BEING INDIAN IN *CIUDAD DE GUATEMALA*

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Abstract: ***This article first briefly presents the history of the Guatemala main cities in the context of the process of dichotomization of Guatemalan society, which is nowadays divided into two equally numerous ethnic and social groups: native (Indian), represented mainly by the most numerous Mayan ethnic groups (Quiché, Kaqchikel, Keqchí, Mam), and Ladino (mixed white/Creole-Indian). In the next part, I discuss several sociological and anthropological works on Guatemala City. Finally, I address how the forming process of "being Indian" in the capital of Central American Guatemala has been constructed. Here I combine a review of the vast ethnographic work of Guatemalan social anthropologist Manuela Camus with my personal reflection.***

Key words: ***Ciudad de Guatemala/Guatemala City, Indians, Ladino People, ethnicity, urban anthropology.***

1. Introduction

In this article I employ both theoretical and ethnographic material in order to inquire into the construction of ethnicity of Central American Guatemala Indian inhabitants who have been increasingly moving from the countryside (mainly mountain regions) to bigger cities, especially to Ciudad de Guatemala, the capital of Guatemala, as well as to Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, Chiquimula, Antigua Guatemala and many others. I rely not so much on my own research but on a large ethnography by Manuela Camus, which I am trying to supplement with my own short ethnographic observations from 1996, 2000–2002, 2004 and mostly from 2005, as well as with theoretical approaches to the study of ethnicity in the context of urban anthropology. The title of the article was inspired by the name of Camus' book *Ser Indígena en Ciudad de*

Guatemala[1]. The article was originally written as a review of the book; however it has since been revised and expanded into its present form.

2. Brief historical-sociological overview of Guatemala[2]

Guatemala is the most populated, though not the largest, Central American country. It can also be understood as a space where the highest density of the original native population is concentrated. Natives represent about 50% of all inhabitants, i.e., 7,000,000 people, who are mostly of Mayan origin[3]. The core of the native settlement is situated in mountainous regions of the departments of El Quiché, Sololá, Totonicapán, Chimaltenango, etc. Here, the gradual occupation of forming colonial Guatemalan territory started. Spaniards, under the leadership of Cortés's companion Pedro de Alvarado, firstly conquered one of the most important Late Post-Classic native centers of Iximché[4] and then on the July 25, 1524, founded nearby the first capital "city" of Tecpan Guatemala[5]. Because the conquest of the main Mayan regions went on very quickly and also because the Kaqchikel incessantly attacked the newly born city, Spaniards shifted their center farther to the south, where, on the November 22, 1527, in one of the fertile valleys, the second capital city, nowadays known as Ciudad Vieja[6], was founded. The dynamics of the process of founding Guatemalan capital cities was afterwards strongly influenced by natural disasters. The most fertile Guatemalan valleys are situated in still seismically very active regions, in the foothills of several volcanoes. One of them, the Agua Volcano, caused, on the September 11, 1541, huge floods and an earthquake that destroyed the

1 Indeed, Camus borrowed the title of the book from Judith Friedlander's *Ser indio en Hueypan*. México: FCE, 1975. Camus's book was published in Guatemala by the publishing house FLACSO in 2002.

2 In a much more detailed way, I am dealing with the forming of Guatemalan society from the Pre-Columbian era until the present in the currently prepared book *Dějiny Střední Ameriky* for NLN.

3 A more numerous native population than in Guatemala lives only in South-American Bolivia. Nevertheless, concerning the density of population it is 10 times less dense than in Guatemala.

4 Iximché was the capital of a new kingdom of Kaqchikel (1470–1524), shortly before the coming of the Spaniards. It is situated in the present department of Chimaltenango.

5 The present city of Tecpan is situated about 3 kms from the archaeological site Iximché. Spaniards were probably afraid of Kaqchikel revenge and did not want to build their first city on the ruins of this sacred place and chose the less important locality of Tecpan for the new city. They called their first capital city Villa de Santiago de Guatemala after Saint James, an important Spanish saint, who had his name-day on the day of the foundation.

6 Only this place can be understood as a permanently inhabited locality with a formal ground plan and a center of colonial administration (Luján Muñoz 1998: 26).

second Spanish center. The colonial authorities then quickly shifted the administrative center into the nearby valley of Panchoy and founded the third capital city of Santiago de Guatemala[7]. There, Spaniards succeeded in creating a relatively strong administrative organization on the basis of which they gradually conquered all the territory of contemporary Guatemala. While some powerful dominions of the Quiché, Kaqchikel, Tzutujil or Mam in the high mountains were conquered during the first half of the 16th century, some marginal groups such as the Itza were not dominated until strenuous expeditions to rain-forest regions in the North at the very end of the 17th century. Spaniards stayed in Antigua throughout the whole Colonial Period, until one of the other active volcanoes, Santa Marta, destroyed the city in 1773. Since destructive eruptions had indeed occurred before, the Spanish crown reacted this time by an ordinance to move the capital city once more. The fourth and last capital of Guatemala was founded on the January 2, 1776, in one of the neighboring valleys, Valle de la Ermita, about 40 kms from the original place. It was called La Nueva Guatemala de la Asunción[8] and is nowadays known as Ciudad de Guatemala or by the English name of Guatemala City[9].

This briefly sketched development of the founding of main administrative centers of Guatemala makes evident the fact that has been discernible since the early Colonial Period – a rather quick formation of a basic socio-political dichotomy conventionally called "The Republic of Spaniards" and "The Republic of Indians"[10]. These "republics" were formally separated by legislation as well as naturally by means of various and region-dependent degrees of alienation of both ethnic substrates. While close to lower situated communities of Antigua, Ciudad de Guatemala, Santa Ana de Chimaltenango, etc., Spaniards lived with Indians, inhabiting dispersed settlements near

7 The city was later, on the June 10, 1566, re-named by the Spanish king Philip II to Muy Noble y Muy Leal Ciudad de Santiago de los Caballeros de Guatemala (i.e. "The very Nobel and very Loyal City of James of the Gentlemen of Guatemala"). Today the official name of the city is Antigua Guatemala, but it is better known under the abbreviated name Antigua and, thanks to numerous colonial heritage sites, it was included on the UNESCO World Heritage List. At present, Antigua is for many reasons a frequented place, mainly by young people who come to study Spanish as well as some Mayan languages, marimba, salsa, or to learn the techniques of weaving of pre-Hispanic textiles, making ceramics, processing jade, etc. Due to a pleasant climate, colonial atmosphere and the openness of the local people, Antigua is one of the tourist "Meccas" of the Western Hemisphere.

