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# SURVIVING CONQUEST: The Maya of Guatemala in Historical Perspective\*

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Little by little heavy shadows and black  
night enveloped our fathers and grand-  
fathers and us also, oh, my sons . . . !  
All of us were thus. We were born to die!  
*The Annals of the Cakchiquels*  
(ca. 1550–1600)

The Maya of Guatemala are today, as they have been in the past, a dominated and beleaguered group. Few have expressed this enduring reality more poignantly than the late Oliver La Farge. Commenting forty years ago on why Kanjobal Indians take to drink, La Farge observed that “while these people undoubtedly suffer from drunkenness, one would hesitate to remove the bottle from them until the entire pattern of their lives is changed. They are an introverted people, consumed by internal fires which they cannot or dare not express, eternally chafing under the yoke of conquest, and never for a moment forgetting that they are a conquered people.”<sup>1</sup>

La Farge’s observation is important because, among other things, it views conquest not as a remote, historical experience but as a visible, present condition. Sol Tax and others concur with La Farge, portraying

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TABLE 1 The Mayan Population of Guatemala, 1950–1980

Year	Mayan Population	Percentage of National Population
1950	1,611,928	56.2
1964	2,185,679	50.3
1973	2,680,178	48.0
1980	3,230,393	47.3

Source: John D. Early, "A Demographic Survey of Contemporary Guatemalan Maya," in *Heritage of Conquest: Thirty Years Later*, edited by Carl Kendall, John Hawkins, and Laurel Bossen (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983), 75.

native life in Mesoamerica as a "heritage of conquest" that connects modern-day survivors with their ancestors of centuries ago.<sup>2</sup> The forms of this heritage, to be sure, have varied considerably over the years, but conquest as a *way* of life remains very much a *fact* of life for more than twenty different Maya-speaking peoples who, to this day, comprise roughly half the population of Guatemala (tables 1 and 2).

In coming to terms with Indian survival in Guatemala, a great danger lies in romanticizing or oversimplifying what happened in history.<sup>3</sup> The recent work of Nancy Farriss in this regard helps enormously. Farriss asserts that Mesoamerican Indians must be viewed properly as independent subjects rather than as anachronistic vestiges of a pre-Columbian past or as passive objects of colonial or neocolonial rule.<sup>4</sup> This perspective, she maintains, allows indigenous peoples to be seen not so much as relicts or victims—which they are or can be—but as actors who have responded to events in ways that help determine no small part of their cultural reality. The capacity to respond creatively to invasion and domination is one Farriss likens to "strategic acculturation," by which she means that concessions are made and certain changes are undertaken "in order to preserve essentials."<sup>5</sup> Over the past two decades, revisionist depictions by Farriss and others have created a distinctive genre of Latin Americanist research that embraces diverse disciplines, ideologies, and interests.<sup>6</sup>

This article seeks to delineate some of the ways the Maya of Guatemala have responded culturally in order to survive almost five centuries of conquest. In piecing together a synthesis, evidence is laid down in the form of a pyramid. The base of time past tapers towards the peak of time present, a structure chosen to emphasize the historical antecedents that propel, and the cultural context that frames, current social unrest. Most scholars wishing to situate the contemporary crisis in historical perspective devote considerably more attention to post-Independence times (1821 on) than to the colonial period.<sup>7</sup> Such an approach is here reversed in an attempt to establish more concretely

TABLE 2 *Language Groups of the Guatemalan Maya*

<i>Maya Language Group</i>	<i>Number of Speakers (ca. 1973)</i>
Achí of Cubulco	18,000
Aguacateco	16,000
Cakchiquel	405,000
Chortí	52,000
Chuj	29,000
Ixil	71,000
Jacalteco	32,000
Kanjobal	112,000
Kekchí	361,000
Mam	644,000
Maya-Mopan	5,000
Pocomán	32,000
Pokomchí	50,000
Quiché	967,000
Rabinal Achí	40,000
Sacapulteco	21,000
Sipacapense	3,000
Tacaneco	42,000
Tectiteco	2,500
Tzutujil	80,000
Uspanteco	2,000

Source: *Bibliografía del Instituto Lingüístico de Verano de Centroamérica*, edited by Pamela Sheetz de Echerd (Guatemala City: Instituto de Verano, 1983), 4-7.

the colonial experience upon which the events and circumstances of post-Independence Maya life were irreducibly founded. While the specifics of Maya cultural survival could be used to illustrate conformity to, or departure from, certain theoretical considerations, this approach has been passed over in favor of historical narrative.<sup>8</sup> The principal intent, to borrow from the ideas and vocabulary of Edward H. Spicer, is to outline the cycles of conquest the Maya of Guatemala have been subjected to since the early sixteenth century.<sup>9</sup> These cycles are conquest by imperial Spain, conquest by local and international capitalism, and conquest by state terror. Each of these cycles has produced or has reinforced certain geographical patterns that reflect basic and irresolvable fissures in the nature of Guatemalan social, economic, and political life. In the geography of conquest, three cornerstones of Maya culture, three elements essential to group survival, recur and figure prominently: land, community, and an attachment to place. Persistent defense of this trinity has been, and will remain, fundamental to the maintenance of Maya identity.

CONQUEST BY IMPERIAL SPAIN

The Spanish conquest of Guatemala, begun in 1524 by forces led by Pedro de Alvarado, was not easily attained. From the beginning, the Maya offered fierce resistance, repeatedly engaging Spanish troops and their Mexican auxiliaries in hostile confrontation. Some highland groups, among them the Uspantec and the Kekchí, inflicted temporary defeat on the foreign invaders; other lowland peoples, including the Chol Manché and the Itzás, actually stalled effective Spanish penetration for up to a century and a half after the initial European intrusion.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the conquest of central Mexico, which was executed with a prompt and ruthless efficiency, the conquest of Guatemala was made an arduous, protracted affair because of intense political fragmentation that, prior to Alvarado's arrival, had resulted in open hostilities between competing Maya groups, especially between the Cakchiquel and the Quiché. While the defeat of the Aztecs by Hernán Cortés did much to hasten the capitulation of other Mesoamerican peoples ruled by them, Alvarado had no single, incumbent state to overcome. On the contrary, an irksome number of small but tenacious groups, accustomed to varying degrees of autonomy, had to be tackled one by one. Successful domination of the Quiché, the first and probably most complexly organized people to succumb, was followed by a series of laborious campaigns aimed at subjugating such groups as the Mam, the Tzutujil, the Cakchiquel (initially Spanish allies who rebelled in 1526 after suffering two years of abuse at the hands of their European taskmasters), the Ixil, and the Pocomán.<sup>11</sup>

As elsewhere in the New World, the Spaniards were assisted in their conquest by the ravages of Old World diseases inadvertently introduced by Europeans and Africans to an immunologically defenseless Amerindian population.<sup>12</sup> Epidemics of smallpox, measles, and mumps—referred to by one scholar as “the shock troops” of the conquest—took a heavy native toll, particularly during the early colonial period.<sup>13</sup> Debate persists over which set of figures most accurately reflects the extent and magnitude of Maya depopulation (see table 3), but it is now generally agreed that the decline was precipitous and continued for decades after the initial pivotal contact.<sup>14</sup> It is also clear that the demographic collapse of native Guatemalans proceeded unevenly through time and differentially across space.<sup>15</sup>

Epidemic disease, however, even if it was the single most significant factor, cannot by itself account for temporal and regional variations in the pattern of Indian mortality—nor can the infamous Black Legend, which lays the blame on unmitigated slaughter, rapacious exploitation, and abusive treatment on the part of demoniacal Spaniards. The complexity of the issue demands that future research be more sophisticated and less one-dimensional. Evidence from Mexico and Peru, where dif-

TABLE 3 *Maya Depopulation in Sixteenth-Century Guatemala*

Year	Denevan <sup>a</sup>	Lovell, Lutz, & Swezey <sup>b</sup>	Sanders & Murdy <sup>c</sup>	Solano <sup>d</sup>	Zamora <sup>e</sup>
ca. 1525	2,000,000	2,000,000	500,000– 800,000	300,000	315,000
ca. 1550		427,850		157,000	121,000
ca. 1575				148,000	75,000
ca. 1600				195,000	64,000

Note: For full bibliographical references, see endnotes 12 and 14. Evidence from the material cited in endnote 26 indicates that native population decline in highland Guatemala continued well into the seventeenth century, after which time downward trends were slowly and then dramatically reversed. Several lowland areas, however, especially along the Pacific coast and around the Bay of Honduras, were emptied of their contact populations within two or three generations. If the estimates of Denevan and Lovell, Lutz, and Swezey are correct, it took over four centuries for the Maya of Guatemala to recover from the demographic collapse precipitated by Spanish conquest.

<sup>a</sup> Estimate is for the territory of the present-day republic of Guatemala.

<sup>b</sup> Estimate is for southern Guatemala, defined as the area of the present-day republic of Guatemala excluding the northern department of El Petén, with some overspill west into the Mexican state of Chiapas and east into the republic of El Salvador.

<sup>c</sup> Estimate is for highland Guatemala only.

<sup>d</sup> Spatial basis of estimate unclear.

<sup>e</sup> Estimate is for western Guatemala, specifically the colonial jurisdiction known as the *alcaldía mayor* of Zapotitlán and Suchitepéquez. Neither eastern Guatemala nor the northern Petén district is included in these estimates.

ferences in the demographic experience of highland and lowland areas have been noted, indicates that the role of environment as a key epidemiological variable must be considered.<sup>16</sup> Culture shock—the stress or trauma of conquest—must also be taken into account, for native communities were clearly disrupted by the imposition of various practices that irrevocably altered the ecological and psychological harmony of the Amerindian world.<sup>17</sup> Linda Newson argues that two other important variables were “first, the nature of Indian societies and the size of their populations at the time of Spanish conquest because these factors influenced the type of institution used to control and exploit the Indians; and second, the kinds and profitabilities of resources to be found in the areas in which the Indians lived.”<sup>18</sup>

What is indisputable is that epidemic outbreaks, one of which actually preceded Alvarado’s arrival by three or four years, substantially reduced Maya numbers and thus adversely affected native capacity to resist.<sup>19</sup> A superior military apparatus, coupled with a strategic sense of when and how to deploy manpower and equipment, also increased Spanish advantage. The psychological impact on peoples who had never before seen a horse and its rider in action was as devastating as the material superiority of steel and firearms over bows and arrows.

Brave and stubborn though the Maya were, subjugation by a more formidable adversary was ultimately their fate.

