

ANTHROPOLOGICAL FIELDWORK
IN MESOAMERICA:
Focus on the Field

Martin Diskin

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

FIELDWORK: THE CORRESPONDENCE OF ROBERT REDFIELD AND SOL TAX.

Edited with an introduction by Robert A. Rubinstein. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1991. Pp. 354. \$49.95 cloth.)

CORN IS OUR BLOOD: CULTURE AND ETHNIC IDENTITY IN A CONTEMPORARY AZTEC INDIAN VILLAGE. By Alan R. Sandstrom. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991. Pp. 420. \$39.95 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

THE DECLINE OF COMMUNITY IN ZINACANTAN: ECONOMY, PUBLIC LIFE, AND SOCIAL STRATIFICATION, 1960–1987. By Frank Cancian. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1992. Pp. 300. \$42.50 cloth.)

ZAPOTEC WOMEN. By Lynn Stephen. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991. Pp. 316. \$35.00 cloth, \$14.95 paper.)

SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN OAXACA: A HISTORY OF RESISTANCE AND CHANGE. By Arthur D. Murphy and Alex Stepick. (Philadelphia, Pa.: Temple University Press, 1991. Pp. 282. \$39.95 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

NATIVE ETHNOGRAPHY: A MEXICAN INDIAN DESCRIBES HIS CULTURE. By H. Russell Bernard and Jesús Salinas Pedraza. (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1989. Pp. 648. \$75.00 cloth.)

RESISTANCE AND CONTRADICTION: MISKITU INDIANS AND THE NICARAGUAN STATE, 1894–1987. By Charles R. Hale. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1994. Pp. 243. \$42.50 cloth.)

The turf of cultural anthropology has been largely self-defined. Its often exotic subject matter has placed the domain of the anthropological outside the critical purview of other social sciences. Anthropology has become what anthropologists do, and its venues for practice its "field." Anthropology's self-definition has given anthropologists enormous leeway to extend and modify the scope of material studied. It has also permitted drawing on the entire array of the social sciences, natural sciences, and literature for intellectual orientation and nourishment. That is the good news.

In general, cultural anthropologists have tried to study bounded social units. In Mesoamerica, these units have been peasant villages

(often Indian) bearing cultural attributes that reflect in some manner their pre-Columbian past. Defining "the field" this way has given rise to useful debates concerning cultural content (pre-Columbian survivals or artifacts of colonial mercantile capitalism), peasants as an underclass exploitable by the state or highly evolved survivors of state predation, and survival strategies of the rural and urban poor. But the village community as the frame for study allows too many important phenomena to go unobserved and unanalyzed. That is the bad news. Limiting the physical or intellectual horizon for anthropologists seems to be accompanied by a distaste for local expressions of resistance or dissatisfaction toward the state, new (that is, nontraditional) forms of organizing, and a discourse that borrows heavily from the national and international political scene. Excluding such manifestations from the canon makes the events like those in Chiapas in January 1994 seem bizarre and unique. Explanations after the fact by anthropologists that appeal to "superstition" and "ritual" mock serious attempts at social change and denigrate the efforts of long-suffering communities.¹ It may not be possible to predict future events like Chiapas, but an ethnographic framework that gives no hint of the ferment freely expressed by Indians and peasants will render anthropology increasingly irrelevant. For cultural anthropology to remain a vital participant in discussions of contemporary Mesoamerica, a more agile and adaptable sense of "the field" is necessary.

Two features have forced changes in the definition of the field as the unit to be studied and the range of problems selected. One is the profound deterioration of civil society experienced by the groups whom anthropologists study. Deepening poverty resulting from corrosive inflation, the withdrawal of subsidies for basic grains, land-tenure changes, and reduction of state services have all profoundly undermined the lives of peasant-Indian populations, radically transforming or eliminating the more traditional bases for productive self-sufficiency. These forces emanate from the national and international environments, and efforts to understand their impact must therefore devote a part of field observation to those locations.

