

THIRD EDITION

# Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala

A Historical Geography of the  
Cuchumatán Highlands, 1500-1821



W. George Lovell

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COLONIAL GUATEMALA

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1500–1821

W. GEORGE LOVELL

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The cover illustration by Angelika Bauer shows the "Guerra de Guatemala y sus provincias" as depicted by Diego Muñoz Camargo in the *Historia de Tlaxcala*, a sixteenth-century manuscript housed in the Special Collections Department of Glasgow University Library. Warriors from Tlaxcala are seen assisting a mounted Spaniard, possibly meant to be Pedro de Alvarado, in the conquest of Guatemala.

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For Maureen, editor and muse,  
and in fond memory of Victor Perera (1934–2003)

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# Preface

This book, the third edition of a work first published in 1985, is the outcome of events and circumstances dating back to my days as a graduate student thirty years ago. It seems appropriate at the outset, therefore, to say something about how it all began, how it all evolved.

Early on the morning of 25 June 1974 I left the Mexican city of San Cristóbal de las Casas and travelled south, for the first time, towards Guatemala. Having been in Mexico for several weeks to conduct field research for my Master's thesis, I planned to spend only a few days resting up in Guatemala before starting the long overland trip back to Canada. I stayed almost a month, absorbed and captivated by what I experienced.

At the border town of La Mesilla, two casual passport checks allowed me to walk from one country into another. I was struck immediately by the splendour of the scene. Colossal and imposing, the mountains that loomed ahead were lush and green, a pleasant change after the gaunt look of much of central Mexico. Compared especially with the gutted, eroded terrain of the Mixteca Alta – I had spent a good deal of the summer in the highlands of Oaxaca – the earth here was much more inviting. Not at all sure what to expect, I felt myself drawn in.

I bought a soft drink from a roadside vendor and climbed onto a waiting bus, already chock-full of passengers. We took off just as a deafening peal of thunder roared across the heavens. I gaped out the window. The features of landscape assumed an elemental, shifting guise: trees glimpsed, then engulfed by mist; a grape-dark, menacing sky; a torrential downpour of rain; a wan burst of sun; all around, a kaleidoscopic play of shadow and light. Steep patchworks of fields and forests towered above the valley that followed the course of the Río Selegua, its raging waters threatening to flood the road at every hairpin turn. The bus would screech to a halt mile after mile, dropping people off, picking people up, all of them carrying some item or other – a steel *machete*, a basket laden with fruit, a bundle of firewood, an armful of flowers, a chicken or a rooster, even a small pig. They were for the most part Indians – men, women, and children wrapped up

not just in startlingly colourful clothes but in exchanges beyond my ability to comprehend, for their conversations were conducted in an idiom my Spanish could not access. I reached my destination mesmerized.

In Huehuetenango's central plaza, a three-dimensional relief map fifty paces in circumference informed me that the mountains I had passed through were the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, home to dozens of communities identified by the names of Catholic saints painted on tiny metal flags inserted across the surface of the map like candles on a birthday cake. The virtual topography someone had toiled hard to render was littered with broken glass, plastic bags, cigarette ends, and dog shit. But there it was in front of me, a doctoral dissertation topic cast in plaster and cement, framed by the curve of a low iron fence that toddlers ran around and sweethearts cuddled against. As I was about to turn in for the night – a bed at the Hotel Central went for a dollar, fleas included – a thought entrenched itself in my mind: why not write about the Cuchumatán highlands and the Maya peoples who inhabit them? That was the beginning of my relationship with Guatemala.

Three years later, after a period of intensive reading and a more scholarly formulation of ideas, my investigations began. The geography of the Cuchumatán highlands presented numerous challenges, but I opted for the task of reconstructing what happened to the land and the people under Spanish rule. Such an orientation called for me to consult unpublished archival sources, so I spent much of 1977 and 1978 gathering material in the Archivo General de Centroamérica, Guatemala City, and in the Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. After three lengthy sojourns in these archives, I then set off, by bus and on foot, on a trip through remote parts of the Cuchumatanes I had never visited before, bringing episodes I had read about in the documents back to life in my imagination. Having sacrificed the field for the archive for so long, I found it exhilarating to walk once again over the hills and through the corn.

In December 1979 I defended the study I had written during the previous fifteen months as a doctoral dissertation. Since then I have had the opportunity to continue to work in Guatemalan and Spanish archives and to visit the Cuchumatanes time and again. Although these later forays were undertaken with different research ends in mind, I always kept a close watch for Cuchumatán data I had overlooked or did not know about before. While the material I gathered as a graduate student constitutes the bedrock of the book, the study in its present form has benefitted from my subsequent inquiries and from the work of scholars in related fields. New findings and fresh insight signal innovation and change. Perhaps Engels was correct after all: nothing is eternal but eternal change.

His words certainly apply to developments in Mesoamerican research and in Latin American studies in general.

The historiography of Latin America concentrates spatially on Mexico and Peru, to the detriment of our knowledge about colonial experiences in other Hispanicized regions of the New World. Such a condition, though problematical, can hardly be considered surprising. It reflects the fact that the geographical focus of modern scholarship parallels closely the political and economic realities of colonial times: resource-rich "cores" such as Mexico and Peru were of considerably more importance to imperial Spain than resource-deficient "peripheries" such as Central America. The colonial destiny of the isthmus has been aptly characterized by William Taylor, who refers to Central America, situated "between the great mining centers and Indian populations of the Andes and Mexico," as "a rainbow of Spanish illusions and frenzied activity between the two pots of gold."<sup>1</sup>

In the Mesoamerican context, work is being done to redress the historiographical imbalance between core and periphery, with more and more scholars moving south and east from central Mexico to conduct research in Chiapas, Guatemala, Oaxaca, and Yucatán.<sup>2</sup> What clearly emerges from these investigations is that we can no longer assume that the colonial experience of a Mesoamerican periphery is a simplified variant, retarded in time and marginal in space, of conditions that prevailed in the central Mexican core. This book examines the vicissitudes of life in a region certainly of peripheral status in the Spanish scheme of empire, one that (as at least one scholar suggests) could more precisely be considered a periphery of a periphery.<sup>3</sup> But before dismissing a focus on such an area as being of minimal importance to an understanding of Spain in America, it should be remembered that poor rural backwaters are where most Hispanic Americans, prior to the juggernaut of twentieth-century urbanization, lived, worked, and died. For every Zacatecas or Potosí, for every Lima or Mexico City, there were (and are still) scores if not thousands of Huehuetenangos, modest provincial centres related in myriad functional ways to smaller, less prosperous, more inward-looking communities in the surrounding countryside.

Research upon which the book is based, first and foremost, was made possible by doctoral support from the Killam Program. Postdoctoral funding also from the Killam Program enabled me to rework my dissertation into a series of articles and essays. Fellowships from Plumsock Mesoamerican Studies and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada allowed me to consolidate my endeavours and, in 1985, publish *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala* with McGill-Queen's University Press. The first edition was followed, in 1992, by a

revised second edition. In this third edition I have left intact the main body of the text, chapters one through ten, but furnished the reader with a new preface and a new epilogue. The latter contains its own bibliography, which highlights pertinent titles published between 1992 and 2003. Chapter 11, "Quincentennial Reflections," is a reprise of the epilogue to the second edition. Little did I imagine on that June evening in Huehuetenango three decades ago that a book would result from my contemplation of that funky relief map. For their belief in that book, given a new lease of life by their encouragement, I thank Don Akenson, Philip Cercone, Joan McGilvray, and their associates at McGill-Queen's University Press.

In both Guatemala City and Seville, the staff of the archives was patient and helpful in guiding me through the customary growing pains of how to locate and request the necessary documents. The paleographic expertise of Carlos Estrada Lemus, Manuel Fuentes Mairena, Wendy Kramer, and Leonel Sarazúa solved many a problem. After my research in the archives, the work of many scholars provided a crucial intellectual framework for interpreting the Cuchumatán data, but it is important to single out the publications of the Berkeley School and the unrivalled contribution of Murdo MacLeod. During the dissertation stage of the study, as a graduate student at the University of Alberta, I profited not only from the flexible supervision of John F. Bergmann but also from the counsel and guidance of Olive Dickason, Ruth Gruhn, Oscar H. Horst, and David C. Johnson.

Looking back to acknowledge my debts, both personal and professional, affords me mixed sentiments, for some of the individuals who influenced my thinking or who shaped who I am have passed on. Anyone I fail to mention by name I trust will forgive the oversight and remember instead the quality of the time we shared.

Bjarne Tokerud, whom I met while enrolled in my first seminar in anthropology, talked about Guatemala in a way that made me really want to go there, which I did after I got my Mesoamerican bearings, in situ, in Mexico. Tomislav Milinusic knew first-hand about other parts of Latin America, and his instincts set me straight. After I had ventured alone on a trip to South America, one that Tomislav and I had planned to undertake together, I was better prepared to return to Guatemala and get on with the job I knew by then awaited me.

In Guatemala, bumping into William R. Swezey in Don Pancho's *tienda* in Antigua opened up a universe and created an everlasting bond. Swezey introduced me to Christopher H. Lutz, whose trail I had come across in the archives and whom I was most curious to meet. Chris and Swezey were busy dreaming up the remarkable research institute that became the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica

(CIRMA). The three of us struck up a partnership, which Chris and I invest in still, as board members of CIRMA, as editors (with Armando J. Alfonzo) of *Mesoamérica*, and as co-investigators and co-authors.

I enjoy a similar working relationship with Noble David Cook, one that began when Henry F. Dobyns brought us together at the Newberry Library in Chicago. David and his wife, Sasha, are my Seville soulmates, two aficionados of a city that is now a cherished home base. There, at the Escuela de Estudios Hispano-Americanos, the Universidad Pablo de Olavide, and the Universidad de Sevilla, I mix with colleagues and students who constitute a stimulating Spanish equivalent to their counterparts at Queen's University in Canada, where I have taught for twenty-five years. Having been hired at Queen's in 1979 on a one-year, non-renewable contract, things (or so I like to believe) worked out just fine.

Before I embarked on a tenure-track position at Queen's, I spent a term as visiting scholar in the Department of Geography at the University of California at Berkeley. The great Carl Sauer had been dead a decade, but his legacy lived on. Being at Berkeley was inspirational. I relish conversations I had with Woodrow Borah, Bernard Nietschmann, James J. Parsons, Dan Stanislawski, and John H. Rowe, and through them the friendships I forged with Wayne Bernhardson, Susan E. Davis, and María Laura Masolo. Fellow geographers whose interests lie in Latin America, and whose company I enjoy and from whom I learn much, include Elisabeth and Karl W. Butzer, William V. Davidson, William M. Denevan, Bill Doolittle, Peter Herlihy, Linda A. Newson, Marie Price, and David J. Robinson. Among my writer friends, Eduardo Galeano, Tom Pow, Alastair Reid, and Ronald Wright sustain a creative presence, an esteem they share on my part with Mary Ellen Davis, Jan De Vos, José Hernández Palomo, Juan Marchena Fernández, John M. Kirk, José Manuel Peña Girón, and Barbara Potthast. Seldom do I agree with the visceral opinions of Michael Shawcross, but his eagle-eyed inspections of previous editions of this book have allowed me to tidy up the text of it considerably. Mike's assessment of my work is what matters, not (mercifully) what he thinks of me. Florine Asselbergs and Michel Oudijk kindly furnished me with the image from the *Lienzo de Quauhquecholan* that appears in the epilogue. Maureen McCallum Garvie, in Barriefield and beyond, keeps me well and truly grounded. Never did I dream of meeting someone whose passion about life north of Huehuetenango could match my own, but the intrepid Krystyna Deuss proved me wrong. To all those whose lives north of Huehuetenango I write about, Maya Indians especially, I dedicate this re-telling of their struggle for survival, which is not yet over.

I close my record of thanks with a few words about my parents. Like many of her generation, my mother had to leave school early to earn a

wage that would help make family ends meet. She longed for me to get the education she herself was deprived of, and urged me to see the world as she never did. "Enjoy it for both of us, son." Her words are with me always. So, too, are the stories my father told me as a boy, of the years he sailed the Spanish Main – not as a latter-day *conquistador* but as a merchant seaman employed by Royal Dutch Shell, working aboard oil tankers that chugged in and out of Aruba, Cuba, Curaçao, and Venezuela after World War II.

My leaving Scotland to study in Canada, my parents soon realized, was only the beginning of the journey. Glasgow to Guatemala may seem an odd trajectory to some. Not, however, to my mother and my father. And certainly not to me.

W. George Lovell  
Barriefield, Ontario  
July 2004

And what you thought you came for  
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning  
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled  
If at all. Either you had no purpose  
Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured  
And is altered in fulfilment.

T.S. Eliot, *Little Gidding*

*Photographs 1–8, 10–14, and 20 were taken by the author while  
conducting fieldwork in the region between 1975 and 1978.*

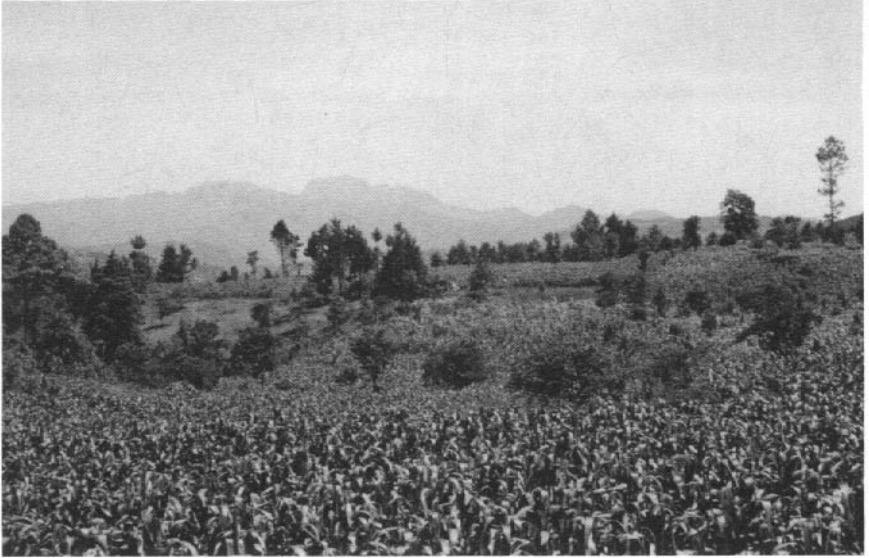




1 Southern edge of the Cuchumatán highlands, viewed from the outskirts of Huehuetenango



2 View of the Cuchumatán *páramo* near Chancol (elevation 3000 m)



3 Corn in the *tierra fría* near Nebaj (elevation 2000 m)



4 View of the *región andina*, looking towards the still-occupied remains of Hacienda Chancol (elevation 3000 m)



5 Indian boys from the Mam community of Todos Santos Cuchumatán



6 Indian boys from the Chuj community of San Mateo Ixtatán



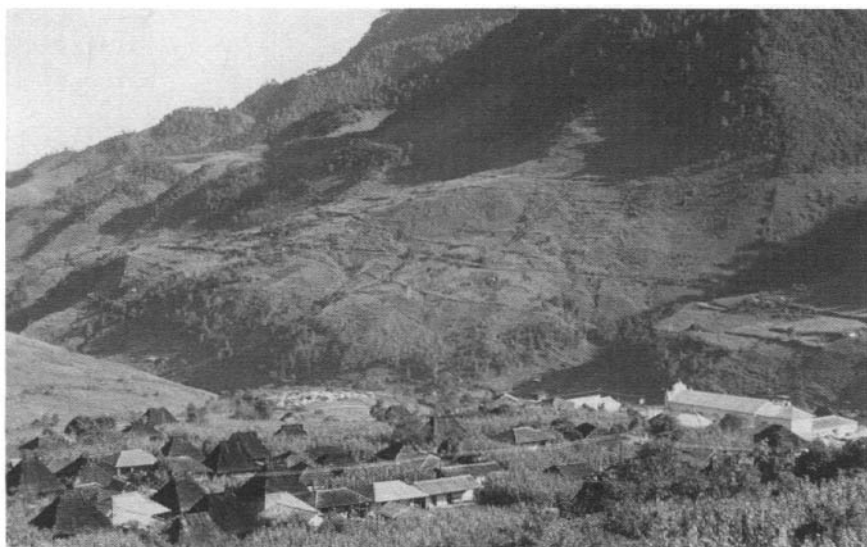
7 Mother and children, Todos Santos Cuchumatán



8 Girl fetching water, Todos Santos Cuchumatán



9 The *cabecera* of Santiago Chimaltenango, a “town-nucleus” *municipio*  
(courtesy of John M. Watanabe)



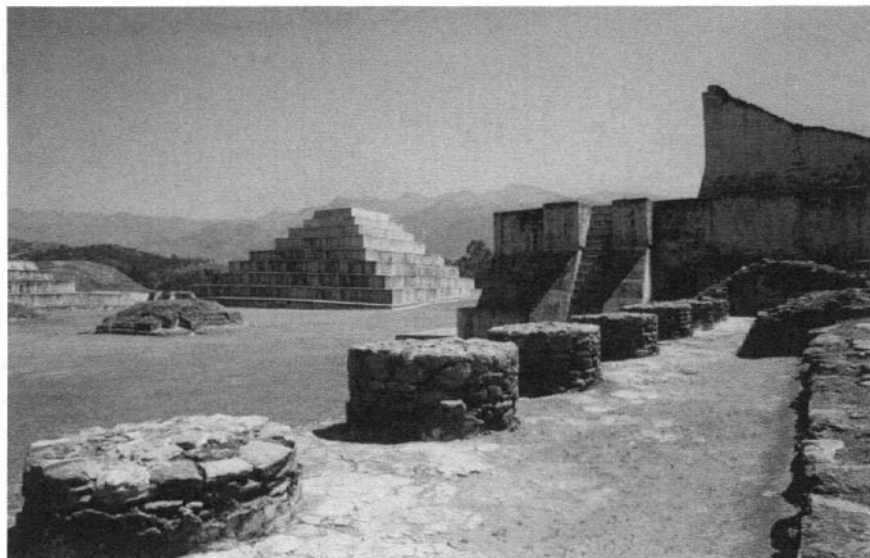
10 The *cabecera* of Todos Santos Cuchumatán, a “vacant-town” *municipio*



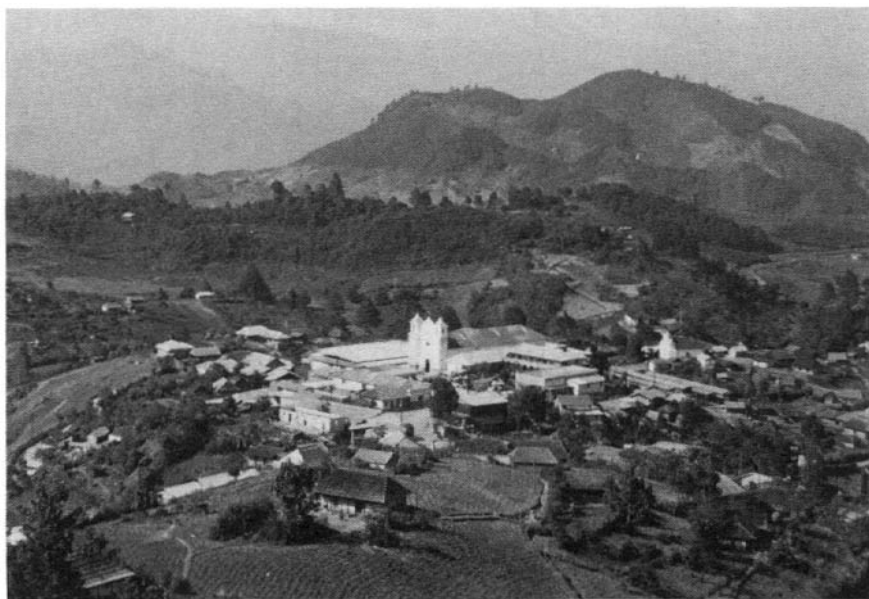
11 Salt works on the Río Negro floodplain near Sacapulas



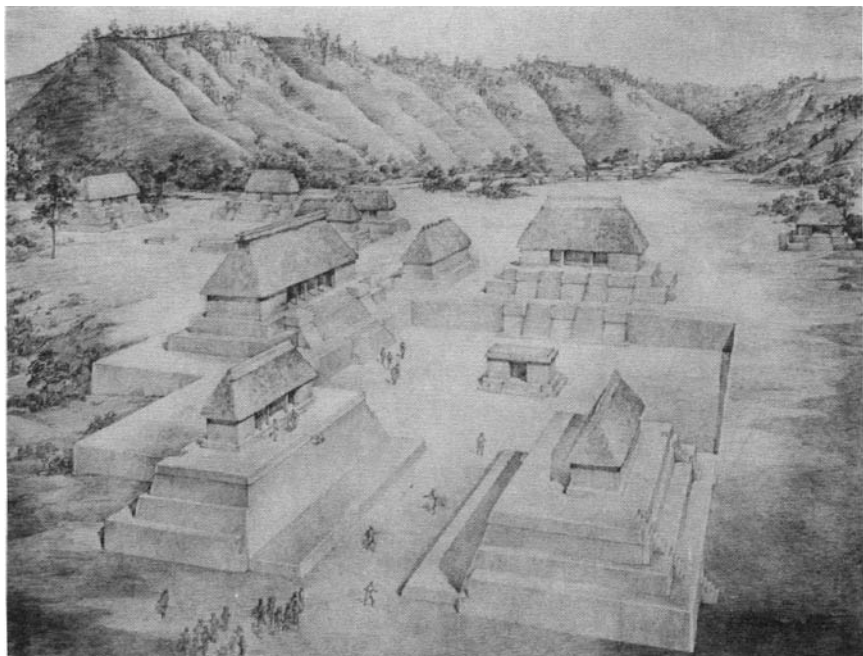
12 One of three salt wells at San Mateo Ixtatán (the crosses in front are the site of Indian *costumbre* activities)



13 The pre-conquest Mam capital of Zaculeu, looking north



14 The Kanjobal community of Santa Eulalia, situated in the northern reaches of the Cuchumatán highlands

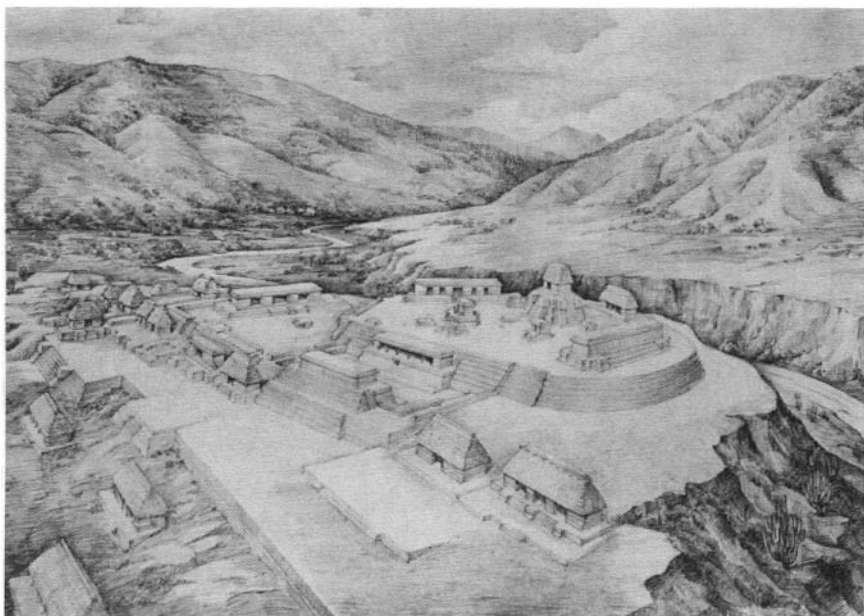


15 Restoration drawing, by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, of Chalchitán, looking south at the ball court group (courtesy of the artist and the Carnegie Institution of Washington)

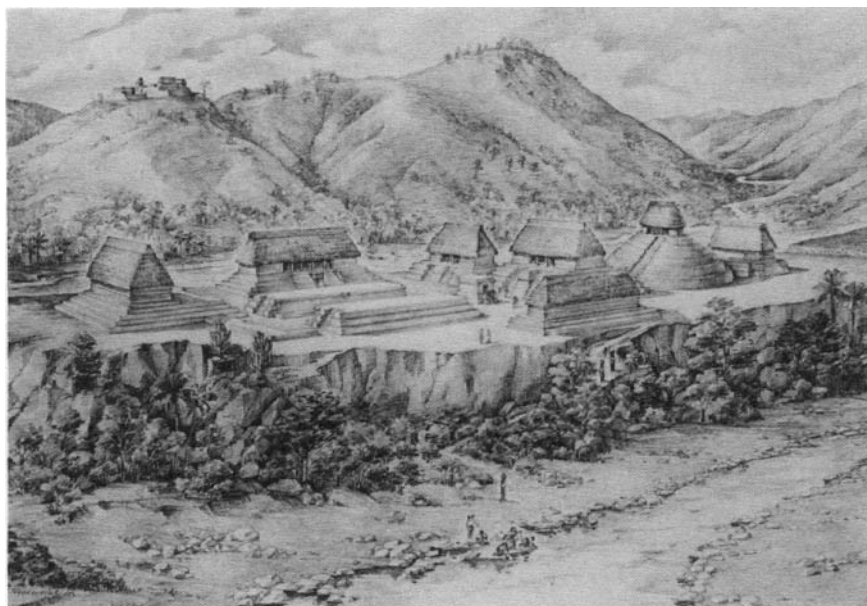




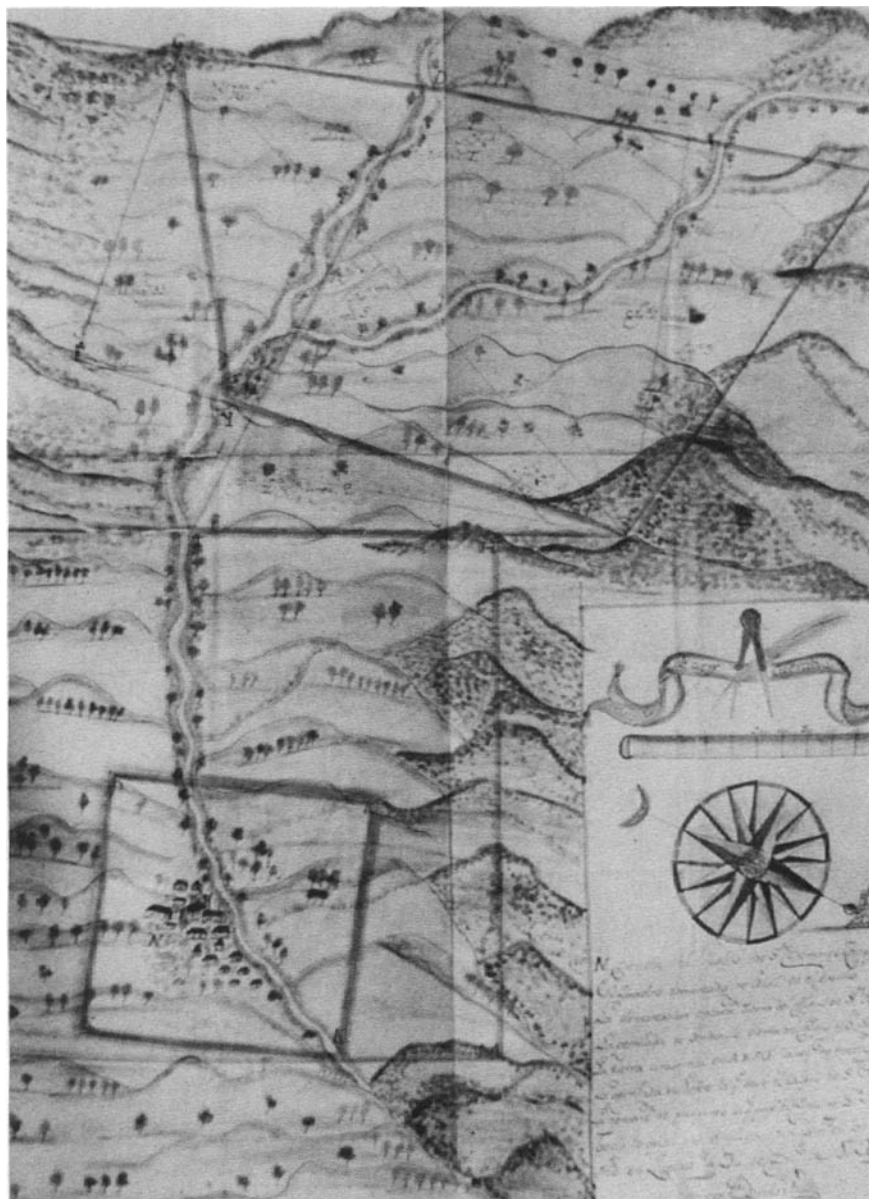
16 Unexcavated temples in the west group at Chaculá. The photograph, probably taken about 1895–7, may be found with others of the same period in E. Seler, *Die alten Ansiedelungen von Chaculá*.



17 Restoration drawing, by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, of Chutixtiox, looking north to the front ranges of the Cuchumatanes (courtesy of the artist and the Carnegie Institution of Washington)



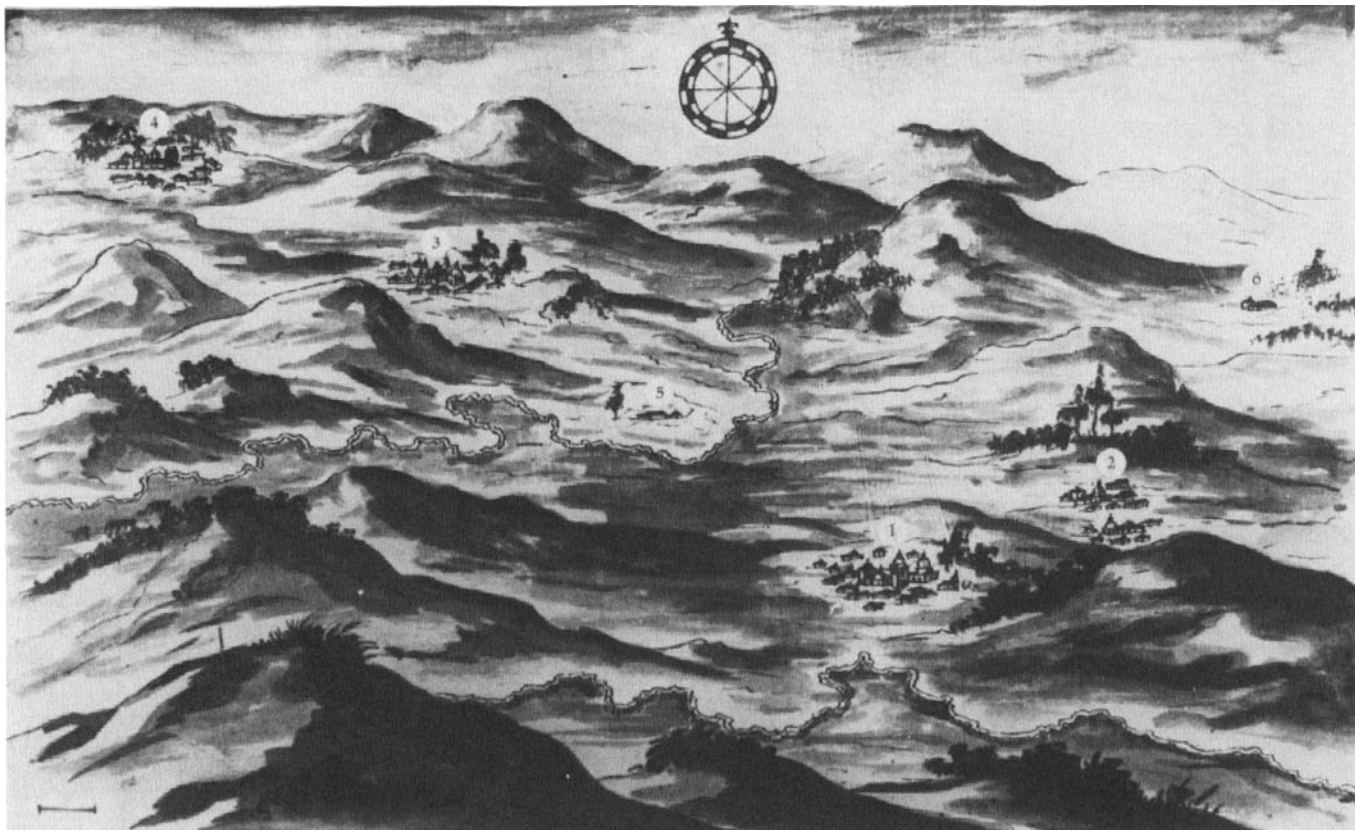
18 Restoration drawing, by Tatiana Proskouriakoff, of Xolchun (Quiché), looking south to the hilltop fortress of Pacot (courtesy of the artist and the Carnegie Institution of Washington)



19 The *congregación* and environs of Sacapulas (for source and explanation, see chapter 6, note 32). Reproduced by kind permission of the Archivo General de Centroamérica

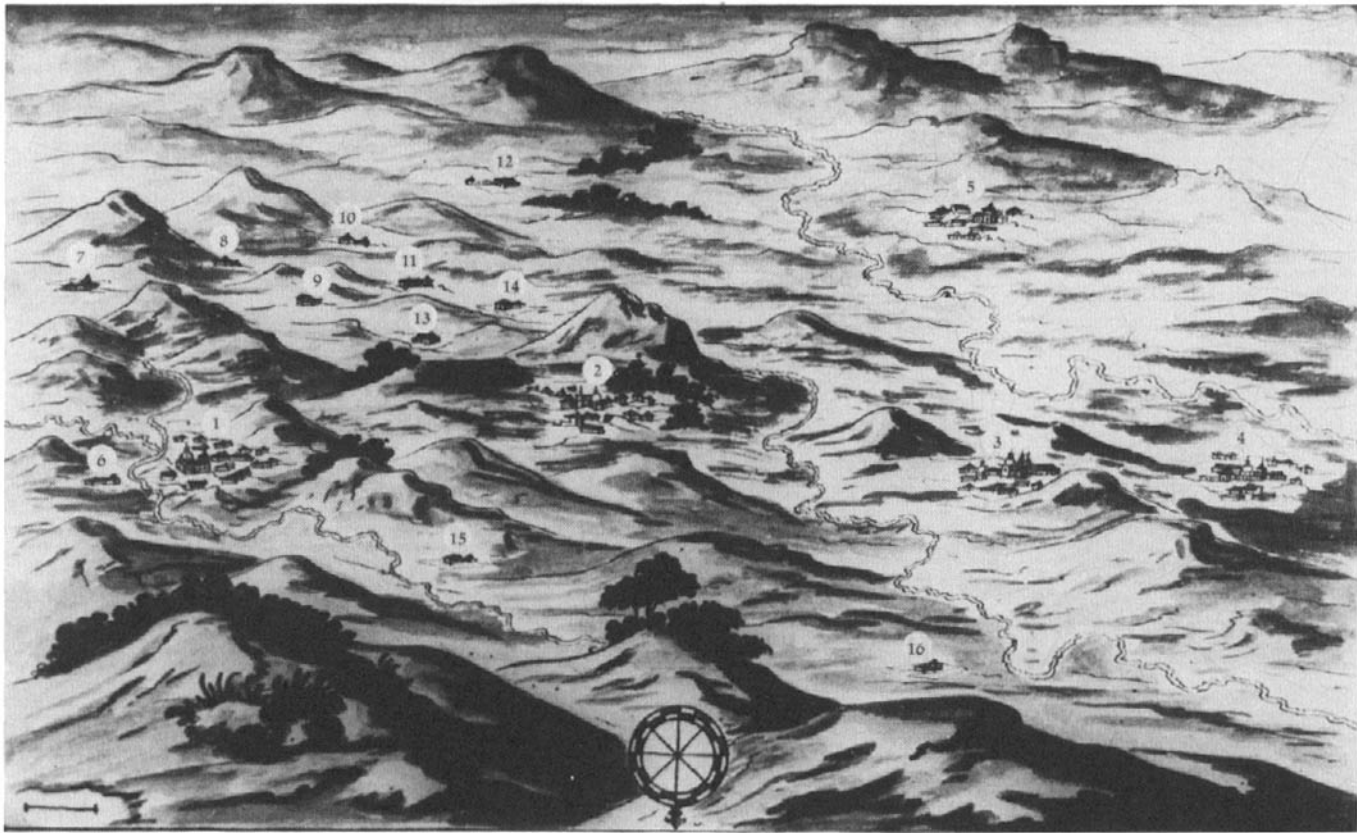


20 Detail from a mural in the parish church at Chiantla, in which a robust-looking Spaniard (possibly meant to be the *encomendero* Juan de Espinar) oversees the labour of Indian miners



21 The parish of Chiantla, showing *haciendas* Chancol and El Rosario and nearby *congregaciones* (for source and explanation, see chapter 8, note 27). Reproduced by kind permission of the Archivo General de Indias





23 Indian *congregaciones* and Spanish *haciendas* of Malacatán parish (for source and explanation, see chapter 8, note 66).  
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CONQUEST AND SURVIVAL IN  
COLONIAL GUATEMALA

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# 1 Geography and the Past

Geography, the study of place and space, of land-life relationships, is a diverse field of learning. Because of the discipline's expansive scope, geographers are seldom in agreement about what constitutes the principal focus of geographical inquiry. The diversity of geography is both the discipline's weakness and its greatest strength, for diversity breeds division and dissent while simultaneously promoting at least the possibility of exposure to a broader, more eclectic range of knowledge.

Within geography there has been frequent debate as to whether or not there is a place in the discipline for historical, genetic, or temporal modes of explanation.<sup>1</sup> Neglect or rejection of the time dimension, and comment concerning its alleged insignificance, have been most characteristic of geographers whose studies emphasize "spatial relationships" and who argue that geography should focus predominantly on contemporary distributions and interrelationships. This antigenetic viewpoint is perhaps best summarized by the words of Richard Hartshorne. In his methodological appraisal, *The Nature of Geography*, Hartshorne in 1939 noted that "some geographers insist that in order to maintain the essential point of view of geography – the considerations of phenomena in their spatial relations – any consideration of time relations must be secondary and merely supplementary."<sup>2</sup> Hartshorne was himself of the opinion "that while the interpretation of individual features in the geography of a region will often require the student to reach back into the geography of past periods, it is not necessary that the geography of a region be studied in terms of historical development."<sup>3</sup>

Such a view of geography has not gone unchallenged. The year following the publication of Hartshorne's *The Nature of Geography*, Carl Sauer, in a presidential address delivered to the Association of American Geographers, asserted that "geography, in any of its branches, must be a genetic science; that is, must account for origins and processes."<sup>4</sup> Criticizing Hartshorne for misinterpreting the views of the German geographer Alfred Hettner, Sauer continued:

## 4 Conquest and Survival

The geographer cannot study houses and towns, fields and factories, as to their where and why without asking himself about their origins. He cannot treat the localization of activities without knowing the functioning of the culture, the process of living together of the group; and he cannot do this except by historical reconstruction. If the object is to define and understand human associations as areal growths, we must find out how they ... came to be what they are ... The quality of understanding sought is that of analysis of origins and processes. The all-inclusive objective is spatial differentiation of culture. Dealing with man and being genetic in its analysis, the subject is of necessity concerned with sequences in time.<sup>5</sup>

Since the 1940 presidential address, which was regarded by Sauer himself as "a confession of the faith that has stood behind [my] work,"<sup>6</sup> support within geography in favour of the necessity and significance of the historical perspective has grown considerably. From a general point of view, Darby in 1953 claimed that "all geography is historical geography, either actual or potential."<sup>7</sup> Other papers by Clark in 1954, Smith in 1965, and Harvey in 1967 all argued convincingly for the need to have historical forms of explanation incorporated as a fundamental strategy in geographical inquiry.<sup>8</sup> In 1969, Baker, Butlin, Phillips, and Prince stressed the "utility of historical geography" by emphatically stating that "the geographical mosaic can only be fully understood with reference to the past,"<sup>9</sup> a way of thinking about geography long upheld and advocated by Sauer.

In retrospect, it is perhaps most fruitful to view the debate concerning the relevance of the historical perspective in geography by considering the position adopted by David Harvey in his *Explanation in Geography*. After outlining the controversy from both conflicting points of view, Harvey concludes that "temporal modes of explanation (usually called genetic or historical explanations in geography) are important in geography and provide a useful but not exclusive mode of approach, given objectives appropriate for such modes."<sup>10</sup> Thus, depending on the nature of the problem, an historical perspective may or may not be a suitable approach to problem resolution. "No one thing can explain everything: though everything can illuminate something," writes novelist Lawrence Durrell.<sup>11</sup> The philosopher Patrick Gardiner observes that "the world is one: the ways we use to talk about it, various."<sup>12</sup> The backward look of historical geography, therefore, is no more than one of several possible ways of looking at the world in an attempt to interpret and to understand land-life relationships as they have unfolded and continue to unfold around us.

## HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY IN DISCIPLINARY CONTEXT

Historical geography, which may be regarded either as the reconstruction of past geographies or the study of processes of geographical change through time, has occupied a rather peripheral position within the discipline of geography as a whole. Sauer in 1925 referred to historical geography as a "difficult and little-touched field."<sup>13</sup> Fifteen years later, as president of the American Association of Geographers, he was still protesting against "the neglect of historical geography."<sup>14</sup> Although these early statements have to be appreciated within certain relevant contexts – the first as part of a viewpoint that did much to diminish the constraining influence of environmental determinism on American geography, the second as a response to, and refutation of, the deliberations of Hartshorne – Sauer's observations are today neither inappropriate nor entirely out of date.

Despite the contribution and legacy of Sauer himself, and the sustained output of numerous other skilled and industrious practitioners, historical geography over the years has remained on the periphery of the discipline.<sup>15</sup> In the eyes of one outside observer, anthropologist Robert Carmack, this situation may simply reflect increasing specialization within geography and the predominant concern of most branches of the discipline with "current national socioeconomic problems."<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, according to the thesis of the Canadian geographer Cole Harris, it may stem from preoccupation with the "ecological crisis" and emphasis within geographical teaching on technique, methodology, and the cultivation of theory over ideas.<sup>17</sup> Compared with developments in most other branches of the discipline, historical geography was less affected by the positivist thinking and drive towards quantification characteristic of the 1960s and early 1970s, its separation from mainstream currents as a result being accentuated and reinforced. The field, in this way, was fortunately spared many of the sterile excesses experienced in other geographical quarters more exposed to, and influenced by, the "quantitative revolution."

This is not to suggest that there is no place in historical geography for quantification, or to imply that historical geographers are not sufficiently conversant with mathematical thinking and statistical analysis. Evidence of such competence and inclination, together with a move towards behavioural, perceptual, and theoretical considerations, is readily available.<sup>18</sup> However, even though historical geography now exhibits a marked diversity in both its content and methodology, the field has remained to a considerable degree within a humanistic framework of narrative, empirical explanation in the face of increasing presentism and theorization, over the past three decades, within most other branches of the discipline. Good historical geography may elude or transcend

methodological prescription, but empathic reconstruction and contextual interpretation, undertaken more to depict reality than to advance theory, figure among the field's most distinctive and enduring habits of mind.<sup>19</sup> Such an approach to the study of geography, as idiosyncratic as it is indefinable, has demonstrated a catholicism and longevity few others can equal.

Central to the study of historical geography is the concept of the cultural landscape. Sauer held that "historical geography may be considered as the series of changes which cultural landscapes have undergone" and saw the study of historical geography as primarily involving "the reconstruction of past cultural landscapes."<sup>20</sup> According to Sauer, cultural landscapes are shaped from natural landscapes by culture groups in a continuous, mutable process: "Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development. With the introduction of a different – that is, an alien – culture, a rejuvenation of the cultural landscape sets in, or a new landscape is superimposed on remnants of an older one."<sup>21</sup>

The cultural landscape, in which all human activity is given both formal and informal expression, is fundamentally dynamic in nature and must therefore be viewed as both a temporal and spatial concept. Sauer claims: "We cannot form the idea of landscape except in terms of its time relations as well as of its space relations."<sup>22</sup> Aspects of time – evolution, change, continuity, sequence, or succession – are important considerations in the contemplation of the cultural landscape and are the substance of historical geography.

#### HISTORICAL GEOGRAPHY IN A LATIN AMERICAN REGIONAL CONTEXT

Latin America has recently been the focus of increasing attention on the part of historical geographers.<sup>23</sup> Research on the historical geography of Latin America, in conjunction with work in the area undertaken by anthropologists, historians, and other investigators, indicates a healthy multidisciplinary initiative, especially in the field of Mesoamerican studies.<sup>24</sup> In spite of these endeavours, however, a number of research tasks remain. In particular, there are lacunae in our knowledge and understanding of events and processes in several regions during certain periods of time. In few places is the deficiency more pronounced than with respect to parts of highland Guatemala from the time of initial

Indian-Spanish contact in the early sixteenth century until the end of Spanish colonial rule in Central America in 1821.

More than fifty years ago, a group of archaeologists suggested that what was conspicuously lacking in studies of highland Guatemala was historical reconstructions of contact and colonial-period culture.<sup>25</sup> More recently, this same view has been articulated by Henry Nicholson, who maintains that the research frontier in Mesoamerican studies may be significantly advanced by undertaking what he calls "reconstructive syntheses" of late pre-Hispanic and colonial life.<sup>26</sup> The need for such a focus is perhaps most strongly expressed by Robert Carmack, who is of the firm conviction that "highland Guatemala is a region particularly rich in documentary source materials, and abjectly poor in bibliographic organization and reconstructive syntheses."<sup>27</sup>

One part of highland Guatemala in need of such reconstructive synthesis is the remote north-western area known as the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, or Cuchumatán highlands: hitherto, the contact and colonial experience of this region has been largely unknown or the object of speculation. The purpose of the study that follows is to reconstruct aspects of the historical geography of the Cuchumatanes from late pre-Hispanic times until the end of Spanish colonial rule in Central America. The study focuses specifically on the changing nature of land-life relationships and on the evolution of the Cuchumatán cultural landscape. The ultimate goal of the study is to portray, as comprehensively as available sources permit, the major land-related features of the historical geography of the region between the years 1500 and 1821. Although discussion of the Cuchumatán evidence inevitably dominates the narrative, an attempt is made, in keeping with the tenets of historical geography outlined earlier, to interpret and situate regional findings in a broader Mesoamerican context.



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## PART ONE

### THE REGIONAL SETTING

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## 2 Physical and Human Geography

The Cuchumatán highlands of Guatemala (see plate 1) are the most massive and spectacular non-volcanic region of all Central America. Lying to the north of the Río Cuilco, and to the north and west of the Río Negro or Chixoy, the Cuchumatanes form a fairly well-defined physical unit bordered on the north by the sparsely settled tropical lowlands of the Usumacinta basin and to the west by the hilly Comitán country of the Mexican state of Chiapas. The Cuchumatanes, with elevations ranging from five hundred to more than thirty-six hundred metres, are contained within the Guatemalan departments of Huehuetenango and El Quiché, and comprise some 15 per cent (approximately 16,350 square kilometres) of the national territory of the Central American republic (see figure 1).

During the first two centuries of Spanish rule in Guatemala, the Cuchumatán country formed part of the administrative division known as the *corregimiento* or *alcaldía mayor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango (see figure 2).<sup>1</sup> This unit included all of the present-day Department of Totonicapán, most of Huehuetenango, the northern half of El Quiché, the easternmost portion of Quezaltenango, and the Motozintla area of the Mexican state of Chiapas. Towards the end of the colonial period, the *corregimiento* or *alcaldía mayor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango was made a *provincia* composed of two jurisdictions: the *partido* of Totonicapán and the *partido* of Huehuetenango. The jurisdiction referred to as the *partido* of Huehuetenango corresponds in approximate territorial extent to the region here designated the Cuchumatán highlands (see figure 3).

The name "Cuchumatán," or "Cuchumatlán," means "that which was brought together by great force," and is derived from the compounding of the Mam Indian words *cuchuj* (to join or unite) and *matán* (superior force). Another possible derivation may be from the Nahuatl or Mexican word *kochmatlán*, meaning "place of the parrot hunters."<sup>2</sup> Regardless of origin, the term "Cuchumatán" appears to be an ancient one, and although more specifically associated with the Mam communities of Todos Santos and San Martín in the heart of the mountains, the name broadly refers to the

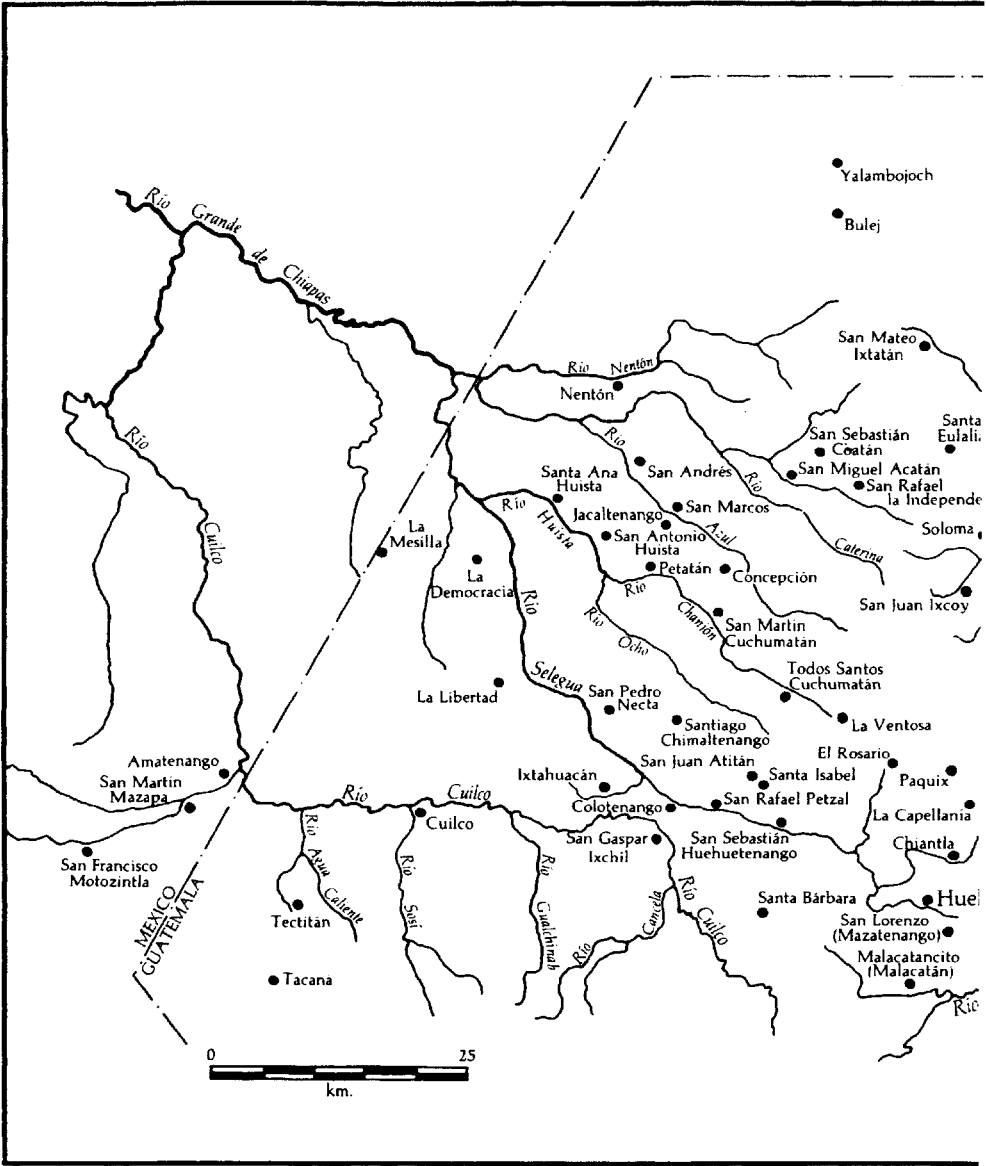


Figure 1 The Cuchumatán highlands of Guatemala: regional setting and principal settlements



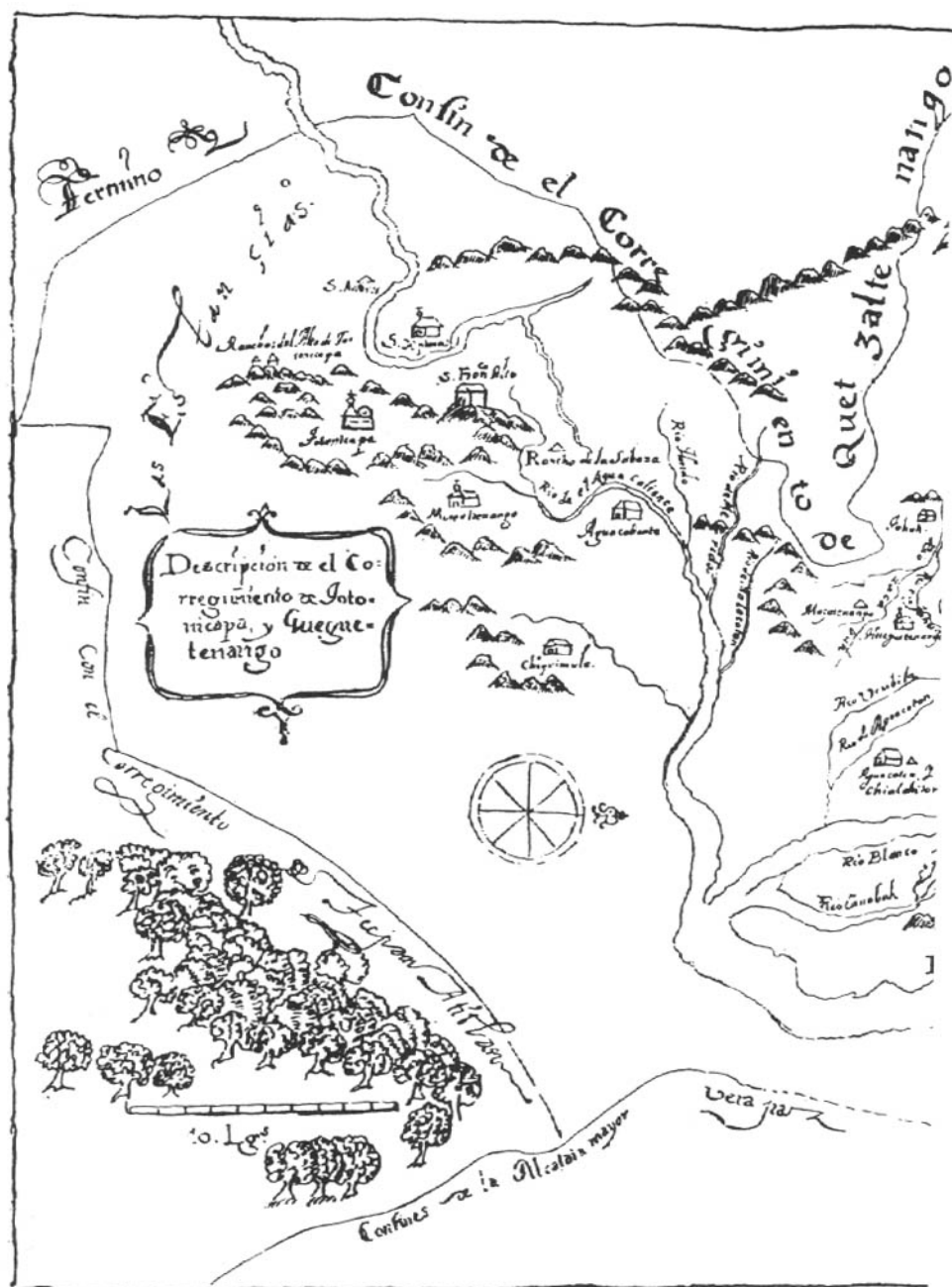
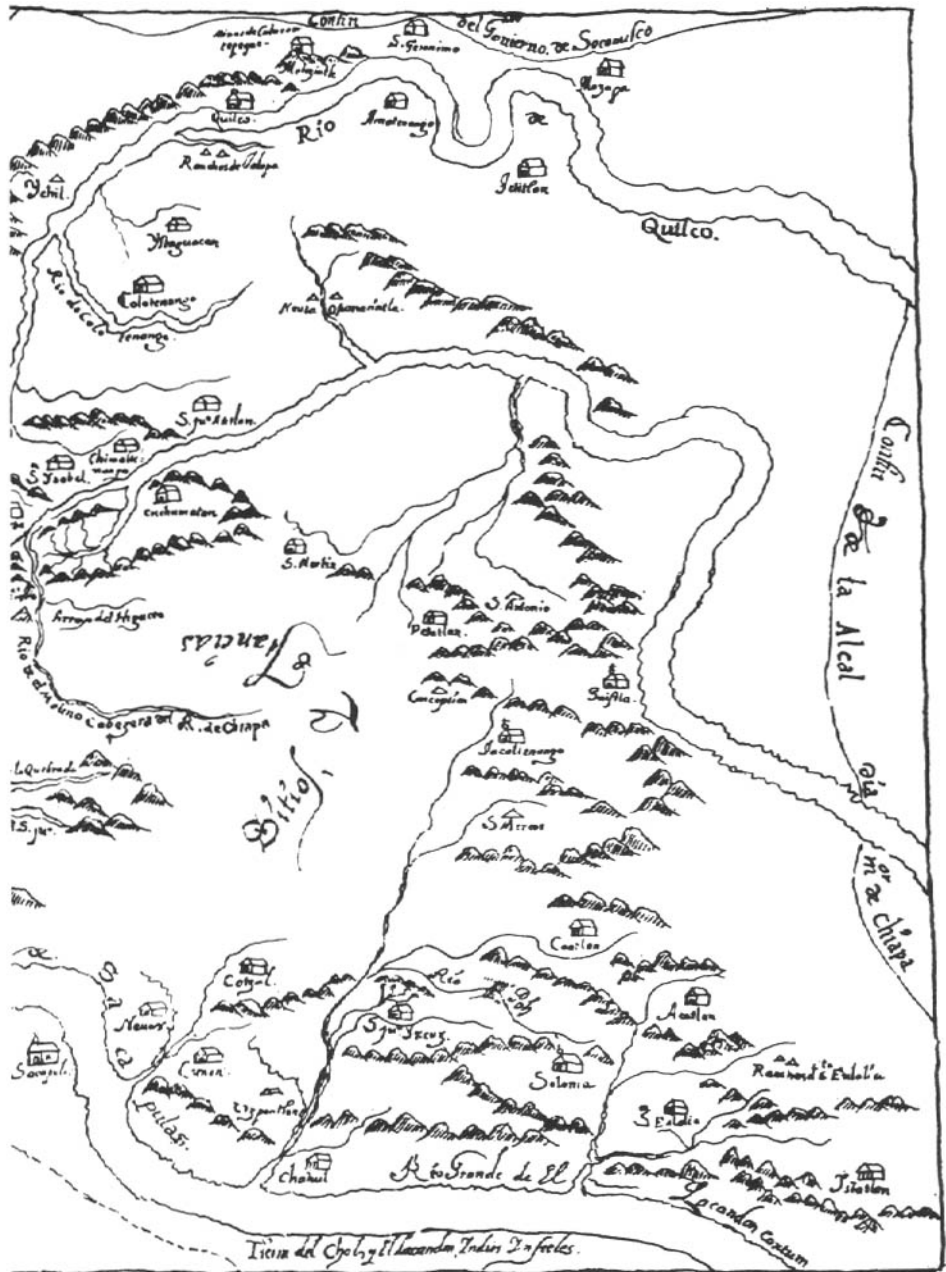


Figure 2 The *corregimiento* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango (for source and explanation, see chapter 2, note 1)





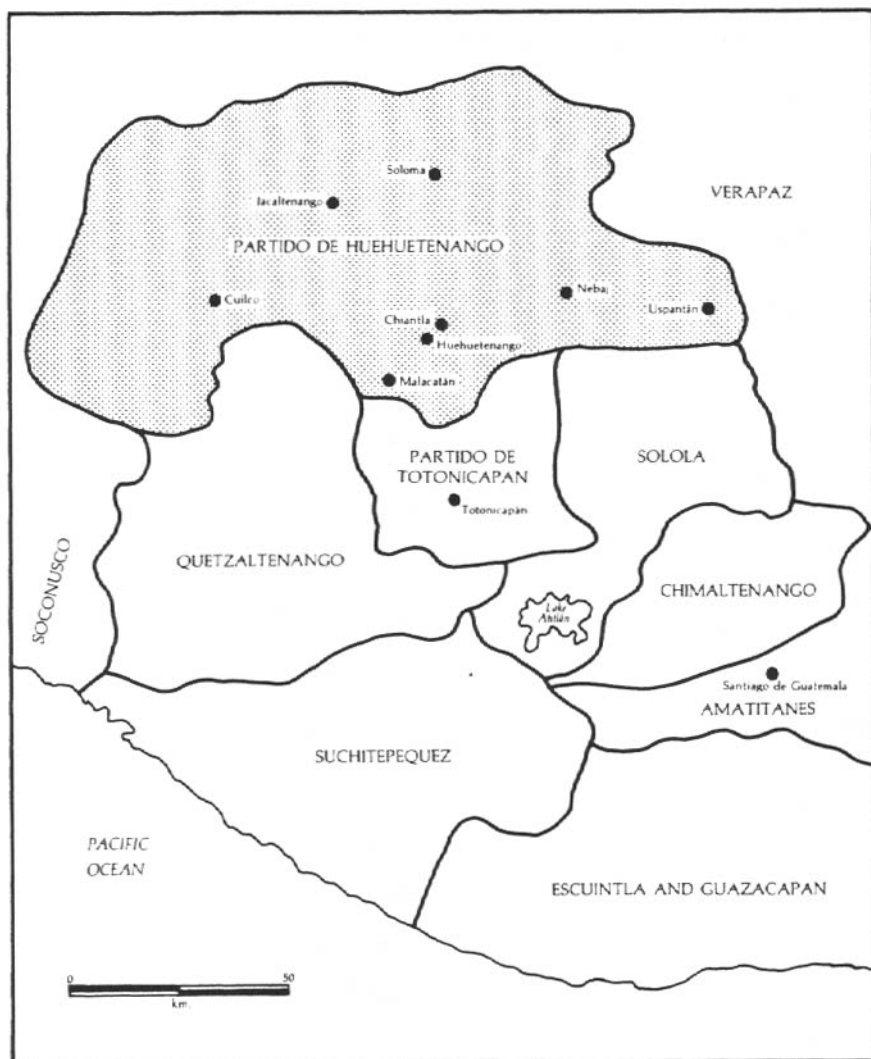


Figure 3 The *partido* of Huehuetenango, showing the jurisdiction's eight parish seats and the relation of the Cuchumatán region to other administrative units in colonial Guatemala

entire upland area of north-western Guatemala. The beauty of this remote and rugged country is unforgettable, and has moved to superlatives a number of writers, including Thomas Gage, John Lloyd Stephens, and Oliver La Farge.<sup>3</sup> Until quite recently an inaccessible and isolated part of highland Guatemala, the Cuchumatanes have a quality of landscape that is singular, mournful, and difficult to convey in words, although the lines of Guatemalan poet Juan Diéguez, writing in the mid-nineteenth century, evoke something of the ethereal splendour of the region:

¡ Oh cielo de mi Patria!  
 ¡ Oh caros horizontes!  
 ¡ Oh azules altos montes,  
 Oídme desde allí!  
 La alma mía os saluda,  
 Cumbres de la alta Sierra,  
 Murallas de esta tierra  
 Donde la luz yo ví!<sup>4</sup>

#### THE PHYSICAL SETTING

Guatemala may be divided into four distinct physiographic-tectonic provinces (see figure 4), which are summarized below.

1. The Petén Lowland: A low, densely forested plain, generally flat but with occasional undulating topography, the Petén Lowland has well developed karst features formed on gently folded carbonates of Cretaceous or Tertiary age.

2. The Central American "Antillean" Mountain System: A rugged, folded, and faulted upland region, this mountain system is the continuation in Guatemala of the plateau-like Sierra de San Cristóbal of Mexico, which cuts roughly west to east across northern Guatemala before descending into the Caribbean Sea to form the Cayman Ridge. The "Antillean" range is divided into two physical subunits by the down-cutting of the Río Chixoy. The Cuchumatanes lie to the west of the river while a complex mountain system, which includes the Verapaz highlands, lies to the east.

3. The Pacific Volcanic Belt: A chain of volcanic peaks of Quaternary origin that rises out of a dissected plateau of volcanic ash, the Pacific Volcanic Belt crosses south-western and south-eastern Guatemala before passing into Honduras, El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

4. The Pacific Coastal Plain: A region of detritus shed from volcanic activity, this tilted plain stretches from the lower slopes of the volcanic highlands to the Pacific coast and in places reaches a width of some eighty kilometres.

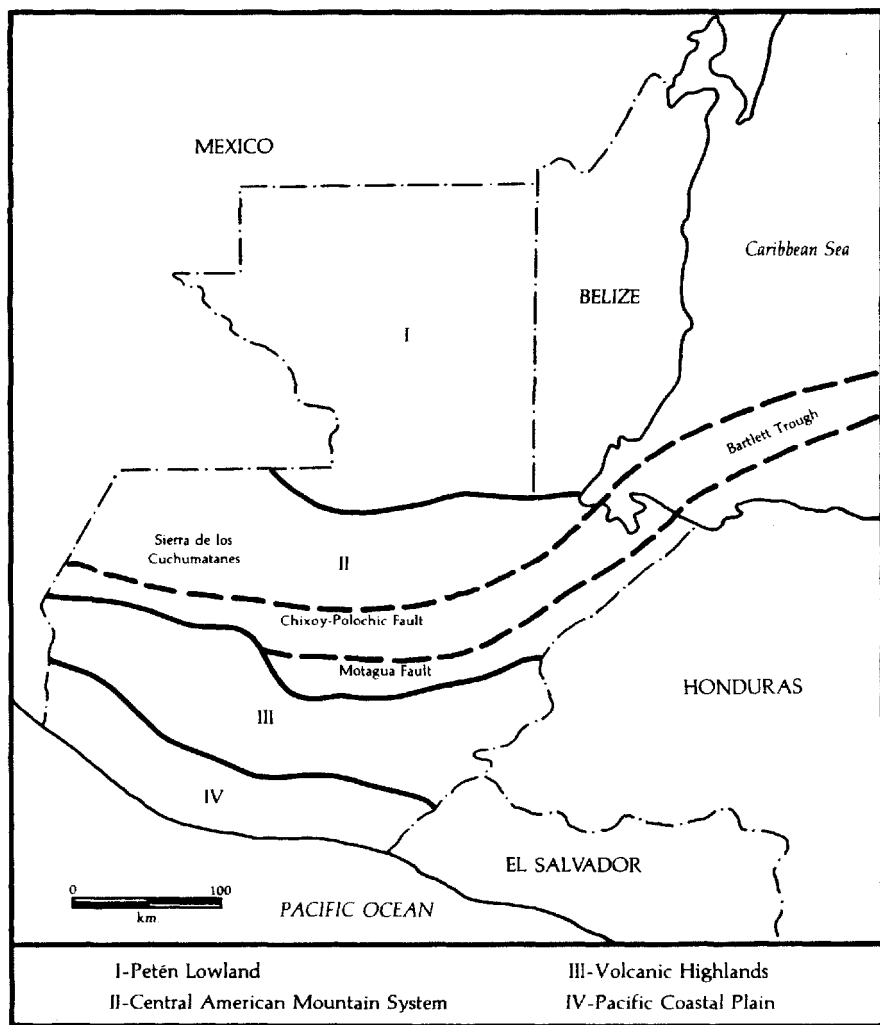


Figure 4 The physiographic-tectonic provinces of Guatemala (adapted from T.H. Anderson, "Geology of the San Sebastián Huehuetenango Quadrangle")

The predominant tectonic grain of Guatemala trends approximately west to east across the country and is characterized by a series of parallel ridges and valleys belonging to the Central American Mountain System. Two great fault zones, occupied by deep and impressive valleys, traverse Guatemala as arcs gently convex to the south. Known as the Chixoy-Polochic and Motagua faults, these zones (see figure 4) are landward extensions of the Bartlett Fault System of the Caribbean Sea.<sup>5</sup> The precise age of the Bartlett Fault system is an issue of some controversy among geologists, but it may date from Miocene or Pliocene times and has been subject to much vertical and lateral displacement since then. The Chixoy-Polochic fault, the northern axis of the Bartlett System in Guatemala, separates largely crystalline rocks to the south from sedimentary rocks to the north. Geologically, the Chixoy-Polochic fault may be considered the southern boundary of the Cuchumatanes.<sup>6</sup>

The oldest formations in the region date back to before the Permian. Submergence from Pennsylvanian to Early Cretaceous times resulted in a vast continental accumulation; today, deposits of shale and limestone, some with magnificent bands of fossils, are found throughout the Cuchumatanes. Salt-water springs are also present. The Cretaceous period was marked by the deposition of thick sequences of carbonates along a shallow shelf, resulting in the formation of the Ixcay limestone. The great thickness of this accumulation suggests that geosynclinal subsidence occurred during most of the Cretaceous, which was also characterized by vigorous local faulting. The Early Tertiary was the time of the major Laramide orogeny. This orogeny formed the structural features of the Cuchumatanes most recognizable today. The Chixoy-Polochic fault zone was particularly active and the important mineralization of lead, zinc, and silver in the Chiantla area probably occurred during this time. Late Tertiary uplift along the Chixoy-Polochic fault resulted in rejuvenation of the elevated landscape and the formation of the Cuchumatán highlands as they exist today. The Quaternary volcanism of the highland region to the south of the Cuchumatanes led to the surface deposition of thick pyroclastic layers of pumice and welded tuff, especially around Aguacatán and Chiantla. The Cuchumatán country, in short, exhibits a great geological diversity. To this day, the region continues to be affected by major geological events, including volcanic eruption and movement along the still-active Chixoy-Polochic fault.<sup>7</sup>

Viewed from the south (plate 1) the Cuchumatanes present a formidable wall of parallel folds trending in a north-west direction, uplifted along the Chixoy-Polochic fault and gradually decreasing in elevation northward. North of Chiantla the high front ranges rise in places well over one thousand metres along a steep scarp slope to an extensive carbonate

plateau characterized by undulating karst topography. This lofty *páramo* or altiplano surface (plate 2), known during the colonial period as the Altos de Chiantla, is generally around three thousand metres in elevation, but in places reaches to almost thirty-seven hundred metres.