8 "The Assumption of New Guatemala" (translation M. H.).

9 Or simply "Guatemala."

10 This name took hold in the regions with a strong share of Indian inhabitants, besides Guatemala, in Mexico, Peru, etc.

agricultural land owned by Spaniards, quite peacefully; in the farther, higher situated regions Indian inhabitants became almost isolated from the world. In fact, the schema of the "two republics" was not so distinct as it was stated officially. Spaniards concentrated only in the capital and in several smaller settlements in its vicinity, never too far from their *haciendas*[11], where they lived together with not many black, mulatto and mestizo people. Only priest-monks acting as missionaries could live in Indian villages. In this way not only the Indian and Spanish republics were created, but also the major part of the native population (a larger number of Quiché, Kaqchikel, Keqchí, Pokomam, Mam, Itza, Chortí, etc. groups) was incorporated into colonial structures rather formally than actually. The politics of the Spanish crown, established from the first years of the Colonial Period, thus soon tended to the development whose consequences are visible today and which can be summarized as follows: (1) Spanish settlement concentrated in a smaller area of the central valleys and surrounding haciendas where a gradual mixing with neighboring Indians occurred. This gave rise to a mixed (Ladino[12] or mestizo) society that later became a base for a "caste" society similar to those known in Mexico, Peru and other viceroyalties of that time. (2) Indians, who did not want to mix with whites and creoles, started to expand further from the "limits" of the Spanish Republic in order to at least partially free themselves. This freed empty space was then inhabited by Creoles and Ladinos, part of whom also settled in some of the less inhabited rural areas of the Altiplano. More and more Indians left for more distanced mountainous and forest regions of the present departments of El Quiché, Totonicapán, Alta Verapaz, Petén, Izabal, Chiquimula, etc., where they were socially and economically isolated and marginalized.; (3) A clear caste dichotomy did not manifest itself only between the Spanish and Indian "Republics," but within each of these rather formal administrative bodies. A rivalry inside the Spanish Republic occurred

11 Hacienda can be generally defined as a system of ownership of Spanish (Andalusian) origin, which was in the Colonial Period imported into Latin America. It is a farm, generally of a substantial size, with a large land for agricultural crops, livestock, etc. The core of a hacienda is formed by residential houses, usually of high architectonic quality. A more precise definition of a hacienda was offered by social anthropologists E. Wolf and S. Mintz: A hacienda "is a rural property under a dominating owner, worked with dependent labour, employing little capital, and producing a small-scale market..." (Mörner 1973: 185).

12 *The Ladino (in Spanish ladinos)* – the name used for a culturally mixed group of inhabitants, used mainly in south-Mexican Chiapas and Guatemala. Simply said, it is a culturally transitional type between Indian and white (Creole).

between Spanish *peninsulares*[13] and American Spaniards (Creoles). At the end of the Colonial Period (around 1800), those two governing groups represented absolutely a minor part of the Guatemala inhabitants. In Guatemala, there lived about 20,000 Spaniards and Creoles, 100,000 half-castes (Ladinos), and 250,000 Indians. The latter represented the most numerous group, however, within the Republic of Indians a system of castes also developed. Descendants of the Quiché and Kaqchikel nobility, who started to Hispanize or Ladinize early, stood highest on the social ladder. Under them were those who lived and worked nearby Spanish settlements and who profited somehow, though not much, from the co-existence. On the lowest level of social stratification were those who lived quite independent lives, but who were little or not at all connected to the inter-ethnic and inter-social economic and political relations; (4) Since the Colonial Period, *municipios*, self-governed settlements created by Spanish authorities and reflecting Spanish administrative structure represented the axis and base of the social, cultural, economic and political life of the Guatemala Indians. The administrative structure has survived with some modifications until the present day. Most of the self-governed communities were founded at the locations of pre-Hispanic settlements or in their vicinity, in the so called *refuge zones (regiones de refugio)* in the area of the Republic of Indians. Although Indians took over many Spanish administrative and cleric institutions and functions such as *alcalde, regidor, alguacil*[14] or religious fraternities (*cofradías*), the pre-Hispanic political and religious structure continued to exist, or more precisely both structures mixed, complemented each other or even blended. Individual chiefs (*caciques*) and guards of religious cults were installed into the principal municipal functions. They also became mediators between the local (Indian) administration and Spanish authorities in Antigua and later in Guatemala City. The local Indian nobility was authorized to collect tributes and keep discipline, in particular in cases when the tribute was not paid to the state treasury. In this way, from the 16th century, a socially stratified society was created, even on the level of municipio inside the Republic of Indians. Simultaneously thus a sectional, *multi-centralized* local intra-ethnic identity emerged based on Indians' feeling to be more connected with their home municipio (or with a subordinate settlement) than with "their" ethnic

13 The Spanish as well as English term *peninsular* denoted people born in Spain (on the Iberian Peninsula) who went overseas for a given period to strengthen colonial administration, on business, etc.

14 i.e. mayor, councilman, and bailiff.

group as a whole. It resulted in forming the Momostec rather than Quiché identity[15], the Sololtec[16] and Chimaltec[17] rather than Kaqchikel, or more Chamula[18] than Tzotzil identity, etc.

