimacy, which still weighs on Afro-Mexicanist ethnography today, had less of an impact on the field of historical research, which continued to develop and expand. Studies in this area are carried out today in many provincial universities:[17] the Colegio de México,[18] the Mora Institute,[19] and, particularly, the Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia (INAH—National Institute of Anthropology and History), with its specialized seminar on "Studies of Populations of African Origin." The terms used in these studies explicitly refer to the past, confining the research subjects strictly to their identity of origin: enslaved and definitively "other." The studies detail the regional conditions of slavery (Palmer Colin 1993, Naveda Chávez-Hita 1995, Guevera Sanginés 1994, Herrera Casasús 1994), but devote equal attention to the ways of life of certain groups (black women in Mexico, Velázquez Gutiérrez 1994), beliefs (studies on the Inquisition[20]), and, in general, "Afro-American culture's" contribution to the national culture.[21] In any case, interest in the historical view of the black populations has never waned, any more than interest in "folklore" studies (music, dance, oral tradition. Gutiérrez Avila 1988), on which Gabriel Moedano is the best-known expert (Moedano Navarro 1997).

In anthropology, however, the pioneering research of Gonzálo Aguirre Beltrán in black ethnography did not gain widespread acceptance, whereas the rest of his work strongly influenced the discipline, primarily valued for its theoretical

and thematic innovation. As an administrator of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista and later the CIESAS (Centro de Investigacions y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social), he himself assumed a leading role in the development of Mexican anthropology. However, it was only in the 1980s that another renowned anthropologist, Guillermo Bonfil Batalla, gave new impetus to ethnographical research by creating the programme "The Third Root" (*la Tercera Raíz*) in the Dirección General de Culturas Populares (DGCP—General Directorate of Popular Culture, today part of the Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, or Conaculta). Directed by Luz María Martínez Montiel,[22] the programme recognizes the contribution made by populations of African origin to national culture (dance, music, food, oral literature), generating many specialized studies and publications on these topics and initiating national and international gatherings, as well as occasionally innovative debates. Not only does it lend legitimacy to the ethnographic approach in the scientific and institutional spheres, but even more importantly, it places this field of research in an international framework. In this respect, in fact, Mexico participates in the UNESCO programme entitled "The Slave Route," which for the last decade or so has promoted conferences and joint publications among African and Latin-American countries. Mexico's representative was Luz María Martínez Montiel, while Colombia's was Jaime Arocha, both anthropologists who in their respective countries represent the revival of contemporary Afro-Americanist studies and who promote a focus on the "African roots" of Latin-American black cultures.

The specialized works in this field can no longer be overlooked. Even though all articles invariably begin by complaining about the lack of previous research, such works do indeed exist. Although not very accessible, often highly biased, sometimes badly documented, and certainly much less numerous than those dealing with the Indian populations, they nevertheless constitute a significant body of work. A first bibliographic review by G. Moedano and a work in progress by Cristina Díaz based on her 1994 thesis (Moedano Navarro 1992, Díaz Pérez 1994) list some thousand titles, and master's and doctoral theses

in anthropology are increasingly numerous, indicating a real interest in the subject on the part of students and their teachers.

The 1990s marked a true rise in the evolution of Afro-Mexicanist studies, which previously had been virtually limited to historical and cultural research. However, the current ethnographical approaches still show some weaknesses, attributable in part to their history.

The Afrogenetic Temptation and the Impossibility of Definition

The Afro-Mexicanist movement has not so far managed to throw off its nominalist compulsion to begin every discussion by establishing "who we are talking about" in terms of ethnic affiliation. In the second edition of their compendium *Etnicidad y pluralismo cultural. La dinámica étnica en Oaxaca*, Barabas and Bartolomé include "Afro-Mexicans" among the "17 ethnic groups of Oaxaca" (Barabas and Bartolomé 1986). This categorization is possible mainly because the state of Oaxaca has legislation that recognizes, institutes, and regulates ethnic difference. In the electoral domain, particularly, the laws validate mayoral election according to "habits and customs," which may vary from one municipality to the next (raised-hand vote, appointment by the council of elders, with or without participation by women and "foreigners" in the village, and so on).[23] The already established and institutionally recognized "ethnic system" is thus the easiest to adapt to the black populations. However, there is no apparatus for estimating and statistically describing the "*afromestizo* ethnic group," in contrast to the neighbouring Indian groups. The classic indicators normally used in Mexico do not work (language, clothing, "traditional" social organization), and each author concocts his or her own, usually based on common-sense criteria specific to the situation under study. Researchers end up adopting the categories used by those around them, usually without devoting any deep critical thought to them beforehand, a tendency that poses the risk of repeating and transmitting the stereotypes of difference – or indifference. Thus it is that "the *negro*" is considered to be in violent confrontation with the Indian in the Costa Chica area,

a recurrent view[24] (among others) to this day, and one which – particularly through the use of the singular "the *negro*" – well reflects the stereotypical nature of these portrayals.

The fact is that no one can agree on the definition of *afromestizos* as an "ethnic group," much less its possible boundaries. The latter are constantly renegotiated according to the fluctuating contexts of alterity, and vary from one locality to the next, from one timeframe to the next, according to the political, economic, or social alliances and tensions of the moment. The Barthian model is useful for pinpointing these boundary movements, but it is ineffective for "defining" ethnic groups, a purpose for which it was not conceived (Barth 1981). An interpretation model based on "inter-ethnic relations," on the other hand, can only function – with difficulty – on the basis of monographs, which is the sole means of describing how differences are created and interpreted locally: differences between blacks and Indians in one place, between whites and Afro-Indians in another, between the three coexisting groups in yet another, and so on (Cervantes Delgado 1984). Obviously, however, the validity of such an approach declines in direct proportion to the degree of generalization or theorization it seeks to support. It is impossible to conceive of "the inter-ethnic" without first isolating separate "ethnic groups," a mission that is still at the very heart of the debates and polemics. It is here that the theoretical impasse blocking many researchers shows most clearly: as long as Mexican anthropology strives to define the boundaries of a potential "*afromestizo* (or Afro-Mexican) group," it will be incapable of grasping the processes by which this social entity is continually constructed and deconstructed – an entity that, although volatile and uncertain, is nevertheless active in the social field.