The entire Cuchumatán *páramo* is riddled with sink holes and other karst features. The drainage system of the plateau is predominantly subterranean. East-flowing streams discharge into tributaries of the Río Chixoy, subsequently draining into the Río Usumacinta and the Gulf of Mexico. West-flowing streams drain into the Río Selegua, which runs along a deep canyon near the southern edge of the Cuchumatanes before joining with the Río Cuilco in Mexico to form the Río Grande de Chiapas.<sup>8</sup>

Several valleys in the Cuchumatanes exhibit distinctive evidence of glaciation, chiefly in the form of ice-scoured rocks and morainic debris. The most conspicuous glacial features are a low terminal moraine and an associated area of outwash in a northwest-trending valley twelve kilometres in length between the communities of San Sebastián Huehuetenango and Todos Santos. Behind the moraine an intermittent pond occupies a depression once filled with ice. Scattered throughout the till-covered valley are remnants of other recessional moraines. Loops of moraine, in this and other neighbouring valleys, mark the easternmost advance of an ice-cap of around one hundred square kilometres in dimension that covered the highest parts of the Cuchumatanes, probably towards the end of the Wisconsin or Würm glaciation some ten to twenty-five thousand years ago. During the earlier Pleistocene glaciations the Cuchumatán region was not sufficiently uplifted to sustain the climatic conditions necessary for the development and maintenance of an icefield.<sup>9</sup>

Away from the bleak, cold, Cuchumatán *páramo*, elevation decreases north and west to the humid, rainforest region of the Usumacinta basin. As holds true for all tropical highland areas, fluctuations in altitude result in an extreme variation of climate, especially in temperature regimes. This variation, in turn, leads to the existence of myriad types of vegetation and a marked diversity in agricultural potential. Stadelman and Recinos divide the Cuchumatán country into four altitudinal zones, each with its own distinctive environmental features.<sup>10</sup>

1. *Tierra caliente* or "warm land": This zone lies below eight hundred metres in elevation and has mean annual temperatures of around 25°C. It is characterized by lush tropical growth and produces mahogany woods, bananas, cacao, and coffee.

2. *Tierra templada* or "temperate land": This zone ranges from eight hundred to around fifteen hundred metres in elevation and has mean annual temperatures of 18°C to 23°C. It is characterized by the

gum-producing liquidamber tree and is capable of supporting coffee and sugar cane. Wheat can also be cultivated in the upper reaches of this zone.

3. *Tierra fría* or "cold land" (plate 3): This zone ranges from fifteen hundred to slightly over three thousand metres in elevation and has mean annual temperatures of 15°C to 17°C, with occasional sub-zero temperatures and resultant frosts. It is characterized by hardy species of pine, fir, oak, and cedar, and may be used to raise apples, potatoes, and wheat. Most land cultivated in *tierra fría* country, however, is farmed as *milpa*,<sup>11</sup> which means that it is used to grow maize, *el santo maíz*, the holy corn.

4. *Región andina* or "Andean region": This zone is upward of three thousand metres in elevation and has mean annual temperatures of below 10°C, with frequent sub-zero temperatures. Frosts are common and there are occasional snow flurries during the cold season.<sup>12</sup> Generally uncultivated and only lightly settled, the *región andina*, especially the Altos de Chiantla around La Capellanía and Chancol (plate 4), is utilized primarily as pastureland for sheep, and was highly prized as such during the colonial period.

Throughout the Cuchumatanes two main seasons prevail: the rainy season and the dry season. The rainy season, or *invierno* (winter), begins towards the middle or end of May and generally lasts until October. A normal six-month rainy season will usually be interrupted at mid-season, some time in August, by a *canícula*, or dry period, which may last as long as two weeks. During the rainy season, convectional thunderstorms occur almost daily, for the most part in the late afternoon. Spells of heavy, continuous rain lasting for several days on end are also common. Such downpours may cause roads and trails to wash out and greatly hinder access and communication. Severe hailstorms are further characteristic of high elevations and pose a danger to cultivation. The yearly rains terminate in most parts of the Cuchumatanes by early November, when the dry season, or *verano* (summer), commences. Normally, little rain will then fall until May, when the cycle begins again.

The Cuchumatán highlands thus comprise many diverse physical environments, from the chilly, windswept lands of the *páramo* around Paquix and La Ventosa to the lush, temperate valleys of the north-west and the arid, dusty scrubland of the Sacapulas valley. A sense of this striking physical diversity has been nicely captured by Felix Webster McBryde:

An immense fault block that rises over 1000 metres above the trough of the Cuilco and Negro drainage basins, with a great escarpment forming the steep southern face, the Altos Cuchu-

matanes is the most elevated mountain region of its area in Central America. It is essentially a massif of dolomites and limestones in sharp contact with granite, presenting an extraordinarily rugged, deeply dissected surface.

Above the thorny chaparral and cactus of the warm, dry canyon of the Río Negro, the higher reaches of the mountains are covered with pines and coarse grass. Still higher, the smooth, undulant summit area of the Cuchumatanes, foggy, cool and moist the year round, is covered with scattered junipers, pines, and cypress, and with rolling meadows.<sup>13</sup>

The diversity of the physical geography of the Cuchumatán highlands is matched by an equal diversity in the human geography of the region.

#### THE HUMAN SETTING

Guatemala supports a population of 11.2 million, 41 percent of whom the national census of 2002 classifies as "Indian." "Ladinos," persons of mixed Spanish and Indian descent, form the majority of the remainder.<sup>14</sup> Predominantly Indian communities are located largely within the highland region of the country to the west of the capital, Guatemala City. Highland Guatemala, particularly the midwestern highlands around Lake Atitlán and the Cuchumatán highlands of the north-west, may therefore be regarded as Indian Guatemala, for it is within this upland region that the highest concentrations of Indian-speaking peoples in Guatemala, over a dozen different language groups in all, are to be found.

In 1973, according to the *Octavo censo de población*, the population of the Cuchumatán highlands numbered about one-half million, of whom 73 percent, or roughly three out of four, were Indians (see table 1). The native peoples of the Cuchumatanes (plates 5–8) speak several closely related languages belonging to Mayan stock, the most important of which are Aguacateca, Chuj, Ixil, Jacalteca, Kanjobal, Mam, Quiché, and Uspanteca.

Human settlement is spread unevenly over the Cuchumatanes. Ladino communities occupy the southern margins of the region (Chiantla, Huehuetenango, and La Democracia) and also proliferate in the fertile lands of the north and west (Barillas and Nentón). Predominantly Indian communities occupy the higher, more remote, and agriculturally less productive terrain of the central and eastern Cuchumatán country. Settlements and the land surrounding them are grouped together to form *municipios*, small township divisions based on local ethnic affiliations. Anthropologists have considered these township divisions to be the most

TABLE 1  
Population of the Cuchumatán Highlands (1973)

Municipio	Indian population	Non-Indian population	Total population
Aguacatán	15,875	2,613	18,492
Barillas	22,967	5,278	28,263
Chiantla	8,212	18,510	26,737
Colotenango	9,133	325	9,458
Concepción	7,120	986	8,107
Cuilco	10,091	9,904	19,999
Huehuetenango	407	29,967	30,402
Ixtahuacán	12,430	1,314	13,745
Jacaltenango	15,161	640	15,802
La Democracia	6,487	7,609	14,099
La Libertad	3,534	11,219	14,756
Malacatancito	1,874	5,611	7,486
Nentón	9,308	3,304	12,613
San Antonio Huista	1,424	4,256	5,680
San Gaspar Ixchil	3,060	25	3,085
San Juan Atitán	7,814	123	7,938
San Juan Ixcoy	7,476	556	8,032
San Mateo Ixtatán	14,754	877	15,632
San Miguel Acatán	13,901	1,107	15,011
San Pedro Necta	8,752	2,617	11,371
San Rafael la Independencia	5,840	60	5,900
San Rafael Petzal	2,588	160	2,749
San Sebastián Coatán	7,273	42	7,316
San Sebastián Huehuetenango	7,472	352	7,824
Santa Ana Huista	1,428	3,324	4,755
Santa Bárbara	6,496	30	6,526
Santa Eulalia	14,212	241	14,459
Santiago Chimaltenango	3,203	66	3,269
Soloma	14,126	1,138	15,304
Tectitán	2,131	1,013	3,144
Todos Santos Cuchumatán	9,795	818	10,613
Chajul	15,724	2,365	18,092
Cunén	8,296	1,463	9,762
Nebaj	25,092	2,155	27,259
Sacapulas	15,406	1,051	16,458
San Juan Cotzal	11,729	967	12,698
Uspantán	25,532	9,465	35,000
TOTAL	356,125	131,551	487,836

SOURCE: *Octavo censo de población: Cifras definitivas* (Guatemala: Dirección General de Estadística 1975)

NOTES: For statistical convenience, the Cuchumatán highlands are considered to comprise the corporate area of the entire 31 *municipios* of the Department of Huehuetenango plus six *municipios* of the Department of El Quiché – Chajul, Cunén, Nebaj, Sacapulas, San Juan Cotzal, and Uspantán.



significant cultural units in highland Guatemala, for it was around the *municipio* that the classic form of what Eric Wolf has termed the "closed corporate peasant community" gradually evolved.<sup>15</sup> Evidence from anthropological field-work indicates that the Indian people of a *municipio* generally regard themselves to be ethnically distinct, differing even from the inhabitants of a neighbouring *municipio*, who may speak the same native language.<sup>16</sup>

Traditionally, each *municipio* has its own religious and political organization, its own hand-woven local costume, and its own Roman Catholic patron saint. It is common for Indians to be attached to their *municipio* by an almost mystical sense of belonging far stronger than the feeling of being part of the republic of Guatemala. Anthropologist Charles Wagley, writing specifically on the Cuchumatanes, suggests that this sense of belonging may stem from the *municipio* being "a continuation of the basic societal unit of preconquest society."<sup>17</sup> Wagley's view is supported by the findings of George Collier in neighbouring Chiapas, where Tzotzil Maya communities "endured as ethnic entities through the colonial period to modern times, often with significant continuities in their internal organization."<sup>18</sup> Such perspectives, however, have been challenged by Robert Wasserstrom, who claims that (at least for central Chiapas) Indian communities "remained quite homogeneous in both their internal structure and their position within the colonial order. Only after independence, it seems, and in fact toward the end of the nineteenth century, did such towns acquire the distinct ethnic identities which later fired the imaginations of anthropologists."<sup>19</sup> The reasoning of Oliver La Farge, whose knowledge of the Cuchumatanes had few equals in his lifetime, would tend to support Wasserstrom's thesis that a good many features of contemporary Indian culture in southern Mesoamerica derive more from the events and circumstances of the nineteenth century than those of the colonial period.<sup>20</sup>

All *municipios* contain a *cabecera*, or township centre, which bears the same name as the *municipio* itself. The *cabecera* is usually the hub of community life, whether the inhabitants of the *municipio* actually live there or in surrounding *aldeas* (villages) or *caseríos* (hamlets). Morphologically, two main types of *municipio* can be recognized: "town nucleus" (clustered settlement) *municipios* and "vacant-town" (dispersed settlement) *municipios*. Most of the residents of "town nucleus" *municipios* live in the *cabecera* and walk from their homes to outlying fields in order to perform the labour essential for the maintenance of agricultural holdings. Santiago Chimaltenango (plate 9) is a good example of such a nucleated pattern of settlement.<sup>21</sup> In contrast, families living in "vacant town" *municipios* are rural based, residing and working in the countryside and

having occasion to visit the *cabecera* only infrequently. In such communities the township centre may be of only modest proportions and contain little else than a church, a plaza or market place, and a few Ladino-owned shops and dwelling houses. The majority of Cuchumatán *municipios* are of the "vacant-town" category, a classic example being Todos Santos (plate 10), described quite appropriately by Stadelman sixty years ago as "a village within a maizefield."<sup>22</sup> His words are not inaccurate today.

Agricultural activity in the Cuchumatanes, as throughout highland Guatemala, centres traditionally on the cultivation of corn. Because of the deeply dissected nature of much of the Cuchumatán terrain and the ever-increasing pressure exerted by a growing population on limited land resources, corn is frequently planted on steep 45° to 65° slopes, close to the limit at which an agricultural worker can stand upright without difficulty.<sup>23</sup> Some 166 different varieties of corn have been recorded under cultivation in the Cuchumatanes at altitudes ranging from 1200 to 2750 metres.<sup>24</sup> Corn lands above two thousand metres are generally planted in February and March, long before the first rains. This planting is known as the dry-season planting (*siembra de verano*). Corn lands below two thousand metres are generally planted in April and May, shortly before or shortly after the first rains. This planting is known as the rainy-season planting (*siembra de invierno*). The higher fields planted during the *siembra de verano* grow more slowly and yield less than the lower fields planted during the *siembra de invierno*.<sup>25</sup> There is a tremendous fluctuation throughout the Cuchumatanes in corn yields. Recently cleared forest lands, such as those of the northern community of San Ramón, are capable of producing one hundred to two hundred pounds of shelled corn per *cuerda* (0.04 hectares), but poorer, continuously worked holdings may yield as little as eight to fifteen pounds per *cuerda*.<sup>26</sup>

Beans and squash are usually cultivated in conjunction with corn and the three together constitute the age-old complex referred to by Eric Wolf as "the Trinity of the American Indian."<sup>27</sup> Throughout highland Guatemala this staple plant trilogy has developed a symbiotic relationship in which the tall corn stalk serves as a support for the climbing and soil-enriching bean, while squash, a creeper with broad leaves, provides shade at ground level and prevents excessive erosion during the rainy season.

In addition to the cultivation of corn there is a notable specialization at the township level in certain grains, fruits, and vegetables. Wheat is an important cash crop in San Juan Ixcay, Santa Eulalia, San Mateo Ixtatán, and Soloma, with the finest quality grain coming from San Miguel Acatán and San Sebastián Coatán. Aguacatán is noted for its garlic and onions,

Huehuetenango for its peaches, and Todos Santos for its apples. The communities of San Pedro Necta, Colotenango, and Cuilco are famed for their oranges. The Altos de Chiantla are more suited than any other part of the Cuchumatanes for growing potatoes, and the *tierra templada* around Barillas, likewise, for the cultivation of coffee.<sup>28</sup> The local agricultural specialty is usually taken to market and sold. There, other foodstuffs are purchased: corn, beans, squash, potatoes, chile, salt, onions, and tomatoes; a few kilos of *panela* (a brown, semi-refined sugar) for sweetening coffee; and perhaps some fish or meat, eaten at most only once a week or, like eggs, bread, and honey, reserved for special festive occasions. The money obtained by selling specialty products at market is therefore used primarily to buy basic provisions, particularly corn. Consumed mostly in the form of thin, unsalted bannocks known as *tortillas*, corn constitutes the mainstay of the Guatemalan Indian diet.<sup>29</sup>

In addition to agriculture, two other land-related activities in parts of the Cuchumatanes merit mention: sheep raising and salt making.

Communities in the uppermost parts of the region have been traditionally involved with the raising of sheep since early colonial times, when the first flocks were driven to Guatemala overland from Mexico.<sup>30</sup> The 1964 *Censo agropecuario* recorded that the Department of Huehuetenango supported almost 200,000 head of sheep.<sup>31</sup> Townships most associated with sheep raising include San Miguel Acatán, Santa Eulalia, Concepción, San Juan Atitán, San Sebastián Coatán, Soloma, and Todos Santos.<sup>32</sup> Indian sheep farmers generally operate on a small scale with flocks of fifteen to twenty-five sheep.<sup>33</sup> In connection with sheep raising, McBryde recorded Aguacatán, Chiantla, Huehuetenango, and Santa Bárbara as important local wool-weaving centres during the early 1940s, but noted that most of the Cuchumatán wool clip – then as now – is bought by itinerant merchants and transported to the Quiché town of Momostenango, the principal wool-weaving centre of Guatemala.<sup>34</sup>

Salt making in the Cuchumatanes is carried out at Sacapulas and San Mateo Ixtatán. Production methods are primitive, involving simply the evaporation by sun and fire of briny water leached from nearby mineral springs. Only small amounts of salt are obtained from each evaporation.<sup>35</sup> Sacapulas salt is sold in the form of round cakes at the local market and is said to be an effective medicine against eye infections. The same salt, however, lacking the vital iodine component of the sea salt of the Pacific coast, was for many years the principal cause of the high incidence of goitre in this part of Guatemala.<sup>36</sup> Salt at Sacapulas comes from mineral springs scattered over the southern floodplain of the Río Negro or Chixoy (plate 11). Production has declined in importance since the end of the rainy season of 1949 when the river, swollen by heavy rains, deposited

thousands of tons of sand and rock on its floodplain. The inundations buried, and hence destroyed, many salt-producing springs.<sup>37</sup> At San Mateo Ixtatán, salt water is drawn from wells (plate 12) controlled and operated by town authorities.<sup>38</sup>

Although sheep raising and salt working, along with some small-scale lead mining at Chiantla and involvement in several communities with the domestic handicraft industry, serve to complement agriculture in various parts of the Cuchumatanes, for the majority of families the land itself remains the focus of human activity. For these people, everyday existence is rooted in an attachment to the seasonal rhythm of the Cuchumatán agricultural cycle (see figure 5).

Landholding within the townships of the Cuchumatán highlands must be viewed in the context of national patterns of ownership and distribution. The fundamental characteristic of landholding in Guatemala in the present day is the concentration of sizable amounts of cultivable land in the hands of a small and wealthy minority, while an impoverished but dignified peasant majority, predominantly Indian, ekes out an existence on a tiny percentage of the total national farmland. Three basic landholding units can be identified: first, large- and medium-sized farms referred to as *latifundia*, which range in extent from around forty-five to over nine hundred hectares and which generally contain the most fertile agricultural land in Guatemala; second, modest, single-family farms termed *familiares*, which vary in size from seven to forty-five hectares; and third, small, fragmented holdings known as *minifundia*, which are less than seven hectares in area and usually lack sufficient resources to sustain a family all year round in work and food.<sup>39</sup> Within the Cuchumatanes, the vast majority of landholders fall into the *minifundia* category and can be considered subsistence farmers, or *minifundistas*.<sup>40</sup>

The amount of land actually held and operated as a family unit can vary considerably from place to place. In a study involving twenty-three Cuchumatán townships in 1940, Stadelman found that the average family holding varied from 10.8 acres (4.5 hectares) in Santiago Chimaltenango to 2.7 acres (1.1 hectares) in San Antonio Huista. The usual holding of a family of five persons was found to be between three and six acres (1.2 to 2.5 hectares).<sup>41</sup> Many families therefore possess amounts of land that cannot provide year-round employment and that are unable to meet annual subsistence needs.<sup>42</sup> Consequently, thousands of *minifundistas* seek part-time employment as wage labourers on the coffee, cotton, and sugar plantations of the Pacific coast in order to supplement the meagre incomes derived from their own insufficient farm holdings.

As early as 1913, the archaeologist-explorer Robert Burkitt observed at the town of Nebaj, in the Ixil country of the eastern Cuchumatanes, "an

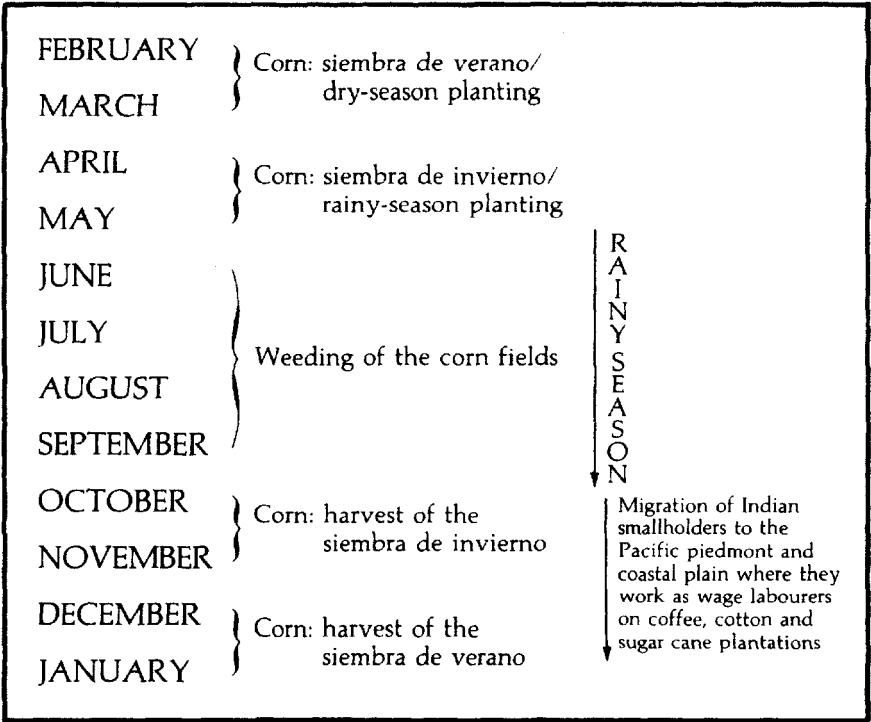


Figure 5 The annual cycle of agriculture, for a normal year, in the Cuchumatán highlands

unceasing coming and going of labour contractors and plantation agents getting out gangs of Indians for the Pacific coast."<sup>43</sup> Some of Burkitt's remarks, phrased in his blunt but graphic style, are worth quoting at length. He writes:

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>44</sup>

What Burkitt witnessed in operation at Nebaj was a coercive system of debt peonage, devised and sanctioned by the national government in the late nineteenth century, by which means seasonal labour was procured from Indian communities in the highlands and channeled into plantation agriculture on the Pacific coast.<sup>45</sup> While the effects of such practices altered irrevocably the fabric of native life throughout highland Guatemala, their impact on the Ixil country was particularly destructive. Not only was the closed, corporate nature of Indian community life gradually broken down, but "temporary" labour on a plantation often also signalled the beginning of a process that led, ultimately, to "permanent" removal. The Nebaj area between 1894 and 1930 is estimated to have sent some six thousand labourers to work each year on coffee *fincas*, many of whom never returned home.<sup>46</sup>

In the 1930s, Stadelman noted that labour for the coffee harvest was regularly furnished by various Cuchumatán communities, including Concepción, Soloma, San Ildefonso Ixtahuacán, and Todos Santos.<sup>47</sup> Population increase between the time of Stadelman's investigations and the present day, while lessening the need for coercive recruitment, has served only to further Indian reliance on seasonal wage labour. The survival of thousands of families is now directly or indirectly dependent on it.

Perhaps the best way to gain some appreciation of changing ecologic

relationships in the Cuchumatán highlands over the past sixty years or so is to focus on one specific community for which reliable and representative data exist. Santiago Chimaltenango, referred to simply as "Chimbal" by its Mam-speaking inhabitants, is one such community. In the late 1930s, when first studied by Charles Wagley, Chimbal's sixteen thousand acres of land supported fifteen hundred people.<sup>48</sup> An unequal distribution of land resulted in over three-quarters of the Chimbal population lacking the minimum amount necessary for independent family existence, estimated by Wagley at 120 *cuerdas*; the average landholding size was 101.5 *cuerdas*. The plight of the majority of heads of household was depicted thus:

The larger landholders in Chimaltenango cannot supply enough work for their poorer countrymen and in consideration of the limited terrains of the village, it seems doubtful whether they will ever be able to do so. The coffee plantations, needing large supplies of wage laborers for a short harvest, fill in the gap. The time of the coffee harvest falls in the period when Chimaltecos may leave their own fields; thus they have an opportunity to augment their income by plantation labor with no great slighting of their own fields. Unless, therefore, the present disparity of holdings is made more equal by government decree or internal changes, the labor at the coffee plantations will remain an important part of their economy.<sup>49</sup>

Since the time of Wagley's study, the population of Chimbal has more than doubled, thus exerting even greater pressure on the land resources of the community. In 1964 the Agricultural Census of Guatemala recorded the average Chimbal landholding as comprising 52.3 *cuerdas*; today, anthropologist John Watanabe estimates the average family unit at only 38.1 *cuerdas*.<sup>50</sup> Two factors have mitigated the scarcity of arable land and the swelling of human numbers: first, the employment, since the late 1960s, of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, which have increased annual crop yields significantly, often as much as threefold; and second, the cash-cropping by Chimbal *minifundistas* of small amounts of coffee. Both these developments, however, have come about only because the people of Chimbal have associated themselves even more closely with Guatemala's agricultural export economy. In the first instance, the money needed to buy fertilizers and pesticides is usually earned by a period of work on a coastal plantation; in the second instance, coffee is grown in the knowledge that there is a demand for it outside of the community, in places far beyond the town of Huehuetenango, where Chimbal coffee is generally sold.<sup>51</sup>

In 1978 Watanabe recorded 64 per cent of the Chimal population as participating in the labour migration to the coast, where the majority of migrants worked for two months or less.<sup>52</sup> Improvement in the transportation system has greatly increased accessibility and mobility and, by enabling closer links to be maintained between the migrants and their home community, has significantly reduced the impact of the "culture shock" that often accompanied seasonal migration in the past. Indeed, according to Watanabe, Chimaltecos now regard the work they perform on coastal plantations "as an extension of their own economic activities, not as the movement into another economic system."<sup>53</sup> He also makes the point that "a new radio or a gleaming watch do not make a person a Ladino, especially when the money to buy them was earned by an activity as characteristically 'Indian' as subsistence agriculture – migratory labor on the plantations of the south coast."<sup>54</sup>

As the traditional distinctions between Indian and Ladino become increasingly blurred and arbitrary, redefinition of the categories is inevitable. Equally in need of reappraisal are our notions about how plantation labour is contracted. Indian *minifundistas* are apparently no longer completely at the mercy of Ladino *habilitadores* (labour contractors) who sign up work parties by advancing money as wages to drunks on market day or during the community fiesta. Times have changed since the days of Robert Burkitt. Such practices as the ones he recorded for Nebaj, founded on centuries of mistrust and exploitation, always carry with them the threat of violence, as is evidenced by the bloody incidents surrounding labour recruitment at San Juan Ixcoy in 1898.<sup>55</sup> Today, many plantations simply announce on the radio the work-force they need, the rates they pay, and the facilities they provide. These broadcasts penetrate even the most isolated highland communities, where potential workers, seldom with enough land to till or food to give their children, are listening. Upon hearing what, when, and where work is available, a human tide drifts down from the mountains to bring in the harvest. Most Chimaltecos, for example, move to the coast without having contracts arranged in advance.<sup>56</sup>

The people of Chimal who form part of this seasonal labour force are representative of an ebb and flow that constitutes one of the great internal migrations of Guatemala. It was estimated that some two hundred thousand people, the majority of them Indians, were involved in this migration in the 1950s; by the end of the 1960s this number had risen to over three hundred thousand and in the mid-1970s had reached an estimated five hundred thousand.<sup>57</sup> Attached though he may be to his land and his community, and however unattractive the often intense heat of the lowlands may be compared with his cool mountain home, the Indian



*minifundista* throughout highland Guatemala, especially in marginal areas like the Cuchumatanes, is confronted by a situation that leaves him little alternative but to migrate for part of each year in search of work to keep himself and his family alive.<sup>58</sup> There is a rather numbing resemblance between this contemporary migration and the ones that occurred during pre-conquest and colonial times, when Indians from the highlands were expected, indeed required, to work on estates in the lowlands in order to meet the tribute demands placed upon them for cacao.<sup>59</sup>

The unfavourable ecological relationships that lie behind seasonal migration to the plantations of the Pacific coast are not explained fully by the high rates of population growth Guatemala has experienced during the twentieth century.<sup>60</sup> The present ecological crisis, and the roots of contemporary political conflict, can only be properly understood by looking at landholding in Guatemala from an historical perspective. One of the most notable features of the colonial experience in Guatemala, as in Oaxaca and Chiapas, was the moderate success of Indian communities in retaining control over much of their ancestral lands. Although during colonial times encroachment at the hands of estate-building Spaniards was by no means unimportant, attrition of Indian holdings was significantly more marked after independence was attained, particularly towards the end of the nineteenth century.

Some fifty years after its formal political independence from Spain in 1821, Guatemala embarked on a land-reform program that was designed to abolish the collective system of Indian landholding by subdividing ownership of communal lands among township inhabitants. Various attempts by the national government to force Indians to secure individual titles to their lands met with little success. Consequently, Indian communal holdings were often classified by the Guatemalan government as "unclaimed" land and fell into the hands of Ladinos or Creoles much more conversant with the legal technicalities of landholding legislation than their non-literate, misinformed, and confused Indian countrymen. Around 1875, as foreign investment in the coffee business began to alter the economic prospects of Guatemala, more systematic and concerted efforts were made by the national government to reshape patterns of landholding. The fate of Indian communal lands was sealed by the administration of President Justo Rufino Barrios in 1877, when it ended the system of exacting rents for the use of land from townships as a whole, a system dating back to colonial times. The Barrios administration also passed legislation requiring all individuals to demonstrate private ownership of land by possessing legal titles; old community titles were simply no longer recognized. Although legislation governing landholding had been radically altered by the late nineteenth century, the Indian communities most affected by the changes were not necessarily made

aware of them. Many simply continued to operate their lands in much the same way as their forefathers. By the early twentieth century, Indian communities throughout Guatemala had lost legal possession of as much as half their traditional communal holdings either to enterprising coffee planters, many of whom were German immigrants, or to ambitious Ladinos capitalizing on the general ignorance and political vulnerability of the Indian.<sup>61</sup>

Since the time of President Barrios there has been marked individualization of Indian landholding. Ruth Bunzel, working in the 1930s, observed that there was no longer communal ownership of land in the Quiché community of Chichicastenango.<sup>62</sup> Manning Nash, working during the 1950s, noted that all but 15 per cent of the land within the township of Cantel, near Quezaltenango, was individually owned.<sup>63</sup> For the Cuchumatán region, Wagley reported that all land in Santiago Chimaltenango in the 1930s, with the exception of some eighty acres utilized as common pasture or for the collection of firewood, was privately owned.<sup>64</sup> For the same time period, however, Stadelman noted the following:

A few of the towns, such as Santa Ana Huista, Jacaltenango, Ixtahuacán, and San Antonio Huista, are outstanding examples of municipalities still possessing a preponderant amount of land owned in common by the citizens. San Miguel [Acatán] lands are in great part privately owned, only about one-third belonging to the municipality. Cuilco, San Juan Ixcoy, Soloma, Chimaltenango, Santa Eulalia, and Concepción have almost entirely dropped the system, while there is said to be no common land at all in the municipalities of La Libertad, Colotenango, Nentón and La Democracia. In some of the villages the change from communal to private ownership is comparatively recent.<sup>65</sup>

The concept of holding land in common has therefore been slow in disappearing. Although legislation over the past century has radically altered the legal structure of ownership, traditional attitudes towards land tenure still prevail in many Cuchumatán communities. To Indians, land represents the centre of existence, provides the roots of family life, forms the basis of community social structure, and is the source of bitter antagonism in the event of a dispute over ownership.<sup>66</sup> It is perceived as belonging to *los antepasados*, the ancestors. Custom therefore dictates that land should not be sold but be passed on from father to son in order to honour, preserve, and continue ancestral tradition.

In view of the existence of such intense and deep-rooted attachments, it

is not surprising that many patterns of ritual and ceremony accompany the annual agricultural cycle. Indians perceive the natural world to be inhabited by supernatural beings who demand their constant respect.<sup>67</sup> The raising of corn is of particular ceremonial significance because of the grain's central role in the native diet. According to the *Popol Vuh*, "the created man" was made by the "forefathers" Tepeu and Gucumatz from corn and cornmeal dough: "After that they began to talk about the creation and the making of our first mother and father: of yellow corn and of white corn they made their flesh: of cornmeal dough they made the arms and legs of man. Only dough of cornmeal went into the flesh of our first fathers, the four men, who were created."<sup>68</sup>

A fascinating array of ceremonial rites has, in the past, been associated with corn cultivation in Cuchumatán townships. The planting of corn may be preceded by the saying of prayers and the burning of candles and incense for the proper germination of the seed. The harvest of the ripened grain may be accompanied by offering the blood of a sacrificed rooster to the spirit of the cornfield. Prayers are also said for the protection of the corn against attack by frost and for the granting of sufficient rain.<sup>69</sup> La Farge, in the 1930s, recorded the following ritual at Santa Eulalia: "In July when the green ears are ripening, it is customary to play a clay flute in the cornfields. As this is just before the beginning of a period of bad winds, not all people do this, since blowing on the flute may bring the wind. It is said that they play this music to protect the field, 'to look and see if there might be any animals,' and that ... when they are playing the flute that way, the holy corn grows happily."<sup>70</sup>

Such beliefs, and the pattern of Indian life in general, indicate that aspects of Mayan culture flourish still throughout the Cuchumatán highlands. Over the past five centuries, native communities have been subjected again and again to the relentless onslaught of outside forces, forces that not only signalled change and subordination but that, at times, even threatened extinction. Against shattering odds, Indians remain today a conspicuous element of the Cuchumatán landscape. It is the purpose of the pages that follow to examine various land-related aspects of native life in the Cuchumatanes as they have developed through time. This examination will be accomplished by reconstructing the cultural landscape of the region during the period of its critical evolution, from the eve of the Spanish conquest in the early sixteenth century to the end of colonial rule in 1821.

## PART TWO

### CONTACT AND CONQUEST (1500–1541)

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### 3 The Cultural Landscape on the Eve of Spanish Conquest

Writing over fifty years ago, Oliver La Farge declared "the pre-Conquest history of the Cuchumatanes is still a matter for guesswork."<sup>1</sup> His words are not at all invalid today. Although important contributions and sophisticated refinements have been made in the field of Mesoamerican studies since the time of La Farge, few major investigations have focused specifically on the Cuchumatán highlands. The reasons for this neglect are not easy to ascertain, but possible explanations may be related to the physical isolation and relative inaccessibility of many parts of the Cuchumatanes, and to the greater potential for archaeological and ethnohistorical investigation afforded by other regions of Mesoamerica. From an archaeological perspective, highland Guatemala has been worked much less than lowland Guatemala, owing principally to the greater size and complexity of the settlement remains in the latter region compared to the former. From an ethnohistorical perspective, the human groups in highland Guatemala that have attracted most scholarly attention have been the Quichean-speaking Indians, since it is chiefly for Quichean culture that native documentation relating to life in pre-conquest times exists. The Cuchumatán area, predominantly a non-Quichean highland region, has thus been adversely affected by the lowland- and Quichean-oriented thrust of research within the Guatemalan context of Mesoamerican studies.

A strong case can in fact be made that the Cuchumatanes have unnecessarily suffered from scholarly neglect. Although the ethno-historical potential of the region is limited, the same cannot be said of its rich archaeological heritage. Apart from Woodbury and Trik's work at Zaculeu<sup>2</sup> and two excavations at Nebaj, one by an American team in the late 1940s,<sup>3</sup> another by a French group in the mid-1960s,<sup>4</sup> there has been little done in the way of intensive, systematic archaeological investigation at other Cuchumatán sites.<sup>5</sup> The paucity of the archaeological record and the limitations of the ethnohistorical record jointly pose a research problem of no small magnitude.

Confronted with such a situation, any reconstruction of the cultural landscape of the Cuchumatán highlands on the eve of the Spanish conquest must necessarily be tentative and incomplete. However, it is important to sketch even the thinnest strands in order to establish some outline, however hazy or indistinct, of land-life relationships during late pre-Hispanic times. To this end, four procedures will now be followed. First, a brief summary of the cultural history of highland Guatemala will be presented to provide a frame of reference by chronological period and developmental stage. Second, the archaeological record that has been established for the Cuchumatanes will be set down with a view to placing the cultural development of the region in a general Mesoamerican context. Third, the ethnohistorical sources that relate to the pre-conquest Cuchumatanes will be indicated, and comment made on the information contained in them. And fourth, a reconstructive synthesis will be carried out with the objective of interpreting, from a fusion of the archaeological and ethnohistorical records, the broad features of late pre-Hispanic life. Wherever possible, inferences will be drawn from other better excavated or better documented areas close in time and space to the Cuchumatán region. The domain of the Quiché Maya is of crucial importance in this respect since the rich Quichean sources complement the sparse Cuchumatán data and can be used comparatively to provide a clearer, more critical reconstruction.<sup>6</sup>

#### PRE-CONQUEST HIGHLAND GUATEMALA

Highland Guatemala, which forms an important part of the cultural unit referred to by twentieth-century scholars as Mesoamerica,<sup>7</sup> has a long record of human settlement. Excavation of an Early Man campsite at Los Tapiales, in Totonicapán, has indicated that the site was probably occupied around 9000 BC by a small group of hunters using fluted points, possibly to hunt big game.<sup>8</sup> At the other end of the time scale, one of the earliest surviving historical documents, written by the *conquistador* Pedro de Alvarado at the time of the Spanish conquest in 1524, describes Guatemala as "well-populated, with many strong towns."<sup>9</sup> This long period of human occupancy, stretching over at least ten thousand years, can be divided into four major chronological-developmental stages known as Paleo-Indian, Pre-classic, Classic, and Post-classic.

Paleo-Indian life dates back to the time of man's first entry into the Guatemalan highlands, perhaps as early as 15,000 BC, and lasted roughly until 5000 BC.<sup>10</sup> This long early period is perhaps best regarded as one of hunting and the gathering of such wild foodstuffs as grains, nuts, berries,

seeds, and roots. The Paleo-Indian bands living at this time were small in number and essentially nomadic. After 5000 BC a gradual but fundamental shift occurred in subsistence patterns. Hunting and gathering were slowly abandoned in favour of a more settled agricultural life made possible by the successful domestication of certain food plants, the most important of which were maize, beans, squash, avocado, chile peppers, pumpkin, and tomato.<sup>11</sup> By about 1500 BC, sedentary village life was a cultural reality that contrasted sharply with the migrant camp life of earlier times.

The chronological period designated as Pre-classic or Formative began around 1500 BC and continued until AD 300.<sup>12</sup> During this time the peoples of highland Guatemala underwent a profound cultural transformation. Out of the simple, spatially confined, village style of life there emerged, by 500 BC, a more stratified society; and, within a few more centuries, the political notion of statehood. Paralleling this socio-political change was an intensification of the agricultural subsistence base and rapid population growth. A sizable demographic increase is inferred from the greater number of settlements, their larger spatial extent, and indications of a marked socio-economic complexity within and among them.<sup>13</sup>

Classic culture in highland Guatemala developed from the life-style of the Formative period around AD 300 and flourished throughout the region until about AD 1000.<sup>14</sup> The Classic has long been considered a time of peace and prosperity, characterized by a theocratic, essentially non-urban, non-imperialistic way of life. This traditional view of the period has recently been questioned, and it is perhaps most fruitful to regard the Classic as peaceful and prosperous only in relation to the more bellicose and turbulent times that were to follow.<sup>15</sup> Although the zenith of Classic civilization in the Maya area is more closely associated, in terms of architecture and artistic expression, with the great lowland settlements of Copán, Tikal, Palenque, and Piedras Negras, a number of Classic settlements also developed in the Guatemalan highlands. The most important of these was the settlement of Kaminaljuyú, part of present-day Guatemala City. Around AD 400 Kaminaljuyú came under the sphere of influence of the great Mexican city of Teotihuacán. Locally there had already evolved a highly organized and sophisticated society, the theocratic orientation of which is indicated by temple mounds located around ceremonial plazas to form acropolis-like complexes.<sup>16</sup> Classic settlements in the highlands were situated predominantly on open valley floors or hill slopes in close proximity to running water, and were essentially undefended but strongly nucleated ceremonial centres. Large populations were supported in the vicinity of these centres by an



intensive agricultural base that utilized as farming land areas peripheral to the ceremonial complex, and in which terracing and irrigation played a major role.<sup>17</sup>

The Post-classic period opened around AD 1000 and closed with the Spanish conquest of Guatemala in 1524. As a chronological span, the Post-classic is generally divided into two units: the Early Post-classic of 1000 to 1200 and the Late Post-classic or Protohistoric of 1200 to 1524.<sup>18</sup> Life in Post-classic times is generally depicted as fundamentally secular, militaristic, and chaotic in comparison to the relatively settled, non-aggressive, religious existence of the Classic. This characterization is substantiated by a move of populations away from unprotected valley bottoms or open land to fortified mountain slopes or hilltops, although not all valley-situated Classic sites were abandoned. The tendency towards locational change, when and where it did occur, was precipitated by internal strife and internecine warfare, resulting possibly from a population climax or crisis.<sup>19</sup> According to Robert Carmack, the most important event of the Post-classic period in highland Guatemala was the arrival in the region around AD 1250 of belligerent Mexican migrants led by a "Toltec" military priesthood. Entering from the Gulf Coast by way of the Usumacinta and Chixoy rivers, these powerful and superbly organized invaders, the traditional founders of the Quiché dynasty, in the course of some two hundred years established political control over much of highland Guatemala.<sup>20</sup> By the end of the Post-classic, however, the supremacy and hegemony of the Mexicanized Quiché over other Indian groups in Guatemala had greatly diminished. With their defeat in 1524, by the forces led by Pedro de Alvarado, Spanish domination began.

#### THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE CUCHUMATÁN HIGHLANDS

The archaeological record reveals traces of human occupation in the Cuchumatanes from the Late Pre-classic through the Classic to Late Post-classic or Protohistoric times. As such, human settlement in the region spans three of the four major Mesoamerican chronological periods, and can therefore roughly be dated back at least two thousand years, although humans were undoubtedly present long before this time.

In the manuscript copy of the second edition of the *Diccionario Geográfico de Guatemala*, a total of 140 archaeological sites are listed for the entire Cuchumatán area.<sup>21</sup> Table 2 lists 56 sites in the region that have been most systematically excavated and figure 6 indicates their spatial distribution.<sup>22</sup> Of the 56 sites for which reasonable archaeological data exist, 34 can be placed, chiefly by the establishment of ceramic sequences, in at least

one major Mesoamerican chronological period. These sites are shown in table 3.

The archaeological record reflects a pattern of cultural development for the Cuchumatán region that is consistent with the broad evolutionary features previously outlined for the Guatemalan highlands as a whole. The stability and tranquility of Pre-classic and Classic life is suggested by the undefended nature of such sites as Río Blanco, Cambote, and Chalchitán (plate 15), all of which are situated without fortification in open valley floors. These and other Classic settlements functioned primarily as administrative-ceremonial centres for dense populations living and farming in the surrounding areas. Within the Cuchumatanes, the settlements that probably attained the most refined Classical level in terms of art and architecture were those of Chaculá (plate 16), a sizable complex associated with nearby Quen Santo, Uaxac Canal, and Yalambojoch, all of which most likely had considerable contact with the great lowland Maya centres to the north and east.<sup>23</sup>

The non-defensive layout and location of the Classic sites stand in marked contrast to the defensive morphology and situation of the majority of Post-classic sites, particularly those of the Late Post-classic or Proto-historic. During the Post-classic period, open and undefended valley sites were generally abandoned in favour of more readily defensible upper-slope or hilltop sites, many of which, including Pacot, Chutinamit, and Chutixtiox (plate 17), are surrounded by deep ravines or gullies. Although some valley sites indicate an unbroken sequence of occupation from Classic through to Post-classic times that is not accompanied by a move towards appreciable fortification, these sites were later protected by military outposts. Such was the case at Xolchun, established at the confluence of the Río Blanco and Río Negro and defended from the nearby hilltop site of Pacot (plate 18).<sup>24</sup> A similar arrangement also prevailed at the long settled Mam capital of Zaculeu, located on an open plain but protected by the surrounding hilltop sites of Cerro Pueblo Viejo, El Caballero, and Tenam, as well as having many defensive structures of its own.<sup>25</sup>

From the archaeological evidence, hostile and warlike times are inferred for most of the Post-classic. Such unsettled conditions have throughout Mesoamerican history been associated with densely settled areas operating at the upper threshold of their carrying capacity. This period of unrest and flux was also characterized by a strong and pervasive Mexican influence, indicated by the presence in many Post-classic Cuchumatán sites of such diagnostic architectural features as altar shrines or platforms, double stairways, enclosed ball courts, round and long structures, and a

TABLE 2  
Pre-Hispanic Settlements in the Cuchumatán Highlands

Site	Topographic location	Classification	Occupational sequence
Acichtz	Valley	ND	Late Post-classic
Agua Blanca	Intermediate	—	Early Classic (?)
Baschuc	Valley	ND	Post-classic
Bijux	Valley	ND	Late Post-classic
Buena Vista	Valley	PD	—
Cambote	Intermediate	ND	Late Pre-classic to Early Classic
Caquixay	Valley	ND	Late Classic and Late Post-classic
Carvao	Spur	PD	Classic (?)
Cerro Pueblo Viejo	Hilltop	PD	—
Cucal	Valley	ND	Pre-classic (?)
Cujá	Valley	PD	—
Cu Manchón	Intermediate	PD	—
Chaculá	Valley	—	Classic
Chalchitán	Valley	ND	Pre-classic (?) to Early Post-classic
Chanquejelve	Intermediate	PD	—
Chichel	Intermediate	—	—
Chichoche	Intermediate	ND	—
Chicol	Intermediate	PD	Classic
Chipal	Intermediate	PD	Post-classic
Chuchun	Valley	ND	Classic
Chutinamit	Intermediate	D	Post-classic
Chutixtiox	Hilltop	D	Late Post-classic
El Bosque	Spur	PD	—
El Caballero	Hilltop	D	Late Post-classic
El Cedro	Intermediate	—	Classic (?)
El Tigre	Hilltop	PD	—
Huil	Intermediate	ND	—
Huitichun	Hilltop	PD	Classic (?) and Late Post-classic
Lamak	Valley	—	Late Post-classic
Malacatancito	Top of ridge	D	Late Post-classic
Mutchil	Hilltop	ND	—
Nebaj	Valley	ND	Early Classic to Late Post-classic (?)
Oncap	Intermediate	ND	Late Post-classic
Pacot	Hilltop	D	Late Post-classic
Piol	Intermediate	ND	—
Pucal	Hilltop	PD	—
Pulai	Valley	ND	—
Quen Santo	Inclined plain	—	Classic
Río Blanco	Valley	ND	Late Pre-classic and Early Classic; possibly also Late Post-classic
San Francisco	Intermediate	PD	—

TABLE 2 (Concluded)

Site	Topographic location	Classification	Occupational sequence
Tenam	Hilltop	D	—
Tilajyón	Spur	—	—
Tixchun	Valley	ND	Post-classic
Tuchoc	Valley	ND	—
Tzicuay	Intermediate	PD	Classic and Post-classic
Uaxac Canal	Valley	—	Classic
Vicaveval	Hilltop	D	Late Post-classic
Vitenam	Intermediate	ND	—
Xetenam	Hilltop	PD	—
Xecataloj	Valley	ND	—
Xoch	Valley	—	—
Xolchun	Intermediate	D	Late Post-classic
(Huehuetenango)			
Xolchun (Quiché)	Intermediate	PD	Classic and Post-classic
Xolpacol	Hilltop	D	Late Post-classic
Yalambojoch	Flat lowland	—	Classic
Zaculeu	Intermediate	D	Early Classic to Late Post-classic

NOTES: The *topographic location* "intermediate" means the site is on the slope of a hill. The *classifications* are D (defensive); PD (potentially defensive); and ND (non-defensive). For sources, see chap. 3, n. 22.

centralized position in the ceremonial plaza of the main temple-pyramid complex.<sup>26</sup>

#### THE ETHNOHISTORY OF THE CUCHUMATÁN HIGHLANDS

The Indian peoples of the Cuchumatanes have left behind a scant and insubstantial documentary record that makes the task of historical reconstruction at best only tentative. The most powerful autochthonous group of the region, the Mam, have but one early extant document, the *Título Mam*, an account dealing primarily with land disputes between the Mam and the Quiché in the Quezaltenango area during the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>27</sup> The Sacapulas basin is the only part of the Cuchumatanes for which an important native record relating to life in pre-Hispanic times exists. This is the Quichean document entitled *Título de los Señores de Sacapulas*.<sup>28</sup> The chronic paucity of the Cuchumatán ethnohistorical record is partially supplemented by several of the rich Quichean sources that touch briefly but significantly on many aspects of pre-conquest history as seen through Indian eyes. The Quichean sources, other than the Sacapulas document, that furnish useful references concerning the Cuchumatán region prior to the arrival of the Spaniards include the *Popol*



Figure 6 Archaeological sites of the Cuchumatán highlands

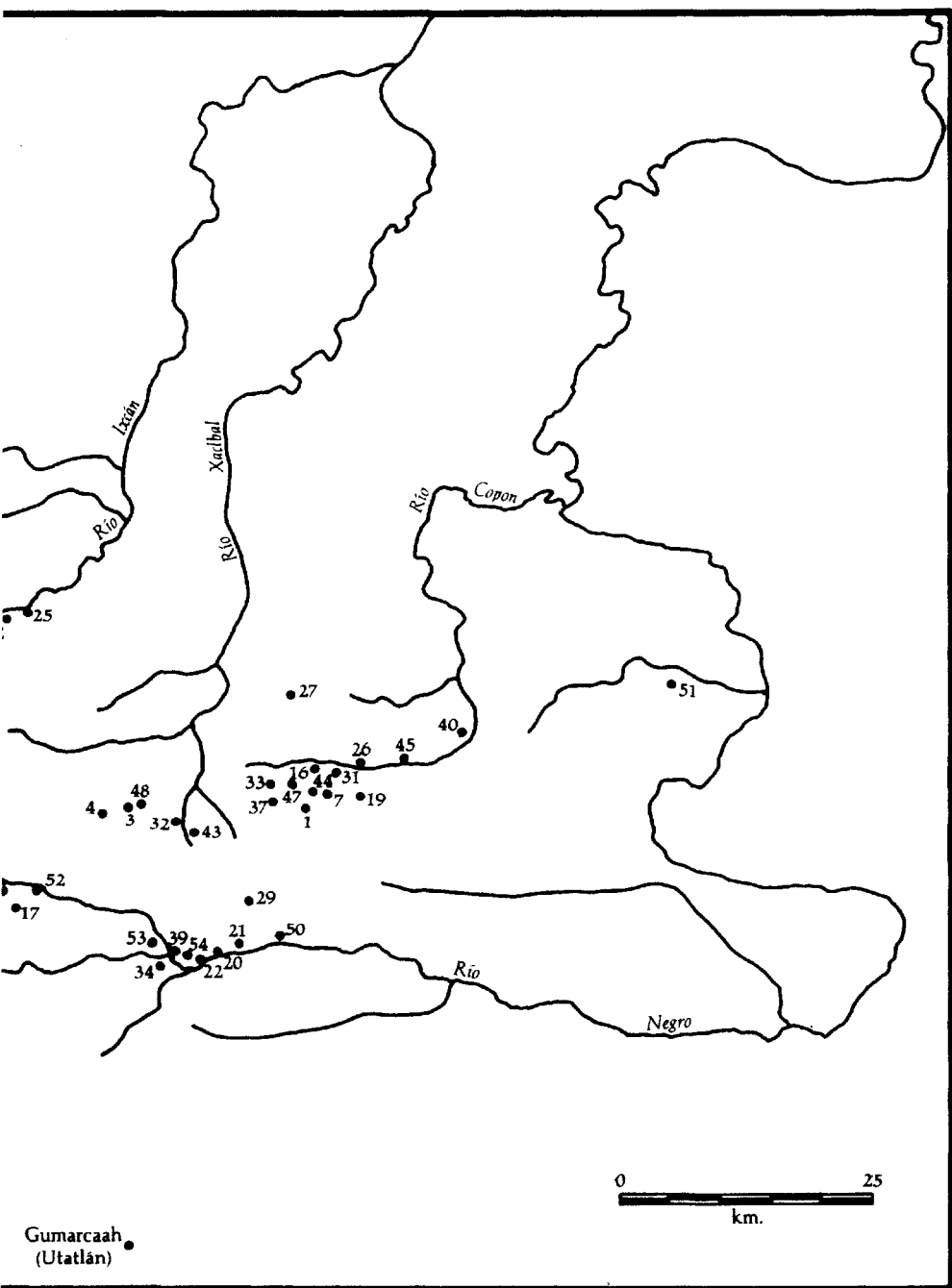


TABLE 3  
Archaeological Sites and Settlement Chronology in the Cuchumatán Highlands

Pre-classic (1500 BC-AD 300)	Classic (AD 300-1000)	Early Post-classic (AD 1000-1200)	Late Post-classic (AD 1200-1524)
	Agua Blanca (?)		Acihutz
		Baschuc	Baschuc Bijux
Cambote	Cambote Caquixay Carvao (?)		Caquixay
Cucal (?)			
Chalchitán (?)	Chaculá Chalchitán Chicol	Chalchitán	
	Chuchun	Chipal	Chipal*
		Chutinamit	Chutinamit* Chutixtiox* El Caballero*
	El Cedro (?) Huitchun (?)		Huitchun* Lamak Malacatancito* Nebaj (?) Oncap Pacot*
	Nebaj	Nebaj	
Río Blanco	Quen Santo Río Blanco		Río Blanco (?)
	Tzicuay Uaxac Canal	Tixchun Tzicuay	Tzicuay (?)
			Vicaveval* Xolchun (Huehuetenango)*
	Xolchun (Quiché)	Xolchun (Quiché)	Xolchun (Quiché)* Xolpacol*
	Yalambojoch Zaculeu	Zaculeu	Zaculeu*

\*Indicates defensive or potentially defensive site. For sources, see chap. 3, n. 22.

*Vuh*; the *Título C'oyoi*;<sup>29</sup> the *Títulos Nihaib*, the *Historia Quiché de Don Juan de Torres*, the *Testamento de los Xpantzay*, and the *Título de los Indios de Santa Clara*;<sup>30</sup> and the *Rabinal Achí*.<sup>31</sup>

It can safely be assumed that the Quichean Indians and other groups in highland Guatemala during pre-Hispanic times had in their possession

written books or pictographic codices. We know, for instance, that versions of the *Popol Vuh* and the *Título de los Señores de Sacapulas* were in existence before the Spanish conquest; Bartolomé de las Casas even records having seen some original native documents around the year 1540.<sup>32</sup> Unfortunately, no written or pictographic works that date back to pre-Hispanic times in highland Guatemala have survived into the present day, unlike those, for example, that have survived for the Mixtec region of Mexico.<sup>33</sup> After the conquest, Spanish priests taught Indians to write in their own language using the Latin alphabet, and in this way important pre-conquest events were frequently recorded. In the words of the Dominican chronicler Francisco Ximénez, the parish priest of Santo Tomás Chichicastenango who in the early eighteenth century first found or was shown the *Popol Vuh*: "they [the Indians] changed their way of writing their histories into our way of writing."<sup>34</sup> The Quichean peoples were particularly assiduous in this regard and have left behind a rich and valuable assortment of native documentation that, although written in post-conquest times, relates to life in the Guatemalan highlands before the arrival of the Spaniards.

The purposes for which the native documents were written more often had to do with practical exigencies than a desire to record for the sake of posterity. Some documents were written with a view to obtaining from the colonial administration an official title to a tract of land, while others solicited the right to such privileges as tribute collection through verification of connections with the pre-Hispanic elite.<sup>35</sup> Regardless of the motives that first prompted the Quiché to write in the style of their conquerors, the documents that emerged from the practice contain many important statements about land, settlement, tribute relationships, and the political history of the late pre-conquest Quiché state. Since many parts of the Cuchumatanes had come under Quiché hegemony during Proto-historic times (AD 1200–1524), native Quichean documents that record this pattern of conquest and rule can be consulted as fruitful sources of information. The section that follows integrates relevant ethnohistorical data with the archaeological evidence outlined earlier in order to establish a reconstructive synthesis for the Cuchumatán highlands on the eve of the Spanish conquest.

#### POLITICAL ECONOMY

The most important political event in the late pre-conquest history of highland Guatemala was the spectacular rise to power throughout the region of the Mexicanized Quiché Maya. According to Quiché mythology, around AD 1250 bands of warlike "Toltec" migrants, possibly



Chontal- or Nahuatl-speaking, moved from the legendary Tulán of the Gulf Coast of Mexico south and east into the Guatemalan highlands.<sup>36</sup> One of these small migrant groups established a defensive hilltop base in the Chujuyub mountains above the Quiché basin and subsequently gained control over the surrounding country and the indigenous Mayan peoples, known ethnohistorically as the Wukamak or Vuc Amag, who occupied it.<sup>37</sup> The invaders were easily absorbed linguistically by the much more numerous Wukamak; but, being exceptionally well organized and led by an authoritarian military priesthood, the immigrant group was able to win political domination over the autochthonous inhabitants. From this fusion of the two traditions – one Mexican, the other Mayan – the ruling dynasty of the Mexicanized Quiché Maya was born.

After consolidating their position in what later became their heartland, the Quiché founded the political capital of Gumarcaah, later known as Utatlán. From Gumarcaah a series of expansionist campaigns was launched, resulting in the greater part of highland Guatemala falling under Quiché hegemony. The *Popol Vuh* states that this period of expansion began during “the fifth generation of men”:

They came here to the town of Gumarcaah, as the Quiché named it, when Kings Cotuha and Gucumatz and all the lords came. There had then begun the fifth generation of men since the beginning of civilization and of the population, the beginning of the existence of the nation.

There, then, [at Gumarcaah] they built many houses and at the same time constructed the temple of God; in the center of the high part of the town they located it when they arrived and settled there.

Then their empire grew.<sup>38</sup>

Although Carmack has established that Gumarcaah was in fact founded during the eighth generation, in about AD 1400,<sup>39</sup> chronological inconsistencies in the ethnohistorical evidence do not seriously hinder the reconstruction of the spatial evolution of the Quiché conquest state. Some time between the years 1400 and 1475, under the consecutive leadership of “the marvellous kings” Gucumatz (1400–25) and his son Quicab (1425–75),<sup>40</sup> the Quiché brought most of highland Guatemala under the rule of Gumarcaah. This process of military conquest and political expansion saw the incorporation into the Quiché realm of the Cuchumatán provinces of Sacapulas, Aguacatán, and Cunén, and the territories of the northern Mam and the Ixil, all of which (see figure 6) lay to the north of the Quiché capital of Gumarcaah.<sup>41</sup>

Without doubt, the most important part of the Cuchumatanes to

succumb to the rule of Gumarcaah was the northern Mam region, the religious capital of which was the ancient settlement of Zaculeu (plate 13). Zaculeu, or "Zaculeuab" as it is written in the manuscript copy of the *Popol Vuh*,<sup>42</sup> shows an uninterrupted record of occupation from Early Classic times until the Spanish conquest in 1525. Such a continuity of settlement, lasting at least one thousand years, is not common in highland Guatemalan archaeological sites.

A primary instrument "for the creation of political, social, economic, and sacred space" and a symbol of "cosmic, social, and moral order," Zaculeu exerted an influence far beyond the immediate environs of its ceremonial centre over much of present-day Huehuetenango.<sup>43</sup> Communities aligned with Zaculeu included Cuilco and Ixtahuacán, both of which fought alongside the Mam of Zaculeu against the Spaniards in 1525.<sup>44</sup> To the west, the sovereignty of Zaculeu extended along the Río Selegua towards Chiapas. Northward, the rule of Zaculeu penetrated high into the more remote areas of the Cuchumatanes, probably into the valley of Todos Santos and beyond, since it was from these parts that a relief force was sent down to assist the Mam ruler Caibil Balam in his struggle against the Spaniards at Zaculeu in 1525.<sup>45</sup>

Although the exact political nature of Zaculeu's relationship with surrounding Mam communities is as difficult to ascertain as the precise range of its spatial domination, there is no doubt that it was an important centre that exercised control over an extensive and populous hinterland. The fall of Zaculeu to the invading Quiché in the early years of the fifteenth century must therefore have constituted a significant event for the northern Mam. Defeat placed much of the western Cuchumatanes under the rule of Gumarcaah. Ethnohistorically, this event is recorded in both the *Popol Vuh* and the *Título C'oyoi*:

Here is the destruction and division of the fields and the towns of the neighbouring nations, small and large. Among them was that which in olden times was the country of the Cakchiquel, the present Chuvilá, and the country of the people of Rabinal, Pamaca ... and the towns of the peoples of Zaculeu ... These [peoples] hated Quicab. He made war on them and certainly conquered and destroyed the fields and towns of the people of Rabinal, the Cakchiquel, and the people of Zaculeu. He came and conquered all the towns, and the soldiers of Quicab carried his arms to distant parts.<sup>46</sup>

Our conquerors of the hamlets and fortified centers, they are the great warriors, our grandfathers and fathers ... Then the Mam of Zakiulew were driven out ... before their mountains and

plains; there the mountains and plains [of Zaculeu] were taken. These were all their mountains and plains, their beautiful places, their structures. This was the succession of the lordship by Don Q'uikab ... Our grandfathers and fathers cast them out when they inserted themselves [among] the Mam of Zakiulew; indeed they were fierce warriors ... The fortified centers and settlements were brought down by them when they entered into the mountains and plains ... Their riches and wealth were fragmented, their structures and residences were torn into pieces, their precious stones and jewels, and black and golden stones were carried off.<sup>47</sup>

Quiché conquest of the Mam of Zaculeu was accomplished at roughly the same time as the successful subjugation of Sacapulas and Aguacatán. These two campaigns are summarily recorded in one of the *Xpantzay* documents and in the *Título de los Señores de Totonicapán*.<sup>48</sup> Another document relating to the Sacapulas area, entitled *Título de los Caniles*, specifically states that people from Gumarcaah "came to take the rule ... Thus all united at Mount Ramason, where [the Quiché] took charge of the government."<sup>49</sup>

Sacapulas and Aguacatán were highly desirable areas over which to exercise control. Both were situated in *tierra templada* country that provided the Quiché with a variety of foodstuffs not available in their *tierra fría* heartland. They also were associated with valuable natural resources. Sacapulas was an important salt-producing centre and the closest such source to Gumarcaah, and Aguacatán seems to have been connected with the supply of gems and precious metals.<sup>50</sup> Salt, a commodity that in pre-Columbian times served along with cacao and chile as a medium of exchange,<sup>51</sup> was probably produced from the mineral springs at Sacapulas by the same primitive process of evaporation and leaching that is employed today. There is, however, a strong suggestion that the Quiché used the forced labour of prisoners of war in the exploitation of Sacapulas salt. This situation is indicated in an account by the Spanish governor of Verapaz, Martín Alfonso Tovilla, who visited Sacapulas in the early seventeenth century:

This town in ancient aboriginal times served as a jail or prison, where the Quiché kings, to whom these lands belonged, enclosed the captives from the wars which they continually had with their neighbours, because these Quiché kings were very powerful. Every night they put the captives in a kind of rock pen which was very large, and by day they made them go to the

salt factory, where they made much salt, and it was of great importance to their king. Because of this factory and the scarcity of salt, [the Quiché] king was more powerful than his neighbours.<sup>52</sup>

Other territories assimilated by the Quiché in their expansion northward from Gumarcaah included the lands of Cunén and of the Ixil people. The ethnohistorical evidence of this pattern of conquest is scant, but the *Rabinal Achí*, a ceremonial dance drama recorded by the Abbé Brasseur de Bourbourg in the mid-nineteenth century and considered a reliable source by Carmack,<sup>53</sup> clearly states that one of the protagonists in the depicted action, the Quiché Achí, was "chief of the strangers of Cunén and the strangers of Chajul."<sup>54</sup> The *Rabinal Achí* gives no indication as to when this conquest took place, but it probably occurred around the same time as the Quiché subjugation of Zaculeu, Sacapulas, and Aguacatán; that is, in the early years of the fifteenth century. The Cunén area and the Ixil community of Chajul lacked the economic and strategic significance of either Aguacatán or Sacapulas. Quiché control over these territories was probably loose and indirect, perhaps being exercised through Quiché-implemented lords who resided at Sacapulas and who owed allegiance to Gumarcaah.<sup>55</sup>

The ethnohistorical evidence for Quiché domination of parts of the Cuchumatanes is corroborated by the findings of archaeology. While there is at present no strong settlement-pattern evidence linking the Quiché with the Sacapulas area, none the less a marked ceramic similarity between the Sacapultec sites of Chutixtiox, Chutinamit, Pacot, and Xolpacol and the Quiché capital of Gumarcaah is suggestive of a close relationship.<sup>56</sup> In addition, both the hilltop site of Xolchun (Huehuetenango) and the Mam capital of Zaculeu exhibit numerous settlement features characteristic of Gumarcaah elements, indicating a strong and direct Quiché influence.<sup>57</sup>

After the successful conquest of these parts of the Cuchumatanes, the archaeological evidence suggests that the Quiché established administrative enclaves modelled on Gumarcaah within the principal centres of the subjugated peoples. This inference from the archaeological record is substantiated by the following lines from the *Título C'oyoi* that specifically mention the founding of a Quiché enclave at Zaculeu:

The younger brother and sons of the lords ... were given instructions by the great lord, Don Q'uicab: "You valiant warriors, you conquerors of the fortified centers, you treaders of the land; go and be inhabitants of the lands at the fortified centers of the sub-

ject peoples so that they do not arrive there again. Conquer, you warriors, lancers; likewise go back and forth continually, make many land boundaries for us at each milpa in the canyons of the fortified centers." [This] was said to them [by Q'uibab] ... The inhabitants of the lands left [and went] before the Sakiulew peoples ... "Grab them by the armpits and sacrifice them, trample them, make yourselves valiant warriors, and watchful guardians."<sup>58</sup>

The Quiché conquest of much of highland Guatemala was therefore, to quote Robert Carmack, "accompanied not only by the sacrifice of some of the captives, but also by a measure of political control, sub-administrators being placed in many of the conquered settlements."<sup>59</sup> It was the important task of these resident "sub-administrators" to maintain Quiché authority in conquered provinces and ensure that subjugated communities regularly furnished various items of tribute for the lords of Gumarcaah.

Quiché expansionist campaigns were motivated, according to the *Popol Vuh*, by a desire for "the aggrandizement of the kingdom"<sup>60</sup> and the attainment of a prosperous conquest state in which subjugated peoples would pay tribute in goods and services to Gumarcaah. The Quiché were singularly successful in achieving this goal. At its maximum extent, reached under the rule of Quicab the Great around the mid-fifteenth century, the Quiché conquest state was large even by Post-classic Mesoamerican standards, stretching from the rich cacao lands of Soconusco in the south-west to the highlands of Verapaz in the north-east. Territorially, the state was some twenty-six thousand square kilometres in area, and supported perhaps as many as one million people. It may have been the largest political entity to have evolved in the history of highland Guatemala.<sup>61</sup>

Brief accounts that record the paying of tribute by the conquered peoples to the Quiché at Gumarcaah are contained in the *Popol Vuh* and one of the *Nijab* documents:

The small towns and the large towns paid high ransoms; they brought precious stones and metals, they brought honey of the bees, bracelets, bracelets of emeralds and other stones, and brought garlands made of blue feathers, the tribute of all the towns ...

