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### **Playing the Tune of Citizenship.**

#### **Indian Brass Bands in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, Mexico, 1876-1911**

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This article examines popular citizenship practices among the Indians of the Sierra Norte de Puebla (Mexico), focusing on the brass bands which participated in religious and patriotic festivals. Rather than analysing the bands as part of the region's popular Liberalism, or concentrating on the festivals' nationalistic content, as previous studies have done, it underlines how the bands' organisation combined customary Indian practices with Liberal regulations, and transformed both. This resulted in the successful exercise of citizenship providing bandsmen with effective participation in face-to-face community life and a form of connection with the wider national sphere.

Keywords: brass bands, citizenship, festivals, Indians, Mexico, popular Liberalism.

A growing corpus of Mexican social and cultural history is studying the actions of Indian peasants in their own right, as opposed to measuring popular culture against an idealised elite ideology only to find it wanting or deviant.<sup>1</sup> This article contributes to the study of citizenship practices among Indian peasants in the Sierra Norte de Puebla, in central Mexico, by focusing on the organisation of brass bands, which became widespread in the second half of the nineteenth century and figured prominently in patriotic festivals.

The popularisation of brass bands in Europe came in the early to mid-nineteenth century after the introduction of valves and keys to wind instruments, which made them more melodic and easier to play. Under the impulse of the French Revolution, the military, and especially National Guard units, diffused this wind music from courts and regiments to the public sphere. In Mexico the new wind instruments were initially used in religious ceremonies but by the early 1850s President Santa Anna and the Conservatives introduced the brass wind band as part of a secular patriotic ritual which included the composition of the Mexican national anthem. Liberals followed suit. During the second half of the nineteenth century, brass bands spread with surprising rapidity throughout the country, playing a wide variety of religious and civil music, fulfilling important political and ceremonial roles, and serving an amazing array of interests: Church, Conservative, Liberal, and more narrowly local and personal (Thomson, 1994). However, as Liberals gained political ground from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, and triumphed over the European Intervention and the Conservatives in 1867, it was their use of brass bands that became more visible.

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<sup>1</sup> See references in notes 2 and 8 below.

For the case of the Sierra Norte de Puebla, brass bands have been studied as part of the regional Liberal leaders' successful efforts to build a clientele from the 1850s on. In fact, this region was paradigmatic of 'popular Liberalism', whereby regional leaders supporting Liberal figures of national standing negotiated Liberal policies with the population, which in turn appropriated those aspects which were useful to defend their interests. The formation of brass bands, for which the regional leaders initially provided expensive imported instruments, were part of the efforts to attract communities to the Liberal camp (Thomson, 1990 and 1991a).

In this article I share the view that brass bands were key to popular Liberalism, but will take a different perspective. Whereas studies of popular Liberalism concentrate on the implementation of Liberal policies to consider their regional and local appropriations, I focus on popular citizenship practices whatever their provenance or ideology. Such citizenship practices comprise customary and other non-Liberal forms of local politics and administration, including those specific to Indian pueblos, in addition to the local authorities' and the population's appropriation of Liberal legislation. Therefore, bands will be seen not so much as instruments of Liberalism, but as an example of locally specific forms of citizenship. Brass bands, themselves a result of diverse influences, contributed to the invention of patriotic ritual and a Liberal tradition which were encouraged by nationalistic, modernising leaders but transformed in the light of local needs and older forms of organisation. Conversely, the customary practices of indigenous villages were changing in the light of Liberal legislation. It is important to note that the practices we label as customary or Liberal may appear as relatively stable or homogeneous in a given moment, but are in fact the outcome of long-term processes that combine heterogeneous

ideas and practices. For these reasons I prefer to speak of hybrid citizenship practices, where hybridisation does not imply the mixture of pure forms, but a process whereby different forms and logics, which may appear to be homogenous but are themselves the result of previous mixture, interact and transform one another creating new practices (García Canclini, 2001: iii). Below, I briefly consider recent developments in the analysis of popular Liberalism and citizenship which frame my own study of popular citizenship practices.

Historians have only recently recognised the affinities between Liberalism and Indian peasants. Before the 1990s it was commonplace that nineteenth-century Liberalism, through its double attack on the properties of Indian corporate villages and the Church, had been the prime enemy of the country's peasant population. Over the last decade there has emerged a much more complex picture of this relationship as historians acknowledge the variety of opportunities that Liberal principles offered to the rural population, as well as the multiple strategies that the latter adopted to apply only those policies which favoured their interests.<sup>2</sup> For the Puebla-Veracruz region a distinction may be made between the highlands, more prone to identify with the Liberals and appropriate their policies thus bringing about a popular Liberalism, and the lowlands, where villagers were much more resistant to the new legislation.<sup>3</sup> The revisionist thesis that there developed,

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<sup>2</sup> See Chassen-López (2004: 304, 327, 333, 392-395) and Hamnett (1996) for Oaxaca; Guardino (1996) for Guerrero and Mallon (1995) for Puebla and Morelos. Kouri (2004) studies Indian leaders who favoured land privatisation in Papantla, Veracruz.

<sup>3</sup> Puebla's popular Liberalism is studied in depth in Thomson with LaFrance (1999). For an outline of the revisionist perspective on Liberalism and the Indian population, Thomson (1991a).

under particular circumstances, a popular Liberalism, has intersected with an emphasis on the agency of subordinate groups.

