THE HISPANO HOMELAND
DEBATE REVISITED

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In the early 1980s a bitter academic debate raged around geographer Richard Nostrand's attempt to substantiate the frequently heard claim that the Hispanos or so-called Spanish Americans of northern New Mexico and southern Colorado are ethnically (that is historically, culturally, and even genetically) distinct from other Mexican Americans and Mexicans. The controversy unfolded on the pages of the *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* between 1981 and 1984, in response to the last of a series of articles in which Nostrand, using U.S. census data, mapped the historical population distribution in a regional Hispano "homeland" along the upper Río Grande Valley.¹ The dispute erupted when Antonio Ríos-Bustamante and Richard Blaut attacked Nostrand's notion of a culturally distinctive Hispano homeland as the false and insidious construct of Anglo imperialist ideology.² In a series of rejoinders, Nostrand defended and re-explicated his position³ while Fray Angélico Chávez⁴ and Marc Simmons⁵ jumped in to support the Hispano uniqueness thesis, and still others pointed out the merits of Nostrand's methodology.⁶ Thereafter the AAAG editors declared the matter closed, but the debate continues in diverse quarters.

The question of whether a self-conscious sense of ethnic uniqueness

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exists among native Hispanic New Mexicans, and why or why not this should be the case, fires vehemently opposed viewpoints and holds different meanings for different groups. These include not only historians and social scientists but native northern Nuevomexicanos themselves, and other Mexican and non-Mexican-descent peoples in the region. The problem remains a persistent bone of contention among Chicano intellectuals. It is also important to anyone with any kind of interest in the social or political disposition of the population in question. Like so many other contemporary issues that involve ethnic identity, the Hispano homeland debate is not only of theoretical interest, but has potentially volatile sociopolitical implications as well.

The intent of this essay is to help place the historical and continuing matter of Nuevomexicano ethnopolitical identity within a clearer analytic framework. Rather than debate the accuracy or insidiousness of the claim that New Mexico Hispanos constitute a distinct subcategory of Mexican American, my discussion will focus upon the historical, interactive process by which the notion of Hispano distinctiveness has come about. I am particularly concerned with the development of this idea, and with the larger issue of ethnic persistence and symbolization, as it occurs in northern New Mexico in the late twentieth century. The question of Hispano ethnicity and its relation to contemporary Mexicano-Chicano ethnopolitical identity and mobilization requires some discussion of ethnic theory. It also calls for a consideration of how the literature on Hispanos and New Mexico has been shaped by, and in turn contributes to, the history and sociology of the region. Although my perspective is historical, the materials drawn upon here and the approach brought to bear on the matter are primarily ethnographic. They derive mostly from research on interethnic relations and social change in contemporary Taos, which focuses on the economic and political situation of Hispanos or Mexicanos within what Bodine aptly named the "tri-ethnic trap."

The case of Taos, like Santa Fe, is perhaps idiosyncratic insofar as it is a tourism epicenter and therefore atypical of the Río Arriba as a whole in several respects. It nevertheless exhibits, in extreme or accelerated form, the major features of the regional system of ethnic-race relations. Most importantly for the present discussion, Taos has become, by virtue of its combination tourism-welfare (or federally-dependent) economy, one of the principal focal points for the development of the self-conscious, constructed and reconstructed sense of Hispano or Spanish American cultural uniqueness that stands near the
center of the controversy. Within the past twenty years or so, a new Hispano-Chicano ethnopolitical mobilization has emerged in Taos and elsewhere in northern New Mexico, which bears the mark of several local, regional, and national influences. It is with reference to these phenomena and the problem of accounting for them theoretically that this paper is concerned.

The Reactive Approach to Ethnicity

Briefly, the reactive approach to ethnicity emphasizes the interactional or 'secondary' rather than 'original,' isolation-bred, or primordial nature of ethnic identity. Following Barth, the approach tends to focus upon the maintenance of ethnic boundaries rather than the preservation of specific cultural content. This method frees the investigator from the archaic task of trying to measure or explain ethnic persistence or assimilation by trait inventories. It also better fits the widely observed yet—to a primordialist view—seemingly paradoxical facts of ethnic persistence and resurgence in the face of continuing social and cultural change. Without dwelling upon its limitations in explaining, for example, the complex interaction between ethnicity and class in contemporary urban industrial settings, let me simply propose that a reactive approach constitutes a necessary, though not in itself sufficient, component for a working model of ethnic relations in northern New Mexico.

