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## **The “Invasion” of Zapotec Textiles: Indian Art “Made in Mexico” and the Indian Arts and Crafts Act**

W. Warner Wood  
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In May 2000, in Capitol Hill hearing testimony Andy Abeita described the “threat”, largely coming from South of the border as an “onslaught” creating “significant losses” because of “unfair competition.” He further described the situation as a “takeover” causing “economic harm” against which those in the U.S. should be “protect[ed].” Abeita’s choice of vocabulary was not out of the ordinary.<sup>1</sup> As a number of authors have pointed out, Mexican workers are often described as an invasionary force.<sup>2</sup> Illegal and legal Mexican migration and work in the U.S. or in the *maquiladora* manufacturing plants that have sprung up along the border from Tijuana in the West to Nueva Leon in the East, are frequently framed in just this manner in public discourse. What made Abeita’s Senate testimony unusual was his target-- not migrant farm workers in California or Ciudad Juarez automobile plant workers, but crafters some of whom, at least for the case of “Mexican” textiles sold in galleries and gift shops throughout the U.S., are Native American artists. In the case of the “Navajo-like” woolen textiles sold throughout the American Southwest, many of these indigenous Americans live in the Southern Mexican state of Oaxaca.<sup>3</sup>

The Capitol Hill hearings in which Abeita and others testified were part of a long-standing effort to deal with the problem of “fake Indian” art and craft items. Formed in 1935, the Indian Arts and Crafts Board was established to both promote and regulate commerce in these items.<sup>4</sup> The act of congress that founded the Board also established a number of guidelines for the sale of “Indian” crafted items, including the creation of the “Board’s trademark” for identifying indigenous crafts and the promulgation of penalties for both foreign and domestically made “counterfeit” items. Unfortunately, the act was seldom enforced: the trademark was never developed, much less enforced, and in 1990, the Indian Arts and Crafts Act was passed by Congress in another attempt to curb what it called an increase in “fraudulent sales” that were

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<sup>1</sup> United States Cong.: Senate, Committee on Indian Affairs Oversight Hearing on the Implementation of the American Indian Arts and Crafts Protection Act Public Law 101-644. “Testimony.” (Washington: GPO, 2000), 1-3.

<sup>2</sup> Hugh Mehan, “The Discourse of the Illegal Immigration Debate: A Case Study in the Politics of Representation.” *Discourse and Society*. 8(1997):2:249-270; Phyllis Pease Chock, “Ambiguity in Policy Discourse: Congressional Talk about Immigration.” *Policy Sciences*. 28(1995):165-184; Otto Santa Ana, “‘Like an Animal I was Treated’: Anti-immigrant Metaphor in U.S. Public Discourse.” *Discourse and Society*. 10(1999):2:191-224.; and Pablo Vila, “Narrative Identities: The Employment of the Mexican on the U.S.-Mexican Border.” *Sociological Quarterly*. 38(1997):147-183.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Cong.: Senate, 1.

<sup>4</sup> United States Cong.: House, Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990. 101st Congress, 2nd Session. Rept. 101-400, Part 2. (Washington: GPO, 1990), 4.

“siphoning an estimated \$40 to \$80 million from the genuine manufacturers markets” on a yearly basis.<sup>5</sup>

The spring 2000 Congressional hearings, marking ten years after the passage of the 1990 act, are testimony to this continuing “problem” and to an inability to deal with it effectively. I argue here that this inability is essentially a consequence of a lack of understanding of the problem itself. This essay explores the origin and form of one type of “fake Indian art,” Zapotec textiles, to demonstrate why, after nearly seventy years of hearings and legislation, the United States Congress and the Indian Arts and Crafts Board still seem unable to curb the “onslaught” described by Abeita. I argue that, at least for the case of Zapotec textiles, the persistent problems with the Arts and Crafts Board legislation rest squarely on the shoulders of researchers and writers who inform understanding of Native American art as well as ethnic arts and crafts more generally.