The ethnographical approach, which could avoid this bias and move its focus away from the ethnicization problem, sometimes plunges into it headlong. It should be added that this is usually the act of beginning anthropology students, who invest the necessary observation time and report on their work in well- or not-so-well-documented and rarely published university theses. Most of them cite the works of Aguirre Beltrán, whose ethnographic descriptions (written, it should be recalled, more

than half a century ago) emphasized the traces of Africanity in the way his subjects walked, built houses, or carried babies, for example, but also in certain healing rites and religious beliefs (Aguirre Beltrán 1989). The master's influence is all the greater since there is little to counterbalance it; Mexican students and their teachers know little of the international literature on contemporary black populations. Above all, however, today's descriptions are decontextualized (Martínez Maranto 1994, Cruz 1989), whereas Aguirre Beltrán advocated a political vision of difference that was clearly part of the relations of domination that he so skilfully analysed (Aguirre Beltrán 1972, 1989).

The positive aspect of this line of study is that it has produced updated documentation. Its theoretical limits are soon evident, however, in two slip-ups: first, when it characterizes certain practices as "black," or even "African," and second, when it associates certain practices, or sets of practices, with a collective identity that the researcher arbitrarily calls "black."

In the first case, this characterization of a given practice sends the specialist, namely the ethnologist, back to authenticating a supposedly "African" origin that relegates European or Mesoamerican influences to the background, using a system of exclusion that is apparently oblivious to the particularly intense cultural intermixing that has now been going on for several centuries. The intellectual construction on which these "Afrogenetic" interpretations (Arocha 1999, 204) are based seeks to make up for decades and centuries during which specific "black characteristics" were disregarded, interpreting that disregard as social and institutional racism which must be combated. This outlook derives in large part from the difficulty of thinking about *mestizaje* in any way other than as a negation of the "original" cultures, and its natural corollary is the privileging of "origins" as the exclusive source of legitimacy, to the detriment of a more open, dialectical, and dynamic conceptualization of cultural interactions (Gruzinski 1999). This mental block can obviously be attributed to the way *mestizaje* has been viewed over the years in Mexico, where, from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on, theorists saw "the cosmic race" (Vasconcelos 1958: 903-942) as the model of the future, liberated from

the cultural atavisms that were considered obstacles to development and national construction. This conception of *mestizaje* having been taken over first by post-revolutionary ideology and then official indigenism, which advocated Indian assimilation and integration (a view now criticized for its Eurocentrism and latent racism), it was never updated as a theory. Instead, it was replaced at the end of the twentieth century by an ethnicizing view of sociopolitical relations that was itself linked both to the recognition of the nation's multicultural and multiethnic character, and to the social and political mobilization of recent decades. Indian groups, in particular, now demand rights and civil participation on the basis of their ethnic identities. The conceptualization of the Afro-Mexican situation is thus based on a model constructed in other spheres.

A major exception to this particularist and exclusionary tendency can be found in southern Veracruz, a region García de León described as "the Afro-Andalucian Caribbean" – a term expressing the inextricable mixture of Caribbean (Cuban in particular, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries) and African influences and the contributions of the European colonists of Spanish extraction.[25] As a number of academic researchers have clearly shown (Alcántara López 2002), music, dance, food, and other cultural manifestations reflect a complex heritage that cannot be appropriated in the name of any particular one of its distant predecessors. Giving a wide berth to the reductive outlines of Afrogenetic interpretation, these researchers highlight the cultural and social creativity of those regional societies – societies that lay claim to distinctly African influences yet definitely do not portray themselves as "black".

The second theoretical blunder involves moving from the individual to the collective, assimilating diverse elements into a constructed, meaningful identity. In southern Veracruz, the Costa Chica, or the warm lands of the Balsas, no one can deny the African origin of various traits, which are joined together with other, clearly Mesoamerican or European features in an arrangement that as a whole is different from that found among the neighbours. Nor does it take any expertise to discern the presence of clearly "black" phenotypes or habitual gestures,

whether in dancing or daily life, that distinguish these areas from the Indian and *mestizo* regions of the *altiplano*, for example. Yet until now it has not been proven that this sum of distinctive elements is the basis of a collectively constructed and assumed alterity. Regional identities integrate these elements and many others that, for their part, are not specifically "of African origin:" a shared history, the type of socioeconomic hierarchy, the role of the elites, interregional alliances and rivalries, the environment and the material conditions of production and reproduction—all of these contribute just as much to the construction of a regional "us" as the "cultural characteristics" so often highlighted. Studies on regional identities long ago demonstrated that the cultural field is meaningful only if it is collectively reinterpreted in the broader framework of social, political, and economic relations within the region and with those outside it (Peña 1981, Lomnitz-Adler 1995, Ávila Palafox 1993).

In short, the current ethnographic approach is having trouble discarding the folklorizing and, ultimately, essentialist bias that initially supported it, when it had to "prove" the existence and relevance of "black" or "African traits." By equating identity exclusively with cultural elements, this approach "manufactures" identity on the basis of cultural practices[26] and is likely to foster a simplified, fragmented view of regional societies that are actually much more complex.

Certain recent studies, however, adopt a more modern approach. Taking the debate on national identity and the myths of identity construction as the context for her thinking, Laura Lewis decentralizes the Afro-Mexican issue and dismantles the multiple and often contradictory[27] mechanisms of affiliation and identification, showing the way to a different kind of anthropology. Other researchers in the same region are addressing the same problems in the course of analyzing kinship, production systems, the construction of regional history, or political systems.[28] Without apriorism or ethnic labels, these authors integrate the issues of difference into broader questions about the regional societies and social dynamics,[29] their ideas converging with the orientations already mentioned in respect to historical research in Veracruz, which have proven themselves

in other Afro-American regions. It is neither ethnicity nor affiliation with an "ethnic group" that is the organizing factor of social life, but rather practices that integrate identity differences at various levels and in variable configurations depending on the arena and what is at stake (kinship, ritual, production, political interaction, etc.). Very much present in individual and collective daily life, the "black" identity parameter delineates contrasts or proximities, yet without forming a barrier or boundary between groups; consequently, it does not offer much scope for a "multicultural" and "interethnic" conception of society. Yet this is exactly how certain trends now developing in the cultural, social, or political domains are seeking to present it.