Over the past decade, the Mexican rural landscape has evidenced these changes. Guatemala and El Salvador (as well as Honduras to a lesser degree) have experienced violent state reaction to movements for social change, responses reflecting an eroding economic situation and historically repressive regimes. In many cases (especially in Guatemala), this state violence has destroyed the notion of community enshrined in the classic anthropological literature. In Nicaragua, radical populist policies engendered civil war, and internal opposition to the revolutionary

1. Evon Z. Vogt, "Chiapas: Rebellion, Ritual, and the Supernatural," *Boston Globe*, 31 May 1994, p. 15.

government was strongly supported by the United States. The result for local populations was as violent and dislocating as in the other countries.

The second factor is the increased attention being paid by social scientists to ethnicity, gender, and social class, which made it more difficult to focus on male leaders of community opinion. Throughout Latin America, the Islamic world, central Europe, and what was then the Soviet Union, movements were demanding autonomy or sovereignty based on ancient land rights and cultural specificity. Meanwhile, the feminist movement in the United States and Europe gave rise to a vigorous literature that demanded finer grained observation and analysis of family, including ethnographic attention to women. The working class, peasants, and the middle class were all in flux and acquiring new modalities of action.

In Mesoamerica to varying degrees, the combination of historic change (economic and state violence) and new social science perspectives were causing reconsideration of conventional approaches. This tendency was perhaps best reflected in the activist commitment of many social scientists to the idea of agency: that even the powerless victims of social injustice behaved in purposeful manners. As formulated by James Scott, agency was demonstrated by counterhegemonic behavior through social movements or symbolic performance.²

For cultural anthropology, the congruence of field and community became problematic. In a complex national environment like Mexico, it became untenable (or politically awkward) to limit one's attention to a microcosm when the economic climate clearly was involved in major transformations such as increased migration, alterations in agriculture and other livelihoods, community governance and maintenance of public order, and ritual and ideological practice. In Guatemala, state policy dictated the murder of individuals and communities, leaving devastation and fear where the literature had once described self-regulated communities.

I recognize that many anthropologists value the classical ethnography, that is, an account of the world from an interior ("native") perspective. Many works of this kind are still being written. After making the tremendous investment of time in one group or community required to understand culture in its own terms, it is daunting to build the layer of macro forces into the description and analysis. For Mesoamerica, an excellent statement of ethnographic practice and its difficulties may be found in *Fieldwork: The Correspondence of Robert Redfield and Sol Tax*. Their correspondence occurred mainly in the late 1930s, as they were both trying to establish the conditions for fieldwork in the Guatemalan highlands. For these anthropologists, the human observer was the best instrument for

2. James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven, Conn: Yale University Press, 1976); and Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1985).

representing native reality. They were acutely aware of the pitfalls in different approaches but sought to overcome these by refining themselves into better instruments. Well-steeped in the dominant theoretical currents of their day, Redfield and Tax were quite modern in connecting fieldwork with ambitious theoretical goals. Yet although Rubinstein shows them to have been very thoughtful and respectful of the difficulty of the enterprise, they seem to have had little or no awareness of the socio-economic position of Indians within Guatemala nor of the idea that state policy or national values have much bearing on Indian identity or behavior. Their perspective is so synchronic that they appear to believe that the Indians of the 1930s arose in an autochthonous fashion parallel to, but outside of, history.

An important question (one that deserves another essay) is whether such traditional ethnographic practice is not a distortion in view of the formative pressures on communities that emanate from the state and the wider environment. Or to put the matter another way, is the effort to present "an interior view" nothing more than a Western conceit?³

The seven books discussed here all seek to present the findings of research against a changed background. Their efforts fall into three categories. First, efforts to remain rooted to what Frank Cancian terms a "localist perspective": to describe and analyze the community while building in regional, national, and international factors and showing their influence on the local scene. Second, efforts to change the ethnographic focus, not necessarily away from the community but rather to concentrate on previously overlooked social segments or to introduce new problem orientations. Third, efforts to take the classical fieldwork definition and make it the subject of questioning, to "problematize" it (using the current jargon).

In reviewing these books, it has become clear to me that it is not so easy to escape the comfortable patterns of the past, even when an author is acutely conscious of a new environment. The real purpose of this review, then, is to tease out the operative sense of field in each work and compare it with the author's stated intention and to suggest, where appropriate, how a revised sense of field might forward understanding.