This only briefly described development reflects the paradox connected to the way Guatemalan Indians have been apprehended. It is one of the surviving stereotypes according to which an Indian is a being from the Colonial Period (*imagen del indio colonial*). In this notion, current Indians and their world are the consequence of the conquest cruelty, which made them submissive victims of its socio-economic and pseudo-cultural problems. On the basis of this doctrine, an illusion of the need to "free" Indians from "their problems" was born. However this liberal idea raises a question: "If Indians are really understood as a result of historical development of the Colonial Period, how is it possible that they exist as Indians who have survived all the post-colonial regimes? (Otzoy 1997: 3). How did it happen that, with the onset of relatively democratic liberal regimes in the 19th century, the attempts to assimilate Indians into Ladino society were not successful? Of course, the answer is not unequivocal, though one of the reasons why, despite the cruelty of colonization and the liberal tendency to assimilate (to Ladinize) Indians, they did not become extinct, is in my opinion their almost hermetic concentration in their "own" municipal habitats, where the customs, traditions, ceremonies, languages or ideas have been preserved for hundreds of years. Many originally small and isolated municipios later became centers of Indian rebellions and resistance against the central government of Guatemala. These once independent centers gradually started to realize their wider *Pan-Mayan* identity, which now, almost five hundred years after the Spanish invasion into Guatemala, represents one of the main ideological principles of the native inhabitants within their endeavor to escape the inferior position of marginalized citizens of the lowest category.

This from the beginning rather inconspicuous and gradual process of national (Mayan) awakening started to accelerate approximately in the middle of the 1940s. Then, with the onset of a new and more progressive

15 After the Quiché town of Momostenango, in the department of Totonicapán.

16 After the Kaqchikel town of Sololá, in the department of the same name over the Atitlán Lake.

17 After the town of Chimaltenango in the department of the same name where the majority of the population is Kaqchikel.

18 After the Tzotzil town of San Juan Chamula in the south-Mexican state of Chiapas. A similar development to that sketched above can also be found in the south and partially in central Mexico, and in some Peruvian, Ecuadorian and Bolivian regions.

regime[19], young Indians started to be more involved in local political structures, even in the towns having been originally solely in the hands of Ladinos. Colonial municipios, established administratively, meanwhile became quite densely populated due to the growth of the native population[20]. The municipio lacked infrastructure and depended mainly on agricultural production. Crops from the surrounding maize fields became insufficient to supply the growing "urban" population. Thus in the era of political liberalization, modernization, urbanization and growing demographic pressure a so-far unique phenomenon occurred – a gradual migration of the Indian rural population into predominantly white and Ladino towns of the Guatemala Central Highlands, mainly into the capital. Since then the process has never stopped. On the contrary, after the burst of the long civil war in the middle of the 1950s that affected mainly rural and mostly Indian communities[21] and after a strong earthquake in 1976 the migration process became stronger. Nowadays, it represents one of the most important social features of present Guatemalan society.

3. Guatemala in the context of urban anthropological/ sociological research

It is logical that the at first slow and later massive influx of Indian inhabitants to towns attracted quite early the attention of social anthropologists and sociologists to this new challenge. Together with continuing ethnological research and studies of the Guatemalan countryside scientists also started to be interested in internal, originally mainly rural-urban migration. As Hannerz points out, the beginnings of urban-anthropological research together with studies of

19 In 1944 the dictator, General Jorge Ubico, was overthrown and in the following year the Constituent Assembly gathered and the new Constitution was published, the Instituto Indigenista Nacional (National Indigenist Institute) was founded and Juan José Arévalo became the president. He promoted his own political philosophy, so-called *spiritual socialism (arevalism)*, which was a Guatemalan version of communism based on liberalization of education, agrarian reform, and including the underdeveloped regions into the national economic system (e.g., by populating the forest department of Petén, isolated mountainous regions, etc.).

20 Between 1920-1940 the absolute growth of the Mayan population was more than half a million, from about 1.3 mil. to more than 1.8 mil. This trend continued and accelerated in the following years.

21 The biggest excesses happened in 1979-1982 when thousands of people were massacred – Indians, politicians, clergymen, intellectuals, etc. (Luján Muñoz 1998: 452-453). One of the most complete testimonies of the atrocities of the military junta in the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s comes from the Guatemalan priest and anthropologist Ricardo Falla in his book *Masacres de la selva. Ixcán, Guatemala (1975-1982)*. Guatemala: Editorial Universitaria, 1992.

socio-cultural differences are connected with the process of settling down in cities, when the "others" started to live together in "one" (urban) space with "us" though segregated in poor, socially inferior quarters (Hannerz 1980)[22]. The city became an object of theoretical discourse of modernity as well as one of the important symbols of the modernization process that in Latin American space however has its specific sense, especially in the countries with a high share of Indian inhabitants:

> "... los supuestos "otros" no-modernos no están en otra parte, fuera de escena para que se les pueda proyectar cualquier atributo. Están y siempre han estado co-presentes con los sujetos "modernos" y todos comparten no sólo el mismo espacio territorial, sino el reto de construir su convivencia, de crear sociedades modernas heterogéneas..." (Pratt 2000)[23].

Nevertheless in Guatemala and other countries, such presupposition is rather a part of theoretical (academic) discourse. Practical everyday socio-cultural negotiations of peripheral societies about modernization rests in the state of "selective reception" (*recepción selectiva*) and "contra-modernity" (*contramodernidad*), as José Guillermo Nugent put it in his excellent essay on Peruvian mixed (*Chol*) society. Peruvian, Guatemalan or Mexican Indians are by local elites still comprehended as "contra-modern" as those unable to understand themselves as members of modern world (Nugent 1992: 73, Pratt 2000, Camus 2002: 28, Franco 2006: 15). Such an attitude only strengthens the old colonial order and therefore paradoxically excludes even those elites from the process of modernization of Latin American society. After the Indian move in the cities, both the groups live in common space, often close to each other, but the discrimination and social exclusion continue and become now even more visible.

> "...discrimination does not disappear. The urban Indians raise fears of violence and social disintegration whose indices, according to Guillermo Nugent, can be

22 The beginning of the serious scientific research of the city started in the 1920s and is connected to the Chicago School of Sociology (in detail see cf. U. Hannerz, *Exploring the City. Inquiries Toward an Urban Anthropology*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

23 „... presupposed non-modern "others" are located somewhere else, outside the scene where they could be ascribed any qualities. They are and they always were part of "modern" subjects and not that all does share the same space, they also share the challenge to construct common coexistence and create modern heterogeneous society..." (Pratt 2000, translated by M. H.).

