The Current State of the Alcaldia Indígena in Light of its Historical Precedents: The Case of Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán

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The Current State of the *Alcaldia Indigena* in Light of its Historical Precedents: The Case of Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán

Thesis: The military governments of 1957-1986 abolished all forms of Maya self-government. With the signing of the Peace Accords in 1994, Mayan communities have resurrected the institution of the *Alcaldia Indigena*, drawing on cultural memory to reorganize it. The new manifestation builds on the *Alcaldea*’s former structure and seeks to connect internationally to the indigenous rights movement and gain official recognition as a local government body representing indigenous interests.

**Historical Precedents**

- Official divide of *ladinos* and Indians: Spanish Crown authorizes the creation of *Alcaldías Indígenas* in 1512
  - *Alcaldías Indígenas* adjudicate in local Indian disputes according to Mayan custom
  - Disbanded during twentieth century liberal administrations and in the 1957 constitution
  - Despite official efforts during the Civil War, indigenous authorities remained influential in heavily indigenous communities

**Current Manifestation**

- The 1994 Peace Accords called for new Indian policy and rights
  - *Alcaldia Indigena* established in Antigua Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán in 2007—against an Indigenous local government
  - In addition being a local judge and leader, the *alcalde indigena* serves as an ambassador to connect Ixtahuacán to the broader indigenous rights movement and treat with the national government