Part of the confusion about whether Hispanos or Mexicanos in northern New Mexico ever constituted a culturally distinct and presumably self-conscious subgroup dissipates if the following points are acknowledged: (1) Ethnic boundaries serve to structure group relations and to organize differential access to and control over critical resources, particularly in situations of competition; (2) Ethnic difference and identity are historical products of ongoing interaction between groups; and (3) Ethnic boundaries are maintained and crossed by people who use them, more or less consciously (contingent upon various sorts of factors), as adaptive strategies in their everyday lives. They are nevertheless subject to the primary ascriptive dictates of such boundaries. Ethnic boundaries are, then, both situational and structural or structurally sustained.

Probably the most obvious, though surely not unique, feature of the ethnic boundary system in the upper Río Grande Valley or Río Arriba region is that while the cultural repertoires (not to mention genetic
makeup) of Indian, Hispano, and Anglo populations have undergone radical and continuous transformation during the past four hundred years, the boundaries between them persist and today seem to be maintained and protected with increasing self-consciousness if not intensity. From the start these boundaries defined, among other things, differential patterns of use and control over land, water, and other key resources. The history and prehistory of intergroup—and intragroup—relations in the region have been cast largely in the idiom of competition for and conflict over land and water. This is still true today.

The Nostrand Controversy

The crux of the Hispano homeland debate seems to be that Nostrand and his supporters claim that historically, Hispanics constitute both an etically (outsider's “objective” viewpoint) and emically (insider's “subjective” viewpoint) distinct subcategory of Mexican/Mexican American. The extremist version of this thesis would even deny that Hispanics are Mexican at all, but Nostrand himself has not argued for this. Ríos-Bustamante and Blaut (1984) deny any of it is true, and detect in Nostrand's claim the insidious workings of a divide-and-rule, imperialist paradigm. However, none of the principals seem seriously to be denying that Hispanics are Mexican Americans, or that real regional and other subcultural variations exist among the sociologically rather heterogeneous population of Mexican-descent peoples in the United States. Instead, as Hall notes, the argument is really over the social, political, and anthropological significance of these facts. Hall correctly contends that Nostrand's basic homeland thesis does not necessarily entail an imperialist interpretation of southwestern history. Yet the terms employed by Nostrand, for example when he speaks of Mexican influx as "diluting" Hispano culture, betray assumptions inherent in an outmoded primordialist notion of ethnicity. His commentaries, and those of his supporters Marc Simmons and Fray Angélico Chávez, moreover, seem to partake of a certain pervasive naïveté about the modern economic and political underpinnings of the "uniqueness" interpretation of New Mexican inter-racial history.

The claim that a significant proportion of Hispanics of all classes in northern New Mexico and southern Colorado see and speak of themselves as related to but distinct from other Mexicanos and Spanish-speaking people is easily substantiated through direct observation and
perusal of the scholarly and popular literature on the region. Adrian Bustamante and John Chávez have both argued that the "Spanish" or "Spanish American myth" was originally perpetuated by the Mexican (and mestizo) or Mexican American elite and middle classes as a self-protective strategy against the progressive institutionalization of Anglo American racism. That this strategy simultaneously served their own class interests and reflected Spanish racism against Indians is also apparent, and reminiscent of a similar pattern still observable in other isolated parts of Latin America, including the southern highlands of Mexico and in Guatemala. The historical antecedents of this go back to the Iberian Reconquest preoccupation with limpieza de sangre (cleansing of the [Spanish Christian] blood) that took shape under the Moorish occupation of Spain. As John Chávez notes of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Anglos also assumed an active role in promoting the romantic fiction of a genteel Spanish "fantasy heritage" in California and elsewhere. It acquired further meaning throughout the Southwest in the post-1910 and bracero program periods, as a status distinction between United States-born Mexican Americans and recently arrived Mexican immigrants and migrant workers. In New Mexico, the Spanish myth was fostered by proponents of statehood who wanted to 'bleach' the native population and thereby assuage anti-Mexican anxieties in Congress, and to encourage Anglo immigration into the region. The New Mexican Spanish myth has been further shaped in this century by the needs and dictates of the tourism industry, which has also had considerable impact upon the character and symbolic expression of Indian ethnicity.