> seen in the characteristic urban Lima landscape of houses fortified behind barbed wire and iron railings behind which live the autonomous individuals..." (Franco 2006: 17).

This apt characteristic of current Lima can be applied to many other Latin American cities. The indisputable modernization trends become apparent in architecture, in the building of road infrastructure in until recently inaccessible "refuge zones," etc. Though at the same time a *pre-modernization* process of "medievalization" of the city has appeared, the process foreseen at the beginning of the 1970s by Umberto Eco. Armando Silva (1992) and Michel Maffesoli (1990) came up with a similar idea of creating of labyrinthine castles characterized by distinctive protective walls and producing new urban aesthetics when they analysed contemporary *neotribalism ("urban tribes")*. Argentinian anthropologist Mónica Lacarrieu tried to explain the apparent "new Middle Ages" that became characteristic of the contemporary city. She pursued her research mostly in the private quarters of Buenos Aires, in privileged conurban zones that have been emerging since the 1980s and proliferated in the 1990s. Behind the high walls surrounded by steel fences and barbed wire, in these almost hermetically closed micro-localities of "locked quarters" (*barrios con candado*) a new social world with its own rules has emerged (Lacarrieu 1998: 7-23).

In Guatemala, the "autonomous individuals" living in these quarters or in private palaces are above all the owners of coffee and banana plantations. The "invisible" immensely rich people living in their own microcosm are those who *feudalize* or *medievalize* the country. Indians on the other hand exist at the social and economic periphery despite living in city-centers. However, they use modernization technologies more and more and are more included in the political life of the country, become successful in municipal, departmental and statewide elections and it is only a matter of time until they start following their Bolivian, Peruvian or Venezuelan "paragons"[24].

The beginnings of anthropological research in Guatemala are closely connected with interest in the research of Indian groups and are immediately related to the birth of indigenism and to many community studies done in various parts of Mexico[25]. A serious interest of social anthropologists in urban

[24] Current strongly left-minded presidents of Bolivia (Evo Morales), Peru (Ollanta Humala) and Venezuela (Hugo Chávez),

[25] The Instituto Nacional Indigenista (INI) was founded in Mexico. At the beginning of the 1940s the Instituto Indigenista Interamericano (III) was founded and since then much ethnographic research

space appeared shortly after WW II and related especially to the rapid growth of urban population and to the process of migration from poor countryside regions.

Guatemala used to be a terrain explored heavily by comparative community research of rural communities (Tax 1937, 1941, 1949, Gillin 1945, 1948, Tumin 1949, etc.). By means of the studies of cultural features and social organization of these rural and country town communities, an empirical base for sociological and anthropological research of Guatemala City was established. I believe that Guatemala was not chosen haphazardly as a terrain for vast fieldwork of North American social scientists. A possibility to research great differences between "traditional" and "modern" worlds epitomized by, e.g., the sacral site of Chichicastenango (Bunzel 1952) on one hand and Guatemala City on the other, was one of the major reasons. Sol Tax (1939) even likens Guatemala to Detroit rather than to other Latin American cities.[26] What attracted researchers probably the most was the fact that "modernity" was in many respects illusionary, especially in social and political spheres (nets of social services and centralized power of the town-house resembling the era of colonial governments, etc.).

The first long-term research in the capital of Guatemala (in 1948-1949) was done by an American sociologist Theodore Caplow, who employed the Chicago School methodology of ecological perspective. This indeed affected the main interest of his research – the interrelation between social organization and spatial distribution and the consequences of urbanism as a way of life. When in his pioneering work Caplow summarizes the features of Guatemala at that time, he points firstly to the problems of migration and extreme poverty of immigrants and he sketches its main trend:

> "... The demands of an impoverished in-migrant population for housing thus tend to be met by the utilization of marginal peripheral land, rather than by the increase of density on obsolescent sites and in obsolent structures..." (Caplow 1949: 127).

of many Mexican and other Indian groups has been done. Numerous studies were published in the III journal *América Indígena*; pilot studies of the Mixe (Beals 1942), the Trique (Comas 1942), the Nicaraguan Miskito (Pijoan 1944, 1945), the Yaqui (Spicer 1945), the Tzotzil (Weathers 1946), the Otomí (Jenkins 1946), the Guatemalan and Honduran Chortí (Girard 1947), the Tepehuan (Mason 1948) and many other groups in Central, South and North America.

26 "... the appearance of Guatemala is strikingly 'modern'" (Caplow 1949: 124).

El Gallito, one of the worst Guatemalan slums, exemplifies the trend taking place after the earthquake in 1918 of poor quarters to emerge on the outskirts of the city rather than in older parts due to the growing density of the population, (Caplow 1949: ibid.).

The boom of community studies between the 1930s and the 1950s was followed by a slight decline caused to some degree by a complicated internal political situation in Guatemala. Only at the end of the 1960s some research studying specific social urban microcosms appeared. Roberts's research of Protestantism in marginal quarters of the capital (Mendoza 2005: 96) can be seen as the most important of them. Roberts is influenced by Weber's Protestant ethics and he tries to interpret it in a dominantly catholic socio-religious space. Even though the process of "Protestantization" ("evangelization" or "de-Catholization") of Latin America started at least in the 19th century and it has intensified in the last decades, we do not have many studies on the impact of the converse on Latin American society and urban religious enclaves. On the basis of comparative research of two quarters, Roberts concludes that the inclination of young people to the Protestant doctrine is more pragmatic than formal. Its general meaning is actually to reach advantages like easier creation and upkeep of a social network, which enables people to improve personal economic and social conditions (Roberts 1968: 766-767)[27].