Recent social and cultural history has highlighted the role of subordinate groups in nation-state building, to the point of being accused of falling into an unwarranted ‘apotheosis of agency’ (Knight, 2002: 141-42; Van Young, 1999: 243-45). Indeed some works have somewhat romanticised subaltern empowerment<sup>4</sup> or have studied cases in which the rural poor have influenced the course of events, neglecting those in which they were powerless.<sup>5</sup> However, nineteenth-century developments do not lend themselves to a rosy picture. In the case of the Sierra Norte de Puebla, the limits of Indian peasant empowerment are clear. The successful assertion of rights was strongest in certain areas (mainly the southern parts of the districts of Tetela and Zacapoaxtla, and the municipality of Zautla) and during the period of the Liberal and patriotic wars (the Reform War, 1858-1861 and the European Intervention, 1862-1867), when the region’s strategic value was at its peak; it continued during La Noria and Tuxtepec rebellions in the 1870s, but showed its fragility in the deterioration that came from the 1880s onwards (Thomson with LaFrance, 1999).

The contingency of the alliance between peasants and Liberalism is further confirmed by research on peasant support for Conservatives and the European intervention (Falcón, 2002). If we consider peasant agency in its own right and stop seeing it only through the lens of national leaderships, we find that, whether they were supporting Liberals or Conservatives, what remained constant in indigenous peasant actions was the

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<sup>4</sup> This is the case in Hernández (1993) and to a lesser extent in Mallon (1995).

<sup>5</sup> See Guardino (1996) and Vaughan (1997), but note the first author’s change of focus in Guardino (2005).

defence of certain forms of local organisation which had proved to secure a minimum fulfilment of material and ceremonial needs. This was no mere defence of an immutable traditional life: it is clear that indigenous communities not only adapted their language to the specific ideology of the addressee but actually transformed their practices, seeking a middle path between the defence of their interests and the need to adapt to the legislation imposed from above.

To the study of peasant politics, we need to add a new concept of citizenship. Here citizenship is understood as a set of social practices rather than a fixed status or an ideal enshrined in legal theory and codes. These practices respond to a variety of local political cultures, revolve around the exercise of rights and duties, including the struggles to obtain entitlement, and link the population to different political communities from village or town to the nation state.<sup>6</sup> Mexican historiography now recognises the coexistence and mixture of a variety of political cultures; Carmagnani and Hernández (1999) have remarked how the nineteenth-century concept of Liberal citizenship drew on the late colonial tradition of vecindad, which underlined the importance of long-term residence and participation in the local community. Annino (1999) finds in peasant petitions a strong and syncretic sense of citizenship that recovers vecindad and other old principles and fuses them with Liberal ideas in order to claim, sometimes successfully, certain rights. Further peculiarities of citizenship for the case studied here will be considered in the section ‘Citizenship in the Sierra’.

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<sup>6</sup> For citizenship as a set of social practices, Turner (1993: 2-7). For the need to take into account local political cultures, Somers (1993) and Purnell (2002). For a Latin American Studies perspective on these issues, Taylor and Wilson (2004: 156-157) and Stepputat (2004: 245).

The presence of nationalist sentiment is not a necessary condition to consider certain political practices as citizenship practices. I do not believe it is essential to ask whether villagers developed an understanding of the nation, as defined in abstract terms by the social sciences, and adjusted their actions correspondingly. In line with Lomnitz's critique of Anderson, I contend that the development and spread of nationalism need not lie in the knowledge of the map of one's country, or the reading of newspapers, but may be present in other situations such as 'the gesture of the peasant who involves his citizenship when petitioning for communal land' (Lomnitz, 2001: 337-338). From this perspective, what is interesting about the brass bands that played in civic ceremonies is not so much whether their members and audience took nationalist rhetoric seriously, or whether they imagined the nation beyond their face-to-face communities, questions that will probably remain unsatisfactorily answered if only because of the lack of sources. Rather, two aspects of musical bands and civic festivals for which we do have enough evidence are: a) the explicit patriotic and nationalistic content of celebrations which were widespread and took place simultaneously across the country and b) their organisation and role in local life and politics.

The first set of themes has received considerable attention while the second, which will be the focus of this article, has been somewhat neglected. Through the performance of rituals that were similar in content and form in villages throughout the country, patriotic festivals were contributing to nation-building, especially to the symbolic processes of hegemony (Beezley and Lorey, 2001: ix; Beezley et al., 1994; Lomnitz, 1995: 20-21; Thomson, 1994: 317-322). Even if the common language developed in these celebrations

was understood very differently by Mexico City elites and Indian peasants, the existence of such shared framework was in itself crucial (Guardino, 2005: 286).

The Sierra Norte de Puebla bands became popular and played a prominent role in the construction of a Liberal cacicazgo in the mid-nineteenth century. However, as President Porfirio Díaz's centralisation grew apace, Liberalism in the Sierra gradually lost its capacity to accommodate the majority Indian population (Guerra, 1995: 49-50; Knight, 1985: 17, 32, 75; Thomson with LaFrance, 1999: 241-260). As the regime became less inclusive, and the memories of the Liberal and patriotic wars were more distant, one would expect civic festivals and their bands to have turned into mechanical expressions of rule rather than sincere manifestations of popular participation. However, this article contends that bands in the Sierra Norte de Puebla continued to be part of a lived ritual, rather than a mere reproduction of the obligatory pomp owed to the state. This was possible because, independently of whether villagers were inflated with some romantic and abstract notion of nationalism, with mere small-town patriotism, or with neither of the two, the fact was that the bands were deeply embedded in the local organisation of politics and ceremony. Incorporating traditional and Liberal traits, they were a successful expression of a hybrid form of citizenship, which served both indigenous village interests and the nationalist aspirations of the political elite.