The main point to be made here is not that the Hispanos' post-American sense of themselves as geographically, historically, culturally, or even genetically distinct is a manifestation of false consciousness, nor even that out-group encouragement, touristic commercialization, or scholarly reification of this identity is imperialistically motivated. The basic point is that it happened. Like the self-conscious identity of any other ethnic population, Hispano ethnicity has been historically constructed. This makes it no less real, authentic, or anthropologically significant than an ostensibly 'non-constructed' or 'natural' ethnic identity. Instead, this very constructedness seems to be a generic feature of ethnicity. And just as it emerged and evolved in the past, Hispano identity, like Chicano and ethnic identity in general, is continuously being constructed, deconstructed, and reconstructed. The process
consists of ongoing everyday dialogue and interaction between regular people that occurs, for example, in Mora, East Los Angeles, Laredo, San Antonio, or Chicago. It happens on university campuses and at academic conferences, as well as in living rooms, parish and union halls, courtrooms, art galleries, political rallies, and so on. Indeed, scholarly views and the controversy in question are themselves creatures of this process: they express, reflect, and contribute to it in turn.

Two aspects of the debate are important to consider. The first pertains to the idea of a homeland, while the other concerns the nature of the process that underlies the widely observed phenomenon of ethnic resurgence in developing and modern states. These two will be linked via an ethnographic consideration of recent events in Taos and Tierra Amarilla, examined for what they can tell us about the complexities of the ongoing negotiation of Nuevomexicano ethnic identity in relationship to land and water.

The Homeland Idea

The first point to make about the Hispano or Chicano homeland is that the very idea is a creature of history. This is the basic import of John Chávez's book The Lost Land, which attempts to trace the theme of an ancient homeland, known as Aztlán, from the aboriginal Mexica to contemporary Chicanos in the U.S. Southwest. The term 'lost homeland' is probably redundant since the very idea of a homeland implies territorial absence or loss. A brief comparison to Chávez's homeland idea will be pursued here in order to analyze Nostrand's. Their differences are instructive.

Chávez's implicitly reactive argument shows how the homeland idea has gradually become more specific and articulated, but also that it has fluctuated through time. The idea has become explicit more or less concurrently with Chicano ethnopolitical mobilization. Chávez's lost land concept also differs from Nostrand's in that its scope is pan-Chicano rather than just New Mexican. Even though he does not prove his thesis, Chávez is correct in suggesting that a homeland mythos has emerged among Chicanos in response to their collective historical experience of foreign occupation, territorial expropriation, and immigrant isolation within Anglo America. The full heterogenous range of Mexican Americans encompasses both these poles of minority experience. This spectrum of experience has contributed to a mixed
sense of place and dispossession among Mexicanos in the U.S. Southwest.

Nostrand's homeland, on the other hand, is by definition exclusively Hispano or northern New Mexican. He sees the homeland as a pre-American phenomenon progressively diminished by Mexican infiltration, Anglo encroachment and assimilation. As noted earlier, Nostrand's approach is essentially primordialist. This is evident in his attribution of Hispano distinctiveness to the preservation of archaic Iberian elements through geographical isolation. In his view, contact with Mexicans from the south, or with Anglos later on, "diluted" and continues to erode Hispano cultural "purity."

In response to Hansen's commentary, Nostrand nevertheless retreats from the implication that this process began before 1900, and he explicitly places the Spanish American phenomenon in the twentieth century. Yet the very concept of Hispano difference, which its proponents are well prepared to document with trait inventories, implies pre-American origin. Part of the problem is that Nostrand infers cultural content from geographic distribution. By drawing a line between Hispanics and other norteños, he assumes what he needs to prove. The complex nuances of culture and ethnic membership cannot be proven one way or the other based on census data alone, as Meinig correctly notes.

Prior to the twentieth century, the Hispano uniqueness thesis, which otherwise is presentist (or projecting contemporary meanings into past events), needs to be tested rather than presumed. Among other things, this would require intensive ethnohistorical study, including archival research, for ethnosemantic reconstruction of a possible early or even gradually emergent regional identity. One would expect the most salient boundaries and distinctions in pre-American times to be Mexicano/Indian. Spanish/casta or Hispano/Mexicano distinctions would be along class rather than geographical lines. Undoubtedly the ethnic boundary system in New Mexico has changed through time, perhaps in the manner Gutiérrez proposes for the late colonial period, with transition from a caste to class-based society, accompanied by cultural change in marriage practice and ideology.

