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Are there any indians left in Colombia? The *indigenista* movement from 1940 to 1950

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ABSTRACT:

This paper examines the creation of the Colombian Indigenista Institute, CII (1942), its institutional history, and its closure (1949). The CII, influenced by the Mexican indigenista movement, fought for indigenous peoples' visibility for eight years. In the end, however, the CII failed due to a combination of internal factors such as ideological disagreements, and internal ones, including violence, scarce resources, and lack of awareness on the part of politicians and elites about the status, challenges, and even existence of Amerindian groups in Colombia. Three Colombian scholars created the CII. They attended the First Inter-American Indigenista Congress (Pátzcuaro 1940) where they got in touch with Manuel Gamio, then director of the Interamerican Indigenista Institute. Gamio's ideas—that Indians have the right to govern themselves, to have tribal organizations, to elect their community leaders, and to maintain and assert their cultural identity—inspired the Colombians. In this paper, I trace the influences of the Mexican indigenista movement on Colombian indigenismo projects between 1940 and 1950. I draw on a variety of sources including Colombian newspapers and magazines, as well as letters of the indigenistas housed at the Colombian library Luis Ángel Arango in Bogotá and the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection at the University of Texas at Austin. I conclude by explaining why Colombian indigenismo of the decade between 1940 and 1950 ultimately failed.

KEY WORDS:

Indigenismo, Colombia, Mexico, Manuel Gamio, Antonio García Nossa.

Introduction

In 1940, in Pátzcuaro, Mexico, Latin American indigenistas gathered at the First Inter-American Indigenista Congress to discuss how to improve the quality of life of Latin American indigenous peoples. A key figure was Manuel Gamio, director of the Inter-American Indigenista Institute, who strongly argued that Indians must be integrated into the nation through Western education. His ideas inspired the three Colombian delegates who attended the congress: They were passionate about the indigenous peoples' condition in their country but Gamio's outlook could not be fully applied to the Colombian context, which differed greatly from Mexico's. In Colombia, unlike Mexico, for instance, elites and government bureaucrats denied the existence of Amerindian societies. Economist Antonio García Nossa; physician and writer Cesar Uribe Piedrahíta; and *indigenista* Gerardo Cabrera Moreno created the Colombian Indigenista Institute (CII) in 1942, but it only lasted eight years. During its brief existence, the members of the Institute worked tirelessly for the visibility of native communities and fought for their rights. Unfortunately, the Colombian indigenistas had founded the CII in an extremely unpropitious environment.

In this paper I examine the conditions that led to the creation of the CII, its institutional history, and its decline and closure. In particular, I trace the impact of the First Inter-American Indigenista Congress (1940), and of Mexican indigenismo, especially Manuel Gamio's ideas, on the creation of the CII. The paper has three parts: The first briefly sketches the foundation of the Institute. I take into account the Pátzcuaro Congress (1940) and the contact Colombian scholars had with Gamio. The second describes the ideas of the eight members of the CII, based on their publications, including articles in newspapers, magazines, and books. The third section explains the failure of the Institute in Colombia due to conflicts between the founders, and to a combination of violence and scarce resources. As a result, the Institute shut down temporarily from 1949 to 1958, when it reappeared, and in 1960 was transformed into the Division of Indigenous Affairs under the Ministry of Government of Colombia, where it exists today.

Influence of Mexican Indigenista Ideas in Colombia

The indigenistas who attended the First Inter-American Indigenista Congress (Pátzcuaro 1940) aimed to design and develop agreements to improve the quality of life of Latin American Indians, an issue closely

related to the indigenous peoples land struggles¹. Mexican President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934-1949), believing that Mexican Amerindians needed to be part of the nation, developed an indigenista policy through the creation of the Autonomous Department of Indigenous Affairs (1936) (Fariás Mackey, 2010). Cárdenas had no doubt about the importance of recognizing and respecting Indians cultures. During the Pátzcuaro Congress he stated that his administration would spare no efforts to resolve issues related to the indigenous population.