Spanish hegemony put Maya communities under immediate pressure to conform to imperial designs. A fundamental element of the Hispanic quest for empire was to organize space and to control population movement by founding towns and villages. Under the policy of *congregación*, which began in the highlands in the mid-sixteenth century, thousands of native families were coerced from their homes in the mountains into new settlements (*congregaciones*) built around churches located, wherever possible, in open valley floors. For the Spaniards, *congregación* promoted more effective civil administration, facilitated the conversion of Indians to Christianity, and created centralized pools of labor that could be drawn upon in myriad ways to meet imperial objectives. To Spanish eyes, the order inherent in *congregación* stood in marked contrast to the random and scattered domestic arrangements first encountered by soldiers and missionaries.<sup>20</sup> Conceived by clergy and bureaucrats as the melting pots of empire, *congregaciones* symbolized much that Hispanic culture valued most. As for motivations, the conquistador and chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo summed up Spanish aims and intentions with remarkable brevity when he declared: "We came here to serve God and the King, and also to get rich."<sup>21</sup>

Spanish conquerors and colonists, being more entrepreneurially than feudally inclined, initially considered control of labor more important than control of land.<sup>22</sup> Thus the first decades of conquest emphasized devices such as the *encomienda* and the *repartimiento*, institutional arrangements whereby privileged Spaniards received from Indian communities tribute in goods and services without actually being awarded seigniorial rights.<sup>23</sup> Not until the exploitation of native labor proved to be an erratic source of wealth did materially minded Spaniards turn to the land as an alternate means of support and enrichment. Individuals so inclined took advantage of favorable legislation known as the *composición de tierras*. First promulgated by royal order in 1591, *composición* was designed specifically to raise funds for an impecunious treasury by selling land considered to belong to the Crown throughout Spanish America.<sup>24</sup> Spanish acquisition of land coincided closely with a period of economic stagnation in Guatemala that lasted for much of the seventeenth century. During this time, old practices, such as reliance on *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, gradually gave way to new initiatives, including the formation of rural estates and the emergence of debt peonage.<sup>25</sup> Acquiring land and making efforts to secure labor to work it were strategies triggered by the depletion of an Indian work force that had declined drastically in size since the early sixteenth century, in some regions by 90 percent or more.<sup>26</sup>

In adapting to the harder times of the seventeenth century, Spaniards were not drawn equally to all parts of Guatemala. Even prior to the onset of contraction and experimentation, Spanish exploitation of the Guatemalan resource base had concentrated either on the cacao-rich Pacific Coast or on the rolling, temperate lands to the south and east of the capital city of Santiago, where indigo could be grown, cattle raised, and two or even three corn crops harvested each year.<sup>27</sup> The highlands of the *tierra fría*, or cold land, to the north and west—remote, rugged, and of little commercial importance—were perceived as far less attractive by those concerned more with the potential windfalls of the external market than with modest involvement in the local economy.<sup>28</sup> As a result, Spanish interest in the northwest highlands after conquest had been consolidated and congregación implemented was never as intense as in the more accessible and lower Oriente, the eastern region of Guatemala. This state of affairs prevailed during the economically stagnant or transitional years of the seventeenth century. It seems also to have prevailed, to a lesser extent, throughout the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century.<sup>29</sup>

The implications of this subjective environmental appraisal were far-reaching. The priorities of imperial Spain first lend support to Leo Despres's thesis that "competition for scarce resources accounts for a great deal of the when and where of ethnic confrontations."<sup>30</sup> More important, when Spanish attitudes were translated into thousands of individual actions, they resulted, from the Indian point of view, in a differentiated colonial experience, the nature of which marks Guatemala to this day. South and east of Santiago, where native communities were encroached upon more, cultural and biological assimilation proceeded more quickly and intensely. Spaniards and Maya mixed, as in neighboring El Salvador and Honduras, to create a predominantly mestizo or *ladino* milieu. To the north and west of Santiago, where less conspicuous entrepreneurial opportunities drew fewer Spaniards, native peoples withstood the onslaught of acculturation with more resilience, holding on to much of their land, retaining Maya principles of community organization, and guarding a sense of place that was resolutely their own. This is not to suggest that three centuries of Spanish rule left native culture pristine and whole. The colonial experience in the north and west, however, was distinguished, if not by differences of kind, then by important ones of degree.<sup>31</sup>

Murdo MacLeod has portrayed the economic history of Spanish Central America as one of cyclical booms, setbacks, and readjustments that reflect changing Spanish fortunes in the relentless search (after gold and silver proved elusive or insufficient) for what Pierre and Hugette Chaunu have called a *produit moteur*, a successful cash crop that would generate the wealth Spaniards craved.<sup>32</sup> Except for supply-



ing much-needed labor to the cacao plantations of the Pacific coast or to the indigo farms of the Oriente, the Maya of the northwest participated little in the great economic cycles that made such a dramatic and long-lasting impact elsewhere in Guatemala. If Central America was, in terms of its peripheral status with the mother country, indeed "the richest of the poor, or the poorest of the rich," then the northwest highlands must surely have ranked among imperial Spain's least-prized possessions.<sup>33</sup>

Condemned by geography and an apparent lack of resources to inhabit an unprofitable backwater in the Spanish scheme of empire, the highland Maya were never so ignored that their communities became the breeding ground for general insurrection, although a number of uprisings did occur at the local level.<sup>34</sup> Instead, Indians effectively nurtured a cultural resistance by keeping alive many of their long-established traditions. The result was not a return to life as it was led before the conquest, a move that was clearly impossible, given the reality of Spanish hegemony. Rather, the emerging society was a creative blend of elements of Hispanic culture the Maya had absorbed, mixed with elements of pre-Columbian culture they had defended and upheld.<sup>35</sup> This fusion of the old and the new led to the formation of a culture of refuge and the emergence throughout northwest Guatemala of what Eric Wolf thirty years ago termed "closed corporate peasant communities."<sup>36</sup>

Wolf's construct is surely one of the most celebrated in Mesoamerican anthropology. He argued that such communities evolved so as to guarantee "a measure of communal jurisdiction over land" and in order to "restrict their membership, maintain a religious system, enforce mechanisms which ensure the redistribution or destruction of surplus wealth, and uphold barriers against the entry of goods and ideas produced outside the community."<sup>37</sup> The closed corporate peasant community was envisioned less as "an offspring of conquest" than as the product of "the dualization of society into a dominant entrepreneurial sector and a dominated sector of native peasants."<sup>38</sup> Although the configuration has undergone "great changes since the time it was first constituted," Wolf held that "its essential features are still visible."<sup>39</sup> He thus regarded "the present-day Indian community as a direct descendant of the reconstructed community of the seventeenth century."<sup>40</sup>

While the concept of the closed corporate peasant community has held up to the scrutiny of revisionist research remarkably well, in the face of recent thinking it now stands in need of some refinement. Modifications that relate to postcolonial times will be discussed later. With respect to the colonial period, the crucial issue is a matter of scale and specificity. In geographical terms, some communities appear to have been significantly less closed than others, just as some communi-

ties were socially less corporate than others. Put another way, the culture of refuge into which colonial Indians retreated seems to have been appreciably more open and heterogeneous than previously thought. Differences between and within communities stemmed largely from the effectiveness of congregación, which varied considerably from place to place.

From the outset, the complex business of forced resettlement created a division in the pattern of native landholding. As early as 1532, a royal order declared rather vaguely that "the Indians shall continue to possess their lands . . . so that they do not lack what is necessary."<sup>41</sup> All congregaciones were entitled by law to an *ejido*, an area of communal land generally left uncultivated but used for grazing, hunting, and gathering water, firewood, and various forest products. In addition to working land in the vicinity of a congregación, native farmers often returned to plant corn (although seldom with official sanction to do so) around mountain homes that they had been forced to leave earlier but to which they remained emotionally and physically attached. The bond between displaced Indian families and their ancestral lands did much to sabotage the operation of congregación, especially among the Maya of the Cuchumatán and Verapaz highlands.<sup>42</sup>

One of the earliest references to congregación not being accomplished without considerable frustration and the risk of failure comes from the Quiché community of Sacapulas soon after the policy was first implemented. Begun in the late 1540s, congregación in these parts was given an added stimulus in 1553, when Dominican missionaries received permission from the Crown to establish a monastery at Sacapulas.<sup>43</sup> The Dominicans chose to resettle Indians from outlying areas at a site on the south bank of the Río Negro, which had long been occupied because of its important salt springs. On 6 December 1555, two friars responsible for bringing dispersed populations together, Tomás de Cárdenas and Juan de Torres, wrote to King Charles V about the tremendous obstacles working against successful congregación. They mentioned first the problems posed by difficult terrain, stating that "this part of the sierra, being so rugged and broken, caused us to encounter settlements comprised of only eight, six, or even four houses tucked and hidden away in gullies and ravines where, until our arrival, no other Spaniard had penetrated."<sup>44</sup> The friars lamented that in nearby mountains they had recently found "a large quantity of idols, not in any way concealed but placed in full public view."<sup>45</sup> This comment indicates either the discovery by the missionaries of hitherto unknown places of abode or the return, at least temporarily, to former lands and old ways on the part of neophytes who may have been congregated and baptized but whose residency in town and allegiance to the Christian faith could not be guaranteed. Cárdenas and Torres, with rare in-

sight into the Maya mind, come closest to understanding native resistance to congregación when they remarked to King Charles that "among all these Indians there is not one who wishes to leave behind the hut passed on to him by his father, nor to abandon a pestilential ravine or desert some inaccessible craggy rocks, because that is where the bones of his forefathers rest."<sup>46</sup>

Two decades later, in the 1570s, reports were filed on several families belonging to the Ixil community of Chajul who resided some distance from the congregación. In the eyes of the colonial administration, this situation meant that these distant dwellers, unlike their congregated relatives, went uncounted and therefore did not pay tribute. Tolerating such fugitivism would decrease the potential tax base of the community, so the district governor was ordered to conduct an inquiry and rectify the situation.<sup>47</sup> A century later, however, the situation in Chajul and elsewhere was far from rectified. Much to Spanish consternation, more and more Maya families had drifted away from the nucleation imposed on them, deserting towns and villages for a less-hounded life among their cornfields in the hills. A seventeenth-century chronicler, Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, complained that "wild and uncivilized" Indians lived in the mountains surrounding the town of San Juan Atitán, a Mam congregación established in the southern ranges of the Cuchumatanes, not far from the district capital of Huehuetenango.<sup>48</sup> Farther north, at San Mateo Ixtatán, Fuentes y Guzmán reported that some forty families dwelled in the countryside at a place called Asantih, fourteen leagues from the townsite.<sup>49</sup> So dissolute was Spanish control over the unruly "*indios fugitivos*" of San Mateo that some of them actually joined forces with the feared Lacandonés, an unconquered Maya group inhabiting the Usumacinta rain forest, for periodic raids among the more docile Kanjobal people to the south and west.<sup>50</sup>

Other factors combined to erode the centripetal, enclosing influence of congregación. Because most native families were resettled forcibly in the first instance, Spanish authorities experienced constant difficulty in keeping them tied to a new townsite against their will. Indians repeatedly fled to outlying rural areas to escape the exploitation they suffered while residing in town or close by. In the seclusion of their far-off homes and favored places, they were free of compulsory demands to pay tribute, provide labor, work on local roads or the parish church, and serve as human carriers. The refuge of the mountains was also sought when disease struck, as it often did, sometimes with devastating impact. Recurrent fugitivism, triggered and sustained by a complex interplay of cultural preference, material circumstance, and ecological rationale, therefore undermined Spanish notions of orderly, town-centered life. Under such conditions, colonial Maya communities

in Guatemala were seldom spatially fixed or static. Nor were they always clearly defined, either legally or operationally. Their new foci, physically and symbolically, may have been identifiable in the form of church towers or consecrated burial grounds, but their edges were blurred and dissolved into more open, ancestral horizons.<sup>51</sup>