In so doing, I borrow from Arjun Appadurai’s conception of the translocality.<sup>6</sup> A recent flurry of research and writing by social scientists (especially anthropologists) on the issue of “locality” reveals that the localities in which people live, and which are often taken to be the setting for their lives, are actually created by the people whose lives social scientists study. As such, localities should not be taken as the backdrop or setting for social science research, but as an object of study in and of themselves.<sup>7</sup> Benedict Anderson’s well-known work on nationalism and the creation of nation (localities of great geo-political importance in the early 21st century) as an “imagined community” is just one example-- an example with direct relevance to this essay, as legislative efforts to define “Indian” in the United States Congress reveal.<sup>8</sup>

Translocalities are simultaneously several places: here and there, north and south, periphery and metropole. They are created in the circulation of and ties among people, objects, and ideas. Places like Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico, the villages in southern Mexico where Zapotec textiles are, at least in part, made, as well as villages in India and the Philippines mentioned in congressional testimony as places where fake Indian art is produced, are all translocalities, connected by a network of people involved in the creation of the Santa Fe area of the American Southwest as a tourist destination as well as interior design and ethnic art mecca-- the “Land of Enchantment,” as proclaimed on New Mexican automobile license plates. In this brief essay, I sketch out an argument that treats the places where Zapotec textiles are made and sold as translocalities-- places, quite literally (and regardless of geographic location), in the “land of enchantment.” Finally, I explore the implications this reconceptualization of the “invasion” of Zapotec textiles has for attempts to legislate participation in the American Southwest’s Indian art market.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 5-6.

<sup>6</sup> Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: The Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis: (University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

<sup>7</sup> Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson eds., *Anthropological Locations: Boundaries and Grounds of a Field Science*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); Akhil Gupta and James Ferguson eds., *Culture, Power, Place: Explorations in Critical Anthropology*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997); Karen Fog Olwig and Kirsten Hastrup eds., *Siting Culture: The Shifting Anthropological Object*. (New York: Routledge, 1997); see also Appadurai, 178-199.

<sup>8</sup> Benedict Anderson ed., *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (London: Verso, 1991).

### **Zapotec Textiles: Made in Mexico?**

Traveling through Southern Mexico in the 1950s, the journalist and travel writer Helen Augur described a small Zapotec Indian village situated among the foothills of the Sierra Madre mountains and noted that its “craft is a transition from Indian to European methods and has scarcely changed since the Conquest, for no part of the craft is mechanical.”<sup>9</sup> The village was the well-known weaving center of Teotitlán del Valle in the state of Oaxaca. Some twenty years earlier, Elsie Clews Parsons, student of Franz Boas and highly regarded anthropologist in her own right, undertook ethnographic research in the nearby town of Mitla and wrote that Teotitlán was the “outstanding serape-weaving *pueblo* of the valley.”<sup>10</sup> Anthropologist Robert Taylor conducted research in Teotitlán in the late 1950s, and Emily Vargas-Baron provided the first comprehensive account of Zapotec textile production, documenting that the craft of weaving had indeed changed since the Conquest and coining the phrase “weaving production complex” (WPC) to describe the inter-connected nature of woolen textile production in several towns nearby Teotitlán-- all situated in the Tlacolula arm of the Oaxaca Valley.<sup>11</sup>

Vargas-Baron described how, for certain historical reasons, Teotitlán had come to dominate a system of subcontracting where local merchants (those selling textiles made by others) had managed to garner control of the regional, national, and international markets for the textiles. Her research revealed that, at least since the 1890s, a small group of merchants, almost exclusively from Teotitlán, had developed a system in which they acted as both buyers-up and as the organizers and overseers of piecework and subcontracted forms of textile production. Teotitecan merchants created both large workshops and at-home piecework relations in Teotitlán and the communities of Santa Ana del Valle and Díaz Ordaz. Since the completion of Vargas-Baron’s study, a number of authors have built upon her ideas and described how merchants in Teotitlán have built an ever-widening circle of contact with and control over newly developing markets and weavers-- including weavers in the nearby community of San Miguel del Valle.<sup>12</sup> More particularly, they describe how this expanding control and circle of influence works within the WPC and highlight how the Zapotec use kin, fictive-kin (primarily god-parentage), and ritual obligations as means of controlling the productive activities associated with textile production.