The Localist Perspective

Alan Sandstrom's *Corn Is Our Blood: Culture and Ethnic Identity in a Contemporary Aztec Indian Village* would not have been included in this

3. In this regard, see James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth-Century Culture, Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988); M. J. Fischer and George E. Marcus, *Anthropology as Cultural Critique* (Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press, 1986); and Renato Rosaldo, *Culture and Truth: The Remaking of Social Analysis* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 1989).

review except for the promise held out by the subtitle of elucidating both culture and ethnic identity among the “contemporary Aztecs” of Amatlán, Veracruz. Sandstrom’s twenty-year association with this community has yielded a rich corpus of work, and this book is a standard account of the culture of one community where most of the data were collected in the native language (Nahuatl in this case). One might argue that any thorough look at a community like this one is enough for one researcher to produce. But the end result offers less than promised, especially in the area of ethnicity.

Amatlán is an agricultural community that practices slash-and-burn cultivation in a semi-tropical environment. For Sandstrom, ethnicity is expressed through community demands for more land and by maintaining the mask of Indianness in the more cosmopolitan setting of the regional market towns. That is, the conscious acting out of Indian stereotypes (of humility and diminished capacity) keeps the outside world at a distance. Overlooked here is the nature of these Aztecs’ neighbors, the mestizo ranchers who regularly invade Indian lands and do not shrink from violence. They ensure their control over land and other resources and, as employers, keep agricultural wages low. The ranchers have an idea of Indianness that suits their purposes. They also have more knowledge and control over local political and judicial processes.

An account of the Aztecs of Amatlán that would explain culture and ethnic identity should have had a wider sense of field. Sandstrom explains that to be Indian means to be a tiller, a notion apparently accepted by both Indians and ranchers. Thus Indians do not hate everything about the ranchers because they are a source of employment and “in the complex world of modern Mexico, the Indians need the mestizo sector of the national economy to sustain many aspects of their village traditions. The mestizo world therefore represents at the same time the oppressors and the safety valve for Indian society” (p. 101). This statement hardly squares with Sandstrom’s assertion that “Indians play the game somewhat differently from the mestizos in part to gain advantages in a system that is stacked against them. . . . [T]hey cultivate their Indianness and, by thus separating themselves from mestizo neighbors, change both the rules of the political and economic struggle and the definitions by which success is measured” (p. 45). It sounds rather as if Indians accept inferior status in order to not make waves, a position of resigned acceptance and retreat from possible conflict. Except for information on land petitioning and some squatting on unused land, the behavior of Indians in Amatlán as described by Sandstrom offers no evidence that they have changed the rules of the game or have achieved any advantage in the local setting.

Corn Is Our Blood could have included the ranchers as study objects to flesh out the mestizo view of Indians, although the inclusion of

work by Frans Schryer in the bibliography suggests that Sandstrom is aware of the exploitative and coercive surroundings in which the Indians live. The study also could have explained more fully the legal and judicial situation of landholding that makes it difficult to be viable economically in agriculture and how the Indians are condemned to poverty as long as they cultivate maize the way they do.

Perhaps the greatest unfulfilled promise of *Corn Is Our Blood* is that the rich cultural information is not tempered by whatever ethnicity might mean in this situation. When a group is defined as being at the bottom of the socioeconomic heap because of being Indian, one would expect some reflection in their ideological system, ritual practice, and other areas of culture. Studies by Miguel Alberto Bartolomé and Alicia Barabas of the Mixe and Chatino show that contemporary myths and rituals, while similar in form to older practices, act as comments on present straitened circumstances and felt oppression.⁴ The saying "Corn is our blood" could have served as an identifying community motto for centuries in Amatlán, but it must also have undergone shifts in nuance numerous times in the past. The narrow sense of field used here prevents readers from perceiving its present incarnation.

Frank Cancian's *The Decline of Community in Zinacantan: Economy, Public Life, and Social Stratification, 1960–1987* seeks to document the decline by means of economic changes emanating from massive state and federal expenditures for development, education, and health in Chiapas. These changes are presented in information about state and federal programs and their budgets. Cancian also introduces life histories of persons whose employment status has changed radically over this period of time as well as documented shifts in the nature of community ritual.