Supported by Cárdenas, indigenista Manuel Gamio was a key figure at the Congress. Since 1920, he had argued that the Mexican Indian population was not an inferior race and that Indians had to integrate into the state in order to emerge from poverty (Gamio, 1921). A clarification is needed here, however. Gamio believed that Amerindian civilizations were somehow inferior to Western cultures in some aspects, like technology: «*Though Gamio considered Mexico's indigenous peoples to be culturally underdeveloped, he did not regard them as racially inferior to Mexicans of European descent*» (Swarthout, 2004). According to Gamio, to help the natives become part of the Mexican nation it was essential to educate them. He thought that the dominant culture needed to guide or give orientation to the incorporation process (Gamio, 2004).

From 1941 to 1960 Gamio was the director of the Inter-American Indigenista Institute. Under his guidance, the Institute published a compilation of Indian laws from various Latin American countries; pressed for the inclusion of Indigenous women in the Institute projects; organized Inter-American Indigenista Congresses; and created the Institute's two information organs, *América Indígena* and *Boletín Indigenista*. Gamio's constant concern was the need to raise the living conditions of the millions of Latin American Indians (León-Portilla, 1962).

Gamio's ideas motivated the three Colombian delegates to the Congress to create an indigenista institute in their country. They found extremely compelling the Mexican indigenista efforts, supported by President Cárdenas, to incorporate Indians into the nation. Gamio's influence on Colombians such as García Nossa was clear in 1945 when the latter wrote,

This process of formation of an *indigenista* ideology is based on the studies and orientations of the master Manuel Gamio, current director of the Inter-American Indigenista Institute, who gives the Indian problem a universal character and provides criteria for an organic knowledge of the peoples, disregarding the formal, isolated, and unilateral positions (García, 1945).

1. El Primer Congreso Indigenista Interamericano. *Boletín Bibliográfico de Antropología Americana*, 1937-1948, 4(1): 1.

Clearly Nossa admired Gamio and attempted to implement his ideas in Colombia.

But Colombian and Mexican indigenismo, despite having the same ideals, confronted different realities. In Colombia, unlike Mexico, the first battle was to demonstrate the existence of indigenous peoples to the government and elites. The question of land tenure was common to both countries, but was addressed differently in each. Whereas the Mexican government supported Indians in the recovery and ownership of their lands, in Colombia the state sought was to dispossess natives. The government argued that Indian land possession was responsible for impeding the country's progress. In September 17, 1951, economist García Nossa, Director of the CII, responded angrily to the government's position:

Nothing has modified the State's position concerning the Indian problem. So-called «public consciousness» has not changed either. Indian struggles have collided with the armed forces; [the Indians] have been powerless against repression. Only two years ago, an indigenous community territory in Cauca (Toribío) was «invaded» by settlers considering it wasteland; currently their (the Toribío Indians') rights have not been reestablished, and it is possible they will never be (García, 1952: 48).

Here, García Nossa sums up 60 years of Conservative republican ambivalence and scorn for Colombian indigenes, an attitude whose long trajectory dates back to the passage of Law 89 of 1890. Chapter 4, Article 40 of Law 89 gave the members of indigenous communities the status of minors in order to prevent them from selling or buying *resguardo* (reservation) lands. This law aimed to delay the complete dissolution of the *resguardos*, and to allow law makers some time to think about what to do with the Amerindians, who were considered incompetent to own land. In 1905, Conservative President Rafael Reyes ratified Law 89 alongside Law 5, which legalized selling of *resguardo* lands and announced dramatic punishments for Indian opposition (Pineda Camacho, 2002).

Even though Conservatives carried out the legal and physical attack on the *resguardos*, Liberals were equally guilty. During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries both political parties scorned indigenous peoples. It did not matter which political party was in power. In fact, Law 89 of 1890 also reflected the thought of politicians like Liberal José María Samper (1828-1888) about the *resguardo* lands. Samper considered *resguardos* a colonial institution, vestiges of a past that obstructed progress for the country as well as for the Indians.