The Agents of Ethnicization

Institutions play a decisive role in the ethnological propensity for assigning ethnic traits. The main objective of the "Third Root" programme, which has generated many monographs, is recognizing and disseminating the "specific" and "distinctive" cultural traits of black and *moreno* groups. As though having to make up for centuries of denial in just a few years, researchers now want to prove the existence and richness of a different culture by recording the distinctive aspects of its music, dance, carnival tradition, religion, body movements, or oral tradition – that is, the folkloric fields in which the local traditions are objectively "different" and describable. Thus *jarocha* music in Veracruz is being rediscovered as "black" or even African music, as are the *son de artesa* in the Costa Chica area, the Coyolillo carnival, and even the *zapateado* of Michoacán, a counterpart of the Jalisco version. Cultural events and products (festivals, holidays, conferences, videos, CDs) now proclaim "Africa" on their programmes, and form part of processes of identity invention and reconstruction that are sometimes astonishingly rapid and successful. Thus, for example, the villages of Coyolillo and Yanga in Veracruz are now presented as "black", something almost inconceivable 15 years ago. The hijacking of history by researchers, the establishment of dance and music studios operated by performers, scientific seminars, and visits

by foreign black activists and sympathizers are all instruments for this invention of tradition—instruments that are financed by cultural and academic institutions.

Thus, for several years the Mexican cultural institutions have had at their disposal effective tools and channels for disseminating the idea of a black culture, and have quickly interpreted this as the expression of a "black identity." The reaction of the relevant populations to these new conceptions of identity has oscillated from reluctance to support depending on the local context, but in general the subject has elicited neither enthusiasm nor rejection. Their attitude depends rather on the concrete form taken by the cultural action, how well it responds to local expectations (music, for example, is always very successful, as is dance) and whether it may offer advantages of some kind, whether material (access to scholarships, financing) or intangible (contacts with foreigners, regional prestige, activities). The Coyolillo and Yanga carnivals, today portrayed as "black" or even "African," are apparently also the result of a real "identity inoculation," in the words of Sagrario Cruz, the anthropologist who was at one time in charge of these cultural activities at the DGCP.

For the researchers involved, the label "ethnic black" opens doors to the North American black world, which welcomes its "forgotten brothers" of Mexico. Several US anthropologists are writing doctoral theses on the subject of the Mexican black identity (Vaughn 2004), and universities are offering programmes and opportunities for collaboration, whether in Mexico (Xalapa, in March 2004) or the US (for example, the University of Florida, the University of California, and Howard University). In general, these events focus on the struggle against the historic invisibility of blacks in Mexico and the racism implied by that invisibility, and several of them adopt plainly Afrocentric positions (Fauvelle-Aymar, Chrétien, and Perrot 2000), supporting the thesis, for example, that blacks were living in America even before the Spanish conquest. The North American researchers arrive with well-constructed discourses, validated in their home environments by consolidated university institutions, financing, or fellowships. They introduce concepts such as "interethnic rela-

tions," "institutional racism," and the "Afro-American diaspora," which are not necessarily those best adapted to the Mexican situation we outlined above. Meetings with Mexican researchers who do not use these theoretical approaches are all the more delicate since they take place against the background of objectively unequal research conditions in the researchers' respective countries of origin. It may be wondered whether these North American academics, often proponents of postcolonial and subaltern theories, are not replicating in Mexico the same mechanisms for imposing theories that they criticize in the US. The same ambiguous relationship, composed of silent or underestimated misapprehensions, characterizes the ties established in the field of Afro-American activism – as witness the strong reaction of a black international leader invited to an annual meeting of México Negro, one of the few organizations that advocates raising the ethnic consciousness of the Afro-Mexican populations. He had trouble finding any common ground with that mixed gathering, and his lecture on the black Latin-American diaspora did not resonate with most of his audience, who were primarily rural inhabitants of the Costa Chica region. He promptly concluded that his audience lacked "black authenticity" and that therefore he did not belong among them.

In contrast to this, however, is the development of other ethnicizing dynamics which are in fact anchored in the daily realities of some of their proponents. For example, the Museo de las Culturas Afromestizas (Museum of Afro-Mestizo Cultures) in Cuajinicuilapa (the Costa Chica area of Guerrero), inaugurated in 1995, is in large part the fruit of an initiative by the local elite, who wanted to create a cultural space that would belong to "the community," without any particular ethnic overtones. In doing so, they joined a nation-wide wave of new community museums and eco-museums created since the end of the 1980s with the encouragement of various institutions, particularly the INAH and the DGCP. Seeking institutional funds and support, these local promoters met with academics and politicians who were themselves interested in Afro issues and could offer already prepared museographic material on the subject. The *afromestizo* orientation of this museum—the only one of its kind in Mexico—was thus constructed through interaction and, largely,

chance, but it was smoothly and quite speedily appropriated by a *mestizo* population that saw no special reason not to celebrate this aspect of their cultural patrimony.

Other initiatives arose in the same region, such as AFRICA (Alianza Fortalecimiento de las Regiones Indígenas y Comunidades Afromestizas, or Alliance to Strengthen the Indigenous Regions and Afro-Mestizo Communities), an association created and supported by a group of local teachers and intellectuals interested in regional culture and how it has been influenced by black and Indian populations. The organization briefly mentioned earlier, México Negro, is the brainchild of a black Catholic priest from Trinidad, who moved to Mexico to organize the underprivileged black populations. Even after fifteen years of labour, at every annual meeting he confronted anew the difficulty of rallying crowds around "Afro" issues. Through his social activism and his personal connections, however, he did manage to establish himself as a key agent of institutions in need of organized spokespersons (for production, educational or health programmes, and cultural activities). In these circles he enjoys an unquestionable legitimacy that allows him to publicize the "black" problem far beyond regional boundaries and to attract foreign black militants who in turn disseminate, particularly through the Internet, the idea of an emerging "black consciousness" in Mexico. Working towards that same goal of greater international awareness, México Negro also takes part in certain Afro-American forums (the Afroamerica XXI conferences), although that participation has so far had little notable impact at the local level.