### Citizenship in the Sierra

Armed with saxophones, trombones, tubas, clarinets and cornets, and under the somewhat grandiloquent name of cuerpos filarmónicos (philharmonic corps), the brass bands of the



Sierra Norte de Puebla actively participated in the rich ceremonial life of the Porfiriato (1876-1911). All municipal seats and some of the pueblos sujetos (villages which had their own council but were subordinate to a municipal seat) boasted a local band. Civic ritual revolved around the celebration of patriotic holidays, of which the most salient were the victory against European armies in the Battle of Puebla on 5 May 1862 and the Independence celebrations on 15-16 September. Other ceremonies included the inauguration of public works and school prizegivings, which were generally made to coincide with a patriotic festival such as the promulgation of the 1857 Constitution on 5 February (Thomson, 1990: 61-62).<sup>7</sup> But beyond participation in the festivities of the emerging Liberal state, was the bands' role in village life part of the new, Liberal practices of citizenship?

The Sierra Norte de Puebla was an exemplary case of popular Liberalism, defined by the Indian population's military, logistic and economic support for the Liberal camp against the Conservatives (1858-61) and the European Intervention (1862-67). Village bands played a crucial role in the construction of such Liberalism, building a regime with a significant popular component (Thomson, 1990 and 1991a; Thomson with LaFrance, 1999). In order to fully understand the role of bands in the Sierra, it is necessary not only to consider the forms of citizenship implemented by the region's Liberal leaders, namely National Guard membership and taxation, as has been done in previous studies, but to examine the peculiarities of local government and society, especially the articulation

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<sup>7</sup> ASMTz, box 27, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 49', Cuetzalan 28 April 1882.

between municipal office and the compulsory form of public service peculiar to Indian pueblos and known as the cargo system.<sup>8</sup>

National Guards started as emergency militias to fight the war with the United States in the 1840s but were then appropriated by Liberals to fight Conservatives and the European Intervention. The Sierra's National Guards were remarkably successful in the recruitment of Indian peasants who were generally believed to abhor military service. The conditions of service, diametrically opposed to those of the regular federal army and its dreaded leva (forced recruitment), explain this success. Members of the National Guard joined voluntarily and were exempted from taxation and public service (both of which were compulsory for adult men). They generally served locally so that its members were never too far from their cultivation plots or families. Finally, Indian soldiers could elect commanders from among their own (Hernández, 1992; Thomson, 1990). In the southern municipalities of the Sierra where land was scarce, National Guard recruitment was highest as soldiers were offered land grants. In the more fertile central and northern municipalities, National Guards were much less popular and villagers participated in the Liberal struggles as food suppliers and taxpayers; this was the case for the municipalities of Cuetzalan (including the village of San Miguel Tzinacapan) and Huehuetla studied here.

In addition to various taxes on production and commerce, all adult men between the ages of 16 and 60 were obliged to pay two types of head taxes: the contribución de

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<sup>8</sup> We need further research on local government in Indian towns during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. However, important contributions are Escobar (1996 and 1997), Guardino (2005), Nelen (2000) and Reina (2004).

rebajados which exempted them from service in the National Guards (and remained in place as contribución civil after the National Guards were disbanded in 1888) and the contribución de Chicontepec which paid for schooling and sometimes contributed to the bands' expenses. The significance of Liberal taxation derived from the changes it introduced in the long term. Whereas colonial legislation placed onerous tributes exclusively on Indians, Liberal taxation would be applied universally to all inhabitants of the new republic, regardless of race. Thus the Sierra's Liberal project was built upon both the National Guard / tax dyad and a network of secular schools sustained by the Chicontepec tax. The population of the Sierra (Nahuas, Totonacs and non-Indians) were bound to the project of the emerging state as soldiers, taxpayers and pupils (Thomson with LaFrance, 1999: 1-23, 226-229, 250-260). Their petitions showed a belief that their entitlement to rights was based on their participation in the Liberal wars or their payment of taxes (Thomson, 1991b).<sup>9</sup> However, such forms of belonging available to the Indian population did not prevent non-Indians' increasing control over the administration.

The nineteenth-century transition from the colonial corporate town (pueblo de indios) to the Liberal town council (Ayuntamiento) and to a more open economy was a protracted and conflictive process throughout the country (Escobar, 1996; Guardino, 2005: ch. 6). In the Sierra, upwardly mobile Indian and mestizo leaders obtained support for Liberalism through a careful balance between exactions (taxation, service in the National Guard, war supplies) and the protection and defence of a number of old and new rights. This relationship entailed a pragmatic implementation of Liberal policy, especially when it posed a clear threat to the pueblos' organisation and identity, and brought about a hybrid

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<sup>9</sup> AMH, box 55, Presidencia, 'Acta del Plebiscito', Huehuetla 4 March 1925.

organisation whereby the old forms of government, sometimes deeply transformed but not strictly Liberal, played a decisive role.