It was not little what [Gucumatz and Quicab] did, neither were few the tribes which they conquered. Many branches of the tribes came to pay tribute to the Quiché; full of sorrow they came [to Gumarcaah] to give it over ...<sup>62</sup>

The towns, as many as these chiefs [of Gumarcaah] had conquered, came to pay tribute. They all came to leave it, without any of them failing to do so, because they were all subject to these chiefs, their conquerors.<sup>63</sup>

There is no information in the ethnohistorical sources concerning the regularity of tribute payment, but it is likely that a levy was exacted every forty or eighty days, as recorded by Las Casas for the people of Verapaz.<sup>64</sup> The tribute brought from the subjugated provinces into Gumarcaah was extremely varied. A *Nijaiib* document records cacao, *pataxte* (a fruit similar to the cacao bean), fish, shrimp, turtles, iguanas, and cotton from the Pacific coast.<sup>65</sup> The *Título de Santa Clara* mentions fish, crabs, and precious stones from the Tzutuhil people of Lake Atitlán.<sup>66</sup> From the Cuchumatán region, Sacapulas would have provided salt, copper, and small fish.<sup>67</sup> Aguacatán would have paid tribute in *tierra templada* agricultural produce and possibly also in precious stones and metals.<sup>68</sup> Other Cuchumatán communities subject to Quiché rule would presumably have paid tribute in whatever item could be locally produced and was considered desirable, such as fruit, corn, lime (important in the preparation of corn for eating), stone and timber for construction purposes, animal skins for clothing, and numerous forest-derived products (dyes, tannin, kindling, and torches).

It is thus fairly clear, from the archaeological and the ethnohistorical evidence, that by about the middle of the fifteenth century the Quiché had brought the greater part of highland Guatemala, including several areas of the Cuchumatanes, under the political and tributary jurisdiction of Gumarcaah. The exact spatial extent of Quiché authority in the Cuchumatanes, however, is an issue of contention. Adrián Recinos, chiefly on the basis of similarities between the archaeological sites of the Cuchumatanes and those of the central Quiché, speculates that domination of the Huehuetenango area by the forces of Quicab the Great in the first half of the fifteenth century did not end with the conquest of Zaculeu and the establishment of a line of fortresses along the Cuilco and Selegua valleys. Rather, asserts Recinos, Quiché domination reached well into the heart of the Cuchumatanes, to the Mam-speaking communities of Todos Santos and San Martín, and even farther beyond to the Jacalteca-speaking communities of the Huista valley.<sup>69</sup>

This view is not shared by John Fox. In a detailed study of the process of Quiché territorial expansion, Fox disagrees with the speculation of Recinos, maintaining quite explicitly that "the Jacalteca ... were beyond Quiché control and, seemingly, influence."<sup>70</sup> The more cautious Oliver La Farge and Douglas Byers, both of whom knew the Cuchumatanes intimately, offer the following analysis: "The high mountain barrier of the Cuchumatanes preserved its isolation, and like the various tribes

immediately north and west it may have consisted of one or a number of petty provincial chiefdoms [where] there must have been a good many little towns, with a small semi-aristocracy, not very lofty, without stupendous monuments or striking riches, living out in a provincial way their simpler version of the general Mayan pattern of life."<sup>71</sup> La Farge and Byers concede that Quiché influence "did reach well in the Cuchumatanes," but further contend that, at least in Jacalteca-speaking districts, "there must have been little here to attract them."<sup>72</sup>

By the end of the fifteenth century, Quiché hegemony in highland Guatemala, including parts of the Cuchumatanes, had diminished considerably. Around 1475, following the death of the mighty Quicab, internal dislocations resulted in one major branch of the Quiché, the Cakchiquel, severing its affiliation with Gumarcaah and forming its own political system. Upon breaking with Gumarcaah, the Cakchiquel migrated some thirty kilometres to the south and east where, in the area of present-day Tecpán, they founded their capital of Yximché, and from there initiated their own pattern of conquest.<sup>73</sup>

The secession of the Cakchiquel from the Quiché precipitated a series of wars between Gumarcaah and Yximché that lasted eleven years. The outcome of this long struggle was the gradual ascendancy to power of the Cakchiquel over the Quiché. On one occasion the Quiché were completely routed and suffered the ignominious shame of having their rulers ceremoniously sacrificed to the Cakchiquel gods.<sup>74</sup> Prolonged warfare with the Cakchiquel had the effect of weakening Quiché control over a number of subjugated territories, including parts of the Cuchumatanes. By the early years of the sixteenth century at least three Cuchumatán groups had revolted against the rule of Gumarcaah. The *Título de Santa Clara* records that the Quiché were expelled from the lands of the Agaab people of Sacapulas, from the lands of the Balamiha people of Aguacatán, and from the lands of the Mam people of Zaculeu.<sup>75</sup>

By the end of the second decade of the sixteenth century, only four years before the arrival of the Spaniards, a distinct change had taken place in the relations between the rulers of Gumarcaah and the peoples formerly governed by the Quiché as part of their conquest state. At the height of Quiché rule, the relations between Gumarcaah and the conquered communities were similar to those of a feudal lord and his vassals. After the successful revolt, relations, in the words of Robert Carmack, more closely resembled "those of feudal lord to manorial lord."<sup>76</sup> This change in the nature of political relations is perhaps best exemplified by the situation of the Mam of Zaculeu. Once totally subject to Quiché authority, the Mam of Zaculeu had by the time of the Spanish conquest reasserted sovereignty over much of their territory and had emerged from the status

of vassals to that of potential allies. Evidence of this change comes from none other than Pedro de Alvarado, who reported that the Mam ruler, Caibil Balam, was received with great ceremony and respect at Gumarcaah.<sup>77</sup>

The eclipse of Quiché power and the concomitant resurgence of former Quiché-dominated peoples through force of arms to the status of self-determining nations resulted in the political fragmentation of highland Guatemala in the years immediately prior to conquest by Spain. Upon their arrival in 1524, therefore, the Spaniards encountered a decidedly unstable situation, one seething with internecine tensions and rivalries. Although the Cakchiquel seem to have had the edge militarily over other newly emerging Indian nations, a vacuum of power prevailed throughout highland Guatemala on the eve of the Spanish conquest. There are strong indications, however, that the vacuum would soon have been filled by the Aztecs of the Valley of Mexico had the Spaniards not arrived before them and completely altered the course of Mesoamerican history.<sup>78</sup>

#### LAND, SETTLEMENT, AND SOCIETY

The Late Post-classic or Protohistoric period between the years 1200 and 1524 was a time of invasions, conquests, and almost perpetual strife throughout highland Guatemala. In view of such conditions, a primary consideration in the human occupation of the land was the need for defence. This need is clearly reflected in the location and layout of the majority of late pre-Hispanic Cuchumatán settlements.

Most Protohistoric settlements in the Cuchumatanes belong to one of three defence-oriented categories: first, those that are located on defensive hilltops or spurs of land, such as the settlement of Xolchun (Huehuetenango), lying at the end of a small plateau surrounded by deep ravines;<sup>79</sup> second, settlements that may not be particularly well positioned defensively but that have either artificial devices of protection (bulwarks, causeways, ditches, or walls) or could have been defended from nearby hilltops, such as the Mam capital of Zaculeu;<sup>80</sup> and third, settlements that have both a naturally defensive location and the additional advantages of man-made defences, such as Chutixtiox and Chutinamit in the Sacapulas basin.<sup>81</sup> An emphasis was therefore placed, in locating or planning settlements, on the need for protection. Of eighteen Cuchumatán sites that can be positively identified as having signs of Protohistoric occupation, twelve exhibit defensive or potentially defensive characteristics (see table 3).

The predominant settlement complex associated with the occupation of



the Cuchumatanes on the eve of the Spanish conquest was that of the *tinamit-amag*, a highland Guatemalan variation of a fundamentally "centre-periphery" pattern of settlement in which a social as well as a spatial distinction can be made. *Tinamit*, from the Nahuatl word meaning "walled" or "fortified towns," were located on naturally defensive or artificially protected terrain. According to Carmack, *tinamit* were established under the wave of Mexican influence that swept the highlands of Guatemala after AD 1250. Residential units were often located adjacent to the *tinamit*, as at Chutixtiox and Zaculeu, but the *tinamit* were generally so physically confined as to prevent any massive agglomeration of people. In this sense *tinamit*, although strongly nucleated, were mostly non-urban or at best semi-urban entities that never attained the size or complexity of such truly urban centres as Teotihuacán or Tenochtitlán. *Tinamit* were essentially religio-military strongholds where the priests and rulers lived, and to where the common people turned for spiritual guidance in times of peace and physical protection in times of war.<sup>82</sup>

Distinct both spatially and socially from the *tinamit* were the *amag*. The *amag*, from the Quiché word meaning "vicinage" or "outlying districts," were dispersed forms of settlement that were indigenous to highland Guatemala prior to the impact of Mexicanization and the establishment of *tinamit* dwelling for the religious and military elite. *Amag* were overwhelmingly the abode of the common people. The Dominican priest Francisco Ximénez, writing in the eighteenth century about life in Guatemala before the Spanish conquest, has left a memorable description of the *amag* and its relationship to the *tinamit*: "[The *amag*] is a small town extended like the legs of a spider from which they take the similitude to give it this name, as if we were to say hamlet; and [it is used] to differentiate it from the 'cabecera' or towns which were inhabited by lords, and which were called *tinamit*, which means, city or court."<sup>83</sup>

Despite the widespread trend towards religio-military nucleation in the form of the *tinamit*, the *amag* remained the dominant form of settlement for the common majority who lived in outlying rural areas. The *tinamit-amag* complex found throughout highland Guatemala on the eve of the Spanish conquest was thus "a compromise settlement ... in which members of the ruling strata resided in town centers (*tinamit*) near the temples, while members of the lower strata stretched out over the countryside in small hamlets (*amag*) or in other units."<sup>84</sup>

The basic social distinction reflected in the *tinamit-amag* pattern of settlement is only part of the complex social fabric of late pre-Hispanic life. Carmack has recently established that the Quiché of Gumarcaah had a social structure that was "a complicated integration of rank, descent,

territoriality, hierarchy, and quadrachotomies."<sup>85</sup> Assuming that the Indian peoples of the Cuchumatanes had a form of social organization similar to the Quiché of Gumarcaah, a fundamental division existed between the lords and their vassals. The lords were concerned with political, military, and religious affairs; the vassals were humble subjects who laboured, provided, and fought for their masters. The lords were sacred, received tribute (in goods, labour, and wives), dressed in fine woven cloths of coloured cotton, and lived in elaborate palaces within the confines of the *tinamit*; the vassals were secular, payers of tribute, dressed in simple henequen cloths, and lived in rudimentary huts amidst the cornfields of the *amag*. In between lords and vassals was a middle stratum consisting of warriors, merchants, and artisans. At Gumarcaah there was also a serf caste who worked the lands of the lords and, like the vassals, were tribute payers. A caste of slaves was entirely beholden to the lords.<sup>86</sup>

These social divisions existed within a larger, more subtle framework that involved a system of ranked lineages. Broadly, a distinction can be made between noble and commoner lineages. Specific high-ranking noble lineages were associated with certain political or military offices, while low-ranking commoner lineages were denied access to any such offices and were engaged primarily in providing tribute in times of peace and military service in times of war. Territorially, noble and common lineages were grouped together to form rural estates known as *chinamit*, which bore the name of the highest-ranked lineage. Several *chinamit* collectively constituted a larger unit known as a *calpul*, which appears to have been a traditional social and territorial entity of considerable antiquity.<sup>87</sup>

It is likely that upon their arrival in the Cuchumatanes, the Spaniards found throughout the region a socio-spatial organization that was similar to that of the Quiché of Gumarcaah. Many parts of the Cuchumatanes had, for most of the fifteenth century, been under the political hegemony of Gumarcaah and had been governed by an implanted Quiché elite who, possibly in conjunction with the leaders of the subjugated peoples, exercised control over the common majority. Quiché domination in the Cuchumatán region had long since lapsed when the Spaniards arrived, but presumably the influence of the Mexicanized expeditionaries of Gumarcaah prevailed in a Quichean-derived style of socio-political organization. It was left to imperial forces led by Gonzalo de Alvarado, which initiated the Spanish conquest of the Cuchumatanes in 1525, to usher in an era of social, political, and cultural change that far surpassed anything the peoples of the Cuchumatán highlands had experienced under the rule of the Quiché of Gumarcaah.

## 4 Conquest and Subjugation by Imperial Spain

Wars waged between groups for the control of mutually desired lands and peoples inevitably carry dramatic and far-reaching implications, particularly for defeated and vanquished factions. The Spanish conquest of Guatemala in the sixteenth century was no exception. Subjugation by imperial Spain (or "pacification," as the conquerors themselves regarded it) was a traumatic experience for the native peoples of Guatemala, more so because disruptions wrought by military confrontation were reinforced for centuries thereafter by the operation of Spanish-promoted forces that radically altered the nature and appearance of Indian life. Specific geographical consequences of the Spanish conquest of the Cuchumatán highlands are discussed at length in subsequent chapters. The present chapter reconstructs the chronology of Spanish penetration and domination in the region, not merely to serve as historical narrative, but more importantly to give some impression of spatial variation in the pattern of conquest – some areas were significantly more difficult to subjugate and control than others. Fundamental to the reconstruction is an appreciation of the extent and degree of Indian resistance to European invasion, an appreciation that is of vital importance with respect to estimates made later of the size of the Cuchumatán population at Spanish contact.

### THE CONQUEST OF GUATEMALA (1524–41)

The Spanish conquest of Guatemala began with the *entrada* of Pedro de Alvarado in February 1524. Instructed by his commanding officer, Hernán Cortés, to verify reports of the existence of "many rich and splendid lands inhabited by new and different races,"<sup>1</sup> Alvarado had left Mexico for Guatemala on 6 December 1523 with an army that included 120 cavalry, three hundred infantry, and several hundred Mexican auxiliaries from Cholula and Tlaxcala.<sup>2</sup> Alvarado met with no appreciable native resistance on his march down the sparsely settled Pacific coast. Only after a difficult ascent of the pass near Santa María de Jesús, "so rough that the

horses could scarcely climb,"<sup>3</sup> did the Spanish expeditionary force enter the densely populated Guatemalan highlands and meet with stubborn Indian opposition. The most decisive confrontation took place early in 1524, when the invading Spaniards met the warriors of the Quiché nation on the broad plain where the city of Quezaltenango (Xelahu) now stands.

The Quiché had unsuccessfully tried to forge an alliance with the Cakchiquel and the Tzutuhil peoples and thus present the European invaders with a united Indian challenge. The refusal of the Cakchiquel and the Tzutuhil to join ranks with a mutual enemy meant that the Quiché confronted the Spaniards with a force drawn entirely from their own people and a few remaining allies. Despite being shunned by the Cakchiquel and the Tzutuhil, the Quiché had a distinct numerical advantage. However, although greatly outnumbered, a combination of astute tactics and a superior military apparatus resulted in an impressive Spanish victory. The physical and psychological impact of cavalry on a people who had never before seen a horse and its rider in action was as devastating as the material superiority of steel and firearms over the bow and arrow. After a long and bloody battle, during which it is said that Alvarado himself killed the Quiché ruler Tecún Umán in man-to-man combat, the Quiché surrendered.<sup>4</sup>

After laying down arms, the Quiché invited the Spaniards to their capital, Utatlán (Gumarcaah), allegedly to discuss the terms of subjugation. At Utatlán, near the present-day town of Santa Cruz del Quiché, a last desperate effort was made by the Quiché to escape defeat. A plot was devised whereby the Spaniards were to be lured into the confines of the capital. Once inside, the man-made causeway forming the principal approach to the city was to be destroyed, thus trapping Alvarado, his soldiers, and the much-feared horses. Both city and foe would then be set on fire. On entering the half-deserted Utatlán, resembling more "a robber's stronghold than a city,"<sup>5</sup> the wary Spaniards sensed a conspiracy and retreated hastily back across the causeway to safety. Suspicions of the plot were confirmed when Indian warriors on the plain outside the city openly renewed hostilities. Alvarado then ordered his soldiers to fall on the Quiché without mercy. Utatlán was laid to waste, and the rulers responsible for conspiring against the Spaniards burned to death. In complete disarray, the Quiché nation collapsed. A crucial primary phase in the Spanish conquest of Guatemala was accomplished.

Following the defeat of the Quiché, the Spaniards turned against other Indian peoples. Whereas the conquest of central Mexico had been executed with a prompt and ruthless efficiency, Spanish subjugation of the Guatemalan highlands was made an arduous, protracted affair by the

political fragmentation of the region. Unlike Cortés in Mexico, Alvarado had no single, dominant native group to conquer. Rather, a host of small but tenacious groups had to be overcome. Domination of the Quiché was followed by a series of laborious campaigns against the Tzutuhil, the Pocomán, the Mam, the Cakchiquel (initially Spanish allies who revolted after suffering a period of chronic abuse at the hands of their foreign masters), the Ixil, the Uspantec, and the Kekchí. The conquests of these and other Indian groups continued throughout the 1520s and well into the 1530s.<sup>6</sup>

The military phase of the Spanish conquest may, therefore, perhaps best be regarded as beginning with Alvarado's *entrada* in 1524 and ending around the time of the *conquistador's* death in 1541. It thus took almost twenty years, by fire and sword, before the various native peoples of highland Guatemala were brought under Spanish rule. During this prolonged period of conquest, several Indian groups were not only successful in resisting the military forces of imperial Spain; some actually inflicted defeat, albeit momentarily, on the European invaders. Among the Indian groups of Guatemala who offered stubborn opposition to the Spaniards were the peoples of the Cuchumatán highlands.

#### THE CONQUEST OF THE CUCHUMATÁN HIGHLANDS (1525–30)

The Spanish conquest of the Cuchumatán highlands was accomplished between the years 1525 and 1530 by three military campaigns directed chiefly against the Mam, the Ixil, and the Quichean people of Uspantán. The expeditions mounted by the Spaniards precipitated at least seven significant battles. On one occasion, during the initial campaign against the Uspantec in 1529, the Spanish expeditionary force was resoundingly beaten back. Only after bold and bloody resistance did Cuchumatán Indians finally surrender to Spanish domination.

Spanish subjugation of the Cuchumatanes began in 1525 with the expedition against the Mam led by Gonzalo de Alvarado. Gonzalo had been appointed by his brother, Pedro de Alvarado, to conduct the campaign after it was revealed by the Quiché leader, Sequechul, that the abortive plot to burn the Spaniards at Utatlán in 1524 was suggested to Sequechul's father, Chigna Huiucelet, by the Mam ruler Caibil Balam.<sup>7</sup> Sequechul wished to avenge what he considered the unjust execution of his father for purportedly engineering the plot. If Chigna Huiucelet had been burned at the stake for his role in the conspiracy, punishment should also be meted out to Caibil Balam. With this end in mind, Sequechul offered to guide the Spaniards in an expedition against the Mam. To

convince the Spaniards of the desirability of conquest, Sequechul described the territory of the Mam as "great and rich," and assured them that "abundant treasure" would be among the spoils of victory.<sup>8</sup> The entreaties of Sequechul met with a favourable response, and preparations were accordingly made for a major *entrada*.

Gonzalo de Alvarado left Tecpán-Guatemala, the Spaniards' temporary base, for the country of the Mam early in July 1525 with a party of forty cavalry, eighty infantry, and two thousand Mexican and Quichean warriors loyal to the Spanish Crown. Assisted by another contingent of several hundred Indians serving as pack bearers, the party proceeded first to Totonicapán, a town on the outskirts of Mam territory that functioned as military and supply headquarters for the campaign. After a brief encampment at Totonicapán, the party proceeded northward into Mam country. Heavy rains delayed the progress of the *entrada*, and eight days passed before the expeditionary force arrived at the swollen Río Hondo. The march continued until the invaders reached the plain where the Mam town of Mazatenango stood, near the present settlement of San Lorenzo. The Spaniards attacked, and in less than four hours Mazatenango was taken.<sup>9</sup>

At dawn the following morning, the Spaniards were about to march on Huehuetenango, only three kilometres away, when they were confronted by a Mam army, reported as five thousand strong,<sup>10</sup> from the neighbouring town of Malacatán (now Malacatancito). Already in battle formation, the Malacatecos approached the Spaniards over an open plain. Alvarado immediately ordered his cavalry into action. Those Indians not killed by Spanish lances or trampled to death beneath the horses' hooves were soon dispatched by the infantry who followed in the cavalry's wake. The Indians of Malacatán fought bravely; but when their leader, Canil Acab, fell to a blow from the lance of Gonzalo de Alvarado, the courage of the Malacatecos quickly waned. Native resistance collapsed and the remaining Indians fled from the field of battle into the surrounding hills. Alvarado then marched unopposed into Malacatán, where only the aged and the sick remained. Delegates of the community later arrived from the mountains with offerings of peace. Alvarado accepted their unconditional surrender and declared them subjects of the King of Spain. The campaign against the Mam had successfully begun.<sup>11</sup>

After a few days' rest, the Spaniards marched into Huehuetenango, only to find it completely deserted. Having already received reports of the Spaniards' approach, Caibil Balam had ordered the evacuation of Huehuetenango and had retreated with his forces to the nearby stronghold of Zaculeu. Alvarado sent word to the Mam leader proposing terms for the peaceful capitulation of Zaculeu to the Spaniards: "Let it be known

[to Caibil Balam] that our coming is beneficial for his people because we bring tidings of the true God and Christian Religion, sent by the Pope – the Vicar of Jesus Christ, God and Man – and the Emperor King of Spain, so that you may become Christians peacefully, of your own free will; but should you refuse the peace we offer, then the death and destruction that will follow will be entirely of your own account."<sup>12</sup>

Caibil Balam was not impressed by this choice and left it unanswered. Alvarado gave the Mam leader three days to consider the treaty before ordering his troops to march on Zaculeu.

The task confronting the Spaniards was indeed formidable. Zaculeu exhibited a distinct air of impregnability. Although located on an open plain, the site was surrounded on all sides but one by ravines, and further protected by a man-made system of walls and ditches (figure 7).<sup>13</sup> Inside the stronghold, Caibil Balam had gathered an estimated six thousand warriors, drawn not only from Huehuetenango and Zaculeu, but also from the Mam communities of Cuilco and Ixtahuacán.<sup>14</sup> Although the possession of horses and gunpowder represented a distinct military advantage, the invaders and their Indian allies were still outnumbered by about two to one. Victory would not be easily attained.

As the Spaniards advanced on Zaculeu they were assailed by a shower of arrows and stones. Alvarado decided on a full-scale frontal assault, and ordered his soldiers to attack the fortress at its least impregnable northern entrance. A detachment of Indians who engaged the invaders in the fields forming the northern approach to Zaculeu held their own against the Spanish infantry, but fared much worse against the ensuing waves of cavalry. A battalion of two thousand warriors was dispatched from Zaculeu to rejuvenate the Mam defence, but still the Spaniards lost no ground. Soon the battlefield was strewn with "green crests covered in Mam blood."<sup>15</sup> Realizing the futility of further combat, Caibil Balam ordered the Mam back to the safety of the barricaded fortress. Although the Spaniards had not succeeded in penetrating beyond the north wall of Zaculeu, Alvarado declared victory, and consolidated his position by laying siege to the stronghold.

Shortly after initiating the siege, the Spaniards were forced to return to the field of battle by a massive Mam army descending on the beleaguered Zaculeu from the mountains to the north. This army, reported as eight thousand strong,<sup>16</sup> came from the heart of the Cuchumatanes and was composed of warriors drawn from towns politically aligned with the Mam of Zaculeu. Communities such as San Martín, Todos Santos, Santiago Chimaltenango, and San Juan Atitán probably all contributed a supply of warriors. Leaving a command of men under Antonio de Salazar to maintain the siege of the fortress, Alvarado marched out to attack the





fast-approaching Mam relief force. Once again the Indians were more than a match for the Spanish infantry, but collapsed under the assault of the cavalry. On two occasions the Zaculeu Mam attempted to break the siege, penetrate the Spanish rear guard, and come to the assistance of their comrades in the field; but Salazar's men stood firm and succeeded in holding them back. Besieged in his stronghold, Caibil Balam could only watch as Gonzalo de Alvarado's disciplined and seasoned troops, ably assisted by their Mexican and Quichean allies, annihilated the courageous but disorganized Mam warriors. After leading his forces to a decisive victory, Alvarado returned to Zaculeu to continue the siege.<sup>17</sup>

The siege of Zaculeu, begun in early September, lasted until the middle of October before the Mam showed signs of capitulation. During this time very little food reached the fortress from the surrounding agricultural communities, most of which had earlier fallen into the invaders' hands. A lack of provisions and a falling morale left the Mam weak, sick, and hungry. At one point during the siege, the invaders' own supplies were almost exhausted. Indian auxiliaries resorted to eating the horses killed in battle, but the Spaniards themselves held out until a shipment of food arrived from the Lieutenant General of the Province of Quiché, Juan de León Cardoma. When the weeping Caibil Balam finally surrendered, it was not until the Mam of Zaculeu had reached the point of starvation. After accepting Caibil Balam's surrender, Alvarado ordered a reconnaissance to be made of all the towns subject to Zaculeu, and established a Spanish garrison in nearby Huehuetenango under the command of Gonzalo de Solís. Satisfied that the subjugation of the Mam had now been accomplished, Alvarado returned to Tecpán-Guatemala with news of his hard-earned victory.<sup>18</sup>

With the fall of Zaculeu to the expeditionary force of Gonzalo de Alvarado in October 1525, the western reaches of the Cuchumatanes came under Spanish domination. Two eastern enclaves, however, remained unconquered: the lands of the Ixil and those of their allies, the Uspantec. For four years after the conquest of the Mam, these two areas were considered too isolated and insignificant to warrant immediate Spanish attention. Increasing harassment of Spanish forces by the warriors of Uspantán, plus the constant efforts of the Uspantecos to incite an uprising among the already vanquished southern Quiché, eventually convinced the Spaniards that an *entrada* into these remote and troublesome parts was necessary.

The first *entrada* into the eastern Cuchumatanes consisted of sixty Spanish infantry and three hundred Indian auxiliaries under the command of Gaspar Arias, an *alcalde ordinario* of the city of Guatemala.<sup>19</sup> This small expeditionary force, by the beginning of September 1529, had

managed to bring the Ixil towns of Nebaj and Chajul under temporary Spanish control. They then marched eastward towards Uspantán. Shortly before reaching the Uspantec stronghold, Arias received word that he had been deposed from his position of *alcalde ordinario* by Francisco de Orduña, the acting governor of Guatemala. Arias returned immediately to the capital in order to attend to his personal affairs, leaving Pedro de Olmos in charge of completing the mission. Against the advice and counsel of his officers, the inexperienced Olmos rashly decided to storm Uspantán in a full-scale frontal assault. The decision proved disastrous. No sooner had the Spaniards attacked than two thousand Uspantecos ambushed them from the rear. The invaders were completely routed and suffered heavy losses. Many Indian auxiliaries were killed in battle, while others were captured alive and later put to death on the sacrificial altar of the Uspanteco god Exbalamquen. The survivors of the expedition, defeated and exhausted, fought their way back to the safety of the Spanish garrison at Umatlán, where they complained bitterly about Olmos's suicidal attack.<sup>20</sup>

About a year after this unsuccessful *entrada*, the Spaniards mounted a second expedition against the Ixil and the Uspantec. Under the command of Francisco de Castellanos, "a man of courage and brave spirit,"<sup>21</sup> this expedition was notably stronger than the first. Castellanos left the city of Guatemala (Ciudad Vieja) for the eastern Cuchumatanes with a party consisting of eight corporals, thirty-two cavalry, forty infantry, and several hundred Indian auxiliaries. Following a brief rest at Chichicastenango, which provided an opportunity to recruit more forces, the expedition marched seven leagues north to Sacapulas. After a difficult crossing of the Río Negro, the Spaniards began a slow ascent of the steep, southern ranges of the Cuchumatanes. On reaching the upper slopes, Castellanos's troops came upon an army of between four and five thousand "rebellious and ferocious" warriors from Nebaj and other neighbouring towns.<sup>22</sup>

After a long and bloody battle at the summit, the Spaniards' cavalry eventually outflanked the Indians and forced them to retreat to their stronghold at Nebaj, "isolated and protected on all sides by a deep ravine."<sup>23</sup> There the Indians made a final stand. The failure of the Ixil to defend adequately all sides of the Nebaj fortress enabled several Indian auxiliaries to scramble over the ravine, scale the stronghold's walls, and gain entry. Once inside, they set the town on fire. In the resulting chaos, the Spaniards broke through the main defence at the entrance to the stronghold after many warriors had left their position to fight the fire. The invaders soon emerged victorious. Ixil warriors who were not killed during the fighting were rounded up. The next day Castellanos ordered

that all captives were to be branded as slaves as punishment for their resistance. When news of the fall of Nebaj reached the people of Chajul, they surrendered to the Spaniards without contest.<sup>24</sup>

Following the capture of Nebaj and the capitulation of Chajul, Spanish forces, rested and buoyed by victory, marched eastward once again towards Uspantán. Castellanos's troops arrived at the town to find an estimated ten thousand Indian warriors, drawn from Uspantán, Cunén, Cotzal, Sacapulas, and Verapaz, waiting in hostile confrontation. The Spaniards had barely established a position in front of the Uspantec stronghold when the Indians attacked. Although greatly outnumbered, Castellanos's strategic deployment of cavalry, plus the firearm superiority of his foot soldiers, finally won the day for the Spaniards. Uspantán was seized; and, as at Nebaj, those warriors not slaughtered on the field of battle were taken prisoner and branded as slaves. After ensuring that the various towns allied with the Uspantec also capitulated, Castellanos returned to the capital.<sup>25</sup>

The successful subjugation of Uspantán, accomplished during the final days of December 1530, concluded the all-important military phase of Spanish conquest in the Cuchumatán highlands. The three expeditions mounted by the Spaniards against the native peoples of the Cuchumatanes resulted in at least seven major battles and many skirmishes between Spanish and Indian forces. The ability of Indian communities to raise strong armies to oppose the *entradas* of 1525 to 1530 is an important indication that the Cuchumatán region at the time of Spanish contact supported a population of considerable magnitude.

## 5 The Cuchumatán Population at Spanish Contact

The debate concerning the size of the indigenous population of the New World in the years immediately prior to European conquest and colonization has long generated heated discussion.<sup>1</sup> A dichotomy of opinion may be said to exist between those scholars who claim that the aboriginal inhabitants of the Americas were few in number and those who claim that the native population was prodigious.<sup>2</sup> Related to the controversy of population size is the issue of the demographic decline that followed the coming of the Europeans. The proponents of a large pre-Columbian population maintain that there was a catastrophic decrease in Indian numbers after European invasion. Conversely, the proponents of a small pre-Columbian population reject the idea of a massive numerical collapse.<sup>3</sup> Although the issue is still far from being resolved, the balance of scholarship points increasingly in favour of those who claim that aboriginal America was densely populated and that the Indian peoples of the New World declined substantially in number after contact with the invading Europeans.<sup>4</sup>

Although much remains to be done in the field of Guatemalan historical demography, a study by Thomas Veblen has convincingly demonstrated that the Totonicapán area, which lies just to the south of the Cuchumatanes, was thickly peopled during late pre-Columbian times and that the Indian population of the region decreased dramatically in size in the years following conquest by Spain.<sup>5</sup> Veblen, from a careful interpretation of the documentary sources, suggests that the late pre-Hispanic population of Totonicapán may have numbered as much as the mid-twentieth-century population of the region. He attributes the substantial post-conquest demographic collapse of Totonicapán primarily to the devastating impact of an array of Old World diseases on an immunologically defenceless Indian population. Veblen's study of native population decline in Totonicapán is of crucial importance to the present work because, culturally and historically, it provides a relevant frame of reference against which the Cuchumatán demographic experience may be mea-

sured. In a field of scholarship such as this one, involving no small amount of conjecture and extrapolation, any calculation can only profit from valid regional comparison.

The estimate of the contact population of Totonicapán, based entirely on historical sources, calls immediately into question the credibility of contemporary testimony, particularly sixteenth-century eyewitness accounts by the Spanish conquerors. There is no better summary of the polemics of this issue than the following statement of Cook and Borah:

Much of our information on Indian population in the years immediately preceding and following the Conquest comes from the conquerors themselves. Some information represents their efforts to determine the nature of the people and country they were entering. Other information arises incidentally from their reporting of what they did and of the hazards they overcame. Spanish reporting of the period of the Conquest has been impugned on two grounds: First, that the Europeans of the sixteenth century could not handle statistical operations or concepts of larger numbers; second, that all explorers and conquerors in a new land tend to exaggerate. If one reflects upon the complexity of European commercial and administrative techniques in the sixteenth century and upon the variety of motives and the rivalries among explorers and conquerors, a more defensible view would be that the Europeans could count and that a tendency to exaggerate in some would be balanced by a tendency to minimize in others. On the whole, we do better to receive gratefully the fragments that have come down to us and to apply the normal canons of textual examination and comparison.<sup>6</sup>

Perhaps the most suspect data used to derive estimates of pre-Hispanic populations are reports of the size of Indian armies encountered by the Spaniards in the course of conquest. It is alleged, for example, that Spanish *conquistadores*, in attempts to glorify their military feats, were guilty of grossly exaggerating the magnitude of the Indian forces defeated in battle. This argument, however, fails to take into consideration the fact that successful conquerors frequently became, following pacification of the Indians, influential administrators charged with, among other duties, tribute assessment for both the Spanish Crown and privileged colonists. Since population size directly determined the levy of tribute, any *conquistador* with prospects of one day being responsible for assessing Indian tribute-paying capacity would tend to count with at least some

TABLE 4

Indian Army Sizes Recorded during Major Battles of Conquest (1525–1530)

Date	Place of battle	Estimated Indian army size	Native communities supplying warriors
1525	Mazatenango (San Lorenzo)	—	Mazatenango
1525	near Mazatenango	5,000	Malacatán
1525	Zaculeu	6,000	Cuilco, Huehuetenango, Ixtahuacán, and Zaculeu
1525	Zaculeu	8,000	Various Cuchumatán communities affiliated with the Mam of Zaculeu
1530	Nebaj	5,000	Nebaj and other towns
1530	Uspantán	10,000	Cunén, Sacapulas, San Juan Cotzal, Uspantán, and some communities from the Verapaz region.

SOURCE: Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida*

measure of discretion, lest his misdemeanour be discovered afterwards and cause him to run foul of local administrators or even of higher authorities in Spain.<sup>7</sup>

Consistent with the view that favours taking contemporary testimony and subjecting it to scholarly scrutiny, Veblen has shown that Spanish estimates of Indian army sizes recorded for the Totonicapán area correspond reasonably well with data derived from other sources. Perhaps most significantly, Veblen claims that the work of the seventeenth-century chronicler Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, considered by many to be an unreliable source for pre-Hispanic population data, in fact contains highly plausible figures for the size of Indian armies mustered by Totonicapán. Veblen explicitly states that "the data available on the size of the pre-Hispanic population of Totonicapán provide no basis for rejecting the demographic information contained in Fuentes y Guzmán."<sup>8</sup> This appraisal is of crucial importance because reports of Indian army sizes, compiled by Fuentes y Guzmán as part of the *Recordación Florida*, are among the few extant historical data that can be used to derive an estimate of the contact population of the Cuchumatanes.

Estimates of the magnitude of the Indian armies that confronted the Spaniards during *entradas* into the Cuchumatanes, along with the names of towns supplying the warriors, are shown in table 4. Fuentes y Guzmán's source for the conquest of the Mam was a document, alas now lost, written by the *conquistador* Gonzalo de Alvarado after the successful subjugation of the Mam in 1525. In his account, the chronicler gives no

indication of the size of the Indian army that defended Mazatenango (San Lorenzo), but does state that the town "in those days was well-populated."<sup>9</sup> Fuentes y Guzmán's chief sources for the conquest of the Ixil and the Uspantec were the *Libros de cabildo*, records of the municipal council of Guatemala, and a collection of documents entitled the *Manuscrito Quiché*.

The total number of Indian warriors the Spaniards faced in battle in the Cuchumatanes between 1525 and 1530 was recorded by Fuentes y Guzmán as thirty-four thousand. For Totonicapán, Veblen uses a one-to-four ratio in correlating army size with total population; for the Tlaxcala region of central Mexico, Gibson uses a warrior-to-total-population ratio of one to five.<sup>10</sup> A ratio of one to four, which Veblen considers conservative, indicates a population of 136,000; a ratio of one to five gives a total of 170,000. An average of these two figures produces a rough estimate of the population of the Cuchumatán highlands between 1525 and 1530 of around 150,000.

In the years immediately preceding the Spanish conquest, however, it is likely that Cuchumatán communities were struck by the same lethal epidemic that, in 1520, swept over much of highland Guatemala. This epidemic, possibly a combination of smallpox and pulmonary plague, entered the highlands of Guatemala from Mexico and had a devastating impact on the Indian peoples of the region. Old World in origin and consequently unknown in the Americas until the arrival of the Spaniards, the epidemic laid low the immunologically defenceless native population and thus reduced both Indian numbers and resistance to military conquest.<sup>11</sup> The havoc and destruction wrought by the disease, a harbinger of the bitter times to come, is recorded in a poignant passage from the *Annals of the Cakchiquels*:

It happened that during the twenty-fifth year [1520] the plague began, oh, my sons! First they became ill of a cough, they suffered from nosebleeds and illness of the bladder. It was truly terrible, the number of dead there were in that period ... Little by little heavy shadows and black night enveloped our fathers and grandfathers and us also, oh, my sons! when the plague raged, ... when the plague began to spread ... It was in truth terrible, the number of dead among the people. The people could not in any way control the sickness ... Great was the stench of the dead. After our fathers and grandfathers succumbed, half of the people fled to the fields. The dogs and the vultures devoured the bodies. The mortality was terrible. Your grandfathers died, and with them died the son of the king

and his brothers and kinsmen. So it was that we became orphans, oh, my sons! So we became when we were young. All of us were thus. We were born to die!<sup>12</sup>

In terms of assessing numerically such qualitative evidence, MacLeod claims, given present-day knowledge of the impact of diseases such as smallpox or plague on human populations with no previous exposure to them, that one-third to one-half of the Indian population of highland Guatemala must have perished as a consequence of this pestilence.<sup>13</sup> A Cuchumatán population that between 1525 and 1530 numbered 150,000 could, therefore, some five to ten years earlier have numbered as much as 225,000 to 300,000. An average of these two figures produces a population estimate for 1520 of around 260,000. In order to place this estimate into some kind of perspective, it is worth noting that the population of the Cuchumatanes in 1950 was about 265,000 and in 1973 numbered in the order of one-half million.<sup>14</sup> This means that the population of the Cuchumatán highlands on the eve of the Spanish conquest may have been of approximately the same magnitude as the mid-twentieth-century population of the region. Although this calculation is no more than a tentative estimate based on meagre documentation, its credibility is supported by Veblen's estimate of the contact population of neighbouring Totonicapán as being of roughly the same size as that region's mid-twentieth-century population. The credibility of the Cuchumatán estimate is further enhanced when one considers that the demographic profiles of three of Guatemala's Mesoamerican neighbours – Mexico, Honduras, and El Salvador – all indicate a long-term process of decline, recovery, and growth whereby human populations regain their contact magnitude some time towards the mid-twentieth century.<sup>15</sup>

An estimate of 260,000 for the contact population of the Cuchumatán highlands must remain highly speculative until the discovery of substantive documentary sources and intensive archaeological excavation make possible a more reliable numerical appraisal. There is, however, little in the existing historical record to suggest that highland Guatemala as a whole was not densely settled in the years immediately preceding and following conquest by Spain. Pedro de Alvarado, a veteran of the Spanish campaign against the populous native groups of central Mexico, was clearly impressed with the density of Indian settlement in the highlands of Guatemala. In his second letter to Cortés in Mexico, written from the Spanish base of Tecpán-Guatemala on 28 July 1524, Alvarado stated that "this land, so great and so thickly inhabited ... has more people than all the lands that Your Grace has governed up to now."<sup>16</sup> Given the scant nature of document survival for the early sixteenth century (and the even



greater scarcity of demographic materials relating to this same period of time) it would be unwise to dismiss entirely the worth of such statements without first having unimpeachable evidence for doing so.

By the end of 1530, Spanish domination over the Indian peoples of the Cuchumatán highlands had been established, albeit with a ruthless show of force on the part of the invaders. The military subjugation of several other parts of highland Guatemala continued well into the 1530s, with all the attendant disruption warfare entails. It was therefore not until about twenty years after the initial *entrada* of Pedro de Alvarado that conditions in Guatemala were conducive to the introduction of systematic and responsible colonial government.<sup>17</sup> Only in the mid- and late 1540s did Spain begin to order and to shape the populous native communities of Guatemala into a viable colony.

## PART THREE

### THE COLONIAL EXPERIENCE (1541–1821)

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## 6 In Pursuit of Order: Congregación and the Administration of Empire

When, writing first-hand of his experiences as a participant in the conquest of Mexico and Guatemala, Bernal Díaz del Castillo declared that "we came here to serve God and the King, and also to get rich,"<sup>1</sup> he not only spoke for a good many besides himself, but summed up Spanish colonial aspirations with a precision as ruthless as the act of subjugation itself. His words boldly and explicitly reflect an awareness of the three most important forces that reshaped the fabric of Amerindian life throughout the New World colonies of Spain: the church, the state, and the ambition of individuals to attain and generate wealth.

Collectively, the church, the state, and individual conquerors and colonists were responsible for executing the transfer, establishment, and cultivation of what anthropologist George Foster has called "the Spanish way of life." According to Foster, the Spanish quest for empire, in which an integrated philosophy about God, Sovereign, state, and man dictated every action and deed, aimed at nothing less than the creation in the New World of a utopia modelled on Spanish principles of religion, government, and culture.<sup>2</sup> The failure to create such a utopia in the islands of the Caribbean<sup>3</sup> served only to increase the desire of Spain to achieve its goal on the American mainland. By the early 1540s, when the subjugation of most of the Indian peoples of highland Guatemala had been successfully accomplished, Spain already had acquired over fifty years' experience as an imperial nation. During this time, two major attempts were made to design codes of legislation aimed at bringing about an efficient and effective administration of Spanish possessions in the New World. In both the Laws of Burgos of 1512 and the New Laws of 1542, Spanish ideals of order, unity, and just government were foremost.<sup>4</sup> One important means of attempting to establish order, unity, and just government throughout the lands of the Indies was a policy of forced resettlement referred to in the literature as *congregación* or *reducción*.<sup>5</sup>

## CONGREGACIÓN AS A SPANISH COLONIAL POLICY

*Congregación* involved the gathering together of scattered Indian communities of often no more than a few families into larger, more centralized towns and villages. "Congregation" of formerly dispersed settlements was allegedly undertaken to expedite the Indians' instruction in Christianity by the evangelizing missionaries. At the same time, however, the policy promoted the task of civil administration by making easier the organization of such arrangements as the enumeration of the native population, the payment of tribute, and the control of labour. The spiritual aspect of *congregación* was at an early date loosely incorporated into the Laws of Burgos, but was later given a more explicit emphasis in the *Recopilación de leyes de las Indias*:

With great care and particular attention we have always attempted to impose the most convenient means of instructing the Indians in the Holy Catholic Faith and the evangelical law, causing them to forget their ancient erroneous rites and ceremonies and to live in concert and order; and, so that this might be brought about, those of our Council of [the] Indies have met together several times with other religious persons ... and they, with the desire of promoting the service of God, and ours, resolved that the Indians should be reduced to villages and not be allowed to live divided and separated in the mountains and wildernesses, where they are deprived of all spiritual and temporal comforts, the aid of our ministers, and those other things which human necessities oblige men to give one to another; therefore ... the viceroys, presidents, and governors [are] charged and ordered to execute the reduction, settlement, and indoctrination of the Indians.<sup>6</sup>

As early as 1537, Francisco Marroquín advocated that *congregación* be initiated throughout Guatemala, but the bishop's call, and two royal orders that followed it, were not acted upon until several years later.<sup>7</sup> One of the main reasons for the delay in starting *congregación* in Guatemala was the authoritarian hold exercised over such affairs by the *adelantado* Pedro de Alvarado. The title *adelantado*, conferred on Alvarado by King Charles V in 1527, gave its recipient a wide range of powers, none of which he was reluctant to use.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, from the mid-1520s until his death in 1541 during the Mixton rebellion in Mexico, Alvarado ruled and exploited Guatemala as if the country were his personal fief. William Sherman reckons that "only rarely has one individual dominated the society of his

time and place in the way that Alvarado did in Guatemala."<sup>9</sup> The *conquistador* and later governor of the province was simply too preoccupied with wielding power and financing ambitious projects to foster the growth of systematic and responsible government. Largely because of Alvarado's behaviour, "the relationship of the Spanish Crown to the conquered peoples for the first quarter century of colonization in Guatemala was one of malign neglect."<sup>10</sup> It was therefore not until after the *adelantado's* death and the dismantling of his impressive private estate that Crown authorities in Guatemala considered it expedient to proceed with the policy of *congregación*.<sup>11</sup>

Towards the end of the 1540s, by order of Licenciado Juan Rogel, the process of *congregación* was initiated throughout the highlands of Guatemala.<sup>12</sup> The policy was orchestrated by Bishop Marroquín and scores of enthusiastic missionaries, all of whom saw *congregación* as the beginning of the "spiritual conquest" of the Indians. *Congregaciones* were generally begun by missionaries first approaching local Indian leaders (*caciques* and *principales*) and encouraging them to approve the site selected for the new town. Engaging the cooperation of local Indian leaders was frequently a key factor in persuading the common majority to leave their old homes in the mountains and migrate to the site of the *congregación*. Some Indian families left their mountain abodes willingly, on the advice and entreaties of their leaders. Others left reluctantly, only after the threat of forceful eviction. Once gathered at the new town site, the Indians would plant the surrounding land as *milpa*. While the corn matured, a start was made on various projects. The first priority was the erection of a church, of modest or elaborate proportion, depending on the number of Indian families comprising the *congregación*. Thereafter, attention was turned to constructing a house for the local priest; to laying out a plaza in front of the church; and to allocating space around the plaza for such buildings as a town hall, a jail, and sleeping quarters where visitors could spend the night. Streets were laid out in a regular grid pattern, running north to south and east to west.<sup>13</sup> By the mid-sixteenth century, a semblance of order had been imposed on the general pattern of Indian settlement. Designed with the goals of Christianization and economic exploitation foremost in mind, the order inherent in *congregación* stood in sharp contrast, in Spanish eyes, to the morphological anarchy of the dispersed pattern of settlement characteristic of pre-conquest times.<sup>14</sup>

An important consideration in the selection of sites for *congregaciones* was the nature of the physical setting. A great many pre-Hispanic settlements were located on remote hilltops, surrounded by ravines and gullies, and were established there during turbulent times more with a view to defence than orderly, peaceful living. The civil and religious

authorities responsible for *congregación* usually favoured accessible valley sites, so the process of resettlement often involved population movement from rugged, isolated mountainsides to central, valley-bottom locations. If a native settlement exhibited site features compatible with the Spanish criteria of open space, access to water, and proximity to agricultural land or enterprises involving the need for Indian labour, then *congregaciones* would be established on or close to these existing settlements. The town Mexican auxiliaries first called Huehuetenango, for example, was built on the site of an earlier Mam settlement known as Chinabjul, and Chiantla, second only to Huehuetenango as a centre of regional importance during the colonial period, was founded near the ancient Mam capital of Zaculeu. It was frequently possible to establish *congregaciones* in which a Catholic church was built on top of, or adjacent to, a native ceremonial complex, thus giving Spanish power over the Indians a strong and overt symbolic expression. Sometimes the stone of pagan temples was quarried and reworked to form a new edifice where Indian peoples could worship the true Christian God. According to La Farge, this is likely what occurred in the *congregación* of Jacaltenango.<sup>15</sup>

From the outset, the process of *congregación* created a dichotomy in the general pattern of native landholding. As early as 1532, a *real cédula* declared that "the Indians shall continue to possess their lands, both arable tracts and grazing lands, so that they do not lack what is necessary."<sup>16</sup> All *congregaciones*, by law, were entitled to an *ejido*, an area of communal land not cultivated but used for grazing, hunting, and the gathering of water, firewood, and various products of the forest.<sup>17</sup> In addition to farming land in the vicinity of a *congregación*, Indian groups brought together often continued to cultivate the land of their abandoned, but never forgotten, mountain homes.<sup>18</sup> The strong attachment of displaced Indian families to their ancestral land was ultimately to modify the pattern of Spanish-imposed settlement in many parts of highland Guatemala.

#### CONGREGACIÓN IN THE CUCHUMATÁN HIGHLANDS

In compliance with an order issued by Licenciado Pedro Ramírez de Quiñones, one of the Crown's most trusted and reliable officials,<sup>19</sup> *congregación* was begun towards the end of the 1540s throughout the Cuchumatanes. The isolation and ruggedness of the region made *congregación* difficult; but the Spanish authorities, led by industrious Dominican missionaries, carried out Ramírez's instructions assiduously.

The majority of Cuchumatán towns in existence today originated as formal centres of settlement in the process of *congregación* begun in the

mid-sixteenth century. The historical record provides evidence of *congregación* for a number of towns, including Aguacatán, Chajul, Chiantla, San Juan Cotzal, Cunén, Huehuetenango, Jacaltenango, Nebaj, Petatán, Sacapulas, San Antonio and Santa Ana Huista, San Martín, and Todos Santos Cuchumatán. Much of our information concerning the founding of these towns comes from the Dominican friar Antonio de Remesal, who wrote the first colonial history of Guatemala between 1615 and 1617, following a period of study and work in the colony.<sup>20</sup>

Remesal's recording of the operation of *congregación* is both general and specific. Some of his observations are worth quoting at length. Of present-day Aguacatán he wrote: "The town of Aguacatlán [Aguacatán] was congregated from a number of hamlets scattered all over the mountains by Friar Pedro de Angulo, Friar Juan de Torres, and other Dominican missionaries who used to preach throughout these Cuchumatán highlands."<sup>21</sup>

According to Remesal, *congregaciones* were established in the Cuchumatanes by Dominican missionaries before ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the central and western parts of the region was handed over to another religious order, the Mercedarian friars of Nuestra Señora de la Merced:

The Dominicans not only gave the Mercedarians jurisdiction over Indians in the city [of Guatemala]; they were also given jurisdiction over Indians outside [the capital] in the towns of Quiché and Zacapula [Sacapulas]. All that is nowadays [1615] administered by the [Mercedarian] monastery of Xacaltenango [Jacaltenango] was formerly under control of the Dominicans. Friar Pedro de Angulo and Friar Juan de Torres, along with other Dominicans, were responsible for the hard work of bringing together Indian families of many different tongues who lived in scattered, outlying hamlets ... The town of Yantla [Chiantla], which lies at the foot of the mountains, belonged to the [Dominican] Order ... The towns of these mountains, as far as Escuytenango in the district of Comitlán [Comitán], including Cuchumatlán [Todos Santos Cuchumatán], Güegüetenango [Huehuetenango], San Martín, Petatán, [and] Güista [San Antonio and Santa Ana Huista] ... were, without doubt, congregated by the Dominican fathers who built in them houses and churches that are still standing today.<sup>22</sup>

Remesal recorded particularly detailed information concerning *congregación* in the Ixil country of the eastern Cuchumatanes, including the



names of settlements that furnished populations for the *congregaciones* at Chajul, Nebaj, and San Juan Cotzal:

To Chaul [Chajul] in the sierra of Zacapulas were brought the settlements of Huyl, Boob, Ylom, Honcab, Chaxá, Aguazap, Huiz, and four others, all of which were associated with smaller, dependent settlements; this was undertaken at the request of the [Dominican] fathers who founded the monastery [of Sacapulas] and by order of Licenciado Pedro Ramírez de Quiñones ... To Aguacatlán [Aguacatán] and Nebá [Nebaj] were brought together the settlements of Vacá, Chel, Zalchil, Cuchil, and many others upward of twelve in number. To Cozal [San Juan Cotzal] were brought together Namá, Chicui, Temal, Caquilax, and many others ... The town of Cunén was also formed by congregating many smaller settlements.<sup>23</sup>

That Remesal recorded the names of outlying settlements brought together to form *congregaciones* is of special interest, not least because some of the "cleared" settlements are still in existence today.<sup>24</sup> Once gathered at a new town site, the various native communities that collectively formed the *congregación* often preserved their autochthonous identity by functioning as individual components known as *parcialidades*. Traditionally, these were social and territorial units of great antiquity, organized as patrilineal clans or localized kin groups and generally associated with a particular area of land.<sup>25</sup>

Although the Spaniards often had difficulty distinguishing between *parcialidades* and grasping the complex distinctions operating within them, the Indians were always acutely aware of the differences both between and within their traditional social affiliations. After being moved to a *congregación*, Indian communities continued to uphold aboriginal patterns of social discrimination. Far from being homogeneous entities, many a *congregación* was a mosaic of small groups that touched but that often did not interpenetrate. Numerous *congregaciones* in the Cuchumatán region were organized internally along these lines; that is, with several "cleared" communities functioning in the Spanish-established centres as *parcialidades*. Thus Ylom (Ilom) and Honcab (Oncap or Onkap), settlements recorded by Remesal as forming part of the *congregación* of Chajul, existed within the *congregación* as separate *parcialidades*. Similarly, Zalchil (Salquil) and Cuchil, recorded as forming part of the *congregación* of Nebaj, survived within that *congregación* as distinguishable *parcialidades*.

During the second half of the seventeenth century, when assessing how much tribute should be levied on the Indians of Chajul and Nebaj,

the Spanish authorities arranged that payment be made not by town but by *parcialidad*. Ilom was assessed at 48 tribute payers, Oncap at 9½, Salquil at 17, and Cuchil at 26½.<sup>26</sup> The towns of Aguacatán, Cunén, San Juan Cotzal, and Sacapulas, all identified by Remesal as having been formed by congregating several smaller settlements, likewise were assessed for tribute individually by *parcialidad*.<sup>27</sup> The fact that the Spaniards allowed all these towns to pay tribute by *parcialidad* suggests that this was simply the most convenient and efficient arrangement. It also indicates that over a century after *congregación* was first implemented, the small social groups that constituted a settlement still retained a sense of their pre-conquest individuality.

A good example of a heterogeneous *congregación* where ancient social divisions were long maintained is the town of Sacapulas (plate 19). According to Captain Martín Alfonso Tovilla, the governor of Verapaz who visited Sacapulas in the early seventeenth century, the town had been formed originally by congregating six different Indian communities: "The town of Sacapulas is divided into six *parcialidades*, each of which comprises a unit known as a *calpul*, because when the missionaries [first] brought them together, as each had only a small population, they brought four or five to each town in order to make a larger [settlement], and in this way each *parcialidad* maintained the name of the place it came from. And the lands that [the *parcialidades*] possessed [in the abandoned places] they still cultivate today in order to grow corn and other bodily needs."<sup>28</sup>

The testimony of Tovilla is confirmed by the parish priest of Sacapulas, Andrés Henríquez, who, in a report written in 1786, stated that the *parcialidad* known as Magdalena, "like the other five of this town, was, and were, small settlements brought together by royal order to form the town of Sacapulas."<sup>29</sup> In a tribute list spanning the years from 1664 to 1678, five *parcialidades* are recorded, three of which were known by their Indian names (Tulteca, Uchabaha, and Aucanil) and two by their Spanish names (San Francisco and Magdalena).<sup>30</sup> By the close of the eighteenth century, the *parcialidades* of Sacapulas still clung to their aboriginal identities, but were generally all known by Spanish names: Magdalena, San Sebastián, Santiago, San Pedro, Santo Tomás, and San Francisco.<sup>31</sup> The preservation of pre-conquest identity within the *congregación* is also illustrated by the fact that Indian land in the Sacapulas area was held traditionally by *parcialidad* (plate 19).<sup>32</sup> When a lengthy conflict occurred towards the end of the eighteenth century over land rights and boundaries, the disputes were not contested primarily between Indian and Spanish interests, but between rival *parcialidades*.<sup>33</sup>

Autochthonous identity was maintained throughout the colonial period, therefore, by such practices as paying tribute and holding land by

*parcialidad*. In the case of Aguacatán, deep-rooted social discrimination has persisted up to the present day. Remesal noted that Aguacatán "was congregated from a number of hamlets scattered all over the mountains" in the mid-sixteenth century.<sup>34</sup> Most of the archival documentation relating to Aguacatán distinguishes between the *parcialidad* of Aguacatán and the neighbouring *parcialidad* of Chalhítán.<sup>35</sup> In Aguacatán today, a distinction can still be made between the Aguacatecos living to the west of the town square and the Chalhitecos living to the east of the town square, chiefly on the basis of dialect, styles of dress, and ceremonial patterns.<sup>36</sup>

In its initial stages, then, and despite the marked survival of pre-Columbian social identity, the process of *congregación* in the Cuchumatanes may be regarded as an operation that, judging by the number of settlements established and the regularity with which the majority of Indian communities furnished tribute and labour, seems to have served satisfactorily several important imperial objectives. However, like most colonial ventures, *congregación* was not without its failures, frustrations, and long-term modifications. Some of these will now be discussed.

#### REGIONAL ADJUSTMENTS TO CONGREGACIÓN

A particularly problematical experiment in *congregación* characterized the founding of Santa Eulalia, a town located in the far north-western reaches of the Cuchumatanes (plate 14). The first attempts to settle there had to be abandoned because Paiconop, the site originally chosen for the *congregación*, was too easily attacked by hostile Lacandón Indians invading from the Usumacinta lowlands to the north. The settlement was therefore moved to its present, more defensible site two kilometres to the south-west, but only after a church and other structures had already been built at Paiconop.<sup>37</sup> Lacandón raids up into the *tierra fría* around Santa Eulalia and San Mateo Ixtatán took place throughout the colonial period, despite numerous attempts by the Spaniards to conquer and impose order on this especially troublesome group.<sup>38</sup> Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Fuentes y Guzmán declared that anyone making the trip from Santa Eulalia to San Mateo did so "with imminent risk from the Lacandón enemy, who invade the mountains to rob and harass our poor Indians."<sup>39</sup> In response to this situation, two peacekeeping forces were established, one at San Mateo and another at Santa Eulalia, in order to protect the northern Cuchumatán frontier to the west of the Río Ixcán. Not even regular policing, however, diminished the threat, for Lacandón incursions persisted in these parts of the Cuchumatanes until the early nineteenth century.<sup>40</sup>

The Ixil *congregaciones* along the northern Cuchumatán frontier to the

east of the Río Ixcán also suffered depredations at the hands of invading Lacandones. The area around Ilom was especially vulnerable to Lacandón attack, which was probably the main reason behind the Spaniards' decision to abandon the town after initially building a church there. The Indians of Ilom were ordered to resettle in Chajul and in Santa Eulalia, the former receiving the Ilom church altar, the latter the Ilom church bells.<sup>41</sup> Chajul was itself attacked many times, the raiding Lacandones entering the Ixil country by way of the Xaclbal valley. Unlike Ilom, however, Chajul was never officially abandoned.<sup>42</sup> The Ilom area was itself gradually repopulated, some Ixiles from there presumably preferring to return to their ancestral lands and risk being raided by Lacandones in familiar terrain rather than eking out an existence away from their home territory where the danger was no less real. The rationale of *congregación*, with its promise of safety and protection from infidel invaders, to say nothing of its promise of life hereafter, often amounted to very little in the face of the intense mystical bond linking an Indian community to its land, an attachment little understood or reckoned with on the part of the Spaniards.

Throughout the colonial period, a combination of other factors and events greatly reduced the centripetal influence of *congregación*. Since many Indians were congregated involuntarily in the first instance, the Spanish authorities often had difficulty in keeping the population tied to a new town site. Indians frequently fled to outlying rural areas in order to escape the constant exploitation to which they were subjected in *congregaciones*. In the seclusion of their old homes in the mountains, they were free of such compulsory demands as paying tribute, providing labour, working on local roads or the parish church, and serving as human carriers. The refuge of the mountains was also sought when disease struck, as it did often, sometimes with devastating impact.<sup>43</sup> Recurrent fugitivism, triggered and sustained by a complex interplay of cultural preference and existential circumstance, therefore constantly eroded Spanish notions of orderly, town-focused living.

The physical isolation and limited economic potential of the Cuchumatanes likewise worked towards diminishing the overall effectiveness of *congregación*. Owing chiefly to a scarcity of Indian labour and a lack of entrepreneurial opportunity, Spanish Central America languished for a good part of the seventeenth century in a condition of economic stagnation, as old practices gradually gave way to new initiatives.<sup>44</sup> Even prior to the onset of contraction and experimentation, Spanish exploitation of the natural resources of Guatemala had concentrated either on the cacao-rich Pacific coast or on the fertile *tierra templada* 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. The highlands of the *tierra fría* to the north and west of Santiago – remote, rugged, and of little commercial importance – were much less attractive to materially minded Spaniards. The governor of the province of Zapotitlán, in a statement that clearly reveals the low estimation held by Spanish officialdom of the Cuchumatán resource base, probably voiced an opinion held by many enterprising but frustrated Spaniards when, in 1570, he declared that “neither in the highlands of Jacaltenango, nor in those of Huehuetenango is there any cacao ... the land here being poor and unfruitful, good only for raising corn and chickens.”<sup>45</sup> As a result of such appraisals bluntly made by men more concerned with the potential windfalls of the external market than with a more modest involvement in the local economy, Spanish interest in north-western Guatemala after domination had been acknowledged and *congregación* begun was never as intense as in other better-endowed parts of Central America. This state of affairs certainly appears to have prevailed during the economically stagnant or transitional years of the seventeenth century. It also seems to have prevailed, to a lesser extent, throughout the eighteenth and even into the nineteenth century.

The consequences of this lack of interest were far-reaching. The native peoples to the north and west of Santiago were not so ignored that their communities became the breeding ground of a physical form of rebellion, although Indian groups did on occasion resort to violence.<sup>46</sup> Instead, they nurtured a strong, cultural resistance to the European invaders by reverting, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to many of their former ways. It was not a return to life as it was led before the conquest, for such a move was clearly impossible. Rather, it was a creative blend of the elements of European culture that the Indians had accepted and the elements of pre-Columbian culture that the Indians had maintained. Neither “Indian” nor “Spanish,” this fusion of the old and the new produced a culture of refuge referred to by historian Murdo MacLeod as “conquest peasant.”<sup>47</sup> In its outward forms and inner features the cultural synthesis effected by Cuchumatán peoples closely resembled the one shaped by neighbouring Mayan communities in colonial Chiapas.<sup>48</sup>

The “conquest peasant” way of life led by Cuchumatán Indians during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries developed several characteristics that conflicted directly with Spanish precepts concerning the material and spiritual quality of native well-being. One of these was the increased abandonment of *congregaciones* in favour of a more dispersed form of settlement (and a less beholden existence) as Spanish authority over the Indians grew progressively weaker, particularly in parts of the

Cuchumatanes far removed from the central government in Santiago and isolated even from the watchful eye of local administrators resident in Totonicapán and Huehuetenango.<sup>49</sup> Another characteristic was the revival, and explicit practice, of aspects of pre-Christian religion.<sup>50</sup>

One of the earliest references to *congregación* not being accomplished without considerable frustration and the risk of failure comes from Sacapulas soon after the policy was first implemented. Begun in the late 1540s, the complex business of native resettlement in these parts was given an added stimulus in 1553 when the Order of Santo Domingo received permission to establish a monastery at Sacapulas from President Alonso López de Cerrato.<sup>51</sup> The Dominicans chose to resettle various native groups around a site on the south bank of the Río Negro that had long been occupied, on account of the existence of important salt springs, by two communities later known as the *parcialidades* Santiago and San Sebastián.<sup>52</sup> In a letter addressed to King Charles V from the Dominican monastery at Sacapulas on 6 December 1555, two friars responsible for bringing dispersed populations together, Tomás de Cárdenas and Juan de Torres, wrote of the tremendous obstacles working against successful *congregación*. They mention firstly the problem presented by extremely difficult terrain, stating that "this part of the sierra, being so rugged and broken, caused us to encounter settlements comprising only eight, six, or even four houses tucked and hidden away in gullies or ravines where, until our arrival, no other Spaniard had penetrated."<sup>53</sup> The friars lamented that they had recently found, in the nearby mountains, "a very large quantity of idols, not in any way concealed but placed in full public view."<sup>54</sup> This comment suggests 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 Indians who may have been congregated and baptized earlier, but whose commitment to residency in the new town site and whose allegiance to the Christian faith could not be guaranteed. Cárdenas and Torres, with rare insight into Indian psychology, came closest to understanding native resistance to *congregación* when they remarked to the King 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>55</sup>

The friars went on to suggest that the monarch not listen to complaints lodged by numerous Spaniards against Licenciado Alonso de Zorita, whose efforts to bring order and responsible government to Sacapulas and surrounding areas during his tour of inspection nine months earlier they praise and support.<sup>56</sup> False and malicious information, the Dominicans warned, was being spread in order to sabotage Zorita's

dedicated work. They singled out in particular Spanish outrage at Zorita's recommendation that the Indians be given a year's grace from paying tribute while they build new houses and plant new fields in and around the *congregaciones* they settle.<sup>57</sup> Although Cárdenas and Torres insisted that, at least to their knowledge, no ruthless excesses were being perpetrated by Spaniards against Indians in the Sacapulas region, they hinted none the less that uncontrolled exploitation by men motivated only by "worldly interests" endangered the long-term success of *congregación* by causing natives to flee newly established settlements to escape oppression.<sup>58</sup>

Two decades later, there were reports of several Indian families at Chajul living some distance from the centre of the *congregación*. In the eyes of the colonial administration this meant that, unlike their congregated kinfolk, these rural dwellers went uncounted and therefore did not pay tribute. Tolerance of such fugitivism would decrease the potential tax base of the community. The governor of the Cuchumatán region, Francisco Díaz del Castillo, was ordered by the Crown to conduct an inquiry and rectify the situation.<sup>59</sup> A century later, however, the situation here and elsewhere in the Cuchumatanes was far from rectified. Much to the consternation of the invader, more and more native families drifted away from the nucleation imposed on them, deserting *congregaciones* for a freer life among their cornfields in the hills. Fuentes y Guzmán, for example, 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 too far from Huehuetenango.<sup>60</sup> Farther north, at San Mateo Ixtatán, the chronicler reported that some forty families dwelled in the countryside at a place called Asantih, fourteen leagues distant from the *congregación*.<sup>61</sup> So dissolute was Spanish control over the unruly "indios fugitivos" of San Mateo that some of them actually joined forces with the feared Lacandones for periodic raids among the more docile Kanjobal people to the south and west.<sup>62</sup>

The colonial authorities were distressed by these developments and viewed them as a threat, for tax evasion or a lapse into lawlessness undermined the way in which the imperial system was supposed to operate. Although such "sloth" and "depredation" were regrettable, what seems to have disturbed some Spaniards even more was the rejuvenation of "pagan" religion that inevitably occurred when Indians broke away from *congregaciones* and the scrutiny of local clergy.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, there were charges of "idolatry" and "acts of barbarism" being all too commonplace at San Juan

Atitán and San Mateo Ixtatán.<sup>63</sup> At the latter town the Indians had erected, on a nearby mountain, "a shrine located in the same place as the ancient sacrificial altar of the times of paganism and barbarity."<sup>64</sup> About fifty years later, Friar Sebastián de Aguirre, working among the natives of San Miguel Acatán, reported religious backsliding there. The Indians, he claimed, resisted his attempts to hear confession, one of them being so bold as to strike him for being so insistent in his demands. Aguirre's confrontation occurred after the central government in Santiago had earlier warned local officials in the Cuchumatanes not to be tolerant of religious non-conformity. Any Indian not regularly attending mass or ignorant of Catholic doctrine was to be given six to eight lashes and thrown in jail overnight.<sup>65</sup> In 1797, the district governor, Francisco Xavier de Aguirre, found and destroyed, two leagues distant from the town of Concepción, "the pagan shrine where the Indians go to offer sacrifices and prayers to the devil."<sup>66</sup> These comments and observations, drawn from a considerable volume of documentation, clearly suggest that Catholicism as practised by Cuchumatán Indians was as unorthodox and syncretic as that recorded for other colonial Mayan groups.<sup>67</sup> The situation is perhaps best summed up by Archbishop Cortés y Larraz who, writing in the second half of the eighteenth century, dismissed the Christianity of Indians in the Cuchumatanes as "nothing more than appearance and hypocrisy."<sup>68</sup> The refusal of the native peoples of the region to abandon completely their pre-Christian rituals and ceremonies persisted throughout the nineteenth century and is a trait that still survives today.<sup>69</sup>

The Cuchumatán evidence therefore suggests that the primary thrust of settlement nucleation in the mid-sixteenth century was soon followed, for a number of reasons, by a long period of settlement dispersal. Attrition of the population base of *congregaciones* in the years following initial town founding has been documented elsewhere in Mesoamerica, particularly in the Maya area. Nancy Farriss presents the process as a general proposition for colonial Yucatán, maintaining that "the Maya, like most people who practise labor-efficient forms of extensive agriculture, found (and still find) dispersed settlements most convenient for farming."<sup>70</sup> Her hypothesis that "whenever the forces of integration weakened, the Maya would drift back into their preferred pattern of scattered settlement,"<sup>71</sup> seems also to hold for the Indians of the Cuchumatanes under Spanish colonial rule. In her depiction of lowland Maya settlement dynamics, Farriss is supported by the findings of Cristina García Bernal and of Grant Jones, and by the work of Sherburne Cook and Woodrow Borah, all of whom document significant *congregación* abandonment in the Yucatán



from the mid-sixteenth century on.<sup>72</sup> The drift there was so advanced by the late eighteenth century that, according to Peter Gerhard, "the settlement pattern was perhaps not greatly unlike that of pre-conquest times, with peasant houses scattered about and many *cabeceras* relatively deserted except during market days and religious festivals."<sup>73</sup> A similar process of recurrent fugitivism has also been noted by Rodney Watson and Robert Wasserstrom for colonial Chiapas.<sup>74</sup> The Cuchumatán experience may simply conform to a southern Mesoamerican or Mayan norm.