The reader may feel some unease due to confused levels of abstraction about the term "homeland." It is therefore useful to call attention to Bateson's distinction between map and territory, and to differentiate between the homeland as map and as territory. Territory refers to the
actual land base lost by Mexicanos as a result of Americanization. I have argued elsewhere that this loss has been the historical stimulant for the homeland as map or symbol. It is this 'map' or its significance that the whole Hispano homeland controversy is about. Both Chávez's and Nostrand's treatments are themselves expressions of the map or homeland idea, although they are not equally aware of the map/territory distinction. Nostrand's discussion is problematic partly because he confuses the two, even though his thesis ostensibly concerns territory pure and simple. The census data alone cannot prove his claims about intra-ethnic cultural variation. We have yet to see any clearcut evidence for pre-American Mexicano/Nuevo Mexicano difference or sense of difference not reducible to the metropolis/frontier, urban/rural, or civilization/backwater contrast. It seems quite probable that any such distinction in pre-American times would have been invidious to New Mexicans and anything but cultivated.

**The Homeland Idea in the Río Arriba Today**

The most dramatic manifestation of the homeland in New Mexico has been the *La Alianza Federal de los Pueblos Libres*. This organization of dispossessed *mercedes* (or land grant) heirs in Río Arriba and other northern counties, led by its charismatic founder, Reies López Tijerina, came to international attention in 1967 with the Tierra Amarilla courthouse raid and its military aftermath. The symbolic import of that episode still reverberates throughout the Río Arriba today, even though Tijerina's actual political effectiveness has long since faded. The Alianza represents one of the most publicized American minority ethnopolitical mobilizations of the late 1960s. It's failed purpose was to bring to an international court of law the alleged violation of the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, which resulted in the illegal and unjust dispossession of Hispano land grant heirs, and to restore the "lost" lands. Tijerina and the Alianza became symbols of the stolen homeland and of resistance to further dispossession. The movement explicitly placed the everyday struggle of individual Hispanos to keep their lands and surface waters within a historical, collective, symbolically charged context.

The meaning of that context is still very much alive today in Taos and other northern New Mexico counties. In Taos, collective Hispano resistance to further dispossession has emerged since 1970 in the form
of community-based grassroots protest against large-scale tourism developments. This included protest against Indian Camp Dam above Talpa and Ranchos southeast of Don Fernando de Taos, and against ski resort pollution of the Río Hondo some twelve miles north of the town. The Dam involved a conservancy district that would have flooded lands to create a lake, ostensibly for irrigation. Farmers opposed it when they realized the project was a government-sponsored recreational enterprise for which they would be taxed. After five years of resistance, the conservancy district was dissolved on a technicality. The ski valley protests involved mobilization against uncontrolled resort expansion and associated river pollution upstream above several Hispanic land grant villages and dispersed settlements. These cases are significant because they inaugurated ethnically mixed yet 'legitimately' Hispano or Chicano direct action protest activity in Taos. Nevertheless, the dissidents represent a political minority within the total population. The following describes their constituency and organizational basis.

Hispano Mobilization and the Acequias

Protests against the Indian Camp Dam, ski valley, and other resort developments in the early eighties were composed of three essential elements. These included officers of acequia and domestic water user associations, and, in some cases, of land grant associations, whose members are mostly older Hispanics and their families. They were joined by younger people, often self-identified Chicanos, who had migrated out but subsequently returned home, and by many ex-hippie Anglo environmentalists. The actual divisions at work in the resort protest battles are along class and urban-rural lines, although they are universally perceived as ethnic. This is because the core protest constituencies are based in community organizations that link households through the distribution of surface water on the one hand and ground water on the other.

The ethnic significance of the acequias lies in the fact that they constitute the technical means by which traditional, village-based subsistence irrigation agriculture is carried out. They are, in other words, a key institution in the Hispano strategy of adaptation to the semi-arid, topographically rugged Río Arriba bioregion. Physically, each ditch system delineates a bounded, self-identified resource domain coextensive with the village or community it serves. Each such
individuated resource domain is linked to every other within a given watershed, and often to those in adjacent watersheds. Now that most ejidos or commonlands are gone, the acequias are what is left of the material base for the traditional agro-pastoral economy. They remain the means by which Hispanics still exert majority control over arable microbasins surrounded by desert, piedmont and mountain. This control and the ownership it depends upon are now quickly eroding in the rural communities around Taos, under pressure from the real estate boom associated with luxury tourism development and the ski industry. So while the protest movements against such developments are ethnically mixed and individual Anglos may even play important roles in them, they nevertheless have a strong Hispanic ethnic identification because the acequias are involved. It is within this context that Hispano cultural survival has become symbolically identified with specific tracts of land and water in the Taos area.