A fourth group of agents, in addition to cultural institutions, academics, and associations, is found in the local political sphere, which is tentatively beginning to integrate the Afro dimension into its activities. For example, during his 2001-2004 term the mayor of Tututepec (Oaxaca) advocated an intercultural approach at the local level through the organization of school exchanges and sports events between the "Indian villages" and the "black communities" (he is one of the few to use this term) that coexist within municipal boundaries. In 2003, for the first time, the municipal recreation committee in Pinotepa

Nacional decided to include an *afromestizo* queen in the Independence Day parade alongside the traditional queens of Spain and Indian America. More recently, the political left on the Oaxaca coast was preparing for the approaching elections (for state governor in July and municipal government in September 2004) by organizing separate meetings specifically directed at *afromestizo* populations (in October 2003) and Indian populations (a few weeks later). These several initiatives have redrawn the public space by legitimizing a differentiated participation by ethnic groups, which now include the *afromestizos* – although, to my knowledge, this applies only to the Costa Chica of Oaxaca.

Conclusion: Avenues of Research

The absence of any external categorization of the *afromestizo* populations by the Mexican state has several consequences. It leaves no potential framework for dialogue and identity confrontation by which an "*afromestizo* group" might be constructed over time, as was the case for the Mames (Chiapas), who, having suffered governmental repression and been forced to abandon their "ancestral customs" in the 1930s and 1940s, are reviving them today through political and ethnic mobilization (Hernández 2001). As a corollary, however, this lack of a framework has provided the freedom to invent other forms of identification.

A primary task would therefore be to pinpoint diverse expressions of identity (political in one area, cultural in another, ethnic in some other region), and to explain their roots at different levels, in various geographical contexts. The immediate purpose of this line of research would be to demonstrate the inconsistence of the ethnicizing positions that contribute today to a stereotyped ethnogenesis of "Afro-Mexicans." The other, more long-term objective would be to understand how space affects the construction of identities through the role it plays in power relations between actors, and between levels of action. It is particularly important to combine the scales of analysis so that instead of juxtaposing monographs, we can identify the modes of interconnection between the different spaces that, as Gupta and Ferguson suggest, shape identities over time. In the case

of localized studies, "instead of assuming the autonomy of the primeval community, we need to examine how it was formed as a community out of the interconnected space that always existed" (Gupta and Ferguson 1997, 36). Having shown that the criteria of identification are not the same at the interpersonal level as at the regional or international collective level, we must understand how these different levels mutually influence each other, and, especially, avoid examining each one in isolation.

Taking space into account would allow us to describe and analyze original identity configurations, which the inhabitants interpret and resignify in light of their own interests and current options. In the very heart of the Costa Chica region, for example, models of identification vary from one locality to the next. In one market town where the colonial and later national representatives have imposed a caste system for centuries, "the blacks" see themselves as different from the Indians and the whites. Fifty kilometres away, the historical absence of a ruling white class has allowed the development of a black and *afro-mestizo* microsociety that sees itself as "other" in relation to its Indian neighbours, whereas a black-white opposition does not seem relevant. Slightly farther away still, these various categories are ignored in favour of an idealized image of the "*mestizo*" which integrates differences without resignifying them in ethnic terms. These identity systems are based on very specific economic and political foundations, in which the relations of domination and hierarchy have given meaning to certain "differences" while ignoring others. The white elite of the market town has maintained the differentiated categorization of blacks and Indians in order to perpetuate itself as the economically and politically dominant class, while in the other two cases relations of domination were established within the subordinate groups, or between them and other subordinate groups. In these cases ethnic categorization was much less of a factor.

These contrasting situations might offer the opportunity to revisit the concept of *mestizaje*, avoiding ideologized and globalizing theories in order to focus on local practices. Exploring the multiple facets of identity (collective or personal, assigned

or reinvented, national or ethnic, etc.), Wieviorka (2004, 11) states that

> we must not only admit that different issues and problems are at stake here, but, in addition, recognize that in practice they often overlap and combine, never corresponding to sociologically pure types […]. The debate has nothing to gain by confusing everything, or by borrowing categories relating to one type of problem and applying them to other types. This is why political philosophy, though it might obviously shed some useful light, could never replace concrete knowledge of real, historic situations.

A documented and localized interpretation of *mestizo* experiences might open avenues carrying us far beyond the dead-ends of universalism and particularism. It should be recognized, however, that such an interpretation would have a narrow margin for manoeuvre, with a risk of premature abortion under the influence of North American and international radical movements that endorse ethnicizing categorizations of national societies.

Meanwhile, on the individual level, the affirmation of a "black" alterity is both obvious and painful, because of the constant reminder of difference in social relations that are never free from racism. It also gives rise, as in many other places around the world, to strategies of avoidance or denial that are reflected, for example, in the linguistic field. Designations for the black population vary considerably according to context, and the tendency to euphemism appears to increase with the distance from the place of origin. A person is "*negro*" (black) at home, "*moreno*" (dark-skinned or brunette) in town, and "Mexican" to foreigners. Thus, at the interpersonal level there are spaces of black identification, but also of hybridization and identity interplay that help individuals to position themselves with respect to the other, and to infringe the limits and boundaries between themselves and the other. Conceived thus as a positioning instrument, identification is not stable or fixed, and could help reformulate the global category of "*negro*" or "*afromestizo*" in a

more fluid and interactive sense than the current "ethnic" proposals. In this respect, Stuart Hall (1994, 395) speaks of cultural identities being "the points of identification, the unstable points of identification or suture, which are made within the discourses of history and culture. Not an essence but a positioning. Hence, there is always a politics of identity, a politics of position."