Ever since 1920 indigenous movements had arisen in Colombia to counteract the notion that Indians were responsible for the nation's back-

wardness. These movements promoted dignity for native cultures. One of the most significant movements was led by the Amerindian Manuel Quintín Lame (1880-1967). Lame wanted to create an Independent Indigenous Republic composed of the Departments of Cauca, Huila, Tolima and Valle; he also pressed for recognition of indigenous peoples as sources of national identity. Quintín Lame fought fiercely against the dissolution of the *resguardos*, which meant that he also took a stance against the Land Law (1936), which had been approved during the Liberal Hegemony (1930-1946)². Even though Liberals such as Alfonso López Pumarejo —whose administration (1934-1938) was known as the Marching Revolution— were sympathetic to Amerindian struggles, the state's outlook on the Indians was still embodied in Law 89. Many indigenous peoples were thrown off their lands and, in 1944, the process of dissolving the *resguardos* of Tierradentro, Cauca Department, started (Pineda Camacho, 2002). It was precisely during that *resguardo* crisis that Antonio García and Gregorio Hernández de Alba created the CII. They sought to defend the *resguardos* by supporting Quintín Lame's land struggles in the Tolima Department, thus paving the way for what would become a new *indigenista* policy in the country (Pineda Camacho, 2002).

In this context the CII came to life, following the agreements reached at the Pátzcuaro Convention, embodied in its 10 (Convención de Pátzcuaro, 1940). At the Congress (Pátzcuaro 1940) itself the Colombian delegation demonstrated its concerns for the Indians as demonstrated in the papers they presented. Diseases, *latifundismo* (the system of great landed estates in Latin America), and social exclusion were the themes, as shown in the following chart. Colombia's *indigenistas*, however, were about to start different struggles than Mexican's.

Name of Colombian Delegate	Paper Title in Spanish	Paper Title in English
Economist Antonio García Nossa, Spokesman and Secretary of the Socioeconomic Section of the Congress	<i>Intervención parte de la Comisión Socioeconómica del Congreso</i>	<i>Intervention on behalf of the Socioeconomic Section of the Congress</i>
Physician and writer César Uribe Piedrahíta. One of the Presiding Officers of the Congress	<i>Las enfermedades de los indígenas colombianos</i>	<i>Diseases of the Colombian Indigenes</i>

2. Law 200 of 1936 or Land Law was part of the agrarian reform Alfonso López Pumarejo attempted to pursue. The Law promoted the concept of private property and established two ways to prove it. The first was to exploit lands efficiently (in economic terms). The second, which affected directly the Indigenous peoples', determined that lands which had not being economically productive during 10 years should belong to the state.

<i>Name of Colombian Delegate</i>	<i>Paper Title in Spanish</i>	<i>Paper Title in English</i>
Indigenista Gerardo Cabrera Moreno. Narrator of the Educational Section of the Congress	<i>Preponderancia del latifundio en Colombia and Resultados negativos de la legislación sobre división de resguardos indígenas en Colombia</i>	<i>Preponderance of the Latifundium in Colombia and Negative Results of Legislation to Dissolve Indian Resguardos in Colombia</i>

Chart 1. Colombian delegates at the First Inter-American Indigenista Congress, Pátzcuaro, Mexico, 1940³

Constitution of the Colombian Indigenista Institute

From 1942 to 1949 the CII devoted its efforts to making Colombian indigenous peoples visible. It had no governmental support, only occasional financial aid from the Inter-American Indigenista Institute and a private character, evident in the fact that its meetings were held at the home of its members though endorsed by the National Ethnological Institute, founded by Paul Rivet (1941). The structure of the CII consisted of a director, a subdirector, a treasurer, a secretary, and a council composed of four members. In addition, members could be honorary, active, or jointly responsible, as described in its statutes (*Estatutos del Instituto Indigenista*, 2012). The founders of the CII aimed to create a significant Colombian institution but due to budgeting hazards, internal conflicts, and violence it did not last. Additionally, it was never as sizable as the Mexican. The chart below shows the structure of the CII.

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Major Publications</i>
Director	Antonio García Nossa (1912-1982)	<i>Pasado y presente del indio</i> (1939). Bogotá: Ediciones Centro. <i>Introducción crítica a la legislación indigenista en Colombia</i> (1951). México: Instituto Indigenista Interamericano.
Co-Director	Gregorio Hernández de Alba (1904-1973)	<i>Etnología Guajira</i> (1936). Bogotá: Editorial ABC. <i>La cultura arqueológica de San Agustín</i> (First Edition, 1978). Bogotá: Carlos Valencia Editores.

3. Acta Final del Primer Congreso Indigenista Interamericano. Supplement of the *Boletín Indigenista*, Instituto Indigenista Interamericano. (Washington, DC: Unión Panamericana, México, May 9, 1940): 8-10.