Thus, viewed both in the context of the entire period of Spanish rule in Guatemala, and in the context of the lofty objectives sought by the mother country, the process of *congregación* or *reducción* in the Cuchumatanes cannot be considered an unqualified success. Certainly the imprint of *congregación* on the look of the land was both enduring and profound; even today, for instance, the mid-sixteenth-century "congregations," dominated by churches towering over and above most surrounding buildings, are a conspicuous settlement feature of the Cuchumatán landscape (plate 14). However, the majority of the region's Indian population, three out of every four persons, now lives not in nucleated centres but in dispersed communities scattered about the countryside, leaving Ladinos (testimony to more successful Hispanization in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries) as the dominant town-dwelling group.<sup>75</sup> Any attempt to explain or understand this present pattern of settlement must begin by examining the events and circumstances of colonial life.

Following their conquest and subjugation by imperial Spain, the Indians of the Cuchumatanes were moved, as were native groups throughout highland Guatemala, from their outlying mountain homes into new, church-dominated *congregaciones*. These settlements were established by the Spanish authorities in the mid-sixteenth century to facilitate the conversion of Indians to Christianity and to create centralized pools of exploitable labour. After *congregación* had been embarked upon, Spanish interest and involvement in the Cuchumatanes was slight, owing to the physical isolation of the region and its limited economic potential. The prospects for Spaniards to accumulate wealth were simply much better elsewhere in Central America. The Indians were thus able, particularly in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, to modify the Spanish-imposed order of things to suit their own cultural preferences. One development in particular was the antithesis of Hispanic designs: the abandonment of *congregaciones* for outlying rural areas where pre-Christian religious mores were revived. Conflicting with

two basic tenets of *congregación*, this way of life was followed by a significant number of Indians during the middle and late colonial period, and has been characteristic of Cuchumatán culture ever since.

#### CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS JURISDICTION

The *congregaciones* formed in the mid-sixteenth century were but tiny components of a great administrative scheme designed to facilitate all levels of government, from local affairs to issues of state. Permeated by a massive bureaucracy and officialdom, the Spanish administration of empire was a complex arrangement that combined rather than separated certain governmental functions. However, two basic hierarchical structures – one politico-judicial in nature, the other ecclesiastical – can be identified.

Politico-judicial jurisdiction was headed by the monarch, whose royal authority was absolute and unquestionable. The monarch was advised on matters pertaining to the American colonies by the Council of the Indies, a body normally resident in Madrid, although it did convene for a short period in Valladolid, when the Spanish capital was located there. The Council of the Indies suggested lines of policy and nominated officials to positions in the colonies, besides auditing accounts, hearing testimony, and reviewing the conduct of individuals elected to office. In the New World itself, the highest ranking representatives of the Crown were the viceroys, generally Spaniards born in the mother country who ruled in the monarch's name and who were responsible for, among other things, revenue, justice, and Indian welfare. Viceroys were assisted by advisory bodies known as *audiencias*, stable committees that provided an important focus for broad regional affiliation. The area presided over by an *audiencia* was divided into a number of units called *corregimientos* or *alcaldías mayores*, each of which was entrusted to the care of a *corregidor* or *alcalde mayor* charged with such duties as the co-ordination of tribute collection and the organization of Indian work parties. In Guatemala, *corregimientos* or *alcaldías mayores* were made up of varying numbers of *pueblos de indios* – Indian towns or *congregaciones* governed (usually from a distance) by a *corregidor* or *alcalde mayor* represented in each community by native *alcaldes* (mayors) and *regidores* (councillors).<sup>76</sup>

Paralleling the civil, politico-judicial structure was the ecclesiastical one. The authority of the monarch over the Catholic church was assured under the terms of the *Patronato real*, a pact between Rome and the Spanish Crown that guaranteed, by papal bulls issued in 1501 and 1508, that a wide range of ecclesiastic controls would be placed in the hands of

the monarchy. Among these controls were the power of nomination and the management of church revenue. The largest unit of ecclesiastical geography was the archbishopric or archdiocese, to which all component bishoprics or dioceses were suffragan. Each bishopric or diocese was internally composed of a number of curacies or parishes. To this episcopal organization belonged the "secular" clergy, so named because they "lived in the world" (Latin, *sæculum*). Such ecclesiastics were distinct from the "regular" clergy who belonged to a specific religious order (Franciscan, Dominican, or Mercedarian) and who were bound to certain vows or rules (Latin, *regula*). Initially, the regular clergy had exclusively a missionary mandate and thus committed themselves to providing for the spiritual welfare of the Indians. The secular clergy, by contrast, were more concerned with the spiritual needs of Europeans, Creoles, and mestizos.<sup>77</sup>

During the colonial period, most of the isthmus of Central America, with the exception of the area of present-day Panama, was civilly administered as the *audiencia* of Guatemala. Today, this same unit would comprise the Mexican state of Chiapas, the now fully autonomous Belize, and the independent republics of Guatemala, El Salvador, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.<sup>78</sup> Created in 1543, the *audiencia* of Guatemala, formally a sub-unit of the Viceroyalty of New Spain, was placed under the charge of a presiding officer, or *presidente*, who was subordinate to the viceroy in Mexico City.

Within the *audiencia* of Guatemala, the Cuchumatanes formed part of the large administrative division known either as the *corregimiento* (1547–1678) or the *alcaldía mayor* (1678–1785) of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango (see figure 2).<sup>79</sup> This same area, after the imposition of the intendancy system in 1785–86,<sup>80</sup> became the *provincia* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango and was divided into two jurisdictions: the *partido* (district) of Totonicapán and the *partido* of Huehuetenango.<sup>81</sup> The jurisdiction referred to as the *partido* of Huehuetenango corresponds in rough areal extent to the Cuchumatán highlands (see figure 3) and comprised some forty Indian towns or *congregaciones* (see table 5).

The *pueblos de indios* of the Cuchumatanes were divided for purposes of ecclesiastical administration into eight parishes, each of which had a *cabecera de doctrina* – the town where the local priest lived and from where he made his parish rounds (see figures 8 and table 5). The *cabecera de doctrina* gave its name to the entire parish. Priests were obliged to recognize the authority of the bishop of Guatemala, resident in the capital city of Santiago. It was not until 1745 that the bishopric of Guatemala was raised to archdiocesan status, a situation that meant that for the first two

TABLE 5  
Towns Forming the Cuchumatán Highlands (by Parish)

Parish	Towns forming parish
Chiantla	Chiantla, Aguacatán, Chalchitán, San Martín Cuchumatán, and Todos Santos Cuchumatán
Cuilco	Cuilco, Amatenango, San Francisco Motozintla, San Martín Mazapa, and Tectitán
Huehuetenango	Huehuetenango, San Juan Atitán, San Lorenzo, San Pedro Necta, San Sebastián Huehuetenango, Santa Isabel, and Santiago Chimaltenango
Jacaltenango	Jacaltenango, Concepción, Petatán, San Andrés, San Marcos, San Antonio Huista, and Santa Ana Huista
Malacatán	Malacatán, Colotenango, Ixtahuacán, San Gaspar Ixchil, and Santa Bárbara
Nebaj	Nebaj, Chajul, and San Juan Cotzal
Soloma	Soloma, San Juan Ixcoy, San Mateo Ixtatán, San Miguel Acatán, San Sebastián Coatán, and Santa Eulalia
Uspantán	Uspantán, Cunén, and Sacapulas

SOURCES: AGCA, A3.16, leg. 246, exp. 4912; Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala*

hundred years of Spanish rule the bishopric of Guatemala came under the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of the archdiocese of Mexico.<sup>82</sup>

Ecclesiastical jurisdiction over the Cuchumatanes was initially granted solely to the Dominicans, and it was apparently under their aegis and industry that *congregación* was first carried out. By the close of the sixteenth century, however, most parts of the Cuchumatán region had passed into the charge of the Mercedarians, for the Franciscan Friar Alonso Ponce recorded Huehuetenango and Chiantla as being under Mercedarian supervision in 1586 when he passed through the Cuchumatanes on a trip from Guatemala to Mexico.<sup>83</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, over thirty towns in the Cuchumatanes were under Mercedarian control, with the Dominicans maintaining a presence in only six.<sup>84</sup> In 1754, a royal edict ordered the secularization of all parish charges, but by special permission it was possible for a member of the regular clergy to continue to serve as a parish priest. The Cuchumatán parishes of Jacaltenango, Malacatán, and Nebaj, for example, were still administered by regular clergy at the end of the colonial period.<sup>85</sup>

Both the politico-judicial and ecclesiastical arms of government in Spanish America were rigidly hierarchical. The dictates of those at the top were transferred, in theory if not always in practice, into action and fulfilment by those at the bottom. The state sought, by deed and decree, to

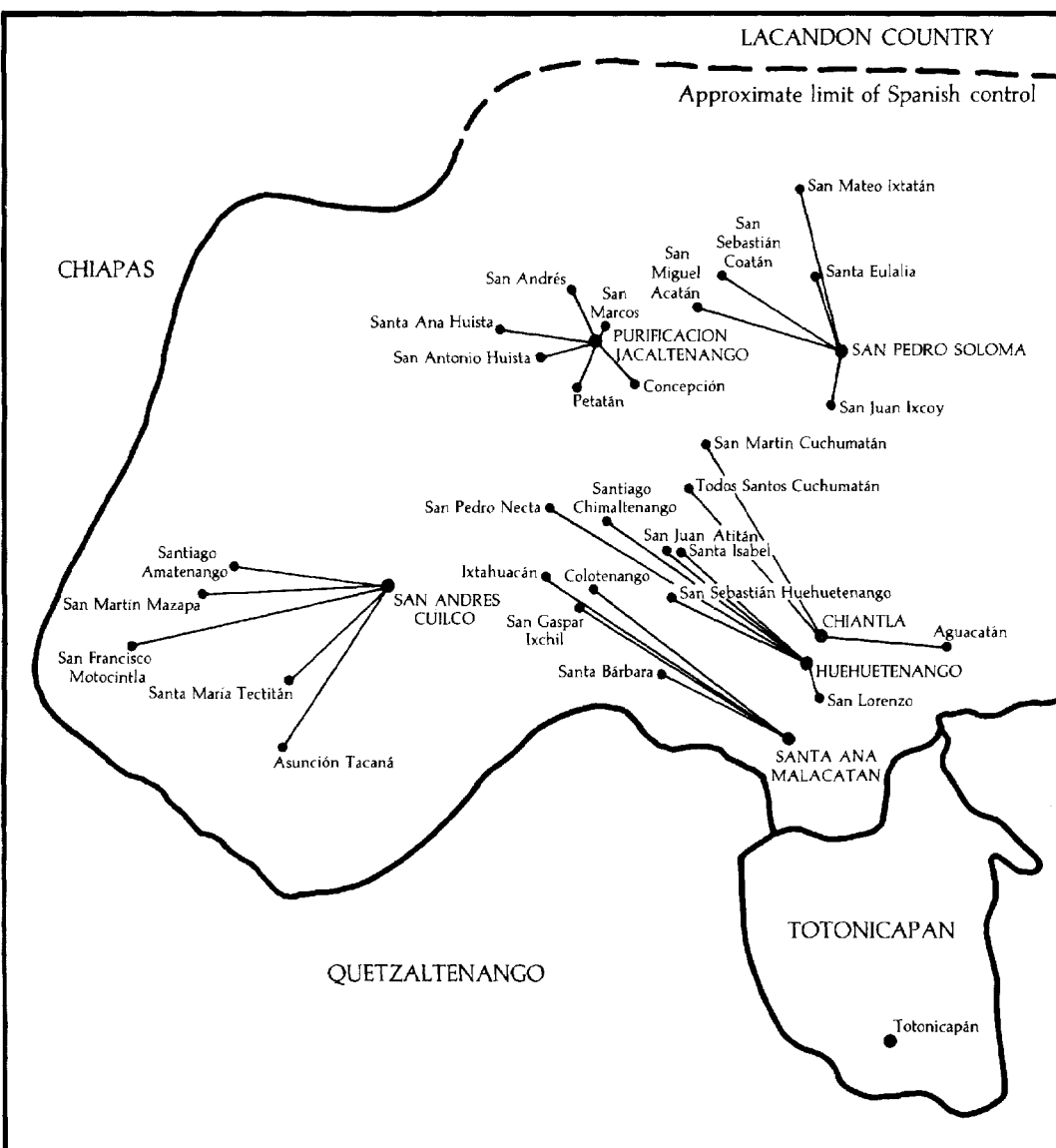
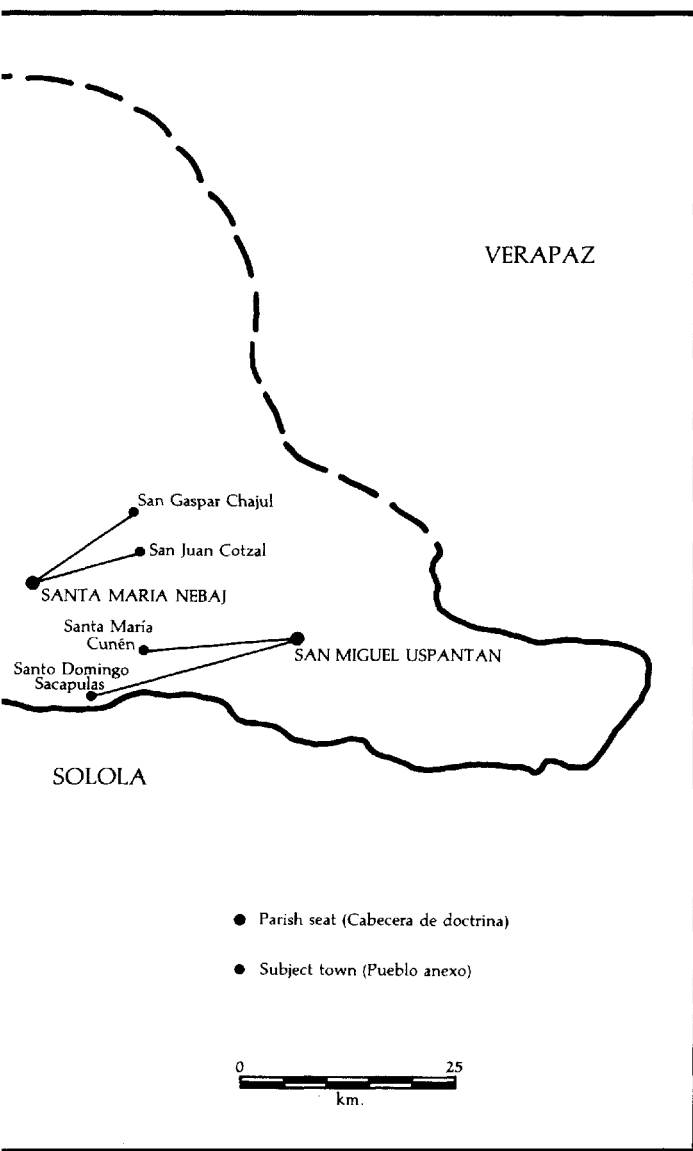


Figure 8 Ecclesiastical administration of the Cuchumatán highlands



extend and exert its control over every facet of colonial life. It is on the operation of certain institutional controls and the impact they had on the land and the people of the Cuchumatanes that attention will now be focused.

## 7 Economic Demands and Ethnic Relations: Spanish Control of the Indian Population

Relentless exploitation of the native capacity to work formed the basis of the Spanish colonial economy and lay at the heart of any material enrichment that accrued either to the Crown or to individual Spaniards over the course of Spain's three-century domination of much of the New World. While the economic demands placed by the conquerors on the conquered were unending, the institutional forms of the exaction varied considerably, both temporally and spatially. At the local level, the manner in which goods and services were extracted differed according to a number of factors, including the structure and complexity of aboriginal society, the size of the Indian work-force, regional economic potential, geographical location, relations between Spanish colonists and the Crown, and attitudes towards the treatment of the native population. In the Cuchumatán highlands, imperial Spain sought to exploit the human resources of the *pueblos de indios* through the operation of several coercive devices. The various means of accumulating surplus, controlling production, and manipulating consumption will be reviewed as comprehensively as available sources permit, with an attempt being made to illustrate the dynamics and tensions of colonial subordination.

### INDIAN TRIBUTE: THE ENCOMIENDA

Defined crudely, the *encomienda* was a means by which privileged Spaniards enjoyed the right to exact tribute, and initially also labour, from a specified number of Indians in a designated town or group of towns. The history of the institution is subtly complex. Grants of *encomienda* in the first half of the sixteenth century, assigned by the Crown primarily to soldiers who had fought with distinction in the battles of conquest, frequently involved the allocation of impressive amounts of goods and services. When it was finally abolished in the eighteenth century, the *encomienda* represented little more than a system of awarding small royal pensions to favoured members of both the colonial and peninsular



Spanish elite. Over time, the policy of the Crown with respect to the functioning of *encomienda* became one of restriction. *Encomenderos*, individuals who held and shared *encomiendas*, often wielded considerable power as recipients of Indian tribute and labour in the early period of Spanish rule. Thereafter, the Crown introduced legislation painstakingly devised to limit the economic and political power of the *encomienda* and to prevent even the most enterprising of *encomenderos* from becoming semi-autonomous feudal lords. Such measures as the curtailing of the labour component and the prohibition of inheritance beyond a certain number of "lives" did much to stifle the development of *encomienda* as a personal weapon. Thus, in the course of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, by a slow process of legislative attrition, most *encomiendas* either reverted to the Spanish Crown or were severely constrained as a source of private income. In this way, to use a characteristic phrase in the literature, the *encomienda* was "tamed." Of particular importance in the taming of *encomienda* in Guatemala were the reforms carried out during the terms of office of President Alonso López de Cerrato (1548–55) and President García de Valverde (1578–89). The operation of *encomienda* can therefore be regarded as one in which privileges originally granted by the Crown were gradually eroded, or completely removed, by the subsequent implementation of restrictive legislation.<sup>1</sup>

Although scant and of limited reconstructive potential, the extant archival documentation suggests that the history of *encomienda* in the Cuchumatanes conforms roughly to the general pattern outlined above. Several of the first titles to Cuchumatán towns, recorded in the *tasaciones de tributos* (tribute assessments) prepared in 1549 by President Cerrato, indicate that *encomienda* in the mid-sixteenth century involved not only the privilege of receiving tribute, but also the right to the labour of a certain number of Indians (*indios de servicio*) for personal service (see table 6). At least six towns in the Cuchumatanes were held in *encomienda* at this time either by *conquistadores* or their offspring.<sup>2</sup>

Some of the early Cuchumatán awards, such as Huehuetenango, Jacaltenango, and Sacapulas, initially furnished enough tribute and labour to provide *encomenderos* with a fairly comfortable living; for example, Juan de Espinar, the first *encomendero* of Huehuetenango, was once so wealthy that he could afford to lose twenty thousand *pesos de oro* through gambling.<sup>3</sup> By the early seventeenth century, however, prohibitive legislation and a dwindling native population resulted in the failure of the *encomienda* system to support its recipients in the style of life to which they aspired. *Encomienda* privileges around the year 1610, as is evidenced by the documentation surviving for San Juan Ixcay, San Mateo Ixtatán,

TABLE 6

Cuchumatán Settlements Listed in the Tribute Assessment Prepared between February and August 1549 by President Alonso López de Cerrato

Name of settlement	Number of tributaries	Name of <i>encomendero</i> (s)	Annual amount of tribute
Aguacatlán (Aguacatán)	200	Juan de Celada	6 <i>fanegas</i> <sup>a</sup> of corn 1 <i>fanega</i> of beans 600 feathers 220 <i>mantas</i> <sup>b</sup> 8 dozen chickens 2 <i>fanegas</i> of salt 2 dozen <i>petates</i> <sup>c</sup> 2 <i>arrobas</i> <sup>d</sup> of honey 10 <i>indios de servicio</i> <sup>e</sup> 4 <i>indios para ganado</i> <sup>f</sup>
Chalchuytlán (Chalchitán)	60	Hernán Pérez Peñate and the sons of Alonso de Pulgar	2 <i>fanegas</i> of cotton 80 <i>mantas</i> 10 dozen chickens 20 <i>cargas</i> <sup>g</sup> of salt 4 <i>indios de servicio</i>
Chimaltenango y Atitán (Santiago Chimaltenango and San Juan Atitán)	35	Leonór de Castellanos	4 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 0.5 <i>fanega</i> of beans 150 <i>mantas</i>
Cochumatlán (Todos Santos Cuchumatán)	–	"Menores hijos" of Marcos Ruiz and García de Aguilar	6 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 200 <i>mantas</i> 8 dozen chickens
Cuylco (Cuilco)	290	Hernán Gutiérrez de Gibaja and Hernán Méndez de Sotomayor	6 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 1 <i>fanega</i> of beans 300 <i>mantas</i> 150 small <i>petates</i> 30 large <i>petates</i> 8 <i>cántaros</i> <sup>h</sup> of honey 6 dozen chickens 50 <i>fardos</i> <sup>i</sup> of chile peppers 6 <i>indios de servicio</i> 6 <i>indios para ganado</i>
Guevetenango (Huehuetenango)	500	Juan de Espinar	15 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 4 <i>fanegas</i> of cotton 5 <i>fanegas</i> of beans 300 <i>mantas</i> 100 cakes of salt 12 dozen chickens 100 <i>cargas</i> of chile peppers 6 <i>indios de servicio</i>

TABLE 6 (Continued)

Name of settlement	Number of tributaries	Name of <i>encomendero</i> (s)	Annual amount of tribute
Motolcintla (Motozintla)	138	Hernán Gutiérrez de Gibaja and Hernán Méndez de Sotomayor	6 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 100 <i>güipiles</i> <sup>l</sup> 100 <i>petates y pares de cótaras</i> <sup>k</sup> 8 <i>cántaros</i> of honey 12 deer skins 8 dozen chickens
Nemá (Nebaj)	35	Francisco Sánchez Tamborino	2 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 3 dozen chickens 4 <i>indios de servicio</i>
Petatán (part of present-day Concepción)	—	Diego Sánchez Santiago	2 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 0.5 <i>fanega</i> of beans 30 <i>mantas</i> 100 small <i>petates</i> 3 <i>cargas</i> of chile peppers 4 dozen chickens 2 <i>indios de servicio</i>
Uzumacintla (part of present-day San Pedro Necta)	60	Melchor de Velasco	2 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 30 small <i>petates</i> and <i>mantas</i> 4 <i>indios de servicio</i> 1 <i>indio para ganado</i>
Vspantlán (Uspantán)	—	Santos de Figueroa	2 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 80 <i>mantas</i> 5 dozen chickens 0.5 <i>arroba</i> of wax 2 <i>cargas</i> of chile peppers 6 <i>indios de servicio</i> 2 <i>muchachos</i> (boy-helpers)
Vyztlán (San Antonio and/or Santa Ana Huista)	45	Francisco López	4 dozen chickens 100 small <i>petates</i> 2 <i>arrobas</i> of honey 4 <i>cargas</i> of chile peppers 4 <i>fanegas</i> of beans 4 <i>indios de servicio</i>
Xacaltenango (Jacaltenango)	500	Son of Gonzalo de Ovalle	12 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 1.5 <i>fanegas</i> of beans 4 <i>fanegas</i> of cotton 400 <i>mantas</i> 10 dozen chickens 80 small <i>petates</i> 4 large <i>petates</i> 3 <i>fanegas</i> of wheat 6 <i>fanegas</i> of salt 2 <i>arrobas</i> of honey 25 <i>cargas</i> of chile peppers 6 <i>indios de servicio</i>

TABLE 6 (Concluded)

Name of settlement	Number of tributaries	Name of <i>encomendero(s)</i>	Annual amount of tribute
Ystatán (San Mateo Ixtatán)	30	Diego Sánchez Santiago	2 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 12 <i>fanegas</i> of salt 35 <i>mantas</i> 3 dozen chickens 2 <i>indios de servicio</i>
Zacapula (Sacapulas)	160	Cristóbal Salvatierra and "el menor hijo" of Juan Páez	96 <i>fanegas</i> of salt 18 dozen chickens 16 <i>indios de servicio</i>
Zoloma (Soloma)	140	Diego de Alvarado and Juan de Astroqui	4 <i>fanegas</i> of corn 100 <i>mantas</i> 150 chickens 8 <i>indios de servicio</i>

SOURCE: AGI:AG 128

<sup>a</sup>A *fanega* is a unit of dry measure of roughly 1.5 bushels. The area planted with this amount of seed was known as the *fanega de sembradura*.

<sup>b</sup>A *manta* was a standard square of cotton cloth.

<sup>c</sup>A *petate* is a woven reed mat, used for bedding and flooring.

<sup>d</sup>An *arroba* is a unit of weight equal to about 11 kilograms.

<sup>e</sup>*Indios de servicio* were Indians granted as an integral part of *encomienda* who could be employed at a number of tasks involving "servicio personal," personal service. Labour from the stipulated number of Indians was provided on a regular basis to the *encomendero*.

<sup>f</sup>*Indios para ganado* were Indians whose personal services to the *encomendero* involved looking after livestock.

<sup>g</sup>A *carga* was a load roughly equivalent to 2 *fanegas*.

<sup>h</sup>A *cántaro* is a jug or pitcher.

<sup>i</sup>A *fardo* is a bundle or bale.

<sup>j</sup>A *guipil* or *huipil* is traditionally the name given to a women's blouse. In this case it may simply mean a unit of woven cotton cloth.

<sup>k</sup>*Pares de cótaras*: one hundred pairs of sandals.

Soloma, and Uspantán, resembled little more than a modest type of pension.<sup>4</sup> By the middle of the seventeenth century, *encomienda* benefits were minimal and, at Aguacatán, Chajul, and Nebaj, were the equivalent of a very humble annuity.<sup>5</sup> In 1678, at the depth of the economic recession widespread throughout much of Central America, the *encomienda* income accruing to the holder of Chiantla and Huehuetenango, together with the town of Guajiaquero in Honduras, amounted to only four hundred pesos a year.<sup>6</sup> By the end of the first quarter of the eighteenth century, holders of *encomienda* had completely lost interest in the institution and sought their fortune in other potentially more lucrative concerns. Most Cuchumatán *encomiendas* were then declared vacant and reverted to the Crown.<sup>7</sup> For the remainder of the colonial period the Indian towns of the Cuchumatanes

paid tribute not to individuals but, via Crown officials, to the royal treasury.

Documentation relating to the history of one single *encomienda* is most complete for the town of Huehuetenango (see chapter 11). Shortly after the conquest, Huehuetenango was assigned to the *conquistador* Juan de Espinar. A tailor-turned-soldier and one time *alcalde ordinario* of Santiago de Guatemala, the ambitious Espinar also owned land in the Huehuetenango area and was said to be the one who first discovered and exploited silver ores in the hills north of Chiantla.<sup>8</sup> Prior to the reforms introduced by President Cerrato in 1549, Espinar exacted *encomienda* labour from two hundred to three hundred *indios de servicio* who hauled ore and wood in the *encomendero's* mines (plate 20); Indian women he put to work in the preparation of food raised from his nearby holdings or paid by Indians as part of their tribute requirement. Espinar earned almost nine thousand pesos a year from his mining operation and a further three thousand pesos annually from his involvement in agriculture. After the Cerrato reforms, Espinar was allocated the labour of only six *indios de servicio* and the tribute of five hundred tributaries, from whom he received corn, beans, chile peppers, cotton cloth, salt, and chickens.<sup>9</sup>

In 1562, after Espinar's death, Huehuetenango was granted to Luis Manuel Pimentel, a Spanish resident of Santiago de Guatemala who was later awarded sizeable agricultural holdings in the Huehuetenango district.<sup>10</sup> When Pimentel died in 1575, the *encomienda* was left to his widow, Doña Juana de Guzmán.<sup>11</sup> Around 1580, at the time of the new province-wide *tasación* of President Valverde, Huehuetenango is recorded as having been held by the person Juana had married, one Francisco de la Fuente, who received an unimpressive amount of tribute from 367 tributaries.<sup>12</sup> The downward adjustment by Valverde of the tribute assessment of Huehuetenango, carried out after the *tasación* of the town had already been substantially reduced by Cerrato some thirty years earlier, reflects directly the two factors most responsible for the decline of the *encomienda* as a viable economic entity: the enforcement, by officers of the Crown, of legislation deliberately designed to curb the power of *encomenderos* and the diminution of a native work-force frequently stricken by wave after wave of epidemic disease.<sup>13</sup>

Almost a century after the Valverde *tasación*, the *encomienda* of Huehuetenango entailed a modest contribution from a mere 156½ tributaries who paid their *encomendero*, José de Balcárcel, a small sum of cash along with some corn, chickens, and cotton cloth.<sup>14</sup> In 1678 the *encomienda* was given to Doña Mariana de Alvarado y Velasco, a resident of Madrid who derived from it an insubstantial pension.<sup>15</sup> Soon thereafter the *encomienda* escheated and the Crown became the sole recipient of the Indian tribute of Huehuetenango.

Two developments in the *encomienda* history of Huehuetenango are of special interest. First, there was an early connection in the district between *encomienda* and landholding *per se*. Two sixteenth-century *encomenderos* of Huehuetenango, Juan de Espinar and Luis Manuel Pimentel, both owned land in the vicinity of the town; the latter in particular was assiduous in seeking formal title to land within the spatial limits of his *encomienda*.<sup>16</sup> Although scholars now consider the history of the *encomienda* and that of the *hacienda*, or landed estate, as legally quite separate and distinct,<sup>17</sup> there was frequently, as James Lockhart has pointed out, a close link "in the realm of actual practice" between the two institutions.<sup>18</sup> Such a linkage is certainly apparent in the case of Huehuetenango, the most lucrative *encomienda* in the Cuchumatán region. Second, there was a marked tendency towards absentee holding by the late seventeenth century as the Crown increasingly awarded *encomiendas* in Central America to powerful Mexican families or members of the peninsular Spanish nobility, much to the chagrin of Guatemalan Creoles.<sup>19</sup> One of the last *encomenderos* of Huehuetenango was a *madrileña* who probably never set foot near her *encomienda*, and who would likely have thought of it only when wondering why her pension from the royal treasury amounted to so little.<sup>20</sup>

#### INDIAN TRIBUTE: THE TASACIÓN DE TRIBUTOS AND SERVICIO DE TOSTÓN

Since *congregación* and the creation of *pueblos de indios* were undertaken with economic as well as spiritual considerations firmly in mind, it is no coincidence that the reshaping of native settlement patterns was contemporaneous with attempts by the Crown to compile accurate lists of the number of Indians who could be expected to serve as suppliers of tribute. This routine procedure of assessing the tribute-paying capacity of Indian towns and villages resulted in the periodic drafting of a basis for levy known as the *tasación de tributos*.

The *tasación de tributos* recorded the number of Indians in any given town from whom tribute could legally be exacted. Such people were designated *indios tributarios*, Indian tributaries. Although Spanish definition of the term varied during the turbulent years of subjugation, by the end of the sixteenth century and for the remainder of the colonial period (save for an attempt at change, in 1786, in the Ordinance of Intendants) a *tributario* was classified as a married Indian male between eighteen and fifty years of age, together with his wife and children. As a taxation category, a *tributario* was therefore a family head, and represented one domestic or household unit. Widows, widowers, and unmarried adult males and females were defined as half-tributaries. Exemption from

paying tribute, a status referred to as *reservado*, was granted to native leaders and their eldest sons, to children, to the aged, to the sick and infirm, and to those Indians involved in some way with the work of the church. Each *tasación* usually stipulated the amount of tribute that each tributary or half-tributary was responsible for furnishing. The setting of uniform rates and quotas was designed to minimize abuse on the part either of *corregidores* collecting for the royal treasury or of *encomenderos* collecting for themselves.<sup>21</sup>

Depending on whether a town was assigned to an *encomendero* or held by the Crown, Indian tribute accrued either principally to a private individual or wholly to the royal treasury. The operation of *encomienda* represented a decentralization of the tribute exaction and therefore conflicted with the desire of the state to monopolize all such relations with the Indians. It was because of the commitment of the Crown to establishing a centralized economic order under absolute state control that a policy purposely stifling the *encomienda* was ardently pursued. As *encomiendas* reverted to the Crown in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Indian tribute formed an increasing part of imperial finances. In Guatemala the amount collected annually in the mid-sixteenth century was about ten thousand pesos; towards the end of the eighteenth century, around the time of the Bourbon reforms, the state's share had risen to more than 120,000 pesos.<sup>22</sup>

As well as enlarging its portion of Indian tribute relative to that enjoyed by *encomenderos*, the state also exacted from every tributary, whether in Crown towns or private *encomiendas*, an annual *real servicio* of one-half peso, or one *tostón*. This additional tax, known as the *servicio de tostón*, was initially imposed in 1592 as a short-term measure to help the royal treasury pay for the Invincible Armada. It continued to be collected, however, well into the eighteenth century.<sup>23</sup> When first levied in the *corregimiento* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, the *real servicio* amounted to some five thousand *tostones*, a figure that grew to about sixty-five hundred *tostones* in 1683 and that reached seventy-five hundred *tostones* in 1710.<sup>24</sup>

Cuchumatán Indians, like native groups elsewhere in Guatemala, were required under Spanish colonial law to pay tribute to their foreign masters twice each year, on the *tercio de San Juan* (24 June) and on the *tercio de Navidad* (25 December). Neither the Feast of Saint John nor Christmas Day could have been legitimate reasons for Indian celebration. Tribute was usually collected at the local level by Indian *alcaldes* and *regidores*, who were responsible either to *encomenderos* or *corregidores* for the provision of the correct amount. Failure on the part of native representatives to collect the necessary quotas often resulted in their being thrown into jail.<sup>25</sup> Once

collected, the tribute, if paid in kind, was usually sold off at public auction. Monetary proceeds were then delivered to the appropriate recipients, either in the colonies or the mother country.<sup>26</sup>

The earliest complete *tasación de tributos* for the Indian towns of the Cuchumatanes dates to the third quarter of the seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup> At this time the majority of *pueblos de indios*, perhaps indicative of their relative worth compared to other more prosperous Guatemalan towns, were still held in private *encomienda*. Cash payments to the Crown in the form of the *servicio de tostón* amounted to a little over two thousand pesos annually. *Encomenderos* were paid in kind with commodities such as beans, chickens, corn, cotton cloth, and palm or reed mats (*petates*). In 1768, a century later, tribute continued to be paid at least partly in kind, despite persistent demands by the Crown (then theoretically the sole recipient of Indian tribute) that all payments be made in cash.<sup>28</sup> By 1788, after the imposition of the intendancy system had increased fiscal efficiency by promoting administrative centralization, the Cuchumatán *tasación* brought in roughly eight thousand pesos per year and constituted approximately one-twelfth of the total Guatemalan tribute exaction.<sup>29</sup>

The semi-annual furnishing of tribute, in normal years, must have been accepted by the vast majority of the Indian population as part of their servile lot, as both an individual and collective burden that somehow had to be met, not questioned or challenged. This was certainly the view held by Spanish officialdom, and indeed was the seldom disputed basis upon which colonial rule was predicated: to the Spaniards tribute was regarded quite simply as "a just token of the vassalage owed by Natives to the Sovereign."<sup>30</sup> The hand of fate, however, from time to time prevented, or retarded, the payment of tribute, including bouts of sickness and pestilence; the ravages of drought, earthquake, and fire; and crop destruction due to locust invasion.<sup>31</sup> Among such calamities the recurrent outbreak of disease must be ranked as of the greatest consequence, judging by the fairly profuse archival documentation in which numerous Cuchumatán communities request either a pardon or a reprieve, on the grounds of disease-related poverty, from their tributary obligations. The following plea by the Indian leaders of Santa Eulalia, made in the early nineteenth century during an outbreak of typhus, may be considered bleakly representative:

Señor Alcalde Mayor: We, the *alcaldes* and *principales* of the town of Santa Eulalia, implore you to look on us as your sons. All is lost in our town. There are some who are homeless and others who are without food, it now being years since the fields were attended to properly. Many are consequently without corn



to eat and to live by. There are some who have not yet returned to their town and are [seeking refuge from the epidemic] in the [towns of the] coast, in Jacaltenango, and in Soloma. Señor Alcalde, we are still frightened, because the people of the town continue to die. Before God this is the truth and no lie. Help us, Señor Alcalde, by requesting the President that he pardon us from paying tribute. There is no corn at all in the town.<sup>32</sup>

Appeals such as this one, even when accompanied by letters from priests sympathetic to the desperate plight of their parish charges, rarely elicited more than characteristic indifference from authorities whose primary concern was that the stipulated levy, regardless of material circumstances, be punctually furnished.

#### FORCED AND FREE LABOUR: THE REPARTIMIENTO DE TRABAJO, SERVICIO PERSONAL, AND DEBT PEONAGE

The term *repartimiento de trabajo* refers loosely to an official allotment of Indians, theoretically hired out as wage workers, whose compulsory labour was used to further any number of Spanish ends.<sup>33</sup> Like the *encomienda*, the legal history of the institution is one of considerable complexity, but the essential principle behind its operation remained constant and clearly defined: Spanish exploitation of the native capacity to work, everywhere and anywhere, whether on farms or in mines, as domestic help or in community service.

Under the *repartimiento de trabajo*, Spanish colonists petitioned the Crown for native workers and were assigned individuals or parties for stipulated lengths of time – days, weeks, or months – at predetermined wage rates. After the contract was fulfilled, Indians supposedly returned to their communities, to be replaced by other recruits. The *repartimiento de trabajo* was considered necessary, indeed vital, for it was widely held by the Spanish authorities that unless forced to work under such arrangements the natives, being inherently slothful, would lapse into corrupt vagabondage. *Repartimiento* labour, therefore, prevented a return to “indolence and idolatry.”<sup>34</sup> Participation in the system was ensured by compelling Indians to pay a variety of secular and religious taxes that could often best be met by engaging in wage labour.<sup>35</sup>

Information pertaining to *repartimiento de trabajo* in the Cuchumatanes is scarce. Apart from the usual problems of document survival, this deficiency may, to some degree, reflect the spatial discrimination inherent in the functioning of this particular device. Generally, the closer an Indian

town or village lay to a major Spanish settlement the more likely it was that the native inhabitants would be subjected to the *repartimiento* draft.<sup>36</sup> In this respect it is possible that certain communities in the remote Cuchumatanes were less exploited during the colonial period than other more accessible communities in highland Guatemala. By the same token, however, distance and isolation from the moderating control of responsible Crown officials in Santiago de Guatemala may have prompted brutal and ruthless excesses on the part of recipients of Indian work parties in outlying areas such as the Cuchumatanes.

The right to enjoy compulsory, unpaid labour known as *servicio personal*, or personal service, was initially an integral part of the *encomienda* system, and it is in this specific context that allotments of Indian work parties in the Cuchumatán region are first documented. In a lawsuit against Pedro de Alvarado in 1537, the *encomendero* of Huehuetenango, Juan de Espinar, stated that his *encomienda* privileges included the labour of two hundred to three hundred *indios de servicio*. All were put to work, alongside 250 slaves, in Espinar's mines at Chiantla and Malacatán, from which the *encomendero* derived a handsome yearly income of more than eight thousand pesos. In addition to those who laboured in the mines, Espinar also had Indians who worked his land and who tended his swine.<sup>37</sup>

The Indians of Sacapulas, as part of their *encomienda* stipulation, were required to provide their *encomenderos*, Cristóbal Salvatierra and the younger son of Juan Páez, with four *fanegas* (roughly 210 kilograms) of salt each month. Prior to the reforms of President Cerrato in 1549, Indians were required to haul salt from Sacapulas almost one hundred kilometres over difficult terrain south to Santiago de Guatemala. *Servicio personal* was eventually replaced at Sacapulas by an annual levy of fourteen *xiquipiles* of cacao.<sup>38</sup> Since the closest source of this product was the cacao groves of Suchitepéquez in the *tierra caliente* far to the south, payment necessitated a migration at least equally as demanding as the one from Sacapulas to Santiago. Not everyone who made the trek to the south coast in search of cacao made it back to the highlands alive.<sup>39</sup>

Even after the Cerrato reforms, the service component of *encomienda*, although greatly reduced, did not entirely disappear. The towns of Aguacatán, Jacaltenango, Soloma, and Uspantán, for example, continued in the second half of the sixteenth century to provide their *encomenderos* with *indios de servicio* who tended swine and flocks of sheep.<sup>40</sup>

Several distinctions were made, at least on paper, between labour coerced from the Indians as *servicio personal* (which received no remuneration) and that allegedly rendered voluntarily (and which should have been paid for) as *repartimiento*. While, as Sherman points out, "the

simultaneous operation of these two forms of forced labour invites confusion,"<sup>41</sup> far less ambiguous is the fact that whereas the *repartimiento de trabajo* in New Spain, except in relation to mining and public works, was legally abolished in 1632,<sup>42</sup> the institution in Guatemala remained fully operational for the remainder of the colonial period.<sup>43</sup> Indians in the Cuchumatanes, for example, were frequently called upon "to contribute freely" towards the maintenance of roads and trails, and as late as 1770 were being forced to serve as human carriers, of wheat and flour, by the notorious Juan Bácaro, an *alcalde mayor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango whose ruthless excesses prompted Archbishop Cortés y Larraz to describe him as "of atrocious reputation in the whole of the province of Guatemala."<sup>44</sup> Similarly, there were repeated request for *repartimientos* of Indians to serve as shepherds on Cuchumatán sheep farms and to work in the silver and lead mines north of Chiantla.<sup>45</sup> And on at least three occasions, during the Lacandón *entradas* of 1685 and 1695, and in the expedition to quell the Tzeltal uprising in Chiapas in 1712, Cuchumatán Indians served as guides, pack bearers, and auxiliaries for the Spanish military forces.<sup>46</sup>

Although the impact of the reforms initiated by Cerrato, Valverde, and other responsible officials should not be overrated – the Crown was seldom, if ever, resolute in matters concerning Indian welfare – none the less by the early seventeenth century the more blatant forms of human exploitation in Guatemala had diminished considerably. By this time, however, many Spaniards who depended for a livelihood on native toil had moved from officially sanctioned coercion to a more individually contractual form of "free" labour: debt peonage. In peonage, a condition of indebtedness tied a worker, and often his offspring, to an employer whose primary objective was to hold on to labour by maintaining, through loans representing an advance on wages, the state of indebtedness. The employer would insist that the debt be repaid through work, which was exactly what he wanted.<sup>47</sup> This arrangement is usually interpreted as a characteristically seventeenth-century phenomenon devised to maximize Spanish control of a native work-force drastically depleted because of its vulnerability to diseases introduced by the Europeans. Indian labourers, so numerous during the first fifty years after conquest, were by the early seventeenth century a scarce and valuable resource worthy of protection. Debt peonage offered such protection.

In the Cuchumatanes, peonage was most prevalent on the large *haciendas* of the Altos de Chiantla, where various elements of physical geography combined to produce some of the finest pastureland in all Central America, even if the alpine locale (cold, windswept, bleak, and

isolated) was as inclement to man as it was ideal for the raising of livestock, especially sheep (plates 2 and 4). A document relating to the Altos de Chiantla and dated 1689 mentions that "it has always been the custom to pay Indians who voluntarily work as shepherds twelve *reales* and four handouts of corn each month."<sup>48</sup> When one of the largest properties, Hacienda Chancol, was sold in 1749, the purchase included, in addition to land and livestock, a debt of 270 pesos owed by Indian workers who were considered an integral part of the transaction. In this way, their labour was secured by the new owner, Manuel Francisco de Fuenlabrada.<sup>49</sup>

After Fuenlabrada's death, Chancol, and an adjoining *hacienda* called El Rosario, were purchased by Francisco Ignacio de Barrutia, a resident of Santiago de Guatemala whose ambition it was to transform the greater part of the Altos de Chiantla into one vast property known as Hacienda Moscoso. By the end of the eighteenth century Barrutia's holdings amounted to an impressive five hundred *caballerías* (21,250 hectares) containing excellent cropland, rich grazing, plentiful water, and fine stands of timber, as well as producing high-quality grain, cheese, and livestock.<sup>50</sup> Living permanently on Hacienda Moscoso were numerous Indian families who had been there "from time immemorial, voluntarily tending more than twenty thousand head of sheep."<sup>51</sup> When an attempt was made by the Indian *alcaldes* of a nearby community to convince the Spanish authorities that the families resident on Barrutia's property should be resettled in their native birthplace in order to help meet the tribute assessment, the *hacendado* protested bitterly, stating that the families concerned lived where they did through choice and that, receiving payment for their services both in land and wages, they therefore had sufficient means "not only to support themselves and next-of-kin but also to honour punctually their tributary obligations."<sup>52</sup> The fact that Indian families involved in the dispute opted to remain with the *hacendado* Barrutia rather than return to their home town may actually have been for them a more acceptable alternative. For, as Woodrow Borah has suggested, if a native worker "was bound to an employer, he was at least reserved for the service of that employer and protected to a considerable measure from the extortions to which he had been subject as a member of the Indian community."<sup>53</sup> A similar interpretation is offered by Murdo MacLeod, who notes that "a surprising number of Indians seem to have been happy to leave the villages," adding that, while the *hacienda* "was no paradise," it none the less "offered some protection against the depredations of *corregidores*, petty merchants, parish priests, and Indian *alcaldes* and *regidores*."<sup>54</sup>

## ADDITIONAL SECULAR AND RELIGIOUS DEMANDS

If, according to Borah and MacLeod, debt peonage in some way represented a haven or shelter, then a brief discussion of the extortions and depredations that prompted Indians to enter into such "free" labour arrangements is in order. Despite the proclamation of laws and royal orders calling for responsible supervision of native welfare, colonial reality was often quite radically different from administrative rhetoric. Among the Crown officials whose job it was to protect and defend the Indians, few groups were more negligent of their posts, or more abusive of their charges, than *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores*. Entrusted to safeguard native investments like the *caja de comunidad*, or community fund, these officials invariably exploited such resources as private capital.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, by subjecting ordinary Indians to all sorts of extra-legal exactions, from non-payment for personal services to excessive collection of tribute, *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores*, sometimes operating in collusion with local priests and native leaders, increased their salaries significantly at Indian expense.<sup>56</sup> One particular device resorted to regularly in the Cuchumatanes, as in neighbouring Chiapas, was a mechanism of forced sale and compulsory acceptance known as the *repartimiento de mercancías* or *reparto de efectos*.<sup>57</sup>

Under this practice *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores* supplied Indians with various commodities, insisting that they be purchased at prices considerably favourable to the seller, regardless of whether or not the merchandise was desired by the recipients in the first place. While there is evidence that the system operated in Huehuetenango as early as 1561, and was prevalent in the parish of Cuilco in 1641 and 1690, the *repartimiento de mercancías* seems to have been most prolific in the eighteenth century (see table 7). The most common item involved in these compulsory transactions was cotton, which Spanish officials distributed in raw, bulk form among Indian women, compelling them to spin it into thread and then weave it into *mantas*. The finished article fetched a handsome profit, for the entrepreneur not the worker, when sold at market. Raw wool was also circulated, among male weavers, with the same end in mind. Other items peddled to the Indians included axes, clothes, iron tools and implements, and (on occasion) money.<sup>58</sup> Although native communities frequently petitioned against the *repartimiento de mercancías*, stating that the involuntary sales caused them to neglect their families and to slight their fields, most directives from the *audiencia* ordering *corregidores* and *alcaldes mayores* to cease their notorious commerce were ignored.

Just as the Indians were vulnerable to exploitation by secular officials,

TABLE 7

*Repartimientos de Mercancías (1561–1813)*

Year	Place	Activity and comments	Source
1561	Huehuetenango	Forced sale of various goods at high prices among Tlaxcalan Indians resident in the district. Clergy as well as secular Crown officials involved in the practice.	AGI:AG52
1641	Cuilco	Father Juan de Mata complains that the governor of Chiapas distributes <i>efectos de comercio</i> among his parish charges, an illegal and harmful activity in the eyes of the priest.	AGCA, A1.14, leg. 4064, exp. 31664
ca 1690	Cuilco and elsewhere	Widespread use by <i>corregidores</i> of <i>repartimientos de algodón</i> , whereby Indians are given raw cotton and expected to work it into finished form. While Cuilco is mentioned specifically, the source states that the practice is common "en todos los demás pueblos de esta jurisdicción [Totonicapán and Huehuetenango] y la de Quezaltenango"	Fuentes y Guzmán, <i>Recordación Florida</i> 259:35
1703	Sacapulas	Describing themselves as "pobres miserables tributarios," native representatives petition against <i>repartimientos de algodón</i> being distributed among the womenfolk of their community. An order is passed in which the <i>alcalde mayor</i> responsible is told to desist from molesting the Indians in this way.	AGCA, A1.24, leg. 1573, exp. 10217
1716	Totonicapán and Huehuetenango	An inquiry into the conduct of the <i>alcalde mayor</i> of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango is to be undertaken by the Captain General of Chiapas. The <i>alcalde mayor</i> is accused of numerous misdemeanours and abuses of office, including excessive demands, embezzlement of funds, and the non-	AGCA, A1.24, leg. 4649, exp. 39688

TABLE 7 (Continued)

Year	Place	Activity and comments	Source
1759	Santa Eulalia	<p>payment of proper sums for services rendered by (and goods received from) various Indian communities.</p> <p>A complaint is lodged by the men and women of the community, especially the latter, that excessive <i>repartimientos de algodón</i> make them "captives" and "slaves" of the <i>alcalde mayor</i>. The women claim they have to work all year round to fulfill the demands placed upon them.</p>	Recinos, <i>Huehuetenango</i> , 215
1760s	Parishes of Huehuetenango, Nebaj, and Soloma	<p>Rampant manipulation of <i>repartimientos de mercancías</i> by <i>alcalde mayor</i> Juan Bácaro, described by the source as one whose exploitation of the Indians has earned him "muy mala fama." Bácaro's treatment of natives is so ruthless that the source claims some of them abandon town life for a fugitive existence in the mountains in order to escape his oppression.</p>	Cortés y Larraz, <i>Descripción geográfico-moral</i> 2:48-9, 118, 124
1774	Parish of Soloma	<p>Indian leaders protest, through their parish priest, against the overbearing demands placed upon them, particularly <i>repartimientos de algodón</i>, by the <i>alcalde mayor</i> Matías de Manzanares. In his defence, Manzanares claims native families accept the <i>repartimientos</i> voluntarily. The <i>alcalde mayor</i> is ordered by the <i>audiencia</i> not to persist with the practice.</p>	AGCA, A1.14, leg. 190, exp. 3864
1776	Aguacatán	<p>Complaints are lodged by the Indians that <i>alcalde mayor</i> Josef González Cosío insists they buy unnecessary goods from him at elevated prices. Native families are also</p>	Recinos, <i>Huehuetenango</i> , 215-16

TABLE 7 (Concluded)

Year	Place	Activity and comments	Source
1779	Parish of Soloma	forced to sell raw wool to Cosío at prices well below market value, thus ensuring that he (and others engaged in the practice) derive from it "una mina de oro." The <i>alcalde mayor</i> is fined 100 pesos by the <i>audiencia</i> for abuse of office. <i>Repartimientos de efectos</i> are once again being carried out, despite orders prohibiting the practice.	AGCA, A3.12, leg. 2897, exp. 43013
1813	Parishes of Cuilco, Nebaj, and Soloma	The <i>alcalde mayor</i> of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, Narciso Mallol, is accused of procuring, by means of <i>repartimientos</i> , items such as salt, wheat, corn, and incense, all of which (once sold) contribute significantly to his enrichment. Despite attempts by Captain General José de Bustamante to prosecute Mallol, the <i>audiencia</i> intervenes on the latter's behalf. The <i>alcalde mayor</i> is eventually re-posted to Tegucigalpa.	Recinos, <i>Huehuetenango</i> , 216-17

so also did they fall victim to rapacious demands on the part of the clergy. A government order issued in 1561 stipulated what goods and services priests could legitimately request of their native parishioners, but such theoretical regulations (like so many others) were seldom adhered to in practice.<sup>59</sup> Clarence Haring has observed that "opportunity for exploitation was especially abundant in the more remote Indian parishes, to which the more worthless friars were frequently sent."<sup>60</sup> An isolated region like the Cuchumatanes certainly gave more materially minded clergy ample scope for self-enrichment. While Cuchumatán parishes were occasionally administered by honest and dedicated clergy, others concerned themselves more with personal gain than with Indian salvation. Abuses once again appear to have been most prevalent in the eighteenth century, with priests and friars accused of various transgressions, including failure to reimburse for personal services, selling Indian livestock without native consent, overzealous collection of funds to



TABLE 8  
Abuses Committed by Spanish Clergy (1681-1819)

Year	Place	Complaint	Source
1681	San Juan Ixcay	Indians from the community claim that the parish priest is excessive in his demands for food and provisions.	AGCA, A1.24, leg. 1566, exp. 10210
1759	Parish of Soloma	The parish priest, Friar Santiago Arriola of Our Lady of Mercy, is said by his native charges to be unrelenting and excessive in his request for payment of such routine services as celebrating mass and administering the holy sacraments.	AGCA, A1.16, leg. 5802, exp. 48989; Recinos, <i>Huehuetenango</i> , 467-8
1759	San Ildefonso Ixtahuacán	The parish priest of Malacatán, Friar Simón José Collado, is accused by natives of the community of embezzling funds meant for reconstruction of the local church.	AGCA, A1.11, leg. 5799, exp. 48925
1771	Todos Santos and San Martín Cuchumatán	Indians lodge complaints with the <i>audiencia</i> concerning "malos tratamientos" and extortions perpetrated by their parish priest, Father Miguel Hermenegildo Muñoz.	Recinos, <i>Huehuetenango</i> , 469
1773	Cunén	The native townspeople allege that Father Andrés Henríquez, their parish priest, does not pay them for looking after the livestock belonging to the church. They further assert that Henríquez sold six of their cows without consulting native owners beforehand.	AGCA, A1.11, leg. 190, exp. 3868
1773	San Juan Ixcay and San Pedro Soloma	The Indians accuse their parish priest, Father Tomás de Clavería, of expecting contributions far in excess of what available resources permit.	Recinos, <i>Huehuetenango</i> , 469
1773	San Gaspar Ixchil	Natives from the community petition against the unreasonable demands placed upon them by Friar Simón José Collado. His greed, the Indians claim, is the principal cause of their continual impoverishment.	AGCA, A1.11, leg. 2801, exp. 24609

TABLE 8 (Concluded)

Year	Place	Complaint	Source
1774	Aguacatán, Chiantla, and Todos Santos	The Indians state that their parish priest compels them to work as unpaid shepherds and porters. In addition to serving as involuntary labour, they complain of the sizeable contributions they make towards the upkeep of their local churches.	AGCA, A1.11, leg. 2801, exp. 24613
1803	San Mateo Ixtatán	Natives from the community seek a reduction in the amount of money they are expected to contribute for the saying of mass and the organization of religious celebrations.	AGCA, A1.11, leg. 2804, exp. 24642
1819	Huehuetenango	Indian representatives accuse their parish priest, Father Bernardino Lemus, of excessive demands and harsh treatment.	AGCA, A1.11, leg. 2806, exp. 24669

celebrate mass or hear confession, and embezzlement of church finances (see table 8). The last complaint was often lodged with respect to the clergy's use of assets belonging to *cofradías* (table 9), religious sodalities maintained in Indian villages to support specific fiestas and to commemorate certain Catholic holidays.<sup>61</sup>

#### ETHNIC RELATIONS

Relations between Spaniards and Indians throughout the colonial period were based on the latter existing in varying degrees of servitude to the former. For most Spaniards, native 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. Co-existence under these terms could hardly foster respect or compassion. What it did breed was suspicion, distrust, hatred, and fear. Colonial subordination, the institutionalized exploitation of one culture by another, generated ethnic tensions in which the vanquished were often pushed to the limits of endurance. When provoked beyond, the reaction against the colonial order took a number of forms.

One common response was flight, the abandonment of *congregaciones* for a fugitive life in the forests and hills, where abusive authority did not

TABLE 9

*Cofradía* Assets of Cuchumatán Parishes (1770 and 1803)

Parish	1770		1803	
	Number of <i>cofradías</i>	Liquid capital (in pesos)	Number of <i>cofradías</i>	Liquid capital (in pesos)
Chiantla <sup>a</sup>	37	2416	38	3382
Huehuetenango <sup>a</sup>	29	2746	67	data incomplete
Cuilco <sup>b</sup>	13	1157	24	2124
Malacatán <sup>b</sup>	25	2080	24	3488
Jacaltenango <sup>c</sup>	20	1529	18	1360
Nebaj <sup>c</sup>	19	2454	18	data incomplete
Soloma <sup>c</sup>	31	3100	37	3472
Uspantán	21	1713	26	1248

SOURCES: AGI:AG948, Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz to the Crown (1768-70); AGCA, A1.11, leg. 6105, exp. 55798, 55799, 55800, 55802, 55803; and AGCA, A1.11, leg. 6106, exp. 55864, 55865, 55893 (1803)

<sup>a</sup>Includes sizeable contribution from *cofradías* organized by Spaniards and Ladinos.

<sup>b</sup>Includes small contribution from *cofradías* organized by Spaniards and Ladinos.

<sup>c</sup>*Cofradía* funds composed entirely or overwhelmingly of contributions by Indians.

reach and could not penetrate. Scores of families from San Mateo Ixtatán opted for this solution in the late seventeenth century.<sup>62</sup> Some of these "indios diabólicos" actually went so far as to return to their *pueblo* and run the parish priest, Friar Alonso de León, out of town.<sup>63</sup> The rebellious Ixtatecos vented their anger further in 1720 by robbing Spanish livestock, stealing some 72 sheep while flocks were being driven down from the Cuchumatanes into the city of Comitán in Chiapas.<sup>64</sup> The *hacendado* whose flocks were plundered, Juan Martínez de la Vega, suffered further losses nine years later at the hands of the Indians of Chiantla, who invaded his property and made off with forty head of cattle and a number of horses.<sup>65</sup> Alarmed by these events, Martínez de la Vega, a prominent and powerful landowner, called for the imprisonment of the culprits and a strengthening of Spanish commitment to law and order.<sup>66</sup>

Not every manifestation of Indian contempt or delinquency ended merely with a half dozen lashes and several hungry days in jail, the normal punishment for such misdemeanours as theft, religious unorthodoxy, lack of respect, and failure to pay taxes. Some Spaniards took the law into their own hands, administering a more personal form of justice in which violence figured prominently. A particularly nasty incident in this regard took place in the mining district of Chiantla in 1725. At the lead mine called Las Ánimas, which lay to the north of Chiantla not far from the *camino real*, the owner, Pedro de Montoya, had a disagreement with an

Indian worker whom he verbally berated and then assaulted physically. The confrontation was witnessed by another native miner, one Juan López, who, to express his disgust at Montoya's behaviour, laid down his tools and started to walk off the job. This action did not please Montoya, who ordered López to stay put. The Indian ignored his employer's commands and continued to walk away from the mine. Montoya, already disturbed, became incensed at such blatant insubordination, and attacked the defenceless López with an iron pick, striking him four or five times in the chest and face. The Indian, wounded badly, fell to the ground. Several of the victim's fellow miners, all from nearby Santa Bárbara, rushed to his assistance, having watched the assault in helpless terror. López, described by his companions as a robust worker of thirty to thirty-five years of age, was carried back to Santa Bárbara, blood spilling from his mouth. A few days later, he died of the injuries sustained in the attack. Although criminal proceedings were brought against Montoya by the Indian workers who had witnessed the assault, the mine owner was cleared of the charge a year later, after serving a brief jail sentence in Santiago de Guatemala. It was stated simply in a letter of exoneration that Montoya, a native of Tegucigalpa but at the time of the incident a wealthy Spanish resident of Huehuetenango, was a considerate employer, paying his native miners one *real* per day and never abusing them or treating them cruelly or disrespectfully.<sup>67</sup>

Few incidents, even ones as vicious as the above, saw the Indians themselves resort to violence. Such an extreme response occurred only during disputes involving property rights or irregularities in the collection of tribute.<sup>68</sup> With respect to the latter, certain developments in the late colonial period triggered a brief but alarming native uprising in the Cuchumatanes, essentially a spillover of the Totonicapán rebellion of 1820.<sup>69</sup> Though the seditious Ixtatecos came close several times to staging a full-fledged insurrection and there is evidence of native dissent during the early nineteenth century at San Martín Cuchumatán and in the Ixil country, it was the Indians of Sacapulas whose revolt against Spanish authority provoked the most serious confrontation.<sup>70</sup>

The roots of the conflict, like so much else that determined Amerindian fate, lay in the political dynamics of Europe, specifically the aftermath of the French invasion of Spain in 1808. Napoleon's overthrow and capture of King Ferdinand VII precipitated a national revolution during which a regency and parliament (Cortes) governed those parts of Spain not conquered by the French. Ruling in the king's name from the city of Cádiz, the Cortes drew up a constitution that was promulgated in March 1812, only to be repealed in May 1814 when Ferdinand was restored to the Spanish throne. Six more years of political crisis ended when, in March

1820, the king finally yielded to demands for a parliament and the reinstatement of the Constitution of 1812. Where these events, at first seemingly far removed from the day-to-day concerns of Cuchumatán Indians, affected native life directly was in relation to the question of tribute. In keeping with its liberal predilection, the Cortes abolished Indian tribute throughout Spanish America on 13 March 1811, only to see it reintroduced on 10 January 1815 after Ferdinand returned to power. Attempts to resume the collection of tribute following a four-year period when, in theory at least, the obligation had been relaxed served only to cause confusion, then to spread unrest, and finally to prompt rebellion among Guatemalan Indians.<sup>71</sup>

Native opposition to the restoration of tribute in Guatemala was particularly vehement in the Totonicapán area. Open revolt began there on 20 February 1820, when the Indians of Santa María Chiquimula rioted against efforts by their parish priest, José Patricio Villatoro, to collect taxes from them without proper authorization.<sup>72</sup> News of the Chiquimula affair spread quickly to other towns, including Sacapulas, some forty kilometres to the north.

A nasty confrontation took place in Sacapulas on 28 March 1820 when the *alcalde mayor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, Manuel José de Lara, arrived in town to collect tribute, which he claimed was considerably in arrears. The Indians, when presented with his request for payment, told the *alcalde mayor* that word had reached them of tribute having been abolished and of towns elsewhere, including Chiquimula, having refused to deliver. Lara consented to a temporary suspension of the tax while an Indian delegation went to the capital, Guatemala City, to find out whether or not tribute should still be furnished. A peaceful solution seemed assured until one Indian, apparently misunderstanding what had been discussed and agreed upon, began to hurl abuse at the *alcalde mayor*. Lara ordered the unruly culprit to be seized and was about to punish him when the man's family and other Indians intervened. Tensions mounted when the *alcalde mayor*, fearing injury, drew a knife to defend himself. His action ignited a full-scale riot, from which Lara was fortunate to escape with his life. He fled, shaken but unharmed, to Huehuetenango, from where some four hundred troops, including reinforcements from Chiantla, were later dispatched to crush the uprising and to reassert Spanish authority.<sup>73</sup>

The Sacapulas incident, coming only one year before Guatemalan independence from Spain, underscores the servile basis on which relations between Spaniards and Indians were founded and conducted throughout the colonial period. To maintain that imposition of Spanish rule resulted in the enslavement of the native population would be

simplistic and misleading. During the first quarter-century of Spanish hegemony, chattel slavery was certainly the miserable fate that awaited any Indian unfortunate enough to be captured alive during military confrontation. Such luckless individuals, branded as *esclavos de guerra* (slaves of war), are recorded by Fuentes y Guzmán as having been rounded up in the Cuchumatán region after the battles of conquest lasting from 1525 to 1530.<sup>74</sup> Thereafter, few references to outright enslavement of Indians in the Cuchumatanes exist. A different matter entirely, of course, is the fate of natives pressed into yielding labour to Spaniards under circumstances that could be equally intolerable.

Through the operation of the institutions discussed above, a considerable and continual burden was placed on the Indians by their Spanish masters. These devices, and others such as the *derrama* and the *salutación*, kept the native population in a condition of servility.<sup>75</sup> The *encomienda* system, requiring specific towns to furnish privileged individuals with labour and tribute, set the institutional precedent upon which subsequent exploitation was based. *Encomenderos* put Indians to work at various tasks: they laboured in mines; they hauled heavy loads from one town to another; they tilled fields and tended flocks; they spun cotton and they wove it into cloth; and they served as domestic help in Spanish households. Some of the agricultural chores demanded of the Indians introduced them to things they had never known, seen, or handled before: horses, cattle, sheep, goats, pigs, chickens, and the cultivation of wheat, the Spanish staple so different from the native corn. Twice yearly, Indian towns paid commodity tribute either to private *encomenderos* or to the Crown. Even in times of dire hardship – following a drought or an earthquake, after an invasion of locusts or an outbreak of disease – Indian towns received little sympathy or concession from officials intent on collecting tribute.<sup>76</sup> Although the Cuchumatanes were never of more than marginal economic importance to the colonial regime, it is difficult not to concur with Wasserstrom's appraisal, made in relation to neighbouring Chiapas, that the quality of Indian life under Spanish rule was characterized by "steady and unabated deterioration."<sup>77</sup> Demands made of native communities may have been so excessive that entering into debt peonage with a Spanish landholder offered better prospects of survival than remaining a tributary of the Crown in an Indian village.<sup>78</sup> It is within such dismal circumstances that native people in the Cuchumatán highlands endured their worldly existence, compelled to do so by masters unflinching in their belief that, having saved pagan souls by bringing them tidings of the Christian God, not *here* but *hereafter* was all that should concern them.

## 8 Working the Land: Landholding Patterns and the Agricultural Economy

That the *hacienda*, or landed estate, played a significant role in the economic, political, and social development of Spanish America has long been recognized.<sup>1</sup> Of particular importance historiographically are the contributions of Woodrow Borah and François Chevalier.<sup>2</sup> Both these writers contend that in colonial Mexico the emergence of the *hacienda* as a Spanish-controlled unit of production was contemporaneous with a period of Indian population decline and general economic contraction lasting from the late sixteenth until the late seventeenth century – events that were closely and inextricably linked. Chevalier presents an image of rural patriarchs presiding over feudal domains worked by an impoverished and servile peasantry. Once created, the *hacienda*, and the power its wealthy owners symbolized, cast a long and oppressive shadow. Borah, for instance, maintains that, by the end of the seventeenth century, an economy distinctively Mexican in character “was already organized on the basis of latifundia and debt peonage, the twin aspects of Mexican life which continued nearly to our day and which helped provoke the Revolution of 1910–17.”<sup>3</sup>

That colonial Guatemala also experienced a seventeenth-century demographic and economic crisis characterized by a marked tendency on the part of resident Spaniards to take up land has been impressively documented by Murdo MacLeod.<sup>4</sup> According to MacLeod, however, Spanish interest in the acquisition of land was more intense south and east of Santiago de Guatemala than north and west of the capital, owing chiefly to the greater accessibility, fertility, and entrepreneurial potential of the former region compared to the latter.<sup>5</sup> The consequences of the seventeenth-century depression, as in Mexico, were profound, because it was during this period, asserts MacLeod, that “the basis was laid for the modern political and economic divisions of the area, and for the cultural cleavage between Indian and Ladino which hampers Guatemalan nationhood to this day.”<sup>6</sup>

As in any field informed by rigorous and progressive research, the

validity of the features depicted by Borah, Chevalier, and MacLeod have been modified or reinterpreted in the light of recent findings. In the Mexican context, the Borah-Chevalier thesis seems not to fit the experience of the Valley of Mexico where, according to Charles Gibson, the evidence "suggests only a limited role for peonage," even though "with respect to land there can be no doubt that the *hacienda* came to be the dominant mode of control."<sup>7</sup> Farther south, the research of William Taylor in the Valley of Oaxaca indicates that although large Spanish estates, landless Indians, and debt peonage were certainly to be found, none the less they were neither common nor characteristic.<sup>8</sup> *Haciendas* owned and operated by Spaniards did emerge, but Indians still controlled two-thirds of the agricultural land of the region during the last century of colonial rule.<sup>9</sup> Taylor maintains that such a significant departure from the findings of Chevalier, in particular, simply reflects the deficiencies of an overgeneralized model that fails to take into proper account the nuances of time and place. An awareness of regional variation, he declares, is all-important: "What holds for the Valley of Oaxaca in 1750 is unlikely to hold for Colima in 1800."<sup>10</sup> Such a viewpoint, urging that spatial comparison be more measured and controlled, is similar to the one called for by Miles Wortman in relation to economic trends and fluctuations in seventeenth-century Central America.<sup>11</sup> On the basis of his familiarity with several parts of southern Mesoamerica, Taylor speculates that landholding in colonial Guatemala may approach a middle ground between the extremes represented by the Chevalier or north Mexican model and the example of the Valley of Oaxaca.<sup>12</sup> The purpose of this chapter is to reconstruct patterns of Spanish and Indian landholding in the Cuchumatán highlands throughout the colonial period. In reconstructing this vital aspect of the cultural landscape, an attempt will be made to present and to interpret the evidence in the context of the issues outlined above.