The theoretical significance of all this is that the organizational basis for ethnopolitical mobilization in this case is local, small-scale, provincial and traditional. Yet it is commonly supposed, among theorists and politicians alike, that local, small-scale identity is an impediment to the formation of larger-scale identity such as class or nation. Hence the assimilationist thrust of modern efforts is to nationalize ethnic minorities, or to mobilize them along class rather than ethnic lines. This assumption seems to be shared by all the participants in the homeland debate except for Hall. In other words, they assume that any sense of Hispano distinctiveness, whether true or false, will impede the development of a broader, more progressive Chicano (or American, or working class) political consciousness, and is therefore undesirable or retrograde. Correspondingly, it is supposed that the processes of modernization relentlessly ordain the supercession of traditional localized identities by larger, more widely shared extralocal ones. Yet a moment's reflection reveals that contemporary world events simply contradict this supposition.

Hannan's Model

Michael Hannan has proposed a theoretical resolution to the paradoxical but widespread observation that while modernization tends to cause a decline in ethnic diversity, it also seems to intensify the social and political importance of ethnic boundaries, at least under certain
conditions. He attempts to link these two processes within a single conceptual framework that combines world systems theory at the macrosocial level with ethnic niche theory at the microsocial level. Hannan argues that:

When modern centers penetrate the local community, they undermine the salience of small-scale identities . . . Sustained mobilization in opposition to further penetration by the center must be on scale commensurate with that of the center. Therefore, successful penetration by the center alters the condition of competition among the various bases of collective action in a direction that favors large-scale identities. . . . The most important feature of the proposed theory is that it relates the reemergence of ethnicity to the process that typically destroys ethnicity. It implies that the center can be so successful in breaking down subsystem boundaries that it creates the conditions for successful ethnic collective action in opposition. 28

In other words, Hannan is proposing a dialectical process whereby opposition in the periphery, resulting from penetration by the core, necessarily becomes organizationally isomorphic with the core. Local-level oppositional organization accordingly grows larger and more complex, in order to meet the external onslaught effectively. Hence the widely observed emergence or increasing salience of large-scale ethnic identities, at a stage at which an earlier generation of theorists would have expected assimilation to be nearly complete.

Hannan's formulation applies to what has been happening in the Rio Arriba. What the case of Taos demonstrates, where acequia officers and small farmers and ranchers join forces with urbanized Chicanos and Anglo environmentalists, is that the stepping stone to a new kind of collective ethnopolitical mobilization is a parochial, highly localized microniche-based ethnic identity. Rather than being an impediment to the emergence of a broad-based, extralocal Chicano identity, the traditional, small-scale organization has become the medium through which a larger identity is realized. Rooted in the village community, Hispano identity has become 'Chicanoized' through modernization, outmigration, and resistance. Today this resistance is organized in part around the acequias, MDWUAs (Mutual Domestic Water Users' Associations), and mercedes, against tourism-generated real estate developments that threaten to consume already over-allocated surface waters and other key resources within traditional village resource
domains. These conflicts are articulated by their native participants as struggles for cultural survival and community self-determination. This attests to a heightened degree of ethnopolitical self-consciousness, at least in comparison to, say, four decades ago. That this phenomenon corresponds to the process Hannan describes is further borne out by the fact that acequia organizations have begun to band together to better protect their common interests, within and between watershed systems, and across the five northern Hispanic counties.

It would seem, therefore, that contrary to the assumption shared by principals in the Hispano homeland debate, a strong, ethnopolitically mobilized northern New Mexican Hispano identity both enhances and in turn is reinforced by a broader Chicano identity. They are at odds neither theoretically or empirically. This is borne out by the fact that in Taos, the broader audiences or non-leadership constituencies for both Chicano (national-regional) and local Hispano forms of collective ethnopolitical and ethnocultural expression tend to overlap. For example, many of the same people or families involved in or at least supportive of anti-development protest activity are also involved in contemporaneous forms of ethnic cultural resurgence, such as ritual revivals within the parishes, or Chicano innovations such as Danza Azteca, lowriders, or local celebrations of Cinco de Mayo (not previously observed by Hispanics in Taos). Participants typically span different generations within extended families. The organizational foci or specific leaderships for these two forms of ethnic assertion do not, however, overlap.29

The Homeland in 1990

Since the mid-1980s, developments have occurred in Taos and Tierra Amarilla that seem to add new complexity to the question of Hispano identity and its relation to land.