Throughout the nineteenth century, the growing migration of non-Indians to former pueblos de indios put great pressure on former common lands that became a commodity open for sale and purchase. However, the geographic conditions of the Sierra discouraged the formation of large estates, while villagers' resistance and the Liberal leaders' flexibility in implementing desamortización (privatisation) further prevented the concentration of property. Even the biggest estates in the Sierra Norte were small compared to those in the centre of the state of Puebla. Devoid of a serious land problem, these pueblos nonetheless felt threatened by growing non-Indian commercial networks. The traders' advantageous position as the main buyers of Indian-grown products fed their political ambitions. Municipal councils were gradually penetrated by non-Indians who became mayors (alcaldes or presidentes municipales). The pueblos sujetos, dependent on municipal seats, generally retained their network of entirely Indian authorities who formed the pueblo council or junta auxiliar headed by the presidente auxiliar, but had to tolerate the presence of non-Indian secretaries, appointed by the district or municipal administration (Thomson with LaFrance, 1999: 1-23).

Public service in the pueblos was a combination of colonial and Liberal practices that were crystallised in what ethnohistorians and anthropologists have called the cargo system or civil-religious hierarchy. Contrary to early interpretations that this system was a vestige of the pre-Hispanic and/or Colonial period, the current (and more historically sound) view is that it was a result of Indian pueblos' adaptation to successive legislation from the Bourbon Reforms to Liberal Constitutionalism, and to economic changes

(Chance and Taylor, 1985). In other words, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Indian traditions of government may show evidence of pre-Hispanic and Colonial influence but were also a response to processes of modernisation occurring from the late eighteenth-century onwards.

The cargo system was a ladder of civil and religious offices (cargos), which were unpaid and compulsory for all adult Indian men. All posts were arranged according to a hierarchy of authority and service. The ladder of civil offices started from the lowly topiles in charge of cleaning and courier services, which could include children, and moved up to posts such as census takers and tax collectors until it reached the higher and respected offices of judge or mayor. Religious posts were similarly arranged starting with topiles and went up to fiscales and mayores, who had great financial commitments to sponsor ceremonial life. Men alternated between religious and civil posts during their lifetime. Those who completed service at all levels became elders or pasados and held the highest authority in the community.<sup>10</sup> Office-holding was compulsory; when an Indian man received an appointment, he was expected to feel honoured and accept it. Taking office committed men to a service of varying demand; the lower the post the lower the strain but also the lower the prestige. In certain circumstances, even a post at the bottom end of the hierarchy could become burdensome as it took the officeholder's time from work in the family's milpa (subsistence maize plots). However, office was seen as a man's duty and an inescapable trait of pueblo life (Arriaga, 1873: 29-30).

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<sup>10</sup> AMZx, box 40, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 167', Nauzontla 12 Oct 1877. On elders see Thomson (1991b: 232-235) and AMH, box 2, Borrador de Oficios 1876, 15 June 1876; Libro de sesiones, 6 Aug and 16 Oct 1878.

The cargo system was articulated with municipal office according to local circumstances. In the pueblos sujetos, where the only non-Indian presence in the council was the secretary, the civil posts sanctioned by Liberal legislation often alternated with religious posts and all were treated as compulsory cargos. In the municipal seats the system was undergoing greater transformation as a result of increasing non-Indian participation in government. Some towns developed two different, although interdependent, forms of access to civil government: Indians took posts according to the cargo system, while non-Indians followed the procedures of the Liberal Ayuntamiento (Arizpe, 1973: 119 ff; Durand, 1986: 43-46; Nelen, 2000; Taller, 1994: 207).<sup>11</sup>

Thus the existence of bands built upon a complex organisation of local administration, which included the articulation between municipal office and the cargo system.<sup>12</sup> As will be seen below, bands were integrated into the peasant family economy and the communities' civic and religious ritual. Embedded in local custom, they allowed their male members - most of whom were Indian - an active form of citizenship integrated into public service, which provided an alternative to community membership and entitlement to rights grounded on military service or the payment of taxation.

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<sup>11</sup> AMC, Libro de Actas y Acuerdos de 1924 (LAA 1924), 28 Jan 1924 and LAA 1927, 1 Aug 1927.

<sup>12</sup> This fact has been acknowledged before but not elaborated upon (Thomson, 1990: 33, 42, 59 and 1994: 320, 325-328).

## Band Integration into the Cargo System and the Peasant Family Economy

While the Constitution enshrined freedom of association and freedom of work, bands developed a form of participation that was somewhere between compulsory and voluntary. Notably, the post of musician was integrated into the cargo system; those who chose to join the band rather than perform other cargos did so either voluntarily or by invitation and persuasion from the authorities. But given that the cargo system itself was compulsory, so was the post of musician once taken. On the other hand, unlike the religious cargos unacknowledged in official correspondence with civil authorities, band membership was bound by a contract and explicit regulations kept in writing by pueblo and municipal authorities. Moreover, there is abundant evidence that such regulations, unlike others, were strictly enforced.

Men and boys (as young as ten) joined the philharmonic corps. In the case of dependants, it was their fathers who would respond to the authorities' invitation to participate but both the parent and the young man were responsible to the community (Taller, 1994: 246).<sup>13</sup> The bandsmen's contract started with training and provided a series of rights, enjoyed by either the band member or his father when the player was too young (Thomson, 1990: 54-55; 1994: 320).<sup>14</sup> In exchange for unpaid service as musicians, bandsmen were exempted from serving in the National Guard (until they were disbanded in 1888), from paying taxes and from taking office (cargos). In this manner, participation

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<sup>13</sup> AMC, box 96, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 7', Miguel Francisco to Cuetzalan, Tzinacapan 12 Jan 1906.