Just as the "closed" nature of colonial Maya life may have been somewhat exaggerated by Wolf, at least in a territorial sense, so also may the same be said about its "corporate" attributes. Mesoamerican society on the eve of conquest was clearly stratified. Furthermore, abundant evidence demonstrates that this stratification persisted for some time after subjugation by Spain, with a native elite set apart from a peasant majority often singled out to do the Spaniards' bidding.<sup>52</sup> More important than divisions between the nobility and the commoners, however, was intracommunity differentiation in the guise of rival factions known as *parcialidades*. Traditionally, these affiliations were social units of great antiquity, organized as patrilineal clans or localized kin groups and usually associated with particular tracts of land. Frequently, overzealous resettlement of native families by evangelizing missionaries resulted in several *parcialidades* being thrown together to form a *congregación*. Once gathered at a new townsite, *parcialidades* tended to preserve their autochthonous identity by continuing to function socially and economically as separate components rather than merging to form a corporate body.<sup>53</sup>

Although Spanish officials often experienced problems in differentiating between *parcialidades* and in grasping the distinctions operating within them, the Maya were of course acutely aware of such things. Far from being homogeneous entities, many *congregaciones* in Guatemala were mosaics of discrete social groups that touched but did not interpenetrate, that coexisted but did not always cooperate. Scores of communities were organized internally along these lines, too many not to question Wolf's assertion that *parcialidades*, some of which survive to this day, "remain the fascinating exception to the general rule that common territoriality in one community and common participation in communal life have long since robbed such units of any separatist jurisdiction they may at one time have exercised."<sup>54</sup>

Once again, the case of Sacapulas is instructive. According to the testimony of Captain Martín Alfonso Tovilla, the governor of Verapaz province who passed through Sacapulas in the early seventeenth century, *congregación* here had brought together six different aboriginal groups:

The town of Sacapulas is divided into six *parcialidades*, each of which constitutes a unit known as a *calpul*. When the missionaries congregated them, as each had only a small population, they brought four or five to each town in order to create a larger [settlement]. In this way, each *parcialidad* maintained

the name of the place it came from. And the lands that they possessed they still cultivate today in order to grow corn and other necessities.<sup>55</sup>

Tovilla's testimony is corroborated a century and a half later by the parish priest of Sacapulas. He stated in a report written in 1786 that the *parcialidad* known as Magdalena, "like the other five of this town was, and were, small settlements congregated by royal order to form the town of Sacapulas."<sup>56</sup> In a tribute list spanning the years 1664 to 1678, five *parcialidades* are recorded, three of them by their Indian names (Tulteca, Uchabaha, and Aucanil) and two by their Spanish names (San Francisco and Magdalena).<sup>57</sup> At the end of the colonial period, the *parcialidades* of Sacapulas still clung to their separate aboriginal affiliations, even though all were known by Spanish names (Magdalena, San Sebastián, Santiago, San Pedro, Santo Tomás, and San Francisco).<sup>58</sup> Tribute was levied and paid at Sacapulas, as elsewhere throughout the highlands, not at the community level but by *parcialidad*.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, although an *ejido* was shared and worked communally, land was held, operated, and legally defended in the environs of Sacapulas by *parcialidad*. When a series of bitter disputes arose toward the close of the eighteenth century over land rights and boundaries, conflict was generated not by a clash of interests between Spaniards and Indians but by squabbles between competing *parcialidades*.<sup>60</sup>

The notion of colonial Maya culture as having unfolded within a closed and corporate configuration has recently been reevaluated by Wolf himself. He now observes that "it becomes difficult to view any given culture as a bounded system or as a self-perpetuating design for living."<sup>61</sup> Indeed, he goes so far as to suggest that no longer "can we imagine cultures as integrated totalities in which each part contributes to the maintenance of an organized, autonomous, and enduring whole."<sup>62</sup> This reassessment may actually be excessive because, as the research of Ann Collins in Jacaltenango clearly demonstrates, the colonial experience of this community conforms strikingly to Wolf's original hypothesis.<sup>63</sup>

Whether closed and corporate or open and heterogeneous, native life in colonial Guatemala was founded (to reiterate Wolf's telling phrase) on the "dualization of society," which means that Indians existed in varying degrees of servitude to Spaniards. For most Spaniards, Maya submission was not an issue of polemic or debate: it was simply taken for granted, something that was accepted as a right of conquest, a natural fixture in the imperial enterprise. Coexistence under these terms could hardly foster tolerance or mutual respect. What it bred was suspicion, distrust, hatred, and fear. To comprehend how subordination was maintained, Michael Taussig warns that "we would be most unwise to overlook or underestimate the role of terror," which he contends is not just "a physiological state" but "a social fact and a cultural

construction whose baroque dimensions allow it to serve as the mediator *par excellence* of colonial hegemony."<sup>64</sup> Like many features created by Spanish conquest, a culture of terror—pervading spaces of death “where Indian, African, and white gave birth to the New World”—endured in Guatemala to scar and disfigure succeeding centuries.<sup>65</sup>

#### CONQUEST BY LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL CAPITALISM

The first half-century following Guatemalan independence from Spain in 1821 has recently been the subject of scholarly reappraisal, especially with respect to the meaning of the event for native communities.<sup>66</sup> La Farge, in his landmark essay on Maya cultural sequences, suggested that during this period the integration long characteristic of Indian life “becomes a smooth blend; well-stabilized, it has the individuality and roundness that mark any culture, and its continued evolution is in the form of growth out of itself, rather than in response to alien pressures.”<sup>67</sup> This view is based on the supposition that Maya life was subjected to fewer strains during periods of conservative rule than during liberal rule.<sup>68</sup> The basic difference between the two political parties that competed for power in nineteenth-century Guatemala is that conservatives favored maintaining Hispanic-derived institutions that preserved the colonial status quo whereas liberals called for establishing a new social and economic order that would view progress as attainable by promoting capitalist links with the outside world. In terms of the impact of ideology on Maya ways, conservatism has been held to represent (broadly speaking) a continuation of the culture of refuge fashioned during colonial times. Liberalism, in contrast, signified Indian assimilation into a modern, outward-looking ladino state.<sup>69</sup>

Following abortive liberal efforts to create the United Provinces of Central America between 1823 and 1839, Guatemala was governed until 1870 by a series of conservative regimes. These governments, particularly when headed by peasant populist José Rafael Carrera, effectively undid the reforms carried out by the preceding liberal administration of Mariano Gálvez and created a stable, paternalist state founded on restored Hispanic institutions.<sup>70</sup> Carol Smith accepts that under Carrera, “the interests of international capitalism were *not* served in Guatemala,” but nowhere does she find evidence of La Farge’s hypothesized maturation of Maya culture.<sup>71</sup> In fact, Smith argues that two transformations ran counter to La Farge’s schema: the emergence of “significant differentiations according to wealth, wherein poorer individuals came to work for wages for richer individuals within the community, and the development of a rigorous regional marketing system manned primarily by indigenous merchants, who traded international imports as well as local commodities and who helped ease peasants out

of their exclusive preoccupation with agriculture."<sup>72</sup> Smith maintains that the operation of these two processes not only "shook the foundations of the closed corporate community" but paved the way for its penetration after the liberals returned to power in 1871 and, led by Justo Rufino Barrios, unleashed on Guatemala "the full force of capitalistic development."<sup>73</sup>

The drive toward modernization initiated by President Barrios, the so-called Liberal Reforms, entailed both an attack on native land and an assault on native labor.<sup>74</sup> Decrees were passed that called for communal land to be subdivided among community inhabitants and then privately titled. Governmental proclamations, however, did not always reach Maya ears, nor were they completely understood when they did. As a result, extensive tracts of land considered unclaimed by the liberal government fell into the hands of creoles and ladinos far more conversant than Indian farmers with the parlance of landholding legislation.<sup>75</sup> Studies of this unprecedented encroachment are remarkably scarce. Complexity and controversy may preclude the magnitude and impact of the appropriation from ever being accurately ascertained. Scholarly opinion presently ranges from Robert Naylor's rather naive impression of there being "little discernible change" in Maya life, of its continuing "much the same as before," to Carol Smith's more realistic but insufficiently documented assertion that native communities "lost about half of the lands they traditionally claimed during the colonial period."<sup>76</sup>

Land acquisition was fueled by the realization that several regions of Guatemala, especially the Verapaz highlands and the Pacific piedmont, offered ideal growing conditions for the cultivation of coffee. Zones that had been relatively untouched by the cacao boom and indigo fever of colonial times (both these products *moteurs* grew best in lower, warmer environments), Verapaz and the Pacific piedmont became the focus of considerable land speculation. Investment by domestic and foreign capital resulted in coffee emerging during the second half of the nineteenth century as Guatemala's principal export crop, a position it has maintained in the national economy from the time of Rufino Barrios until the present.<sup>77</sup> When coffee production is organized on a plantation or *finca* basis, as in Guatemala, coffee demands intensive labor only at harvest time. What coffee planters require, therefore, is a seasonal work force, one that provides labor when needed and that can be dispensed with when not. For more than a century, migrant Indians have met this requirement.

The methods employed to procure an adequate flow of Maya labor for the coffee harvest have differed over the years. Outright coercion in the form of a draft known as the *mandamiento*, authorized by President Barrios in November 1876, gave way in 1894 to legalized debt

peonage, which was in turn replaced in 1934 by a vagrancy law requiring individuals holding less than a stipulated amount of land to work part of each year as wage laborers for others. Anyone farming less than 6.9 acres was expected to work one hundred days; anyone farming less than 2.8 acres was expected to work one hundred and fifty days.<sup>78</sup> David McCreery argues that the effects of these demands “varied widely from village to village and family to family” but that their cumulative impact was “to aggravate social differentiation within the communities and contribute to the breakdown of corporate self-protective structures.”<sup>79</sup> He asserts that such demands “underwrote the profitability of the chief export, impoverished the rural population, and contributed to the preconditions for present-day violence.”<sup>80</sup>

For the Maya of Guatemala, the Liberal Reforms were the equivalent of what the events leading up to the Caste War became for the Maya of Yucatán—both initiated a second cycle of conquest.<sup>81</sup> But whereas, in nineteenth-century Yucatán, expropriating native land and drafting native labor sparked widespread and organized rebellion, Indian resistance in Guatemala was mostly localized and uncoordinated.<sup>82</sup> It is difficult to determine exactly why this reaction was the case, but the fact that the native estate was plundered in a sporadic and variable fashion cannot be irrelevant. Like many conquests, the Liberal Reforms seem to have been orchestrated by ruling interests keenly attuned to principles of divide and rule.<sup>83</sup>

Some support for this interpretation may be drawn from the evidence of the two best case studies currently available, Shelton Davis's account of the experience of Santa Eulalia and Robert Carmack's account of events in Momostenango. Davis reckons that between 1880 and 1920, the Kanjobal Maya of Santa Eulalia lost 1388 *caballerías* of a communal estate of 1900 *caballerías* to ladino intruders, close to 70 per cent of their ancestral territory. Most of the land encroached upon lay a fair distance from town in the “hot country” around Barillas and the Ixcán Valley, zones Davis describes as “of greatest ecological and economic potential.”<sup>84</sup> Indians responded to ladino pressure by retreating to, and legally consolidating their hold on, *tierra fría* in the immediate environs of the town center. Thereafter, despite growing numbers, increasing internal factionalism, and seasonal migration to the coffee fincas of the Pacific piedmont, the Maya of Santa Eulalia held the outside world at bay more pacifically than did the native people of San Mateo Ixtatán, only ten kilometers to the north, or San Juan Ixcay, fifteen kilometers to the south.<sup>85</sup>