#### PATTERNS OF SPANISH LANDHOLDING

In his landmark work on Spanish Central America, MacLeod has convincingly demonstrated that the first Spanish conquerors and colonists in the region were not men motivated primarily by feudal ambitions. Rather, they were initially much more entrepreneurial and mercantilist in their aspirations. Only when exploitation of the work of others proved, if not without profit, certainly not as lucrative as first anticipated, did Spaniards focus attention on the land and concentrate on the establishment of large rural estates. As a means of personal enrichment, therefore, control of labour was for much of the sixteenth century considered more



important than control of land. An emphasis was thus placed, during the early period of Spanish rule, on regulating the native work-force through such coercive devices as the *encomienda* and the *repartimiento de trabajo*, geared towards the booming trade in cacao that dominated Central American commerce in the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

Spanish interest in the Cuchumatán highlands parallels closely the general pattern of exploitation and involvement developed by MacLeod. There was an initial flurry of excitement over the discovery that gold could be panned along the course of the Río Malacatán, but this early promise was not maintained. The gold of Pichiquil and San Francisco Motozintla, much to the ire of frustrated Spaniards, proved more mythic than real.<sup>14</sup> Gold and silver were plentiful enough to provide the first European to exploit the local ores, Juan de Espinar, with a handsome return of eighty-seven hundred pesos in 1537, but even Espinar had to adjust his expectations.<sup>15</sup> During the colonial period, the mines of Chiantla certainly produced modest quantities of silver, used to decorate church altars throughout Guatemala; but the scale and output of the operation, even when undertaken in conjunction with lead mining, was far less significant than that of central Honduras, and nothing at all like that of Guanajuato and Zacatecas in the Viceroyalty of New Spain or Potosí in the Viceroyalty of Peru.<sup>16</sup> By the close of the sixteenth century it was apparent to the few Spaniards who decided to retain an active interest in the Cuchumatanes that greater security and better prospects lay in taking up land than in forcing a reluctant and much-depleted native population to render labour in marginal mining enterprises.

Among the earliest titles to land in the Cuchumatán region were four awards made between November 1563 and May 1564 to the *encomendero* of Huehuetenango, Luis Manuel Pimentel. The first award was for two *caballerías* of land near Huehuetenango to be used to cultivate wheat.<sup>17</sup> A charge of five hundred pesos was made for the title. It was also stipulated that the land had to be fully cultivated within two years, and that no sale of property could occur until four years had passed. A second title to two *cabellerías* in the vicinity of Chiantla was granted for land to grow corn, at the same cost and carrying similar restrictions regarding property sale.<sup>18</sup> Two further titles were made for grazing land near Huehuetenango to raise sheep, goats, cattle, horses, and mules.<sup>19</sup> All four titles awarded to Pimentel stated that the land was allocated "without injury" (*sin perjuicio*) to the Indians, and that the grants did not conflict with the legal claims of any other party. In addition to landed property, Pimentel also acquired ownership of a water mill in Huehuetenango that had formerly belonged to Juan de Espinar.<sup>20</sup>

The move by Manuel Pimentel to take up land in the vicinity of Huehue-

tenango apparently did not immediately influence other Spaniards to do likewise, for there is a lengthy hiatus in land acquisition between the 1560s and the end of the sixteenth century. The start of the seventeenth century, however, marked the beginning of a spate of interest in Cuchumatán landholding that continued for the remainder of the colonial era.

The period of time between the early seventeenth and the early eighteenth century witnessed the taking up of land in the Cuchumatanes through *composición*, a policy whereby an impecunious treasury either sold Crown land (*tierras realengas*) or legalized an irregular land title on the payment of a fee. The proclivity of the Crown towards the latter option meant that Spaniards could illegally usurp Indian holdings in the knowledge that a small monetary contribution to the royal treasury was all that was needed to legalize the seizure. At least thirty-eight different awards, amounting to over two hundred *caballerías* of land, are recorded for properties in the Cuchumatán highlands between 1607 and 1759 (see table 10). The chronology of most of these awards coincides closely with a period of economic contraction in Central America and, as MacLeod has indicated, likely reflects the retreat to a modest, rural self-sufficiency on the part of resident Spaniards and Creoles frustrated by the events and circumstances of seventeenth-century colonial life.<sup>21</sup>

During the years of economic transition between about 1635 and 1720, Spaniards were mostly drawn to the lands south and east of Santiago de Guatemala where, in addition to such staples as wheat, fruit, and vegetables, indigo could be cultivated as a cash crop and cattle raised as a source of hides and meat. Although the highlands to the north and west of the capital – rugged, cold, isolated, certainly amenable to subsistence agriculture, but with little or no potential for cash cropping – were not encroached upon as much, some favoured pockets did arouse Spanish interest. Excellent grazing land in particular was abundant, the availability of pasture being related directly to diminished resource utilization because of catastrophic Indian depopulation. In addition, the absence of livestock in the pre-Columbian economy meant that the alpine meadows of the *páramo* could be turned to profitably for the first time in history. The Cuchumatanes, dismissed in the golden age of cacao as next to worthless, assumed a slightly more appealing status. Spaniards began to discern distinct possibilities in the region, not so much in farming as in ranching, especially the raising of sheep. Of all the areas that attracted Spanish attention, by far the most desirable was the Altos de Chiantla (see plates 2 and 4).

One of the first important landholders in these parts was Baltasar de Herrera who, at the time of dictating his will in 1687, owned the *hacienda*

TABLE 10

Spanish Landholding (*Composiciones, Denuncias, Medidas, and Remedias*)  
in the Cuchumatán Highlands (1607–1759)

Year	Location	Amount ( <i>caballerías</i> )	Recipient	AGCA source
1607	Altos de Chiantla	—	Francisco Rodríguez	A1, leg. 5937, exp. 51931
1623	Two leagues from Cuilco	12	Sebastián Montes de Oca	A1, leg. 5939, exp. 51953
1628	Altos de Chiantla	18	Bartolomé Ponce	A1, leg. 5939, exp. 51964
1652	Vicinity of Malacatán	2	Melchor González de Mazariegos	A1, leg. 5943, exp. 52010
1670	Between Aguacatán and Chiantla	2	José Pérez de la Plata	A1, leg. 5946, exp. 52054
1670	Altos de Chiantla	9.5	José de Alvarado	A1, leg. 5946, exp. 52055
1670	Altos de Chiantla	10.5	Juan López de Mata	A1, leg. 5946, exp. 52056
1676	Vicinity of San Juan Ixcay	7	Melchor Rodríguez	A1, leg. 5948, exp. 52087
1683	Altos de Chiantla	8.5	Pedro Chávez	A1, leg. 5949, exp. 52106
1684	Altos de Chiantla	2	Pedro Nolasco	A1.57, leg. 6095, exp. 55405
1685	Five leagues from Todos Santos Cuchumatán and San Juan Ixcay	5.5	Melchor de Mencos	A1, leg. 5949, exp. 52111
1704	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	16	Tomás García de Medina	A1.80, leg. 5959, exp. 52241
1704	Altos de Chiantla	3.5	Nicolás de Mata	ST, Huehuetenango, 1:10
1705	Vicinity of Chiantla	11.5	Juan Salvador de Mata	ST, Huehuetenango, 1:3
1705	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	3	Antonia de León	A1.24, leg. 1574, exp. 10218
1705	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	6	Andrés de León	A1, leg. 5960, exp. 52252
1706	Vicinity of Chiantla	2	Tomás García de Medina	ST, Huehuetenango, 1:3
1706	Vicinity of Chiantla	4	Tomás García de Medina	ST, Huehuetenango, 1:3
1706	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	5.5	Ana María de Mazariegos	A1.24, leg. 1575, exp. 10219
1706	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	6.5	Tomás García de Medina	ST, Huehuetenango, 1:19
1706	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	3	Antonio Cifuentes	A1.24, leg. 1575, exp. 10219

TABLE 10 (Concluded)

Year	Location	Amount ( <i>caballerías</i> )	Recipient	ACCA source
1706	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	19	María de Vides	A1.24, leg. 1575, exp. 10219
1706	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	6	Tomás García de Medina	A1.24, leg. 1575, exp. 10219
1707	Vicinity of Chiantla	5	Domingo García Moscoso	A1, leg. 1576, exp. 10220
1708	Altos de Chiantla	7	Convento de Jacaltenango	st, Huehuetenango, 1:8
1708	Vicinity of Malacatán	4	Tomasa de Solís	st, Huehuetenango, 1:16
1711	Between Aguacatán and Chiantla	4	Domingo García Moscoso	A1.24, leg. 1578, exp. 10222
1714	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	2	Duarte Fernández de Hidalgo	A1.57, leg. 5757, exp. 48171
1715	Altos de Chiantla	3.5	Nicolás de Mara	st, Huehuetenango, 1:19
1717	Vicinity of Huehuetenango	10	Antonia de León	A1.24, leg. 1582, exp. 10226
1723	Vicinity of Malacatán	1	Pedro Monzón	st, Huehuetenango, 1:18
1726	Between Amatenango and Cuilco	2	Domingo Ramírez	st, Huehuetenango, 1:13
1737	Vicinity of Malacatán	2	Martín Sánchez	st, Huehuetenango, 1:16
1740	Vicinity of Cuilco	7.5	Pascual de León	st, Huehuetenango, 1:14
1741	Vicinity of Cuilco	12	Nicolás de Barrios	st, Huehuetenango, 1:2
1759	Vicinity of Malacatán	—	Antonio Santiago	st, Huehuetenango, 1:16
1759	Vicinity of Malacatán	—	Juana Barrios	st, Huehuetenango, 1:16
1759	Vicinity of Malacatán	—	Juan de Soto	st, Huehuetenango, 1:16

known as Nuestra Señora del Rosario Changucux Chemal y Saxbalá. A property then of some fifteen *caballerías*, El Rosario supported over two thousand head of sheep in addition to some horses and cattle.<sup>22</sup> After the death of Herrera, El Rosario was taken over by his son-in-law, Captain Domingo Moscoso Balmaior. An enterprising and highly motivated individual, Moscoso sought to gain control over as much land on the Altos de Chiantla as possible. Early in the eighteenth century he acquired the property and livestock of José Alvarado Bracamonte and Melchor

Rodríguez Mazariegos, and by 1711 owned over sixty *caballerías* of prime pasture land. The Moscoso holdings at that time supported some fourteen thousand head of sheep, and the *hacendado* owned more land on the *páramo* and adjacent territory than all the other Spanish settlers combined.<sup>23</sup>

When Moscoso died he left his estate to his wife, Lucrecia de Herrera. When a notary penned her will on 9 September 1725, Doña Lucrecia listed as Moscoso property the three finest *haciendas* of the Altos de Chiantla: El Rosario, La Capellanía, and Chancol. El Rosario contained 10,600 sheep, five hundred mares, four hundred cows, three hundred horses, fifteen mules, and two donkeys, as well as a number of houses for resident Indian workers, the *casa grande* of the *patrón*, and a sumptuously decorated chapel. La Capellanía raised over five thousand sheep, three hundred mares, and several mules. Chancol comprised ten to twelve *caballerías* of quality pasture that had been purchased from Tomás García de Medina for six hundred pesos.<sup>24</sup>

On the death of Lucrecia de Herrera, the Moscoso holdings were passed on to her brother-in-law, Juan Martínez de la Vega. When he dictated his last will and testimony on 27 February 1744, the following Cuchumatán properties had been added to his estate:

*Sajpojola*: A *hacienda* of thirteen and one-half *caballerías* that was purchased for 1350 pesos from Doña Micaela de la Parra, widow of Sebastián Antonio de Aguayo

*San Antonio Musmul*: A plot of land measuring nine *caballerías* bought from Pedro de Chávez

*Baco de Anco*: A plot of land measuring five *caballerías* near Todos Santos Cuchumatán

*Xebuyugüitz*: A *hacienda* of seventeen *caballerías* purchased from the heirs of Juan López de los Ríos

*Tuwinimá*: Five *caballerías* of land in the Río de las Vueltas

*Los Cheches*: Five *caballerías* of land on the Altos de Chiantla overlooking Aguacatán

These properties, along with the former Moscoso holdings, amounted to a sizeable estate of some 137½ *caballerías* that supported thirty thousand sheep, one thousand cattle, one thousand mares, 180 horses, four hundred pigs, forty-nine mules, and five pairs of oxen.<sup>25</sup>

Although Martínez de la Vega left some property to the church, his daughters Manuela and Juana received the bulk of the estate. To Manuela, the wife of Manuel Francisco de Fuenlabrada, was left Hacienda El Rosario, while Juana, the wife of Marcelo de Noriega,

received Hacienda Chancol. Juana later sold Chancol to her brother-in-law, Fuenlabrada, for the sum of 7,287 pesos and four *reales*. The live-stock component of the transaction was broken down as follows:

7900	sheep at three <i>reales</i> a head
1315	rams at four <i>reales</i> a head
182	mares at two pesos a head
20	one-year old colts at three pesos a head
20	stallions at five pesos a head
10	stallions at four pesos a head
18	goats at three <i>reales</i> a head
70	pigs at one peso a head
25	pigs at four <i>reales</i> a head
6	mules at eight pesos a head

The sale of Chancol also included a payment of 270 pesos by which Fuenlabrada assumed the debt of the Indian shepherds, farmers, and servants who worked on the *hacienda* and who had received money as an advance on wages. The right of the new owner to the labour of these people and their offspring was thus assured. Such arrangements appear to have been considered normal and routine, as indeed was peonage itself, the customary means of securing a work-force for the *haciendas* of the *páramo*.<sup>26</sup>

After Fuenlabrada's death, in 1750 or 1751, his widow Manuela sold both Chancol and El Rosario to Francisco Ignacio de Barrutia, a Spanish resident of Santiago de Guatemala. The combined extent of the two *haciendas* (plate 21)<sup>27</sup> was then almost two hundred *caballerías* and the transaction was negotiated under the following terms: 4431 pesos for land; 1017 pesos for the chapel of Nuestra Señora del Rosario with all its jewels and ornaments; and 14,029 pesos for livestock, grain, wool, farm equipment, and houses. Like the ambitious Moscoso some forty years before, Barrutia then set out to incorporate, by aggressive and systematic buying, the fine pastures of the Altos de Chiantla into one single property. By the end of the eighteenth century he had successfully acquired possession of some five hundred *caballerías* of land, an impressive estate by any standards.<sup>28</sup>

Economic contraction in the seventeenth century therefore marked the beginning of significant land acquisition throughout Central America on the part of Spanish colonists. Resources available for exploitation were re-evaluated as expectations changed. Appraisals and perceptions formulated during the first hundred years of colonial rule were no longer

appropriate or realistic. In the Cuchumatanes the process of agricultural expansion was somewhat delayed, but by the late seventeenth century Spaniards were present in the region in important numbers. They were especially attracted by the ranching possibilities of the Altos de Chiantla. The majority of property owners were from a secular background, but the church (individual priests or friars as well as convents and *cofradías*) also figured prominently in the carving up of Cuchumatán pastures and farmland.<sup>29</sup> During the eighteenth century a handful of men emerged as wealthy owners of estates on the Altos de Chiantla, where sheep, cattle, horses, and mules were tended by resident native families bound to their *hacendados* by debt peonage. The creation of sizeable Spanish holdings in the Cuchumatanes, however, was not undertaken entirely at the expense of the territorial integrity of the Indian communities of the region.

#### PATTERNS OF INDIAN LANDHOLDING

Under the policy of *congregación*, the Indians resettled at a new town site were legally entitled to an allotment of land from which to derive basic subsistence. Included in this allotment were both arable tracts and an area designated *ejido*, uncultivated land held in common by the Indians and used by them for cutting firewood, grazing livestock, hunting animals, and gathering the various products of the forest. In addition to the "new" lands held in the vicinity of *congregaciones*, the Indians continued to cultivate the "old" lands surrounding their former homes in the mountains, although seldom with a legal title to do so. Not even the dogged persistence of visiting Crown officials or zealous local clergy prevented native farmers from returning to plant corn in the land of their forefathers. Despite concerted efforts, Spanish colonial policy never resulted in the complete alienation of Indians from their ancestral terrain, whether spiritually or materially. From the mid-sixteenth century on, therefore, a fundamental division existed in the pattern of native land tenure between "new" lands surrounding the *pueblos de indios* and "old" lands some distance away.<sup>30</sup>

Indian towns and villages usually held land under a communal title, and often successfully petitioned for territorial extensions beyond the standard one-league *ejido* allocation.<sup>31</sup> In order to maintain a firm legal standing, many communities wisely updated or "composed" their titles by making periodic payments to the Crown, thus lessening the risk of invasion and seizure by Spaniards or Ladinos. As late as 1789, for instance, the Indians of Sacapulas paid 143 pesos for a *composición de tierras*; the natives of Cunén adopted a similar strategy early in the nineteenth century in order to safeguard their land.<sup>32</sup> Certainly by the end

TABLE 11  
Indian Landholding, by *Calpul* or *Parcialidad*, in the Vicinity of Sacapulas

<i>Calpul</i> or <i>parcialidad</i>	Location of holdings	Approximate extent of holdings	Tributary population (1794)
San Pedro	North bank of Río Negro, across the river from the townsite	81 <i>caballerías</i>	67
Santiago and San Sebastián	South bank of Río Negro (including salt-works) adjacent to the townsite	72 <i>caballerías</i>	141
San Francisco	To the west of land held by Santiago and San Sebastián, predominantly on the south side of Río Negro	78 <i>caballerías</i>	98
Santo Tomás	To the west of land held by San Pedro, predominantly on the north side of Río Negro along both banks of Río Blanco	121 <i>caballerías</i>	60

SOURCE: AGCA, A1, leg. 6040, exp. 53305; Hill, "The *Chinamitales* of Sacapulas." See Plates 19 and 22 for cartographic representation.

of the colonial period, native recourse to the bureaucratic process was common practice when it came to issues involving ownership of land, but an Indian propensity towards Hispanic legalism had developed much earlier.<sup>33</sup>

Within certain *congregaciones*, land was held not by the community as a whole, but by *calpul* or *parcialidad*. Perhaps the best illustration of such an arrangement in the Cuchumatanes was at Sacapulas, where the distinct social groups constituting the settlement were long associated with particular tracts of land, a situation never fully understood or sufficiently acknowledged by the Spaniards (see plate 19 and table 11). To the Indians of Sacapulas, however, this form of tenure enabled them to preserve a strong sense of autochthonous identity, despite the Christian nomenclature by which most *parcialidades* were known.<sup>34</sup> Some land was also set aside for the upkeep of *cofradías*, several Cuchumatán sodalities (in Aguacatán, Chiantla, Huehuetenango, Sacapulas, and Soloma) owning property on which cattle and sheep were raised with a view to financing special religious celebrations and festivities.<sup>35</sup>

The most affluent members of native society were the lineage heads known as *caciques* and *principales*. These Indian leaders were often awarded private grants of land in recognition of their elite status and also for performing specific services, such as the collection of tribute, for their



TABLE 12

Land Grants to Indian *Caciques* and *Principales* in the Cuchumatán Highlands (1600–1711)

Year	Location	Amount (in <i>caballerías</i> )	Recipient(s)	AGCA source
1600	Vicinity of Chiantla	19.5	Antonio, Francisco, and Luis de Mendoza	A1, leg. 5935, exp. 51906
1628	Vicinity of Todos Santos Cuchumatán	6	Juan de Herrera	A1, leg. 5940, exp. 51969
1705	Vicinity of Chiantla	4	Baltasar Jiménez Celajú	A1, leg. 1574, exp. 10218
1711	Vicinity of Aguacatán	14	Pedro and Sebastián de Escobar	A1, leg. 5960, exp. 52250 A1, leg. 1578, exp. 10222; ST, Huehuetenango, 1:9

Spanish masters (table 12). Although no *cacique*-owned estates, or *cacicazgos*, emerged in the Cuchumatanes to compare with those developed by high-ranking lineages in the Valley of Oaxaca, a number of native rulers were conspicuously better off materially than ordinary members of their community. One such individual in the late seventeenth century was Pedro Hernández, an Indian leader of Santiago Chimaltenango who, according to Fuentes y Guzmán, enjoyed an impressive personal estate comprising land, livestock, and "no small amount of money."<sup>36</sup>

An important feature of native landholding in communities adjacent to the Lacandón frontier was the cultivation of tropical lowland areas to the west, north, and east of highland *congregaciones*. Seasonal migration down from the Cuchumatanes in order to work the fertile *tierra templada* or *tierra caliente* of the sparsely populated Usumacinta basin was a tradition among the Indians of Santa Eulalia, and was also practised by other native communities, including San Sebastián Coatán, San Juan Cotzal, San Gaspar Chajul, and San Mateo Ixtatán.<sup>37</sup> Several leagues distant from the Indian town sites, these lands, or *ranchos*, not only produced fine yields of corn, but also yielded cacao, chile, cotton, sugar cane, and a wealth of fruits that could not be grown in the *tierra fría* of the highlands. They also provided Cuchumatán Indians with an opportunity to fish and to gather honey. Movement to and from these lowland fields was apparently so well established that Fuentes y Guzmán, when composing the *Recordación*

*Florida* towards the end of the seventeenth century, considered it pertinent to show their location in his sketch of the *corregimiento* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango. The "Ranchos de Santa Eulalia," for example, are clearly depicted some four leagues to the north and west of the *congregación*, well beyond the limit of effective Spanish jurisdiction and control (see figure 2). One result of such seasonal migration was to blur or make meaningless property boundaries between neighbouring communities, which in these parts of the Cuchumatanes were often fluid and ill-defined, on paper as well as on the ground. Another consequence was to place Indian families here in the enviable position of seldom having to be seriously concerned, as were native groups elsewhere, about a shortage of cultivable land. The advantage, however, was offset considerably by the problem of being vulnerable to attack by hostile Lacandones raiding from the Usumacinta rain forest to the north.<sup>38</sup>

The option of frontier farming was something the myriad Indian communities along the southern edge of the Cuchumatanes did not enjoy. Good agricultural and grazing land in the south was apparently in much shorter supply, owing chiefly to a greater density of native occupation and the closer proximity of Spanish and Ladino settlers who could encroach upon Indian holdings. Thus the Indians of San Sebastián Huehuetenango, in 1741 and again in 1811, petitioned the Crown for more land in view of the inability of existing resources to support their rising numbers.<sup>39</sup> In the mid-eighteenth century the native people of Cuilco also asked the Crown for assistance, stating that hardship was upon them on account of land allocated as *ejido* being used by their parish priest to grow sugar cane and operate a sugar mill.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the Indians of Huehuetenango in 1812 requested that they be awarded a sum of money in order to buy Crown land with which to supplement their present holdings, since much of the community *ejido* had been taken over by land-hungry Ladinos. The Indians also complained bitterly about "the enormous animals, owned by our Ladino neighbours, which invade our fields and destroy our crops."<sup>41</sup> Land was therefore at a greater premium along the southern Cuchumatán border with Quezaltenango, Totonicapán, and Sololá than in remote northern reaches adjacent to uninhabited or lightly settled tropical lowlands. Not surprisingly, disputes over land ownership and property rights were more numerous and heated in the south than in the north.

#### LAND DISPUTES (1668–1822)

The surviving documentation indicates that conflict over ownership of land in the Cuchumatanes was most significant during the eighteenth and

early nineteenth centuries (tables 13 and 14). Conflict certainly arose during earlier times, but was more pronounced between 1700 and 1821 for two main reasons: first, it was during this period that the native population began its slow recovery after the demographic collapse brought about by Spanish conquest, thus precipitating a need for more land to feed a growing number of Indians; and second, the years 1700–1821 saw Spaniards and Ladinos maintain and intensify their landholding interests in the region. After the frugality and stringency that characterized much of seventeenth-century Central American life, landholding prospects, even in isolated areas like the Cuchumatanes, must have taken on added appeal. While no great fortune could be guaranteed, *hacienda* management did offer limited, but tangible, commercial possibilities, as well as providing some degree of self-sufficiency.

Significantly, two of the earliest documented property disputes between Indian and non-Indian factions involved highly prized land on and adjacent to the Altos de Chiantla. The Spanish contestant in both cases was Juan Martínez de la Vega, a wealthy and influential *hacendado*. Indian communities fighting against the encroachment of the Spaniard's estate included Chiantla, Todos Santos, and San Martín Cuchumatán.

On 19 August 1705, Martínez de la Vega requested that he be assigned what he alleged were "vacant lands" (*tierras baldías*) in the cordillera about one league north of Chiantla at a site known as Mamenguiché. His principal reason for wanting the land was to extend the amount of pasture available to him for the raising of sheep. The *hacendado's* request, however, was challenged by the Indians of Chiantla. Represented by their *alcaldes* and *regidores*, the natives claimed that the site under dispute comprised "the best land the community holds, for it is here that we grow corn and graze sheep so that we can pay the tribute required by His Majesty."<sup>42</sup>

In the legal entanglement that followed, seven individuals were called upon to submit information that would help bring about a settlement. Some Spanish residents supported the position argued by Martínez de la Vega. Among them was Manuel Martín, who stated that the Indians "have land in other parts which is both fertile and plentiful."<sup>43</sup> Other Spaniards testified in support of the natives, among them Joseph Brillegar and Pedro de Chávez, the latter himself a local landholder and a rival of Martínez de la Vega. Arbitration by the *juez de tierras*, an official of the Crown responsible for the settlement of land disputes, eventually resulted in a new title to 178 *caballerías* being given to the Indians. Included in this allocation were four *caballerías* of land at Mamenguiché, suggesting that the conflict was finally settled in favour of the natives.<sup>44</sup>

Over thirty years later, in 1737, Juan Martínez de la Vega, by then the

owner of *haciendas* Chancol, El Rosario, and La Capellanía, was involved in another dispute. The Indian contestants on this occasion were the communities of Todos Santos and San Martín Cuchumatán. In a letter to the district governor, Martínez de la Vega bluntly stated that "the Indians – without cause, without title, and without any reason whatsoever – have begun to pasture their sheep on lands which are part of my *haciendas*."<sup>45</sup> The *hacendado* complained that the sheep, some 140 head, were overgrazing a certain pasture and thus causing damage to his property, "all of which has been composed and purchased from Your Majesty."<sup>46</sup> Two Indians in particular, Francisco Pérez and Gaspar Chap, were singled out as being the chief culprits.

For their part, the natives of Todos Santos and San Martín Cuchumatán claimed that the stretch of land on which they grazed their sheep, known as Siquibilchas, was allocated to them as *ejido*, and stated in a letter to the *juez de tierras* that the land was in fact recorded as belonging to them in the community titles they currently held. The Indians also mentioned that they had "no other land which can be used to pasture sheep" and that Martínez de la Vega had "more than one hundred *caballerías* on which to raise his sheep, which is more than sufficient." Siquibilchas was needed, the natives argued, "so that we can pay our tribute and clothe and feed our families."<sup>47</sup> Although they sent their community titles as proof of ownership to the appropriate authorities, litigation this time went against the Indians. Under threat of imprisonment and the confiscation of their sheep, the Indians were told to withdraw their claim and to abandon the pasture. Although Francisco Pérez complied reluctantly with the order, Gaspar Chap did not, forcing the authorities to confiscate his sheep and prompting the Indian to flee from justice.<sup>48</sup>

The two cases outlined above can be considered more or less characteristic of the land disputes between Indian and non-Indians that occurred throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (table 13). Some conflicts were litigated in favour of Spaniards or Ladinos, others in favour of the Indians. Not all disputes, however, were settled peacefully, for the tensions that charged certain confrontations resulted, on occasion, in outbreaks of violence and damage to property. Such was the case, for example, when, some time between 1768 and 1772, the Indians of San Sebastián Coatán, protesting against Spanish seizure of native territory in the *tierra caliente* to the north and west of the highland *congregación*, invaded the offending *hacienda* and burned houses, stole cattle and horses, and even kidnapped a Spanish administrator.<sup>49</sup> The Indians of Coatán again took up arms between 1800 and 1810, in anger at further encroachment. They were joined on this occasion by about two hundred people from San Mateo Ixtatán, with whom they plundered the

TABLE 13

Land Disputes between Indians and Non-Indians in the Cuchumatán Highlands (1705–1822)

Year	Contestants	AGCA source
1705	Juan Martínez de la Vega against Chiantla	A1, leg. 5960, exp. 52251
1737	Juan Martínez de la Vega against Todos Santos Cuchumatán	A1, leg. 3025, exp. 29183; leg. 5976, exp. 52505
1748–59	Friar Juan Antonio González against Cuilco	ST, Huehuetenango, 1:17
1772–9	Mateo Morales and Juan José Franco against San Pedro Necta	A1, leg. 6018, exp. 53040; leg. 6102, exp. 55702; leg. 2899, exp. 26827
1775	Nicolás Recinos against San Sebastián Huehuetenango	A1, leg. 6021, exp. 53075
1777	Pedro Henríquez against Santa María Cunén	A1, leg. 6022, exp. 53093
1793	Parish priest of Huehuetenango against San Pedro Necta	A1, leg. 6040, exp. 53302
1803	Ladino community against Indian community in Huehuetenango	A1, leg. 6092, exp. 55333
1808	Luis Aguilar against the Indian communities of Jacaltenango parish	A1, leg. 2919, exp. 27230; ST, Huehuetenango, 2:14
1810	Luis Aguilar against Jacaltenango	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:5
1813	José Domingo Franco against San Sebastián Coatán	A1, leg. 6052, exp. 53498
1814	Nolberto Zamallorga against Indian community of Huehuetenango	A1, leg. 6117, exp. 56583
1815	Ladino community against Indian community in Huehuetenango	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:13
1816	Hacienda San Lucas y San Antonio "Tierra Negra" against San Mateo Ixtatán and San Sebastián Coatán	A1, leg. 6118, exp. 56683; leg. 5329, exp. 44907
1820	José and Joaquín Montejo against Jacaltenango	A1, leg. 2806, exp. 27672; ST, Huehuetenango, 2:15, 18
1822	Vicente Gómez against Tectitán	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:17

*hacienda* known as San Antonio Tierra Negra, stealing livestock, setting fire to a church, and kidnapping estate workers. Troops were dispatched from Comitán with orders to enter from Chiapas and restore order.<sup>50</sup> In another incident that took place at Huehuetenango in 1814, the native farmer Tomás Moreno was attacked by a knife-bearing Ladino named Nolberto Zamallorga. The Ladino, who had driven his cattle on to Moreno's cornfield, insisted that they be allowed to graze there, threatening the Indian with further harm should they be removed.<sup>51</sup> The invasion of Indian lands by cattle owned by Spaniards and Ladinos was a common source of conflict.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to property disputes between Indian and non-Indian factions, conflict also arose in the Cuchumatanes between native groups

TABLE 14

Land Disputes between Indian Communities in the Cuchumatán Highlands (1668–1822)

Year	Contestants	AGCA source
1668	Santiago Chimaltenango against Todos Santos Cuchumatán	ST, Huehuetenango, 1:1
1689	Jacaltenango against Santa Ana Huista	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:8
1711–12	San Antonio Huista, Santa Ana Huista, and Jacaltenango	A1.24, leg. 1579, exp. 10223
1730– mid-1800s	Aguacatán against Sacapulas	ST, Quiché, 1:5; leg. 5978, exp. 52518; leg. 5979, exp. 52536; leg. 5982, exp. 52582; leg. 6051, exp. 53470
1742–3	Jacaltenango against Santa Ana Huista	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:8; A1, leg. 5985, exp. 52635
1743	San Antonio Huista against Santa Ana Huista	ST, Huehuetenango, 1:15
1810	Cunén against Sacapulas	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:13
1812	Jacaltenango against San Miguel Acatán	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:11
1813	Santiago Chimaltenango against Todos Santos Cuchumatán	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:12
1813	Cunén against Uspantán	ST, Quiché, 1:7
1814– mid-1840s	Jacaltenango against Todos Santos Cuchumatán	A1, leg. 2806, exp. 24664; leg. 2857, exp. 25791; leg. 2927, exp. 27474; leg. 6055, exp. 53546; leg. 6117, exp. 56588; leg. 6118, exp. 56680; leg. 6118, exp. 56696; leg. 6118, exp. 56709; ST, Huehuetenango, 2:11
1817	San Miguel Acatán against San Marcos Jacaltenango	A1, leg. 2929, exp. 27463
1819	Jacaltenango, San Miguel Acatán, and Todos Santos Cuchumatán	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:14
1821	San Martín Cuchumatán, Todos Santos Cuchumatán, and Jacaltenango	B3.6, leg. 47, exp. 983
1822	Tectitán against Tacaná	ST, Huehuetenango, 2:17

(table 14). From 1730 until the early nineteenth century, the Indians of the Chalchitán *parcialidad* of Aguacatán clashed with the Indians of the Santo Tomás *parcialidad* of Sacapulas over the ownership of a stretch of land mid-way between the two towns known as Pichiquil. According to the testimony of Friar Raymundo de Herrera, the parish priest of Sacapulas, Pichiquil belonged to the Indians of Santo Tomás by virtue of the members of this *parcialidad* being the descendants of the Lamaquib group who were brought from a settlement called Solchum (Xolchun) to form part of the

*congregación* of Sacapulas in the mid-sixteenth century. Pichiquil, the priest stated, had traditionally been worked by the Lamaquib of Xolchun. Their descendants, therefore, were the legitimate holders of the terrain. Since the Indians of Santo Tomás were now in need of more land, Herrera argued that they should be given legal title to their ancestral territory.<sup>53</sup>

The Indians of Chalchitán, however, claimed that Pichiquil was originally held by their forefathers, the Bai'joon, and therefore belonged to them. Furthermore, they contended vehemently that the Indians of Sacapulas were materially much better off than they were, on account of owning "ten *haciendas* with both livestock and a plentiful amount of land, in addition to working salt deposits and not having, like our community, to provide the frequent users of the royal highway with food and lodging."<sup>54</sup>

A lengthy litigation ensued. Juan José Ordóñez, an official of the Crown, called for the complete remeasurement of the land boundaries between the towns of Aguacatán, Sacapulas, Cunén, and Nebaj. He was extremely sceptical of "proof" of ownership in the form of titles he considered old and useless, and stated that Pichiquil was the property neither of Aguacatán nor Sacapulas but was *tierra realenga* belonging only to the Crown. Tempers flared as the dispute dragged on. Santo Tomás twice accused Chalchitán of robbing livestock from land near Pichiquil belonging to the *cofradías* of Sacapulas. By the end of the eighteenth century, arbitration by a royal surveyor gave legal ownership of the disputed land to Santo Tomás, principally because their *parcialidad* had a greater number of tribute payers, and hence more need of land, than their rivals in Aguacatán. The Indians of Chalchitán, for their part, refused to recognize the decision, and continued to occupy Pichiquil until their forceful eviction from the terrain in 1808 by the district governor, Prudencio de Cozar.<sup>55</sup> Some years later, however, the decision was reversed. Astute lobbying on the part of the Chalchitecos, in which a payment to the Crown proved particularly persuasive, resulted in another redrawing of land boundaries that saw Pichiquil excluded from the territory allocated to Santo Tomás. The perseverance of Chalchitán, albeit with the assistance of a sum of money, had finally paid off.<sup>56</sup>

An equally complex dispute over land ownership occurred in the early nineteenth century between the Indian communities of Jacaltenango and Todos Santos Cuchumatán. Conflict was again centred on land that formed a boundary between the two towns. Confrontation on this occasion apparently originated because the Todosanteros considered that they had bought land from their Jacalteco neighbours, while the latter viewed the exchange not as a sale but merely as a temporary rental arrangement.<sup>57</sup>

The land under contest was in an area called Gehec, traditionally Jacalteco *ejido* but claimed by Todos Santos through "purchase" from Jacaltenango. In 1814, numerous families from Todos Santos who worked plots of land at Gehec reported that Indians from Jacaltenango, Petatán, and Concepción had invaded and burned their homes, had attacked and threatened innocent people, and had made off with twelve sacks of corn.<sup>58</sup> The Todosanteros retaliated swiftly, killing five people and severely beating many others. By 1817, after a series of attacks and counterattacks, the situation had deteriorated to such an extent that the parish priest of Jacaltenango, José León Faboada, warned Crown officials of the possibility of "a murderous riot with grave consequences."<sup>59</sup> In an attempt to resolve the feud, the *alcalde mayor*, Manuel José de Lara, arranged a meeting with parish representatives and afterwards ordered a complete remeasurement of the land boundaries between the two communities. The solution put forward to resolve the dispute was either to divide the contested territory in two equal parts, or offer Todos Santos an equivalent amount of land elsewhere, thus leaving Jacaltenango in sole control, once again, of Gehec. Both suggestions, however, seem to have had little impact, for Jacaltenango and Todos Santos were still fighting over land jurisdiction in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup>

Conflict over property rights developed not only between neighbouring Indian communities but also within communities between rival *parcialidades*. Nowhere was such internal bickering more endemic than at Sacapulas. Throughout the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the various social groups that formed the *congregación* were in almost continual collision as each *parcialidad* sought to gain control over as much land in the vicinity of the town site as possible. The problem was compounded by rash Spanish attempts to impose a solution that completely ignored long-established divisions and practices. Particularly controversial was the proposal to redraw property boundaries in such a way as to place the salt works owned by the *parcialidades* Santiago and San Sebastián within *ejido* limits (figure 9). Needless to say, the plan was not well received by the people of Santiago and San Sebastián, who waged a long legal battle (in the end successfully) to defend the salt-works against encroachment, especially from the *parcialidad* San Pedro (see plate 22).<sup>61</sup> Similarly, the *parcialidad* San Francisco entered into litigation with the *parcialidad* Santo Tomás, chiefly over attempts by the latter faction to restrict the access of the former to fertile irrigable land in the Río Negro valley.<sup>62</sup>

Feuds and antagonism over property ownership were therefore a prevalent feature of late colonial life. Conflict seems to have been most prolific along the more densely populated zone of Spanish-Indian contact



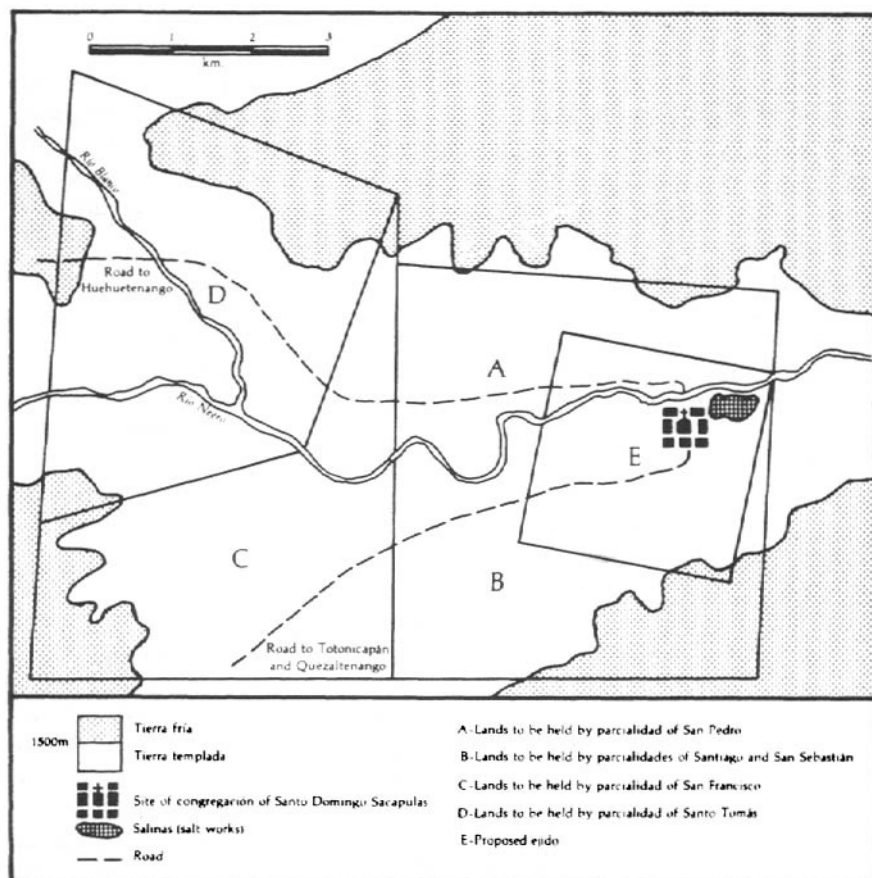


Figure 9 Proposed division of Indian landholding at Sacapulas in the late eighteenth century (based on AGCA, A1, leg. 6040, exp. 53305 and leg. 6025, exp. 53126)

stretching from Aguacatán and Sacapulas in the east to Chiantla and Huehuetenango in the centre-south and beyond to Jacaltenango and Santa Ana Huista in the north-west. Land appears to have been as highly prized during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as it is today. How the Cuchumatán earth was used will now be discussed.

#### THE AGRICULTURAL ECONOMY

By the introduction of new tools, new crops, and domesticated animals, the Spaniards radically and irrevocably altered patterns of land use throughout the Cuchumatanes. The European conquerors had little success, however, in creating an agricultural economy that was of much commercial significance, simply because most parts of the Cuchumatanes were environmentally unsuitable for colonial cash crops such as cacao and indigo. One of the few market-oriented activities made possible by the physical geography of the region was the raising of livestock.

Several Indian communities are documented as supporting sizeable herds of livestock, particularly sheep. Fuentes y Guzmán, for instance, recorded "large and plentiful flocks of sheep, all with excellent meat" at Santiago Chimaltenango.<sup>63</sup> Joseph de Olvarrieta and Archbishop Cortés y Larraz noted the same at San Lorenzo, San Juan Ixcoy, San Pedro Soloma, San Miguel Acatán, San Sebastián Coatán, Santa Eulalia, and San Mateo Ixtatán.<sup>64</sup> Although most native communities kept some animals, whether sheep, goats, pigs, turkeys, chickens, or even a few head of cattle, Indian stock raising in the Cuchumatán highlands was far surpassed by the pastoral pursuits of the Spanish *haciendas* of the region.

According to Fuentes y Guzmán, the Spanish residents of Huehuetenango at the end of the seventeenth century depended for their livelihood "on *haciendas* which raise all kinds of livestock, because the countryside here is ideally suited for this type of activity."<sup>65</sup> When, a century later, Archbishop Cortés y Larraz passed through the Malacatán area, a little to the south of Huehuetenango, he also recorded a landscape in which *haciendas* figured conspicuously (plate 23).<sup>66</sup> The largest ranches in the Cuchumatán region were on the Altos de Chiantla where, in addition to horses, mules, and cattle, tens of thousands of sheep were grazed. On the Moscoso holdings alone, over twenty thousand sheep were raised "for the supply of wool and meat" chiefly to Huehuetenango, Quezaltenango, and Santiago de Guatemala.<sup>67</sup> Although these three towns were the main focus of the trade in livestock, Cuchumatán *hacendados* also did business with the Spanish residents of Comitán and Ciudad Real in Chiapas.<sup>68</sup> The colonial space-economy was therefore oriented north and west towards Mexico as well as south and east towards central Guatemala. Wool

production fostered the development of weaving in the district, especially among the Indians of Chiantla, Huehuetenango, and Santa Isabel. Meat production and preservation was facilitated by the proximity of two local salt sources, one at Sacapulas and the other at San Mateo Ixtatán.<sup>69</sup> Twice yearly, the livestock industry of the Cuchumatanes was given added vitality by the agricultural fairs held at Chiantla in conjunction with extravagant religious ceremonies related to the cult of the Virgin.<sup>70</sup> These fairs attracted buyers and sellers of quality livestock from all over Mexico and Central America and, together with regular transactions, must have represented a modest but noteworthy source of *alcabala* (sales tax) income for the Crown.<sup>71</sup>

Although locally and, to a lesser extent, regionally important, the Cuchumatán livestock economy must be properly viewed against the larger and more widespread backdrop of Indian subsistence and tribute-oriented agriculture. Native communities worked the land primarily to subsist and to pay tribute. During years of good harvests, there might be a surplus left after subsistence needs had been met and tribute paid, which could either be stored or traded. In times of crisis, brought on by drought or earthquake, by an outbreak of disease or an invasion of locusts, there was barely enough food to survive even before tribute was due.<sup>72</sup>

The Indians grew a variety of crops. Some were age-old staples, such as corn, beans, chile peppers, and squash. Others, like wheat, sugar cane, onions, garlic, bananas, apples, and peaches, were introduced by the Spaniards. Indian communities tended to specialize, then as now, in producing whatever was best suited to local conditions. Thus sugar cane was cultivated at San Ildefonso Ixtahuacán, San Pedro Necta, and San Andrés Cuilco.<sup>73</sup> Salt was produced by the Indians of Sacapulas and San Mateo Ixtatán, and was taken by itinerant merchants as far away as Chiapas, Quezaltenango, and Suchitepéquez, where it was traded for cacao and cotton.<sup>74</sup> Todos Santos grew apples and made from them each year "more than two thousand jugs of cider, which sell for twenty-four *reales* a jug."<sup>75</sup> Wheat, the cultivation of which was taught to the Indians by missionaries in the sixteenth century, was grown as a cash crop at Cunén, Coatán, and Concepción; it was used to feed the Spanish residents of, among other places, Ciudad Real, Comitán, Chiantla, Huehuetenango, and Santiago de Guatemala.<sup>76</sup> A small amount of cacao and *achiote*, the latter a vegetable dye used to colour food, was produced at San Antonio and Santa Ana Huista, San Andrés Cuilco, and San Andrés Jacaltenango.<sup>77</sup> The dry scrubland around Toxoh, a small Mam community near Huehuetenango, supported a growth of *nopal* cactus that some natives exploited as a means of making cochineal dye.<sup>78</sup> Honey was made by the Indians of Petatán, and bananas and pineapples were grown at Purificación Jacaltenango.<sup>79</sup>

Land in the Cuchumatanes was therefore put to productive use, by Spaniards and Indians alike. Spanish interest in the agricultural potential of the region was apparently at first quite negligible, with the sole exception of the area around Huehuetenango. Serious Hispanic involvement materialized only in the seventeenth century, but, once started, continued and intensified throughout the eighteenth century up until Guatemalan independence from Spain in 1821. The acquisition of land by Spaniards had less of an impact on native communities until the end of the seventeenth century, when the Indian population began its slow demographic recovery after a century and a half of sustained decline. A growing native population clashing with Spanish desires for land resulted, between 1700 and 1821, in a spate of conflicts over property ownership and territorial rights. Disputes developed not only between Spaniards and Indians, but also between and within native communities. The *hacienda*, with its marked orientation towards raising livestock tended by native peon labour, certainly emerged as a recognizable feature of the Cuchumatán landscape, but while Spanish encroachment was by no means unimportant, Indians none the less managed to retain possession of many of their ancestral lands. Explanation of such a pattern lies intertwined in the region's physical geography, its limited economic potential, Spanish colonial ambitions, and the tenacity and willingness of Cuchumatán Indians to exercise their rights as subjects of the Crown by entering into lengthy and often complex litigation procedures. As William Taylor correctly speculated a few years ago, landholding in colonial Guatemala, at least judging from the Cuchumatán evidence, seems to bear little resemblance either to the north Mexican model or to the example of the Valley of Oaxaca. The Cuchumatán pattern, rather, straddles an intriguing middle ground between both these extremes. So long as land remained to a significant degree within Indian control, the survival of a distinctively Mayan way of life was assured, not just in the Cuchumatanes but throughout highland Guatemala. It was left for future depredations to erode the native estate with unprecedented ardour and confront the Indians of Guatemala with a crisis as profound as conquest by Spain.<sup>80</sup>

## 9 Collapse and Recovery: Demographic Change in the Native Population

There exists, in many colonial societies, a marked tendency for population size and economic performance to be directly related. Such a connection may be said to have prevailed in Spanish Central America, for the economic history of the region – one of cyclical booms, setbacks, and readjustments – was tied closely to demographic trends and fluctuations. Thus, with a large native population from which to draw labour, initial economic prospects seemed encouraging. As Indian numbers diminished in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, economic activity languished and depression set in. When the native population began to increase in size towards the end of the seventeenth and throughout the eighteenth century, economic contraction and stagnation gave way slowly to experimentation, revival, and growth.<sup>1</sup>

The operation of this crude, causal connection linking population size and economic performance runs through a number of developments in colonial Guatemala. Indian depopulation was a major factor behind the demise of the *encomienda* system. It also contributed towards *hacienda* formation and the emergence of debt peonage as a means of securing a resident native work-force.<sup>2</sup> Such important developments can be understood fully only when viewed in relation to long-term population dynamics. It is to the establishment of a demographic profile for Cuchumatán Indians between Spanish conquest and Guatemalan independence that this chapter is directed.

### NATIVE POPULATION MOVEMENT (1520–1821)

Any attempt to reconstruct the population history of the Cuchumatán highlands is beset by a lack of consistent, representative data. The paucity of source materials is particularly severe for the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, by comparison, are reasonably well documented. As with the contact situation discussed earlier, the safest procedure is to regard early

TABLE 15  
Selected Cuchumatán Populations (1570–1604)

Date	Spatial Category	Population
1570 <sup>a</sup>	Amatenango	1000 vecinos
1570 <sup>a</sup>	Huehuetenango	1000 vecinos
1570 <sup>a</sup>	Los Mames	1000 vecinos
1570 <sup>a</sup>	Sacapulas y su visita	1500 vecinos
1572 <sup>b</sup>	Cuilco, Motozintla y sus estancias	1000 vecinos
1572 <sup>b</sup>	Huehuetenango y sus sujetos y estancias	1000 vecinos
1572 <sup>b</sup>	Jacaltenango y sus estancias	1000 vecinos
1572 <sup>b</sup>	Sacapulas y los pueblos en su comarca	1600 vecinos
1595 <sup>c</sup>	Corregimiento de Totonicapán	6000 tostones (6000 tributarios)
1604 <sup>d</sup>	14 pueblos de Sacapulas	3340 indios

NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Memoria de los partidos que ay de clérigos en el obispado de Guatemala (AGI:AG394)

<sup>b</sup>Relación de los caciques y número de yndios que hay en Guatemala (J. García Icazbalceta Collection, vol. 20, no. 1, Latin American Collection, University of Texas at Austin)

<sup>c</sup>Servicio de tostón año de 1595 (AGI: Contaduría 969)

<sup>d</sup>Suma y memoria de los conventos, religiosos, pueblos, visitas y indios que ay en toda esta provincia de Guatemala y Chiapa de la orden de Santo Domingo (Biblioteca del Palacio Real, Madrid, MS. 175).

estimates of population size as necessarily tentative and to scrutinize with caution later calculations before reaching any final conclusions.

Among the surviving documentation so far encountered, the earliest records known to contain demographic data for every important settlement in the Cuchumatanes are tribute assessments covering the years 1664 to 1678.<sup>3</sup> Prior to this period, few reliable and no complete counts exist. The problem is compounded by the extant material either being spatially indeterminate or relating generally to one of a number of demographic or economic categories, not entire populations, thus entailing a risky procedure of statistical conversion. Some of the most problematical data are shown in table 15. The information upon which estimates of the magnitude of the sixteenth-century population can be made are appallingly scarce. Among these data are reports of the size of Indian armies encountered during the battles of conquest, as recorded by the chronicler Fuentes y Guzmán (table 4); the number of Indian tributaries in a dozen or so towns assessed by President López de Cerrato between February and August of 1549 (table 6); and the number of Indian tributaries in the town of Huehuetenango, the principal administrative

centre for the Cuchumatanes, assessed by President García de Valverde between 1578 and 1582.<sup>4</sup> None of this information is remotely ideal to work with, but it is the best that exists or has been uncovered up to now.

An estimate based on the size of the Indian armies that confronted Spanish forces between 1525 and 1530 suggests that the population of the Cuchumatanes during the era of conquest perhaps numbered around 150,000. This figure indicates that the contact population of the region may have been as large as 260,000, roughly the same size as the Cuchumatán population in the mid-twentieth century.<sup>5</sup>

Of the two sixteenth-century *tasaciones* that contain information on Cuchumatán towns, the one made by Valverde, although spatially restricted, is considerably more reliable than the earlier Cerrato assessment for a number of reasons.<sup>6</sup> Foremost among these was Cerrato's tendency to depend on reports submitted by Indian *caciques* and *principales* rather than rely on information volunteered by *encomenderos* or – the most appropriate method of all – levy tribute on the basis of knowledge about native resources obtained from diligent tours of inspection such as the one conducted by Alonso de Zorita in 1555.<sup>7</sup> It is likely that Cerrato, not wishing to subject himself to the rigours of a thorough *visita*, overcompensated for the avarice of *encomenderos* by turning uncritically to local Indian leaders for counsel and assistance. In so doing, he greatly underestimated native tax-paying capacity, for, in order to reduce the amount of tribute demanded by the Spaniards, *caciques* and *principales* furnished Cerrato with appraisals that, when acted upon, drew outrage from various secular interests and caused dismay even among the clergy.<sup>8</sup> In contrast, the Valverde *tasación*, undertaken personally by the president with the help of trusted Crown officials, enabled a more accurate and realistic appraisal to be made of the Indian resource base. The Valverde *tasación* is especially useful because it contains two figures for the tribute-paying population; the first is apparently a revised version of the Cerrato assessment dating back to the mid-sixteenth century, while the second is the new Valverde count of 1578–82.<sup>9</sup> Cerrato, so it seems, was content with statistical approximations, since almost all of his figures are rounded off in units of ten or twenty. Valverde, by contrast, appears to have been an administrative perfectionist, diligently assessing tribute-paying capacity down to individual family units.<sup>10</sup>

One of the towns assessed by Valverde was Huehuetenango. Being an important seat of officialdom – the *corregidor* at the time of the *tasación* was Francisco Díaz del Castillo, son of the conqueror and chronicler Bernal Díaz del Castillo – it seems reasonable to assume that the Spaniards who

lived in the town had a fairly good idea of the number of Indians resident in the district who could be expected to serve as suppliers of tribute. Huehuetenango, formerly assessed at 570 *tributarios*, was adjusted downwards by Valverde to 367 *tributarios*.<sup>11</sup> Tributaries at this time in Guatemala, judging from detailed evidence that exists for eight towns in the central highlands for 1561 and 1562, were usually household heads constituting approximately one-fifth of the total native population.<sup>12</sup> Applying this same ratio to the Valverde statistics for Huehuetenango suggests that the town and surrounding countryside in the mid-sixteenth century supported an Indian population of around 2850, a figure that by 1580 had fallen to around 1835. In the *tasaciones* for 1664–78, the earliest extant documentation with comprehensive tribute data for every significant Indian community in the Cuchumatanes, Huehuetenango accounts for 3.9 per cent of the total number of *tributarios*.<sup>13</sup> Assuming that Huehuetenango represented this same proportion in the sixteenth century, then the total number of Cuchumatán *tributarios* in 1550 would have been 14,615 and in 1580 would have been 9410. Applying to these figures a population-to-tributary ratio of five to one, the same conversion factor employed in at least three other studies of sixteenth-century Guatemala, indicates that the native population of the Cuchumatán highlands in 1550 may have numbered around 73,000 and in 1580 may have numbered around 47,000.<sup>14</sup>

Viewed on their own, these estimates appear both tentative and implausible, concealing a significant margin of error. They assume greater credibility, however, when measured against an independent frame of reference provided by the research of Murdo MacLeod and Thomas Veblen. According to both these scholars, the Indian population of highland Guatemala in the mid-sixteenth century numbered only about one-half the size it was between 1524 and 1548, primarily because of catastrophic native mortality brought about by Old World diseases introduced by the Spaniards.<sup>15</sup> Particularly destructive of Indian life and welfare during this period was a plague known as *gucumatz* or *cocoliztli*, which raged acutely from 1545 until 1548.<sup>16</sup> Similarly, the number of Indians alive in the year 1580 was about one-half that of the mid-sixteenth century because of the equally devastating impact on native Mayan communities of the *matlazáhuatl* pandemic of 1576–81.<sup>17</sup> If MacLeod and Veblen are correct, then a population of 150,000 (the Cuchumatán estimate based on the size of Indian armies between 1525 and 1530) would have fallen to around 75,000 after *gucumatz* had struck. Such a figure compares exceptionally well with the estimate of 73,000 derived from the Valverde *tasación*. A population of 75,000 at mid-century would by 1580



have numbered around 37,500. Once again, this figure compares reasonably well with the estimate of 47,000 also derived from the Valverde assessment. The data available may be scant, but at least they converge.

For almost a century after the Valverde *tasación* there is little useful information concerning Cuchumatán demography (table 15). The data known to exist, moreover, are difficult to interpret or to break down with any confident degree of spatial or statistical accuracy. They include figures of the *servicio de tostón* for the *corregimiento* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango in 1595 and an ecclesiastical census of the towns (and souls) under the spiritual charge of the Dominican monastery at Sacapulas in 1604.<sup>18</sup> Both sets of data, especially the former, deal with suspiciously round numbers, further undermining the credibility with which they may be employed as means of population estimation.<sup>19</sup>

The *tasaciones* of 1664–78 are the next records after the Valverde assessment of 1578–82 that contain detailed demographic data on Cuchumatán Indians. This valuable set of documents gives a complete breakdown, by town and occasionally by *parcialidad*, of the entire tribute-paying population of the Cuchumatanes. The total number of *tributarios* at this time was 4040½.<sup>20</sup> Fuentes y Guzmán, during the second half of the seventeenth century, reckoned on a population to tributary ratio of four to one.<sup>21</sup> Using this same ratio, 4040½ *tributarios* would be indicative of a native population of 16,162 around the year 1670.

For the remainder of the colonial period there is no shortage of reliable and comprehensive sources, chiefly in the form of unpublished documents in the Archivo General de Centroamérica and the Archivo General de Indias, upon which the population history of the Cuchumatanes may be confidently reconstructed. The abundant eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century documents from which demographic data can be gleaned include tribute lists, reports compiled by officers of the Crown or servants of the church, and meticulous censuses that enumerate the Cuchumatán population in great detail by age, sex, class, and race. This information is synthesized in table 16 and is represented graphically in figure 10.

The overwhelming feature of the population history of the Cuchumatán highlands is the catastrophic decline in Indian numbers that followed conquest by Spain. Massive demographic collapse probably began in the years immediately preceding Spanish arrival and continued throughout the sixteenth and for most of the seventeenth century. Reaching its nadir around 1680, native population began to recover and grow throughout the eighteenth century, although occasional fluctuations were still experienced at the local level. By the end of the colonial period, Indian

TABLE 16  
Population of the Cuchumatán Highlands (1520–1825)

Year	Population	Comments and source
1520	260,000	Extrapolation of size of Indian armies recorded by Fuentes y Guzmán in <i>Recordación Florida</i>
1525–30	150,000	Estimate based on size of Indian armies recorded by Fuentes y Guzmán in <i>Recordación Florida</i>
1550	73,000	Estimate based on figures for Huehuetenango in AGI:AG 10 and AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391
1578–82	47,000	Estimate based on figures for Huehuetenango in AGI:AG 10 and AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391
1664–78	16,162	Based on comprehensive tribute assessments in AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391
1683	16,000	Estimate based on partially destroyed regional census in AGI: Contaduría 815
1690	19,258	Based on tribute data compiled by Fuentes y Guzmán in <i>Recordación Florida</i>
1710	18,000	Estimate based on figures of the <i>servicio de tostón</i> for Totonicapán and Huehuetenango in AGI: Contaduría 973
1719	17,500	Estimate based on figures of the <i>servicio de tostón</i> for Totonicapán and Huehuetenango in AGI: Contaduría 977
1724	18,500	Estimate based on figures of the <i>servicio de tostón</i> for Totonicapán and Huehuetenango in AGI: Contaduría 976
1760	21,176	Based on comprehensive tribute assessments in AGCA, A3.16, leg. 950, exp. 17715
1768–70	23,418	Based on a head count recorded by Cortés y Larraz in <i>Descripción geográfico-moral de la diócesis de Goathemala</i>
1778	27,505	Based on head count in AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507
1779	28,047	Based on head count in AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507
1782	23,021	Based on head count in AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507
1783	25,027	Based on head count in AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507
1784	24,828	Based on head count in AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507
1788	24,678	Based on comprehensive tribute assessments in AGCA, A3.16, leg. 246, exp. 4912
1790	23,623	Based on detailed population and tribute data in AGCA, A3.16, leg. 237, exp. 4706
1797–8	24,129	Based on population and tribute data recorded by Domingo Hidalgo in the <i>Gaceta de Guatemala</i>
1801	27,477	Based on detailed population and tribute data in AGCA, A3.16, leg. 243, exp. 4853
1811	29,571	Based on comprehensive tribute assessments in AGCA, A3.16, leg. 953, exp. 17773
1825	34,691	Based on population data in AGCA, B.84.3, leg. 1135–36, exp. 26030–34

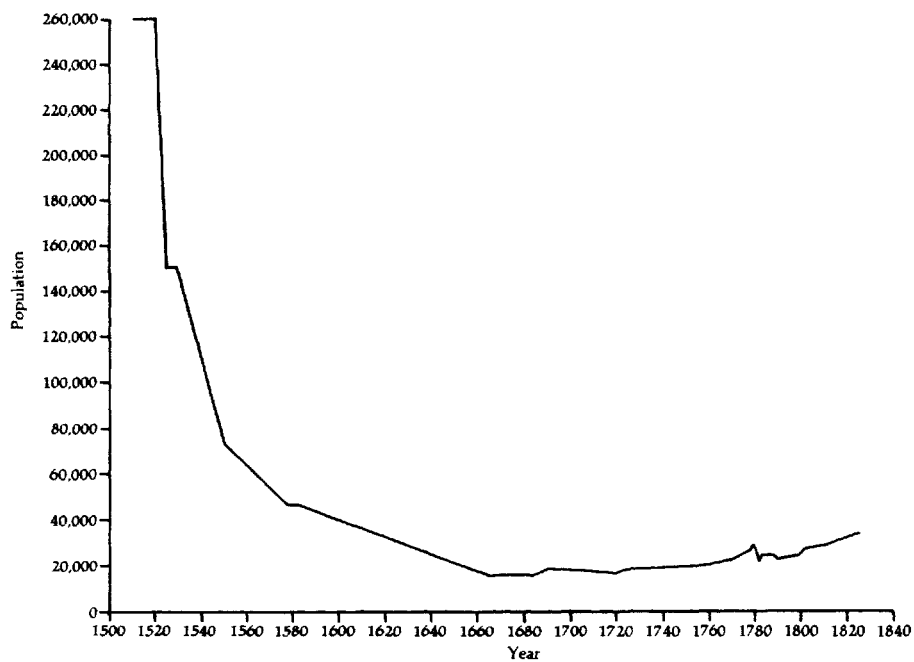


Figure 10 The population of the Cuchumatán highlands, 1520–1825 (based on data presented in table 16)

population was on a steady, if slight, upward trend. The factors most directly responsible for this complex syndrome of collapse and recovery will now be discussed.

#### EPIDEMIC DISEASE AND DEMOGRAPHIC CRISIS

Even though controversy still surrounds the exact numbers involved, it is now generally recognized that the New World was densely settled on the eve of its "discovery" by Renaissance Europe and that native American populations declined drastically in size following contact with Old World intruders.<sup>22</sup> Catastrophic depopulation among Amerindians whose lands and islands were conquered by imperial Spain has traditionally been attributed to unmitigated carnage, ruthless enslavement, and harsh exploitation by Spanish colonists, the thesis of the infamous *Leyenda Negra*, or Black Legend.<sup>23</sup> It is not difficult to find references in the literature that support the thesis of the Black Legend. According to Bartolomé de las Casas, for example, five million Indian lives were lost in Guatemala alone because of the tyranny of the *conquistador* Pedro de Alvarado. In his *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, Las Casas singled out Alvarado as being among the most rapacious *conquistadores* of all, stating bluntly that "the enormities perpetrated by himself especially ... are enough to fill a particular volume, so many were the slaughters, violences, injuries, butcheries, and beastly desolations."<sup>24</sup> Writing to King Charles V in the mid-sixteenth century, Las Casas declared that "Your Highness can be sure that of all the parts of the Indies where there have been the most excesses and disorder in committing injustices and iniquities ... there are, and have been, so many and such grave and evil vexations ... made against the Indians ... of the province of Guatemala ... one cannot imagine the ways and cunning manner ... used to secure them."<sup>25</sup>

While the criticism of Las Casas and the moral position he and others represented must always be taken into consideration, the principal cause of native depopulation was not massacre and mistreatment at the hands of bloodthirsty Spaniards, but the introduction by the invaders of Old World diseases against which Amerindians were immunologically defenceless.<sup>26</sup>

From the submergence of the Bering land bridge about ten thousand years ago until the coming of the Europeans in the late fifteenth century, the inhabitants of the New World lived in virtual isolation from those of the Old. This long period of isolation weakened considerably the resistance of Amerindians to most of the major diseases of mankind. Possibly because of the harsh climate characteristic of Siberia, the Bering

land bridge, and Alaska, many diseases were never carried over from the Old World to the New by the first migrants; the Arctic cold simply killed off both the disease organisms and those humans suffering from sickness or ill health. Alternative explanations may be that the migrations across the Bering Strait occurred so long ago that many diseases had not yet evolved in the Old World before the departure of the Amerindian ancestors; or that the original group of migrants was so small that the loss of immunity factors was due to genetic drift.<sup>27</sup> Whatever the reasons, the inhabitants of the New World developed tolerances for only a limited number of indigenous American diseases. During pre-Columbian times, Amerindians appear to have suffered primarily from gastro-intestinal disturbances and respiratory disorders.<sup>28</sup> Prior to the arrival of Europeans, therefore, Amerindians enjoyed an existence relatively free of infectious diseases. Maladies such as measles, mumps, smallpox, and plague – all of which were endemic to the Old World – were apparently unknown. When these diseases were inadvertently brought to the New World by Spanish conquerors and colonists, their impact on hitherto isolated human communities may well have caused, in the words of one scholar, “the greatest destruction of lives in history.”<sup>29</sup>

Crosby thinks the first disease to arrive in America was smallpox.<sup>30</sup> MacLeod reckons that the impact of smallpox on the native population of the New World was at least as cataclysmic as the impact of the Black Death of 1346–50 on late medieval European society; that is, one-third to one-half of the people who came in contact with the disease would have perished.<sup>31</sup> From the testimony of Toribio de Benavente, a sixteenth-century Franciscan better known by his adopted name Motolinía, we know that smallpox swept through central Mexico with horrendous human devastation.<sup>32</sup> It continued its lethal passage south towards Guatemala, accompanied perhaps by pulmonary plague or typhus.<sup>33</sup> By the end of 1520, four years before the *entrada* of Pedro de Alvarado, the Indians of highland Guatemala were reeling from their initial encounter with what MacLeod has appropriately called “the shock troops of the conquest.”<sup>34</sup> The chroniclers of the Cakchiquel lamented that it was “in truth terrible, the number of dead among the people ... in that period ... when the plague raged.”<sup>35</sup> This first bout of pestilence was followed about twelve years later by a pandemic of measles. Thereafter, chronic outbreaks of Old World sickness were a common feature of Indian life in colonial Guatemala and resulted repeatedly in high mortality among a native population that was ill equipped physiologically to fight off infection (table 17). As well as being struck periodically by diseases of pandemic proportion, the Indian peoples of the Cuchumatanes also had to contend with more localized outbreaks of pestilence (table 18).