	<i>Name</i>	<i>Major Publications</i>
Subdirector	Luis Duque Gómez (1916-2000)	Problemas sociales de algunas parcialidades indígenas del occidente colombiano (1945). <i>Boletín de Arqueología</i> . Bogotá: Instituto Etnológico Nacional. <i>Balance de una tarea cultural 1944-1952</i> (1952). Bogotá: Instituto Etnológico Nacional.
Treasurer	Edith Jiménez Arbeláez (1914-2008)	<i>Trajes regionales de Colombia</i> (1972). Bogotá: Litografía Arco.
Secretary	Blanca Ochoa Sierra (1916-2008)	<i>El indígena en el Perú</i> (1945). Boletín de Arqueología. Bogotá: Instituto Etnológico Nacional. <i>Colombia prehispánica: arte e imagería</i> (1983). Bogotá: Ediciones Tercer Mundo.
Active Members	Juan Friede (Colombo-Ucranian, 1901-1991)	<i>Los indios del alto Magdalena. Vida, luchas y exterminio. 1609-1931</i> (1943). Bogotá: Editorial Centro. <i>El indio en la lucha por la tierra. Historia de los resguardos del Macizo Central colombiano</i> (1944). Bogotá: Instituto Indigenista de Colombia, Ediciones Espiral.
Active Members	Milciades Chaves (1916-1987)	<i>El problema indígena en el departamento de Nariño</i> (1944). Bogotá: Ediciones de divulgación indigenista. <i>Estudio socio-económico de Nariño</i> (1959). Bogotá: Agra.
Active Members	Gerardo Cabrera Moreno	<i>El problema indígena del Cauca, un problema nacional</i> (1944). Bogotá: Ediciones de Divulgación Indigenista.

Chart 2. Structure of the CII, 1942-1949.

The few members of the CII were deeply committed to helping improve the Amerindians quality of life in the country, but they were fighting against a stubborn state, which did not see the benefits if incorporating Indians into the nation. On May 22, 1945, García Nossa filed in the

office of a public notary of Bogota the statutes of the CII. The economist signed as director, his assistant director being the archaeologist Luis Duque Gómez, (1916-2000), as shown in Chart 2.

Self-educated anthropologist Gregorio Hernández de Alba, creator and founder of the National Archaeological Service (1935), did not attend the Pátzcuaro Congress (1940), but his trajectory as an Indigenous peoples' advocate was closely linked to the CII, as noted in Chart 2. Even though he does not appear in the official statutes of the Institute, he was its co-director. Hernández de Alba was the first Colombian scholar who did ethnography (fieldwork), as his book *Etnología Guajira* (1936) demonstrates; he was also the first to excavate the archaeological sites of San Agustín and Tierradentro (1937), currently included in the World Heritage List of Unesco. In addition, he was part of the Bachué Movement of sculptors, painters, and writers, who captured in their artworks indigenous vernacular culture.

What are we talking about? Activism versus Academy

The CII demanded recognition despite its small size, minuscule budget, and informal character. However, unlike Mexico —where there was no doubt about the existence of indigenous cultures, and where Gamio's efforts to integrate the Indians were supported generously by the state— Colombia had another reality. The members of the CII first needed to convince elites and politicians that there actually was an Indian problem, therefore, a need for an Institute. Its director, García Nossa, explained how the CII was to function:

The new phase —in which not only an organic criterion is acquired but a continental vision and comparative possibilities— starts from the First Inter-American Indigenista Congress and from the organization of the Colombian Indigenista Institute, as an institution and with two inseparable objectives (García, 1945: 68).

Following García Nossa, these objectives were to undertake scientific research and to be politically committed (García, 1945: 68). As for the CII's policies, García Nossa claimed:

The indigenista criteria that inspired the Institute are far from the academic tendencies of pure science —the Social Sciences cannot adopt a neutral attitude towards the problems of peoples crumbling or dispersing— and from the pan-indigenismo that reduces the trouble of the nation to indigenous issues. Our conceptions impose two ways as the basis of a rational indigenista policy (García, 1945: 68).