At Momostenango, Indians appear to have fared much worse. Carmack records that “Momostecan Indians lost their best agricultural lands under Liberal rule, forty-six *caballerías* of rich, flat lands in Buenabaj, and several hundred *caballerías* of piedmont lands in El Palmar



and Samalá.<sup>86</sup> Although the amount of land lost in absolute terms was smaller than in Santa Eulalia, the seizure of the native estate was such that, with population doubling in the course of the century, the average family holding fell to less than half a hectare, meaning that "land shortage reached crisis proportions."<sup>87</sup> Carmack considers the Liberal Reforms to have been "disastrous" and "objectionable" to the extent that, in 1876, they engendered "full-scale guerrilla warfare," which the Barrios regime brutally suppressed.<sup>88</sup> Employing tactics resorted to by the Guatemalan armed forces a century later, President Barrios ordered his militia "to burn houses and crops in all rebel zones of Momostenango" and to resettle forcibly in town "many families suspected of aiding the rebels."<sup>89</sup> Government troops eventually won the day, capturing and imprisoning rebel soldiers, some of whom were executed. Carmack concludes that the "final fifty years of Liberal rule in Momostenango were a time of intense political and economic repression for the Indians. Local ladinos established close personal links with national dictators and used these to establish an authoritarian system of government within the community."<sup>90</sup> He estimates that one to two thousand Indians were channeled to the coffee plantations of the Pacific piedmont each year, as well as being pressed into public service in Momostenango itself. In this way, Indians contributed more than 336,000 days per year (16 percent of the total available) in coerced labor. They were overseen in their efforts by ladinos who ruled "by an elaborate mix of terror and paternalism."<sup>91</sup> In another tactic resorted to by later oppressors, the entire native population, in order to prove its allegiance to "a virtual fascist state," was forced to participate "in almost constant militia and active duty service."<sup>92</sup>

The case studies by Carmack and Davis stand out as models to be emulated, as examples of a type of inquiry needed for Maya communities all over western Guatemala. Not until such detailed research is undertaken will it be possible to assess fully the repercussions of the Liberal Reforms with any precision or to comment meaningfully on the factors responsible for spatial differentiation in the nature and degree of land alienation and community resistance.<sup>93</sup>

But good regional geography, Carl Sauer once commented, is finely representational art.<sup>94</sup> If the details of exactly how much land was usurped or how much labor was coerced are presently beyond our ken, we do have some descriptive material that provides a window on the human dimension of the tragedy. Consider, for example, the observation made at Nebaj in 1913 by archaeologist-explorer Robert Burkitt, who recorded throughout Ixil country "an unceasing coming and going of labor contractors and plantation agents getting out gangs of Indians for the Pacific Coast."<sup>95</sup> Some of Burkitt's remarks, phrased in his inimitable style, are worth quoting at length:

Years ago, when I first visited Nebaj, it was a different place from now. . . . I had struck the place at an especially bad moment. The plantation agents were at the height of their activity, scattering money, advance pay for work, and every Indian was able to buy rum. The rum business and the coffee business work together in this country, automatically. The plantation advances money to the Indian and the rum seller takes it away from him and the Indian has to go to work again. Work leads to rum and rum leads to work. . . . I used to think that Chichicastenango was the drunkenest town in the country, but now I think it is Nebaj. My plans at Nebaj were upset by rum. There are two ruin places that I know of that are to be got at from Nebaj and I did nothing at either of them, and one of them I never even saw. The Indians I was going to take were never sober.<sup>96</sup>

Poor Mr. Burkitt. Think of it. His plans for archaeological exploration were disrupted because native guides and helpers were, as he put it, “drunk from morning till night.”<sup>97</sup> But while we acknowledge the researcher’s frustration, let us try also to imagine the anguish and pain of the Indians. The “advance pay for work” Burkitt refers to was the *habilitación*, a loan impoverished natives must have found difficult to resist, especially if proffered with a bottle of *aguardiente* in July or August, when corn prices were high and a family meal difficult to obtain.<sup>98</sup> Not only were many closed or corporate features of Maya community life gradually broken down—for some, “temporary” labor on a finca signaled the beginning of a process that ultimately led to permanent removal and their staying on in plantations as resident workers or *colonos*.<sup>99</sup> Alain Dessaint estimates that, between 1894 and 1930, the Nebaj area Burkitt was surveying sent six thousand Indian laborers to work each year on piedmont fincas, not all of whom made it back to Ixil country.<sup>100</sup>

We also have a good account of how miserable the situation could be from the fieldwork of Maud Oakes. An incident during her stay at Todos Santos Cuchumatán highlights certain aspects of the problem. She writes:

One morning early in January, 1946, Patrona, the wife of my neighbour Domingo, came to see me. Her eyes were swollen from crying. In very incoherent Spanish she told me that Domingo had signed a contract for himself and his son Andrés, with Señor López, who owned the *tienda* in the village, to work on a coffee finca beyond Quezaltenango. She went on to say that she expected her baby in a month and a half, and how could she look after three children, get wood, and plant corn if neither Domingo nor Andrés was there to help her?

Domingo then entered the house and told me the whole story. The year before, he and Andrés were both sick for two months, so sick that they nearly died. In consequence he was not able to plant his corn. When he was better he could not work for he still had no strength. He had only a little corn. He therefore signed a contract with Señor López for money. He was to receive sixteen dollars and for this he and Andrés, aged fourteen, would both have to work sixty-four days picking coffee on the finca. They would have to walk there and back, which would take four to five days each way. At the finca they would be

given huts, too poor to keep out the mosquitoes, and unground corn, nothing else. If they got sick they would get no medical care; and all this for less than one dollar a week apiece.<sup>101</sup>

Since the time of Burkitt and Oakes, important qualitative changes have occurred in the way that plantation labor is recruited in Guatemala.<sup>102</sup> The necessity of coercing labor, however, has diminished over the past fifty years, as explosive population growth and the need to earn more money to feed more mouths routinely ensure a plentiful work force. This has especially been the case among Indian *minifundistas*, peasant smallholders an estimated 90 percent of whom live with their families on plots of land too tiny to provide year-round employment and subsistence.<sup>103</sup> If inducements in the form of cheap rum or vagrancy laws have lessened or vanished, the structural inequity and ethnic manipulation primarily responsible for perpetuating seasonal migration have not. Nowhere is inequality more starkly revealed than in the statistics of two agricultural censuses, the first conducted in 1950 and the second in 1964. These official Guatemalan sources reveal that a small percentage of the total national farmland (14 percent in 1950 and 19 percent in 1964) is shared among a large percentage of farm units (88 percent in 1950 and 87 percent in 1964). Conversely, a large percentage of the total national farmland (72 percent in 1950 and 63 percent in 1964) is shared among a small percentage of farm operators (2 percent in 1950 and 3 percent in 1964).<sup>104</sup> According to a more recent survey, differentials in patterns of landownership remain considerable (see table 4). This ongoing disparity produces a *latifundia-minifundia* dichotomy as chronic as any in Latin America.<sup>105</sup>

The only serious governmental attempt to confront, if not to redress, these and other socioeconomic inequities occurred during a ten-year period (1944–1954) from which Guatemala has yet to recover.<sup>106</sup> How foreign interests and domestic opposition joined forces to impede and then to overthrow the reformist government of Jacobo Arbenz Guzmán is by now sufficiently well-known to warrant no reiteration here.<sup>107</sup> If one accepts the argument of Robert Wasserstrom over those advocated by Jim Handy and Piero Gleijeses, then Arbenz “sought mitigation, not metamorphosis,” and the reforms of the ill-fated president represented in essence “a modest program, not a daring one.”<sup>108</sup> As Wasserstrom sees it, Arbenz operated under the misapprehension that “Guatemala’s internal difficulties stemmed chiefly from the ignorance and isolation of its Indian population.”<sup>109</sup> What Arbenz and his supporters failed to comprehend was that “commercial agriculture in Guatemala represented a special form of capitalism which had itself promoted the spread of subsistence farming and *minifundia* land tenure.”<sup>110</sup> Enacted in the belief that “old antagonisms between Indians and Ladinos would disappear as in time Indian serfs were integrated into na-

TABLE 4 *Land Distribution in Guatemala in 1979*

<i>Size of Farm Units (hectares)</i>	<i>Number of Farms</i>	<i>Percentage</i>	<i>Surface (hectares)</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Less than 0.69	250,918	41.1	60,871.1	1.5
0.69 to 6.99	296,654	48.7	608,083.2	14.7
7.00 to 45.00	49,137	8.0	774,974.3	18.4
45.01 to 902.00	13,158	2.1	1,793,618.6	42.7
More than 902.00	477	0.1	955,921.6	22.7
Total	610,344	100.0	4,193,468.8	100.0

Source: Shelton H. Davis and Julie Hodson, *Witnesses to Political Violence in Guatemala: The Suppression of a Rural Development Movement* (Boston: Oxfam America, 1982), 45.

tional life," the Arbenz revolution challenged and was defeated by a more powerful and insidious variant of capitalism that had long since adapted itself to the geographical and ethnic peculiarities of Guatemala.<sup>111</sup> What Arbenz apparently never understood was that capitalism had evolved symbiotically in Guatemala to create a situation wherein highland Maya villages and piedmont fincas existed in varying degrees of interdependence; in this specific setting, capitalist logic dictated that "if the former endure, the latter are ensured the labor they need."<sup>112</sup>

It was in fact an institution introduced by Arbenz's predecessor, Juan José Arévalo, that began a process of cultural change the unfolding of which gradually altered native life by lessening the dependent status of Maya communities. Between 1945 and 1950, the government of President Arévalo helped organize the first cooperatives in the Guatemalan countryside, a move that, combined with decisions to improve the education system and to promote Mayan languages, inaugurated a rural awakening.<sup>113</sup> If the cooperative movement begun by Arévalo did not exactly flourish under Arbenz because government priorities lay elsewhere—one of the stated objectives of the Arbenz agrarian reform was "to develop a capitalist economy among peasants and in agriculture generally"—the movement's collectivist principles were neither regarded as inimical nor viewed as a threat.<sup>114</sup>

After the overthrow of Arbenz, a number of foreign missionaries entered Guatemala at the invitation of Archbishop Mariano Rossell y Arellano. It was the archbishop's intent that these recruits would serve as priests in Indian parishes and, in the words of Shelton Davis and Julie Hodson, "fill the void left by the counterrevolution by playing a more active role in rural areas."<sup>115</sup> Their arrival marked a turning point in the relationship between Maya communities and the Guatemalan state.

Several years previously, in 1948, Archbishop Rossell had

launched a development program known as *Acción Católica*. Implemented originally to counteract the spread of Protestantism and to give the Catholic Church a more concerned community voice, *Acción Católica* as a means of preserving the status quo was meant to be reinforced by the arrival of foreign missionaries. But priests recruited primarily to attend to spiritual needs were soon engaged in projects that sought to ameliorate the social and economic life of their native parishioners. Priests not only taught classes and fostered the building of schools. Rather ironically, they also encouraged the formation of agricultural, consumer, and credit cooperatives that eventually became the cornerstone of *Acción Católica*.<sup>116</sup> By 1967 a cooperative movement had been firmly established, with 145 different associations and twenty-seven thousand participants, many based in the predominantly Indian departments of El Quiché, Huehuetenango, San Marcos, and Sololá.<sup>117</sup> Eight years later, the cooperative movement had expanded to over five hundred different associations with a combined membership of one hundred and thirty-two thousand family representatives.<sup>118</sup> According to Davis and Hodson, "fifty-seven percent of these cooperatives were located in the western and central highlands where they were having a major impact on Indian political attitudes, marketing strategies, and agricultural techniques."<sup>119</sup> During the preceding century, the land base of Maya villages may have been significantly eroded, but a vibrant sense of community had not.