Cancian's plan was to stick to the community that has yielded data for three previous books and many articles, that is, to draw on his own strengths and the considerable information about the Chiapas highlands accrued through more than a generation of attention by the Harvard Project. This "localist" approach is sensible in that it provides an arena in which macroeconomic change plays out in everyday lives. Cancian takes his readers a step beyond studies that demonstrate local change, but he has not expanded his ethnographic frame to include the settings where change is negotiated, planned, and implemented.

In the third chapter of *The Decline of Community in Zinacantan* on the government, Cancian presents data about new agencies and bureaucracies with large budgets whose action "was the principal direct cause of

4. Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, *Narrativa y etnicidad entre los chatinos de Oaxaca*, Cuadernos de los Centros Regionales, (Oaxaca: Centro Regional de Oaxaca, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1979); and Alicia Barabas y Miguel Alberto Bartolomé, *El Rey Cong-hoy: tradición mesiánica y privación social entre los Mixes de Oaxaca* (Oaxaca: Centro Regional de Oaxaca, Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia, 1984).

change in Zinacanteco economic life" (p. 27). That phenomenon, despite its causal quality, is treated largely through the writings of political scientists, some high-ranking bureaucrats' accounts of their actions, and data taken from official sources. That is, little or no ethnographic attention is devoted to the implementing agents of state policy. Although budgets have shrunk and expectations diminished due to the economic decline of the late 1970s and 1980s, programs and bureaucrats were still available when Cancian was collecting data for this book. This chapter will seem somewhat naive to the many political scientists who examine the development process by interviewing and interacting with its agents in order to show the real processes in contrast to the often self-interested accounts written by bureaucrats.⁵ That is indeed the essence of ethnographic fieldwork. Because highland Chiapas and Zinacantan in particular have been Cancian's field for so long, his present task would have been better served by widening the definition of field by conducting ethnographic work among the white-collar (or white-*guayabera*) natives. By doing so, Cancian might have been able to show the real developmental agenda and not merely the shifts in line items over time. Such research might have developed in more detail the way real opportunity presented itself to Zinacantecos in order to explain individual survival strategies.

Community decline focuses on the changes in political leadership through shifting alliances with national political parties seen against the backdrop of the *cargo* system. Once again, intrusion by political parties into these traditional closed communities is not treated by including party functionaries within the definition of field to determine what their goals were. Readers are left with several questions. Should one assume that the influx of money, inevitably through channels of the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI), was accompanied by efforts to gain party loyalists? And once the process was started, did community factionalism provide an opening for penetration by the Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN)? Or were the affiliations with national parties merely skin-deep and used by individuals to gain access to resources?

Cancian's measurement of change is largely quantitative, and the use of these data, especially new statistical treatment of old data, is often esoteric (pp. 188–97). Cancian uses information from his early work on the *cargo* system as elements for diachronic analysis. Along the way, he engages other students of Chiapas in what appear to be disputes of interest mainly to themselves (such as his discussion with Haviland of *cargo* careers, p. 277).

Cancian's measurement of changes at the level of the *municipio* (itself an aggregate statistic that conceals considerable variation at the

5. For example, see Jonathan Fox, *The Politics of Food in Mexico: State and Social Mobilization* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1992).

hamlet level) are convincing but lack significance concerning their stability or the depth of these changes. This problem reflects his lack of a theoretical framework that would add depth to the localist details. Cancian's contrast between modernization and Marxist theories and his adherence to the "third way" found in Eric Wolf and William Skinner is unconvincing (pp. 3–6).⁶ More important, this discussion is not presented in anything like adequate detail to accommodate the wealth of quantitative data. Cancian seems to recognize this shortcoming: "I believe it is possible to be clear about what happened in Zinacantan, and not so clear about how to interpret it" (p. 200). With all the accumulated attention that has been paid to this study site, interpretation is a reasonable expectation.

Shift in Focus

In *Zapotec Women*, Lynn Stephen sets herself an ambitious task. Her primordial ethnographic focus is the women of Teotitlán del Valle, a Zapotec community in the Oaxaca Valley that has achieved wide recognition for its weaving industry. Stephen also seeks to unite notions of ethnicity, class, and gender and how they constantly interact in village life. Her goals place *Zapotec Women* among the studies that have reshaped the problematic rather than the venue for study. Inevitably, however, a different optic requires looking at social life differently, and she does. Although many field-workers in the Oaxaca Valley have been told by villagers that womens' roles are crucial in agriculture and ceremonial life, few works have focused on women's participation in craft production.