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<sup>9</sup> Helen Augur, *Zapotec*. (Garden City: Doubleday, 1954), 62.

<sup>10</sup> Elsie Clews Parsons. *Mitla: Town of Souls and Other Zapoteco-Speaking Pueblos of Oaxaca, Mexico*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1936), 45.

<sup>11</sup> Robert Taylor, “Teotitlán del Valle: A Typical Mesoamerican Community.” Ph.D. dissertation. (University of Oregon, 1960) and Emily Vargas-Baron, “Development and Change in Rural Artisanry: Weaving Industries of the Oaxacan Valley, Mexico.” Ph.D. dissertation. (Stanford University, 1968).

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Cohen, *Cooperation and Community: Economy and Society in Oaxaca*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000); Scott Cook and Leigh Binford, *Obliging Need: Rural Petty Industry in Mexican Capitalism*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Lynn Stephen, “Zapotec Weavers of Oaxaca: Development and Control.” *Cultural Survival Quarterly*. 11(1987):1:46-48; *Zapotec Women*. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1992); and “Weaving in the Fast Lane: Class, Ethnicity, and Gender in Zapotec Craft Commercialization.” In *Crafts in the World Market: The Impact of Global Exchange on Middle American Artisans*, ed. J. Nash. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993).

With few exceptions, from the 1940s well into the 1970s the marketing and consumption of Zapotec textiles was intimately tied to tourism in Mexico. Zapotec textiles were sold in Teotitlán, at tourism sites in Oaxaca, in Mexico City, and throughout Mexico wherever people vacationed. By-and-large, merchants from Teotitlán bought up textiles from independent producers, pieceworkers, or sometimes produced large quantities of them in family workshops, which they then transported by muleteer, truck, or train to retailers throughout Mexico or sold to other businesses (including those based in the U.S.) for resale.<sup>13</sup> In the late 1960s a handful of U.S. based wholesale and retail business owners began to travel to Oaxaca to purchase weavings in bulk from those merchants. This general pattern changed in the 1980s, however, when large quantities of textiles began to be exported to the U.S. to supply a newly developing market.<sup>14</sup> Santa Fe and Taos, New Mexico's importance as vacation destinations had reemerged and the emblems of the "Southwestern" or "Santa Fe" style (and of the "land of enchantment") gained widespread popularity including: adobe or "mission" architecture, Tex-Mex cuisine, and, most importantly for the purposes of this essay, Native American and Hispanic arts and crafts. As it turns out, however, many of the textiles marketed and sold as emblematic of the "land of enchantment" were in fact made in Oaxaca by Zapotec Indians.

Throughout the 1980s, as the newly emerged Southwestern market for Zapotec textiles gained momentum and more wholesalers and retailers from that region began to visit Teotitlán and to buy large quantities of textiles on a regular basis, they also changed how they did business with Teotitlécans. While as few as a half-a-dozen individuals made trips to Teotitlán to purchase textiles in the 1970s, their numbers increased significantly in the early- and mid-1980s. More importantly, business owners from the U.S. who had worked in Teotitlán in the 70s describe a dramatic shift in their relation to Zapotec textile businesses and in how textile production was organized.<sup>15</sup> Two important features of this shift help to distinguish it from the earlier pattern, as described in the ethnographic literature. First, after the shift, wholesalers and retailers from the U.S. were no longer solely buying textiles from Teotitlécans and then transporting them to markets. After the shift, they began to work directly with merchants and weavers in their workshops taking increasing control over the production process, instead of simply making purchases from the existing stock of textiles. This work was initially limited to creating new designs and overseeing the dyeing of wool into colors they knew would sell well in the U.S. market. Eventually, however, nearly every aspect of textile production, from design creation, to wool and yarn preparation and dyeing, would come under their control-- everything except the actual work at the loom.