4. Manuela Camus: *Ser Indígena en Ciudad de Guatemala*

In the 1990s another release of tension took place in Guatemala culminating in the signing of a peace treaty that confirmed the end of a more than 40 years long civil conflict. Even though anthropological research in urban and rural areas was never suspended absolutely, social scientists could engage in systematic research in calmer conditions only since the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. A remarkable book by a prime Guatemalan social anthropologist of the middle generation Manuela Camus is also from this period. The book

27 Later on, at the beginning of the 1970s, B. Roberts did an ethnographic research in Guatemala City among poor families. On the basis of the research he analysed the processes of creation of migrants' social organization, consumer cooperatives and subsequent re-organization of the poor in an urban environment and their strategies of settling down. Unfortunately, his book *Organizing Strangers: Poor Families in Guatemala City*. Austin & London: University of Texas Press, 1973, which is a result of his research and which is considered as a classic one (Mendoza 2005: 97), was not available.

represents the result of a long-term (almost 10-year) study of sociocultural reality of chosen groups of the native population that has been concentrating in the last decades in the capital Ciudad de Guatemala. At the beginning of her research, which she started in 1990 in cooperation with Santiago Bustos, Camus concentrated on social nets, adaptation and subsistence mechanisms of the people living in the poorest parts of the city. The cooperation of the two scientists resulted in a short study *Indígenas en la ciudad de Guatemala: subsistencia y cambio étnico* (1990) and in more synthetically oriented books *Sombras de una batalla. Los desplazados por la violencia en la ciudad de Guatemala* (1994) and *Los mayas de la capital: un estudio sobre identidad étnica y mundo urbano* (1995). These two works are explicitly interested in a controlled "culture of violence," which represented a serious problem for the Guatemalan capital incessantly from the mid-1950s when after the short period of democracy a long civil war started. The other topic dealt with in the books is the more and more visible formation of *pan-Mayan* identity gradually shifting from rural communities to urban space.

Camus' book *Ser Indígena en Ciudad de Guatemala* (2002) represents a climax – so far – of Camus' work. It is a moderate modification of her PhD thesis defended in the Centro de Investigaciones de Estudios Superiores de Antropología Social, CIESAS-Occidente, in 2000 in Mexican Guadalajara. In it, the author examines the transformations of ethnic identity caused by the growing mobility of the Indian population quickly leaving the levels which were traditionally reserved for them in Guatemalan society. She tries to review the officially accepted idea that Indian immigrants assimilated (assimilate) culturally to urban environment and they mixed (mix) with Ladinos. Camus strives to disprove simplified amalgamation theories that deny the Indianization processes occurring in the city. She understands an "urban Indian" as one of the symbols of Guatemalan society in the period after the official cease of violence on the December 29, 1996, when the Firm and Last Peace Agreement (*Acuerdo de Paz Firme y Duradera*) was signed.

In accord with Camus, the capital of Guatemala can now be understood as a privileged space where changes of ethnic differentiation can be observed. Here the destinies of more than 20 ethnic groups of this most important Central American country cross and intermingle. During the process not only the urban landscape, but also the meaning of ethnicity itself is transformed. As the prime Mexican sociologist María Lourdes Arizpe noted when writing about the capital of Mexico: "what will also be changed is the root (the core, the base)

of ethnicity" (1986). It is so because the social and cultural construction of an Indian as a "primitive" creature bonded firmly to the ground and to his/her community has been modified. Urban Indians living in Guatemala are mostly taken as "infected," "cunning," "deceitful," etc. and they are still not a part of the Mayan political discourse, the epicentre of which is mostly located in the Quiché[28] zones in the Guatemala Highlands. Urban *indígenas*[29] has become a sort of a new caste, a non-desired social product already born in the Colonial Period and now as if it were being reborn.

The whole of Camus' book is divided into three large parts – the first one (pp. 21-70) is a vast theoretical introduction to the studies of ethnicity; the second one (pp. 71-284) is the biggest and represents the core of the book – extensive ethnographies of three native enclaves in various parts of Ciudad de Guatemala; the last part (pp. 285-369) is an attempt to generalize the studied problems of ethnicity and territorialization of the capital city. It also contains a separate part on the ethnicity of Indian women, who are the visible bearers of ethnic identity even long after the final shift from the original communities to the city.

The first part (theoretical-methodological) is also a historical overview of various concepts of ethnicity in sociology, social anthropology and history. It starts with a gentle reflection of the first definition of "ethnicity" by Max Weber, who understood ethnic groups as communities with an entitlement to special status based on their unnatural character. Then it continues with a re-evaluation of the "great turnover" brought by F. Barth (1969). His understanding of ethnicity as a tool of social analysis overcame the idea of ethnic groups as having culture with its own specific content.

Camus studies ethnicity in the period of modernity and she disrupts the traditional schema according to which ethnic groups are captured in stereotypes reflecting the social organization of rural-communal type, and tries to formulate her own definition of ethnicity: "*...it is a discipline studying social forms deviating from its ideal in the sense of their own cultural homogeneity...*" (Camus 2002: 26, translated by M. H.). At the same time, Camus warns against

28 *Quiché* – the most numerous Indian ethnic group of Guatemala living mostly on the Altiplano in the departments of Quiché, Totonicapán and Quetzaltenango. According to the last available census of 2002, there were 1,270,953 Quiché in Guatemala.

29 In Guatemala *indígena* is a general name for a member of any Indian group (for an Indian in general), which is consistently used as an opposition to the rather pejorative *indio* (compare expressions *Rom* vs. "Gypsy.")

the dangers present when studying ethnicity in countries such as those in Latin American countries where the Indian population is more significantly represented. The methodological trap – given by the special historical construction of Latin America – is that the "others" means "we" in the sense that they are first of all constituents of the social experience and not only some anomalous component or a tolerated curiosity. Camus sees the Indian as an integrative entity which is a part of the modernization process and of the formation of modern nation. She does not omit the fact that Guatemalan Indians are at least since the 1950s – as was said above – co-creators of the modernization process despite the fact that the other half of the population (Ladinos and Creoles) consider them unable to integrate in the national dynamics. In Guatemala and in many other countries of Latin America with a significant share of the native population, the Indian question was "solved" within the politics of *indigenismo*, a Latin America form of nationalism, when the national identity is reinforced on the basis of Indianism (*indianidad*). In it, the Indian becomes one of the bearers of national values. For several tens of Guatemalan ethnic groups, indigenism also opened the channels of social mobility and gradual incorporation into the class structure as well as mestizo, acculturation, integration and assimilation processes, and gradually became the most powerful political tool of multiculturalism (Bastos and Camus, eds. 2007).