Perhaps the most ambitious effort in this book is Stephen's second chapter, "Ethnicity, Class, and Social Reproduction: The Frames of Women's Daily Lives." Here she seeks to construct a theoretical guide that will give deeper meaning to the ethnographic details of village life. Stephen draws on the feminist literature of the past twenty years and also on other sources. For example, she defines ethnicity as something "used by a group of people in particular situations where they are trying to assert their status vis-à-vis another group of people, often for political, economic, or social reasons" (p. 11). Ethnicity is linked to resistance or to counterhegemony, following the tenets of Antonio Gramsci and James Scott. Given the self-consciousness built into this notion of ethnicity, Stephen suggests the possibility of a variety of ethnic identities projected in differing contexts. For example, she asserts that Teotitecos project one kind of ethnicity in the context of selling their wares outside the village and a somewhat different one among fellow villagers.

6. See Eric Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Java," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13 (1957):1–18; and William G. Skinner, "Chinese Peasants and the Closed Community: An Open and Shut Case," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 13 (1971):270–81.

Class is used to express socioeconomic stratification and can be perceived mainly in economic rank that reflects occupation and income. The most interesting aspect of this chapter is the effort to tie gender, class, and ethnicity together through the concept of social reproduction. Stephen distinguishes between biological reproduction, reproduction of the labor force, and social reproduction, by which she means the "reproduction of conditions necessary for the continued existence of a particular mode of production." But instead of developing the idea of mode of production and tapping into the rich literature on it, she follows Lourdes Benería in "moving it out of a mode of production orientation and rephrasing it as 'the reproduction of conditions sustaining a social system'" (p. 37). This move appears to me to jettison the ethnographic clarity that the mode of production framework offers only to substitute something considerably more vague. Subsequent uses of this term do not substantiate Stephen's claim that it unifies and interrelates gender, class, and ethnicity, especially as they apply to women (see pp. 251, 253–54).

Stephen's ethnographic presentation is organized around the three institutions of *respet* (ritual authority), *compadrazgo*, (ritual kinship), and *guelagueta* (reciprocal gift-giving, mainly for ritual activities). According to Stephen, these institutions "provide a basis of power and resources for all women in the community" (p. 29). But her ethnographic account of women in commercial and ritual contexts in Teotitlán points out that despite women's crucial importance in production and ritual, they remain without power and real control of resources. Stephen later calls for breaking the "economic marginalization of rural women on the basis of their femaleness, poverty, and indigenous identity" (p. 251). Thus although she creates a framework for understanding an understudied social element (women) and fleshes out all areas of social life where women exercise purposeful behavior (or "agency"), Stephen seems reluctant to face the asymmetry and powerlessness to which they are subject. Her complex presentation of guiding ideas coupled with her valuable observations of real women's lives in this community present the participation of women here in spite of their "hidden voices" (p. 208).

Arthur Murphy and Alex Stepick's *Social Inequality in Oaxaca: A History of Resistance and Change* shifts the field focus away from one bounded community to a way of life: urban existence in the secondary Mexican city of Oaxaca. The great strength of this book lies in its historic account of the city's development against the backdrop of Mexican history. The richest description and analysis concern the period after World War II, when many characteristics of the modern city were developed. The account of the contemporary period (from the 1970s to the present) is based on extensive survey research in all the city's urban settlements conducted in 1977 and again in 1987. The 1977 study contained data on fifteen hundred households, but the nature of the 1987 survey is not

reported here. Murphy and Stepick evidently decided to present their data in narrative style rather than in a barrage of tables. This approach is both a strength and a weakness.

Social Inequality in Oaxaca achieves a nice balance between theorizing and presenting data. The organizing hypothesis posits a cyclical relation of engagement and disengagement between local urban centers and a broader system: "during periods of engagement, social inequality increases along with externally induced efforts (usually only partially successful) to reduce Oaxaca's political autonomy. With disengagement, social equality and political autonomy increase" (p. 4). This hypothesis is examined from the beginning of urbanism in the Oaxaca Valley, about the fourth century B.C. Measures of engagement, definition of the broader system, and evidence for equality or inequality are all rough for the pre-Hispanic period. Murphy and Stepick's discussion makes it clear nevertheless that central Oaxaca has been the site of urban settlement for two millennia and that these urban locales were part of complex polities with considerable economic and commercial interconnections. The authors periodically sum up the stratification system of the city at key moments in their narrative.