The second important feature of this shift was that Zapotec textiles were no longer being sold as Zapotec textiles, but rather as inexpensive, vaguely "ethnic" or "Indian" textiles.<sup>16</sup> Since the late 1980s a large number of Navajo-like textiles have been produced, at least in part, in the Tlacolula Valley WPC. The 1980s shift in the ways that wholesalers and retailers with

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<sup>13</sup> Cook and Binford; Stephen *Zapotec Women*, "Weaving in Fast Lane"; and Vargas-Baron.

<sup>14</sup> W. Warner Wood, "To Learn Weaving Below the Rock: Making Zapotec Textiles and Artisans in Teotitlán del Valle, Mexico." Ph.D. dissertation. (University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign, 1997) and "Flexible Production, Households, and Fieldwork: Multisited Zapotec Weavers in the Era of Late Capitalism." *Ethnology*. 39(2000):2:133-48.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

businesses based in the U.S. interacted with businesses in the Tlacolula Valley WPC mark initial changes in the organization of Zapotec textile production that by the early 1990s had radically altered the nature of the businesses based in both Oaxaca and the Southwestern U.S. By the early 1990s Teotitlán had begun to take on many of the characteristics of an off-shore production zone, something described as “flexible production” in the economic literature.<sup>17</sup>

The ethnographic investigation of how the Tlacolula Valley WPC became an outsourcing center where “Southwestern” style textiles were produced more cheaply than they could be in the Santa Fe area requires a research design that focuses on the multiple spaces or sites where these textiles are produced. Most significantly, these changes cannot be understood apart from the work that wholesalers and retailers with businesses based in the U.S. also do coordinating the production of Zapotec textiles in multiple places in Southern Mexico and the Southwestern U.S. In a very real sense, the Zapotec textiles that find their way to the gift shops and galleries of Santa Fe and Taos are better understood as, simultaneously, a product of Mexico and New Mexico.

### **Zapotec Textiles: Made in the Land of Enchantment?**

The relationship which exists among Tlacolula Valley WPC merchants, gallery and gift shop owners, and wholesale ethnic art distributors from Santa Fe, Taos, and the broader Southwestern U.S. area grew out of a 1980s tourism boom based not in Teotitlán del Valle, Mexico but in Santa Fe, New Mexico. In addition, the “Southwestern look” interior design craze that swept the U.S. in the mid-1980s created a wider market for interior design accouterments in that style. Consequently, enterprising business owners responded to demands for more affordable souvenirs and pieces to decorate “Santa Fe-style interiors” by importing craft items from Third World countries. Those with existing ties to businesses in the Tlacolula Valley WPC were quick to take advantage of the Santa Fe style’s new-found popularity. In the case of the “Southwestern” or “Santa Fe” market, however, Zapotec textiles were not simply packaged and shipped North to the U.S. as one might assume and as has been described by others.<sup>18</sup> During the 1980s (as described above) the work of wholesalers and retailers with businesses based in the U.S. involved less the buying of finished textiles for shipment to the U.S. and more the subcontracting of small batches of textiles in an off-shore production zone.<sup>19</sup>

David Harvey describes how since the 1970s, mostly as a consequence of contradictions inherent to capitalism and technological advances, regimes of “flexible accumulation” (including the creation of off-shore production manufacturing plants of the *maquiladora* variety) have developed. Subcontracting, outsourcing, and the general dispersal of productive activities around small-batch production are the rule, as full time labor forces are shifted to the temporary and part-time employment of marginal and more easily exploitable populations. Most important to my argument here is Harvey’s contention that such flexible relations of production not only

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<sup>17</sup> Wood “Flexible Production.”

<sup>18</sup> Cook and Binford; Stephen “Zapotec Weavers,” *Zapotec Women*, and “Weaving Fast Lane.”