<sup>14</sup> AMZx, box 30-E, Presidencia, Fomento, 'Exp. no. 36', Zacapoaxtla 10 May 1909. AMH, box 51, Presidencia, 'Comparecencia de Pedro Juárez', Huehuetla 22 Aug 1913.

in the band was connected to a citizen's duties (military service, taxpaying) and the local cargo system, reflecting an ideal of active citizenship which drew from both the liberal-republican tradition and the reinvention of Indian forms of government.

Musicians in service had a contractual obligation to remain in the corps for a minimum period of five years after which bandsmen were free to leave or continue for a second five-year period. Only serious illness and certified change of residence were legitimate reasons for a musician to leave the corps before completion of the contract. Sanctions specified that bandsmen who left town without notice would be summoned to return. In fact, mayors and auxiliary presidents called for authorities in the neighbouring municipalities to summon or arrest fugitive musicians, following the same procedure as when men fled the village to avoid paying taxes. Additionally, band rules showed an acute awareness of costs. In some towns regulations allowed that a member leave the corps if he found a replacement to play the same instrument or if he paid 40 pesos to cover the expenses incurred on his education. Members expelled for indiscipline also had to compensate the municipal coffers for the investment made in their training. When band members wanted to leave service before the end of their period and did not fulfil any of the conditions above, they adopted the same strategies followed when seeking exception from office in the cargo system. They often faced a stark choice between being jailed or fleeing town, or, if they had a good case to make, they petitioned the jefatura política (district administration) (Thomson, 1990: 56-61).<sup>15</sup>

The expenses incurred made authorities all the more concerned with having a respectable band. In some pueblos the auxiliary president would arrange for a special fee

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<sup>15</sup> ASMTz, box 62, Presidencia, Miguel Juárez to Reyes, Tzinacapan, 9 July 1900.



to be collected every month; in others, the school tax would be increased. Additionally, authorities often encouraged donations from wealthy residents and public employees.<sup>16</sup> To the purchase and maintenance of instruments, and the director's salary, the pueblo had to add the loss of between 25 and 40 men who did not make pecuniary contributions to the local treasury or serve in cargos. Therefore, municipal and auxiliary presidents, together with public instruction aldermen and the band's inspector, made sure that members attended classes and rehearsals. Disciplinary measures ranging from reprimands, through fines and confinement in the rehearsal room, to expulsion were stipulated in the regulations and strictly enforced. Authorities sometimes went as far as imprisoning disobedient band members, a punishment which was not contemplated in the contract, but corresponded to customary practice, which continued to run against Liberal principles (Thomson, 1990: 58-59).<sup>17</sup>

Such severity contrasted markedly with the situation in elementary schools, another cherished project of the Liberals. Although communities made great efforts to pay school taxes and compulsory education was prescribed by law, only a small percentage of children (around 15-20 per cent) attended school. Authorities were aware of regulations and sanctions with regard to universal compulsory education, but in rural towns where selective literacy was in fact the norm, and schools did not integrate into local life as effectively as the bands, educational regulations were not applied systematically (Acevedo 2004: 93-112, 158-63, 437-465).

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<sup>16</sup> AMC, box 21, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 185', Cuetzalan 29 Dec 1885. AMH, box 10, Tesorería, 'Noticia de ingresos...', Huehuetla 31 Dec 1882.

<sup>17</sup> AMH, box 18, Presidencia, 'Exp. Correspondencia...', González to Caxhuacan, Huehuetla 20 Dec 1898.

Band members were often recruited among school children. With a busy schedule for music training, those who joined the band generally stopped attending school (Thomson, 1994: 326-327).<sup>18</sup> Unlike school attendance, which took children away from domestic tasks, band membership was clearly integrated into the peasant family economy via the cargo system. As mentioned above, service in the band entitled musicians to exemption from taxes and other offices in the cargo system. Yet, as in other offices, it required family support and could become burdensome as demonstrated by the fact that even if a musician obtained permission to work on his corn plot, he often had to rely on his father's support while he served in the band, and some had to leave the music service altogether when their family commitments increased, as with the birth of children and the setting up of a separate household.<sup>19</sup> However, in extreme cases the situation was negotiable; for instance, a father who, in times of family hardship, had to help his independent adult son who was a musician could, if he made a persuasive case, obtain exemptions from taxes or cargos.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately, service in the philharmonic corps would not be more taxing than the religious and political offices which all males in the community were expected to take. By contrast, schooling took children's time from other duties and therefore interfered with, rather than contributed to, family organisation and the cargo system.

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<sup>18</sup> AMC, box 63, 'Acta de visita', Tzicuilan 5 Aug 1898; box 123, Instrucción Pública, 'Exp. no. 68', Tzinacapan 25 April 1910, Zacapoaxtla to Cuetzalan 6 May 1910.

<sup>19</sup> ASMTz, box 68, Presidencia, Tzinacapan 13 Feb 1902. AMC, box 81, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 86', 31 Aug 1903.

<sup>20</sup> AMC, box 96, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 7', Miguel Francisco to Cuetzalan, Tzinacapan 12 Jan 1906.