The core of *Social Inequality in Oaxaca* analyzes the city and the locations where ordinary working families live, places far from the Oaxaca that is deservedly known as a touristic gem of Mexico. The study also shows the value of Murphy and Stepick's central hypothesis for the modern period. Oaxaca's hinterland, unlike other regions in Mexico, maintained the integrity of its community land base after nineteenth-century liberal reforms. Thus rural populations had less incentive to migrate to the city because Oaxacan villages offered a decent living and a rich social and ceremonial life. When the presence of central government increased during the 1950s and 1960s, migration picked up, especially from the more blighted parts of the state like the Mixteca Alta. The migratory stream subsequently swelled as residents sought to escape poor rural conditions like drought and the economic crisis of the 1970s and 1980s.

New migrants put up their own housing, efforts that Murphy and Stepick believe have relieved the state of its responsibility to provide housing. The resulting squatter settlements with their irregular tenure, water shortages, and lack of health and educational services were rational responses to the cities' labor requirements as well as an expression of the mobility aspirations of rural migrants. These new settlements also extended the social stratification system, that is to say, they intensified inequality.

Although the new migrants came from the countryside, their mobility strategies were modern. They valued education universally, with many foregoing consumer comforts to send their children to school. But ethnic identity changed radically with urban residence, and Indianness was abandoned. Yet their urban neighborhoods exhibited little

anomie and family breakdown. Throughout all the social strata that Murphy and Stepick define, the family remains the real and ideal vehicle for survival and mobility. Family composition varies across strata, however, with the poorest families being those with least labor power. Yet the vagaries of family developmental cycles are somewhat overridden by multifamily households. Occasionally, larger organizational forms such as neighborhood associations or unions arise and act to achieve specific goals, but they seem transient in comparison with households.

Through the family histories provided in *Social Inequality in Oaxaca*, the reader gets a clear picture of the origins of these new Oaxacans and the variety of their survival strategies. These histories are so illustrative that with this book as guide, one could go to the neighborhoods described and see the logic and structure of household and community.

The one cavil I have with this study is that it relegates the survey material to the far background. While the data presentation reflects participant-observation, archival study, and case histories, the creation of social strata, household composition, and other important topics derive from the surveys, and one finds no discussion of the contours of the database. For those interested in how to represent such a large and varied population, this information would have been helpful. The appendix entitled "Further Reading" is very useful for urban anthropology courses or for those interested in including an urban section in a course on Mesoamerica (see pp. 239–48).

Another way that anthropology has had it easy is that its subjects of investigation have rarely if ever spoken in their own voice. Their silence has led to intellectual hegemony for those with degrees in anthropology and perversely marginalized members of the groups being studied. Some linguists, Kenneth Hale for example, have suggested that a native speaker would make a better linguist with some formal training than a professional linguist who must operate in a language foreign to her or him. Russell Bernard has tested this proposition and reveals much about anthropological representation in the book he co-wrote with Jesús Salinas Pedraza, *Native Ethnography: A Mexican Indian Describes His Culture*. Long a student of the ñähñu language and culture, Bernard devised a keyboard for a standard computer that a native speaker could use to write this previously unwritten language. In 1972 Salinas, a bilingual schoolteacher and longtime coworker of Bernard's, began writing texts on ñähñu folktales and stories using a conventional but somewhat uncomfortable orthography to represent ñähñu. Over time and with advances in microcomputer technology, Bernard developed a genuine keyboard whose output could be instantly recognized on the screen as WYSIWYG (meaning "what you see is what you get") and dumped to a high-quality printer that could present a publisher with camera-ready copy. In so doing, Bernard opened the door to a radically alternative path for representing

indigenous cultural data: the direct account by members of the culture. This development also gave rise to questions that still need to be discussed fully.