Before Camus defines her own theoretical-methodological position, she tries to critically cope with the powerful concept of *hybrid cultures (culturas híbridas)* devised by Néstor García Canclini (e.g. 1989). This term was understood as a Latin American contribution to the debate on "overcoming" modernity that emphasized cultural otherness from different positions than multiculturalism. García Canclini advocated the socio-cultural reality of cultural hybridism or mixing between modernity and tradition also understood as an antinomy between "educated" vs. "native/ethnic." He claims that the relations between cultural systems were always more fluent than they could seem and that the forms that cause mixing of cultural projects are various, incomparable and contradictory. Within the process of trans-nationalization of cultures, urban cultures are also recomposed. Their hybridization presupposes three key processes: 1. breaking off and then mixing of ensembles that organized (original or previous) cultural systems; 2. de-territorialization of symbolic processes (within the Guatemalan context, it is their transition from a rural environment to urban agglomerations) and 3. blending of culturally impure elements as a self-evident result of acculturation impact (García Canclini 1989: 264).

The concept of hybrid cultures thus emphasises unification, merging, communication, and multi-centrism rather than cultural differences and oppositions as accentuated by multiculturalism. It is in this distinctiveness of the today so much discussed and still influential and brilliantly formulated concept where Camus sees the main problem. It is a question whether the hybridization leads to an indefinable "sprawl" *("potingue")*, a kind of disgusting melting pot, in which in the end the power of mass media wins, while the "native" and the "ethnic" stay in the positions of uninformed naïvism. In other words: the concept of hybrid cultures can in its extreme form lead to two or more otherwise differentiated ethno-cultural entities blended one into the other and becoming a hardly definable cultural and social amalgam similar to mestizism or syncretism.

Although Camus refers to the cultural hybridization *(hibridación cultural)* throughout the text, she infuses it with new meaning: she relativizes the term "hybridization" as for the phenomena pointing at mixing of cultural elements – e.g., an Indian woman dying her hair blond or an Indian man in sandals browsing the Internet. She does not only understand this "hybridization" as a result of necessarily hybridizing cultural processes, but she studies *ethnicity* as a basic theoretical frame from the point of view of political economy, i.e., more as a reflection of social conflicts than of cultural mixing (see also e.g. Kokotovic 2000: 291). Camus sees the Guatemalan society as a complex one into which various culturally differentiated social groups are incorporated. The uniqueness of Guatemalan society lies in an extreme manifestation and survival of two axes, the socio-economic and the ethno-cultural, that Camus closely interconnects.

The second, most extensive part of Camus' book is a description and analysis of the almost 10-year-long ethnographic research among three native groups settled in various zones of Ciudad de Guatemala, in quarters, colonies, urban gorges, on peripheries and nearby the town market. Camus studies three places *(lugares)* that represent both physical and symbolical space *(espacio)* in the city. The first place is *La Terminal*, the main wholesale town market of Guatemala and the center of local and inter-city transportation where many Indian stallholders are concentrated. She is predominantly interested in "migrants with a double residence," i.e., those who spend part of the year in their own original community on the Altiplano and the rest in the city where they coexist with other already settled Indians. The second place is a small Indian village *La Brigada*, part of the Mixco district, that has just recently become a peripheral

colony of the capital city. The third place is the small colony of *La Ruedita* lost in several gorges of the city center. The core of the group consists of families coming from the district of Sacapulas (the Sacapultec)[30]. Camus gives each of the three places an ethnically-territorial metaphor, which defines its features. While Indians (mostly the Kaqchikel[31] and Quiché) living and working in the La Terminal market represent a relatively isolated "island" in the heart of the city, La Brigada represents for its inhabitants rather a "corridor," through which mainly migrants from the north and north-west pass (ethnically mostly Kaqchikel and Poqomam[32]; fewer, Poqomchí[33]). Some stop there, others continue deeper into the city center. Nevertheless, due to massive ethnic mixing, it is almost impossible to carry on a thorough analysis of at least one of the passing groups. The inhabitants of La Ruedita are ethnically clear, they themselves identify as Sacapultec, and thus form a native "metropolitan community." All the three studied groups differ among other things in the character of their social (socio-economic) adaptation – the first can be metaphorically characterized as "transhumants," the second as "nomads," and the third as "residents." If maize needs to be seeded or harvested, most of the male population of La Terminal moves to the villages on the central Altiplano. La Brigada is only a temporary "pastureland," transient subsistence space for most of its inhabitants who move immediately more deeply into the center, where they settle permanently or at least find their livelihood. They can keep only a rented house or a room in La Brigada. Only La Ruedita is a residential area for some of the Sacapultec, who take the capital as a *place* where all their socialization and reproduction take place. They thus return to their original villages only to visit relatives or to spend a short holiday. The capital city is their home.

The most turbulent circulation of the Indian population happens at the marketplace of La Terminal in the very center of Ciudad de Guatemala. As it is also a place where the central bus station is, for many incoming people from the Guatemala Altiplano it is where the very first contact with a metropolitan

30 The *Sakapultec* – an Indian ethnic group, in 2002, they represented 9,763 inhabitants.

31 The *Kaqchikel* – along with the Quiché and the Keqchí, the third most numerous Indian ethnic group of Guatemala (in 2002, 832,968 inhabitants declared themselves members of this group). They live mostly in the central departments of Guatemala – Guatemala, Sacatepéquez, Chimaltenango and Sololá.

32 The *Poqomam* – another native ethnic group of Guatemala living mainly in the central departments (42,009 inhabitants in 2002).