In this conception of identity, "cultural traits" are simply tools of social and political positioning that can be manipulated by individuals and groups. By examining the history of these cultural manipulations, we can perhaps understand the evolution of social groups in terms of resistance strategy rather than reproduction, always in the context of interaction with the neighbouring and surrounding societies. Still in the linguistic field, the *afromestizos* of the Costa Chica area have developed a very rich oral tradition, which owes some of its distinctiveness to the linguistic corpus used. As in the Colombian Pacific region, the black populations have retained numerous expressions from "archaic" Spanish. Custodians of a linguistic capital forgotten by others, the *afromestizos* still use it today in their cultural works (poems, ballads) and in daily life, in humorous or ironic expressions that only they understand – expressions that could be thought of as a form of linguistic marronage. They use the master's tool – the language imposed along with slavery – diverting it from its standard usage to make it into an instrument of communication accessible only to some, to insiders. If this avenue is beginning to be explored by linguists (Althoff 1994, Githiora 1999), it will also attract the attention of anthropologists.

Are modern Afro-Mexicans distinguished by a "cultural identity," an "ethnic identity," or a "collective identity"? This article's purpose is to show that this judgement cannot and should not be made, since it implies a simplistic way of thinking that obstructs understanding. Nevertheless, the analytical distinctions remain valid. In fact, Afro-Mexicans activate certain options rather than others, individually or collectively, depending on contexts, spaces, and local relations of subordination. The processes of constructing identity are for the moment still unequal in social and geographic space, largely because of or thanks to the fact that the state and institutions have no interest

in a marginal minority group without any strategic resources. Efforts to create a black Mexican "ethnic group" that could join with its "diaspora brothers" are emerging most clearly outside of the regional societies and the country itself. These tendencies, if confirmed, would run the risk of erasing far more complex processes, which do not seek to set up any clear or definitive separation between the desire for a distinct identity and the historic reality of *mestizaje*, but rather combine the two.

Notes

1. Translated by Martha Grenzeback. Adaptation of: Odile, Hoffmann. Negros y afromestizos en México: viejas y nuevas lecturas de un mundo olvidado. *Revista Mexicana de Sociología* 68(1): 103-135.

2. Like other social categories (workers, women, the poor), ethnic categories are constructions with changing boundaries that analysis cannot reduce to stable, easily definable groups according to "objective" criteria, as is the case for legally constituted nationalities. In contrast to actual nationalities, both ethnonyms (Mixtecs, Mames) and ethnic categories (Indians, Afro-Mestizos) describe social groups that are constantly redefining themselves, rather than legal or social categories with clearly established limits.

3. See Agudelo1999, 151-176.

4. The "indigenous" population is estimated at 10.5-12.5 percent of the total population of the country, depending on the criteria used and how they are combined: use of an Indian language, or member of a household in which the head or the head's spouse speaks an Indian language. See Serrano Carreto, Embriz Osorio and Fernández Ham 2002).

5. I have adopted the term Afro-Mexican because it is becoming common in Mexico, just as similar usages have spread in other countries of Latin America (Afro-Colombian, Afro-Brazilian, etc.) The word "Afrodescendants is rarely used and is more specific to international debates. However, there is no consensus on the use of "black", neither among researchers nor among the populations in question, which often do not recognize themselves as such and use their regional names instead.

6. This is true even of the "multicultural" version of the nation instituted by the constitutional reform of 1992, which amended

Article 4 to state that the Mexican nation has a multicultural composition originating in its indigenous "peoples".

7. This racism is of course not confined to the realm of interpersonal interactions, and affects society as a whole, as much today as in the past—for example, during the Mexican Revolution which recast the national identity without managing to "fix" the problem of racism. See Knight 1990.

8. The Yanga rebellion in the early seventeenth century and especially the revolt of 1735 in the Córdoba region (Veracruz) led to the formation of *palenques*, villages of free blacks. The first was founded in 1640 under the name of San Lorenzo de los Negros (today called Yanga), followed, one century later, by the village of Nuestra Señora de Amapa. See Naveda Chávez-Hita 1987.

9. At the time of the 1777 census, a priest reported the difficulties involved in determining people's "caste", noting that in his parish "there is no separate census for Spaniards alone, another for the mestizos, another for mulattos, and another for the Indians because all the castes live in the town and in one house it is common to meet people of every category; even in a single family the husband may be of one status, the wife another, and the children yet another". Quoted by Sánchez Santiró 2003, 41.

10. That is, well before emancipation in France (finally achieved in 1848), Colombia (1851), the United States (1865), Cuba (1886), and Brazil (1888).

11. Certain clichés, though persistent, do not correspond to the historical evidence. One of them is the idea that the black population is confined to certain regions, namely the Atlantic (Veracruz-Tabasco) and Pacific coasts (the Costa Chica area of Guerrero and Oaxaca). As mentioned previously, blacks were initially to be found throughout the national territory, and certain regions traditionally characterized as "white" or "creole", such as Jalisco or the northern part of the country, had very substantial black populations in the seventeenth century, now gone or effectively "diluted" by racial mixing. See Becerra 2002, Nájera 2002.

12. Thus, we are dealing here with customary categories, as will be seen further on. See Pépin Lehalleur 2003, Campos 1999, Neff 1986.

13. "It cannot be denied that in hybridization the black factor was predominant and that consequently mestizos in Cuajinicui-

lapa today are primarily black—that is, afromestizos" (Aguirre Beltrán 1989, 65).

14. In the introduction to his ethnographic work, Aguirre Beltrán reaffirmed the exceptional nature of the Costa Chica situation, reminding readers that "blacks no longer exist as a distinct group." (Aguirre Beltrán 1989, 7). Aguirre Beltrán does not capitalize categories denoting identity (indians, blacks, mixtecs), adhering to the normal usage in Mexico.

15. In particular, the foundation of the Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI—National Indigenist Institute) in 1948.