In Taos an economic downturn (following closure of a molybdenum mine) has increased native outmigration and helped to diminish Hispano grassroots protest activism, but not cultural-religious revivalism. Resort development continues to escalate, and ever greater numbers of outsiders move into and through the town and ski resort areas. The major land-water issue in the local arena at the beginning of the 1990s concerns federal and state adjudication of all surface water rights in the Taos basin. This far-reaching litigation process pits the Taos Pueblo's
prior claims to surface water rights against those of all its non-Indian neighbors across several watersheds. In Taos, Hispanics distinguish themselves from Anglos and Indians both, and under the influence of tourism and concomitant conditions of poverty, negotiate an increasingly precarious and self-conscious local identity. One of the lessons Taos offers is the reminder that in some locales at least, the self-definition of Hispanics unfolds within a tripartite way where the Hispano-Indian boundary is longstanding and emically important, in terms of territory, water rights, and perceived cultural difference.

In Tierra Amarilla, a small town sixty-five miles to the northwest, the overall regional conditions of economic underdevelopment are even more extreme than in Taos. The local situation is also different. Tierra Amarilla is more remote, mountainous, and rural, with far fewer people and a smaller proportion of either Anglos or Indians than either Taos or Española (Rio Arriba county’s largest town). It remains primarily ranching country, with little commercial development and a higher unemployment rate. Twenty-three years after the famous courthouse raid, some conditions in Tierra Amarilla remain much the same while others are changing. The Alianza no longer exists as it once did and Tijerina now lives isolated in a well-fenced compound in Coyote. A core of mostly younger former followers continues to work as activists along several fronts, including community health care, grassroots agriculturally-based economic development, water rights, and once again, the original front—the claim to and occupation of contested land within the Tierra Amarilla grant. This time, the conflict, resolved in 1989 with a land and monetary settlement made out of court, involved the armed occupation of a piece of land claimed on the one hand by a local small rancher named Amador Flores, and on the other by an Arizona-based real estate development company called Vista del Brazos. The purpose here is not to provide a detailed account of the legal or sociopolitical aspects of this particular case, but instead to call attention to the rhetoric and symbolism employed by local land grant activists in carrying out the protest activity.

Although the new dissident leaders in Tierra Amarilla broke with Tijerina years ago and criticize his centralized style of leadership, those associated specifically with the 1988 land occupation were also organizationally centered on a single individual. This man is a longtime local activist who once served as Tijerina’s bodyguard. Although the Flores land case attracted a moderate amount of media attention at state and national levels and enjoyed some loyal support, its active local
constituency was small and could not be described as a movement. Much of this has to do with regional and national conditions. The conservative post-Reagan era is not ripe for popular mobilization of anti-establishment dissidence. There are few if any ethnic or other countercultural protest movements going on in New Mexico or anywhere else in the U. S. Furthermore, as people in Tierra Amarilla themselves will say, locals who once supported the Alianza are today more cautious and perhaps more cynical as a result of the disillusionment that followed Tijerina's arrest and fall from popular grace. The potential costs of public dissidence, underscored by their own economic vulnerability, are well known to Nuevomexicanos. There may be another reason as well, which has to do with the particular rhetoric and symbolism employed by the leadership of the Flores land occupation. It is this aspect of the case that is of particular interest to the present discussion.

The rhetoric and imagery adopted by the Flores land activists is explicitly that of the peasant land struggle of the Mexican Revolution. The matter began in 1985 when Vista del Brazos filed suit for quiet title to land Flores had claimed and used since 1968. The developer's claim was upheld in district court by a judge who subsequently jailed Flores for fifty-nine days in 1988 for publically burning the ejectment order and refusing to leave the land. Flores was then barred from the land under peril of further incarceration, but others continued to occupy it for more than a year before the matter was settled. The activists' policy decisions were made by a small consejo de ancianos (El Consejo de Tierra Amarilla), mostly older individuals within their extended families. The protesters virtually set up an armed camp on the land. They built a log bunker, raised the Mexican flag, and erected signs with the slogan "Tierra o Muerte," featuring the familiar image of Emiliano Zapata. The newspapers ran photographs of the activists, who posed with rifles at the fence, and were quoted as saying they would fight to the death before leaving the land. Throughout, their leader and principal spokesman insistently referred to the people of Tierra Amarilla as Mexicans.