<sup>19</sup> Wood “Flexible Production.”

incorporate already existing systems for organizing manufacturing and controlling labor, but make them, “centrepieces rather than... appendages to the production system.”<sup>20</sup>

As described in the extensive ethnographic literature related to Zapotec textile production, the domestic, familial, and paternalistic forms for organizing manufacturing and controlling labor Harvey identifies were already in place in the Tlacolula Valley WPC prior to its incorporation into the production of inexpensive ethnic and Indian art for the Santa Fe market. I have argued elsewhere that beginning in the 1980s many textiles woven in the Tlacolula Valley WPC are the product-- indeed, following Harvey, the “centerpiece”-- of a subcontracting network that churns out inexpensive “Indian art” for the Santa Fe market.<sup>21</sup> The Tlacolula Valley WPC now incorporated families and businesses well beyond the Zapotec communities of the Tlacolula Valley of Oaxaca-- it had become a transnational weaving production complex incorporating businesses in both Mexico and New Mexico. At the same time, in the Santa Fe, New Mexico area reaction to the influx of these transnationally produced ethnic art items finds its origin in the ethnic and racial politics particular to that region of the American Southwest.

### **The Production of Locality in a Translocality**

In the Santa Fe and Taos region of the American Southwest, the value ascribed by tourists to “Mexican” blankets vis à vis Navajo blankets parallels social relations in that region. In Taos, New Mexico and the surrounding region, researchers have shown how Mexican American culture is devalued by the Anglo population as dirty, cheap, shoddy, and common, while local indigenous culture is often privileged as it is understood to be both quaint and noble.<sup>22</sup> According to Sylvia Rodríguez, this tripartite social division -- Anglo, Indian, Mexican American -- is based upon culturally defined notions of race and class. She traces the development of Taos, New Mexico as an art colony and positions the artists’ and tourists’ fascination with the Indian as it has developed historically over the last century.

Rodríguez writes that artists first began arriving in the region at the turn of the 20th century for several reasons, including “‘spectacular’ natural scenery” and “isolation and rusticity.”<sup>23</sup> Within this “fantastic” environment, a tripartite social division of labor developed early on in which Anglo artists painted, local Indians modeled for them, and Mexican Americans worked as domestics for the Anglo painters. Mexican Americans seldom worked as models for Anglo artists; even when they did, they were portrayed differently than indigenous models who were cast as romanticized noble savages while Mexican American models, on the other hand, were “cast as distinct individuals in their traditional workaday world.”<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Inquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), 147-57; see also Scott Lash and John Urry, *The End of Organized Capitalism*. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> Wood “Flexible Production.”

<sup>22</sup> John Bodine, *A Tri-Ethnic Trap: The Spanish American in Taos*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968) and Sylvia Rodríguez, “Art, Tourism, and Race Relations in Taos: Toward a Sociology of the Art Colony.” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 45(1989):1:77-100.

<sup>23</sup> Rodríguez, 80.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

John Bodine coined the term “tri-ethnic trap” to describe the position of the Mexican American population in the Santa Fe-Taos area’s tripartite social division.<sup>25</sup> Rodríguez, building upon his work, noted that in this trap, Mexican Americans are “conquered, dispossessed, dependent, ghettoized, and above all, witness to the Indian’s spiritual and moral elevation above themselves in Anglo eyes.”<sup>26</sup> This tripartite social division is a version of the well documented pattern where Mexican Americans and Mexicans, as well as their cultural products (material and otherwise), are devalued and made to stand as a symbol of poverty in the U.S.<sup>27</sup> Mexican immigration, of bodies and products, is framed in terms of a flood, onslaught, or invasion of the U.S., a “nation” which is, in turn, metaphorically understood in terms of family, house, and community.<sup>28</sup>

Zapotec textiles are frequently framed discursively as Mexican textiles (and not “Indian”), a practice carrying a number of implications for their value in Santa Fe’s social hierarchy-- and which also frames them as a foreign product and, by logical extension, their appearance in the Santa Fe art market as a flood, onslaught, or invasion. Within the translocal “land of enchantment,” then, certain populations and their art are made to be permanent foreigners and thereby interlopers in one of the more lucrative parts of the region’s economy-- the Native American art market.