By raising Maya consciousness and promoting community self-reliance, the cooperative movement posed a direct challenge to the Guatemalan status quo. The plantation economy of the country was especially undermined. Agribusiness boomed during the 1960s and early 1970s. The value of coffee exports increased between 1960 and 1974 from seventy-five million dollars to one hundred and seventy-three million. Cotton exports rose in value during the same time from six million to seventy-one million, sugar from one hundred thousand dollars to forty-one million.<sup>120</sup> Although native labor helped propel this prosperity, more and more Indians, on returning to their communities after a period of plantation work, invested their hard-earned pay in local ventures such as petty trading and land improvement, eventually creating for themselves alternatives to seasonal migration.<sup>121</sup> When the time came for coffee to be harvested, Maya hands continued to do most of the picking. But traditional pools of labor were slowly drying up and could no longer be relied upon. Matters reached a crisis following the earthquake of 4 February 1976, when Indians placed a higher priority on remaining in the highlands to rebuild their ruined communities than on making themselves available for plantation labor.<sup>122</sup> This decision was only exacerbated when cooperatives had little to do with government initiatives they knew from past experience would be ineffective

and graft-ridden and instead solicited reconstruction assistance directly from international relief agencies.<sup>123</sup> The stage was then set for a major confrontation between community and state interests.

#### CONQUEST BY STATE TERROR

Knowing where and when the third conquest of the Maya commenced matters considerably less than acknowledging that such a process has begun and is still underway. Most observers pinpoint the event as having begun on 29 May 1978 in the town of Panzos in Alta Verapaz.<sup>124</sup> On that day, in that place, a special unit of the Guatemalan armed forces opened fire on Kekchí Indians demonstrating peacefully against the government's refusal to award them land titles. The protest was organized because permits to explore for nickel and petroleum in an area designated the Franja Transversal del Norte (of which Panzos and its environs form part) had already been issued by the government to several transnational corporations, and Indians feared they would be thrown off their land. More than one hundred Kekchí Maya, among them women, children, and old people, were killed.<sup>125</sup> Prior to the Panzos massacre, a more selective slaughter had been carried out farther to the west in Ixil and Ixcán country, where 168 cooperative leaders were murdered between February 1976 and December 1977.<sup>126</sup> Whether one chooses Ixil and Ixcán country immediately after the 1976 earthquake or the town of Panzos in May 1978 is immaterial. What both incidents clearly reveal is that the Guatemalan state was determined to prevent community initiatives from obstructing a certain kind of capitalist development, one that not only absorbed desirable native land but also demanded the release of essential native labor. The state reasserted its hegemony by resorting to premeditated acts of terror. The Guatemalan government, at the command and in the service of a powerful few, declared war on its own citizenry, especially its indigenous peoples.

The front presented to the outside world is that a struggle is being waged to rid Guatemala of communist interference. Over the past decade, a lethal counterinsurgency by the military regimes of Presidents Romeo Lucas García, Efraín Ríos Montt, and Oscar Mejía Víctores has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of Maya Indians, most of whom probably never knew who Karl Marx was, let alone understood or agreed with the ideals he upheld. Such fierce and widespread slaughter as lacerated rural Guatemala between 1981 and 1985 makes little objective sense. Killing Maya Indians and laying their communities to waste does not solve the problem of reluctant native labor. But it has served effectively to traumatize survivors into submission. Fear and suspicion, moreover, corrode village solidarity and jolt families into compliance. But logic figures barely, if at all, in this latest cycle of con-

quest. The majority of victims so far have been defenseless, nonpartisan villagers, some of whom met their deaths in the most barbarous ways imaginable. Reports of the systematic annihilation of entire communities are not pleasant to hear or read about, but we must deal with them, even if their repulsive savagery precludes rational explanation. The massacre that occurred on 17 July 1982 at Finca San Francisco, a remote settlement in the Department of Huehuetenango near the border with Mexico, is no more gruesome than hundreds of others. One eyewitness, whose account has been corroborated by fellow survivors, gave the following testimony:

The soldiers took our wives out of the church in groups of ten or twenty. Then twelve or thirteen soldiers went into our houses to rape our wives. After they were finished raping them, they shot our wives and burned the houses down. . . . All of our children had been left locked up in the church. They were crying, our poor children were screaming. They were calling us. Some of the bigger ones were aware that their mothers were being killed and were shouting and calling out to us. . . . They took the children outside. The soldiers killed them with knife stabs. We could see them. They killed them in a house in front of the church. They yanked them by the hair and stabbed them in their bellies; then they disemboweled our poor little children. Still they cried. When they finished disemboweling them, they threw them into the house, and then brought out more. . . . Then they started with the old people. . . . "What fault is it of ours," the old people said. . . . "Outside!" a soldier said. They took the poor old people out and stabbed them as if they were animals. It made the soldiers laugh. Poor old people, they were crying and suffering. They killed them with dull machetes. They took them outside and put them on top of a board; then they started to hack at them with a rusty machete. It was pitiful how they broke the poor old people's necks. . . . They began to take out the adults, the grown men of working age. They took us out by groups of ten. Soldiers were standing there waiting to throw the prisoners down in the patio of the courthouse. Then they shot them. When they finished shooting, they piled them up and other soldiers came and carried the bodies into the church.<sup>127</sup>

Although the Guatemalan military is most responsible for the violence unleashed on the Maya, revolutionary insurgents are by no means blameless. Especially in Huehuetenango and El Quiché, Indians suffered badly when the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres retreated in the face of government counteroffensives, leaving behind unarmed villagers to bear horrific reprisal for having provided food, shelter, or moral support for the insurgents. Caught in the middle, scores of Maya communities paid dearly for their affiliation, whether direct or indirect, real or perceived.<sup>128</sup>

Insurgent guerrilla organizations still exist in Guatemala and engage in revolutionary armed combat, despite claims to the contrary. But government security forces fail to distinguish between "subversives" and "Indians." Indeed, the two are often considered to be synonymous. Any popular rural base enjoyed by guerrilla units in the early 1980s has

been greatly eroded by the bombardment of native settlements, the destruction of personal property and belongings, the burning of crops and supplies, the killing of livestock, and the regrouping of "suspect" communities into "model villages" watched over by vigilant government troops.<sup>129</sup> Because it will take years for the myriad consequences of counterinsurgency to become manifest, current appraisals must inevitably be premature and incomplete, not least because political life in Guatemala unfolds in a state of constant flux. Some elementary observations, however, reveal the extent of past destruction and the magnitude of future repair.

An estimated one million Indians (one Maya in four) fled or were displaced from their homes between 1981 and 1985 as a result of counterinsurgency tactics. Among those displaced, some sought refuge in the forests and mountains surrounding their gutted communities, where they wandered for months in search of food and shelter. Others drifted to the squatter settlements of Guatemala City, discarding their native garb and Maya tongue in an effort to "ladinoize" and stay alive. Still others, pushed beyond the limits of endurance, moved into the guerrilla fold, took up arms, and are now fighting back. At least one hundred thousand Maya fled across the border west and north into Mexico, where many remain. Among those who fled to Mexico, some eventually trekked as far as the United States and Canada. For native men left behind, demonstrating political correctness may involve regular service in one of the civil defense patrols set up by the Guatemalan army to help police the countryside. Because such duty can entail tedious hours standing guard at village entrances or trails leaving town, fields in some areas have been neglected or improperly attended, at a time when population pressure on the land—recent atrocities notwithstanding—calls for scrupulous attention to agricultural chores. Poor local harvests, especially in 1982 and 1983, meant that Indian families were not only intimidated and dispossessed but received far less food than was potentially available.<sup>130</sup>

Viewed in historical perspective, it is disconcerting to think how much the twentieth century resembles the sixteenth, for the parallels between cycles of conquest hundreds of years apart are striking. Model villages are designed to serve similar purposes as colonial congregaciones—to function as the institutional means by which one culture seeks to reshape the ways and conventions of another, to operate as authoritarian mechanisms of resettlement, indoctrination, and control. Terminology may alter, but policy remains the same: to dismantle and destroy existing forms of community organization; to drive a wedge between people and place; to force families to live in nucleated centers where movements are scrutinized, routines disrupted, attitudes and behavior changed. Pressed into service during colonial times under the



terms of *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, Maya Indians today are being forced once again to slight local priorities in order to fulfill obligations imposed from outside their communities. In recent years, the peoples whom Miguel Angel Asturias immortalized as *hombres de maíz* have actually had to seek permission from military personnel to tend their plots and raise the very crop that created Maya civilization.

It is important to realize, however, that counterinsurgency in the 1980s, like subjugation by imperial Spain and engulfment by a "coffee republic," represents neither victory nor defeat. What it does represent is yet another intrusion that Maya Indians somehow will respond to in ways that ensure meaningful group preservation. Fateful but not apocalyptic, the imagery invoked by Cakchiquel chroniclers centuries ago fits present reality equally well. Survivors of three cycles of conquest, the Maya of Guatemala are enveloped still by heavy shadows and black night. But while conquest may darken their lives, it has yet to extinguish their culture.

#### NOTES

1. Oliver La Farge, *Santa Eulalia: The Religion of a Cuchumatán Indian Town* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1947), 100.
2. *Heritage of Conquest: The Ethnology of Middle America*, edited by Sol Tax (New York: Macmillan, 1952). For an assessment of how well the analysis of Mesoamerican life developed by Tax and his collaborators has withstood the test of time, see *Heritage of Conquest: Thirty Years Later*, edited by Carl Kendall, John Hawkins, and Laurel Bosen (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).
3. For a romantic view of the Indian as "vestige," as a timeless throwback to a golden age, see Louis de la Haba and Joseph J. Scherschel, "Guatemala, Maya and Modern," *National Geographic* 146, no. 5 (Nov. 1974):661–89. For a crude view of the Indian as "victim," as a powerless being forged and preserved by colonial exploitation, see Severo Martínez Peláez, *La patria del criollo: ensayo de interpretación de la realidad colonial guatemalteca* (San José, Costa Rica: Editorial Universitaria, 1975). In a recent study of Guatemalan ethnicity, John Hawkins characterizes the Indian as "opposite," maintaining that Spanish colonialism created a Mayan culture of symbolic inversions and oppositions that was structurally one with the culture of the conquerors. See Hawkins, *Inverse Images: The Meaning of Culture, Ethnicity, and Family in Postcolonial Guatemala* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984). The ways in which, throughout history, Europeans and Europeanized Americans have portrayed the Indian as a collective and general category-of-one is scrutinized at length in Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978). A provocative discussion of the Indian as "other" is the focus of Tzvetan Todorov, *The Conquest of America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).
4. Nancy M. Farriss, "Indians in Colonial Yucatán: Three Perspectives," in *Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica: Essays on the History of Ethnic Relations*, edited by Murdo J. MacLeod and Robert Wasserstrom (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 2 and 19.
5. *Ibid.*, 34.
6. Numerous contributions are evaluated and placed in historiographical context in Benjamin Keen, "Recent Writing on the Spanish Conquest," *LARR* 20, no. 2 (1985):161–71; and W. George Lovell, "Rethinking Conquest: The Colonial Experience in Latin America," *Journal of Historical Geography* 12, no. 3 (1986):310–17. For