TABLE 17  
General Outbreaks of Disease in Highland Guatemala (1519–1746)

Year	Disease	Impact
1519–20	Smallpox and perhaps also pulmonary plague or typhus	Very high mortality; at least one-third of the Indian population would have perished
1532–4	Sarampión (measles)	High mortality among Indians
1545–8	Gucumatz (a type of plague); Peste (unspecified sickness)	Very high mortality among Indians; several villages entirely depopulated
1563–5	Unspecified epidemic preceded by drought and famine	—
1571	Peste (unspecified sickness)	—
1576–7	Peste, viruela (smallpox), matlazáhuatl (typhus?), and gucumatz	High mortality among Indians; several more settlements entirely depopulated
1600–1	Smallpox (?)	—
1607–8	Tabardillo (typhus and/or a type of plague)	Disease only affected Indians; Spaniards untouched
1614	Unspecified epidemic	Illness confined to Indians
1631	Tabardillo (typhus)	Many deaths among Indians
1650	Gucumatz, bubonic plague	Many deaths; villages depopulated
1666	Peste, tabardillo	Many deaths
1686	Typhus and/or pneumonic plague	High mortality among Indians and the poor
1693–4	Sarampión, viruela, tabardillo	High mortality
1695	Smallpox	—
1704–5	Peste	—
1708–9	Peste	Only Indians affected
1710–11	Peste	Some villages completely depopulated
1733	Peste, smallpox, typhoid	Many deaths
1741	Tabardillo	—
1746	Tabardillo	—

SOURCE: MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 98–100

The demographic collapse of the Cuchumatán population is therefore most critically linked to the ravages of Old World disease on vulnerable native inhabitants. Subjugation by imperial Spain was certainly not achieved and maintained without brutality and exploitation, but Old World microbes consumed more Indian lives than did Hispanic depravity and greed. From the 1520s until the end of Spanish rule in 1821, Cuchumatán Indians were subjected to unrelenting waves of pestilence. Mortality rates varied but were consistently high. Between 1520 and about 1680, native population declined by more than 90 per cent, falling

TABLE 18  
Local Outbreaks of Disease in the Cuchumatán Highlands (ca 1550–1819)

Year	Disease	Communities affected	Comments	Source
ca 1550– ca 1615	Pestes (unspecified sickness)	Aguacatán and other settlements in the "sierra de Cuchumatlán"	The source records specifically that "con las pestes han venido [los pueblos] en disminución." Bishop Marroquín, in November 1553, suggested to the Dominicans that their Order establish a monastery at Aguacatán. The friars chose to locate in Sacapulas instead, possibly because pestilence had already reduced Indian num- bers at Aguacatán.	Remesal, <i>Historia general</i> 2:259
1552	Unspecified	Aguacatán and other towns	The source states that "los pueblos ... han venido en gran descrecimiento y di- minución" and that "se han muerto e ido de ellos otra mucha más cantidad."	AGI: Justicia 286
1568	Unspecified	Aguacatán, Sacapulas, and two other towns held in <i>encomienda</i> by Alonso Páez	Because of Indian population decline, the income accruing to the <i>encomendero</i> is expected to total less than 100 pesos.	AGI: Patronato 68–2–3
1571	Unspecified	Sacapulas region	The same disease struck communities in the Verapaz, with considerable mortality.	AGCA, A1, leg. 5942, exp. 51995
ca 1582	Unspecified	Chiantla, Huehueten- ango "y sus estancias"	The source records that "los indios han venido en disminución, la encomienda ha venido a menos."	AGI: Patronato 61-2-4

TABLE 18 (Continued)

Year	Disease	Communities affected	Comments	Source
1613	Unspecified	Todos Santos Cuchumatán	The tribute assessment has been lowered "por falta de tributarios." Mention is made of "indios viejos y enfermos."	AGI: Patronato 58-1-4
1617	Unspecified	San Martín Cuchumatán	The source mentions "indios enfermos."	AGI: Patronato 58-1-5
ca 1639	Peste (unspecified sickness)	La Magdalena, near Cunén and Sacapulas	The source refers to "una formidable peste." The people who survived the epidemic were resettled in Cunén and Sacapulas, forming in the latter the <i>parcialidad</i> Magdalena.	AGCA, A1, leg. 6037, exp. 53258
1666	Tabardillo (typhus)	Huehuetenango	Indian tribute lowered after epidemic carried off 45 adults.	AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1600, exp. 26390
1733	Viruela (smallpox)	Cunén and Sacapulas	Many tributaries died. The Indians, unable to pay tribute, request an exemption.	AGCA, A3.16, leg. 2819, exp. 40918
1774	Peste (unspecified sickness)	Various towns in Totonicapán and Huehuetenango	The <i>alcalde mayor</i> informs treasury officials that, because of the pestilence, certain communities are unable to pay tribute.	AGCA, A3.16, leg. 943, exp. 17608
1780-1	Viruela	Every major settlement in the Cuchumatán region	Over 4000 deaths among the Indians. Children were particularly hard hit by the epidemic, thought to have originated in Chiapas.	AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507
1786	Tabardillo	Concepción and Petatán	The sickness is recorded as having begun on 2 September.	AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6101, exp. 55666



TABLE 18 (Continued)

Year	Disease	Communities affected	Comments	Source
1795	Viruela	Towns along the <i>camino real</i> and throughout Soloma parish	The disease is thought to have spread east and south from Chiapas.	AGCA, A1.47, leg. 385, exp. 8012
1796-9	Tabardillo	Various towns, especially those in the parishes of Huehuetenango, Jacaltenango, and Nebaj	Very high mortality. In San Sebastián Huehuetenango, over 1000 Indians perished. An equal number died in Concepción and Jacaltenango.	AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6101, exp. 55666-9; A1.49, leg. 192, exp. 3911; A3, leg. 2894, exp. 42846; A3.16, leg. 244, exp. 4869; A3.16, leg. 255, exp. 5719
1802-7	Tabardillo	Towns throughout Soloma parish	Considerable mortality. Settlements abandoned, fields neglected, and normal life totally disrupted. Locust invasion exacerbates crisis. Great misery.	AGCA, A1, leg. 6105, exp. 55795; A1, leg. 6107, exp. 55836; A1, 24, leg. 6091, exp. 55306; A1.47, leg. 2162, exp. 15558; A3.16, leg. 245, exp. 4909
1803-7	Viruela	Numerous towns, including Soloma, Santa Eulalia, and San Juan Ixcay	Smallpox prevails, despite efforts by Spanish authorities to vaccinate the Indians.	AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6091, exp. 55307; A1.47, leg. 2162, exp. 15558-9; A1.47, leg. 192, exp. 3922
1804-5	Sarampión (measles)	Chiantla and the towns of Soloma parish	Disease probably originated in Chiapas.	AGCA, A1, leg. 6091, exp. 55307; A3.16, leg. 2899, exp. 43063

TABLE 18 (Concluded)

Year	Disease	Communities affected	Comments	Source
1811	Fiebre putrida (a type of fever)	Various communities throughout Totonicapán and Huehuetenango	Doctors request permission to draw money from community funds to help fight the spread of sickness.	AGCA, A1, leg. 394, exp. 8238
1812	Peste (unspecified)	Chajul and San Juan Cotzal	The Indians are unable to pay tribute because of disease-related mortality.	AGCA, A3.16, leg. 2900, exp. 43154 and 43178
1812-14	Tabardillo	Chiantla, San Juan Cotzal, and the towns of Soloma parish	Roads into the infected communities are ordered closed and a "cordón sanitario" is set up.	AGCA, A1.4, leg. 386, exp. 8055; A1.4, leg. 6114, exp. 56316; A1.4, leg. 6116, exp. 56424
1818-19	Tabardillo	Chiantla and Jacaltenango	Religious festivities are to be cancelled because of the prevailing sickness.	AGCA, A1.4, leg. 388, exp. 8099; A1.4, leg. 6118, exp. 56743

from perhaps 260,000 to a nadir of about 16,000. The collapse seems to have abated by the end of the seventeenth century, when the first signs of demographic recovery are manifest. Several fluctuations in the course of the eighteenth century, however, indicate that the Indians had still not built up effective immunities to diseases such as smallpox and typhus. Only at the very end of the colonial period are there signs of a sustained increase in native numbers across the region as a whole (table 16 and figure 10).

The impact of Old World disease on Indian life in the Cuchumatanes was devastating. Guatemalan and Spanish archives contain thousands of documents that describe, often in lugubrious detail, the disruptions wrought by outbreaks of pestilence on scores of native communities. In an attempt to convey some sense of the social upheaval caused by epidemic disease, attention will now be focused on reconstructing the incidence and significance of smallpox and typhus in the Cuchumatán region

between 1780 and 1810. While a focus on this particular period and these two diseases is dictated in large part by the nature of the historical record, available evidence suggests that the reality depicted is both applicable to earlier times and representative of other crisis situations.

#### SMALLPOX AND TYPHUS (1780–1810)

After reaching its nadir of sixteen thousand around 1680, the population of the Cuchumatanes increased slowly in number for roughly a century. By 1779, population had risen about 75 per cent above its 1683 level, numbering slightly over twenty-eight thousand. The vast majority of this population were Indian. Ladinos and Spaniards accounted for only five per cent of the total Cuchumatán population at the end of the colonial period, and constituted an even smaller percentage during earlier times.<sup>36</sup> The population recovery that took place between 1683 and 1779, therefore, reflects essentially an increase in Indian numbers. With the onset in 1780 of a virulent outbreak of smallpox, one that can be considered but a regional manifestation of a hemispheric pandemic, the upward trend of the native population was abruptly arrested.<sup>37</sup>

The smallpox epidemic that swept through every major settlement in the Cuchumatanes between 1780 and 1781 is documented as having been in existence on 28 March 1780 in San Martín Mazapa and San Francisco Motozintla, communities in the westernmost part of the parish of Cuilco close to the *alcaldía mayor* of Chiapas. Friar Manuel Ordóñez, the resident priest, diligently recorded the 28 March date, the earliest documented occurrence of the disease in the Cuchumatán region.<sup>38</sup> The epidemic persisted in parts of the Cuchumatanes, specifically the community of San Lorenzo Mazatenango, at least until January 1781, a duration of some ten months.<sup>39</sup> In some communities (for example, San Martín Mazapa and San Francisco Motozintla) smallpox raged for approximately four months, while others (for example, Santiago Chimaltenango and San Sebastián Huehuetenango) endured the pestilence for five or six months. In Asunción Colotenango, smallpox lingered for a period of seven months (see figure 11). The chronology of recorded incidence suggests a fairly rapid diffusion of the disease eastward from a source in Chiapas along the southern edge of the Cuchumatanes (possibly by way of the Cuilco valley) with a slower northward spread into the higher and more remote parts of the region.

In response to a request by Francisco Geraldino, the *alcalde mayor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, resident priests supplied information concerning the number of deaths that had occurred within their parishes as a result of the outbreak.<sup>40</sup> Geraldino, acting on a royal edict, then

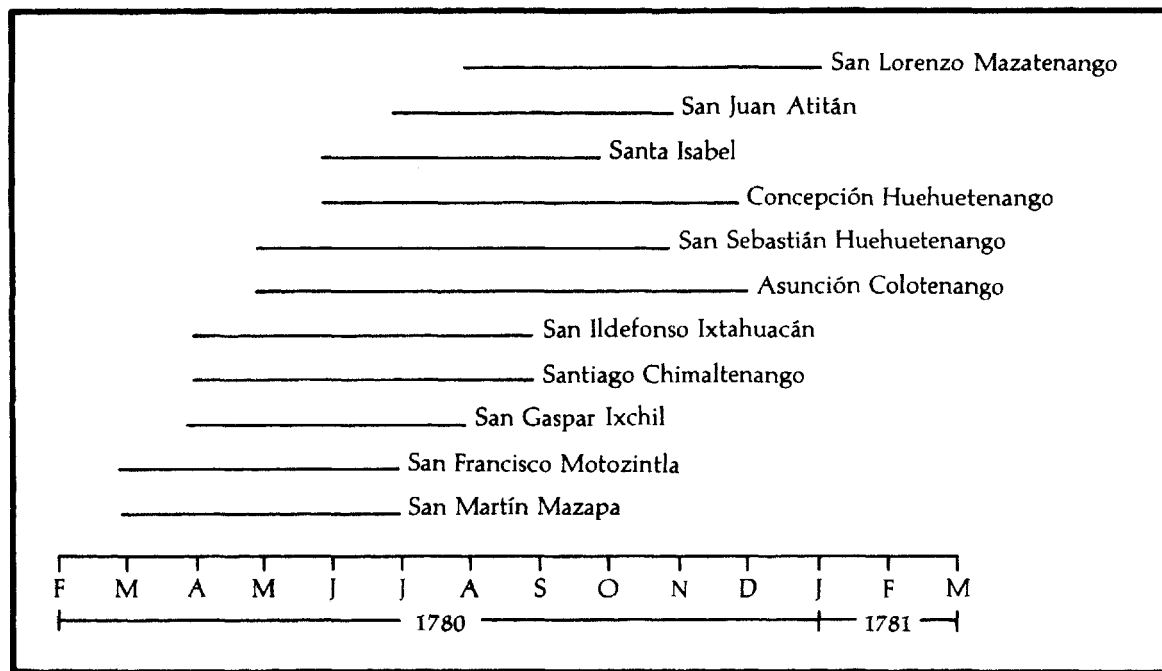


Figure 11 Chronology and occurrence of smallpox in the Cuchumatán highlands, March 1780 to January 1781 (based on AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507)

gathered the parish accounts together, completing the task on 2 May 1781. His responsibility appears to have been twofold: first, he was to determine how many of the dead were tribute payers, an exercise presumably undertaken with a view to assessing how taxes levied on stricken communities would in the immediate future be affected; second, he was to determine which towns were most in need of government assistance, and act accordingly. Geraldino synthesized the vast amount of information delivered to him by parish priests, some of whom were more conscientious than others, in a table he called a "general summary showing mortality related to the smallpox epidemic of 1780, with a listing of the number of dead tributaries and the amount [of money] with which communities were assisted."<sup>41</sup> A detailed town-by-town breakdown of the impact of the epidemic, based on Geraldino's summary, is shown in table 19.

Over four thousand Indians of all ages perished throughout the Cuchumatanes, with almost 60 per cent of the total number of recorded deaths occurring among children.<sup>42</sup> Of those who died, 259 were reported by Geraldino to have been tribute payers. Only one priest, Friar Juan Ramón Solís of the parish of Nebaj, provided Geraldino with specific details about the number of people who not only died from smallpox but who fell sick with fever and who were eventually nursed back to health.<sup>43</sup> This information enables some assessment to be made of the degree of infection and the rate of survival or recovery. The data are shown in table 20 and relate to the three Ixil communities of San Gaspar Chajul, San Juan Cotzal, and Santa María Nebaj. Some idea of how disruptive the epidemic must have been of such routine chores as tending fields, fetching water, or preparing food is indicated by Ramón Solís reporting that, in San Gaspar Chajul, three out of every five people in the community fell sick. Of those stricken with fever, one in four perished while three in four survived, a pattern that holds also for the neighbouring communities of San Juan Cotzal and Santa María Nebaj.

Mortality rates throughout the Cuchumatán region varied from 8 per cent in San Gaspar Ixchil to 38 per cent in San Miguel Acatán, indicating that there was a significant spatial variation in the impact of the epidemic, some communities being much harder hit than others (table 19). Assuming it was the same strain of smallpox that passed through each community, differences in disease impact were likely caused by a combination of factors, including demographic composition, population density, degree of settlement nucleation or dispersal, extent of previously acquired immunity, level of pre-contagion health and nutrition, effectiveness of quarantine procedures, proximity to routes of trade and communication, and numerous cultural and environmental characteristics relating to habit

and habitat.<sup>44</sup> In other words, variable local conditions that changed in myriad, subtle, and complex ways from valley to valley and from town to town would best account for the differential mortality pattern throughout the region. Within a year the epidemic had reduced the total population of the Cuchumatanes, after a century or so of gradual recovery, from twenty-eight thousand to around twenty-four thousand, a drop of almost 15 per cent.

On 29 August 1780 the colonial administration responded officially to the crisis when Francisco Geraldino issued a rather vague precautionary order stating that "the Indians should be cared for and assisted by drawing upon the resources of their communities."<sup>45</sup> Following a brief inspection of several stricken towns, Crown officials made various recommendations about what could be done to alleviate suffering and to halt the spread of disease. Most of the recommendations amounted to little more than allocating certain towns a sum of money drawn from their own *cajas de comunidad* or local *cofradías*. This money was then spent on bedding, clothing, and food for the stricken and in administering the holy sacraments to the dead.<sup>46</sup> Parish priests were responsible for the distribution of goods and provisions, dispatched from Huehuetenango, among those Indian families considered most in need. In Aguacatán and Chalchitán the sum of ten pesos bought an *arroba* of sugar and thirty-eight *petates*; in Todos Santos, twenty pesos purchased two *arrobos* of sugar, ten *petates*, and a quantity of cloth used for making blankets.<sup>47</sup> Financial assistance seems only to have been extended to eleven towns, with the majority of afflicted communities simply left to fight the sickness with nothing other than their own limited resources. Although Francisco Asturias, in his history of Guatemalan medicine, records inoculation as having first been carried out during this epidemic, just how extensive the practice was in the Cuchumatán region is still a matter of conjecture.<sup>48</sup>

By early 1781 the smallpox epidemic that began about a year or so before had run its course. Within ten years the tribute-paying population of the province of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango attained its pre-contagion size, but, taken as a whole, population recovery was significantly retarded and in fact did not reach its pre-contagion regional level for another decade.<sup>49</sup> A less fatal, more localized outbreak of smallpox flared up in 1795 and 1796.<sup>50</sup> Of this epidemic Joseph Domingo Hidalgo, a Crown official and a contributor to the *Gazeta de Guatemala*, wrote:

In 1795 and 1796 the towns which border the province of Chiapas ... were overrun by a terrible outbreak of smallpox, an all-consuming pestilence which has plagued this Kingdom of Guatemala throughout the 275 years it has been conquered by

**TABLE 19**  
**Mortality in Cuchumatán Towns during the Smallpox Epidemic of 1780-1**

Community	Married males	Married females	Widowers	Widows	Single males	Single females	Boys	Girls	Total no. of dead	No. of dead tributaries	Indian population in 1779	% mort- ality
Aguacatán and Chalchitán	5	10	—	—	18	12	49	43	137	5	904	15
Amatenango	2	2	4	—	3	4	9	12	36	2	186	19
Colotenango	10	15	3	4	27	8	31	42	140	15	1042	13
Concepción	7	17	—	2	22	14	44	41	147	7	480	31
Chajul	5	15	—	—	10	—	86	77	195	5	1358	14
Chiantla	6	8	—	2	13	7	20	7	63	5	225	28
Cuilco	1	2	—	1	7	7	23	14	55	3	304	18
Cunén	16	20	7	1	3	2	12	16	77	10	244	32
Huehuetenango	5	6	1	1	15	17	20	15	80	6	602	13
Ixtahuacán	9	30	4	4	15	23	45	43	173	12	947	18
Jacaltenango	13	28	4	1	32	29	80	86	273	15	1728	16
Malacatán	2	4	2	3	2	4	9	9	35	2	180	19
Nebaj	6	11	—	—	19	15	58	56	165	7	1428	12
Sacapulas	14	42	11	9	21	24	78	101	300	10	1906	16
San Andrés Jacaltenango	1	8	—	—	8	5	19	13	49	1	294	17
San Antonio Huista	10	1	—	—	1	6	3	11	32	6	136	24
San Francisco Motozintla	—	3	—	2	3	3	7	12	30	1	125	24
San Gaspar Ixchil	—	—	1	1	3	3	5	8	21	1	273	8
San Juan Atitán	1	13	1	3	10	4	29	35	96	2	473	17
San Juan Cotzal	11	17	—	—	8	3	48	47	138	11	1707	8
San Juan Ixcay	5	9	—	1	21	24	35	39	154	6	934	16
San Lorenzo	4	7	—	—	2	2	11	11	37	4	330	11
San Marcos Jacaltenango	8	6	—	—	7	—	11	21	53	8	288	18

San Martín	—	1	—	—	1	3	10	9	24	—	118	20
Cuchumatán												
San Martín Mazapa	1	1	—	3	10	4	4	19	42	3	208	26
San Mateo Ixtatán	10	26	20	6	32	10	55	72	231	12	1132	20
San Miguel Acatán	5	12	1	5	31	18	24	33	129	5	338	38
San Pedro Necta	3	8	1	—	11	5	26	13	67	3	527	13
San Sebastián	8	11	—	—	13	14	26	51	123	8	463	27
Coatán												
San Sebastián	6	16	—	2	43	43	74	68	252	6	2275	11
Huehuetenango												
Santa Ana Huista	8	10	—	2	11	7	11	4	53	7	395	13
Santa Bárbara	3	2	—	—	10	3	15	17	50	3	386	13
Santa Eulalia	19	37	3	3	31	28	84	92	297	17	1577	19
Santa Isabel	2	3	1	—	12	16	11	11	56	3	532	11
Santiago	2	1	—	3	7	14	28	24	79	2	484	16
Chimaltenango												
Petatán	9	—	2	1	1	—	4	—	17	9	94	18
Soloma	5	5	2	1	2	3	7	17	42	5	285	15
Tectitán	5	6	—	1	12	8	30	13	75	4	275	27
Todos Santos	1	8	—	1	12	10	36	38	106	—	721	15
Cuchumatán												
Uspantán	11	22	5	2	22	3	10	11	86	22	361	24
										4215	253	

SOURCE: AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507

NOTE: All the above deaths occurred among the Indian population. In addition, there were 181 deaths among the Ladino and Spanish population of the region.



TABLE 20

Extent of Infection, Recovery, and Fatality during the Smallpox Epidemic of 1780 in the Ixil Country of the Eastern Cuchumatanes

A Community	B Population in 1779	C No. of people contracting smallpox in 1780	D C as % of B	E No. of smallpox deaths in 1780	F E as % of C (fatality rate)
San Gaspar Chajul	1358	836	62	195	23
San Juan Cotzal	1707	503	29	138	27
Santa María Nebaj	1428	614	43	165	27

SOURCE: AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6097, exp. 55507

Spain, destroying generation after generation, scarcely leaving one-tenth of the population to endure; but on this occasion, due to the efforts of Don José Domás y Valle, President and Captain General of the Kingdom, the outbreak was isolated, procedures of inoculation were set up, and the pestilence was stamped out at the peak of its virulence.<sup>51</sup>

About a dozen towns were affected by this outbreak, all of them lying to the north and west of Huehuetenango, with the eastern Cuchumatanes apparently left untouched and unharmed. Specific reference is made in the documents to the coldness, remoteness, and general environmental inhospitability of the region being among the "physical causes" of the resurgence and virulence of the disease, with the colonial authorities openly admitting that rugged terrain would hamper effective medical penetration of all needy communities, even if relief operations were attempted in the first place.<sup>52</sup>

The epidemic of 1795-6 was followed, seven years later, by yet another appearance of smallpox, once again focused on the border area with Chiapas.<sup>53</sup> Although these renewed outbreaks were far less serious than either the epidemic of 1780-1 or the one of 1795-6, the authorities reacted (perhaps because of the impact of the earlier visitations) with stronger emergency measures, including inoculation and efforts to isolate stricken communities.<sup>54</sup> Since many of the towns where smallpox reappeared were located on the *camino real* between Mexico and Guatemala (Chiapas was the actual or perceived origin of many diseases that struck Cuchumatán Indians throughout the colonial period), this main artery was ordered closed.<sup>55</sup> A *garita* or control point at either San Antonio or Santa Ana

Huista was set up to ensure that trade and journeys originating in neighbouring Mexico with an eventual Guatemalan destination be strictly monitored. Theoretically, restrictions were placed on the movement of people and goods early in December 1802, but enforcement proved to be lax and inefficient; one Crown official charged that the watch was anything but vigilant, remarking that "people have come and still come increasingly from all parts."<sup>56</sup> Commerce and the exercise of personal convenience often made quarantine an impractical charade, at the Huistas and elsewhere.

By the early nineteenth century, however, a development had taken place that was to alter irrevocably the relationship between smallpox and mankind, with considerable potential benefits for Indian communities such as those of the Cuchumatanes. In 1798 Edward Jenner, an English country doctor, published his findings concerning inoculation against smallpox, documenting his keen observation that milkmaids seemed never to succumb to smallpox because, as he correctly hypothesized, they had developed an immunity to the disease by first contracting cowpox. Subsequent inoculation of human patients with cowpox matter, the medical risks of which were negligible, demonstrated that immunity to smallpox did in fact occur, thus establishing "vaccination" as the definitive preventative measure against the disease.<sup>57</sup>

Word of Jenner's breakthrough spread quickly throughout Europe, and in Spain was responsible for the setting up of a medical mission instructed to sail overseas to the New World with news of "the fortunate English discovery."<sup>58</sup> The mission was led by Doctor Francisco Xavier de Balmis and left the port of La Coruña on 30 November 1803 bound for Veracruz with the enlightened objective of informing local doctors, not just in Mexico but throughout Spanish America and the Philippines, of Jenner's successful experiments in establishing an immunity against smallpox.<sup>59</sup>

Francisco Pastor, a member of the Balmis mission, is recorded as having arrived in Totonicapán from Chiapas and the Yucatán on 4 November 1804.<sup>60</sup> Much to the chagrin of the *alcalde mayor*, Colonel Prudencio de Cozar, Pastor did not leave behind a supply of smallpox vaccine, but proceeded instead directly to Guatemala City, from where both vaccine and instructions on how to use it were later disseminated.<sup>61</sup> The arrival of Pastor in Guatemala made it possible, from late 1804 on, for colonial authorities to initiate campaigns of vaccination against smallpox, campaigns in which the Indian population, because of its previous extreme vulnerability, was identified as the most important target group.

Regional committees were set up throughout Guatemala to supervise

TABLE 21  
Vaccination against Smallpox among Cuchumatán Indians (1807)

Name of parish	Number of Indians vaccinated	Cost of vaccination
Chiantla	515	64 pesos 3 reales
Jacaltenango	762	95 pesos 2 reales
Malacatán	621	77 pesos 5 reales
Nebaj	348	43 pesos 4 reales
Soloma	1186	148 pesos 2 reales

SOURCE: AGCA, A1.47 leg. 2162, exp. 1558

vaccination procedures, with medical personnel trained in the application of the new techniques paid as much as four pesos a day for their services.<sup>62</sup> One doctor active in the Cuchumatán region was Ignacio Ruiz, recorded in a document dated 12 May 1806 as having had "a pleasant manner and style with the Indians, one that has resulted in the vaccination by himself alone of 10,127 persons in over fifty towns in the province of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango."<sup>63</sup> By 1807, thanks to the efforts of Ruiz and others, over 3400 Indians in the Cuchumatanes had been vaccinated, the majority of them children aged fourteen years and under (table 21). While this figure, in an era not noted for its prompt response to medical innovations or progressive ideas, at first seems impressive, subsequent events did much to erode the beneficial impact of vaccination on Indian welfare. Resistance from wary elements of the native population was always a problem, as was lack of cooperation among Spanish residents, some of whom were threatened with prison sentences for neglecting to arrange for the vaccination of Indians.<sup>64</sup> Thus fear of inoculation, apathy among the non-Indian elite, and problems related to vaccine supply and availability all contributed to periodic outbreaks of smallpox in highland Guatemala long after the Balmis-Pastor initiatives.<sup>65</sup> None of these outbreaks, however, had the profound demographic impact of earlier epidemics, resulting in the sustained growth, despite local fluctuations, of the native population. Indian survival, if not quite guaranteed, at least had the intensity of one of its most lethal constraints significantly reduced.

Shortly after the smallpox epidemic of 1795–6 many towns in the Cuchumatanes were struck by a devastating outbreak of typhus, another infectious disease long recognized in Guatemala as a first-rank exterminator of Indians.<sup>66</sup> The first report of widespread incidence dates to 21 November 1796, when the *alcalde mayor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, Colonel Francisco Xavier de Aguirre, informed his

superiors in Guatemala City that an epidemic of typhus was currently raging in parts of his district.<sup>67</sup> Aguirre singled out the community of Jacaltenango, stating that "many Indians in the town are dying."<sup>68</sup> He reported that the disease had already claimed the lives of over five hundred Jacaltecos, among them sixty-one tribute payers.<sup>69</sup> Of the survivors, Aguirre mentioned that "many of these unfortunate people will die because of a lack of food and assistance."<sup>70</sup>

From Jacaltenango the typhus spread to the nearby town of Concepción where, between 7 September 1796 and 27 September 1797, no fewer than 561 Indians died from the fever, and this in a community that only twelve years earlier had a total population of 608 people.<sup>71</sup> Only fifty-six tribute payers were left among the survivors.<sup>72</sup> In order to prevent the infection spreading further, over one hundred homes were ordered to be burned to the ground. Even such drastic measures, however, proved futile, because the disease soon appeared some fifteen kilometres to the south and east of Concepción in the Mam community of Todos Santos, where it carried off 488 people (over half the town's population), among them 96 tributaries. Todos Santos was left with a total population of around 380 people, 55 of whom were tribute payers.<sup>73</sup> Here, too, dwellings and properties were burned, over sixty in all. The neighbouring Mam community of San Martín Cuchumatán was also affected. There, eighty-seven Indians perished (among them thirty-six tributaries), leaving only ninety-one sickly survivors, nineteen of whom were tribute payers.<sup>74</sup>

By 16 October 1798 the epidemic had spread eastward across the Cuchumatanes to the Ixil country.<sup>75</sup> Two hundred victims were reported buried in the churchyard at San Gaspar Chajul, where the pestilence at its height caused the deaths of ten to twelve people each day.<sup>76</sup> San Juan Cotzal and Santa María Nebaj suffered equally high mortality, and in the latter community, as at Chajul, the Indians rioted against some of the measures that were imposed in order to halt the spread of disease, specifically attempts by officials to have the dead buried not in the local churchyard but in consecrated ground some distance away from the town centre.<sup>77</sup> Perhaps the greatest absolute loss of life in a single township occurred at San Sebastián Huehuetenango, a Mam community that in 1795 supported a population of 2878 people. There, a total of 1070 Indians were reported dead, 245 of whom were registered as tribute payers. The neighbouring settlements of San Juan Atitán and Santa Isabel were also badly hit.<sup>78</sup>

Because of the high incidence of death among the tribute-paying population, at San Sebastián Huehuetenango and elsewhere, the colonial authorities were forced to adjust downward the tax assessments of most afflicted towns. By the end of the eighteenth century, the number of

tributaries registered as residents of Jacaltenango, San Martín Cuchumatán, Todos Santos, San Gaspar Chajul, and San Miguel Uspantán had been significantly lowered.<sup>79</sup> In the case of Concepción, Petatán, and Nebaj, the *alcalde mayor* went so far as to suggest that the Indians be relieved temporarily of the burden of tribute payment, so considerable was the mortality in these three towns in particular.<sup>80</sup>

Unfortunately, no records exist for the typhus outbreaks of 1796–9 that are comparable in detail and quality to those that exist for the smallpox epidemic of 1780–1. However, data available for eight Cuchumatán communities again indicate a marked spatial variation in the degree of Indian mortality, suggesting that the differential impact of disease once more should be viewed in relation to local conditions and circumstances (table 22). Thus, the lower mortality characteristic of Huehuetenango likely reflects the existence in the district capital of better material facilities and medical expertise to combat infection, as well as the desire of the city's Spanish and Ladino inhabitants (who at the time comprised about 60 per cent of the town's population) to limit the effects of the contagion by responding quickly to its presence among Indian residents for fear that non-Indians might themselves become infected. Higher mortality in Concepción, by contrast, is indicative of an impoverished community composed entirely of Indians who lived, at an elevation approaching 2500 metres, on an isolated, inaccessible mountainside, far beyond the reach of any kind of prompt governmental assistance. It is also apparent that while Huehuetenango and even Jacaltenango recovered fairly quickly from outbreaks of typhus to attain their pre-contagion size within a few years, in other communities (for example, Todos Santos and San Martín Cuchumatán) population levels remained significantly lower for many years after the disease first struck (table 22).

Around the turn of the century there was a lull in the ravage of typhus. From 1799 to 1802 there are few documented occurrences of the disease. Then, in 1803, there was a dramatic outbreak of the pestilence (accompanied, in some instances, by measles, smallpox, and an invasion of locusts) in the towns of the parish of Soloma.<sup>81</sup> Typhus seems first to have reappeared, with considerable disruption, in the communities of Santa Eulalia and San Juan Ixcay.<sup>82</sup> According to Mariano Larrave, a doctor tending the sick throughout Soloma, by 29 February 1804, 325 Indians had perished at Santa Eulalia, and countless others lay afflicted with fever and pains.<sup>83</sup> Unlike smallpox, which resulted in consistently high mortality among children, typhus struck severely at the adult population; of the 325 victims Larrave reported, 103 were children while 222 were adults.<sup>84</sup> Since prior to the outbreak of typhus the Indian population of Santa Eulalia numbered 2531, these deaths already represent a mortality rate of 13 per

TABLE 22

Population and Mortality Levels in Eight Cuchumatán Communities around the Time of the Typhus Epidemic of 1796-9

A Community	B Population in 1784	C Population in 1795	D No. of Indian deaths due to typhus (1796-9)	E D as % of B or C	F Population in 1801	G Population in 1811
Huehuetenango	509	786	97	12	857	1115
Concepción	608	—	561	92	309	340
Jacaltenango	1443	—	528	37	1463	1840
San Juan Atitán	543	687	351	51	392	430
San Martín	144	—	87	60	99	95
Cuchumatán						
San Sebastián	2067	2878	1070	37	2059	2300
Huehuetenango						
Santa Isabel	461	300	82	27	345	435
Todos Santos	704	827	488	59	415	440
Cuchumatán						

SOURCE: AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507; *Gazeta de Guatemala*, 6, 13 November 1797; AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6101, exp. 55666; A3.16, leg. 255, exp. 5719; A2.16, leg. 243, exp. 4853; A3.16, leg. 953, exp. 17773

cent.<sup>85</sup> At San Juan Ixcay, with an Indian population approximately only half the size of Santa Eulalia, over 250 people had died by 11 August 1804, a mortality rate closer to 20 per cent.<sup>86</sup>

Some of the most detailed information relating to the outbreak of typhus in Soloma parish comes from the priests who served there and from the reports compiled by medical personnel who were occasionally sent to the parish to help fight the spread of disease. Of the priests, Friar José María Orellana was among the most diligent observers of the tragic plight of his parishioners. On 30 April 1804 he wrote to the *alcalde mayor*, Prudencio de Cozar, describing the situation in Santa Eulalia:

Although the pestilence continues with the same virulence, I will be unable to estimate how many Indians perish, because only an elder and one or two families remain in the town. A large number of Indians have abandoned their community for the coast. Many others have settled on a tract of land called Payconó, which belongs to the Indians of San Miguel Acatán, and some are in the warmer lowlands belonging to their own community. These people bring the bodies of victims, who die with no spiritual comfort whatsoever, back to their home town for burial.<sup>87</sup>

Largely because of Orellana's appeals to the *alcalde mayor*, arrangements were made for another doctor to be dispatched to the parish to care for the afflicted, Mariano Larrave apparently having left Soloma shortly after compiling his report on the sickness at Santa Eulalia dated 29 February 1804. The task fell to an inexperienced young doctor named Mariano Francisco Lenteno, who arrived in Huehuetenango on 13 May 1804 after a short visit to Quezaltenango in order to purchase medicines, provisions, and a mule team (both animals and a human assistant, or *mozo*) for the journey high into the Cuchumatanes.<sup>88</sup> From letters and reports later written by him, it is obvious that Lenteno had doubts and misgivings about where he was travelling, the class of people he would be working among, and what in general was expected of him. His trip was preceded by a disturbing incident in Huehuetenango, where Lenteno fell into conversation with one of the local Spanish residents, a certain Señor Aguayo, who painted a grim picture of what lay ahead. The perturbed Lenteno recorded in his journal that "a dreadful description has been given to me of the character of the Indians, their savageness, and the risks to my life, as well as the lack of proper relief work even to the extent of people starving to death."<sup>89</sup> To the fearful, reluctant doctor, such stories (while unfortunately true) could hardly have prepared him psycho-

logically for a mission he clearly regarded from the outset with considerable trepidation.

Lenteno left Huehuetenango and arrived on 15 May 1804 at San Juan Ixcay, where he found Friar José María Orellana prostrate and sick with fever.<sup>90</sup> (The priest later wrote that the doctor's arrival "has been a great consolation to me; my fever still rages but may God grant that I not be one of many.")<sup>91</sup> On May 16 Lenteno wrote to the *alcalde mayor* telling him "there are indeed many sick" and requesting that a woman helper be sent to San Juan Ixcay to cook food and assist in tending the needy.<sup>92</sup> The request was granted, and along with the *cocinera* came a supply of flour, rice, sugar, and vinegar.<sup>93</sup> With this meagre but important assistance Lenteno set about his work, which included a trip from San Juan Ixcay seven kilometres north to San Pedro Soloma and another journey ten kilometres farther north, over a difficult, rocky trail, to Santa Eulalia. On 24 May he confirmed Orellana's earlier report of the mass abandonment of Santa Eulalia, stating that "left behind are but three or four families," the Indian townfolk having fled to the perceived refuge of the surrounding mountains, "where they die, evidently in even greater misery."<sup>94</sup> Four to six people were estimated to perish daily. Lenteno goes on to say that "under these circumstances, in order to help as best as conditions permit, I go from one dwelling to the next, carrying antiseptic potions and other medicines."<sup>95</sup> Vinegar was apparently used as both a domestic and personal disinfectant. Not only were houses aired each day with a combination of vinegar and ammonia vapour, but a vinegar solution was also used to wash and rub the bodies of the sick, particularly the face and arms.

Even with the woman cook and male muleteer to help him, Lenteno soon found himself physically exhausted. Mentally, he slowly adapted to the "fear and panic" with which the Indians invariably viewed his medical ministrations, ultimately holding himself back if he found them terrorized at the thought of being treated with unknown cures and remedies.<sup>96</sup> The image of the people and the place first given Lenteno by the Spanish resident of Huehuetenango remained unaltered, if not reinforced, by the young doctor's experiences over the four months he spent in Soloma. In a summary of his work to the *alcalde mayor*, dated 6 August 1804, Lenteno stated that he found the Indians sadly negligent in matters of personal hygiene: "These people never clean themselves, their clothes, or their dwellings, which are just like those where chickens and other domestic animals are kept."<sup>97</sup> He added that the Indians recognized no Spanish authority whatsoever, not even that of the parish priest, whom Lenteno claimed had no influence at all over his unruly native charges.<sup>98</sup>

The havoc and destruction wrought by the typhus epidemic persisted



in Soloma for the rest of 1804 and throughout the following year. On 8 May 1806 Friar Juan José Juárez, who apparently replaced or assisted José María Orellana as parish priest of Soloma, wrote to the *alcalde mayor* requesting that, on account of disease-related poverty, the Indians of Santa Eulalia be granted a pardon from their tributary obligations for the years 1804 and 1805 and that the people of San Miguel Acatán be exempted for the year 1805.<sup>99</sup> Juárez pointed out the "miserable situation" in which the Indians of Santa Eulalia and San Miguel Acatán had existed "since the first attacks of fever struck in 1803."<sup>100</sup> In the first three years during which the epidemic raged in Santa Eulalia, Juárez, citing local death registers, reported 1039 typhus victims, which indicates a mortality rate between 1803 and 1806 of about 41 per cent.<sup>101</sup>

A request for tribute exemption was also submitted by the Indian leaders of San Pedro Soloma. The appeal was once again argued on the grounds of impoverishment arising directly from the impact of contagion. The native representatives seeking the pardon from the *alcalde mayor* mentioned specifically that "because we gave refuge in our homes to those who came from Santa Eulalia fleeing the pestilence, our town was contaminated also, and many tribute payers died. Now, because we gave them corn so that they might eat, perhaps we will all go hungry this year [1806] and the next."<sup>102</sup>

When typhus broke out in Santa Eulalia, the Indians from there not only fled south to San Pedro Soloma but also scattered west towards Concepción, a distance of some twenty-two kilometres. This evidence comes from Francisco de Paula López, a Mercedarian friar who at one time served as the parish priest of Jacaltenango. López reported having come across, in November 1804, many people from Santa Eulalia living in the mountains around Concepción.<sup>103</sup> In response to his inquiry as to how the Indians from Santa Eulalia came to be there, López stated that "since the previous year they have fled, in great numbers, a feverish pestilence in their own community," noting that many of the destitute and hungry "roamed the hills for eleven months" before arriving at Concepción.<sup>104</sup> Having seen the sorry state of the survivors, some of whom lay sick and unclad, López persuaded the Indians of Concepción, who had themselves suffered horrendously from typhus only eight years before, to provide the hapless refugees with land on which to grow corn, lest they starve to death.<sup>105</sup> Such desperate circumstances were later recounted by Friar Juan José Juárez in his plea to the *alcalde mayor* that Santa Eulalia be granted a tribute exemption for 1804 and 1805.<sup>106</sup> In describing the wretched condition of his parishioners, Juárez likened them to "birds without a nest, flying aimlessly all over the countryside, without belongings, without parents, without children, and naked. Oh what

suffering!"<sup>107</sup> The plight of the Indians, however, is nowhere more poignantly conveyed than in a letter written on 5 May 1806 by the Ladino *comisionado* of Soloma parish, Marcos Castañeda. His words, addressed to the *alcalde mayor*, capture a vivid sense of the tragedy in the way only an observant eyewitness could:

For four years now in the towns of Soloma there has been great distress due to the mortality caused by the typhus epidemic which kills the Indians without relief or remedy, leaving them only in dire hardship. Through fear of death, we [the Ladino residents Marcos and Santiago Castañeda] fled with our families to the solitude of the mountains and the rocky wastes of Chemal, suffering there from the extremity of the climate, leaving our houses and possessions abandoned in Soloma. But God having seen fit to end this terrible affliction, we have returned once again to our homes. We find that the majority of the Indians of Santa Eulalia have perished and are lying unburied all over the place, their decaying corpses eaten by the animals which stalk the countryside. Because of this and the fact that countless sheep also perished, neglected in their pens, the pestilence raged even more. What grieves us most, however, as it would any pious heart, is to see the great number of orphaned children crying for the laps of their parents, asking for bread without having anyone to receive it from; to behold many widows and widowers mourning the loss of their consorts; and to watch old people lament the death of their offspring. After so much hard work, these unfortunate Indians have been reduced to a life of misery. Having returned to their town [the Indians who survived] are without homes to live in, without resources to pay their expenses and tribute, and without corn to feed themselves and their families. If no measures are taken to assist these wretched people, they will without doubt starve to death, because they did not plant corn in the places where they sought refuge and so have nothing to live on, both for this year and for next, since it is now too late to plant their fields. It is a common thing in this parish to encounter Indians from Santa Eulalia, old and young alike, walking from town to town, from house to house, begging and searching for corn or charity. Others seek loans, leaving as security one of their children, for they have nothing else to offer. Señor Alcalde Mayor, because I witness these setbacks from such close quarters, for the sake of God and a sign of His mercy, inform the President that help

should be extended to the towns of this parish. At the very least, the people of Santa Eulalia and San Miguel Acatán could be exempted from paying tribute for the years during which they have suffered great misfortune.<sup>108</sup>

Marcos Castañeda, in a second letter written three years later, figured that the outbreak of typhus had killed "three-quarters of the Indians of San Miguel Acatán and Santa Eulalia" and stated that most of the survivors of the epidemic were rendered "destitute and homeless because their houses were burned to rid them of the contagion."<sup>109</sup>

Although assistance in the form of food, medicine, and nursing personnel was eventually elicited from the *alcalde mayor*, appeals that the Indians be given a full reprieve from paying tribute met with no success. Prudencio de Cozar, the *alcalde mayor* to whom much of the above correspondence was directed, was able only to obtain a royal order granting the affected communities a temporary respite.<sup>110</sup> The inability of the *alcalde mayor* to gain a complete pardon for the natives of Santa Eulalia and San Miguel Acatán later prompted Friar Juan José Juárez to write the following rebuke: "It seems to me that what is more important to you is that the Indians pay their tribute [so that] you receive your salary, but I doubt if the Indians will be able to pay, ... either this year or later, for they are sick and hungry and have nothing to pay with, since their crops are already lost."<sup>111</sup>

The tone of this address hints at the bitter resignation with which some Spaniards would periodically respond, during times of crisis, to the apathy, ineptitude, and lack of responsibility of bureaucrats in distant seats of authority. Such woeful disregard for native welfare must occasionally have numbed the few Spanish priests and Ladino officials who managed to conduct their duties with some sense of obligation towards the Indians. In Soloma parish typhus lingered, with brutal devastation, for many years after its appearance in 1803, spreading sickness and death from San Juan Ixcoy in the south to San Mateo Ixtatán in the north, from Santa Eulalia in the east to San Miguel Acatán (and beyond) in the west.<sup>112</sup> Even during an epidemic involving considerable loss of life and appalling human suffering, an appropriate course of remedial action, such as the suspension of all tributary obligations, was apparently beyond the workings of government bureaucracy.

Although the grief and despair of the afflicted command our most immediate attention, the episodes discussed above are also quite revealing from a demographic and epidemiological perspective. Of particular interest is the considerable variation in the fate of individual towns and villages when exposed to epidemic disease. Thus, while the

smallpox epidemic of 1780–1 resulted in the loss of approximately forty-two hundred lives, or 15 per cent mortality, over the Cuchumatán region as a whole, death rates fluctuated significantly at the community level, from 8 per cent to 38 per cent. Changing local conditions would best explain this complex pattern of differential mortality. Although smallpox was virulent and widespread enough in 1780–1 to engender a fall in the size of the regional population, such a decrease apparently did not occur during a renewed outbreak of the disease fifteen years later. Nor did the regional population plummet in the wake of typhus epidemics in 1796–9 and 1803–9, even though these two outbreaks caused high mortality in the parishes of Jacaltenango and Soloma respectively. It was thus possible for the spatial impact of certain outbreaks of pestilence to be quite localized; that is, for sickness to prevail in some communities without necessarily reaching (and devastating) adjoining or surrounding ones. Just as a national population profile, upon closer inspection, reveals marked spatial variation, so also does a regional population profile. In fact, a regional population profile that, like the Cuchumatán pattern, reflects general downward and upward trends over time is likely to conceal considerable fluctuation at the subregional (community or parish) level.<sup>113</sup> Such a dynamic would suggest that although studies in historical demography may be of assistance in the formulation of general principles governing the relationship between population movement and epidemic disease, they must also be cognizant of nuances of time and place that are anything but simple and predictable.

By the inadvertent but fatal transfer of Old World diseases to a physiologically defenceless native population, the Spanish conquest of America precipitated a demographic collapse that in all probability was the most catastrophic in the history of mankind. The magnitude and rapidity of Indian depopulation in the Cuchumatán highlands following conquest by Spain conforms to a pattern already well established for a number of other regions of Latin America.<sup>114</sup> A population of perhaps 260,000 on the eve of conquest, roughly the same size as the mid-twentieth-century population of the Cuchumatanes, had by 1680 declined to around 16,000, a fall of more than 90 per cent over a period of 160 years. While disease-related mortality was most massive and widespread in the century and a half immediately following European intrusion, premature death due to Old World contagions first introduced by the Spaniards was a characteristic feature of late colonial times as well. By the last quarter of the seventeenth century, however, a process of demographic recovery had begun that continued throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For most of this time, population increase was slow and sporadic because of the persistent outbreak of

diseases to which the Indians only gradually acquired immunities. Not until the beginning of the present century did the native population begin to increase sharply, thanks to the impact of modern medical technology in substantially reducing rates of human mortality. By 1950, after a process of decline, recovery, and growth lasting over four hundred years, the population of the Cuchumatán highlands reached a level equivalent to that which it may have numbered prior to the arrival of the Spaniards and their pestilential allies.

## 10 Refuge in the Mountains

Between the idea  
And the reality  
Between the motion  
And the act  
Falls the Shadow

T.S. Eliot, *The Hollow Men*

By the opening years of the sixteenth century, the Indian peoples of the Cuchumatán highlands had broken away, after two or three generations of subjugation, from the hegemony of the Quiché of Gumarcaah. Their newly won autonomy was not to last for very long. Between 1525 and 1530, native Mayan communities in the Cuchumatanes were confronted and defeated by an alien force far more formidable than anything they had come in contact with before: the might and vision of imperial Spain.

The Spanish conquest of the Cuchumatán highlands was not accomplished without prolonged and bloody conflict. Military opposition to the European invaders was widespread, but was particularly marked among the Mam, the Ixil, and the Quichean people of Uspantán. By 1530, however, Indian resistance in most parts of the Cuchumatanes had been crushed, and the region entered an era of Spanish domination that was to last almost three hundred years.

Throughout the colonial period, other areas of Central America had much more to offer Spaniards who sought wealth than did the Cuchumatán highlands. The slave trade in Nicaragua and Honduras; silver mining in the hills around Tegucigalpa; the cultivation of cacao in Soconusco, Suchitepéquez, Guazacapán, and Izalcos; cattle raising and the indigo dye industry in the *tierra templada* to the south and east of Santiago de Guatemala; all these activities, and others, were more attractive to materially minded Spaniards than the limited entrepreneurial opportunities presented by involvement in the Cuchumatanes – rugged,

remote, and with few major exploitable resources. With the possible exception of supplying much-needed Indian labour to the cacao plantations of the Pacific coast, the region therefore had little direct participation in the great economic cycles that had such a dramatic and long-lasting impact in other parts of the isthmus.<sup>1</sup> If, in terms of its colonial status and fiscal relationship with the mother country, Central America was indeed "the richest of the poor, or the poorest of the rich," then the Cuchumatán highlands must surely have ranked among imperial Spain's least prized possessions.<sup>2</sup> There was certainly no doubt in the mind of Diego de Garcés, the *alcalde mayor* of Zapotitlán, that enrichment lay not here but elsewhere. When, in 1570, he declared the Cuchumatanes to be "tierra pobre y estéril, salvo de maíz y gallinas que hay en abundancia," Garcés voiced a majority opinion.<sup>3</sup> A "poor and unfruitful land" where the only plentiful things to be had were "corn and chickens" could hardly capture the imagination of an enterprising Spaniard.

The validity of the Garcés appraisal cannot be disputed, for the Cuchumatán highlands were (and are still) very much an economic backwater, a periphery within a periphery.<sup>4</sup> It would be totally misleading and incorrect, however, to suggest that, because of the region's physical isolation and its paltry commercial endowment, the land and the people of the Cuchumatanes went untouched by nearly three centuries of Spanish rule. Given the nature of the Hispanic quest for empire and the operation of certain processes initiated merely by European presence, such a thing was simply not possible. Thus the colonial experience here was marked only by differences of degree, not of kind.

As elsewhere in Guatemala, Cuchumatán Indians in the middle years of the sixteenth century were either persuaded or forced into leaving their old homes in the mountains and into taking up residence in new church-dominated *congregaciones*. Established primarily to facilitate native conversion to Christianity and to create centralized pools of exploitable labour, *congregación* produced an orderly pattern of nucleated settlement that contrasted greatly with the predominantly random and scattered arrangement of pre-Hispanic times. Although the imprint of *congregación* persists to this day, the operation of the policy in the Cuchumatanes was not without its failures and frustrations. From the outset, difficult and inaccessible terrain often hampered effective Spanish penetration beyond the immediate environs of *pueblos de indios*, thereby leaving scores of native families well outside the reach of civil and religious authority. Moreover, a deep-rooted cultural preference towards more dispersed forms of settlement that did not sever the bond between Indian communities and the land of their ancestors constantly eroded the viability of *congregación*. This was especially the case during the seventeenth and

eighteenth centuries when, with Spanish precepts of law and order seemingly ever more difficult to enforce, increasing numbers of native families abandoned *congregaciones* for outlying rural areas. The centrifugal movement away from *pueblos de indios* was accompanied by a revival of pre-Christian Mayan religion, a development that was apparently just as distasteful to Spanish authorities as the fact that fugitive Indians once again performing old pagan ceremonies no longer contributed to the support of the colony or the enrichment of the Crown. Flight was also triggered by the desire to escape the exploitation and oppression that came in various legal and several extra-legal forms as long as natives maintained residency in *congregaciones*.

During the early colonial period, the key factor in the creation of wealth for Spaniards was control of native labour, not native land. Coming to Central America first and foremost as entrepreneurs who sought to profit from the work of others, Spanish conquerors and colonists turned to the acquisition of land only after their search for gold, silver, or a successful cash crop – a *produit moteur* – proved fruitless.<sup>5</sup> Apart from a few early titles in the Huehuetenango area, the taking up of land on the part of Spaniards began significantly only during the seventeenth century, when limited economic prospects meant that a frugal self-sufficiency was not without certain material advantages. This trend continued throughout the eighteenth century as Spaniards who acquired land in the Cuchumatanes, particularly on the alpine meadows of the Altos de Chiantla, became aware of the potential of the region for the raising of livestock, especially sheep. Although sizeable *haciendas* were developed, precipitating conflict between Spaniards and Indians over land rights and boundaries, the emergence of the landed estate in the Cuchumatanes was not attained wholly at the expense of the territorial integrity of native communities. Some Indian towns, particularly in the south, may not always have had enough land to pay their tribute and to feed their populations, but they held on tenaciously to what they had. Other Indian towns, especially those along the northern Lacandón frontier bordering fertile and sparsely settled *tierra caliente*, apparently were never troubled by a shortage of land during the entire colonial period.

Under Spanish rule, the Indians of the Cuchumatán highlands were introduced not only to the conquerors' religion, language, and customs; they were also exposed, as were native groups throughout the Americas, to an array of diseases inadvertently brought by the invaders from the Old World to the New. The effect of this transfer on the immunologically defenceless native population was devastating. Owing to the ravages of epidemic disease, Indian numbers in the Cuchumatanes between 1520 and about 1680 fell from possibly 260,000 to 16,000, a drop of over 90 per



cent in a century and a half. Although native population doubled by the end of the colonial era over its nadir level reached around 1680, demographic recovery was both sporadic and intermittent because the Indians only slowly acquired immunities to the contagions long endemic to the Spaniards. Epidemic disease was therefore a debilitating peril with which native communities constantly had to contend. Its impact on Indian life was profound. When disease broke out, it invariably precipitated a chain of events, including catastrophic mortality, the inability of stricken towns to pay tribute, and the failure on the part of native families to plant their fields for the year ahead. Famine, misery, and a wretched existence were then never very far away, and served only to increase the susceptibility of the Indians to renewed outbreaks of pestilence. With the recurrence of such unforeseen setbacks, initial imperial expectations soon proved naïve and unattainable. The motion of conquest carried with it, hidden in blood and breath, an act of disaster that was a people's scourge and an empire's ruination. More than any other single factor, it was the unleashing of Old World diseases on a physiologically vulnerable native population that caused a shadow to fall between the idea and the reality of Spanish colonial rule, not just in the Cuchumatán highlands of Guatemala but throughout the entire Hispanic American realm.

## 11 Quincentennial Reflections

In Mesoamerican studies, the years immediately preceding the Columbus Quincentennial in 1992 saw more and more researchers focus attention on geographical regions other than central Mexico. This is not to suggest that the cultural core, with its rich source material and intriguing complexity, no longer exerted an appeal, but merely to observe that neglected peripheries like the Cuchumatán highlands are now better represented in the literature than ever before. Such a development indicates a healthy process of maturation. Much remains to be done, but progress continues to be made.

This book, then, occupies a smaller vacuum than before. In the Central American context, two exceptional monographs by Linda A. Newson examine the historical geography of Honduras and Nicaragua, where the colonial experience was markedly different from that in Guatemala, especially in terms of Indian survival.<sup>1</sup> This was true also of El Salvador and Costa Rica, as shown by the investigations of William R. Fowler<sup>2</sup> and Carolyn Hall<sup>3</sup>. For Yucatán, the work of Nancy Farriss<sup>4</sup> stresses the theme of Maya resistance to Spanish rule, as do studies by Inga Clendinnen<sup>5</sup> and Grant Jones,<sup>6</sup> the latter dealing with an extremely remote frontier zone straddling what is today the northern half of Belize, part of the Guatemalan department of El Petén, and a portion of Mexico's Quintana Roo. For other areas of southern Mexico, inquiries by Jan Gasco<sup>7</sup> and Rodney Watson<sup>8</sup> scrutinize various aspects of native life in Soconusco and highland Chiapas, which were administered in colonial times as part of the Audiencia of Guatemala. Farther north, in Oaxaca, John K. Chance reconstructs relations between Spaniards and Indians in the isolated Sierra Zapoteca, in many respects a Mexican equivalent of the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes.<sup>9</sup>

Our knowledge of colonial Guatemala has profited in recent years from the research of several scholars. The role of the Catholic Church in forging an Indian "west" and a Ladino "east" was explored by the late Adriaan van Oss.<sup>10</sup> Lawrence Feldman has analyzed production systems and distribution patterns in the much-neglected Oriente.<sup>11</sup> A

similar concern with economic geography pervades the study by Jorge Luján Muñoz<sup>12</sup> of the valley and environs of Santiago de Guatemala, which functioned for most of the colonial period as the capital city of a jurisdiction stretching from Chiapas and Soconusco in the north to the border between Costa Rica and Panama in the south. Ralph H. Vigil charts the life and times of Alonso de Zorita, an important Crown official who, like President Alonso López de Cerrato, tried to impose royal authority by enforcing the New Laws in Guatemala around the middle of the sixteenth century.<sup>13</sup> The tumultuous first years of conquest and colonization are expertly handled by Wendy Kramer, whose reconstruction of the early operation of *encomienda* breaks new scholarly ground.<sup>14</sup> The Cakchiquel Maya, long overshadowed historiographically by their Quiché neighbours, engage the interest of Barbara E. Borg<sup>15</sup> and Robert M. Hill.<sup>16</sup> Ethnohistory of the Tzutuhil Maya is likewise now better known, Sandra Orellana having devoted an entire volume to the study of their communities.<sup>17</sup> Orellana has also written about native medical practices before and after Spanish intrusion.<sup>18</sup> Discontent erupting into localized rebellion is touched on by María del Carmen León Cázares<sup>19</sup> and Severo Martínez Peláez,<sup>20</sup> but this important matter awaits systematic elaboration. Music as a vehicle for acculturating the Maya is discussed insightfully by Dieter Lehnhoff.<sup>21</sup> Issues of acculturation in general figure prominently in Elías Zamora's depiction of continuity and change in the province of Suchitepéquez and Zapotitlán.<sup>22</sup> His regional perspective is mirrored by Michel Bertrand's portrayal of land and society in Rabinal and the Baja Verapaz.<sup>23</sup> The community studies of Sajcabajá by Jean Piel<sup>24</sup> and of Sacapulas by Robert M. Hill and John Monaghan<sup>25</sup> may best be described as historically informed ethnography. The latter is the more successfully executed of the two and, apart from *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala*, is the only book-length publication to appear that seeks to illuminate what happened to Maya peoples in the Cuchumatán highlands under Spanish rule.

With the literature mentioned above furnishing an additional Mesoamerican backdrop, further details about the colonial experience in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes may now be provided.

#### CONQUEST AND RESISTANCE

Most of what we know about Spanish military engagements in the Cuchumatán region is based on the *Recordación Florida*, a history of Guatemala written by Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán towards the end of the seventeenth century. Fuentes y Guzmán, a Guatemalan of Spanish origin, had access to several documents that are now either lost

or no longer exist. Only by consulting his work, in other words, can certain early information be obtained. Such is the case, for example, with the account prepared in 1525 by Gonzalo de Alvarado of the conquest of the Mam. While we must be grateful to Fuentes y Guzmán for transcribing data from such sources, the *Recordación Florida* cannot be read with complete confidence, for the chronicler frequently embellishes his text in order to lend the actions of his predecessors maximum valour and distinction. He also tends to omit or gloss over episodes that fail to correspond with his particular vision of the past. Few modern scholars have afforded Fuentes y Guzmán closer scrutiny than Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María. Padre Carmelo notes that the chronicler "exerts his fertile imagination by locating feats of conquest all over Guatemala, military exploits in which the most established and distinguished first colonists show up again and again."<sup>26</sup> While sources for the conquest of the Mam that tell a different story than the one promoted by Fuentes y Guzmán have yet to be found, documents have been unearthed that allow the role of key players in the conquest of Uspantán and Ixil country to be reassessed.

According to Fuentes y Guzmán, Gaspar Arias led the first Spanish *entrada* into Ixil country in 1529. Having subjugated Nebaj and Chajul, Arias was supposed to march with his men to attack Uspantán, which lies farther to the east. Instead, Arias returned to Santiago de Guatemala, where he quarrelled with Francisco de Orduña over membership in the city council. Arias' departure, contends Fuentes y Guzmán, left Pedro de Olmos in command. The latter's rash decision to launch a frontal assault on Uspantán met with disaster. The Spaniards retreated in defeat towards Utlatlán, suffering further casualties during an ambush between Sacapulas and Chichicastenango. A year or so later, according to Fuentes y Guzmán, a second expedition under Francisco de Castellanos finally brought the Indians of Uspantán to heel.

Recently discovered information suggests that this version of events at Uspantán must now be re-evaluated. First, the part played by Gaspar Arias seems to be exaggerated. In a formal record drafted in 1541 Arias himself makes no mention of ever having led an *entrada* to Uspantán. He does point out, however, that between April and August 1529 he led an *entrada* against the Indians of Mazagua, in Escuintla.<sup>27</sup> Second, the actions of Francisco de Castellanos also seem inflated. In 1545 he, like Arias, composed a formal record of the services he had rendered in the name of the King. While acknowledging that he had fought at Uspantán, as well as providing men, horses, and arms for the campaign, nowhere in his declaration does he suggest he served as leader.<sup>28</sup> In fact, Castellanos attributes leadership of the second, successful campaign

against Uspantán to Francisco de Orduña, as does another Spaniard, Gonzalo de Ovalle.<sup>29</sup> Archival sources indicate that Arias fought alongside Orduña at Uspantán, and it was there, not in the capital, that they had a dispute over *cabildo* membership, Orduña at one point in the exchange punching Arias in the face.<sup>30</sup> Sáenz de Santa María attributes Fuentes y Guzmán's unwillingness to credit Orduña with victory at Uspantán to his "not being interested in glorifying Don Francisco's memory," implying that the chronicler may have been a direct descendant of either Arias or Castellanos (perhaps both) and so considered them more worthy of veneration.<sup>31</sup> Evidence now at hand also indicates that Jorge de Alvarado once led an expedition to Uspantán, about which Fuentes y Guzmán says nothing.<sup>32</sup> Such information may not radically alter our understanding of the course of conquest history, but it does encourage a sense of wariness when consulting the *Recordación Florida*. It also prompts the suspicion that Fuentes y Guzmán might also have taken liberties when distilling Gonzalo de Alvarado's account of the conquest of the Mam.

What is certain, however, is that with the capitulation of Uspantán, whether to Castellanos or to Orduña, major wars of conquest in most parts of the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes came to an end. Another matter entirely, of course, was native resistance to the arrangements afterwards put in place. Diego de Rodas, the Spaniard rewarded with the *encomienda* of Uspantán, warned in 1531 of lingering hostilities, stating bluntly that what the Indians there need "is a good hiding from time to time, in order to make them obedient and ensure that they stay at peace."<sup>33</sup> When Indian uprisings occurred in Guatemala, they were usually small-scale, passing affairs. While they lasted, however, they could become violent, triggering fear and alarm on the part of the Spanish regime. As early as 1534, barely four years after the fall of Uspantán, several Spaniards were killed in disturbances involving the Cuchumatán communities of Aguacatán, Comitán, Ilom, and Serquil by Indians described as "mutinous and rebellious."<sup>34</sup> Indian slaves and servants working for the Spaniards also lost their lives. The fact that Jorge de Alvarado, then serving for the second time as interim governor of Guatemala, himself spearheaded forces that crushed this uprising gives some indication of the seriousness with which it was viewed. Writing from Aguacatán, Jorge expressed the opinion that the best way of dealing with the problem would be to burn the communities in question to the ground. He opted, instead, for singling out the ringleaders, whom he punished severely, "dogs that they are."<sup>35</sup> One Spaniard, Alonso Cabezas, testified that the Indians involved in the revolt had killed his compatriots "by beating them, hanging them, then throwing them down ravines."<sup>36</sup> In

a letter to the Crown dated 14 May 1535 the city council of Santiago summarized the incident as follows:

The devil appeared before [the Indians] and told them that soon the Spaniards who lived in Santiago would perish, and that they should kill those other Spaniards who lived in towns outside the capital. Thus it was that in some of these towns upwards of ten Spaniards were murdered and sacrificed, along with an even greater number of their slaves and servants. Although action was taken against [the Indians] quickly, in order that matters would deteriorate no further, it was not possible to respond before much harm was done.<sup>37</sup>

Elsewhere in the Cuchumatanes, documents indicate that some time in the 1530s an *entrada* had to be organized to put down an uprising in the province of Puyumatlán, a name given to the area surrounding Santa Eulalia where "towns at war" were said to exist.<sup>38</sup> To what extent Spanish hegemony was contested in other parts is difficult to say, but in 1539 there was official recognition of ongoing confrontation, Alonso de Maldonado informing the Crown on 16 October that "in this jurisdiction there is much territory yet to be pacified."<sup>39</sup>

One Maya group, the Lacandones, resisted conquest throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Their resistance caused problems for other Maya groups as well as for the Spaniards. While the Lacandón cannot, in the strictest sense, be considered a Cuchumatán people, they made their presence felt in the region by raiding settlements where local Indians had chosen to adjust to Spanish domination in a less belligerent fashion. These raids, organized from forest strongholds in the Usumacinta basin, disrupted the peace and destroyed both property and lives. Communities in a frontier stretching from Chajul to San Mateo Ixtatán lived in constant fear of Lacandón attack. On several occasions, most notably in 1685 and again in 1695, the Spaniards mounted sizeable *entradas* against the Lacandones, but never with lasting, desirable results.<sup>40</sup> In 1712 it was proposed that Lacandones from the ill-fated (but aptly named) Nuestra Señora de los Dolores be resettled near San Mateo Ixtatán at a place called Asantic or Asantih.<sup>41</sup> Whether this move took place is not known.

#### SPOILS AND SQUABBLES OF VICTORY

For their services as combatants, the first Spanish conquerors were granted *encomiendas*, formal titles that carried the right to exact tribute

TABLE 23

Awards of *Encomienda* in Early Colonial Guatemala (1524-48)

Governors, lieutenant governors and interim governors	Tenure in office	Number of awards	Number of encomenderos
Pedro de Alvarado	1524-6	30	22
Jorge de Alvarado	1527-9	94	72
Francisco de Orduña	1529-30	11	10
Pedro de Alvarado	1530-3	90	50
Jorge de Alvarado	1534-5	8	6
Pedro de Alvarado	1535-6	19	10
Alonso de Maldonado	1536-9	12	8
Pedro de Alvarado	1539-40	7	3
Francisco de la Cueva	1540-1	14	5
Beatriz de la Cueva	1541	—	—
Bishop Marroquín and Francisco de la Cueva	1541-2	20	16
Alonso de Maldonado	1542-8	45	19

SOURCE: Kramer, "Politics of Encomienda Distribution"

from subjugated communities. Discussion of the role of *encomienda* in Guatemala, and indeed throughout Central America, invariably takes the Cerrato years as its point of departure. This tendency is understandable, given that our earliest extant list of *encomiendas* – who held them, what kinds of tribute they received, which communities were involved – was compiled during the Cerrato presidency (1548–55). Cerrato's actions, especially his freeing of Indian slaves and attempts to put the New Laws of 1542 into effect, certainly warrant recognition. Focusing on Cerrato, however, has deflected us from looking at *encomienda* when the institution operated at its most remunerative (from a Spanish viewpoint) and at its most exploitative (from a Maya perspective). This occurred in the first two decades or so after conquest was begun, when *encomenderos* themselves set hefty tribute quotas and the moderating hand of royal government was almost non-existent. A much-needed corrective to understanding the pre-Cerrato history of *encomienda* is provided by Wendy Kramer, who concludes that, "far from being the starting point of Guatemalan *encomiendas*, or reflecting recent innovations wrought by the new President, Cerrato's *tasación* reflects the vicissitudes and allegiances of six different men, influenced by and responding to the circumstances of eleven different governments."<sup>42</sup> These six different men and their eleven different governments (see table 23) often assigned or exchanged, confirmed or removed *encomienda* privileges worth thou-

TABLE 24  
*Encomienda* in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes (1524–40)

Date of first title	Community granted	Recipient
27 Oct. 1524	Tecpán Puyumatlán (Santa Eulalia)	Gonzalo de Ovalle
3 Oct. 1525	Huehuetenango	Juan de Espinar
20 Feb. 1526	Uspantlán (Uspantán)	Diego de Rojas
1524–26	Ozumacintlán (San Pedro Necta)	Diego Cancino
1527–29	Tetechan (Tectitán)	Alonso Larios
1528	Cochumatlán (Todos Santos)	Marcos Ruiz
1528	Ayllón (Ilom)	Hernando de Yllescas
29 Mar. 1528	Chalcuytlán (Chalchitán)	Diego de Rojas
29 Mar. 1528	Petatán (Petatán)	Gonzalo de Ovalle
10 Aug. 1529	Cacalutlán o Colutla (Colotenango?)	Gonzalo de Ovalle
10 Aug. 1529	Ystapalapán (San Mateo Ixtatán?)	Gonzalo de Ovalle
19 Aug. 1529	Xacaltenango (Jacaltenango)	Gonzalo de Ovalle
1528–9	Zacapula (Sacapulas)	Antón de Morales y Juan Páez
1528–9	Nemá (Nebaj)	Francisco Sánchez
1528–9	Vyztlán (San Antonio y Santa Ana Huista)	Francisco López
1528–9	Cuilco	Rodrigo de Benavides
1528–9	Motocintla (San Francisco Motozintla)	Rodrigo de Benavides
16 Oct. 1530	Aguacatán	Cristóbal de la Cueva
20 Aug. 1531	Yscos (San Juan Ixcoy)	Marcos Ruiz
1540	Zoloma (Soloma)	Francisco de la Cueva

SOURCE: Kramer, "The Politics of *Encomienda* Distribution"

sands of *pesos* annually. Table 24 summarizes Kramer's findings as they relate to the Cuchumatán highlands.