García Nossa contrasts two outlooks here: that indigenismo is merely an academic position (an attitude taken by scholars at the National Ethnological Institute) and that indigenismo is a responsibility (the attitude that the members of the CII must have). The first alluded to the researcher's duty to study, document, analyze, and gather information related to native Colombian groups. The second pointed to a committed position that included political activism to help improve indigenous peoples' lives. The CII, under García Nossa's direction, intended to become a political actor, able to contest the official government position, which denied the existence of an Indian problem, and even refused to recognize legally the existence of Indian communities.

García Nossa's worries were shared by anthropologist Hernández de Alba, whose life-long concern was the indigenous communities' recognition and land struggles. He agreed with the director of the CII that clear political commitments were important. This is evident in the distress he felt when he knew about Decree 918 of 1944. The decree had a section entitled *Some provisions regarding the resolution of the indigenous reserves in the region of Tierradentro, Cauca Department* (Castrillón Orrego, 2006: 290), which assumed that in Colombia there were no Indians left. Politicians such as Juan Lozano y Lozano and Rafael Maya declared:

What once was an indigenous culture no longer exists. The Conquest did not leave any trace of it or anything about it that influences the country's social organization. There is no code, temple, or idea left (Hernández de Alba, 1943).

To such claims, Hernández de Alba responded that it was not possible to deny the existence of an «Indian problem» in the country. It had a clear manifestation in the poverty and non-visibility in which the indigenous peoples lived. The anthropologist also argued that Indian influences were still present in Colombian society in diverse spheres, such as health, customs, and techniques (Hernández de Alba, 1943).

As for the 1944 Decree, which aimed to dissolve the resguardos, Hernández de Alba expressed outraged:

For all the members of the Indigenista Institute the study the situation of the Colombian Amerindians living under the resguardo regime, and who follow step by step the measures to protect the American Indians —to make Indians more capable economically, more educated and healthy [...]— the measure that the government wants to impose is not only absurd but widely harmful (Hernández de Alba, 1944).

Ever since 1930 Hernández de Alba had known firsthand about the Amerindian situation in Colombia, therefore, he felt the Decree as a targeted attack endangering the country's cultural diversity. By 1942 he had already written articles calling for the need into assimilate Colombian natives to the nation, according to Gamio's guidelines. Hernández de Alba also believed that indigenous communities had to become economically productive and visible. This did not mean that Indians had to adopt alien economic systems, but rather that they should improve their own economies in order to gain a foothold in the national economy. Hernández de Alba aimed for legal changes to encourage strong native economies. (Hernández de Alba, 1942). In Hernández de Alba's statements, it is possible not only to trace Gamio's influence but also Paul Rivet's, director and founder of the National Ethnologic Institute. Rivet stated: «*It is necessary that Indian genius is acknowledged in the modern economy of the peoples we call civilized*» (Rivet, 1941: 8).

When the Decree (1944) that aimed for the division of the Tierradentro resguardos came into existence, the Director of the Land Department of the Treasury Department of Colombia, Justo Díaz Rodríguez, affirmed that Hernández de Alba, as all the members of the CII, was wrong in his conception about indigenous peoples. Díaz Rodríguez argued that the indigenista criterion was incorrect and that a land reform would not benefit natives. He attacked Hernández de Alba like this:

The distinguished archaeologist is confused about the indigenista problem. In our country, there are SAVAGE INDIANS or those not reduced to civilization, objects of catechetical activity and to whom the measure does not apply. There are SEMICIVILIZED INDIANS, such as the peoples who live in Sibundoy, and who are subject of other measures [...] And there are CIVILIZED INDIANS, reduced to community life and considered civilized men, not now but since 1890. They are really so because it is not possible to distinguish them by their habits, customs, traditions, culture, or own land productive system, and they are no different to the peasants [...] it is towards them that the measure is taken (Díaz Rodríguez, 1944).

This official response demonstrates that the members of the CII had to fight against conceptions of «Indians» as non-Christian, pre-contact, and restricted groups. Díaz Rodríguez also accused the indigenistas of conceptual dishonesty when he claimed that:

The facile declarations of Mr. Hernández de Alba, in my view, are due to an unfortunate mix of the boundaries of the indigenista problem, and of the peasants benefited by the measure. It is also due to the confusion of the social, economic, and legal problem with the ethnological, historical, anthropologi-

cal, etc., point of view studied by the intellectuals that compose the Indigenista Institute (Díaz Rodríguez, 1944).