- Mexico, Nancy M. Farriss joins Charles Gibson in establishing standards of scholarly excellence to which all future research on the colonial period should aspire. See Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule: The Collective Enterprise of Survival* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); and Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish Rule: A History of the Indians of the Valley of Mexico, 1519–1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964). Three works that reappraise the colonial experience in Peru are Nathan Wachtel, *The Vision of the Vanquished: The Spanish Conquest of Peru through Indian Eyes, 1530–1570* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1977); Steve J. Stern, *Peru's Indian Peoples and the Challenge of Spanish Conquest: Huamanga to 1640* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1982); and Karen Spalding, *Huarochiri: An Andean Society under Inca and Spanish Rule* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1984). See also Luis Millones, "Ethnohistorians and Andean Ethnohistory," *LARR* 17, no. 1 (1982):200–216; and Leon Campbell, "The Historical Reconquest of 'Peruvian Space,'" *LARR* 21, no. 3 (1986):192–205. For Guatemala, recent contributions include Robert M. Carmack, *The Quiché Mayas of Utatlán: The Evolution of a Highland Guatemalan Kingdom* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981); Robert M. Hill and John Monaghan, *Continuities in Highland Maya Social Organization: Ethnohistory in Sacapulas, Guatemala* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987); Christopher H. Lutz, *Historia sociodemográfica de Santiago de Guatemala, 1541–1773* (Antigua Guatemala: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica, 1983); Sandra L. Orellana, *The Tzutujil Mayas: Continuity and Change, 1250–1630* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1984); W. George Lovell, *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala: A Historical Geography of the Cuchumatán Highlands, 1500–1821* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); and Elías Zamora, *Los mayas de las tierras altas en el siglo XVI: tradición y cambio en Guatemala* (Seville: Diputación Provincial de Sevilla, 1985). See also Grant D. Jones, "Recent Ethnohistorical Works on Southeastern Mesoamerica," *LARR* 22, no. 1 (1987):214–24. An excellent example of the approach Farriss espouses is John M. Watanabe, "'We Who Are Here': The Cultural Conventions of Ethnic Identity in a Guatemalan Indian Village, 1937–1980," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1984.
7. See, among many examples, George Black, *Garrison Guatemala* (London: Zed Books, 1984); and John Weeks, "An Interpretation of the Central American Crisis," *LARR* 21, no. 3 (1986):31–53. A refreshing change, in emphasis if not in actual execution, is Jim Handy, *Gift of the Devil: A History of Guatemala* (Boston: South End Press, 1984). The tendency to slight the colonial period is to be found among writers of every ideological hue, Marxists included. They are admonished for the practice, by one of their kind, in Steve J. Stern, "Latin America's Colonial History: Invitation to an Agenda," *Latin American Perspectives* 12, no. 1 (1985):3–16. The historiography of the Central American crisis, especially the flood of print released over the past several years, is dealt with most cogently by Carol A. Smith and Jeff Boyer, "Central America since 1979," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 16 (1987):197–221; and by James Dunkerley, "Central American Impasse," *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 5 (1986):105–19.
  8. This choice is not meant to suggest that theory has been deliberately eschewed. Nor should it be taken to mean that theory has no place in understanding the dynamics of Maya cultural survival. Historical geography of the type attempted here lends itself to many different approaches. The subject under discussion is simply considered best rendered as historical narrative. For those who wish to make some theoretical assessment of the reality here reconstructed, the case specifics may be borne in mind during a perusal of Edward H. Spicer, "The Process of Cultural Enclavement in Middle America," *Actas y Memorias del XXXVI Congreso Internacional de Americanistas* 3 (1966):267–79; and "Persistent Cultural Systems: A Comparative Study of Identity Systems That Can Adapt to Contrasting Environments," *Science* 174 (19 Nov. 1971):795–800. See also George P. Castile, "Issues in the Analysis of Enduring Cultural Systems," in *Persistent Peoples: Cultural Enclaves in Perspective*, edited by George P. Castile and Gilbert Kushner (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1981), xv–xxii.
  9. Edward H. Spicer, *Cycles of Conquest: The Impact of Spain, Mexico, and the United States on the Indians of the Southwest, 1533–1960* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1962).

10. Hubert H. Bancroft, *History of Central America*, 3 vols. (San Francisco: The History Company, 1882–1887), 1:617–704 and 2:74–121; *An Account of the Conquest of Guatemala in 1524 by Pedro de Alvarado*, edited by Sedley J. Mackie (New York: Cortés Society, 1924); and Arden R. King, *Cobán and the Verapaz: History and Cultural Process in Northern Guatemala*, Middle American Research Institute Publication no. 37 (New Orleans: Tulane University Press, 1974), 15–26.
11. Murdo J. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520–1720* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 41–43; and William L. Sherman, “Some Aspects of Change in Guatemalan Society: 1470–1620,” in MacLeod and Wasserstrom, *Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica*, 170–75.
12. W. George Lovell and William R. Swezey, “The Population of Southern Guatemala at Spanish Contact,” *Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 3, no. 1 (1982):71–84. See also *The Native Population of the Americas in 1492*, edited by William M. Denevan (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976); Henry F. Dobyns, *Native American Historical Demography: A Critical Bibliography* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976); and D. Joralemon, “New World Depopulation and the Case of Disease,” *Journal of Anthropological Research* 38, no. 1 (1982):108–27.
13. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 40–41.
14. The debate is nicely summarized in Murdo J. MacLeod, “Modern Research on the Demography of Colonial Central America: A Bibliographical Essay,” *Latin American Population History Newsletter* 3, nos. 3–4 (1983):25–28. See also Francisco de Solano, *Los mayas del siglo XVIII* (Madrid: Ediciones Cultura Hispánica, 1974), 62–96; Denevan, *Native Population*, 291; William T. Sanders and Carson Murdy, “Population and Agricultural Adaptation in Highland Guatemala,” in *The Historical Demography of Highland Guatemala*, edited by Robert M. Carmack, John D. Early, and Christopher H. Lutz (Albany, N.Y.: Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, State University of New York, Albany, 1982), 32; Elías Zamora, “Conquista y crisis demográfica: la población indígena del occidente de Guatemala en el siglo XVI,” *Mesoamérica* 6 (1983):291–328; and W. George Lovell, Christopher H. Lutz, and William R. Swezey, “The Indian Population of Southern Guatemala, 1549–1551: An Analysis of López de Cerrato’s *Tasaciones de Tributos*,” *The Americas* 40, no. 4 (1984):459–77.
15. Murdo J. MacLeod, “An Outline of Central American Colonial Demographics: Sources, Yields, and Possibilities,” in Carmack, Early, and Lutz, *Historical Demography of Highland Guatemala*, 13.
16. Woodrow Borah and Sherburne F. Cook, “Conquest and Population: A Demographic Approach to Mexican History,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 113, no. 2 (1969):177–83; and N. David Cook, *Demographic Collapse: Indian Peru, 1520–1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).
17. Nathan Wachtel, “The Indian and the Spanish Conquest,” in *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Colonial Latin America*, edited by Leslie Bethell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 1:207–30. See also S. Ryan Johansson, “The Demographic History of the Native Peoples of North America: A Selective Bibliography,” *Yearbook of Physical Anthropology* 25 (1982):139–42; and Robert H. Jackson, “Demographic Change in Northwestern New Spain,” *The Americas* 41, no. 4 (1985):465–67.
18. Linda A. Newson, “Indian Population Patterns in Colonial Spanish America,” *LARR* 20, no. 3 (1985):65–66.
19. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 40–41.
20. *Ibid.*, 120–23; Stefan H. Borhegyi, “Archaeological Synthesis of the Guatemalan Highlands,” *Handbook of Middle American Indians* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1965), 2:3–58; and W. George Lovell, “Settlement Change in Spanish America: The Dynamics of *Congregación* in the Cuchumatán Highlands of Guatemala, 1541–1821,” *Canadian Geographer* 27, no. 2 (1983):163–74.
21. Bernal Díaz del Castillo, as quoted in J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469–1716* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1976), 65.
22. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 374.
23. Salvador Rodríguez Becerra, *Encomienda y conquista: los inicios de la colonización en Guatemala* (Seville: Universidad de Sevilla, 1977); William L. Sherman, *Forced Native Labor in Sixteenth-Century Central America* (Lincoln and London: University of Ne-

- braska Press, 1979); and W. George Lovell, "To Submit and to Serve: Forced Native Labour in the Cuchumatán Highlands of Guatemala," *Journal of Historical Geography* 9, no. 2 (1983):127–44. *Encomienda* entailed the unremunerated provision, by Indians to Spaniards, of certain commodities and initially also of labor. *Repartimiento* involved the furnishing to Spaniards of Indian labor that theoretically should have been paid for.
24. John H. Rowe, "The Incas under Spanish Colonial Institutions," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 37, no. 2 (1957):181; Gibson, *Aztecs under Spanish Rule*, 285; and MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 221–24.
  25. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 381–85; and W. George Lovell, "Landholding in Spanish Central America: Patterns of Ownership and Activity in the Cuchumatán Highlands of Guatemala, 1563–1821," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, n.s. 8, no. 3 (1983):214–30.
  26. MacLeod, "Demography of Colonial Central America," 25–28. For regional studies of Indian depopulation in Guatemala, see Michel Bertrand, "Estudio demográfico de la región de Rabinal y del Chixoy en Guatemala," *Mesoamérica* 1 (1980):232–49; W. George Lovell, "Collapse and Recovery: A Demographic Profile of the Cuchumatán Highlands of Guatemala, 1520–1821," in Carmack, Early, and Lutz, *Historical Demography of Highland Guatemala*, 103–22; and Thomas T. Veblen, "Native Population Decline in Totonicapán, Guatemala," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 67, no. 4 (1977):484–99.
  27. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 228–31; and Robert M. Carmack, "Spanish-Indian Relations in Highland Guatemala," in MacLeod and Wasserstrom, *Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica*, 218.
  28. Murdo J. MacLeod, "Ethnic Relations and Indian Society in the Province of Guatemala, ca. 1620–ca. 1800," in MacLeod and Wasserstrom, *Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica*, 194.
  29. *Ibid.*, 197.
  30. As paraphrased by Joan Vincent in her review of *The Prospects for Plural Societies*, edited by S. Plattner and D. Maybury-Lewis (Washington, D.C.: American Ethnological Society, 1984) in *Science* 226 (9 Nov. 1984):683. A discussion with Bernard Q. Nietschmann caused him to question the validity of Depres's argument on the grounds that theft by decree, in Nietschmann's eyes, does not constitute competition.
  31. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 228–30; and "Outline of Central American Colonial Demographics," 11. In contrast to MacLeod's predominantly economic and demographic reasoning, Adriaan C. van Oss explains the emergence of "Indian" and "ladino" Guatemala in terms of ecclesiastical geography, distinguishing between a "west" overseen by regular clergy and an "east" overseen by secular clergy. See van Oss, *Catholic Colonialism: A Parish History of Guatemala, 1524–1821* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 14–49. See also Lovell, *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala*, 173–76.
  32. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 97, 375, 385.
  33. *Ibid.*, pp. xiv–xv. The quotation comes from Pierre and Hugette Chaunu, *Séville et l'Atlantique* (Paris: Colin, 1955–1959), 8:848.
  34. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 326–27. Native rebellion in colonial Guatemala has yet to receive the scholarly attention it deserves. An important beginning is the work of Severo Martínez Peláez, *Motines de indios: la violencia colonial en Centroamérica y Chiapas* (Puebla: Centro de Investigaciones Históricas y Sociales, 1985). For a discussion of the issue elsewhere, see Leon Campbell, "Recent Research on Andean Peasant Revolts, 1750–1820," *LARR* 14, no. 1 (1979):3–50; William B. Taylor, *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1979); and Anthony McFarlane, "Riot and Rebellion in Colonial Spanish America," *LARR* 17, no. 2 (1982):212–21. Brief accounts of violent confrontation may be found in Victoria R. Bricker, *The Indian Christ, the Indian King* (Austin: University of Texas, 1981), 77–84; Daniel Contreras, *Una rebelión indígena en el partido de Totonicapán en 1820: el indio y la independencia* (Guatemala City: Imprenta Universitaria, 1951); and Handy, *Gift of the Devil*, 31–33.