One interesting feature in Kramer's chronology is that rewards were formalized, as at Tecpán Puyumatlán (Santa Eulalia) and Uspantlán (Uspantán), long before any semblance of Spanish control materialized, suggesting that *encomienda* may have been manipulated quite brazenly as an incentive to conquer as well as a privilege granted thereafter. Another striking finding in the documents consulted by Kramer is the wealth that early *encomiendas* could generate, even in regions like the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the case of Huehuetenango. Some idea of the reward or burden at stake and a concrete measure of the difference between pre-Cerrato and



Cerrato times may be gained by examining how this particular *encomienda* was exploited.

A doughty Spaniard named Juan de Espinar held Huehuetenango in *encomienda* from 1525 until his death in the 1560s, with a hiatus of ten or twelve months (1530–1) when the privilege went to Francisco de Zurrilla. For more than thirty-five years a combination of cleverness, persistence, and political savvy, coupled with a toughness that drifted at times into downright cruelty, made Espinar the master of Huehuetenango. He had keen entrepreneurial instincts, controlling the sale of Indian tribute and developing an elaborate infrastructure of mining and agricultural activities in and around Huehuetenango. His mining operations were made possible by the discovery of gold placer deposits about ten kilometres to the south of Huehuetenango, along the course of the Río Malacatán.

Good fortune for Espinar proved a curse for the Indians he controlled as *encomendero*. When Huehuetenango was in its hey-day Espinar could look forward to an income of some 9,000 pesos each year from his involvement in mining and another 3,000 pesos from his agricultural transactions. At the mines, a fellow Spaniard served as the technician concerned with extraction procedures, while a foreman (*mayordomo*) supervised the labour of Indian servants and slaves. A pig farm was established close to Huehuetenango and Espinar laid claim to enough land to raise large quantities of corn and beans, which he stored for consumption throughout the year. Foodstuffs paid to him as tribute he either fed to the Indians working his mines or sold to neighbouring Spaniards. He also used native labour to pan for gold. He was, by any standards, an enterprising individual, dogged and unyielding, determined to do well.

Espinar lived long enough to see the population of Huehuetenango shrink to a fraction of what it had been when he was initially awarded the *encomienda* (see table 25). One factor affecting the population size of his *encomienda* was the loss of a handful of surrounding towns assigned to other Spaniards after 1530. Espinar's forfeit of Huehuetenango for one year to Zurrilla precipitated a lawsuit which records the bounty the latter only briefly enjoyed (see table 26). Espinar's desire to retain Huehuetenango made perfect sense, for the loss was substantial: some of the commodities listed in the left-hand column of table 26 would have fetched a handsome return at market. In addition, labour at the gold mines alone represents between 43,200 and 72,000 work days per year on the part of Indian men, and 10,800 work days on the part of Indian women. The right-hand column of table 26 reflects the shrunken, tamed

TABLE 25  
Population of Huehuetenango and Subject Towns, 1530-1 and 1549

Head/subject town	1530-1	1549
Huehuetenango (includes Chiantla)	3,000-3,500 tributaries <sup>a</sup>	500 <sup>b</sup>
Santiago Chimaltenango (Chimbal, Chinbal)	500 <i>casas</i> <sup>c</sup>	35 <sup>d</sup>
San Juan Atitán (Atitán)		
San Pedro Necta (Niquitlán, Niquetla)	200 <i>casas</i> <sup>e</sup>	20

SOURCE: Kramer, Lovell, and Lutz, "Fire in the Mountains," 272

NOTES:

<sup>a</sup>Estimate based on calculations by Kramer, "Politics of Encomienda Distribution".

<sup>b</sup>All 1549 figures are from AGI: AG 128 and record the number of Indian tributaries.

<sup>c</sup>200 houses in the town centre, or *cabecera*, and 300 in outlying settlements, or *estancias* (AGI: Justicia 1030).

<sup>d</sup>Santiago Chimaltenango and San Juan Atitán, jointly, are recorded as having 35 tributaries in 1549.

<sup>e</sup>AGI: Justicia 1031.

*encomienda* of Huehuetenango after Cerrato had wrestled with the beast. Even though the prize at mid-century was noticeably less, Espinar could still console himself with having the eleventh largest entrustment of Indians in all Guatemala, not including those *encomiendas* which paid tribute to the Crown.

Why Espinar was awarded Huehuetenango is unclear. He received the *encomienda* from Pedro de Alvarado in a formal title dated 3 October 1525, shortly before the Mam of Huehuetenango surrendered to Don Pedro's brother, Gonzalo, at Zaculeu. It makes sense to assume that Espinar was granted Huehuetenango because of his involvement in the conquest of the Mam, but Fuentes y Guzmán makes no mention of him in his filtered version of Gonzalo's account. The chronicler does credit Espinar with discovering and later exploiting silver at mines near Chiantla, but describes him, before fortune smiled on him, as "a miserable subject, with a wife and many children, but with no means to feed so many mouths."<sup>43</sup> The only explanation Don Pedro could offer as to how Huehuetenango landed in the hands of such an unworthy recipient was to say, years after first awarding title, that "as a result of continuous warfare in the region, the distribution of *encomiendas* had been irregular. Consequently, there were men like Espinar to whom the captains, in order to placate the appetites [of their soldiers], had given disproportion-

TABLE 26

*Encomienda* Obligations in Huehuetenango in 1530–31 and 1549

Commodity or service	1530–1	1549
Clothing	800 lengths of cotton cloth 400 loincloths 400 jackets 400 blouses 400 skirts 400 sandals	300 lengths of cotton cloth
Foodstuffs	Unspecified amounts of corn, beans, chile, and salt  108–126 large jugs of honey	Harvest from planting 22.5 bushels of corn  Harvest from planting 7.5 bushels of black beans  100 loads of chile  100 cakes of salt
Fowl	2,268 turkeys	12 dozen chickens
Other Items	400 reed mats	Harvest from planting 6 bushels of cotton
Labour	40 Indian men sent to work in and around Santiago de Guatemala in 20-day shifts all year  120–200 Indian men sent to work in the gold mines in 20-day shifts all year  30 Indian women sent to the gold mines each day in order to make <i>tortillas</i> and prepare food.	6 Indian men to act as general servants
Slaves	80 male and 40 female slaves who worked in the gold mines.	

SOURCE: Kramer, Lovell, and Lutz, "Fire in the Mountains," 274–5

tionately large *encomiendas*, while others who deserved good *encomiendas* ended up with very little."<sup>44</sup> He went on to say:

Espinar is a lowly person and of little disposition, someone who has lived by his trade as a tailor. His Majesty orders that tradesmen of the mechanical arts should not be given Indians but, rather, that they use their trades so that they add to the worth of newly settled lands and kingdoms, that the Indians should be given to the nobility and to those of a disposition other than that of tradesmen like Espinar.<sup>45</sup>

Alvarado's words are taken from papers in a complex lawsuit between himself and Espinar which arose from Don Pedro's decision, in 1530, to take Huehuetenango away from Espinar and bequeath it to one of his favoured business partners, Francisco de Zurrilla. By the time of the takeover there was certainly no love lost between Alvarado and Espinar, largely as a result of the latter having presented damaging testimony against the former during a government inquiry in 1529–30 headed by Francisco de Orduña. Alvarado, a strong-willed man accustomed to getting his way, must have been caught off-guard by Espinar's tenacity in opposing the takeover, opposition that involved the one-time tailor travelling to Mexico City, where he petitioned successfully before the Audiencia of Mexico to reverse Alvarado's ruling.

On his return to Guatemala, Espinar filed suit against Alvarado for loss of earnings during the brief but ruinous period of Zurrilla's tenure. Espinar claimed, and found witnesses to support him, that the population of Huehuetenango had dropped by half during the time Zurrilla was *encomendero*. In addition to attrition induced by disease, numbers declined because Indians fled to the mountains to escape the clutches of Zurrilla's rapacious administrators. Indians were reported to be "very hostile and did not want to serve, running off always into the wilds. Sometimes Indians from the *cabecera* [Huehuetenango], along with the Spaniard working as foreman, went to look for them. They would bring [the fugitives] back forcibly, as prisoners, and make them work. Zurrilla had them put in chains in order that they might work at the mines, as did [the Indians] in other [subject] towns."<sup>46</sup> Native resistance, perhaps more passive than in the unspecified subject town referred to, also occurred in the *cabecera* itself. When two native leaders from Huehuetenango refused to cooperate with Zurrilla in marshalling Indian labour, he ordered that they be sent for punishment before Pedro de Alvarado in Santiago.

One witness, Luis de Vivar, testified that he had heard it said that Indians from Huehuetenango had been mistreated, perhaps even killed, when they refused to serve Zurrilla and obey Alvarado. Vivar stated that when Espinar arrived back in Guatemala from Mexico he found several *principales* in prison, accused of having fled rather than stay and cooperate. Among those jailed was Coatle, lord of Chiantla. Somewhat impartially, Vivar also testified that Coatle later fled from Espinar, himself not above reproach for harsh treatment of Indians. In response to this allegation, Espinar had his attorney state that when he acted with force "it was a long time ago, when the Indians were uncivilized and half at war and [also because] they did not want to feed or help maintain slaves that their *encomendero* had in the mines, on account of which some of them died of hunger."<sup>47</sup> Espinar made no attempt to deny how heavy-handed he could be, justifying his actions by saying "knowing how evil, incorrigible, and unruly the Indians of these parts are, especially those of Huehuetenango, it is no great sin to beat them, or to threaten to beat them. They must be punished constantly, a strong grip kept on them always."<sup>48</sup> Espinar makes it perfectly clear that he was prepared to hold on to what he believed was rightfully his at all costs. In perhaps the most startling revelation to emerge from the lawsuit, it was revealed that Espinar had ordered several communities within the boundaries of his *encomienda* to be destroyed and their inhabitants resettled elsewhere.

The documents at hand, as is often the case, furnish no single version of the truth. What does emerge from a labyrinth of ambiguous or conflicting evidence is Espinar's desire that only he control Huehuetenango. To this end, shortly before Francisco de Orduña initiated the eventual conquest of Uspantán, Espinar informed Indians who lived within his *encomienda* but some distance from the centre of Huehuetenango that an *entrada* was being planned and they should abandon their towns and move closer to the *cabecera* to avoid being caught in Orduña's inevitable swath of destruction. The Indians complied with their *encomendero*'s demands, which involved putting entire communities to the torch (see table 27). Espinar then tried to cover up his manoeuvres by informing Orduña that the Indians had set fire to their settlements because they were in rebellion. Cotohá, one of the Indian leaders who went along with Espinar's plot, later testified that a messenger sent by the *encomendero* told people "everyone should go down to the plain and congregate there, so that the Christians passing through [as part of Orduña's *entrada*] could not redistribute them elsewhere."<sup>49</sup> Cotohá also testified that Espinar had ordered the towns to be burned quickly, before Orduña or his men could see them, so that the *encomendero*'s motives would not be apparent.

TABLE 27

Settlements Burned, Wholly or in Part, in Huehuetenango (1530)

Identified places	Unidentified places
Huehuetenango	Amala
Cozumaçutla, Xozumaçutla (Sto. Domingo Usumacinta)	Mocoga
Chiantla	Esquinel
Atitán	
Chinbal, Chimbal (Santiago Chimaltenango)	
Niquitlán, Niquetla, Necotla (San Pedro Necta)	

SOURCE: Kramer, Lovell, and Lutz, "Fire in the Mountains," 278

Espinar's behaviour appears to have been triggered by rage at what he saw as intrusion into his *encomienda* jurisdiction by two other Spaniards, García de Salinas and Juan Niño. Evidence presented in the lawsuit suggests that these men were pressing for control of towns hitherto subject to Huehuetenango: Chinbal and Atitán (claimed by Salinas) and Nequetla (claimed by Niño).<sup>50</sup> Espinar refers to Salinas and Niño as "enemies who have endeavoured to dispute with me [my rights] over some of the aforementioned towns."<sup>51</sup> In order to invalidate his adversaries' claim that he was usurping *their* communities, Espinar planned the burning of the subject towns and the resettlement of inhabitants closer to the *cabecera*. Because under Spanish law a grant of *encomienda* was for the tribute and labour of a specified population rather than for lands or territory, by this daring move Espinar eliminated the real resource base of his rivals while consolidating his own.

His extreme measures, however, did not work according to plan. When Orduña undertook the conquest of Uspantán, he was also serving as acting governor of Guatemala, filling in for Alvarado during one of Don Pedro's many absences. Suspicions of foul play by Espinar led Orduña to conduct an official inquiry, during which it became clear that Indians who, through coercion or fear, had left the outlying parts of Huehuetenango were simply following their *encomendero's* instructions. Espinar's guiding principles were thus revealed as unabashed greed and a thirst for absolute power. His obsession with status and wealth was accompanied, among other traits, by spitefulness against what he interpreted as unwarranted encroachment by two fellow Spaniards who were attempting to grab a share of the spoils. As well, he must have felt he was defending the economic infrastructure he had developed in the environs of Huehuetenango in a scant five years of conquest. Espinar's

treachery earned him a brief spell in jail, during which time Alvarado may have used the burning of the towns as the reason for granting Huehuetenango to his associate Zurrilla. Don Pedro's reassignment, as things turned out, proved only temporary. At one juncture in the proceedings the outraged Orduña describes Espinar as an "hijo de puta," a son of a whore.<sup>52</sup> His remark is one with which Indians in Huehuetenango likely would have agreed.<sup>53</sup>

#### PROBLEMS OF NATIVE RESETTLEMENT

In one of his Massey Lectures, the Mexican writer Carlos Fuentes makes an important distinction between the "real country" and the "legal country" in Latin American history.<sup>54</sup> The latter is an ornate fiction, a paper world inhabited by scribes, theologians, lawyers, and bureaucrats, most of whom never set foot in America but whose job it was to advise the Crown, through the Council of the Indies, in matters relating to Spain's overseas possessions. This legal country stands in marked contrast to the real country that came into being, an exploited terrain where Spaniards and Indians lived side by side in uneasy juxtaposition. The enormous distance between the real country and the legal country is exposed in many situations, none more striking than the policy of native resettlement known as *congregación*. As laid down by Spanish law, *congregación* was intended to bring Indians residing in small, dispersed groups into a larger assembly where they would be converted to Christianity and moulded into residents of harmonious, resourceful communities that epitomized imperial notions of orderly, civilized life. In practice, outcomes differed so dramatically from legislated intent that contemporary observers expressed outrage, astonishment, and despair that such a grand scheme could amount to so little.

*Congregación* made its mark on the landscape at an early date, a mark still clearly visible today. In fact, *pueblos de indios* created under the policy by regular and secular clergy during the sixteenth century (see table 28) now exist as *municipios*, or townships, Sol Tax considered "the primary (and possibly final) ethnic units" appropriate for anthropological inquiry.<sup>55</sup> Maya peoples throughout Guatemala were embraced if not ensnared by *congregación* – Severo Martínez Peláez suggests that the policy created prisons, not towns<sup>56</sup> – but responded in different ways to its multiple, acculturating grip. Indians in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes were among those communities whose colonial experience illuminates *congregación* not as the crystalization of Spanish designs but, more decisively, as native subversion of the master plan.

TABLE 28

Towns Founded in Guatemala in the Sixteenth Century by Regular and Secular Clergy

Type of clergy	Towns founded by 1555	Towns founded by 1600
Dominicans	47	82
Franciscans	37	108
Mercedarians	6	42
Secular Clergy	5 (?)	104
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>95</b>	<b>336</b>

SOURCE: van Oss, *Catholic Colonialism*, 43

One Spaniard well-versed in "legal country" lore, the *oidor* (judge) Pedro Ramírez de Quiñones, voiced his alarm about the "real country" he saw emerging in Guatemala in a letter addressed to the Council of the Indies on 20 May 1556. Ramírez wrote:

There is great disorder among the Indians in matters that relate to their government and administration. Things are chaotic, lacking direction. Grave public sins abound. What is most of concern is that their actions go unpunished, without redress, because they are not brought to the attention of the authorities. In most *pueblos de indios* people live much as they wish to, or can, and since the court cannot arrange for visitations to be made, we, its officers, cannot vouch for one-tenth of the district we are in charge of.<sup>57</sup>

The *oidor's* frustration was shared by members of the missionary orders charged with the onerous tasks of not only converting Indians to Christianity but also convincing them of the benefits of town residence. Fugitivism on the part of Cuchumatán Indians – whether to escape sickness or flee oppression, to dodge missionaries or avoid paying taxes, or to spurn the one true Christian god by returning home to worship a host of different Maya ones – worked against the principles of *congregación* cumulatively and relentlessly. Obstacles posed by fugitivism were complicated by the friars' penchant for inter-denominational bickering. The Dominicans had originally been granted the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes as a territory for proselytization, but were so overextended by their work in other parts of Guatemala that they ceded those parts of the region lying north and west of Aguacatán to the Mercedarians,



retaining spiritual jurisdiction only over a limited sector to the north and east of Sacapulas. Mercedarian presence was more acceptable to the Dominicans than relinquishing control to their Franciscan adversaries, who, as early as 1552, lobbied the Crown for permission to enter and preach in Dominican territory, "because the fathers of Santo Domingo are just not up to it."<sup>58</sup> So intense was the rivalry between Dominicans and Franciscans that a royal order was issued commanding the friars, accused of "petty ambition" and "name calling," to resolve their differences and conduct themselves in a more seemly, Christian fashion.<sup>59</sup>

The King's edict was probably a response to the manner in which the two orders confronted each other over the actions of Alonso de Zorita, especially in the mountains around Sacapulas. Zorita had arrived in Guatemala in 1553 to serve as an *oidor* under President Alonso López de Cerrato. Like Cerrato, Zorita was committed to enforcing the New Laws promulgated in 1542 for the protection of the Indians, several of which related directly to *congregación*. Much of what Zorita found in Guatemala distressed him, particularly the pervasive idolatry of the Indians and the shocking way many Spaniards treated their native charges. The Dominicans were impressed by Zorita, Fray Juan de Torres describing him in a letter to Charles V as "one of the best *oidores* that Your Majesty has in the Indies."<sup>60</sup> Torres and fellow Dominican Tomás de Cárdenas had welcomed Zorita at Sacapulas in March 1555 at the start of a gruelling tour of inspection. In their support of Zorita, however, they acknowledged that some Indians displaced during *congregación* would experience hardship and suffering. To critics of Zorita who complained that resettlement was carried out involuntarily, that it shifted families from one location to another against their will, Cárdenas and Torres stoically admonish "there is no sick person who does not find the taste of medicine unpleasant."<sup>61</sup> In this sense, Indians are "like children," and so "one must do not what most pleases them but what is best for them."<sup>62</sup> Their tone is insistent. God's work required that His earthly intermediaries exert a strong ruling hand. Only by gathering scattered folk together at more convenient, central locations, with or without their cooperation, could the Dominicans' expenditure of time and energy be maximized and, importantly, the behaviour of neophytes whose conversion was known or suspected to be weak monitored closely.

The Franciscans saw things differently. Four of their members held Zorita to be "without knowledge of the peoples or the languages of this land, which require great effort," a shortcoming which contrasted with the Franciscans being "well versed in the languages and conversion of these new people."<sup>63</sup> This knowledge was derived, so the King was

informed, from the fact that "for eight years we have rounded up Indians who used to live in the mountains and in caves and have grouped them in settlements so as to facilitate their indoctrination, as laid down by Your Majesty's decree."<sup>64</sup> However, the friars complained, "these arrangements not being quite to the liking of Licenciado Zorita, he has forced many people to settle in lands very different in climate than those to which they are accustomed," some families having been moved "from cold lands to hot lands, on account of which many Indians died and others fell sick."<sup>65</sup> Zorita, it was claimed, made these decisions "without beforehand inspecting where people would be moved to, which for the most part were barren lands, in contrast to the fruitful, healthy, and pleasant ones they had abandoned."<sup>66</sup> Some Indians, "wronged and offended," refused to comply with Zorita's instructions, whereupon the judge ordered that "their homes, places of residence, and towns be burned."<sup>67</sup> With suitably apocalyptic imagery, the Franciscans lament that "the fire that raged resembled the Day of Judgment."<sup>68</sup> Chaos ensued. Roads and trails were strewn "with poor Indian women, tied as prisoners, carrying children on their backs," left to fend for themselves because "their husbands, through fear, took off for the mountains."<sup>69</sup> It was a painful spectacle to behold. Only during "the time these people were conquered" could the friars recall such scenes of upheaval.<sup>70</sup>

Precisely how Zorita so enraged the Franciscans yet won Dominican approval is not easy to establish. Attempts at *congregación* which required Indians already moved to one location to resettle in another would not have been welcomed by the Franciscans, who wanted the Indians to remain where they had grouped them. The Franciscans would have been even more angered, however, if Indians were ordered not only to relocate but to move to places within Dominican territory. While no concrete proof exists, available evidence suggests that this was the source of Franciscan consternation.<sup>71</sup>

That at least one Franciscan ventured into parts of the Cuchumatán unknown, which the Dominicans considered their territory, seems certain. Writing in the eighteenth century, Francisco Vázquez states that from 1545 on Sacapulas and "many other" towns were founded by the Franciscan missionary Gonzalo Méndez.<sup>72</sup> Vázquez was himself a Franciscan, and so would have been disposed toward portraying his Order in the best possible light, which included encroaching on Dominican terrain to spread the Word of God. His statement, however, is corroborated by another eighteenth-century chronicler, the Dominican friar Francisco Ximénez, who claims Méndez was responsible for "converting to the Catholic Faith" the *parcialidades* San Francisco and Santo Tomás, two groups that formed part of the *congregación* of Sacapulas.<sup>73</sup>

From about 1553 on, Sacapulas was securely in Dominican hands. Writing from there two years later, Tomás de Cárdenas and Juan de Torres observed with some relief that "now [the Indians] are housed together they will have less opportunity to practise idolatry and, ourselves, more opportunity to watch over them."<sup>74</sup> Thus resettled, Indians "can more readily be instructed not only in matters that concern our Holy Faith but also in proper human conduct."<sup>75</sup> Cárdenas and Torres would have been shocked at how little had come of their labours, not just at Sacapulas but throughout the Cúchumatanes, by the close of the following century when the Bishop of Guatemala, Andrés de las Navas, on a pastoral tour of inspection, heard (among other things) of rampant fugitivism and continuing idolatry. Of the stories told to the stunned bishop, few compared with that of the Mercedarian Alonso de León, who served as the parish priest of San Mateo Ixtatán.

In the course of his ministrations at San Mateo, León discovered that "some eighty families do not figure on the tribute list," which meant not only that "His Majesty is losing revenue" but also that "all these fugitives do not attend mass or go to confession."<sup>76</sup> The priest's efforts to rectify the situation brought him into direct conflict with Gaspar Jorge, a town elder who collected tribute as if the eighty families in question *were* on the roll, apparently pocketing the proceeds or using them to indulge in all sorts of mischief. One of Jorge's tricks was to arrange for women to sneak into church at night, "not merely for his own villainy but so that their solicitations might tempt the honour of the fathers."<sup>77</sup> Another ploy was an attempt to frighten León by witchcraft, the priest entering his quarters on one occasion to find, placed under his bed, "a brazier in which coals had been snuffed out with blood, and the stump of a tallow candle pierced with pine needles, also soaked in blood."<sup>78</sup> When León showed the brazier to an Indian and asked for an explanation he was told that it had been put there in order to attract demon spirits that would kill him.

From his personal encounters, León ventured candid opinions about Indian life in general. The relationship between father and son, he declared, was one in which "nothing is passed on save for how to take care of the cornfields and how to live all day long like savages in the hills."<sup>79</sup> He feared that proper codes of behaviour would never take root, for the Indians of San Mateo "are at each other's throats, all year long."<sup>80</sup> León disclosed that Jorge and his cronies had decided "to erect a shrine, on no authority but their own, some distance from town, at precisely the same spot where the sacrificial altar of pagan times used to be, on a hill top between the remains of ancient temples, where on any given day may be found charcoal and incense and other signs of

burnt offerings."<sup>81</sup> The priest lamented that "further transgressions against Holy Church include the sacrifice of turkeys, taken up to the hills to be dispatched with the blood of other animals."<sup>82</sup> Driven by Satan, León concluded, the Indians of San Mateo "with their nasty habits and evil ways have contaminated the entire town in such a way that it remains Christian in name only."<sup>83</sup>

The unruly state of affairs revealed by León had deteriorated even more towards the end of the colonial period when Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz undertook his lengthy pastoral reconnaissance. If read against the "legal country" fanfare surrounding *congregación*, the archbishop's account depicts a "real country" in which the failure of more than just native resettlement looms large. Cortés y Larraz wrote that "because Indians are basically fugitives in the mountains, all sorts of wrongs occur, like going for two years without confessing or receiving the Holy Sacraments."<sup>84</sup> This remark was made about Nebaj, but the situation was no better in the vicinity of Huehuetenango "where not one-third of the number of families are town dwellers."<sup>85</sup> Around Cuilco, "the people belonging to all these towns, as is the case of Huehuetenango, normally live up in the hills."<sup>86</sup> The archbishop's "moral-geographic description," which links the failure of *congregación* to established Maya ways, echoes with a defeated, valedictory ring, the last testament of a veteran member of a tired, exasperated regime.<sup>87</sup>

#### FIVE CENTURIES LATER

Whether we approved of it or not, the 500th anniversary of Columbus's historic landfall has come and gone. For some, the commemoration marked a celebration of discovery; for others it signalled cause for lament. Did an error of navigation result in aggrandizement or annihilation? Is the miscalculation best measured in riches or in ruins? Regardless of whether we cheer or mourn, the fact remains that few dates are so pivotal as the year 1492. If nothing else, the passing of five centuries provided a timely opportunity to reflect on the impact of Europe on America, on the meaning of conquest and survival.

Writing about ecological changes wrought by human intervention, Carl Sauer reflected:

We know of scarcely any record of destructive exploitation ... until we enter the period of modern history, when transatlantic expansion of European commerce, peoples, and governments takes place. Then begins what may well be the tragic rather than the great age of man. We have glorified this pe-

riod in terms of a romantic view of colonization and of the frontier. There is a dark obverse to the picture, which we have regarded scarcely at all.<sup>88</sup>

In the case of Guatemala, Sauer's "dark obverse" is readily apparent. There, furthermore, the sixteenth century and the twentieth bear a striking resemblance, especially if viewed from the perspective of the Maya. Issues of cultural representation are crucial, but addressing them is both difficult and hazardous. In this regard, the work of Nancy Farriss provides a more grounded sense of the status and role of Mesoamerican Indians, both historically and in their contemporary situation.

Farriss argues that Indians in Mesoamerica are best seen as subjects in their own right rather than as vestiges of a pre-Columbian golden age or as objects of colonial and neocolonial rule. This perspective, she maintains, recognizes Indians as actors who respond to events in ways that help shape the overall pattern of their lives. Farriss calls the ability to respond creatively to invasion and domination "strategic acculturation," by which she means that concessions are made and certain changes are undertaken "in order to preserve essentials."<sup>89</sup> Survival in the long run depends on the interplay of key variables that, period by period, place by place, dictate the terms of conquest and the nature of resistance.<sup>90</sup> What "survival variables" emerge from consideration of the colonial experience of the Cuchumatán Maya? Might their identification encourage the hope that native peoples in the region somehow will survive the assault made on their culture over the past twenty-five years?

We must first acknowledge that conquest in Guatemala did not begin and end with a half-dozen forays in which Pedro de Alvarado made fleeting, personal appearances. Likewise, the Quiché leader Tecún Umán may serve as an important symbol of Maya resistance, but mythologizing his stand should not be allowed to obscure the actions of scores of other native rulers. Even a cursory inspection of the Guatemalan confrontations depicted in the *Historia de Tlaxcala* shows that there was extensive opposition to the invaders.<sup>91</sup> That Indian armies were assembled, throughout the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes and elsewhere, that they repeatedly forced Spaniards into battle, that they fought for years after Alvarado's initial *entrada*, and that they caused delay to (and reversal in) the forward motion of conquest has not been sufficiently recognized. Spanish hegemony, in the wake of subjugation, may never again have been contested as seriously as in the Tzeltal Revolt (1712–13) in Chiapas, but there were numerous incidents that provoked tension and triggered unease on the part of ruling Spaniards.

There is also the indisputable fact that, whatever the weight of adversity, Indians have always been more numerous than Spaniards and Ladinos. The latter, even when the colonial era was drawing to an end, comprised only five percent of the total Cuchumatán population, and constituted a smaller fraction still during earlier times. Never losing majority status can itself be considered an insidious form of resistance. Warfare, disease, abuse, and exploitation all took a heavy toll among the native population. But after reaching their nadir around 1680, Maya communities in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, especially from the nineteenth century on, began to grow in size significantly. Certain biological and epidemiological adjustments had to be made<sup>92</sup> but what other factors contributed to demographic recovery? Surely the existence of a sizeable contact population to begin with, and the fact that the region, possessed with meagre natural resources in the eyes of the conqueror, was not one to which many Spaniards were attracted. The crucial outcome was that Indians found a breathing space in which to fashion ways of life distinctly at odds with the blueprint devised for them.

It is in cultural terms that Maya resistance was most variably and, at times, flagrantly expressed. Some Indians learned but little Spanish, many none at all, an observation made repeatedly by, among others, Archbishop Cortés y Larraz.<sup>93</sup> Keeping alive some twenty native languages, often monolingually, helped Mayas hold the conqueror at bay. Their adherence to Christianity was frequently a sham, occasionally outright mockery, in certain instances nothing short of contempt. They fled from the *pueblos de indios* they were supposed to inhabit and stayed away in numbers that cannot be known but which local priests and tax collectors considered substantial. Those who remained in *pueblos de indios* often did so by gathering into discrete pre-Hispanic groups within the Spanish-designed whole. Such acts of resistance conform nicely to James Scott's now celebrated notion of "weapons of the weak," a cultural arsenal perfected by the Maya.<sup>94</sup>

Nothing, then, turned out quite as originally imagined. Certain Spanish accounts, even ones penned soon after conquest, are filled with an almost premonitory sense of failure, of doom in the making. Maya survival in the Cuchumatán highlands hinged on sustained acts of resistance that enabled Indians to endure not just as individuals but, from generation to generation, as members of a community strongly attached to the lands and ways of their ancestors.

While portraying Indians as, at least in part, agents of their own destiny, care must be taken not to embellish or overstate the point. Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil wisely reminds us that "cultural resistance is practised more clandestinely than out in the open, more by an instinct to

survive than by national consciousness."<sup>95</sup> He and other Maya intellectuals understand also that conquest is not a remote, colonial experience but still very much a tangible, current predicament for the five to six million Maya living in Guatemala today.<sup>96</sup>

Political events in Guatemala over the past three decades have caused considerable international concern. In the name of counter-insurgency, entire communities in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes were laid to waste, their houses burned, their fields destroyed, their occupants killed or scattered, with survivors pressed into duty in civil defense patrols or relocated in "model villages" watched over by vigilant government troops.<sup>97</sup> It is disconcerting to ponder how much the twentieth century mirrored the sixteenth. Model villages, like *pueblos de indios*, were a coercive means by which one group sought to change the habits and conventions of another, operating as imposed vehicles of resettlement, indoctrination, and control. Rhetoric may change, but policy remains the same: to dismantle existing forms of community organization, drive a wedge between people and place, and force families to live not where they wish but where they are told, in nucleated centres where movements are scrutinized, routines disrupted, attitudes and behaviour modified. A country ravaged centuries ago by Old World diseases that one clergyman called "secret judgments of God," in July 1991 found its population exposed to cholera, which arrived from Mexico to find a perfect situation for proliferation in the living conditions of Guatemala's Indians.<sup>98</sup> Compelled to work for Spaniards during colonial times by *encomienda* and *repartimiento*, the Maya were forced once again to ignore local concerns in order to meet demands thrust on them by those outside their communities. The spectacle even arose of the people whom Nobel laureate Miguel Angel Asturias immortalized as *hombres de maíz*, men of corn, having to request military permission to tend their plots and raise the very crop that created Maya civilization.

A native chronicle written in the mid-sixteenth century laments that "little by little heavy shadows and black night enveloped our fathers and grandfathers and us also."<sup>99</sup> This mournful imagery fits present reality equally well, for the Cuchumatán Maya are enveloped still by heavy shadows and black night. But while conquest may darken their lives, it has yet to extinguish their culture.

# Epilogue

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.

Oliver La Farge, *Santa Eulalia: The Religion of Cuchumatán Indian Town* (1947).

Why do I continue to write about colonial Guatemala? I get asked this question often enough to be able to answer it, I trust, directly: I write about colonial Guatemala in order to understand the country as it exists today.

Despite theoretical literature that lays claim to the contrary, for me there is nothing “postcolonial” about how present-day Guatemala is constructed. How Guatemala operates, how its resources are appropriated, exploited, and profited from, how its ethnic groups relate and coexist in a troubled nation state, how its Maya peoples (those of the Cuchumatán highlands a dozen or so among twenty) endured assaults on their land and their lives in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to sustain a presence in the twenty-first – these elemental characteristics register fully only when viewed in colonial perspective. Guatemalan historian Severo Martínez Peláez (1998 [1970]) insists on this fact. “The detailed picture of colonial life I have lavished upon readers,” he states when summing up *La patria del criollo*, “furnishes them with all the information they need to assess its *current* significance.” The italics, faithful to the original, are Don Severo’s, not mine. “Colonial reality,” he concludes, “is our everyday reality.” Guatemalans of all stripes – Ladino or Indian, rich or poor, urban or rural – live and die in the shadow of a colonial past that haunts them still.

Let me begin, then, by commenting on recent works that have advanced our knowledge of Mesoamerica in general, Guatemala and Central America more specifically. There have been several notable developments, indeed some exciting new discoveries, which reinforce the con-



nections asserted above between the past and the present, showing that though profound changes have occurred in Guatemala between the sixteenth century and the twenty-first, visceral traits persist. Contextualizing the Cuchumatán experience, illuminating it whenever possible with fresh empirical data, is my primary goal.

## CONTEXT AND PERSPECTIVE

In terms of English-language historiography, two projects long in the making stand out as landmark contributions. The first is the three-volume *Oxford Encyclopedia of Mesoamerican Cultures*, for which David Carrasco (2001) served as editor-in-chief; the second is the three-volume *Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*, volume two of which, edited by Richard E.W. Adams and Murdo J. MacLeod (2000), is dedicated to Mesoamerica.

Producing the *Oxford Encyclopedia*, Carrasco informs us, called for him to work with a team of ten editors, sixteen advisors, and more than three hundred scholars to piece together a grand total of 617 entries, each of which has an annotated bibliography referring readers to key sources. The whole, an elaborate gestalt, is considerably more than the sum of its parts. Carrasco (1: ix) reminds us at the outset that Mesoamerica was "the site of two major cultural transformations in Western Hemisphere history." The first involved "the complex evolution from the social world of the village to urbanized cultures," aspects of which we sketched out in chapter three. A second transformation entailed "the encounter between Europe and the Americas," one that "fundamentally changed the course of human history." Rather than dwell on the disruptive and far-reaching effects of that encounter, Carrasco emphasizes that "natives, European settlers, and slaves from sub-Saharan Africa formed distinctive ... social, religious, and political relationships" that led to "new ways of being and constructing culture." He does acknowledge, however, that "colonial patterns are also periodically brought back to our contemporary consciousness, as demonstrated in the attention given to the Zapatista insurrection in Chiapas." Though it never received comparable attention, civil strife in Guatemala is another case in point.

If Carrasco downplays and glosses over the destructive, in certain areas the obliterating, consequences of conquest, he is more animated when identifying three crucial developments behind his decision to orchestrate such an ambitious project. He singles out (1) innovative archaeological excavations, (2) remarkable progress in linguistics and in the decipherment of Maya hieroglyphic writing, and (3) sophisticated analyses of colonial and modern predicaments, which he attributes in large measure

to the unearthing of "inventories and descriptions ... that were written by Indians, mestizos, and Euro-Americans" (1: x). These records complement or counter "conquest narratives" produced by European protagonists, imperial bureaucracy, and traditional historiographical perspectives. Carrasco stresses, most importantly, that "Mesoamerica is not to be understood only in pre-Hispanic terms," the temporal frame of such influential researchers as William T. Sanders and Barbara J. Price (1968) and, more recently, Michael E. Smith and Frances F. Berdan (2003).

Critical discussions of historiography are scattered throughout the *Oxford Encyclopedia*. Carrasco points out how the intellectual labours he oversaw differ from, but build upon, the *Handbook of Middle American Indians (HMAI)*, which appeared in sixteen volumes between 1964 and 1976 and for which Robert Wauchope (1964–1976) served as general editor. Six supplementary volumes of the *HMAI* were published subsequently, under the general editorship of Victoria R. Bricker (1981–1992). Bricker's *HMAI* volumes, in which epigraphy, ethnohistory, linguistics, and native texts figure prominently, help offset what Carrasco considers the decidedly "anthropological perspective" (1: xi) of their predecessors, though four volumes edited by Howard F. Cline (1972–1975) serve as an admirable survey of ethnohistorical sources.

It is in matters relating to ethnohistory that Carrasco sees the *Oxford Encyclopedia* as differing most from the *HMAI*. The latter, he states, functions as an inventory of a "substantial body of written materials" (1: xii); the former, more reflective of changing times, reports on investigations devoted to "politics and states, religion and symbolism, social history and economic institutions, and missionaries and lay societies" (1: xii). What Carrasco terms "new disciplinary orientations" receive special attention, among them gender studies and native textual production. Some of these novel approaches, we will see, characterize recent research on Guatemala.

In shaping the *Cambridge History*, Adams and MacLeod worked with a score or so of colleagues to steer to completion twenty-one essays that, like the *Oxford Encyclopedia*, trace the cultural evolution of Mesoamerica from earliest times to the close of the twentieth century. Part one of volume two, edited by Adams, deals with archeology; part two of volume two, edited by MacLeod, focuses on history. Whereas many entries in the *Oxford Encyclopedia* are no more than a handful of pages in length, the chapters of the *Cambridge History* mostly run between forty and fifty pages, with bibliographical synopses complementing substantive narrative expositions. Adams prefers archaeology that is field-driven; his contributors generally eschew theory and deliver the goods in the form of minute findings, not lofty ruminations. MacLeod likes his history culled from the archives, but with the fine grain of documentary evidence

throwing light on the big picture and the *long durée*. Adams believes that "Marxist models" (1: 12) do no justice at all to archeological inquiry, and leans heavily on Anglo-American viewpoints when relaying information to the reader. MacLeod handles the writing of Mesoamerican history much more ecumenically.

Not everyone appreciates the results, and Adams, MacLeod, and their associates have come in for stern criticism not only for what is in the *Cambridge History* but also for what has been left out. Robert W. Patch (2002), for instance, finds the pedagogic principles upon which Adams operates "not only inaccurate but patronizing" and chastises MacLeod for having secured the services of but one Mexican scholar, María Angeles Romero Frizzi, and no Guatemalans. Patch, however, recognizes that sources of information other than those available in English are well represented, an opinion not shared by Serge Gruzinski (2002), who attacks Adams and MacLeod both for the actual content of their solicitations and what he considers lamentable omissions. The slighting of French-language scholarship in particular pains him. Gruzinski, like Patch, may have some valid points to make, but his critique reeks of self-serving importance. In the final analysis, Adams, MacLeod, and the investigators with whom they corresponded over a period of ten years have lots to show for their collective endeavour.

In terms of Spanish-language historiography, two general histories now exist, one for Guatemala, another for Central America. The former, coordinated by Jorge Luján Muñoz (1993–1999), is a lavish enterprise that draws on international expertise as well as the talents of Guatemalan researchers; the latter, a less extravagant undertaking for which Edelberto Torres-Rivas (1994) assumed editorial charge, also features the joint efforts of Central Americans and non-Central Americans. Ideologically, the six volumes of the *Historia General de Guatemala* tend to be more conservative than the six volumes of the *Historia General de Centroamérica*. No single volume better distils what we know about Central America than the historical atlas of Carolyn Hall and Héctor Pérez-Brignoli (2003), in which the creative cartography of John V. Cotter is a major asset. Temporal coverage in all three of these projects again spans the entire period of human settlement. The pages of *Mesoamérica*, a quarter-century after the journal first appeared, continue to function as a premier forum for debate and the dissemination of research findings.

## INNOVATION AND CONSOLIDATION

Literature on Guatemala is being enriched not only by the continued productivity of established scholars but, more importantly, by a new genera-

tion of investigators often inspired by markedly different research agendas than those of their predecessors. This development holds true as much for what is being written about the colonial period as for the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Native participation in academic work is also growing. Where do we stand at present?

A good deal of the effort that goes into determining what took place in Guatemala under Spanish rule calls for long hours of archival foraging, usually with modest return. Data emerge that are of genuine merit and worth, for sure, but rarely does one uncover a find of exceptional importance. Engaged in a routine doctoral grind in the city of Puebla, Mexico, Florine Asselbergs could not have anticipated that she would stumble across an elaborate sixteenth-century source that would break new scholarly ground. Housed in the Casa del Alfeñique, one of Puebla's venerable cultural institutions, the *Lienzo de Quauhquecholan* had been known to exist for some time, but prior to Asselbergs' sleuthing it was thought that the pictorial manuscript referred to past episodes in the immediate environs of San Martín Huaquechula, an Indian community in the state of Puebla. What Asselbergs (2002) found is that while the *Lienzo de Quauhquecholan*, which measures 2.35 by 3.25 metres, does record information that applies to Mexico, for the most part it documents the role played by auxiliary forces from Quauhquecholan in the conquest of Guatemala.

Accompanying Spanish forces in their military campaigns, Quauhquecholan Indians not only fought alongside them but also settled in Guatemala, as did many Tlaxcalan auxiliaries, after the worst years of conflict were over. Much like the *Historia de Tlaxcala*, which furnishes this book with its cover illustration, the *Lienzo de Quauhquecholan* reveals an intricate involvement never appreciated before. Asselbergs (2002: 48) notes that one scene depicts armed confrontation in the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes: a bird, *cuchuma*, sits atop a mountain, on either side of which (three on the left, two on the right) warriors are engaged in combat (see figure 12). Drawing on the linguistic savvy of Nicolás Carreta, Asselbergs suggests that the bird, *cuchuma* in Nahuatl, refers to a linnet or a warbler rather than a parrot (see chapter 2, 11). The Cuchumatán glyph, she contends, most likely records a pitched battle that occurred when Jorge de Alvarado waged wars of conquest in the region (see chapter eleven, 180). One of Don Jorge's *encomiendas* was Quauhquecholan itself, which supplied him not just with tribute but with troops. Another glyph represents Mazatenango (see chapter 4, 61). Asselbergs' discovery is already having an impact, prompting Ruud van Akkeren (2002) to scrutinize one pictorial sequence to reconstruct hitherto undocumented Spanish forays into the Verapaz in the early sixteenth century.

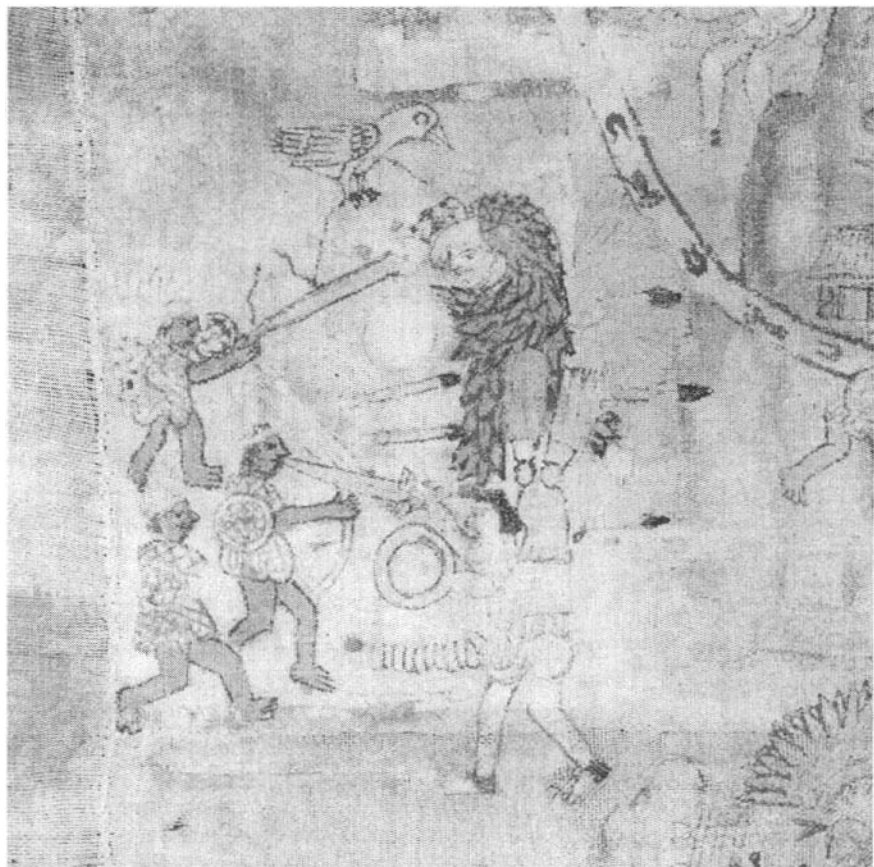


Figure 12 Detail from the *Lienzo de Quauhquecholan* showing the conquest of the Cuchumatanes. Courtesy Florine Asselbergs, Bob Schwalkwijk, and the Casa del Alfeñique, Puebla, Mexico

The collaborative synergy of Asselbergs and Van Akkeren is, most refreshingly, also apparent in the production of a new edition of the sixteenth-century Kaqchikel manuscript, the *Memorial de Sololá*. Unlike the *Lienzo de Quahuquecholan*, the *Memorial de Sololá* has been a well known indigenous source ever since Daniel Brinton (1885) in the nineteenth century and Adrián Recinos (1950) in the twentieth published their celebrated translations, Brinton into English, Recinos into Spanish. Neither Brinton nor Recinos, however, were native speakers of Kaqchikel. Gifted though both men were, having the *Memorial de Sololá* translated by a team of researchers in which native speakers of the language have their say is most advantageous. With Simón Oztzy (1999) at the helm, ably assisted by fellow Kaqchikel linguists Martín Chacach and Narciso Cojtí, as well as historians Jorge Luján Muñoz and J. Daniel Contreras, the appearance of a facsimile version of the *Memorial de Sololá*, complete with an annotated translation in Spanish, represents another major step forward. The results are subjected to critical scrutiny by Christopher H. Lutz and James Mondloch (2002), the former from an ethnohistorical perspective, the latter from a linguistic one. Working with Karen Dakin (1996), Lutz has also furnished us with commentary on the plaintive accounts left by Indians living near Santiago de Guatemala of the tyranny that was their lot around the year 1572, when the judge Valdés de Cárcamo not only turned a blind eye to blatant excesses but indulged in them himself.

In addition to unprecedented levels of Maya involvement, young scholars are leaving their mark by moving beyond traditional historiographical concerns (land, labour, tribute, settlement, colonization, demography, religion, trade, and commerce) by discussing matters related to race, gender, ethnicity, and identity. Among them are Alvis Dunn (1999), Greg Grandin (2000), Catherine Komisaruk (2000), Laura Matthew (2000), Leonardo Hernández (1999), Robinson Herrera (2003), Paul Lokken (2000), and Ruud van Akkeren (2000a, 2000b). By establishing that women, not just men, played influential roles, by weaving their stories into the fabric of colonial life, Martha Few (1995, 1999, 2002) has begun to fill a significant void. Though, on first inspection, Few's examination of Inquisition records would appear to have limited resonance – she concentrates on *mujeres de mal vivir*, women who lead evil lives, a term applied to females alleged to be “sorcerers, witches, magical healers, and leaders of clandestine devotions” (Few 2002, 129) – her study is in fact socially diverse, allowing us to glimpse gender dynamics in a variety of settings.

Much of Few's analysis revolves around the capital city of Santiago de Guatemala, for which Lutz (1994) provides elaborate sociodemographic particulars. Like Lutz, other veteran researchers remain active. Grant D.

Jones (1998), for instance, assiduously reconstructs the conquest of the Itzaj Maya, which did not occur until the late seventeenth century, and Sandra L. Orellana (1995) has written an ethnohistorical synthesis of the Pacific Coast. Julio Martín Blasco and Jesús María García Añoveros have collaborated on a new edition of the tour-of-inspection undertaken by Pedro Cortés y Larraz (2001 [1768–1770]) in the late eighteenth century, during which the archbishop and his entourage logged an impressive 5,245 kilometres riding or walking the length and breadth of the Diocese of Guatemala over a fourteen-month period. Having privileged access to the original manuscript housed in the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, Blasco and García Añoveros include in their edition 113 of the parish maps with which Cortés y Larraz adorned his “Moral-Geographic Description” (see plates 21 and 23). Unfortunately, dismal reproduction of Cortés y Larraz’s stunning cartography – the archbishop’s watercolour maps, in truth, are one of the jewels of colonial textual production – mars an otherwise commendable exercise. Equally commendable is the initiative on the part of colleagues of Adriaan van Oss (2003) to edit and translate nine of the late historian’s essays, giving them thematic coherence in a posthumous collection that emphasizes ecclesiastical history. Wendy Kramer’s dissertation on the early *encomienda* has been published (Kramer 1994). For Chiapas, adjacent to the Cuchumatanes and so invariably a useful base of comparison, Gudrun Lenkersdorf (1993, 2001) also grapples with sixteenth-century conditions, while Jan De Vos (1994) moves on from there to modern times, as do Juan Pedro Viqueira and Mario Humberto Ruz (1998). Focusing on Momostenango, Robert M. Carmack (1995) relates the history of the community from pre-Hispanic times to the present. In a dazzling piece of scholarship, Matthew Restall (2003) debunks what he considers “seven myths of the Spanish conquest,” examining how key misrepresentations originated, why they have been perpetuated, and the ways in which lucid revisionist thinking can set the record straight. Several of Restall’s arguments are echoed by Stephanie Wood (2003, x), whose evocation of Nahua views of colonial Mexico portrays Indians “as individuals and groups who negotiated, mediated, and exchanged with the invading cultures in complex and sometimes subtle ways, but always as equally important actors on the stage.”

Stories of how Maya peoples in Guatemala were affected by the transition from late colonial times into the republican era have been advanced by the work of Jorge H. González (1994) and David J. McCreery (1994). Ralph Lee Woodward, Jr. (1993) situates the Conservative presidency of Rafael Carrera in the context of Guatemala’s first half-century of embattled nationhood, also discussed by Danielle Pompejano (1997) and Arturo

Taracena (2000). Taracena (2002, 2003), heading a team of researchers from the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (CIRMA), has edited two volumes that cover the entire sweep of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, exploring the complex interface of ethnicity, state, and nation in grounded case studies.

Debate about the place of Maya culture in a country forged upon its simultaneous exploitation and exclusion has, if anything, become even more charged since the heightened sensibilities of the Columbus Quincentennial. Another CIRMA initiative has seen Richard Adams and Santiago Bastos (2003) tackle the thorny issue of ethnic relations. Bastos and Manuela Camus (1993, 1995, 2003) chart the emergence of Maya organizations that pursue all sorts of objectives, from recognition of official language status to a fairer distribution of resources.

Addressing the latter issue, I once heard a Maya representative, Raxche' point out that improving the Maya lot could more readily be attained if the government of Guatemala allocated resources in conformity with the findings of national censuses. "According to the government's own statistics," Raxche commented wryly, "in 1994 Mayas constituted 42.8 per cent of Guatemala's population. When can we expect to have access to 42.8 percent of the country's resources?"

As the clamour for native rights grows, so does the number of groups lobbying to be heard. In 1994 the Consejo del Pueblo Maya (Council of Maya Peoples) was formed, functioning as one of thirteen umbrella organizations established to more effectively address the claims of over 300 associations. Maya activism is discussed by Edward P. Fischer (2001), Fischer and R. McKenna Brown (1996), Kay B. Warren (1998), and Richard Wilson (1995). While the research of these scholars and other non-Maya investigators (Camus 2002, Carey 2001, Cook 2001, Falla 2000, Nelson 1999) adds to our knowledge, most noteworthy is the extent to which Maya intellectuals have appeared on the scene and become politically engaged. Those at the forefront of activity include Demetrio Cojtí Cuxil (1984, 1996, 1997), Edgar Esquit Choy (2002), Víctor Gálvez Borrell and Edgar Esquit Choy (1997), Irma Otzoy and Enrique Sam Colop (1990), Demetrio Rodríguez Guaján (1992), and Irma Alicia Velásquez Nimatuj (2002). Víctor Montejo (1999a, 1999b) best represents voices raised in exile, a crucial perspective given that over one million Guatemalans (the majority of them Maya Indians) are estimated to be working residents – some legal, most not – of the United States and Canada (Loucky and Moors 2000, Nolin 2002, Fink 2003). Though memories of past injustices linger, and thus temper any expectations of realistic political solutions, a Maya agenda is being advocated in Guatemala as never before.



## TERROR IN THE MOUNTAINS

Precisely what some of these past injustices are, and their reverberating consequences, Maya peoples in the Cuchumatán highlands know only too well. Martínez Peláez once again cuts to the quick. "The colonial regime," he asserts, "was a regime of terror." His *magnum opus* (Martínez Peláez 1998 [1970]) abounds with descriptions of incidents that unfolded in the mountains north of Huehuetenango. Indians resisted Spanish rule throughout the colonial period but fear of reprisal conditioned the texture of everyday life. Native agency, therefore, was strategic, measured to avoid a backlash. Even those groups who sided with the Spaniards and fought for them in anticipation of preferential treatment – the Indians of Tlaxcala are perhaps the best example – complained bitterly of the wrath and heavy-handedness of their rulers after native sacrifice had ensured Spanish hegemony.

"They treat us here like slaves," four Tlaxcalan leaders wrote to the King from Huehuetenango on 10 January 1562 (AGI: AG 52). "Your Majesty's representatives are aware of the wrongs they do us, of the laws they fail to enforce." Five days later, writing from Aguacatán, three other Tlaxcalan leaders added: "Instead of looking on us as their sons, the President and his judges regard us as worthless. They consider us their slaves. Deprived and forgotten, we cry out in grief."

Penned in Nahuatl and translated into Spanish for the Crown's benefit, the petitions fell not so much on deaf ears as on ones that never were tuned to listen.

Relations between Spaniards and Indians bred mutual feelings of suspicion, mistrust, scorn, and apprehension. These emotions, in turn, shaped attitudes, values, and patterns of behaviour that transcended Guatemala's formal independence from Spain in 1821. In the Cuchumatán case, some Maya communities fared even worse in the era of Liberal reform than under Spanish rule, at least with respect to demands on land and labour (Lovell 2000, 126–38). Similarly, Maya communities in the region suffered dreadfully as a result of counter-insurgency operations in the early 1980s (Carmack 1988, Falla 1994). It was the colonial experience, however, that established parameters within which ethnic relations were enacted, for Creoles and Ladinos (like Spaniards) believed themselves superior in every regard to Indians and behaved accordingly. Details are called for.

Anthropologists have conducted fieldwork in the Cuchumatanes to such a degree that a distinctive genre has emerged – the community re-study. A community is visited and written about, decades apart, not by one anthropologist but by two, with the earlier inquiry serving as a base

against which change may be gauged. Three examples are Santiago Chimaltenango, Nebaj, and Santa Eulalia, for which pioneering research by Charles Wagley (1941), Jackson Steward Lincoln (1945), and Oliver La Farge (1947) has been followed up by (respectively) John M. Watanabe (1992), David Stoll (1993), and Shelton H. Davis (1997 [1970]). The latter three scholars afford us valuable observations about the transformation of native land and labour under the modernizing initiatives of Justo Rufino Barrios and his Liberal successors (Cambranes 1985) in the late nineteenth century.

Chimbal, the name by which local residents refer to Santiago Chimaltenango, laid claim to formal title of community holdings on 19 May 1879, in accordance with laws passed by the Liberal government that required communities to do this or run the risk of forfeiting their holdings. Chimbal's claim was disputed by three of its neighbours. First to contest was San Juan Atitán, followed by San Pedro Necta and San Martín Cuchumatán. A survey was arranged to resolve matters. It established that Chimbal's colonial *ejido*, a standard allotment of one square league (16.6 square kilometres) of common land around the town centre, in fact measured 17.4 square kilometres. Chimbal's *ejido* was complemented by 54 square kilometres of *baldío*, or public land. When, on 10 September 1891, formal title was issued, it recognized as community holdings the 17.4 square kilometres of the *ejido*, but included only 29 square kilometres of *baldío*, a little more than half of Chimbal's previous allotment.

Compared to what took place elsewhere in the Cuchumatanes, Chimbal cannot be said to have lost out unduly. Transactions concerning its property, though, are instructive. "In seeking legal title to safeguard their lands," Watanabe (1992, 170–1) writes, "Chimaltecos in effect abdicated sovereignty over that land by appealing to state authority to validate their claims." Liberal ways had arrived, and had been asserted.

Stoll reinforces Lincoln's findings for Nebaj by documenting how Guatemala's expanding coffee economy penetrated and reconfigured land-labour relations. Here access to labour, not appropriation of land, was the initial attraction. In the early 1890s a Spaniard named Isaías Palacios arrived in Nebaj to assume the post of town secretary. Palacios became adept at recruiting Indians by advancing them loans, which they were obliged to repay by working on coffee plantations on the Pacific piedmont. He and his cronies secured contracts by offering Indians drink and then ensnaring them in booze-induced debt and dependency. Lincoln (1945, 75–6) notes that "Indians drank on all ceremonial occasions" but records that it was Ladinos who were responsible "for increasing the amount and the strength of the liquor for the purpose of enriching themselves." A group of Ladinos who moved to Nebaj from Malacatán, Stoll

(1993, 33) tells us, manipulated the situation to their advantage, "selling liquor and loaning the cash needed to go on binges." Their duplicity "separated Ixils from much of their best arable land," for after a deal had been struck "anything less than prompt repayment meant that the house or land put up for collateral could change hands."

The titling process also eroded the native estate. In 1903 Nebaj was granted municipal title to 1,237 *caballerías*, 87 *caballerías* less than it previously enjoyed. Nebaj's immediate neighbours, Chajul and San Juan Cotzal, were awarded 2,424 *caballerías* and 388 *caballerías*, 157 and 180 *caballerías* less than before. Usurped land, which lay in lower-lying *tierra templada* at elevations suitable for growing coffee or raising sugar cane, was ceded to private individuals for commercial use. Farther north in Ixil country, the communities of Sotzil and Ilom received title to little more than the land close to residential compounds. Chel, Ixtupil, and Sac-siguan were deprived of their most prized tracts. Lisandro Gordillo Galán, a Mexican whom we know acted as town secretary for Chajul in 1895, did well for himself, for his name shows up regularly on property deeds.

"Titling land may not seem the most obvious way to lose it," Stoll (1993, 34) comments, "but such has been the experience of indigenous people, for what can be titled can be alienated."

Stoll's words certainly apply to what happened at Santa Eulalia. There, La Farge (1947, 4) observed, a government survey of native holdings "resulted in the passing of much land into the hands of Ladinos and a considerable reduction in the extent of the *ejidos*." Davis (1970, 54-7) diligently provides the details. He reckons that 70 per cent of Santa Eulalia's land was taken over by Ladinos, especially land in Santa Cruz Yalmux and in the Ixcán, "zones of greatest ecological and economic potential." Of fifty-five lots titled in these two areas, only nine were granted to Indians; of 1,520 *caballerías* allocated, Indians received 183. Championed by the Liberal government, Ladinos laid claim to land as private individuals, not as a corporate entity, the traditional Maya practice. Several Ladinos who belonged to Huehuetenango's militia, Davis reveals, lobbied for title to 200 *caballerías* on the grounds that (1) the holdings of Santa Eulalia were "large and sufficient" for native needs; (2) the claimants would use the land to which they sought title "for the development of capitalistic agriculture"; (3) during "the rise to power of Justo Rufino Barrios," Huehuetenango had played a "military role" worthy of government recognition; and (4) land ceded would foster the creation of a new *municipio* to the north of Santa Eulalia, one that would function "as a military outpost for the protection of the frontier between Mexico and Guatemala." In July 1888 the Ladino claimants received title to all 200 *caballerías*

they had requested. Three months later the *municipio* of Barillas was founded, named after General Manuel Lisandro Barillas, the Liberal president who had personally received the Huehuetenango militiamen when they travelled to Guatemala City to promote their case.

In the three scenarios outlined above, tensions generated by the titling process did not end in violence. Sadly, this was not the case at San Juan Ixcoy, a Kanjobal community that has yet to attract the anthropological attention devoted to its neighbours. Historian David McCreery (1988), however, has combed the archives and reconstructed a tragic episode of ethnic confrontation.

The story begins in 1893, when Ladino militiamen who were residents of Chiantla filed for title to land that lay between their community and San Juan. Also involved in the proceedings were Ladino militiamen from Soloma. The Indians of San Juan claimed that the land in question was rightfully theirs, held on the basis of "ancient titles" and worked by them "since time immemorial" (McCreery 1988, 241). They arranged for an engineer to conduct a survey, agreeing to pay for his services by signing a contract with the recruiting agent, Friedrich Koch. The contract, McCreery (1988, 242) shows, committed San Juan to send men to work on a plantation called Buenos Aires "in return for the plantation paying the costs of the land survey." As collateral, Koch was entrusted with documents already in San Juan's possession. To the community's consternation, the engineer's survey did nothing to advance its case. Failing to appreciate the extent of native resentment, agents from Buenos Aires arrived in San Juan and insisted that the contract to work in Buenos Aires be honoured. For the Indians of San Juan, the terms upon which their labour had been pledged had yet to be satisfied and they therefore refused to deliver men to be shipped off to work. A stand-off ensued.

Nothing had been resolved by the time the agents turned in for the night on 18 July 1898 in sleeping quarters arranged for them in the town hall, which is where they were when the building was set on fire. As they fled the blaze they were assaulted and killed. Believing that it would be possible "to eliminate hostile witnesses and conceal their crime," the assailants "spread through the village, killing Ladino men, women, and children" – some thirty in all – as well as "abusing and threatening" any Indian residents who had cooperated with the agents (McCreery 1988, 424). When it turned out that some agents or their hirelings had managed to escape, San Juan braced itself for reprisal.

"The retaliation of the Government was prompt," Raymond Stadelman (1940: 96–7) discloses, with as many as "ten Indian lives exacted for each slain Ladino." The militiamen who stood to gain most from the titling process, those stationed at Chiantla and Soloma, rounded up sixty

individuals who were later put on trial in Huehuetenango. McCreery (1988, 243) found no evidence to suggest that San Juan was penalized by having land taken away from it, but he does concede that "in the aftermath of the violence the inhabitants were in a weak position to defend their rights." The Chiantla militiamen were awarded 113 *caballerías*, with their counterparts in Soloma also given a share of the spoils. Not long after receiving title, however, the Ladino claimants sold the land to plantation owners on the Pacific piedmont. The buyers then rented the land back to the Indians of San Juan, exacting payment not in money but in labour. By this manoeuvre, an adroit articulation of the means of production, property secured in the highlands was used to guarantee a seasonal supply of workers for the lowlands.

Wounds left to fester at San Juan Ixcay burst open again when, assisted once more by local militias, the national armed forces unleashed a campaign of terror throughout the Cuchumatanes during the civil war that raged in Guatemala between 1962 and 1996. Two voluminous inquiries, one undertaken by the Human Rights Office of the Archdiocese of Guatemala (1999), the other by a United Nations Commission for Historical Clarification (1999), present evidence that attributes the worst atrocities to army troops in 1981 and 1982, when incursions ostensibly mounted to combat guerrilla insurgency instead targeted unarmed civilian populations. The grim statistics for Guatemala as a whole – over 200,000 dead, 93 per cent of them killed by state security forces, 83.33 per cent of all victims Maya Indians – are thrown into sharp relief by Paul Kobrak (2003), who focuses on the war years in Huehuetenango alone. Kobrak's regional analysis is sensitive to local nuance, including the role played by the Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres, the Guerrilla Army of the Poor, in exposing native communities to government repression. An investigation coordinated by Cultural Survival and the Anthropology Resource Centre (1983) documents the carnage perpetrated on 17 July 1982 at Finca San Francisco, where more than three hundred people lost their lives. One eyewitness, whose testimony is corroborated by that of fellow survivors, told the investigation (1983, 36–7):

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 disembowelled our poor little children. Still they cried. When they finished disembowelling 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 asked. "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.

Kobrak (2003, 81–9) provides chilling particulars of another sixteen massacres committed in Huehuetenango during the fateful month he calls "Black July." Massacres of non-combatants were carried out purposefully, Kobrak argues, to undermine any challenge to the status quo, real or imagined, on the part of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor. Any popular support the insurgents enjoyed soon vanished in the face of such calculated venom.

One massacre is the subject of the documentary film *Haunted Land*. Directed by Mary Ellen Davis (2002), *Haunted Land* follows a Chuj Maya named Mateo Pablo on his return to Guatemala after a life of exile, in Mexico and Canada, that lasted almost twenty years. Mateo is one of thirteen survivors of the slaughter that took place on 14 July 1982 in Petanac, a village perched in the mountains above Finca San Francisco. In the film, we see forensic scientists exhume the bodies of Petanac's inhabitants, Mateo's wife and their two small children among them. In one scene, a man identifies what is left of his father, thrown in a heap with three other murdered villagers, by the colour of his shirt and trousers, by the make of his shoes.

"That's him," the man says. "I know that's him. That's my father."

Another man tells how he lost his entire family – his wife, his children, his parents, his brothers. Everyone.

"I was left alone, with nobody. I was an orphan, with no place to go. So I sought refuge in Mexico. I still feel this pain, which has never gone away."

*Haunted Land* closes with a Chuj Maya prayermaker asking that the dead forgive the living for disturbing them and moving them to a final place of rest. Mateo helps carry dozens of wooden coffins to a nearby cemetery, where they are sealed in narrow tombs.

The man who was president of Guatemala in Black July, one horrific month in a reign of seventeen, himself hails from the Cuchumatán highlands: General Efraín Ríos Montt, born in Huehuetenango on 16 June 1926. As unrepentant as most of his colonial predecessors, like them steadfast and sure in the God-fearing faith by which he claims to have ruled, Ríos Montt is heir to a conquest that has yet to end.