The unfortunate assertions of Díaz Rodríguez were only a reflection of the government's position toward indigenous peoples, which made extremely difficult for the members of the CII to do their job.

The indigenistas, for their part, believed that Colombian indigenous peoples were not merely peasants, and had no desire to make them such. They contested this perception promoting the idea of cultural diversity. They endorsed some of Gamio's ideas, like the necessity to integrate Indians people to the state while preserving their own cultural characteristics, such as land holding, and living at their own rhythm. Furthermore, the members of the CII advocated for integration so that native communities could access public health, educational, political, and economic services. As Hernández de Alba wrote in 1949:

the [illegible] of Anthropology is expected to benefit the indigenous minorities and the State, with realistic, fair, acceptable formulas in order to achieve Indian incorporation into a regime that improves their actual circumstances, giving them their fair share of modern civilization's conveniences, and also improves and strengthens the State. In other words, now is the moment to plan seriously the Colombianization of the Indians (Hernández de Alba, 1949).

Colombian indigenistas were critical of acculturating native populations. They acknowledged, however, that it was in the Amerindian groups' best interest to become part of the nation in order to have access to public health services, education, and land subsidies.

Struggles of the CII Members

The members of the CII were actively committed to fighting for Amerindians rights. For instance, archaeologist, Luis Duque Gómez, assistant director of the CII (Chart 2), emphasized the government's neglect towards the Colombian Indians. In the article entitled *Problemas indígenas de algunas parcialidades indígenas del Occidente de Colombia*, he referred to the *reguardos*' situation in the west of the country. He argued that Land Law 200 of 1936, promulgated during López Pumarejo's first administration (1934-1937), instead of benefiting the Indians had a disastrous effect because in most cases they were violently thrown off their plots. (Duque Gómez, 1945: 198).

Land Law 200 was meant to regulate the relations between sharecroppers and tenants, and it is considered the first serious attempt at

agrarian reform in Colombia. The Law aimed to give peasants lands that were not theirs —like the *resguardo* lands, usually thought as wasteland— under the principle that private property had to fulfill a social function. Law 200 was not well received and both Liberal and Conservative land owners united to approve another law, Law 100 of 1944. Law 100 was intended to end the concentration of lands and with it landowners' economic and political power (Buitrago, 2013). Politician López Pumarejo also fought the traditional landowner's oligarchies and the Church's power.

Historian Juan Friede (1901-1991), another member of the CII (Chart 2), born in Ucrania but naturalized as Colombian in 1930, admired the resistance and resilience of Amerindian groups who had survived since the Spanish conquest. He had a special interest in San Agustín, Huila, where he had lived since 1942. Friede claimed that Indian problems' in Colombia were due to the lack of knowledge about indigenous communities and their history. His purpose in the book *El indio en la lucha por la tierra. Historia de los resguardos del Macizo Central colombiano* (1944) was to reach a large audience, to teach it why and how Amerindians were organized and how did they conceive their land and property. The book, which traces the Indians land conflicts piece is a historiography of the Indian's land conflicts from the Colony to 1944, is polemical because it advocates for the defense of indigenous peoples' land ownership. *El indio en la lucha por la tierra* declared in its opening sentences:

The indifference towards the Indian problem in Colombia and the general lack of concern for their history ensures that in this field, above all, there is ignorance of even the most common terms used to name forms and institutions related to indigenous history (Friede, 1944).

Friede was convinced that a way to address the indigenous people invisibility in Colombia was learning about their history.

Another member of the CII, Milciades Chaves (1916-1987), developed different arguments to fight for Indians' rights. After studying land problems in the Nariño Department he published *El problema indígena del Departamento de Nariño* (1944) (Chart 2); siding with Duque Gómez about the division of *resguardos* concerns. Chaves paid attention to language barriers, to Amerindians' lack of knowledge of the dominant culture, and to indigenous land ownership. In discussing why Indians were disadvantaged in their interactions with landlords, Chaves pointed to their insufficient proficiency in Spanish, their unfamiliarity with the dominant society's monetary system (bills, silver coins, of nickel and copper),

and their inability to perform basic math calculations like addition or subtraction (Chaves, 1944). He contended that:

The moral and material misery of the Indians' lives is based in the Colonial regime that we have not overcome; it supports itself in the political *caciquismo*⁴ that finds its best defense in semi-feudal property. (Chaves, 1944).