35. Oliver La Farge, "Maya Ethnology: The Sequence of Cultures," in Clarence L. Hay et al., *The Maya and Their Neighbors* (New York: D. Appleton Century, 1940), 282–91; and MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 328.
36. Eric Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities in Mesoamerica and Central Java," *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (1957):1–18
37. *Ibid.*, 6.
38. *Ibid.*, 8.
39. Eric Wolf, *Sons of the Shaking Earth* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1959), 214–15.
40. *Ibid.*, 215.
41. From *Recopilación de las Leyes de Indias*, as rendered in William B. Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant in Colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1972), 67.
42. Lovell, "Settlement Change in Spanish America," 169–72; and Karl Sapper, *The Verapaz in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: A Contribution to the Historical Geography and Ethnography of Northeastern Guatemala*, Institute of Archaeology Occasional Paper no. 13 (Los Angeles: University of California, 1985), 19–20.
43. Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* (Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1972), 15.
44. Archivo General de Indias, Audiencia de Guatemala, *legajo* 168, Tomás de Cárdenas and Juan de Torres to King Charles V, 6 Dec. 1555.
45. *Ibid.* To this day, such shrines may be found throughout highland Guatemala.
46. *Ibid.* This same conclusion has since been reached by many other observers. Maya notions of what connects people and place truly enter the realm of the mystic. The relationship between man, land, and the supernatural is richly explored by Miguel Angel Asturias in his novel *Hombres de maíz* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1972). How the Maya deal with time is discussed in Nancy M. Farriss, "Remembering the Future, Anticipating the Past: History, Time, and Cosmology among the Maya of Yucatán," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 3 (1987):566–93; Barbara Tedlock, *Time and the Highland Maya* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982); and John M. Watanabe, "In the World of the Sun: A Cognitive Model of Maya Cosmology," *Man*, n.s. 18, no. 4 (1983):710–28.
47. Ray Elliott and Helen Elliott, "Ixil," in *The Languages of Guatemala*, edited by M. Mayers (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 126. The Elliotts cite as their source papers found inside the baptismal registry for the town of Chajul for the years 1678 to 1778.
48. Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida*, 26.
49. *Ibid.*, 40.
50. La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, x.
51. Lovell, *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala*, 82–89. For a discussion of similar patterns elsewhere in the Maya realm, see Nancy M. Farriss, "Nucleation versus Dispersal: The Dynamics of Population Movement in Colonial Yucatán," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 58, no. 2 (1978):187–216; David J. Robinson, "Indian Migration in Eighteenth-Century Yucatán: The Open Nature of the Closed Corporate Community," in *Studies in Spanish American Population History*, edited by David J. Robinson (Boulder, Colo.: Westview, 1981), 149–73; and Rodney C. Watson, "La dinámica espacial de los cambios de población en un pueblo colonial mexicano: Tila, Chiapas, 1595–1794," *Mesoamérica* 5 (1983):87–108.
52. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 122; Carmack, *The Quiché Mayas of Utlatlán*, 306 and 320–27; and Watanabe, "We Who Are Here," 53–55. For a useful general discussion, with a case study of social differentiation in colonial Peru, see Steve J. Stern, "The Struggle for Solidarity: Class, Culture, and Community in Highland Indian America," *Radical History Review* 27 (1983):21–45.
53. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 29; Hill and Monaghan, *Sacapulas*; and Lovell, *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala*, 78–82.
54. Wolf, *Sons of the Shaking Earth*, 220.
55. Martín Alfonso Tovilla, *Relación histórica-descriptiva de las provincias de la Verapaz y de la del Manche* (Guatemala City: Editorial Universitaria, 1960), 218.
56. Archivo General de Centroamérica (hereafter AGCA), A1, legajo 6037, expediente 53258.

57. AGCA, A3.16, legajo 1601, expediente 26391.
58. AGCA, A1, legajo 6037, expediente 53258; and A1, legajo 6040, expediente 53305.
59. See, among many examples, the records forming part of Contaduría 973 and 815 in the Archivo General de Indias.
60. Lovell, "Landholding in Spanish Central America," 226; and Hill and Monaghan, *Sacapulas*, 90–114.
61. Eric Wolf, *Europe and the People without History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1982), 19.
62. *Ibid.*, 390.
63. Ann Collins, "Colonial Jacaltenango, Guatemala: The Formation of a Corporate Community," Ph.D. diss., Tulane University, 1980.
64. Michael Taussig, "Culture of Terror—Space of Death: Roger Casement's Putomayo Report and the Explanation of Torture," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 3 (1984):468. Taussig elaborates on this theme in *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
65. Taussig, "Culture of Terror," 468. See also Martínez Peláez, *Patria del criollo*, 535.
66. See especially E. Bradford Burns, *The Poverty of Progress: Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980), 96–106; Hazel Ingersoll, "The War of the Mountain: A Study of Reactionary Peasant Insurgency in Guatemala, 1837–1873," Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1972; Keith L. Miceli, "Rafael Carrera: Defender and Promoter of Peasant Interests in Guatemala, 1837–1848," *The Americas* 31, no. 1 (1974):72–95; Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., "Social Revolution in Guatemala: The Carrera Revolt," in *Applied Enlightenment: Nineteenth-Century Liberalism* (New Orleans: Middle American Research Institute, 1971); and Woodward, "The Economic Development of Guatemala in the Nineteenth Century," paper presented to the Social Science History Association, Toronto, 28 Oct. 1984.
67. La Farge, "Maya Ethnology: The Sequence of Cultures," 291.
68. Robert M. Carmack, *Quichean Civilization: The Ethnohistoric, Ethnographic, and Archaeological Sources* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), 220.
69. Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 92–119.
70. *Ibid.*; and Burns, *Poverty of Progress*, 96–106.
71. Carol A. Smith, "Local History in Global Context: Social and Economic Transitions in Western Guatemala," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 26, no. 2 (1984):202.
72. *Ibid.*, 203.
73. *Ibid.*; and Carol A. Smith, "Beyond Dependency Theory: National and Regional Patterns of Underdevelopment in Guatemala," *American Ethnologist* 5, no. 3 (1978):610–11.
74. David J. McCreery, *Desarrollo económico y política nacional: el Ministerio de Fomento de Guatemala, 1871–1885* (Antigua Guatemala: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica, 1981); and McCreery, *Development and the State in Reforma Guatemala, 1871–1885* (Athens: Ohio University Center for International Studies, 1983).
75. Charles Wagley, "Economics of a Guatemalan Village," *Memoirs of the American Anthropological Association* 58 (1941):59–61; and Robert A. Naylor, "Guatemala: Indian Attitudes toward Land Tenure," *Journal of Inter-American Studies* 9, no. 4 (1967):627–30.
76. Naylor, "Indian Attitudes toward Land Tenure," 629; and Smith, "Local History in Global Context," 204.
77. King, *Cobán and the Verapaz*, 28–34 and 91–104. German entrepreneurs played a particularly active role in establishing an export economy based on coffee production. Smith records coffee as comprising "50 percent of foreign exchange earnings by 1871, 92 percent by 1880, 77 percent in 1929, 78 percent in 1950 and 32 percent in 1970." See Smith, "Beyond Dependency Theory," 589. For a vivid depiction of how the coffee economy was forged and what the "coffee republic" looked like as it came into being, see E. Bradford Burns, *Eadward Muybridge in Guatemala, 1875: The Photographer as Social Recorder* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1986), especially 91–129.

78. Nathan Whetten, *Guatemala: The Land and the People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 121; and David J. McCreery, "Debt Servitude in Rural Guatemala, 1876-1936," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 63, no. 4 (1983):735-59; and McCreery, "An Odious Feudalism: Mandamiento Labor and Commercial Agriculture in Guatemala, 1858-1920," *Latin American Perspectives* 13, no. 1 (1986):99-117.
79. McCreery, "Debt Servitude in Rural Guatemala," 758.
80. *Ibid.*, 759.
81. Nelson Reed, *The Caste War of Yucatán* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964); and Farriss, *Maya Society under Colonial Rule*, 355-88. For an assessment of the literature on the Caste War, see Gilbert M. Joseph, "From Caste War to Class War: The Historiography of Modern Yucatán (ca. 1750-1940)," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 65, no. 1 (1985):111-34.
82. Carmack, "Spanish-Indian Relations in Highland Guatemala," 220-33; and Smith, "Local History in Global Context," 205. King records three native revolts among the Kekchí Maya between 1864 and 1906. See King, *Cobán and the Verapaz*, 29 and 34. Future research may reveal resistance to have been far greater than is presently thought.
83. David J. McCreery, "Coffee and Class: The Structure of Development in Liberal Guatemala," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 56, no. 3 (1976):450.
84. Shelton H. Davis, "Land of Our Ancestors: A Study of Land Tenure and Inheritance in the Highlands of Guatemala," Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 1970, 54-55. A *caballería* is a unit of land measuring approximately 105 acres.
85. *Ibid.*, 64-65. McCreery writes that "on the night of July 17, 1898, the inhabitants of San Juan Ixcuy murdered the local *habilitador* . . . and then, in an effort to hide their crime, slaughtered all but one of the remaining thirty Ladinos in town." See McCreery, "Debt Peonage," 756. Irregularities in labor recruitment procedures and native resentment of outside control of municipal land apparently triggered the bloodbath. The Indian uprising met with a swift and brutal response. Raymond Stadelman reports that "the retaliation of the Government was prompt, and it has been estimated that perhaps ten Indian lives were exacted for each slain Ladino." See Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation in Northwestern Guatemala," *Contributions to American Anthropology and History* 33 (1940):96-97. A brief account of the incident may be found in Adrián Recinos, *Monografía del Departamento de Huehuetenango* (Guatemala City: Ministerio de Educación Pública, 1954), 363-64. Mention of the affair is also made by La Farge, who adds that "in the present century the Indians of San Mateo all but perfected a similar uprising." See La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, pp. xi-xii. Watanabe discusses the Liberal Reforms in relation to Santiago Chimaltenango, which lies about forty kilometers to the southwest of Santa Eulalia. He establishes that this community lost possession of about half its *baldío* or "uncleared land," 24.4 square kilometers in all, under the terms of a municipal land title issued on 10 Sept. 1891. The land was lost not because of ladino encroachment, however, but because of successful lobbying on the part of neighboring Indian townships, particularly San Juan Atitán and San Pedro Necta. Land disputes between native communities in the Cuchumatanes date back to the seventeenth century. See, for example, AGCA: Sección de Tierras, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 1, expediente 1, which records that Santiago Chimaltenango was involved in litigation against Todos Santos Cuchumatán in 1668. But Watanabe suggests that "in this region of little commercial value, population growth motivated this escalating competition for land." His research serves to underscore the need, when assessing the impact of the Liberal Reforms, for scholars to be ever-mindful of the geographical specificity of their findings. See Watanabe, "We Who Are Here," 165-70.
86. Carmack, "Spanish-Indian Relations in Highland Guatemala," 242.
87. *Ibid.*, 242-43. For the time period that Carmack is dealing with (that is, before the advent of chemical fertilizers), E. C. Higbee reckons that "about three arable hectares" would have been "the minimum necessary for independent family existence on average *tierra fría* land." See Higbee, "The Agricultural Regions of Guatemala," *Geographical Review* 37, no. 2 (1947):180. The growth of the Guatemalan population in the course of the nineteenth century is crisply summarized in Ralph Lee Woodward,