16. See Aguirre Beltrán's prologue to the 1972 edition of his work *La población negra en Mexico*.

17. Notably in the states of Guanajuato and Veracruz.

18. Centre of Studies on Asia and Africa, Colegio de México.

19. Caribbean research group.

20. Alberro 1988, Castañón González 2002.

21. Martínez Montiel 1993a, 1993b. All these references are merely token examples, since there are too many studies to cite them all here; see the bibliographies cited further on.

22. See Martínez Montiel, "La cultura africana: tercera raíz".

23. See Recondo 2001.

24. Flanet 1977. Aguirre Beltrán often mentions "the violent ethos" of the blacks of the Costa Chica; see Aguirre Beltrán 1989.

25. García de Leon 1992, 1993. The Indians had been swiftly decimated in these regions following the Spanish conquest, surviving only in the mountain enclaves of Santa Marta and the foothills around Playa Vicente.

26. Compare with Agier's "identity cultures" (Agier 2001).

27. In the case of the Costa Chica area of Oaxaca. See Lewis 2000.

28. On kinship, see Díaz Pérez 2003, 247. On production systems, see Quiroz Malca 1998. On the construction of regional history, see Pépin Lehalleur 2000. On political systems, see Lara Millán 2003.

29. As Levine remarks, the problem of categorization is not posited a priori but when we see "how ethnic categories become salient components of social and cultural action" (Levine 1999, 168).

30. For Colombia, see Losonczy 2002.

31. At both the federal and state levels: Dirección General de Culturas Populares, Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura, Instituto Oaxaqueño de Cultura, Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.

32. It is impossible to list here all the festivals or cultural events of this kind, but we will mention the annual Afro-Caribbean festival of Veracruz, created at the end of the 1980s; the seminar "Africa in Mexico" held in 2004 in Xalapa, and the various manifestations of "black music and dance" in Mexico and the provinces. Common to all is the effort to reinstate the Afro-Mexican culture by emphasizing its African "roots".

33. On Coyolillo, see Martínez Maranto 1994; on Yanga, see Cruz Carretero et al. 1990.

34. This theory is based almost exclusively on the negroid features of the Olmec heads in Veracruz. At the "Africa in Mexico" conference held in Xalapa in March 2004, a number of nationally respected archaeologists supported this theory. See de Brizuela 2004, Cuevas Fernández 2004.

35. Interviews held in Cuajinicuilapa, January 2003.

36. At the end of the nineteenth century, an observer remarked that the inhabitants of Cuajinicuilapa "are of African race" and that for that reason they "speak ancient Spanish". Quoted by Aguirre Beltrán 1989, 63.

Bibliography

Agier, Michel. 2001. Le temps des cultures identitaires. Enquête sur le retour du diable à Tumaco (Pacifique colombien). *L'Homme* 157: 87-114.

Agudelo, Carlos Efren. 1999. Participation politique des populations noires en Colombie. *Cahier des Amériques Latines* 30: 151-176.

Aguirre Beltrán, Gonzalo. 1972 [1946]. *La población negra de México: estudio etnohistórico.* Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Aguirre Beltrán, Gonzálo. 1989 [1958].*Cuijla: esbozo etnográfico de un pueblo negro.* Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Alberro, Solange B. de. 1988. Negros y Mulatos: la integración dolorosa. In *Inquisición y sociedad en México, 1571-1700.* Mexico City: FCE.

Alcántara López, Álvaro. 2002. "Negros y afromestizos del puerto de Veracruz. Impresiones de lo popular durante los siglos XVII y XVIII". In *La Habana/Veracruz, Veracruz/La Habana, Las dos orillas*, coord. Bernardo García Díaz and Sergio Guerra Vilaboy. Veracruz: Universidad Veracruzana: 166-175.

Althoff, Daniel. 1994. Afro Mestizo Speech from Costa Chica, Guerrero: From Cuaji to Cuijla. *Language Problems and Language Planning* 18: 242-256.

Argyriadis, Kali and Capone, Stefania. 2004. Cubanía et santería. Les enjeux politiques de la transnationalisation religieuse (La Havane—Miami). *Civilisations* 51: 81-137.

Arocha, Jaime. 1999. *Ombligados de Ananse. Hilos ancestrales y modernos en el pacífico colombiano.* Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia-CES.

Ávila Palafox, Ricardo. 1993. "Elites, región e identidad en el occidente de México". In *Identidades, nacionalismos y regiones*, comp. Ricardo Avila Palafox and Tomás Calvo Buezas. Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara/Universidad Complutense de Madrid.

Barabas, Alicia and Bartolomé, Miguel. 1986. *Etnicidad y pluralismo cultural: la dinámica étnica en Oaxaca*. Mexico City: Colección Regiones-CNCA.

Barth, Fredrik. 1981. "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries". In *Process and Form in Social Life: The Selected Essays of Fredrik Barth*, ed. Adam Kuper. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul: 198-227.

Barth, Fredrik. 1994. "Enduring and Emerging Issues in the Analysis of Ethnicity. In *The Anthropology of Ethnicity: Beyond "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries"*, ed. Hans Vermeulen and Cora Govers. Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis: 11-32.

Becerra, Celina. 2002. Población Africana en una sociedad ranchera. *Estudios Jaliscienses* 49: 7-19.

de Brizuela, Gladys Casimir. 2004. "Hubo negros en América Precolombina. En busca de una metodología". *3rd Annual Conference Africa en México*. Xalapa, Veracruz, 22-24 March 2004.

Campos, Luis Eugenio. 1999. "Negros y morenos. La población afromexicana de la Costa Chica de Oaxaca". In *Configuraciones étnicas en Oaxaca. Perspectivas etnográficas para las autonomías*, coord. Alicia M. Barabas and Miguel A. Bartolomé. Vol. II. Mexico City: CNCA/INAH-INI: 145-182;

Carroll, Patrick J. 1991. *Blacks in Colonial Veracruz, Race, Ethnicity and Regional Development.* Austin: University of Texas Press.