33 The *Poqomchi* – an ethnic group, the culture and language of which is close to the Poqomam. They live mainly in the departments of Alta Verapaz and Quiché (114,423 inhabitants in 2002).

environment is established. We could say that hundreds of "culture shocks" concentrate in this place and every newcomer goes through them. Culture shock quickly passes because the newcomers gather on the marketplace, which is also the space known for Indians from the pre-Columbian period. Moreover, many of them are prepared for such a way of life: "*We are like doves. When we get wings, we have to fly. Through many generations we saw our fathers do the same and now you can find the Momostec*[34] *traders from the United States to Panama, and inside Guatemala we are in Petén*[35]*, Livingston*[36] *and in many other places...*" (Camus 1998: 133, translation M. H.), says one of the Momostec street salesmen. He in fact describes one of the archetypes of the Central American Indian – a trading nomad[37] traveling since the pre-Classic Period with his goods among Utatlán[38], Kaminaljuyú[39], Iximché and other important pre-Hispanic centers. The places have changed, but the aim stays the same: to quit at least to some extent the traditional agricultural way of life depending on the cycles of nature. When Camus uses the metaphorical term – *insular ethnicity* – she probably also means representatives of this group, who despite frequent stays in the city do not intend to settle there or at least they resist it intensively. Their ethnic identity is therefore quite easily decipherable. Those who for some reason settle in the city reproduce only among themselves and do so not only on a social level, but also economically because the majority of their customers are Indians. La Terminal thus becomes a growing indigenous "island" in the middle of the two-million "sea" of dominant Ladinos. The endeavour to keep the ethnicity pure – either spontaneous or enforced – has its negative consequence: to *be* an Indian in Guatemala means to be a citizen of the second category.

34 The *Momostecs (*in Spanish *momostecos)* – Guatemalan Indians often declare their ethnicity as an affiliation to their home community, in this case to the town of Momostenango in the department of Totonicapán. Concerning language and ethnicity, they are members of the Quiché group.

35 *Petén* – the largest and from the demographical point of view the least populated department, situated in the northern Guatemala. From the ecological point of view it is mostly a lowland tropical rainforest, which has gradually become a homeland for many Guatemalan migrants.

36 *Livingston* – a small port in Bahía de Amatique on the Caribbean shore of Guatemala where one of the two non-Mayan minorities of the country – *Garifunas* (sometimes called *Black Caribs*) – live. Today they mix more and more with Indian, mostly Keqchí, migrants.

37 In Yucatan Mayan (yucateco) they are called *ppolm*, in Náhuatl they were called *pochteca*.

38 *Utatlán* – the name in Náhuatl for the capital of the Quiché kingdom, in the Quiché language called *Gumarcaaj*. The ruins of the center lie about 4 kms from the capital of the department of Quiché Santa Cruz del Quiché.

39 *Kaminaljuyú* – an important pre-Hispanic town inhabited since the pre-Classic Period, whose inhabitants already traded with Mexican Teotihuacán in the 4th century. Today it is a part of the zone 7 of the capital city.

Ethnicity is formed in a different way in La Brigada, the border colony of the capital. There, Indians also represent a dominant ethnic substrate but not as significant as in the previous case. The main specificity of La Brigada lies in the ethnic-space borders being indefinable stemming from the surviving urban-rural dichotomy of the way of subsistence. If Camus characterizes the ethnicity of most of the local people as a "corridor" or an "edge" ("orilla"), she expresses by that their prevailing ambiguity: as if they live in an urban environment but at the same time keep their minifundios, little fields where they grow inferior types of vegetables hardly sufficient to survive. Mixco[40], where La Brigada is located, does not offer potential residents any stronger alternative sources of income. Most of the men earn their living as seasonal bricklayers and women traditionally by preparing maize pancakes. Local life thus resembles the cycle of tide and ebb: changes of urban and rural spaces (most of the newcomers are originally from the nearby small towns of San Pedro Sacatepéquez and San Juan Sacatepéquez) happen so quickly that it is possible to sketch the prevailing ethnic identity only very approximately due to its incessant transformation. The researched group is probably the most typical representative of what García Canclini calls hybrid culture.

Metropolitan ethnicity is represented by about 30 Sacapultec households, who started to arrive in the city at the end of the 1950s. Migrants of the first generation settled in several gorges on the edge of the city center where they founded the colony of La Ruedita. Since Sacapulas, the original community of the group, was abandoned by only a part of the inhabitants, the tension has built up not only between newcomers and the urban population but also and maybe even more strongly between those who left and those who stayed. Camus thus comes to a basic question when studying the group: Is it possible to be released ethnically from the original community and transformed into a new community in the city, or, in the words of B. Anderson, in a community "imagined"? In other words, is it possible to conceptualize Sacapultec sociability after the permanent shift to the city as the Sacapultec one? Is it possible to avoid the process of Ladinization? It seems that, even after 50 years of the stay in the city, the Sacapultec are still a collective, a group *en sí mismo*, i.e., a group which preserves its endogamous impermeability. It is not, of course, absolute, as Camus indicates in the text. When she speaks of La Ruedita she speaks

40 *Mixco* – apart from this peripheral quarter of the capital, there is the old Mixco *(Mixco Viejo),* several kilometres to the north, once the center of the pre-Hispanic Poqomam.

about a "less imagined community" ("comunidad menos imaginada") and thus of course weakens Anderson's concept. It looks as if she implicitly supported an older thesis by Mexican archaeologist and ethnohistorian Alfonso Caso, for whom an affiliation to the home community is one of the features of ethnic (Indian) adscription (Caso 1948: 246). Such a statement is still valid for La Ruedita, however with a difference that the home community was created in the middle of the non-Indian city.