## Band Participation in Civic and Religious Festivals

The bands' key place in village life was felt through their participation in a tight calendar of civic and religious festivals, and in the sounds of daily rehearsals. The band's obligatory performances consisted of all civil ceremonies, namely patriotic festivals, Sunday serenades and whatever performances authorities requested for special occasions. The exclusion of religious festivities from some of the regulations was most likely a result of the local authorities' desire to comply with Reform Laws, which prohibited public expression of religious ritual, at least in print. But regardless of the anticlerical measures of the Liberal state, participation in religious celebrations continued and was key to the band's role in the community.<sup>21</sup> In fact some contracts specified the obligation to play in the patron saint celebrations (funciones titulares) for each of the municipality's pueblos as well as the municipal seat or headtown (cabecera). Others went as far as stipulating that musicians were obliged to play in all 'cofradía' (confraternity) and 'public' performances. Cofradía performances would include not only the patron saint celebrations but those of several other saints, and could therefore result in a tight calendar of commitments for the

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<sup>21</sup> AMH, box 2, 'Borrador de oficios...', 24 Dec 1874; box 5, Tesorería, 'Exp. no. 2', Huehuetla 31 Dec 1885, Puebla 15 Jan 1885 and Huehuetla 3 Oct 1888; box 11, 'Libro de actas y acuerdos', 11 May and 14 Sep 1889; box 42, Fomento, 'Exp. no. 1', Huehuetla, Jan and Feb 1910 and Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 46', Huehuetla 24 Dec 1910'

village band. Authorities probably saw this practice as a useful way of strengthening ties between pueblos and their cabeceras, and between authorities and the population.<sup>22</sup>

The extent to which bands participated in the rituals of the Liberal state and religious ceremonies varied from town to town. The philharmonic corps' role in developing patriotic ritual during the mid-nineteenth century was crucial in the Liberal strongholds of Xochiapulco and Tetela, while in the more Conservative district seats, such as Zacapoaxtla, the music bands were closer to Conservative families, religious ritual and the Church (Thomson, 1990). Evidence for the municipalities of Cuetzalan and Huehuetla here studied indicates that philharmonic corps were less of a symbol of martial patriotic Liberalism than they were in Xochiapulco or Tetela, and more of a hybrid space that allowed for the expression of both popular patriotism and folk religion, whether it was the Creole/mestizo religion guided by the parish priest in the cabecera, or the syncretic and often anticlerical religion of the Indian pueblos.<sup>23</sup>

In the Nahua pueblo of San Miguel Tzinacapan, dependent on the cabecera of Cuetzalan, the older musical instruments connected with pre-Hispanic and colonial music such as rattles, pipes, drums, violins and guitars were played to accompany popular dances of colonial origin. Yet, in this pueblo, although only a handful of men had ever joined the National Guard, the brass bands were welcome and participated in religious and civil

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<sup>22</sup> AMC, box 5, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 21', Cuetzalan 31 Aug 1875; box 17, 'Exp. no. 86', Cuetzalan 1883. ASMTz, box 50, Presidencia, 'Reglamento...', Tzinacapan 1895; box 68, Presidencia, Amado Mora to Tzinacapan, Cuetzalan 3 July 1902.

<sup>23</sup> Bands' inventories listed patriotic military, religious and civil music: AMC, box 19, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 72', Cuetzalan 1884. ASMTz, box 57, Presidencia, 'Inventario...', Tzinacapan 1 Jan 1898.

celebrations. The bands in Tzinacapan and Cuetzalan were fully integrated into ceremonial life and public entertainment. The musicians' work was taken seriously and when the band was good it provided collective pride and enjoyment and served political functions (Taller, 1994: 218; Ichon, 1990: 377-430).<sup>24</sup> The success of these bands, which were composed almost entirely of Indian musicians, becomes clearer by contrast with the state of Chiapas. In Zinacantán and Chamula, Tzotziles preferred pre-Hispanic and colonial instruments which produced sacred music and accompanied song, such as pipes, drums and strings, while brass bands were seen as mere background noise produced by non-Indians from neighbouring towns (Thomson, 1994: 316-324).

In sum, bands tapped into tradition through their participation in religious festivals where they shared a space with pre-Hispanic and colonial music and which were part of a syncretic culture with a much longer history than that of the Liberal state. Yet at the same time, bands were central to patriotic celebrations, a vital ritual of the Liberal state, and provided lay entertainment during Sunday serenades, where they played the tunes that were fashionable in the provincial capitals and Mexico City.

### The Pride of an Indian Pueblo

Much as bands reproduced old religious rituals and participated in the creation of new Liberal traditions, they both reproduced and transformed local forms of domination by negotiating administrative, race and class hierarchies. It is administrative hierarchies for which we have more information, although in observing them, we learn something from

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<sup>24</sup> ASMTz, box 14, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 40', Tzinacapan 1873.

the racial and class inequalities with which they overlapped. In the Indian peasant pueblos dependent on cabeceras dominated by non-Indian traders, bands, very much like church buildings, acted as sources of pride, identity and status. In Liberal times, however, the church, although still a potent symbol, was less politically useful. In some of the cases when a village or hamlet sought to gain the status of pueblo (which allowed them to form their own council) they would start a band as part of the process, in much the same way as they would found a school (Rockwell, 1994: 188; Thomson, 1994: 325). When a community already held the status of pueblo, the music band would help gain respect and some degree of autonomy from its cabecera, or at least soften tense relations between mestizo-dominated cabeceras and Indian pueblos, through its participation in the festivities of the municipal seat and other surrounding towns, and their serenading of higher authorities when they visited (Thomson, 1994: 336).