Castañón González, Guadalupe. 2002. *Punición y rebeldía de los negros en la nueva España en los siglos XVI y XVII.* Xalapa: Instituto Veracruzano de la Cultura, Colección Sextante.

Castillo Gómez, Amaranta Arcadia. 2000. "El papel de los estereotipos en las relaciones interétnicas: mixtecos, mestizos y afromestizos en Pinotepa Nacional, Oaxaca, México". Unpublished thesis. México: Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Cervantes Delgado, Roberto. 1984. "La Costa Chica. Indios, negros y mestizos". In *Estratificación étnica y relaciones interétnicas*, coord. Margarita Nolasco. Mexico City: INAH, Colección Científica #135: 37-50.

Chávez Carvajal, María Guadalupe. 1995. "Negros y mulatos en Michoacán". In *Tradición e identidad*. Coord. Agustín Jacinto Zavala and Alvaro Ochoa Serrano. Zamora: El Colegio de Michoacán: 396-397.

Cruz, Sagrario. 1989. "Identidad en una comunidad afromestiza del centro de Veracruz: la población de Mata Clara". Unpublished thesis. Pueblo: Fundación Universidad de las Américas.

Cruz Carretero, Sagrario et al. 1990. *El Carnaval en Yanga: notas y comentarios sobre una fiesta de la negritud.* Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes.

Cuevas Fernández, Hector. 2004. "¿Presencia Negra en el México arqueológico?". *3rd Annual Conference "Africa en México".* Xalapa, Veracruz, 22-24 March 2004.

Cunin, Elisabeth. 2002. *Métissage et multiculturalisme en Colombie. Le "noir" entre apparences et appartenances.* Paris: L"Harmattan-IRD, Collection Connaissances des Hommes.

Delgado Calderón, Alfredo. 2000. "La conformación de regiones en el Sotavento veracruzano: una aproximación histórica". In *El Sotavento veracruzano. Procesos sociales y dinámicas territoriales.* Coord. Eric Léonard and Emilia Velásquez. Mexico City: CIESAS-IRD.

Díaz Pérez, María Cristina. 1994. "Descripción etnográfica de las relaciones de parentesco en tres comunidades afromestizas de la Costa Chica de Guerrero". Unpublished thesis, Mexico City: Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia.

Díaz Pérez, María Cristina. 2003. *Queridato, matrifocalidad y crianza en tres comunidades de la Costa Chica*. Mexico City: CNCA/ Unidad Regional Guerrero-PACMYC.

Fauvelle-Aymar, Xavier, Chrétien, J. P and Perrot, C. H. 2000. *Afrocentrismes. L'histoire des Africains entre Egypte et Amérique*. Paris: Karthala, 2000.

Flanet, Véronique. 1977. *Viviré si Dios quiere. Un estudio de la violencia en la mixteca de la costa*. Serié de Antropología Social #55. Mexico City: INI.

García de Leon, Antonio. 1992. El Caribe afroandaluz: permanencias de una civilización popular. *La Jornada semanal* (Mexico City), 12 Jan. 1992: 27-33;

García de Leon, Antonio. 1993. "Comunidad histórica e identidad regional: los casos de Chiapas y Veracruz". In *Identidades, nacionalismos y regiones*, comp. Ricardo Avila Palafox and Tomás Calvo Buezas. Guadalajara: Universidad de Guadalajara/Universidad Complutense de Madrid: 187-197.

Githiora, Chege John. 1999. "Lexical Variation in Discourse: Socioracial Terms and Identity in an Afromexican Community". Unpublished doctoral thesis, Michigan State University.

Glazer, Nathan and Moynihan, Daniel. 1975. *Ethnicity: Theory and Experience.*Cambridge: Harvard University Press;

Gruzinski, Serge. 1999. *La pensée métisse*. Paris: Fayard.

Guevera Sanginés, María. 1994. "Participación de los africanos en el desarrollo del Guanajuato colonial". In *Presencia Africana en México*. Eds. Luz María Martínez Montiel. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Colección claves de América Latina, serie Nuestra Tercera Raíz:133-198;

Gupta,j Akhil and Ferguson, James. 1997. "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference". In *Culture, Power, Place Explorations in Critical Anthropology*, eds. Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson. Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press: 33-51.

Gutiérrez Avila, Miguel Angel. 1988. *Corrido y violencia: entre los afromestizos de la Costa Chica de Guerrero y Oaxaca*. Chilpancingo: Universidad Autónoma de Guerrero.

Hall, Stuart. 1994. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora". In *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader*. Ed. Patrick Williams

and Laura Chrisman. New York: Columbia University Press: 392-403.

Hernández, Aida. 2001. *La otra frontera. Identidades múltiples en el Chiapas poscolonial.* Mexico City: CIESAS—Miguel Angel Porrúa.

Herrera Casasús, María Luisa 1994. "Raices africanas en la población de Tamaulipas". In *Presencia Africana en México*. Eds. Luz María Martínez Montiel. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Colección claves de América Latina, serie Nuestra Tercera Raíz: 463-523.

Hoffmann, Odile. 2001. "Flux et reflux des catégories identitaires. Une lecture des politiques foncières au Mexique et en Colombie". In *Les territoires de l'Etat-Nation en Amérique Latine*. Coord. M.F. Prévot Schapira and H. Rivière d'Arc. Paris: IHEAL Editions: 101-120.

Knight, Alan. 1990. "Racism, Revolution and Indigenismo: Mexico, 1910-1940". In *The Idea of Race in Latin America, 1870-1940*. Ed. Richard Graham. Austin: University of Texas Press: 71-112.

Lara Millán, Gloria. 2003. "Raíces de color. Afromexicanos en la construcción ciudadana, Costa Chica, Oaxaca". Unpublished master's thesis. Mexico City: Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana.

Levine, Hal B. 1999. Reconstructing ethnicity. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 5: 165-180.

Lewis, Laura. 2000. Blacks, Black Indians, Afromexicans: The Dynamics of Race, Nation and Identity in a Mexican *Moreno* Community (Guerrero). *American Ethnologist* 27: 898-926.