Chaves emphasized the estrangement of native populations from the dominant society. He firmly thought that the clash of cultures between Indians and whites was due to their radically different way of perceiving the world.

The members of the CII agreed that the Indian problem in Colombia could not be solved in isolation. Chaves and García believed that it was related to economic and legal issues. Hernández de Alba alleged it had to do with the understanding of culture and diversity. These differences harm badly the CII, but its decay and closure was primarily due to politics⁵.

Decline and Closure of the Colombian Indigenista Institute

In 1946 the Liberal Hegemony came to an end with the Conservative presidency of Mariano Ospina Pérez. From this year to 1953, the Conservative Party regained power of the state and terminated many Liberal policies. For instance, the government withdrew economic support

4. *Caciquismo* is a distorted way of local government, where a political leader has the total dominion of a rural society.

5. Despite the policies and intentions created by the members of the Colombian Institute were targeted to all the indigenous peoples of the country, some of them were more benefited than others because they were being studied by the scholars of the Institute at the moment. Some of these groups are located in the Cauca Department, such as the Guambianos and Paeces, who since Colonial times are fighting for their lands. Other communities such as the Yanacomas, the Ingas, the Kokonukos, and the Totoroes also live in the Cauca Department. There are approximately 250,000 Indians in this Colombian region and they constitute one of the Amerindians better organized. One of its most important leaders was Manuel Quintín Lame. Currently, there are about 11,000 Guambianos, according to the Unidad de Planeación Minero Energética de Colombia (Mine and Energy Planning Unit of Colombia). Other native societies are also in the Tolima Department such as the Pijao descendants. They inhabit this region since the Colony but it was during the nineteenth century, when their *resguardos* were dissolved, that they initiated the recovery of their traditional land, under the guidance of Quintín Lame, who in 1914 organized an uprising in the Cauca Department and wanted to extend it to the departments of Huila, Tolima, and Valle. Nowadays, the Nasa and Coyaima (both Pijao) groups live in the Tolima Department. Their population is about 24,663 people in several communities. In addition, in the Huila Departments there are four native groups: the Guambianos, the Paeces, the Yanacona and the Pijao, who sum up about 10,000 people.

given to the Social Sciences. Many intellectuals, like the CII members, had to travel abroad or lower their profiles to avoid political persecution.

During Ospina Pérez's presidency, the traditional violence between the Liberal and Conservative parties intensified, reaching its peak in April 9, 1948, with the assassination of Liberal leader Jorge Eliécer Gaitán. Gaitán's murder sparked the so-called *Bogotazo*, one of the most dramatic situations of Colombian nationhood. His homicide led to a political mass movement in Bogotá and other cities such as Barrancabermeja, Bucaramanga, Cali, Ibagué, and some towns of Tolima and Cundinamarca. Other riots took place on the Atlantic Coast, and in the Departments of Antioquia, Boyacá, and Nariño (Ocampo López, 2014).

The *Bogotazo* initiated ten years (1948-1958) of violence between Liberals and Conservatives, mostly in rural areas. This period, called La Violencia—capitalizing the first letters—is known for the vicious attacks Conservatives and Liberals committed against each other. At the core of the conflict, as ever in Colombia, was land ownership. Conservative politicians encouraged peasants to seize the lands of Liberals. This provoked intense armed confrontation throughout Colombia. Massacres, burning of villages, kidnapping, robbery, rape, and all kinds of atrocities took over the country. Many people fled to the mountains and formed guerrilla bands to defend themselves (Ocampo López, 2014).

President Ospina Pérez advocated for state economic interventionism, gave much importance to agrarian problems, and supported the coffee harvest sector. He believed that progress was built upon the richness of the territory's soil (Ocampo López, 2014). There is no explicit mention of ethnic minorities in his speeches, but as a Conservative he thought that indigenous people model of land property, the *resguardos*, was one reason for Colombia's backwardness. From 1946, the onslaught against Indian collective property increased. The division of the *resguardos* of Nariño became a reality. The state also promoted a policy of denial of native cultures (Pineda Camacho, 2002).