Additionally, bands were part and parcel of local factionalism. During the mid-nineteenth century village bands helped the Sierra's mestizo and Indian Liberal leaders develop patronage networks to replace old loyalties (Thomson, 1990). But once the Sierra Liberals, organised into the Montaña party, took the governorship of the state of Puebla after 1877, the political role of the band could become more fractured. Whether they were Montaña allies or not, factions within towns and villages used the formation of a band as a focus of opposition to the local authorities. In 1870s Tzinacapan, a faction of Nahuatl men opposing the Indian authorities, who were allied with the non-Indian secretary, unsuccessfully tried to form a village band. In the 1880s, however, the authorities themselves decided to start a philharmonic corps but its work suffered interruptions. Finally, in 1894 the auxiliary president, Juan Antonio, encouraged the population to

contribute six cents every month to purchase new instruments and pay a director's salary of 20 pesos per month. From then on the band served more as a source of cohesion than the instrument of a particular faction.<sup>25</sup>

By the turn of the century, the band in Tzinacapan was clearly a source of pueblo pride in its relations with other pueblos and, more importantly, vis-à-vis the headtown. Tzinacapan's musicians were of sufficient quality to be requested to attend the 5 May celebrations in the district seat of Zacapoaxtla and to provide music for religious services in neighbouring villages. The musical director of the municipal seat of Cuetzalan occasionally had to borrow instruments from Tzinacapan. With a band of 40 musicians, the Nahua pueblo could compete with the cabecera.<sup>26</sup> Although the height of public entertainment in the municipal seat of Cuetzalan were the weekend serenades provided by their own philharmonic corps, during the 1900s the bands of the pueblos sujetos of Tzinacapan and San Andrés Tzicuilan alternated to provide serenades every Thursday at the new bandstand in Cuetzalan's park. Thus the mostly Indian musicians showed their civility by playing classical and popular European music with the imported instruments purchased by their own village council. Unfortunately, we do not know what the

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<sup>25</sup> ASMTz, box 16, Presidencia, 'Exp. No. 7', 1875 and box 27, Presidencia, 'Exp. No. 49', April 1882 and box 50, Presidencia, Acta de la sesión extraordinaria, Tzinacapan 13 March 1894.

<sup>26</sup> ASMTz, box 66, Presidencia, Libro de Actas y Acuerdos de la Junta Auxiliar de San Miguel Tzinacapan para el año de 1901 (LAA 1901), 15 April and 19 Nov 1901; box 68, Presidencia, LAA 1902, 15 Feb and 12 April 1902. AMC, box 85, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 22', Tzinacapan to Cuetzalan, 8 Jan 1904; box 92, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 84' Cuetzalan to Tzinacapan 16 April 1905; box 104, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 94', 'Programa...', Cuetzalan 27 April 1907; Cuetzalan to Tzinacapan, 20 Aug 1907 and 'Programa...', Cuetzalan 12 Sep 1907; box 124, Presidencia, 'Programa...', Cuetzalan 3 Sep 1910.

respectable Creole and mestizo ladies of the municipal seat thought of the mostly Nahua musicians who played waltzes, mazurkas, polkas, schottisches and pasodobles for their diversion.<sup>27</sup>

It is difficult to assess the musical quality of the bands and its relation to racial inequalities; yet some information is available and I propose a hypothesis in the last paragraph of this section. Music teachers came from different municipalities in the Sierra including Nauzontla and Tetela, which enjoyed good reputations, and villages vied with each other to attract the best musical director (Taller, 1994: 219-220).<sup>28</sup> His salary was therefore above that of the schoolteacher. In principle, teaching included musical notation, the singing of scales and voice practice. The most advanced students would be selected to learn to orchestrate. One year was spent in preparatory studies before they formally joined the corps and the five-year contract commenced.<sup>29</sup> However, the extent of band members' musical knowledge varied. Evidence suggests that directors were frequently content with having their students play an instrument regardless of whether they had learned to read musical scores. Even in the cases when they were praised for their music, we cannot assume they had learned musical notation.

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<sup>27</sup> ASMTz, box 66, Presidencia, Hernández to Miguel Juárez, Cuetzalan 30 March 1901 and box 68, Presidencia, Acta de sesión, Tzinacapan 7 July 1902. AMC, box 98, Presidencia, 'Exp. no. 134', Cuetzalan 14 Aug 1906; LAA 1910, 21 May 1910.

<sup>28</sup> ASMTz, box 62, Presidencia, LSA 1899, 24 Feb and 21 April 1900; Tzinacapan to Carlos Macip, Tzinacapan 5 June 1900; Note from Silveriano Mora to Ignacio Orduña, Tzinacapan 24 March 1900.

<sup>29</sup> AMC, LAA 1910, 25 June 1910; box 8, Presidencia, 'Reglamento...', Cuetzalan 16 Feb 1878; box 17, 'Exp. no. 86', Cuetzalan 1883.