In the third part called *Space and ethnicity: their multiple dimensions* it is worth noting how Camus theorizes the Indian woman, who is usually the most dominant bearer of "traditional" ethnic identity. The Guatemalan Indian woman still succumbs to Ladinization much less than men, even after many years of a stay in the city. The most visible feature of ethnic/regional/local/community adscription is indeed clothes, especially the *corte* and the *huipil*. According to the cut, color and motifs one can infallibly distinguish where a woman comes from even without knowledge of her mother tongue. These two most important pieces of women's clothes represent also an indicator of social control continually brought from the Colonial Period. An eminent Guatemalan historian Martínez Peláez even says that an "Indian who is wearing burlap and socks is no longer an Indian" (1994: 611, translated by M. H.). Camus basically agrees with this rather strong statement, but she warns against the dangers of commercial abuse of those ethnic symbols and the dangers of their politicization. Huipils, the corte and other pieces of women's clothing become a still stronger tool of fighting for "pan-Mayan identity" and they lose a bit of their original power of social control. Indian women, whose most important representative in Guatemala is Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú, often unconsciously get tangled in the fight for future political unity of all Mayan-language-speaking ethnic groups that they do not fully comprehend. All of Camus' work thus gets also a gender dimension[41].

Undoubtedly, Manuela Camus belongs among the most important Latin American social anthropologists and with this book she confirms her erudition in the field of theoretical preparedness as well as the ability to do serious ethnographic research. All the three studied localities in the city represent in fact extensive ethnographies based on long term participant observation, tens

[41] Today, gender aspects are also studied by many archaeologists re-constructing mainly classic Mayan society (cf., e.g., Hewitt, E. A. 1999. What´s in a Name. Gender, Power, and Classic Maya Women Rulers. *Ancient Mesoamerica*, 10, 1999, pp. 251-262, or other work by this Berkeley based archaeologist).

of interviews and hundreds of analysed questionnaires. The book is difficult to read and is supplemented by perhaps a too large number of word-for-word transcribed answers of some of the author's informants. This however gives the book a more authentic feel. Camus is more narrative sometimes in the sense that she lets her informants tell their life stories. However there, too, she does not stay on the surface. She always attempts a deep analysis so as to be able to capture the complex process of socio-cultural change or the development of ethnic and cultural identity of any given individual and use it in order to deduce conclusions related to one of the three researched groups. In her book Camus presents (although, unfortunately, only to a rather limited number of interested people, as only 1,000 copies were published) a social drama which has been going on since the first phase of the conquest and which now has consequently become more intense with (pan)Mayan revitalization. This drama that originally went on only in the rural environment of the Guatemalan Altiplano or in the lowlands of Escuintla, Izabal, Zacapa, Chiquimula, and in many other departments is quickly shifting to the area of Valle de la Ermita to which the rapidly growing Guatemalan capital was shifted by Spanish colonial administrators in the 1770s. Partial analysis of this huge social drama, studied through the ethnicity of three native city enclaves, is probably the biggest contribution of Camus' book that can be considered one of the best original social anthropological works published in recent years in the field of Guatemala studies.

5. Conclusion: *Quo vadis Guatemala City?*

I first arrived at the contemporary capital city of Guatemala sometime in April 1996. I remember that I stayed in an oblate's mission for several days[42] in the marginal part of the city in Mixco. There at that time Manuela Camus had been doing her fieldwork for several years, which of course I knew nothing about. Most of my information came mainly from one experienced Canadian oblate and a young Quiché Indian who had been preparing for his first mission in hard reachable areas in the department of Alta Verapaz, near the Mexican border. From their mission house I undertook several short visits to the center of the busy metropolis, which struck me by the multifariousness of women's

42 The Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), which was founded in 1816 by French priest and bishop Eugene de Mazenod in southern France. In the western hemisphere they started working in 1841 in Canada; gradually they spread to almost all countries of North, Central and South America. Generally, they do their missionary work in the poorest and most remote parts of a country.

costumes from many places of Guatemalan (urbanizing) countryside rather than by the beauty of its historical sites. During my so-far last stay in the summer 2005 I was already able to distinguish not only to which wider ethnic group the Indian women belonged, but I often knew from which small town or village she came.

As I wrote in the introduction of this article, I had never done any purposeful ethnographic research there. Nevertheless, thanks to many spontaneous acquaintances, I got much information and knowledge of urban Indians and of those others who come there for various reasons. On such a basis I found out, for example, that the net of second-hand bookshops where I bought many valuable books on the history and ethnography of Guatemalan Indians is owned by several Kaqchikel families from Patzun. I realized that Ixil and Kaqchikel women sell their cloths and smaller souvenirs on the central square and in several adjacent streets nearby, etc. I learned that Guatemalan Indians, the "men of maize," as Miguel Ángel Asturias, a Nobel Prize in Literature laureate, calls them in his novel, settle more and more heavily in various parts of the capital. I got to know that urbanization is an unavoidable process and one of the most visible sides of current social and culture changes.

Such a process takes place all over the world, but in the countries of the third or even fourth world it is much more significant. I agree with T. H. Eriksen's claim that the main cause of urbanization is the growth of rural population[43]. Village settlements such as Chichicastenango, Panajachel, Santiago Atitlán, Patzun, Santa Cruz Quiché, and many others have rapidly grown into localities of an urban type and are now more or less connected to commercial activities on the regional, national or international level. Eriksen points out the transition from agricultural self-sufficiency to overproduction for the market (2008: 298). This is however valid only for part of the Indian population. Only some families have access to commercial growing of maize or other commodities. A larger number are still more or less dependent on the crop from their own fields. In this way, quite a schizophrenic situation has been created: e.g., the Patzun have in their town a solid infrastructure (municipal offices, which are in the hands of Patzun men, shops, schools, big church, etc.), but because their town is outside tourist interest most of the local inhabitants are still significantly dependent on agricultural production. When visiting Patzun,

43 E.g., the number of the Panama Guaymí grew in the middle of the 1990s by about 12% (!) contrarily to the whole of Panama, that grew only about 1%.

where about 95% of the inhabitants are of Kaqchikel origin, and many similar towns, I always asked myself a question – how to define such a place. So far I have not found a satisfactory answer, nor does Manuela Camus give a definite standpoint in her book when using the above-given metaphoric names for the three studied groups of *indígenas urbanos*. Only one fact seems to be sure – despite Guatemalan Indians' symbolic erasure from the social map of the capital city and the whole country, a significant process of self-representation of related Mayan groups and their complicated, though more and more rapid unification, has been taking place.

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