No effort was made to eject the activists while the matter proceeded toward litigation. The number of dissidents resident on the land remained small through the winter, and while tension mounted over the issue, no overt manifestation of broad grassroots support for the action took place. On June 6, 1989, for example, the land activists organized a celebration of the twenty-second anniversary of the courthouse raid.
The event featured a feast on the occupied land, a march along the highway from the land to the courthouse, and a rally at which several veterans of the raid and its aftermath spoke. Except for a few members of the organizers’ extended families, almost no one from Tierra Amarilla attended. A number of outside supporters came, including a few Anglo activists, and a predominantly Anglo peace group from Denver. One reason for the poor turnout, as one local activist intimated, was that people did not like or relate to all the rhetoric about being Mexican (that is, Mexican Mexicans as opposed to plain old Mexicanos, the term used when speaking in Spanish). This is significant not because it seems to prove the claim that New Mexican Spanish Americans reject that which is Mexican, but because of its explicitly ideological character.

The meaning we can draw from the noteworthy if not altogether compelling rhetoric of the Flores dissidents can equally be used to support the Mexicanist position regarding Hispano identity. Whether everyone in Tierra Amarilla related to the imagery, the fact is that it was used, and to some degree it worked. Here we see illustrated the practical implications of a theoretical issue along with the theoretical implications of a practical issue. In terms of any organizer’s presumed purpose of mobilizing as many of the quiescent or disempowered as possible, the insistently Mexican irredentist rhetoric here would seem to amount to a tactical error in which political success was sacrificed to ‘ideological correctness.’ Yet in the final analysis it also succeeded, insofar as it did publicize the land issue, and, as it turned out, resulted in an award of land and money to Flores and his wife in late 1989. While it might exemplify the sort of miscalculation a cultural outsider would make, this particular ‘error’ was made by a working-class native, a grassroots leader and organic intellectual in the Gramscian sense. It is one often made by leftist leaders, and may be as much a consequence of the ‘leadership’ role itself as of class or ethnic misidentification or ‘false consciousness.’

The ethnic symbolization of land among northern Nuevomexicanos is a phenomenon which today intensifies as they urbanize and their actual land base diminishes. It both differentiates them from—and also identifies them with—Mexican or mestizo peasant populations, while simultaneously differentiating them locally from Indians and Anglos. The style or content of Hispano ethnic land symbolization is fluid and changes through time and with the particular context. It has borrowed in places and at times from other models, for example the Blue Lake case of Taos Pueblo, the Mexican Revolution, the Civil Rights Movement,
and even the Bible. The current land issue in Tierra Amarilla attests to a long and acrimonious history. It portends an uncertain future with respect to whether, how, and precisely which local Mexicanos will act to resist resort expansion and accelerated dispossession, and how they and others will conceptualize and symbolize their situation. Nuevomexicanos' sense of ethnic and cultural identity is tied explicitly to their land base and to the memory of a subsistence pattern, long superseded by the wage economy, which once embodied and now symbolizes this tie. However this situation unfolds differently in different areas. Before we can arrive at a broad, comparative level of analysis and understanding of this phenomenon, we must examine individual cases closely and in depth.

Conclusion

Different instances of ethnopolitical mobilization have occurred in Taos and Rio Arriba counties during the past two decades, and have gradually assumed new expression. In Taos, Hispano cultural-religious revivalism, based in the parishes, has emerged alongside grassroots acequia-based community mobilization against resort development. Although it is still too soon to say, it may be that the former, because it is inherently less threatening to the local power structure and is more consonant with a pro-tourism ethos, will displace the latter. In Tierra Amarilla, the Alianza has been replaced by local activists working on several interrelated fronts that include ongoing issues of land and water ownership and use. There, the Alianza has left a mixed legacy of inspiration and disillusionment, while a younger generation of activists still pursues a variably authoritarian, variably popular grassroots strategy of ethnopolitical resistance. Explicit Mexicanist-irredentist rhetoric has emerged recently and even though it enjoys limited local appeal, it has succeeded in attracting some external support and media attention. Its future remains to be seen.