When Salinas asked for guidance in how to write ethnography, Bernard suggested that he begin with the setting. Salinas also asked questions about what was appropriate to include, and Bernard recalls his own reaction: "I was nonplussed. The fact is, *I could not have formed the appropriate questions in ñähñu that would have retrieved that kind of information from a ñähñu person*" (Bernard's emphasis). *Native Ethnography* is largely the result of their collaboration. Bernard's interesting preface and introduction present Salinas's six hundred pages of ethnography, which are subdivided into four large sections—"The Geography," "The Fauna," "The Flora," and "Religion"—all presented in English. Bernard points out that as much subjectivity, selectivity, and intracultural variation exist within the professional anthropological repertoire as might be found in Salinas's work. He further suggests that Salinas's ethnography is one of the few examples of writing in which literacy occurred in one's native language (ñähñu) only after becoming literate in a second language (Spanish).

By meeting such questions head on, Bernard is effectively agreeing with Hale about native proficiency and admitting that Western professional status may not be the exclusive qualification for representing other languages and cultures. The implications of that idea are enormous. Once "native ethnographies" are accepted into the canon as legitimate expressions of ethnographic representation, an ethnic divide will have been crossed. Although members of some indigenous groups have already contested professional accounts of aspects of their culture or society, few native ethnographies have been realized that present an alternative to the professional, credentialed effort. Bernard makes it clear that all the previous "first-person accounts" have in one way or another been the product of intense interaction with a tutelary anthropologist. Given the large number of bilingual indigenous individuals in Mexico, it is to be hoped that this promising beginning will be followed by many more such works with anthropologists acting like Bernard in welcoming indigenous colleagues as coequals in the anthropological enterprise.

As the nature of anthropological fieldwork changes and the state (through its agents, programs, policies, and bureaucratic structures) is included in the definition of field, another problem will emerge: who will be the anthropologist's client? At present, it is tacitly assumed to be the indigenous community. But with a revised sense of field, might some anthropologists not feel closer in interests and predilections to the state than to their indigenous objects of study? Possibly some field-workers will distinguish between anthropology as a self-contained entity, and Indians and bureaucrats will be actors on the same stage as part of the

same process. Will anthropologists not simply be saying that the academic enterprise is where their primary interest lies and that their clients (or patrons) will be the funding institutions, anthropology departments, or other career opportunities as anthropologists for which a stint of fieldwork is one of the necessary *bona fides*? Thus the effort to achieve greater clarity in defining the field soon leads to a consideration of interests, something currently not being discussed much.

In doing the research for *Resistance and Contradiction: Miskitu Indians and the Nicaraguan State, 1894–1987*, Charles Hale had to face this question as a practical matter while working among Miskitu communities on the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua. Because he was working through a research agency with strong ties to the Sandinista government, he was aware of their expectations of his research. The Sandinistas viewed fieldwork as something like polling, that is to say, discovering what local sentiment might be toward an emerging policy that would end the warfare or enlist citizens to support generally revolutionary goals. Hale found such questions to be the wrong ones, and his interaction with one community showed him much deeper roots of the conflict than the Sandinistas perceived. He communicated both points of view to each side and was occasionally suspected of being an agent of the other side. Hale's dilemma was that while generally agreeing with the Sandinista project, his experience in a particular community did not permit him to view the inhabitants as "counterrevolutionary" simply because they were intrigued with notions like autonomy (in a different form from that proposed by the Sandinistas) or a Miskitu nation.

Most of *Resistance and Contradiction* is an ethnography of a community undergoing strong social conflict. The contradictions experienced by the anthropologist need not have figured in the text. But Hale's eloquent statement of the pressures he felt points out that virtually all fieldwork entails contradictory elements that are usually disregarded. Full awareness of what the field is should include the abundance of contradictions that are brought to bear on the field-worker.

Greater awareness of field might well become the task of anthropologists because it will soon be raised by those we study as they develop the capacity to read and criticize our work. Their criticism will often express the accusation that anthropologists' allegiances and interests lie elsewhere than with those being studied. And texts will be produced that flatly contradict anthropological judgment and writing based on the impossibility of outsiders' understanding native culture. The only real rejoinder to this objection is to advocate a pluralistic anthropology of overt interests in which conversations can occur among professional anthropologists, indigenous commentators, and anyone else with information and a point of view. The time for such advocacy is now.