When one enters a gallery in Santa Fe or Taos, the same tripartite social division structures the presentation and value ascribed to the textiles on display. Local indigenous textiles are hung in upscale gallery windows and displayed in well-lit, prominent locations in the gallery space to attract customers, while textiles made by Zapotec Native Americans living in Mexico are folded and in piles in the back. Many of the more upscale galleries will not sell textiles made in Mexico; those businesses that do so, market them as a more affordable alternative to purchasing a Navajo textile. That is, they are not marketed as worthy of purchase in their own right as a Native American craft, but as a cheaper substitute for the “real thing”-- a Navajo textile.

In Santa Fe, visitors are advised against purchasing “cheap,” “machine made,” “Mexican souvenirs” masquerading as Native American crafts. Newspapers routinely feature articles, and guides printed expressly for “Indian Market” include pieces, warning against counterfeit Native American art.<sup>29</sup> In addition, articles and sections of books written about collecting Indian art are dedicated to helping spot these “fakes.” In his 1914 classic on the history, aesthetics, and manufacture of Indian blankets, George Wharton James devotes an entire chapter to the problem of “Imitation Navaho Blankets.”<sup>30</sup> Regarding Mexican weavings he writes, “it must be remembered that some blankets are sold as Indian blankets which are made by Mexicans, and it

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<sup>25</sup> Bodine.

<sup>26</sup> Rodríguez, 87.

<sup>27</sup> Mehan; Pease Chock; Santa Ana, and Vila.

<sup>28</sup> Santa Ana.

<sup>29</sup> Indian Market in an organized event for the promotion of “Native American” art--see Colman Cornelius, “Two Days, 1,200 Artists, 100,100 Buyers: The 71st Indian Market Gears Up.” In *The Albuquerque Journal’s Guide to the 71 Santa Fe Indian Market*. (Santa Fe, 1992), 6-7.

<sup>30</sup> George Wharton James, *Indian Blankets and Their Makers*. (Chicago: A.C. McClurg, 1914. Reprint, New York: Dover, 1974).



requires knowledge to differentiate between an Indian blanket and a Mexican Blanket.”<sup>31</sup> As the above quote demonstrates, for James Mexican cannot equal Indian-- the two are, for all intents and purposes, mutually exclusive categories.

In Mexico, however, hundreds of Native American languages are spoken by thousands of people still living in the same villages that their ancestors inhabited well before the arrival of Christopher Columbus, Hernan Cortez and other Europeans. How might anyone accept that a handicraft item from Mexico made by a Zapotec weaver (for example) might not, or more accurately could not, be made by a Native American and was therefore a “counterfeit?” A closer look at the Indian Arts and Craft Act of 1990 begins to reveal part of the answer.

### **Defining “Indian-made” for a Trans-locale Art**

So many textiles were produced in the newly developed transnational WPC that Zapotec textiles became well recognized as one of the many art forms to which Abeita was referring during his Congressional testimony in May 2000. The 1990 Indian Arts and Crafts Act was designed, in part, with Zapotec textiles in mind. With the passage of this act, the U.S. Congress reaffirmed racialized definitions of who was Indian by making it illegal to market as Indian art any item made by someone who did not meet certain very specific criterion.<sup>32</sup> The May 2000 hearings re-asserted (with minor revisions) the original 1935 legislation stating that:

the term ‘Indian’ means any individual who is a member of an Indian tribe; or... is certified as an Indian artisan by an Indian tribe... band, nation, Alaska Native village, or other organized group or community which is recognized as eligible for the special programs and services provided by the United States to Indians because of their states as Indians.<sup>33</sup>

This definition is dependent upon the particulars of U.S. governmental policies that have been developed to deal with the indigenous populations of the U.S., and they do not easily apply to indigenous populations in other national contexts. Entities such as tribe, band, and nation, for example, are not legally recognized in many countries in the Western hemisphere where Native Americans reside and few Native Americans residing outside the U.S. are members of “tribes” recognized by the United States Department of the Interior.