Lomnitz-Adler, Claudio. 1995. *Las salidas del laberinto. Cultura e ideología en el espacio nacional mexicano*. Mexico City: Joaquín Mortín-Planeta.

Losonczy, Anne Marie. 2002. "De cimarrones a colonos y contrabandistas: figuras de movilidad transfronteriza en la zona dibullera del Caribe colombiano" In *Afrodescendientes en las Américas. Trayectorias sociales e identitarias*. Eds. C. Mosquera, M. Pardo and O. Hoffmann. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional, ICANH, IRD, ILSA: 215-244.

Martínez Maranto, Alfredo. 1994. "Dios pinta como quiere: Identidad y cultura en un pueblo afromestizo de Veracruz". In *Presencia Africana en México*. Eds. Luz María Martínez Montiel. Mexico

City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Colección claves de América Latina, serie Nuestra Tercera Raíz: 525-573.

Moedano Navarro, Gabriel. 1992. "Bibliohemerografía histórica y etnohistórica sobre la población de origen africano en México". In *Aportaciones a la investigación de archivos del México colonial y a la bibliohemerografía afromexicanista*. Ed. Emma Pérez-Rocha and Gabriel Moedano Navarro. Mexico City: INAH, Colección Fuentes, Serie Bibliografías: 37-64;

Moedano Navarro, Gabriel. 1997. "Los afromestizos y su contribución a la identidad cultural en el pacífico sur: el caso de la tradición oral en la Costa Chica". In *Pacífico Sur: ¿Una región cultural?*. México City: CNCA: 1-7.

Martínez Montiel, Luz María. 1993a. "La pluralidad del mestizaje". In *III Encuentro Nacional de Afromexicanistas, Colima*. Ed. Luz María Martínez and Juan Carlos Reyes. Colima: CNCA-Gobierno del Estado de Colima: 20-40.

Martínez Montiel, Luz María. 1993b. "La cultura africana: tercera raíz". In *Simbiosis de culturas. Los inmigrantes y su cultura en México*. Comp. Guillermo Bonfil Batalla. Mexico City: FCE: 111-180.

Martínez Montiel, Luz María. 1994. *Presencia Africana en México*. Mexico City: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Colección claves de América Latina, serie Nuestra Tercera Raíz.

Nájera, Mario Alberto. 2002. Los afrojalisciences. *Estudios Jaliscienses* 49: 20-32.

Naveda Chávez-Hita, Adriana. 1987. *Esclavos negros en las haciendas azucareras de Córdoba, Veracruz, 1690-1830*. Xalapa, Veracruz: Universidad Veracruzana, Historias Veracruzanas.

Neff, Francoise. 1986. "Reflexiones sobre la identidad del afromestizo de la Costa Chica de Guerrero". In *Palabras devueltas*. Ed. Jesús Jáuregui and Yves-Marie Gourio. Mexico City: INAH-IFAL-CEMCA: 71-74.

Palmer Colin, Alphonsus. 1993. "Afro-Mexican Culture and Consciousness during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries". In *Global Dimensions of the African Diaspora*. Ed. Joseph E. Harris. Washington DC: Howard University Press: 125-135.

Peña, Guillermo de la. 1981. Los estudios regionales y la antropología social en México. *Relaciones. Estudios de Historia y Sociedad* 1(8): 43-93.

Pépin Lehalleur, Marielle. 2000. "¿Existe el regionalismo popular? Reflexiones a partir de una región pluri-étnica". In *El Sotavento veracruzano. Procesos sociales y dinámicas territoriales.* Coord. Eric Léonard and Emilia Velásquez. Mexico City: CIESAS-IRD.

Pépin Lehalleur, Marielle. 2003. "¿Existe el regionalismo popular? Reflexiones a partir de una región pluri-étnica". In *Territorios, Actores y Poder, regionalismos emergentes en México.* Coord. J. Preciado Coronado et al. Guadalajara and Merida: Universidad de Guadalajara-Universidad Autónoma de Yucatán: 25-48.

Quiroz Malca, Haydee. 1998. "Las mujeres y los hombres de la sal. Un proceso de producción y reproducción cultural en la Costa Chica de Guerrero". Unpublished doctoral thesis. Mexico City: Universidad Iberoamericana.

Recondo, David. 2001. Mexique: multiculturalisme et démocratisation dans le Oaxaca. *Problèmes d'Amérique latine* 41: 45-70.

Sánchez Santiró, Ernest. 2003. *Padrón del arzobispado de México 1777.* Mexico City: AGN.

Serrano Carreto, Enrique, Embriz Osorio, Arnulfo and Fernández Ham, Patricia. coords. 2002. *Indicadores socioeconómicos de los pueblos indígenas de México.* Mexico City: INI-PNUD México-CONAPO.

Touraine, Alain. 1988. Modernité et spécificités culturelles. *Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociales* XV: 497-511.

Vasconcelos, José. 1958. "La raza cósmica". In *Obras Completas,* Vol. II. Mexico City: Libreros Mexicanos: 903-942.

Vaughn, Bobby. 2004. "Negros, una apreciación global breve". Available online at www.mexconnect.com/mx_/feature/ethnic/bv/costa.htm

Velasco, Baltazar. 2002. La costa chica. *Revista Fandango* 2: 1-2

Velázquez Gutiérrez, María Elisa. 1994. "Mujeres afromexicanas en la Nueva España". Paper presented at the IV Encuentro de Afromexicanistas. Veracruz: Instituto Veracruzano de Cultura.

Wachtel, Nathan. 1992. Note sur le problème des identités collectives dans les Andes méridionales. *L'Homme* 122-124(32) (2-3-4): 39-52.

Wieviorka, Michel. 2004. "Identités culturelles et démocratie". Paris : Séminaire ERSIPAL-IHEAL, June.

Hoffmann Odile. (2014).

The renaissance of afro-mexican studies.

In : Cunin Elisabeth (ed.). Blackness and mestizaje in Mexico and Central America.

Trenton : Africa World Press, p. 81-116. (The Harriet Tubman Series on the African Diaspora).