In this Conservative environment, all the members of the CII but Duque Gómez were Liberal. Moreover, they were Gaitanistas. They resented deeply Gaitán's murder, which discouraged them from fighting for indigenous people's rights. In his diary Hernández de Alba in 1948 wrote: «At 2 pm, Gonzalo [youngest son of Hernández de Alba] told me that J.E. Gaitán was dead. ¡Do not be cruel! ¡Do not say that! Horror, anger» (Hernández de Alba, 1948: 4).

Restricted in their work and actions, the members of the CII decided to give the Institute a rest. It closed in 1948. By then, Hernández de Alba had already left for the city of Popayán, in the Cauca Department, where

he created the Ethnological Cauca Institute (1946). His aim was to continue his indigenista work, but this Institute too ceased to function (1950). The Ethnological Cauca Institute, however, tried to maintain ties with the Inter-American Indigenista Institute and Gamio. Hernández de Alba told Gamio as much in a letter:

I hope the [Colombian] government would finally understand the utility of an indigenista action. With its comprehension, the Indians that are currently under the resguardo regime or not, could improve their social status. Status that definitively reinforces the ties between Colombia and the Inter-American Indigenista Institute (Gregorio Hernández de Alba to Manuel Gamio, June 21, 1946).

Hernández de Alba insisted on maintaining a relationship with Gamio by reiterating the importance of emulating Mexican indigenista ideals in Colombia. Therefore, while directing the Ethnological Cauca Institute, he denounced of indigenous peoples' of the Cauca Department. In a letter addressed to president Ospina Pérez he made a public protest against the violence:

On Thursday November 24th most men of the Guambía group reunited to repair the «Ñimbo» bridge. Then authorities and employees of Silvia arrived at this village to force the natives to vote during the forecoming elections. The official employees threatened to take away the Indian's identification papers. Two former governors of Silvia, friends of this Institute, Antonio Valencia and Agustín Tombé, protested. For this they were beaten, taken as prisoners to the town of Silvia, and in one of its streets, in the dark, murdered (Gregorio Hernández de Alba to Mariano Ospina Pérez, January 16, 1950).

The anthropologist was deeply outraged by the killing of his Indian friends and helpers at the Cauca Institute. Because of the murders, however, Hernández de Alba continue advocating for indigenous societies Human Rights.

Meanwhile, García Nossa, trying to salvage the CII, turned to his friend, the chancellor of the National University, Gerardo Molina (Colombian politician). García Nossa wanted the CII to become part of the University. It seems also that some ideological differences rose between Hernández de Alba and García Nossa. The latter believed in a committed and political indigenismo, one that pursued concrete actions, and was not restricted to academy. But Hernández de Alba, also an activist, could not find a middle ground between Garcia Nossa and the National Ethnological Institute's position, where some of its members did not agree with activism. The tension was between political social action and academic ethnology. The members of the Ethnological Institute ar-

gued that anthropology and politics did not go well together (Correa Rubio, 2007: 38).

In 1947, the Economic Sciences of the National University of Colombia took under its wing the CII by Accord 148. This Accord also encouraged its members to keep true to the purposes of its creation (Barragán, 2012: 5-6). García Nossa continued working and developing what he considered organic indigenismo —a combination between social action and theory. The other CII members dispersed.

In 1958 —after the so-called dictatorship of General Rojas Pinilla (1953-1957)— Hernández de Alba was appointed by the Liberal president Alberto Lleras Camargo (1958-1962) as Chief of the Division of Indian Reservations of the Ministry of Agriculture. In this position he recovered the CII, taking it out of the National University (Hernández de Alba, 1959: 26-27). By Decree 2343 of November 13, 1958, the CII came to life again. Its Article 1 reads, «*That the Colombian Indigenista Institute shall be created as an advisory organ of the Office of Indian Reservations of the Ministry of Agriculture*» (Hernández de Alba, 1959: 26-27). Two years later, 1960, the Institute became the Division of Indigenous Affairs under the Ministry of Government, and currently it is called Direction of Indigenous, ROM, and Minorities Affairs.

The CII came a long way since its creation in 1942. Its members were brave scholars who were the first to create awareness of the problems of native Colombian societies. Eight people fighting against elites and the government for indigenous peoples' privileges might sound idealistic or impractical. Their efforts and commitment, however, were fruitful, in the sense that sparked interest of other intellectuals, professors, and activists who still today fight for native societies rights. Sadly, the Indian communities' situation in Colombia has not changed. On the contrary, it has gotten worse.

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