The bands were dependent on the availability of funding and bandmasters; they suffered interruptions when authorities could not raise enough money for their maintenance. As in schools, when directors changed, students could either lose or improve their skills. As late as 1913, after decades of sustaining a philharmonic corps, the Cuetzalan band inspector resigned after finding that teaching was deficient, concluding that the band was a waste of resources. In fact, the forty musicians who comprised the philharmonic corps attended their classes and rehearsals punctually and their music satisfied the authorities and public. However, José María Hernández, the music inspector, was outraged that most students in the corps did not understand the timing of the different musical notes and actually played by ear. Hernández might have been even more indignant had he learned that many band members in the Sierra could not read Spanish (Taller, 1994: 217-224, 251-253; Brewster 2003: 59; Thomson 1990: 57).<sup>30</sup>

Yet the learning of music possibly held fewer disadvantages for Indians than the Spanish literacy taught in schools. In the schoolroom non-Indian students could easily excel while Nahua and Totonac speakers, facing a Spanish-only school programme, were at a disadvantage. With the musical instrument, Indian and non-Indian pupils may well have started on a more equal footing. Although the bandmaster was generally a Spanish speaker, a fact which must have favoured non-Indian children, when students had to learn music, and sometimes simply to play by ear, command of the Spanish language mattered less. Some Nahuas and Totonacs might have excelled in music even if they found the Spanish language or primary school instruction difficult to tackle. Perhaps it is no coincidence that the first Nahua teacher for whom there is a record in Porfirian San

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<sup>30</sup> AMC, Libro de Actas y Acuerdos para el año de 1913, 24 March and 26 June 1913.

Miguel Tzinacapan was Miguel Manzano, a music instructor, not a schoolmaster. Yet the story of Manzano himself shows the advantages of a Spanish education. He initially taught his students to play by ear, but later, thanks to his knowledge of Spanish, he had the opportunity to study music and instructed the Tzinacapan band to read scores. According to villagers' telling of the story, it was after such improvement that the band was invited to play in Zacapoaxtla's bandstand rather than being relegated to a street corner of the district capital as it had been before the learning of musical notation (Taller, 1994: 217-224, 251-253).

## Conclusions

Initially drawing inspiration from anthropological studies of ritual and European historiography on civic festivals, Mexicanists have already underlined how patriotic festivals have served to reproduce domination, but could also provide a space for negotiation, however unequal, between rulers and ruled, or become an outlet for resistance, however ritualised (Beezley et al., 1994). Vaughan (1994) related how federal teachers in 1930s Puebla drew on the rich local tradition of civic ritual developed in the nineteenth century in order to attract communities to the schools of the revolutionary government. Even in regions where federal schools were not very welcome, festivals succeeded because they appropriated local, popular initiatives.

This article has underscored the importance of the local, indigenous contribution to patriotic ritual by examining in detail the organisation of brass bands. It has also described

how constantly renovated customs of Indian local government conflated with Liberal principles in the bands. Such interaction was far from new: Indian forms of organisation had been reinvented countless times in order to respond to modernising state directives since Bourbon times. It was this openness, which allowed the combination of diverse practices, that brought the success of the *cuerpos filarmónicos*. In their organisation, musical repertoire and accompaniment of festivals, bands were open to European, mestizo, Indian, religious and civil influences. The significance of this fact is emphasised by contrast with another instrument of Liberal nation-building: schooling. Even if school attendance affected a greater part of the population than band membership did, the latter was better integrated into Indian village life and was probably more influential in qualitative terms. While bands allowed syncretism, the school was generally a space of one-way acculturation favouring Spanish speakers. Additionally, band members were committed to a five-year contract whereas students usually attended school for only one year. The results obtained through a musical education, compared to the meagre results of the village schools, were relatively rapid and much more tangible (as well as audible). The deficiencies of schools meant that Indian pupils barely learned to pronounce Spanish words from a given text and frequently did not understand their meaning (Acevedo, forthcoming). By contrast, by playing music, members of the philharmonic corps could fully contribute to civic and religious ritual life, as well as entertainment.

With the break-up of rule brought about by the 1910 Revolution, populations became reluctant to make pecuniary contributions to public causes. Local treasuries further suffered when head taxes were abolished. Moreover, instruments were lost to the revolutionary armies. Sustaining a philharmonic corps became a luxury few could afford.

Yet once the worst of violence and economic crisis had passed, the bands served as a focus for post-revolutionary reconstruction.<sup>31</sup> Gabriel Barrios, Nahua commander of the 46<sup>th</sup> Federal Battalion in the Sierra and regional boss throughout the 1920s, formed a philharmonic corps for his soldiers, using music to both strengthen ties with indigenous communities and assure non-Indians that these soldiers were not dangerous Indians with guns, but disciplined members of society (Taller, 1994: 217-224; Brewster, 2003: 36-37, 42, 55-61, 67).

If for the Indian population a more democratic distribution of power often came with arms, for the Creole and mestizo elite families, the starched uniforms, bright brass and classical music, all trappings of civilisation, made Indian soldiers more acceptable. In a context of power, class and race hierarchies, the Battalion's philharmonic corps demonstrated to the elite that Indians could conform to an ideal of civilisation and were ready for citizenship.<sup>32</sup> Band membership provided a space, however constrained, for recognition of Indians as Mexican citizens. For their part, the soldier-musicians believed service gave them entitlement to citizenship rights, while their participation in local ritual reinforced their membership in the local community.

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<sup>31</sup>AMH, box 37, 'Libro de Acuerdos del Ayuntamiento', 24 April and 8 May 1916 and box 39, Presidencia, 'Libro de Acuerdos', 31 March and 25 Sep 1911; box 51, Presidencia, Huehuetla to Gabriel Barrios in Tetela, Huehuetla 17 Nov 1917.

<sup>32</sup> For the definition of citizen as a civilised person: Taylor and Wilson (2004: 159-161). On subordinate groups' adoption of elite ideals of civilisation as a strategy to gain entitlement to rights: Stepputat (2004).

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