We are left with several kinds of questions that call for further investigation. The first set of questions centers on the relation between ethnicity and class, and has to do with how, why, and under what circumstances ethnicity rather than class becomes an explicit or implicit basis for mobilization, or vice-versa. The interaction between the two, under conditions of socioeconomic and technological change and at different historical periods, needs to be examined comparatively in the
upper Rio Grande Valley, and elsewhere in the Southwest. The second set of questions concerns the specific social, political, and cultural-symbolic ways in which local, small-scale identities articulate with larger, extralocal ones, and conversely, how different organizational foci compete for members under different conditions. Particular cases must be examined in ethnographic and historical detail. A conceptual framework for the comparative, subregional analysis of ethnic identity among Mexicano populations throughout the Southwest can be constructed only after such investigations have been made.

NOTES


Briefly, the tri-ethnic trap is a situation in which Hispanics, unable to advance beyond clearcut secondary economic status and faced with the steady and irrevocable loss of their traditional land base, must abide by a tourism-engendered Anglo glorification of Indian culture, as well as the federal protection and even restoration in Indian lands, sometimes at the expense of Hispano ownership.

This broadly follows MacCannell's usage for "constructed" and "reconstructed" ethnicity. MacCannell proposes that ethnicity is constructed in response to colonialism, and reconstructed in response to tourism. Reconstructed ethnicity presupposes and also constitutes a special case of constructed ethnicity, which itself is largely the product of European colonization of non-western peoples and a fundamentally reactive phenomenon. Ethnic construction may occur under any of four basic asymmetrical relationships between groups: "First, an inferior group attempts to associate itself with a superior; second, the inferior group defines itself as the antithesis of the superior group or the superior group as the antithesis of itself; third, a superior group attempts to associate with and copy the ways of an inferior group; and fourth, a superior group defines itself as the antithesis of an inferior group or vice versa." The third is the situation of tourism is which reconstruction takes place. (See Dean MacCannell, "Reconstructed Ethnicity: Tourism and Cultural Identity in Third World Communities," Annals of Tourism Research 11, 3 (1984): 383.)


Adrian Bustamante, "Los Hispanos: Ethnicity and Social Change in New Mexico," Ph.D. dissertation, University of New Mexico, (1982).


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24 This is essentially the distinction between the thing or ding an sich and the symbol that represents it in human discourse. Drawing upon the semantic map/territory distinction proposed by Korzbski ("the map is not the territory" or, to put it another way, "the word 'cat' cannot scratch us"). Bateson incorporated and elaborated upon this notion in his own discussions of epistemology. (See Gregory Bateson, "Form, Substance, and Difference," *Steps to An Ecology of Mind*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1972), pp. 448-466.)


27 Hall states that subcultural identification can but does not necessarily impede the development of a larger political unity, and "If one accepts the position that ethnicity is reactively created and that there is a general trend to larger, more wide-spread ethnic groups, then the identification and understanding of those features which impede such changes is vital to the construction of such a wider identity." Thomas Hall, "Comment on the Nostrand, Hansen, Nostrand, Blaut, and Ríos-Bustamante, Nostrand Debate," Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Western Social Science Association, Fort Worth, (1985), p. 10.


30 The Flores land case was settled out of court when their lawyer established that scores of improper or private and privileged communications had taken place between the presiding judge and the attorney for Vista del Brazos. Whereas the merit of the Flores' land claim might have been contestable, their legal case quickly became a civil rights issue by virtue of the manner in which the court, or District Judge Bruce Kaufman, proceeded. The Flores ended up receiving a substantial monetary settlement (approximately $117,000) plus legal costs (approximately $164,000) and 200 acres of their originally claimed 500 or more. (See Tamar Stieber, "In Río Arriba, Jury Still Out on Land Settlement," *Albuquerque Journal*, September 3, 1989.)
WORLD,

July 10, 1969
VERDANT VIRGINNY

en el ceno
del cocodrilo
una lágrima
rompe el silencio

i assail you
and
question seriously
all that you espouse
in
the way
of civil rights
and
other power projections

for
i know that the people
will never know
what it is
that they must know
in order
to not only survive you
but to live...

world,
you come into the barrio
(ghetto)
and promulgate
means of better
capitulation
from those you oppress...

and i know
that you shall ever
fear
to extend the knowledge
that shall free us...

Ricardo Sánchez