In Santa Fe and Taos, the popular conception seems to be that Mexico is inhabited by “Mexicans,” its indigenous population having long ago “disappeared.” The textiles produced in Mexico are therefore made by Mexicans not Indians. At the same time, in the Southwestern U.S. weaving practices have been shaped by influences that cross geopolitical borders; between European and indigenous cultures (Navajo, Hopi, and Rio Grande Hispanic weaving traditions were all influenced or introduced by Spanish colonial settlers-- as were Zapotec weaving traditions), as well as between different indigenous cultures for several centuries. Any assertion, then, that any textile produced in Mexico or the Southwestern U.S. is distinctly and, in terms of design and techniques of manufacture, strictly Mexican, American, Navajo, Hopi, or Zapotec

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 160.

<sup>32</sup> Gail K. Sheffield *The Arbitrary Indian: The Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); and U.S. Cong: House.

<sup>33</sup> U.S. Cong.: Senate, 2.

must be understood as a discursive strategy which functions to occlude such transnational and intercultural connections.

As Pease Chock reminds us in regard to immigration law, the terms employed in any discursive construction occlude as much as they reveal. She examined how the “erasure” of various subjectivities (e.g. gender, racial, and class based) occurs through the use of a “natural science” discourse that employs terms such as “population.”<sup>34</sup> “Perceived threats to social order” such as Mexican immigrants, can be “reconstituted” in scientific terms which deny “humanity to immigrants” from a supposedly unbiased scientific perspective.<sup>35</sup> Ultimately, of course, such discursive strategies silence those “whose lives would be most immediately affected.”<sup>36</sup> Making Zapotec textiles into Mexican textiles through the use of social scientific terms, such as “tribe” and “band” (terms that Anthropologists have been instrumental in formulating), enable those participating in the public debate surrounding how the Indian Arts and Crafts Act is written to occlude the ethnicity of Zapotec weavers and frame their identity in terms of nation-- a strategy which effectively writes them into the “land of enchantment” as “foreign” and the presence of their textiles as an “invasion.” The logic of the “land of enchantment’s” tripartite social order is thereby given the force of law and the very same discursive strategies used to devalue Mexican and Mexican Americans and their culture are also used, in the end, to devalue and indeed to vilify the Zapotec, their culture, and the textiles they make.

#### **Epilogue: Enforcing the Indian Arts and Crafts Act for Trans-locale Art**

Current attempts to legislate and legally enforce the Santa Fe and Taos art market’s ethnically segregated “tripartite social world” through compliance with the Indian Arts and Crafts Act of 1990 face a number of difficulties. Foremost among them include attempts to deal with the influx of “fake” Native American art as though it were the product of Mexico or the Philippines, and simply imported into the U.S. ignoring the complexity of who and where these products, in their entirety, are made.

Zapotec textiles offer an interesting case in point, given that one may legitimately ask whether they are even “made in Mexico?” The places and people involved in the creation of Zapotec textiles that were available for purchase in 1998 in Chimayó, New Mexico are illustrative of this point as they were made of wool from New Zealand that was processed in Texas and shipped to Ocotlan, Mexico for spinning before shipment to Teotitlán where the yarn was dyed and distributed to weavers. The designs for the textiles had been photocopied from museum exhibition catalogs by the Chimayó business owner, who mailed them to Ocotlan and from there they were sent, with the yarn, to merchants in Teotitlán who distributed the design and dyed yarn to weavers in Teotitlán and in Santa Ana. When finished, the textiles were delivered back to Teotitlan merchants and then to Ocotlan before being shipped to the U.S. and ultimately a house front gift shop in Chimayó.

Finally, the angora blended yarn shipped from New Zealand, to Texas and to Ocotlan, Mexico for spinning into yarn is also dyed there and then shipped to a number of trading posts in the American Southwest where it is purchased by Navajo weavers.<sup>37</sup> Like Zapotec textiles then,

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<sup>34</sup> Pease Chock, 174.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 168.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 180.

<sup>37</sup> Graham Johnson, Interviewed by Author. Ocotlan, Oaxaca, Mexico. 14 August 2000.

the complexity of where and by whom some Navajo textiles, in their entirety, are also made, makes attributing a national origin to them an equally difficult endeavor.

### **Notes**

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