- Jr., "Population and Development in Guatemala, 1840–1879," *Journal of the Southeastern Council on Latin American Studies* 14 (1983):5–18.
88. Carmack, "Spanish-Indian Relations in Highland Guatemala," 242.
  89. *Ibid.*, 243.
  90. *Ibid.*
  91. *Ibid.*, 244.
  92. *Ibid.*, 243. Carmack presents a fuller reconstruction of what happened to the community of Momostenango under Barrios and subsequent liberal administrations, including the regimes of Manuel Estrada Cabrera and Jorge Ubico, in *Historia social de los Quichés* (Guatemala City: Seminario de Integración Social, 1979), 245–351.
  93. Julio Castellanos Cambranes, a Guatemalan historian, is currently engaged in a pioneering three-volume project that will furnish important new information on the impact of the Liberal Reforms. His first volume reveals widespread resistance to land seizure and to labor demands. See Castellanos, *Coffee and Peasants: The Origins of the Modern Plantation Economy in Guatemala, 1853–1897* (Stockholm: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1985). While rich in empirical detail gleaned from years of archival foraging, Castellanos's work is marred by poor organization and a rather clinical style of writing that creates an uncomfortable distance between the author and his subject. For a fuller critique, see W. George Lovell, "Voices from the Dark: Recent Writing on Guatemala," *Queen's Quarterly* 94, no. 1 (1987):34–42, especially 37–38.
  94. Carl O. Sauer, "The Education of a Geographer," in *Land and Life: A Selection from the Writings of Carl Ortwin Sauer*, edited by J. Leighly (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963), 403.
  95. Robert Burkitt, "Explorations in the Highlands of Western Guatemala," *The Museum Journal of the University of Pennsylvania* 21, no. 1 (1930):58.
  96. *Ibid.*
  97. *Ibid.*
  98. McCreery, "Debt Servitude in Guatemala," 744.
  99. *Ibid.*, 744–45.
  100. Alain Dessaint, "Effects of the Hacienda and Plantation Systems on Guatemala's Indians," *América Indígena* 22 (1962):340–41.
  101. Maud Oakes, *The Two Crosses of Todos Santos: Survivals of a Mayan Religious Ritual* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1951), 241. For a more recent account of life on a finca as a migrant Maya worker, see Rigoberta Menchú, *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala* (London: Verso Press, 1984), 21–27 and 33–42.
  102. See, for example, John M. Watanabe, "Cambios económicos en Santiago Chimaltenango, Guatemala," *Mesoamérica* 2 (1981):31. Watanabe records that many plantations simply announce on the radio the labor they need, the rates they pay, and the facilities they provide. These broadcasts penetrate even the most isolated Maya communities, where potential workers are listening. Upon hearing the specific details about what work is available, workers drift down from the highlands to the Pacific slope to bring in the harvest. Most of the Mam Indians of Santiago Chimaltenango now migrate as seasonal laborers without having contracts arranged in advance.
  103. Shelton Davis and Julie Hodson, *Witnesses to Political Violence in Guatemala: The Suppression of a Rural Development Movement* (Boston: Oxfam America, 1982), 45.
  104. Whetten, *Guatemala: The Land and the People*, 92–106; and Lehman B. Fletcher, Eric Graber, William C. Merrill, and Erik Thorbecke, *Guatemala's Economic Development: The Role of Agriculture* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1970).
  105. For comparative purposes, see Sven Linqvist, *Land and Power in South America* (Harmondsworth: Pelican Books, 1979). E. Torres-Rivas writes that the agricultural census undertaken in 1979 "was never published by the Guatemalan government. The results confirm what everyone knows to be true: the poverty/riches ratio gets worse every day, and the government has done nothing to alleviate it." See Torres-Rivas, "Presentation by the Prosecutor," in *Guatemala: Tyranny on Trial*, edited by S. Jonas, E. McCaughan, and E. Sutherland Martínez (San Francisco: Synthesis, 1984), 18.
  106. For example, four out of five children in rural Guatemala have nutritionally inadequate



- quate diets, while the lands of their forefathers produce coffee, cotton, and sugar cane for export abroad. For a statistical profile of inequality in Guatemala, see Davis and Hodson, *Witnesses to Political Violence*, 45–46.
107. See, among other works, Richard I. Immerman, *The CIA in Guatemala: The Foreign Policy of Intervention* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982); and Stephen Schlesinger and Stephen Kinzer, *Bitter Fruit: The Untold Story of the American Coup in Guatemala* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1982). The work of Piero Gleijeses will advance considerably our knowledge of the Arbenz period. See Gleijeses, *The United States and the Guatemalan Revolution, 1944–54* (Austin: University of Texas Press, forthcoming).
  108. Robert Wasserstrom, "Revolution in Guatemala: Peasants and Politics under the Arbenz Government," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 17, no. 4 (1975):478. Wasserstrom's argument and his interpretation of the Arbenz period in general do not sit well with either Jim Handy or Piero Gleijeses. Handy contends that "a serious cause of unrest was the continued corporate nature of Guatemalan communities, a strong attachment to the community and the institutions of the community." See Handy, *Class and Community in Rural Guatemala: Village Reaction to the Agrarian Reform Law, 1952–1954* (Florida International University: Occasional Papers Series, Dialogue no. 59, 1985), 50–51. He elaborates on this and related issues in "Revolution and Reaction: National Policy and Rural Politics in Guatemala, 1944–1954," Ph.D. diss., University of Toronto, 1985. Like Handy, Gleijeses considers the agrarian reform of Arbenz to have been more radical and successful than Wasserstrom acknowledges. Both Handy and Gleijeses work with an array of unpublished primary sources and criticize Wasserstrom for having relied exclusively for his thesis on six community studies written by anthropologists who conducted field research in Guatemala during the Arbenz period.
  109. Wasserstrom, "Revolution in Guatemala," 478.
  110. *Ibid.*
  111. *Ibid.* See also Smith, "Local History in Global Context"; and McCreery, "An Odious Feudalism."
  112. Norman B. Schwartz, "Ethnicity, Politics, and Cultural Survival," in *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1983):20.
  113. Davis and Hodson, *Witnesses to Political Violence*, 14.
  114. As cited in Wasserstrom, "Revolution in Guatemala," 474.
  115. Davis and Hodson, *Witnesses to Political Violence*, 14.
  116. *Ibid.* For a detailed analysis of changes in the Catholic Church during this time, see Richard N. Adams, *Crucifixion by Power: Essays on Guatemalan National Social Structure, 1944–1966* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1970), 278–317.
  117. Davis and Hodson, *Witnesses to Political Violence*, 14.
  118. *Ibid.*
  119. *Ibid.*
  120. *Ibid.*, 46. For a more detailed exploration, see Robert G. Williams, *Export Agriculture and the Crisis in Central America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986).
  121. Carol A. Smith, "Labor and International Capital in the Making of a Peripheral Social Formation: Economic Transformations in Guatemala, 1850–1980," in *Labor in the Capitalist World Economy*, edited by Charles Bergquist (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1984), 148–49. See also Watanabe, "Cambios económicos en Santiago Chimalteango," 20–41; and Watanabe, "We Who Are Here," especially 40, 43, and 152. Watanabe makes the valid point that the growing cycles of corn and coffee are complementary, not conflictive. He contends that "this seems to contribute to an Indian (Chimalteco at least) sense of migrant labour as an *extension* of, rather than an intrusion into, their local economic activities." Personal letter from John M. Watanabe to W. George Lovell, 30 Jan. 1985, emphasis in original.
  122. Jude J. Pansini, "Indian Seasonal Plantation Work in Guatemala," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1983):17. Although Pansini has independent evidence that documents a "drying up" of Indian plantation labor, the argument is most convincingly made by Carol Smith, especially for what she considers to be "core" communities, in

- "Local History in Global Context," 219; in "Economic Transformations in Guatemala," 148–49; and in "Does a Commodity Economy Enrich the Few While Ruining the Masses?," *Journal of Peasant Studies* 11, no. 3 (1984):60–95. Smith openly admits that her thesis "about labour scarcity since 1976 is not a widely accepted one. It is based on my own rural surveys of 1970 and 1976 (of 131 hamlets) which asked about labour migration over the past 25 years. Most people think Indian labour was *redundant* in the 1970's." Personal letter from Carol A. Smith to W. George Lovell, 28 Dec. 1984. While Smith's argument may be controversial, it fits my own impression of increasingly innovative self-reliance on the part of native communities lessening their dependence on plantation labor. During a tour of several cooperative projects in the Department of Chimaltenango prior to the escalation of violence, I was everywhere struck by the resourcefulness with which Indians were tackling their problems, even though well-founded apprehension charged their collective endeavors.
123. Shelton H. Davis, "State Violence and Agrarian Crisis in Guatemala," paper presented at the meeting of the Latin American Studies Association, Washington, D.C., 5 Mar. 1982.
  124. Smith, "Economic Transformations in Guatemala"; and Smith, "Local History in Global Context," 219, 221.
  125. Davis and Hodson, *Witnesses to Political Violence*, 48.
  126. *Ibid.*, 15, 47.
  127. Cultural Survival and Anthropology Resource Center, *Voices of the Survivors: The Massacre at Finca San Francisco, Guatemala* (Peterborough, N.H.: Transcript Printing, 1983), 36–37. The events at Finca San Francisco and other atrocities are analyzed in Ricardo Falla, "The Massacre at the Rural Estate of San Francisco, July 1982," in *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 7, no. 1 (1983):43–44; and Falla, "We Charge Genocide," in Jonas, McCaughan, and Sutherland Martínez, *Guatemala: Tyranny on Trial*, 112–19. Few have written firsthand about counterinsurgency with greater effect than Víctor Montejo, an Indian schoolmaster from Jacaltenango currently engaged in graduate study at SUNY-Albany. His *Testimony: Death of a Guatemalan Village* is a moving account of how counterinsurgency affected his life, and those of many others, in the small Cuchumatán community where he once taught school. See Montejo, *Testimony* (Willimantic, Conn.: Curbstone Press, 1987).
  128. Why the call for Indians to rise to rebellion in Guatemala failed catastrophically will consume the energies of the left for many years to come. For a reflective discussion of the matter, see Carol A. Smith, "Culture and Community: The Language of Class in Guatemala," in *The Year Left*, edited by M. Davis, M. Marable, F. Pfeil, and M. Sprinkler (London: Verso, 1987), 2:197–217 and 2:267–71.
  129. George Black, "Under the Gun," *NACLA Report on the Americas* 19 (Nov.–Dec. 1985):10–25.
  130. W. George Lovell, "From Conquest to Counter-Insurgency," *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (1985):46–49. The film *El Norte*, released by director Gregory Nava in 1983, is as comprehensive an account of this tragic era as may ever be produced.