

Brett Troyan

***Cauca's Indigenous Movement in Southwestern Colombia:
Land, Violence, and Ethnic Identity***

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Since the 1970s, the indigenous movement in Colombia has come to be known as one of the strongest, most well-organized social movements in the country, mobilizing thousands in defense of ethnic autonomy and territory. But how exactly did this movement and the parallel formation of a modern indigenous identity emerge? Brett Troyan's *Cauca's Indigenous Movement in Southwestern Colombia* provides a welcome answer to this question. Utilizing a rich array of archival documents, newspapers, personal interviews, and other materials, Troyan presents us with a meticulous study of the recent historical antecedents and formation of the indigenous movement in modern Colombia from the 1910s to the early 1990s. Focusing on the southwestern department of Cauca, the birthplace of the movement in Colombia, Troyan argues that the development of the modern indigenous movement in Colombia was primarily the complicated product of relations between indigenous communities, local elites, and the central government. The national state, she claims, "encouraged the formation of an ethnic-based movement amongst the indigenous rural folk of Cauca" (1) towards the end of the century.

After an introductory chapter, the first three chapters chart the historical relationship between indigenous communities in Cauca and a burgeoning central state in the first half of the twentieth century that lay the groundwork for the development of an ethnic-based indigenous movement in the latter half of the century. Chapter two follows the rise and fall of Manuel Quintín Lame, Cauca's celebrated indigenous leader who led a revolt known as the *Quintada* in defense of *resguardos* (communal land grants dating back to the Spanish Crown) and *cabildos* (local indigenous councils) from 1910 to 1920. While regional authorities delegitimized Lame's movement through ethnically-based accusations of fomenting race war, Troyan shows that the national state was initially more receptive to the demands of the movement, motivated by its own desire to assert itself as a center of power. Troyan provocatively argues that the Lame movement "established a certain type of ethnic political mobilization based on an alliance with the central state" (22) that would later be adopted by the present-day indigenous movement. The third chapter documents the development of a different relationship between Cauca's indigenous communities and a newly empowered liberal, central state intent on dissolving *resguardos* in order to

generate political and economic modernization by the 1930s and 1940s. While most communities were opposed to the dissolution, Troyan illustrates how some embraced the liberal policy as a way to seek state protection from land invasions, religious authorities, and other threats. Chapter four turns to Cauca during *La Violencia*, one of the most volatile moments in Colombian history, which grew out of and magnified unresolved land conflicts from the 1930s and 40s. A Tribunal of Reconciliation was created in Cauca, one of the departments with the worst levels of violence during *La Violencia*, which was ultimately unsuccessful in resolving land conflicts. Nevertheless, the Tribunal signaled the formation of a new kind of central state that was technocratic and officially nonpartisan. Troyan further traces the creation and destruction of a multiethnic self-defense movement in Riochiquito (norte del Cauca) composed of indigenous and non-indigenous communities in the early 1950s that developed ties to what became the FARC by the 1960s.

The last two chapters uncover a fundamental shift in the central state's policy towards indigenous peoples and role in the lives of Cauca's indigenous communities. Chapter five examines the national government's establishment of the *División de Asuntos Indígenas* (DAI), which sought to end the dissolution of the *resguardos* and strengthen the *cabildos*, a complete change of course from the previous half-century's state policies. As a product of new national and international *indigenista* politics and security concerns that indigenous communities would join guerrilla forces, the DAI signaled the formation of a modern central state that "respected ethnic traditions" as the "most effective strategy in terms of successful state formation" (129). Focusing on the 1970s, 80s, and 90s, the final chapter explores the rise of the present-day indigenous movement and the emergence of "ethnic citizenship," based upon "a new reciprocal relationship that stressed the ethnic character of the claims made by indigenous groups" (154) vis-à-vis the state. Through a careful reading of the early founding of the *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca* (CRIC), Colombia's largest grassroots indigenous rights organization, in the early 1970s, Troyan forcefully shows how an explicitly ethnic, indigenous identity was crafted amidst the backdrop of guerrilla warfare and political repression. State authorities, Troyan argues, legitimized ethnic claims in order to eschew class-based concerns, while CRIC successfully regained

resguardos utilizing this ethnically based discourse. Troyan's study ends with an examination of the fascinating creation of the Movimiento Armado Quintín Lame (MAQL), a self-defense army established in northern Cauca to stop assassinations of CRIC leaders and activists. Formed in 1977, the MAQL claimed an explicitly indigenous identity (despite having non-indigenous members), which Troyan argues tempered its portrayal as a subversive group.

Cauca's Indigenous Movement in Southwestern Colombia is an excellent excavation of the birth and evolution of the modern indigenous movement and the protracted process of state formation in Colombia that is sorely missing both in the historiography of twentieth century Colombia and indigenous movements in the Americas. Troyan's account

reveals how the uneasy political dance between multiple actors—indigenous communities, state officials, local elites, and international organizations, among others—reciprocally shaped not just the making of the indigenous movement in Cauca, but the modern Colombian nation-state itself. It would have been interesting for Troyan to underscore the non-economic (spiritual and otherwise) value of land for indigenous communities in Cauca during these moments of intense change, and to clarify the potentially contentious categories of *campesino* vs. *indígena* identity as other scholars (particularly in the Mexican historiography) have done. Nevertheless, Troyan's study is a crucial contribution to the Colombian and Latin American historiography broadly, in addition to the growing field of ethno-racial movements in the twentieth-century.