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# Glossary

- Alcabala* A sales tax placed on certain goods and commodities.
- Alcalde* A principal representative of an Indian community.
- Alcalde mayor* A Spanish official in charge of a district known as an *alcaldía mayor*.
- Alcalde ordinario* A member of the municipal council of a Spanish town.
- Alcaldía mayor* An administrative unit governed by an *alcalde mayor*.
- Aldea* A village.
- Almud* A unit of dry measure, one-twelfth of a *fanega*.
- Amag* A dispersed form of settlement, the home of the common people in pre-conquest times.
- Arroba* A unit of measure of approximately 11 kilograms.
- Audiencia* Either the governing body of a region or, by extension, the region itself.
- Ayuntamiento* A municipal council, or *cabildo*.
- Caballería* A unit of land, roughly 42 hectares.
- Cabecera* The principal town of a *departamento* or *municipio*.
- Cabildo* A municipal council, or *ayuntamiento*.
- Cacique* An Indian chieftain or ruler.
- Calpul* An Indian social and territorial unit.
- Camino real* Literally "royal road," a main overland trail or highway.
- Canícula* A short dry spell that usually occurs mid-way through the rainy season in July or August.
- Caserío* A hamlet.
- Cédula real* A royal order or decree, a command from the monarch in Spain to his representatives overseas.
- Chinamit* A small, socio-territorial unit associated with certain native lineages.
- Cofradía* A religious fraternity or sodality.
- Comisionado* A deputy, usually appointed to serve as an assistant to a *corregidor* or an *alcalde mayor*.
- Composición de tierra* The legalization of a title to land upon payment of a fee.

- Congregación** The policy of concentrating scattered settlements into nucleated, church-dominated centres; by extension the centres themselves (*congregaciones*).
- Conquistador** A Spanish conqueror.
- Corregidor** A Spanish official in charge of a district known as a *corregimiento*.
- Corregimiento** An administrative unit governed by a *corregidor*.
- Costumbre** A traditional native ceremony, esoteric and generally strongly individualized.
- Cuerda** A measure of land, about 0.04 hectares.
- Denuncia** A land claim.
- Departamento** Department, an administrative division of the republic of Guatemala.
- Ejido** An area of common land, generally forest or pasture.
- Encomendero** Holder of an *encomienda*.
- Encomienda** An award that entitled the recipient, an *encomendero*, to receive tribute from a designated number of Indians.
- Entrada** A Spanish military expedition into unconquered territory.
- Fanega** A unit of dry measure, about 1.5 bushels, approximately 53 kilograms.
- Finca** A large farm, usually a coffee plantation.
- Finquero** An owner of a *finca*.
- Ganado mayor** A term used to denote cattle, horses, and mules.
- Ganado menor** A term used to denote sheep, goats, and pigs.
- Gucumatz** An undetermined pestilence that may be pulmonary or bubonic plague.
- Habilitador** A labour contractor.
- Hacendado** An owner of a *hacienda*.
- Hacienda** An estate, usually with a mixed economic base of agriculture and ranching.
- Huipil** An Indian woman's blouse.
- Invierno** "Winter," the rainy season, which usually lasts from May to November.
- Jornalero** A day labourer.
- Ladino** In Guatemala, a person whose cultural traits are predominantly non-Indian and who speaks Spanish rather than a native language.
- Latifundia** Large agricultural estates.
- Lengue** A distance of about 4.2 kilometres.
- Licenciado** A judge or lawyer.
- Manta** A piece of cloth, usually cotton; a common item of tribute.
- Matlazáhuatl** A disputed kind of pestilence some consider to be typhus.
- Medida** A measurement of land.
- Milpa** Generally land used to grow corn, although it may contain other crops as well.

- Minifundia* Small and fragmented agricultural holdings.
- Minifundista* An owner of a *minifundia*, a peasant smallholder.
- Municipio* A township, usually comprising a *cabecera* and several *aldeas* and *caseros*.
- Páramo* In Guatemala, a lofty altiplano or plateau surface upward of 3000 metres in elevation.
- Parcialidad* A small, social division associated with certain sections of a town or village.
- Partido* An administrative unit.
- Peso* A monetary unit worth two *tostones* or eight *reales*.
- Peste* An unspecified epidemic.
- Petate* A reed or palm mat.
- Principal* A member of the Indian elite, a village elder.
- Provincia* A loose term for an administrative unit roughly as extensive as an *alcaldía mayor* or a *corregimiento*.
- Pueblo de indios* An Indian town or *congregación*.
- Real* A Spanish coin, eight of which (hence "pieces of eight") make one *peso*.
- Real servicio* A tax of one-half *peso* levied upon full Indian tributaries, beginning in 1592, whether in royal or *encomienda* towns.
- Reducción* See *congregación*.
- Regidor* A representative of an Indian community.
- Región andina* Land over 3000 metres in elevation.
- Remedida* A remeasurement of land.
- Repartimiento* A draft of forced native labour.
- Repartimiento de mercancías* A mechanism of forced sale and compulsory acceptance of certain goods or commodities.
- Sarampión* Measles.
- Servicio de tostón* See *real servicio*.
- Siembra de invierno* The rainy-season planting.
- Siembra de verano* The dry-season planting.
- Tabardillo* A fever usually considered to be typhus.
- Tasación de tributos* An assessment of the amount of tribute owed to the Crown or to an *encomendero*.
- Tierra caliente* "Warm land" below 800 metres in elevation.
- Tierra fría* "Cold land" between 1550 and 3000 metres in elevation.
- Tierra templada* "Temperate land" between 800 and 1500 metres in elevation.
- Tierras realengas* Crown lands.
- Tinamit* Nucleated, military strongholds, the home of the elite in pre-conquest times.
- Tostón* Half a *peso* or four *reales*.
- Tributario* An Indian tribute payer.
- Vecino* A resident of a town.



*Verano* "Summer." The dry season in Mediterranean Spain. Lasts from November until May in Guatemala.

*Viruela* Smallpox.

*Xiquipil* A measure of 8000 cacao beans.

# Notes

Short titles are used throughout the notes. The full citations for works consulted may be found in the bibliography. The following abbreviations have also been employed:

- AGCA Archivo General de Centroamérica, Guatemala City. The letter A, placed after AGCA, denotes a document relating to the colonial period (1524–1821). The letter B, placed after AGCA, denotes a document relating to the post-independence period; that is, after 1821. In all citations from this archive the abbreviation “leg.” refers to *legajo* and the abbreviation “exp.” refers to *expediente*. The letters ST refer to documents that were formerly part of the Archivo de la Escribanía in the Registro de la Propiedad Inmueble, but that are now housed in the AGCA, classified as Sección de Tierras.
- AGI: AG Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain. The letters AG refer to the section of documents extant for the jurisdiction known during colonial times as the Audiencia de Guatemala.

## PREFACE

- 1 Taylor's words come from his review of Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, in *Hispanic American Historical Review* 60, no. 2 (1980): 325. His characterization is based on a reading of Góngora, *Los grupos de conquistadores en Tierra Firme*.
- 2 For a review and assessment of research in Chiapas, Guatemala, and Yucatán, see MacLeod and Wasserstrom, eds, *Spaniards and Indians in Southeastern Mesoamerica*. For Oaxaca, see Spores, *Mixtec Kings*, and Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant* and “View from the South.” Gibson, “Writings on Colonial Mexico,” and Van Young, “Mexican Rural History,” also examine trends and directions.
- 3 C.A. Smith, “Beyond Dependency Theory,” 583–7. Farriss, “Indians in Colonial Yucatán,” 33, considers Yucatán also to have been “a periphery of a periphery.” Such marginal status means that, as in the case of the Cuchuma-

tanés, Yucatán "is no more likely to replicate the exact processes of change in central Mexico than central Mexico is likely to follow the same path as western Europe."

## CHAPTER 1

- 1 Harvey, *Explanation*, 407.
- 2 Hartshorne, *Nature*, 183.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 183.
- 4 Sauer, "Foreword," in Leighly, ed., *Land and Life*, 352. Sauer's presidential address was delivered to the annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, December 1940.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 360.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 351.
- 7 Darby, "Relations," 6.
- 8 Clark, "Historical Geography," 70-105; C.T. Smith, "Historical Geography," 118-43; Harvey, "Models," 549-608.
- 9 Baker et al., "Future," 48.
- 10 Harvey, *Explanation*, 418-19.
- 11 Durrell, *Justine*, 140.
- 12 Gardiner, *Nature*, 61.
- 13 Sauer, "Morphology," in Leighly, ed., *Land and Life*, 344.
- 14 Sauer, "Foreword," in Leighly, ed., *Land and Life*, 351.
- 15 For assessments of Sauer's life, work, and thinking, see Leighly, "Carl Ortwin Sauer," 345-8; Parsons, "Carl Ortwin Sauer," 83-9; and Williams, "Apple of my Eye," 1-28.
- 16 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 223.
- 17 Harris, "Theory and Synthesis," 157-72.
- 18 See, for example, the review essays and methodological appraisals of, among others, Baker, ed., *Progress*; Baker, "Historical Geography," 465-74; Baker and Billinge, eds, *Period and Place*; Conzen, "Historical Geography," 549-59; and Goheen, "Methodology," 8-15.
- 19 Harris, "Historical Mind," 123-37.
- 20 Sauer, "Morphology," in Leighly, ed., *Land and Life*, 344.
- 21 *Ibid.*, 343.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 333.
- 23 For two fine reviews of historical geography in a Latin American regional context, see Robinson, "Historical Geography in Latin America," 168-84, and "Introduction to Themes and Scales," 1-24. A useful guide to the literature in English is Denevan, *A Bibliography of Latin American Historical Geography*. Topical diversity in the field is impressively showcased in Davidson and Parsons, eds, *Historical Geography of Latin America*.

- 24 Developments in the field of Mesoamerican studies can best be assessed by a perusal of the various editions of the *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, a series begun in 1964 by the University of Texas Press and consisting to date of more than fifteen published volumes.
- 25 Kidder, Jennings, and Shook, *Excavations at Kaminaljuyú*, 259–60.
- 26 Nicholson, "Middle American Ethnohistory," 498.
- 27 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 5.

## CHAPTER 2

- 1 Figure 2 shows the *corregimiento* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango as depicted in the late seventeenth century by the Guatemalan chronicler Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán in his *Recordación Florida*. Most important Cuchumatán settlements are represented. Huehuetenango (Hueguetenango) is located in the centre of the drawing, at the headwaters of the Río Cuilco (Quilco). Distortion and incorrect configuration are most conspicuous in the bottom right or north-east corner, across the river from the land designated "Tierra del Chol y El Lacandón, Yndios Ynfieles."
- 2 Instituto Geográfico Nacional, *Diccionario geográfico de Guatemala*, 112; Arriola, *Geonímias*, 103.
- 3 Gage, *Travels*, 160–7; Stephens, *Incidents*, 185–200; La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, v, 1. The keen eye and unique pen of the eccentric Robert Burkitt, "Explorations," 41–2, evoke a sense of place few have matched:

The southern front of the Cuchumatanes is a very definite line; and at any reasonable distance, it is a very distinct line to the eye. At a distance of twenty or thirty leagues, the effect of unity in the long mountain front is very striking. Riding from Quiché to Totonicapán, for instance, you see the Cuchumatanes as a great blue barrier on the north. The barrier seems to be penetrated here and there by black glens. But there is no rift or opening that you can seen through. The general appearance is that of a solid frowning rampart rising to a very even height and long stretched out.

You wonder as you look at it what there might be behind. When you get behind that southern front, the face of things is entirely changed. You forget about the front. There is nothing, almost, to remind you of it. For one thing, instead of the bare and more or less desert looking country to the south, what you see now is a green country covered to a great extent with woods. And when you look back south, you do not see anything to remind you of the long mountain range you saw from the other side. There is no definite north front as there is a south front. On the north side, you seem to get into a mess

of mountains ramifying in all directions. There are some great mountain masses to be seen and tops apparently higher than anything on the outside range. And there are endless spurs and ridges and hills behind hills and rivers between. Finally the whole mass – the whole system, I suppose a geographer would call it – sinks down to the hot country of the Mexican border and the river Chixoy.

The topography of the region is also nicely described in Termer, "Observaciones geográficas," 7–13, and "Paisajes geográficos," 159–61. Ricketson, "The Cuchumatanes Re-visited," 341–57, has an interesting account of a ten-day trip through the region in April 1934.

- 4 Juan Diéguez's poem, *A Los Cuchumatanes*, may be found in Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 30–3. Translated into English, this stanza reads:

Oh heaven of my country!  
 Oh precious horizons!  
 Oh high blue mountains,  
 Hear me from over there!  
 My soul greets you,  
 Peaks of the high sierra,  
 Keepers of that land  
 Where my eyes first saw light!

The same lines may also be read, engraved on metal plaques, at the *mirador* (viewpoint) some thirteen kilometres to the north of Chiantla near the summit of the steep scarp slope of the Cuchumatanes. Early on a bright clear morning, this scenic vantage point gives a commanding view of the splendours of highland Guatemala, from Volcán Tacaná in the west past Volcán Tolimán and Volcán Atitlán in the south to Volcán Agua in the east.

- 5 Anderson, "San Sebastián Huehuetenango," 87.  
 6 Blout, "Chiantla," 107ff.  
 7 Ibid., 115ff., and Anderson et al., "Altos Cuchumatanes," 805–26, contain comprehensive accounts of the geology of northwestern Guatemala. Parts of the Cuchumatanes, including the communities of Colotenango and Cuilco, were affected by the eruption of Volcán Santa María in 1902, when volcanic ash and sand destroyed crops throughout western Huehuetenango and caused several rivers to overflow. The Cuchumatanes were also badly shaken, although less so than the central and eastern parts of Guatemala, during the major earthquake of 4 February 1976, which caused widespread damage and disruption throughout the republic and claimed the lives of an estimated thirty thousand Guatemalans.  
 8 Blout, "Chiantla," 107ff., has a detailed discussion of the geomorphology of the Cuchumatán *páramo*.

- 9 Anderson, "San Sebastián," 137ff., presents interesting information derived from various field observations concerning the glaciation of parts of the Cuchumatanes during Late Wisconsin times.
- 10 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 92-3; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 85-8.
- 11 Milpa is a term generally understood to mean land devoted to growing corn, although in Guatemala it may be employed to indicate any parcel of land that is under cultivation.
- 12 For accounts of chilly weather conditions on the  *páramo*, see Stephens, *Incidents*, 196, and Ricketson, "The Cuchumatanes Re-visited," 349. The former records that "the ground was covered with a hoarfrost and water was frozen a quarter of an inch thick"; the latter recalls being bombarded, during a heavy thunderstorm, by "hailstones as large as pigeon eggs."
- 13 McBryde, *Southwestern Guatemala*, 7.
- 14 The distinction between Indian and Ladino is based on culture and language rather than on physical or racial characteristics. Tax, "Municipios," 432, summarizes the distinction as follows: "Indians speak Indian languages, wear Indian costumes, have Indian surnames, and live like Indians. A Ladino has a Spanish surname and speaks Spanish as a mother tongue; he wears European-type clothes, wears shoes, lives in a house with windows, is usually literate, and has, in general, a better standard of living than his Indian neighbor. None of these criteria holds universally, but on the basis of all of them one can usually make a safe judgement." Throughout highland Guatemala, Ladinos are for the most part town-dwellers, while the majority of people living in the countryside are Indians. Writing in the early 1940s, McBride and McBride, "Highland Guatemala," 253, considered Indians as constituting 65 per cent of the population of Guatemala. Writing in the mid 1940s, McBryde, *Southwestern Guatemala*, 9, estimated the Indian contingent at around 60 per cent of the national population. Writing in the early 1960s, but working from the unreliable 1950 Census of Guatemala, Whetten, *Guatemala*, 49, records Indians as constituting 54 per cent and Ladinos 46 per cent of the national population. Available statistical evidence indicates that the Indian population has dwindled relative to its Ladino counterpart over the past century, but this trend derives more from the changing criteria employed in distinguishing those categorized as "Indian" than from an absolute numerical decline. The difficulty of population estimation and Indian-Ladino classification is compounded by the unreliability of Guatemalan census information. Although the 1973 census recorded a national population of 5.2 million, Francis Gall, of the Instituto Geográfico Nacional, believed that figure to be under-enumerated by a significant amount, owing chiefly to the lack of complete penetration of remote rural areas by census enumerators and under-reporting by the Indians of their family size (Gall, personal communication). Gall speculated in 1977 that the population of Guatemala

- then numbered about 6.5 million. Early, *Demographic Structure*, analyses national population trends with an insight and sophistication few could equal.
- 15 Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities"; Tax, "Municipios"; Smith, "Local History in Global Context," 198–200.
  - 16 Tax, "Municipios," 433–8; Nash, "Guatemalan Highlands," 30–45.
  - 17 Wagley, "Northwestern Guatemala," 55.
  - 18 Collier, *Tzotzil*, 157.
  - 19 Wasserstrom, *Central Chiapas*, 6; see also MacLeod and Wasserstrom, *Spaniards and Indians*, xiii, 117–19.
  - 20 La Farge, "Maya Ethnology," 290–1, and *Santa Eulalia*, xi–xii. The issue here is one that anthropologists will debate for some time to come. Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities," 7, argues that "historically, the closed corporate peasant configuration in Mesoamerica is a creature of the Spanish conquest," maintaining that "thoroughgoing changes divide the post-Hispanic community from its pre-conquest predecessor." In the Cuchumatán context, Collins, "Colonial Jacaltenango," makes a convincing case in support of Wolf's model, one that is at variance with the proposed cultural sequence of La Farge.
  - 21 McBryde, *Southwestern Guatemala*, 96; Tax, "Municipios," 427–33; Wagley, *Economics*, 9–10.
  - 22 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 101. A documentary film about life in the community, called *Todos Santos Cuchumatán: Report from a Guatemalan Village*, was released in 1982 by Icarus Films, New York. The film was made by Olivia Carrescia.
  - 23 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 110.
  - 24 *Ibid.*, 112 and plates 7 and 8, facing 265; Wagley, "Northwestern Guatemala," 50. Stadelman's report, based on extensive field-work in the Cuchumatanes during the late 1930s, to this day remains the most thorough study of corn cultivation in Guatemala.
  - 25 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 13; Wagley, "Northwestern Guatemala," 50.
  - 26 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 117; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 192.
  - 27 Wolf, *Sons of the Shaking Earth*, 63.
  - 28 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 192–3.
  - 29 May and McLellan, *Malnutrition*, 94–104. Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 93, states that the "usual daily rationing of Indian corn is about two pounds per day for an adult, which is more than sufficient to supply the daily energy requirements as it has been calculated to furnish some 3480 calories." May and McLellan, using data from the Instituto de Nutrición de Centro América y Panamá, note that although "corn and sugar are available in adequate amounts," there is a "level of deficiency in certain specific nutrients ... serious enough to make malnutrition a public health problem"; they record

677,000 children of less than five years of age suffering from varying degrees of malnutrition in Guatemala. Horst, "Specter of Death," 164, states that in the Mam community of San Juan Ostuncalco "it is probable that 20 per cent of the children who die in this region do so because of complications arising out of starvation."

30 McBryde, *Southwestern Guatemala*, 38.

31 Dirección General de Estadística, *Censo agropecuario*, 242.

32 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 205; Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 95-9.

33 Aragón Cabrera and Ruiz Escobar, "Consideraciones," 99.

34 McBryde, *Southwestern Guatemala*, 63-5 and maps 13 and 16.

35 Ibid., 58-60, 73-4; Pettersen, *Maya*, 55-66. Both works contain accounts of salt production at Sacapulas.

36 Goitre, a condition of morbid enlargement of the thyroid gland, often manifest as a large, pendulous swelling in the neck, was the scourge of the Sacapulas area until government action made it mandatory for iodine to be added to locally produced salt. The shocking manifestations of the disease, however, were very much in evidence when Thomas Gage passed through Sacapulas in the early seventeenth century; see Gage, *Travels*, 166-7, for a graphic description of some of the afflicted.

37 Pettersen, *Maya*, 55.

38 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 95, contains the following description of salt exploitation at San Mateo Ixtatán: "The salt deposits consist of three wells, Shul, Nanal, and Almul, in which water with a high percentage of salt accumulates and is periodically removed to be boiled down by the Indians. These wells have been worked since before the Conquest and the salt is famed throughout the Department as having medicinal properties. The deposits were recently taken over by the Government and rented for \$258 per month to a concessionaire who sells the water to the people." Since the time of Stadelman's investigations, one well has been abandoned as a source of salt water and the remaining two have fallen under municipal control. Of the two wells still in operation, one is worked daily (from 3:00 PM to 5:00 PM), while the other is worked only intermittently on a fortnightly basis; that is, worked for two weeks then given two weeks to replenish. Each afternoon the women of San Mateo, resplendent in bright red and yellow *huipiles* and carrying large clay pots, weave their way down to the salt wells that lie at the bottom of a steep valley to the north of town. Under the supervision of an Indian official, pots are filled with salt water and a record kept of how much each woman carries off. In 1978, the municipality collected twenty cents (Guatemalan) for each pot of salt water taken from the wells. Salt is obtained by simply boiling down the water. The larger of the two wells in operation is located adjacent to an important pre-Hispanic structure that is the scene of Indian *costumbre* activities.



- 39 Universidad de San Carlos, *Tenencia de la tierra*, 122-5.
- 40 Information concerning the number, size, and distribution of farm holdings in Guatemala is available from two national agricultural censuses, the first conducted in 1950, the second in 1964. The reliability of the published statistics to reveal the complete landholding situation is undermined by the fact that the 1950 agricultural census recorded only those farms containing one *cuerda* of land or more; that is, about 0.04 of a hectare. Many *minifundia* in Guatemala are smaller than one *cuerda* and in fact were incorporated into the 1964 agricultural census, which placed no restrictions as to minimum size of farm holdings. This classificatory change in data collection accounts largely for the significant increase in total farm numbers in 1964 over 1950. Regardless of statistical inconsistency, however, the essential reality of land ownership in Guatemala remains the same; namely, a small percentage of the total farmland (14.3 per cent in 1950 and 18.6 per cent in 1964) is shared between a large percentage of farms (88.4 per cent in 1950 and 87 per cent in 1964), while a large percentage of the total farmland (72.2 per cent in 1950 and 62.6 per cent in 1964) is held by a small percentage of farms (2.1 per cent in 1950 and 2.9 per cent in 1964). Further discussion of the Guatemalan landholding situation is contained in Whetten, *Guatemala*, 92-106; Fletcher et al., *Agriculture*; and Early, *Demographic Structure*, 65-77.
- 41 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 105.
- 42 Higbee, "Agricultural Regions," 180, reckons that "about three arable hectares is the minimum necessary for independent family existence on average *tierra fria* land" in the highlands of Guatemala.
- 43 Burkitt, "Explorations," 58-9.
- 44 Ibid., 58. See also La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, 7, who writes: "When partway drunk, an Indian will sell his soul for more liquor; upon this the *finca* system is based." While one can sympathize with Burkitt's frustration at having his plans for archaeological exploration disrupted because Indian guides and helpers were, in his own words, "drunk from morning till night," it is important to view inebriety as a response to, or symptom of, a deeper-rooted problem. La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, 100, offers the following perspective: "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."
- 45 For a discussion of labour recruitment in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Guatemala, see C.L. Jones, *Guatemala*, 148-67, and McCreery, "Debt Servitude," 735-59.
- 46 Dessaint, "Plantation Systems," 340-1.
- 47 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 95-103.

- 48 Wagley, *Economics*, 82.
- 49 *Ibid.*, 82–3.
- 50 Watanabe, "Cambios económicos," 23.
- 51 *Ibid.*, 23–8.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 30.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 32–3.
- 54 *Ibid.*
- 55 McCreery, "Debt Servitude," 756, writes that "on the night of July 18, 1898, the Indian inhabitants of San Juan Ixcay murdered the local *habilitador* ... and then, in an effort to hide their crime, slaughtered all but one of the remaining thirty Ladinos in town." Irregularities in 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. Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 96–7, records that "the retaliation of the Government was prompt, and it has been estimated that perhaps ten Indian lives were exacted for each slain Ladino." A brief account of the incident may be found in Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 363–4. Mention of the affair is made by La Farge ("Maya Ethnology," 283–4, and *Santa Eulalia*, xi–xii), who adds that "in the present century the Indians of San Mateo all but perfected a similar uprising." Burkitt, "Explorations," 58, makes reference to the events as "the massacre of Soloma." See Epilogue, 211–12.
- 56 Watanabe, "Cambios económicos," 31.
- 57 Schmid, *Migratory Labor*, 1–2; Colby and van den Berghe, *Ixil Country*, 33; Francis Gall, personal communication.
- 58 For an analysis of the relationship between the plantation economy of the Pacific lowlands and the predominantly subsistence economy of the western highlands, see C.A. Smith, "Beyond Dependency Theory," 574–617 and "Local History in Global Context," 193–228. According to this investigator, it was the coffee boom of the late nineteenth century and not the Spanish conquest of the sixteenth that unleashed the forces of capitalism on Guatemala and led to the emergence, at the national level, of a developed "core" and an underdeveloped "periphery." An interesting theoretical discussion of the "articulation," as opposed to the "penetration," of non-capitalist modes of production by the capitalist mode may be found in Foster-Carter, "Modes of Production Controversy," 47–77.
- 59 A discussion of cacao tribute in pre-Columbian and early colonial times may be found in Bergmann, "Cacao Cultivation," 85–96.
- 60 Guatemala's rapid population growth in the twentieth century is discussed in Early, "Population Increase," 275–87.
- 61 Carmack, "Spanish-Indian Relations," 215–52; Dessaint, "Plantation Systems," 323–54; Early, *Demographic Structure*, 65–6; Ebel, "Political Modernization," 151–3; La Farge, "Maya Ethnology," 282–4, and *Santa Eulalia*, xi–xii,

4–7; McCreery, "Coffee and Class," 456–7, and "Debt Servitude," 739–40; Nash, "Impact," 172–4; Naylor, "Indian Attitudes," 627–30; C.A. Smith, "Local History in Global Context," 202–4; Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 102; Wagley, *Economics*, 59–61. For a detailed Cuchumatán case study, see Davis, "Land of our Ancestors," 49–69, on the attrition of the communal estate of Santa Eulalia.

62 Bunzel, *Chichicastenango*, 16.

63 Nash, *Machine Age Maya*, 93.

64 Wagley, *Economics*, 63–4.

65 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 102.

66 Naylor, "Indian Attitudes," 634.

67 Tax, "Midwestern Highlands," 91.

68 Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 167.

69 Stadelman, "Maize Cultivation," 123–4; Siegel, "Religion in Western Guatemala," 73–4; Valladares, "Hombre y maíz," 179ff.

70 La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, 77.

### CHAPTER 3

1 La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, x. This book was not published until 1947, but, like most of La Farge's investigations, the data pertain to field-work undertaken in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

2 Woodbury and Trik, *Zaculeu*.

3 A.L. Smith and Kidder, *Excavations at Nebaj*.

4 Becquelin, *Archéologie de la Région de Nebaj*.

5 This is a view I have heard expressed by a number of archaeologists, among them Carlos Navarrete of the Universidad Autónoma de México, whom I met briefly on 9 May 1978 in the town of San Mateo Ixtatán, while he and a colleague were surveying several Cuchumatán sites. It can only be hoped that the efforts of Navarrete and others one day progress from the survey to the excavation stage, for scores of sites, many of which are to this day the scene of native ceremony and ritual, are scattered throughout the Cuchumatanes. Two recent survey reports, which mention the neglected state of Cuchumatán studies and the rich archaeological potential of the region, include Lischka, "Reconocimiento arqueológico" and Navarrete, "Rutas de comunicación prehispánica." Political unrest, which in the 1980s resulted in prolonged open conflict between the Guatemalan armed forces and guerrilla groups operating throughout the Cuchumatanes, may unfortunately retard future investigations, such as the ones proposed by Navarrete, for some time to come. Navarrete himself alluded to this likelihood in two presentations made to the Sociedad Mexicana de Antropología at their XVII Mesa Redonda held in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas, 21–27 June 1981.

- 6 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization and Quiché Mayas*, analyses and synthesizes the relevant materials. For a slightly different interpretation of Quichean cultural evolution, see Gruhn and Bryan, "Archaeological Survey," 75–119, and Rounds, "Tecuhtli," 343–61.
- 7 Territorially defined, Mesoamerica includes Mexico south of the Lerma-Panuco drainage; all of the present-day republics of Guatemala and El Salvador; the former colony of British Honduras, nowadays Belize; and the westernmost parts of the republic of Honduras to an approximate boundary formed by the Río Ulúa and Lake Yojoa. See Sanders and Price, *Mesoamerica*, 6, who present a concise cultural definition of the unit.
- 8 Gruhn and Bryan, "Los Tapias," 258–9.
- 9 Pedro de Alvarado to Hernán Cortés, quoted in Kelly, *Pedro de Alvarado*, 139. The reference is contained in the first of Alvarado's two surviving letters to Cortés, written about 10 April 1524.
- 10 Borhegyi, "Archaeological Synthesis," 6–7.
- 11 Sanders and Price, *Mesoamerica*, 24.
- 12 Borhegyi, "Archaeological Synthesis," 7–18.
- 13 Sanders and Price, *Mesoamerica*, 29.
- 14 Borhegyi, "Archaeological Synthesis," 19–41.
- 15 Sanders and Price, *Mesoamerica*, 31.
- 16 Borhegyi, "Archaeological Synthesis," 20.
- 17 *Ibid.*, 19.
- 18 *Ibid.*, 41–56.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 20 Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 59–64.
- 21 A manuscript copy of the second edition of Francis Gall's *Diccionario geográfico de Guatemala* is currently housed in the library of the Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamerica, Antigua, Guatemala. Dr Gall kindly gave me permission to consult his *magnum opus* in the summer of 1977, prior to its publication by the Instituto Geográfico Nacional several years later. (Don Francis, one of Guatemala's most talented scholars, unfortunately died before seeing his lifetime's work appear in print.) The recording by Gall of 140 archaeological sites in the Cuchumatanes was by no means meant to be a definitive count, since many others also exist that have not yet been formally recognized or named.
- 22 Table 2 summarizes the archaeological data contained in Becquelin, *Archéologie de la Région de Nebaj*; Burkitt, "Explorations"; Fox, *Quiché Conquest*; La Farge and Byers, *Year Bearer's People*; Lischka, "Reconocimiento arqueológico"; Navarrete, "Comunicación prehispánica"; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*; Seler, *Die alten Ansiedelungen von Chaculá*; A.L. Smith, *Archæological Reconnaissance*; A.L. Smith and Kidder, *Excavations at Nebaj*; and Woodbury and Trik, *Zaculeu*.

- 23 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 417–18. Recinos's information on the Chaculá region is derived from the much earlier investigations of the German scholar Eduard Seler, whose archaeological reconnaissance of northwestern Huehuetenango is contained in *Die alten Ansiedelungen von Chaculá*. Seler infers contact between the settlements of Chaculá and the Classic Lowland Maya centres to the north and east on the grounds of similarity of pottery and stelae styles:

[The stelae of the Chaculá region] are very important pieces because they are the exact counterparts of the stelae or columns of Copán and Quiriguá, proving that the ancient inhabitants of Chaculá were part of the same civilization as the tribes that created these great monuments, rightly famous throughout the world. But the inhabitants of Chaculá, poorer and more primitive, were obliged to work with a [limestone] material which could not compare with the beautiful volcanic rock worked by the sculptors of Copán and Quiriguá. But one sees on these ... pillars the same glyphs, beginning with the calligraphic sign for the Katun, the cycle of twenty times three hundred and sixty days, that one sees on the stelae of Copán and Quiriguá.

The Chaculá region contains some of the best-preserved Cuchumatán sites worthy of systematic excavation. For a study of the unusual sculptures of the region, see Navarrete, *Las esculturas de Chaculá*. Mention of the site, and photographs of its primitive stone statues, also appear in Burkitt, "A Journey in Northern Guatemala," 115–17 and 138–45.

- 24 Carmack, "Documentary Sources," 263.  
 25 Fox, *Quiché Conquest*, 151.  
 26 A.L. Smith, *Archaeological Reconnaissance*, 81–3, considers these architectural features to be indicative of "Mexican influence."  
 27 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 68, provides a summary of the *Título Mam*.  
 28 Acuña, "Título de los Señores de Sacapulas," 1–37.  
 29 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 265–345, contains a bibliographic study and both the Quiché text and an English translation of the *Título C'oyoi*.  
 30 The Quichean documents known as the *Títulos Nijaib*, *Historia de Don Juan de Torres*, *Testamento de los Xpantay*, and *Título de los Indios de Santa Clara* are included in Recinos, *Crónicas indígenas de Guatemala*.  
 31 Cardoza y Aragón, *Rabinal Achí*.  
 32 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 11–13; Acuña, "Título de los Señores de Sacapulas," 5–6.  
 33 See, for example, M.A. Smith, *Picture Writing from Southern Mexico*.  
 34 Ximénez, quoted in Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 24.  
 35 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 19–20.  
 36 Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 62–70.  
 37 Fox, "Quiché Expansion," 83–5. The subjugation of the Wukamak is described in Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 192–204.

- 38 Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 215–17.
- 39 Carmack, "Ethnohistory," 5.
- 40 Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 228; Carmack, "Ethnohistory," 6.
- 41 Fox, "Quiché Expansion," 86.
- 42 The name "Zaculeu" or "Zaculeuab" is a Quiché word meaning "white earth"; see Carmack, "Documentary Sources," 242, and Arriola, *Geonimias*, 166–7. The manuscript copy of the *Popol Vuh*, with Quiché and Spanish texts laid down neatly side by side in fine handwriting, is now part of the Ayer Special Collection (MS. 1515, Ayer Cakchiquel 36) permanently housed in the Newberry Library, Chicago.
- 43 Woodbury and Trik, *Zaculeu*, 284. The description of Zaculeu's function as a traditional ceremonial centre is based on a reading of Wheatley, *Pivot of the Four Quarters*, 225–6.
- 44 Woodbury and Trik, *Zaculeu*, 16.
- 45 *Ibid.*, 17.
- 46 Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 220–1.
- 47 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 297.
- 48 Recinos, *Crónicas indígenas*, 141–5; Chonay, Goetz, and Recinos, *Title of the Lords of Totonicapán*, 188.
- 49 *Título de los Caniles*, quoted in Carmack, "Documentary Sources," 247.
- 50 Fox, "Quiché Expansion," 87, and *Quiché Conquest*, 112. Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 54 and 76, mentions the mining of gold and silver at Pichiquil, a settlement about twelve kilometres to the east of Aguacatán. Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz, writing in the third quarter of the eighteenth century, also records gold mines operating in the vicinity of Sacapulas; Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:41. Reference to gold and silver mining in the hilly land between Aguacatán and Sacapulas is referred to in a letter from a Spanish resident of Rabinal, José Joaquín González, addressed in 1808 to the *alcalde mayor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango. González writes that his brother Tomás, a Dominican friar, encountered Indians working "a vein of gold and silver in a ravine near Pichiquil," then part of the *ejido* of Sacapulas. See AGCA, A3.9, leg. 2899, exp. 43092. Also to the east of Aguacatán was the settlement of Chalchitán, meaning "place of emeralds."
- 51 Carmack, "Documentary Sources," 293.
- 52 Tovilla, *Relación histórica*, 218.
- 53 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 218.
- 54 Cardoza y Aragón, *Rabinal Achí*, 35.
- 55 Carmack, "Documentary Sources," 247–8.
- 56 Fox, *Quiché Conquest*, 74, 79, 82, 85, and "Quiché Expansion," 87.
- 57 Fox, "Quiché Expansion," 87.
- 58 *Título C'oyoi*, in Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 298–9.
- 59 Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 77.

- 60 Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 228.
- 61 Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 77.
- 62 Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 228.
- 63 Nijaiib, in Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 77.
- 64 Las Casas, cited in Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 77.
- 65 Recinos, *Crónicas indígenas*, 78–9.
- 66 Ibid., 175.
- 67 Fox, *Quiché Conquest*, 111.
- 68 Ibid., 112.
- 69 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 411, 472–4.
- 70 Fox, *Quiché Conquest*, xi.
- 71 La Farge and Byers, *Year Bearer's People*, 7, 195.
- 72 Ibid., 199.
- 73 Recinos, *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, 312.
- 74 Fox, *Quiché Conquest*, 176.
- 75 Recinos, *Crónicas indígenas*, 179; Fox, *Quiché Conquest*, 106–7.
- 76 Carmack, "Documentary Sources," 310.
- 77 Cited in Woodbury and Trik, *Zaculeu*, 10. According to the Quiché ruler Sequechul, it was Caibil Balam who first suggested the idea of luring the Spanish expeditionary force into Gumarcaah (Utatlán) in 1524, with a view to ensnaring and later burning the European invaders in the confines of the city. When the plot failed, the Spaniards executed Sequechul's father, Chigna Huiucelet, whom they held responsible for the ploy. If Caibil Balam did have the ear of Chigna Huiucelet, this also would indicate that the former was well received at the Quiché capital; that is, he went there more as an equal than as a subordinate. See also Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:56, and Bancroft, *Works* 6:695.
- 78 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 37.
- 79 A.L. Smith, *Archaeological Reconnaissance*, 15.
- 80 Fox, *Quiché Conquest*, 151.
- 81 A.L. Smith, *Archaeological Reconnaissance*, 16–21.
- 82 Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 81.
- 83 Ximénez, *Historia de la Provincia de San Vicente de Chiapa y Guatemala*, quoted in Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 81.
- 84 Carmack, *Toltec Influence*, 83.
- 85 Carmack, "Ethnohistory," 6. See also Zamora, "Tenencia de la tierra."
- 86 Carmack, "Ethnohistory," 6–9.
- 87 Ibid., 10–13.

## CHAPTER 4

- 1 Cortés, *Five Letters*, 268.
- 2 Díaz del Castillo, *Historia verdadera*, 410. Díaz del Castillo states that Cortés

also charged Alvarado “to endeavor to bring the people to peace without waging war on them, and to preach matters concerning our holy faith by means of certain interpreters and clergymen [Alvarado] took with him.”

- 3 Alvarado, *Account*, 56.
- 4 Juarros, *Statistical and Commercial History*, 387–93.
- 5 Alvarado, *Account*, 63.
- 6 Veblen, “Native Population Decline,” 491–2; Bricker, *Indian Christ*, 29–42.
- 7 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:56; Bancroft, *Works* 6:695.
- 8 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:56.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 56–7; Bancroft, *Works* 6:696–7.
- 10 Woodbury, “The History of Zaculeu,” 14, incorrectly states that the Spaniards were attacked by “five hundred armed Indians.” This may be either a misprint or a misinterpretation. The primary source, Fuentes y Guzmán (*Recordación Florida* 259:58), clearly records that the Indian force numbered not five hundred but five thousand: “reconocieren a acercárles por la llanura cinco mil indios armados que marchaban en regulada disciplina y militar disposición.”
- 11 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:58–60; Bancroft, *Works* 6:697–9.
- 12 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:63. The terms proposed by Gonzalo de Alvarado to Caibil Balam were those of the *Requerimiento*, or Requirement. The *Requerimiento* was a document drawn up with a view to placing the Spanish conquest on a firm legal ground. Drafted on royal order shortly before 1514 by Juan López de Palacios, a Spanish juridical expert, the *Requerimiento* was a summary of the history of Christianity from the Biblical creation of the world to the concessions granted to imperial Spain by Pope Alexander VI. A copy of the *Requerimiento* was carried by every *conquistador* and was read aloud to belligerent Indians prior to the commencement of battle. The *Requerimiento* called upon Indians to recognize the authority of the church, the pope, and the monarch. By reading the *Requerimiento* before waging war, the Spanish *conquistadores* considered themselves absolved from any responsibility of action. In fact, if the terms of the *Requerimiento* were not met, responsibility for the ensuing battle was laid solely on the heads of the Indians resisting the Spaniards on their “divine mission.” To a people as legalistically minded as sixteenth-century Spaniards, the *Requerimiento* thus served as a definition of “just warfare.” See Gibson, *Spain in America*, 38–40, and Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 7.
- 13 Figure 7 shows the fortress of Zaculeu (Socoleo), as depicted somewhat fancifully by Fuentes y Guzmán in his *Recordación Florida*. Although the drawing cannot be considered an accurate representation of the morphology and defences of the Mam fortress, the chronicler clearly indicates that Zaculeu was protected against outside attack by an elaborate system of walls, barricades, and ditches. The words that begin to the left of the northern entrance (bottom centre) and run clockwise around the drawing follow the



course of a deep trench that surrounded the fortress almost completely, safeguarding it in much the same way as a moat would a medieval castle. An even more fanciful drawing exists in the *Recordación Florida* of the fortress that protected Uspantán, where Indian forces in 1529 repelled a Spanish *entrada* led by Pedro de Olmos.

- 14 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 253:63. Fuentes y Guzmán's account of the Spanish conquest of the Mam, compiled in the late seventeenth century, was based on a report written by the *conquistador* Gonzalo de Alvarado in the early sixteenth century. Alvarado's original report is now missing. Although it is not likely to reappear, such a possibility can never be entirely ruled out, as Sherman, "Change in Guatemalan Society," 171, optimistically points out.
- 15 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:63; Bancroft, *Works* 6:700.
- 16 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:66.
- 17 Bancroft, *Works* 6:700–1.
- 18 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:67–71. The chronicler gives no information about the fate of Caibil Balam after the fall of Zaculeu. Whether or not the Mam who surrendered along with Caibil Balam were branded and held as slaves is also not specified, although this was likely the case.
- 19 The position *alcalde ordinario* of Guatemala means that Gaspar Arias was a member of the municipal council of the city of Guatemala. The city referred to was the first permanent capital of Guatemala, founded in 1527 in the valley of Almolonga, known today simply as Ciudad Vieja. This settlement was destroyed by flood and earthquake on 10 September 1541, whereupon the Spaniards moved the capital six kilometres away to a site in the valley of Panchoy.
- 20 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:18–20; Bancroft, *Works* 7:108–10.
- 21 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:20.
- 22 *Ibid.*, 21; Bancroft, *Works* 7:111–12.
- 23 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:21.
- 24 *Ibid.*, 21; Bancroft, *Works* 7:112.
- 25 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:21–2; Bancroft, *Works* 7:112–13.

## CHAPTER 5

- 1 Borah, "Historical Demography," 173–205, and "Attempt at Perspective," 13–34; N.D. Cook, *Demographic Collapse*, 1–8; Denevan, *Native Population*, 1–12; Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 8–45.
- 2 Denevan, *Native Population*, 3, summarizes the wide-ranging estimates, as does Joralemon, "New World Depopulation," 108–27.
- 3 Borah, "Attempt at Perspective," 17–18.
- 4 Denevan, *Native Population*, 1, notes that "as the quality of the research

improves, the trend is toward acceptance of higher numbers." The monumental work of Sherburne F. Cook and Woodrow Borah has been of primary significance in establishing a model of large populations at European contact experiencing a rapid and precipitous post-contact decline. The preface to volume 1 of their three-volume *Essays in Population History*, v–xiv, serves as a succinct bibliographic survey of their years of painstaking research. Other works that establish the existence of large pre-Columbian populations and that support the Cook and Borah thesis of massive post-contact collapse include: N.D. Cook, *Demographic Collapse*; Crosby, "Conquistador y Pestilencia," 321–37, and "Virgin Soil Epidemics," 289–99; Denevan, *Upland Pine Forests*, 289–91; Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned* and "Estimating Aboriginal American Population," 395–416; Gerhard, *Guide*, 22–8, and *Southeast Frontier*, 23–30; Johannessen, *Savannas of Interior Honduras*, 27–47; Lovell, Lutz, and Swezey, "Indian Population of Southern Guatemala"; Lutz, "Santiago de Guatemala," 249–317, 743–52; MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 37–45; Madigan, "Santiago Atitlán," 176–206; Newson, "Demographic Catastrophe," 217–41, and "Depopulation of Nicaragua," 253–86; Robinson, ed., *Spanish American Population History*; Sauer, *Colima*, 59–63 and 93–6, and *Early Spanish Main*, 65–9, 155–6, 178–81, 200–4, 382–9; Stanislawski, *Nicaragua*, 9–13; Veblen, "Native Population Decline," 486–94; and Zamora, "Conquista y crisis demográfica," 291–328.

5 Veblen, "Native Population Decline," 484–99.

6 Cook and Borah, *Essays* 1:7.

7 Veblen, "Native Population Decline," 486–7.

8 Ibid., 497. Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 184, expresses the following support for Fuentes y Guzmán's credibility as a scholarly source: "The *Recordación Florida* has always been recognized as an important source for the study of the history and culture of early Guatemala, though Fuentes y Guzmán has been severely criticized for his exaggerations, disorganization, confusion and errors of fact, rambling, flowery style, and his obvious bias in favour of the *conquistadores* ... Granting the general validity of these criticisms, it is my considered opinion that Fuentes y Guzmán was a better student of Indian culture than is usually recognized, and that his work is of inestimable importance."

9 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:57.

10 Veblen, "Native Population Decline," 487; Gibson, *Tlaxcala*, 139. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 174–87, also employs a warrior-to-total-population ratio of one to five.

11 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 39–40.

12 Recinos, *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, 115–16.

13 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 18–20, 41.

14 Morales Urrutia, *División política* 1:432, 644; *Octavo censo de población* 1:16–18.

See table 1 for a listing of the 37 *municipios* that constitute the Cuchumatán region in the present day.

- 15 Cumberland, *Mexico*, 367; Durham, *Scarcity and Survival*, 23; Johannessen, *Savannas of Interior Honduras*, 34; Lovell and Swezey, "Southern Guatemala at Spanish Contact," 81–2.
- 16 Alvarado, *Account*, 86–8.
- 17 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 44; Sherman, "Change in Guatemalan Society," 173.

## CHAPTER 6

- 1 Díaz del Castillo, quoted in Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 65.
- 2 Foster, *Culture and Conquest*, 2.
- 3 Sauer, *Early Spanish Main*, is a masterful reconstruction of the tragic Spanish conquest and colonization of the Caribbean between 1492 and 1519. By the latter date, when Cortés was establishing a foothold for Spain on the American mainland and when Charles V was setting up the Council of the Indies, the Spanish Main was already "a sorry shell. The natives, whom Columbus belatedly knew to be the wealth of the land, were destroyed. The gold placers of the islands were worked out. The gold treasures which the Indians of Castilla del Oro had acquired had been looted. What most Spaniards wanted was to get out and seek their fortunes in parts as yet untried and unknown" (p. 294). Despite attempts by the Crown at efficient and orderly administration, the experience of the Spanish Main was later shared by many other parts of the New World.
- 4 Simpson, *Encomienda*, 29–38 and 123–44, contains an analysis of the Laws of Burgos and the New Laws respectively.
- 5 For a general discussion of *congregación* and its consequences in colonial Guatemala, see MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 120–42; Jesús Cabezas, *Reducciones indígenas*; Martínez Peláez, *Patria del criollo*, 443–60, 557–64; and Sáenz de Santa María, "Reducción a poblados." A more detailed analysis of the policy may be found in Van Oss, "Catholic Colonialism," 25–82. Other studies, relating primarily to Mexico, against which the Cuchumatán experience may be measured include Simpson, *Administration of the Indians* (Ibero-Americana 7); Cline, "Civil Congregations"; Gibson, *Aztecs*, 282–7; Gerhard, "Congregaciones de indios"; and Salmón, "Tarahumara Resistance."
- 6 From Libro VI, Título III, *Recopilación de leyes de las Indias*, translated in Simpson, *Administration of the Indians* (Ibero-Americana 7), 43.
- 7 Van Oss, "Catholic Colonialism," 27. The *reales cédulas*, issued on 26 February 1538 and 10 June 1540, may be found in AGCA, A.1, leg. 4575, folio 38 verso and A1.22, leg. 1511, folio 10.
- 8 Elliott, *Imperial Spain*, 59, defines *adelantado* as "a hereditary title granted by

medieval Castilian Kings and conferring upon its holder special military powers and the rights of government over a frontier province. The leader of an expedition would also expect to enjoy the spoils of conquest, in the shape of moveable property and captives, and to receive grants of land and a title of nobility." The office is also described in Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 19–22.

- 9 Sherman, "Change in Guatemalan Society," 137. He adds: "Perhaps no other Spanish conqueror left his personal imprint so clearly on a colony as the conqueror of Guatemala."
- 10 Ibid., 176.
- 11 Sherman, "A Conqueror's Wealth," 199–213; Veblen, "Native Population Decline," 492.
- 12 Recinos, *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, 136. The Cakchiquel chronicle states: "In the fifth month of the sixth year after the beginning of our instruction in the word of Our Lord God [July 1548] the houses were grouped together by order of the lord Juan Roser [sic]. Then the people came from the caves and the ravines."
- 13 For a discussion of the concepts and influences behind town founding in Spanish America, see Stanislawski, "Spanish Town Planning," 94–105.
- 14 Remesal, *Historia general* 2:177–80; García Peláez, *Memorias* 1:163; MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 120–3; Martínez Peláez, *Patria del criollo*, 443–60.
- 15 La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, ix.
- 16 From *Recopilación de leyes de las Indias*, cited in Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant*, 67.
- 17 Simpson, *Administration of the Indians* (Ibero-Americana 7), 44.
- 18 Veblen, "Forest Preservation in Totonicapán," 339.
- 19 Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 141–3, has an interesting character sketch of Ramírez. Notoriously promiscuous and temperamental, Judge Ramírez was none the less viewed by the Crown as one of its most capable and responsible officers. Apart from the other duties he performed, Ramírez led the first expedition against the Lacandones in 1559, organized by the Spaniards in an attempt to halt the sacking of Christian towns in Chiapas and the Cuchumatanes by the unsubdued infidels of the Usumacinta rain forest. See Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 382–3.
- 20 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 178–80, reviews Remesal's contribution. Several reservations aside, Carmack considers Remesal to be "an important source on the early history and cultures of Guatemala."
- 21 Remesal, *Historia general* 2:259. Aguacatán exists today as the *cabecera* of the *municipio* of the same name.
- 22 Remesal, *Historia general* 1:243–4. Jacaltenango, Chiantla, Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Huehuetenango, San Antonio Huista, and Santa Ana Huista exist today as *cabeceras* of their respective *municipios*. San Martín is an

*aldea* of the *municipio* of Todos Santos Cuchumatán. Collins, “Colonial Jacaltenango”, 146–55, has a slightly different reconstruction of missionization in the Cuchumatán region than Remesal. She writes that, by 1555, the Mercedarians “were carrying out missionary activities at the foot of the Cuchumatanes,” which suggests that Remesal (himself a Dominican) may have been overly generous in recording the accomplishments of his order.

- 23 Remesal, *Historia general* 2:178–9. Chajul, Nebaj, San Juan Cotzal, and Cunén exist today as *cabeceras* of their respective *municipios*. Some of the smaller settlements that furnished populations for the *congregaciones* in the Ixil country also still exist. For example, Ylom (now Ilom) and Chel are *aldeas* of the *municipio* of Chajul; Huyl (now Juil) and Chaxá are *caseríos* of the same *municipio*. Namá is a *caserío* of the *municipio* of San Juan Cotzal. Zalchil (now Salquíl) is an *aldea* of the *municipio* of Nebaj. Colby and van den Berghe, *Ixil Country*, 43, incorrectly state that Chaxá and Namá may no longer exist. Both settlements are still in existence and are listed as *caseríos* in Morales Urrutia, *División política* 1:450 and 1:456. Chaxá is also clearly marked on the 1:50,000 topographic map of Tzijaá published by the Instituto Geográfico Nacional; it lies about ten kilometres northeast of Chajul. Namá is also clearly marked on the 1:50,000 topographic map of Nebaj; it lies about four kilometres southeast of San Juan Cotzal. The existence of such formerly cleared settlements as populated places in the present day suggests a definite resettlement trend some time during the past four hundred years. Resettlement of outlying areas from established *congregaciones* possibly occurred after the third quarter of the seventeenth century when the native population, emerging from 160 years of post-contact collapse, began slowly to increase in number and hence precipitate the need for more agricultural land. Alternatively, cleared districts could have been resettled much earlier by fugitive Indians returning to their former homes to escape paying tribute or rendering labour to Spanish authorities in the *congregaciones*.

24 See note 23 above.

25 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 29; see also Hill, “The Chinamitales of Sacapulas.”

26 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391. This tribute list spans the years 1664–78. See also AGI: Contaduría 815, a record of tribute payers for the year 1683.

27 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391; AGI: Contaduría 815.

28 Tovilla, *Relación histórica*, 218.

29 AGCA, A1, leg. 6037, exp. 53258.

30 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391. AGI: Contaduría 815, dated 1683, also records five *parcialidades* as discrete, tax-paying units. Four are listed by their Indian names (Cutlán, Tulteca, Acunil, and Bechauazar), with Magdalena the sole one identified by Spanish nomenclature. The *parcialidad* known as Tulteca possibly included some of the descendants of the Tlaxcalan

auxiliaries who settled in Sacapulas when the wars of conquest were over. They were likely attracted to the town by the possibility of being granted control of the nearby salt springs as a reward for the military assistance they gave to the Spaniards. See Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 37–9.

Sacapulas was not the only town in the Cuchumatanes where Tlaxcalan Indians settled. There were also important Tlaxcalan contingents living in the mid-sixteenth century at Aguacatán and Huehuetenango. Many Tlaxcalans chose to settle in Guatemala after the conquest, rather than return to their native Mexico. They frequently solicited Spanish authorities for special favours and privileges over local Indians as a reward for their role in the conquest. In recognition of their contribution, the Spaniards would grant Tlaxcalans exemption from paying tribute or rendering agricultural labour, in theory if not always in practice. The experience of the Tlaxcalan residents of Aguacatán and Huehuetenango was not a happy one. In 1561, they complained bitterly to the Crown that their special status and rights were being violated as they were being forced to work and to pay tribute. They also claimed that they were being forced to buy merchandise at inflated prices from the local judge and priests. The Tlaxcalans considered their treatment unjust, since they had already suffered great hardships and deprivations “in the service of Your Majesty” under the *conquistador* Pedro de Alvarado. The settlers were so dissatisfied with their treatment that they requested to be administered by authorities in Mexico who, they felt, would treat them with the respect they deserved. See AGI:AG52.

- 31 AGCA, A1, leg. 6037, exp. 53258; A1, leg. 6040, exp. 53305. Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 60 and 208, correlates the *parcialidad* of Santo Tomás with the Lamaquib lineage and associates the *parcialidad* of Santiago with the Canil lineage “who came from Tula.” See also AGCA, A1, leg. 5979, exp. 52536.
- 32 Plate 19 is a reproduction of a map sketched in 1794 under the supervision of Joseph Domingo Hidalgo. Land surrounding the town site of Sacapulas was owned and operated by the various *parcialidades* that constituted the *congregación*. The map records an ill-fated plan by Spanish authorities to redraw property boundaries in such a way as to create a sizeable *ejido* out of privately owned land on the north and south banks of the river in the immediate vicinity of the town site. The map forms part of the documents found in AGCA, A1, leg. 6042, exp. 53327.
- 33 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 206–9, has a summary of the conflict. For a full and detailed discussion, see Hill, “The Chinamitales of Sacapulas.”
- 34 Remesal, *Historia general* 2:259.
- 35 See, for example, the tribute lists for 1677 (AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391) and 1683 (AGI: Contaduría 815). The latter also records a *parcialidad* known as Comitán, with only four tributaries, compared to 64 for Aguacatán and 91 for Chalchitán.

- 36 McArthur and McArthur, "Aguacatec," in Mayers, *Languages of Guatemala*, 140, and Brintnall, *Revolt Against the Dead*, 61–87. Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 75, actually refers to "el doble pueblo de Aguacatán y Chalchitán."
- 37 La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, xi, 4, 63. The name "Paiconop" means "former village." The Spaniards probably first settled Paiconop and built a church there because the site was an important pre-Columbian ceremonial centre.
- 38 For a discussion of the expeditions undertaken with a view to pacifying the Lacandones, see Stone, *Spanish Entradas*, 208–96 and de Vos, *Paz de Dios*. The efforts of the Spaniards to Christianize the Lacandones and to congregate them into towns never had any permanent degree of success; see Tozzer, "Spanish Manuscript Letter," 497–509. At the beginning of the eighteenth century it was suggested that, in order to stop any further depredations, the Lacandones should be moved from their Usumacinta homeland and settled in the Cuchumatanes at a site named Asantic or Asantih, near San Mateo Ixtatán. Whether or not this resettlement occurred is not known; see AGI:AG225 and Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 396–7.
- 39 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:39.
- 40 Ibid.; La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, 68.
- 41 Colby and van den Bergh, *Ixil Country*, 40; Elliott and Elliott, "Ixil," in Mayers, *Languages of Guatemala*, 126. The decision to resettle Ixil-speaking Indians of Ilom at the Kanjobal-speaking town of Santa Eulalia makes very little sense, but is a good indication of how little the Spaniards understood, or cared about, spoken ethnic affiliations. The distance from Ilom to Santa Eulalia is also about twice the distance from Ilom to Chajul. The Indians from Ilom who were resettled at Chajul presumably formed there the *parcialidad* known as Ilom. That Ixil-speaking Indians were indeed moved from Ilom to Santa Eulalia is attested by the recording of Ixil speakers there in notes made by Father Baltasar Valdivia, a Spanish missionary priest living and working among the Ixil around the middle of the nineteenth century. See Elliott and Elliott, "Ixil," 127.
- 42 Termer, *Etnología y etnografía de Guatemala*, 7–8; Ximénez, *Historia* 2:221; Tovilla, *Relación histórica*, 209. Ximénez has the following account: "In the year 1664 the Lacandones arrived at the cornfields of the town of Chajul, and in one [field] they came across an [Ixil] mother who was breast-feeding her child; the mother escaped, but left the child behind, running to the town [for safety]. The Indians [of Chajul] took up arms, and marched to the cornfields four leagues out of town, but when they arrived there the Lacandones had already fled. It was discovered that the child left behind had been sacrificed, its chest torn open and its heart pulled out."
- 43 Martínez Peláez, *Patria del criollo*, 245–6; AGCA, A1, leg. 6118, exp. 56749, which concerns Indian flight at Nebaj towards the end of the colonial period; AGCA, A3.16, leg. 249, exp. 5036. This last *expediente* records that the

Indians of Soloma parish abandoned their *congregaciones* for the open countryside following a terrible outbreak of typhus in the early nineteenth century. It was initially thought by the Spaniards that the Indians would be better cared for in *congregaciones* in times of crises, particularly during an outbreak of disease. Unintentionally, *congregación* probably had the opposite effect, since infectious diseases spread more easily in areas of dense population than in dispersed settlements like those formerly inhabited by the Indians. See MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 121.

- 44 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 231, 310–29. The notion of the seventeenth century as being a time of general economic contraction was first advanced by Woodrow Borah in his 1951 monograph *New Spain's Century of Depression*. Since then a number of studies have either challenged or modified, chiefly at the local or regional level, the interpretation of the seventeenth century as one of economic depression. This literature, for the most part spatially confined to Mexico, includes Bakewell, *Silver Mining*; Boyer, "Mexico in the Seventeenth Century"; Brading, *Miners and Merchants and Haciendas and Ranchos*; Brading and Cross, "Colonial Silver Mining"; Hoberman, "Merchants in Seventeenth-Century Mexico City"; and Israel, "General Crisis" and *Race, Class, and Politics*. Although lively debate continues, fruitful resolution of conflicting viewpoints will most likely come from scholars who, like Hegel, understand that history, and everything in history, proceeds from thesis, through antithesis, to synthesis. Gibson, "Writings on Colonial Mexico," 307, calls for such reconciliation, and Te Paske and Klein, "Seventeenth-Century Crisis," move cautiously in the same direction.

It is difficult to know what effect this debate will have on the historiography of Central America. Recently Wortman, *Government and Society*, 15–16, and "Elites and Hapsburg Administration," has questioned the depression thesis articulated by MacLeod, in much the same way as the Mexican inquiries mentioned above took issue with Borah. It may well be that in the years ahead studies will appear that contradict or refine MacLeod's depiction of Central America between 1635 and 1720 as having been in a state of economic contraction. MacLeod, "Ethnic Relations and Indian Society," 190, himself alludes to this possibility, predicting that generalized interpretations of the Central American past "will undergo heavy revision, if not demolition, as the detailed monographic literature grows." In the meantime, MacLeod's contribution must stand, in the absence of work in any way comparable to it, as the most developed, intelligible, and plausible framework by which to investigate the colonial experience in Central America.

- 45 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 68–95, 176–203, 308. The quotation may be found in Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 383, which contains information taken from AGI:AG968.



- 46 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 326-7. Evidence from AGI: Patronato 69-1-5, indicates that a rebellion on the part of the Indians of Aguacatán, Ilo, and Serquil resulted in the deaths of several Spaniards as early as 1534. Accounts of violent confrontation in northwestern Guatemala may also be found in Bricker, *Indian Christ*, 77-84, and AGCA, A1.21, leg. 5504, exp. 56774.
- 47 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 328. See also La Farge, "Maya Ethnology" and Wolf, "Closed Corporate Peasant Communities."
- 48 Wasserstrom, *Class and Society*, 69-106, and "Spaniards and Indians," 118-19.
- 49 La Farge, "Maya Ethnology," 282-91; MacLeod, "Ethnic Relations and Indian Society," 202-3, 206-7.
- 50 Gibson, *Spain in America*, 75, considers that the missionary endeavours of the friars responsible for *congregación* succeeded not in converting the Indians to orthodox Christianity but in creating a "syncretic" religion that was essentially "Catholic-Christian in its externals but non-Christian in some of its basic postulates or in its enveloping world view."
- 51 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:15.
- 52 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 206-8.
- 53 AGI:AG168.
- 54 Ibid.
- 55 Ibid.
- 56 A reformist Crown official of the same mould as Alonso López de Cerrato, Zorita arrived in Guatemala in 1553 to help implement the New Laws of 1542. Keen, in Zorita, *Brief and Summary Relation*, 33-6, provides an account of the *oidor's* experiences there. Zorita set out on his first *visita*, or tour of inspection, early in March 1555, arriving in Sacapulas later that same month. Over the six months his *visita* lasted, Zorita travelled on foot throughout Guatemala, touring remote and mountainous regions like the Cuchumatanes that few important Spanish officials had ever reached before. A zealous destroyer of native idols, Zorita may have been popular with the Dominican friars of Sacapulas, but he was hated by secular Spaniards whose privileges as recipients of Indian tribute and labour he attempted to curtail. Successful lobbying by his enemies in Guatemala eventually resulted in Zorita being transferred to the Audiencia of Mexico in 1556.
- 57 AGI:AG168.
- 58 Ibid. The friars also make grim reference to reports about Indians in other parts of Guatemala who, according to Zorita, committed suicide by throwing themselves from hilltops in order to escape abuse and exploitation.
- 59 Elliott and Elliott, "Ixil," 126. The Elliots cite as their source papers found inside the baptismal registry for the town of Chajul for the years 1676-8.

Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:48, mentions “indios fugitivos” in the Chajul area in the late eighteenth century, suggesting that the problem of fugitivism, in the Ixil area at any rate, was never satisfactorily resolved.

60 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:26.

61 *Ibid.*, 40. Fuentes y Guzmán claims that, with the help of Friar Alonso Páez, he personally went to Asantih in 1673 and forced the forty families living there back to the *congregación* at San Mateo Ixtatán. This was an extremely risky business, as Asantih lay only four leagues from Lacandón country. Asantih was where the Spanish authorities suggested Lacandones themselves be resettled. See AGI:AG225 and Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 396–7. The measures taken by Fuentes y Guzmán had no lasting impact and set no enduring example, for there was widespread anarchy at San Mateo by 1687. See AGCA, A1, leg. 2, exp. 23, which tells of rampant civil disobedience, including idolatry, tribal feuding, evasion of taxes, and intimidation of the parish priest.

62 La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, x.

63 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:26–7; AGCA, A1, leg. 2, exp. 23. The Indians of San Juan Atitán who committed the sacrilegious acts to the old Mayan gods were eventually brought to justice. They were taken to Huehuetenango where, after a public flogging, they were forced to work for the parish church. For a full narration of the incident, see Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:27.

64 AGCA, A1, leg. 2, exp. 23.

65 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6035, exp. 55410.

66 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 255, exp. 5719.

67 Bricker, *Indian Christ*, 177–81; Wasserstrom, “Spaniards and Indians,” 106–17.

68 Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:44.

69 A Spanish priest working in the Ixil country in the mid-nineteenth century considered that “after three hundred years of being evangelized, [the Indians] are seen today to be in a worse state than in the first century, marching backwards toward their ancient barbarities, mixed with vices and irreligion of other castes”; see Elliott and Elliott, “Ixil,” 127. For studies on the continuity of pre-Columbian systems of belief, see La Farge, *Santa Eulalia*, and Oakes, *Todos Santos*.

70 Farriss, “Population Movement,” 216.

71 *Ibid.*, 188.

72 García Bernal, *Población y encomienda*, 111; G. Jones, “Last Maya Frontiers,” 64–88; Cook and Borah, *Essays* 2:114–20.

73 Gerhard, *Southeast Frontier*, 29–30.

- 74 Watson and Lovell, "Estimating Population Change"; Wasserstrom, *Class and Society*, 89–90.
- 75 This observation can easily be confirmed by perusing the relevant sections of the *Octavo censo de población*, which contains the results of the national census undertaken in 1973. A more qualitative assessment is contained in Wagley, "Northwestern Guatemala," 46–68.
- 76 Gibson, *Spain in America*, 90–9; Cline, "Territorial Divisions," 24–6; Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 161–2.
- 77 Gibson, *Spain in America*, 68–78; Cline, "Territorial Divisions," 26–7; Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 166–93.
- 78 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 23, 400.
- 79 Gerhard, "Colonial New Spain," 132.
- 80 Part of the legislation known as the Bourbon Reforms, the intendency system, introduced throughout Spanish America in the second half of the eighteenth century, was designed "to centralize the colonial administration still further under the Crown, to eliminate abuses of officeholding, and to increase the royal revenue" (Gibson, *Spain in America*, 170). The impact of the Bourbon Reforms in Guatemala is explored in detail in Wortman, "Bourbon Reforms," 222–38, and *Government and Society*, 129–56.
- 81 Cline, "Viceroyalty to Republics," 161; Juarros, *Compendio*, 46–8.
- 82 Cline, "Territorial Divisions," 27.
- 83 Ponce, San Juan, and Ciudad Real, "Relación breve," 208–12; Remesal, *Historia general* 1:242–4. Collins, "Colonial Jacaltenango," 148, citing a source in the local archive, has established that the Mercedarians were present in Jacaltenango at least ten years prior to Ponce's trip through the Cuchumatanes. According to Remesal, the Mercedarians left Spain for the New World in 1537, arriving that same year in Chiapas and entering Guatemala a year later in 1538. They came to Guatemala, as did all the missionary orders, with royal permission. In 1542, the Mercedarians were given land in the newly founded capital of Santiago, where they built a monastery. Remesal, a Dominican, claims that the first Mercedarians were not "missionary oriented," restricting themselves exclusively to the spiritual welfare of Spaniards and Creoles. He claims that only after the Dominicans ceded parts of "Quiché and Sacapulas" to the Mercedarians did the latter spread north and west from Santiago with any degree of missionary commitment. For a general history of the Mercedarian Order in the New World, see Nolasco Pérez, *Historia de las misiones mercedarias*. Their arrival in Guatemala is commemorated in Zúñiga Corres "Aniversario." See also Van Oss, "Catholic Colonialism," 59–60 and Collins, "Colonial Jacaltenango," 148–55.
- 84 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:15–44.
- 85 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 466; Cline, "Territorial Divisions," 27; Juarros, *Compendio*, 46.

## CHAPTER 7

- 1 The word *encomienda* is derived from the Spanish verb *encomendar*, which means “to entrust.” *Encomiendas* were not grants of land but rather titles to the right to receive tribute. The title to an *encomienda* carried with it certain obligations, among which was the instruction of the Catholic faith to the Indians held in *encomienda*. The standard work in English on the institution is Simpson, *Encomienda in New Spain*. Other important contributions include Zavala, *La encomienda indiana* and *De encomiendas y propiedad territorial*; Chamberlain, “Castilian Backgrounds of the Repartimiento-Encomienda”; Kirkpatrick, “Repartimiento-Encomienda”; and Lockhart, “Encomienda and Hacienda.” A splendid regional analysis of *encomienda* may be found in Gibson, *Aztecs*, 58–81 and 413–34. For a study of the institution in sixteenth-century Guatemala, see Rodríguez Becerra, *Encomienda y conquista*.
- 2 The six towns were Todos Santos Cuchumatán, Sacapulas, Soloma, Jacaltenango, Aguacatán, and Huehuetenango. Todos Santos was held, in part, by the younger sons of Marcos Ruiz. Ruiz participated in the conquest of Mexico under the leadership of Hernán Cortés and in the conquest of Guatemala under Pedro de Alvarado; see AGI: Patronato 82-1-4. All of Aguacatán and half of Sacapulas were held by the younger son of Juan Páez. Páez, like Ruiz, was a veteran of campaigns in both Mexico and Guatemala; see AGI: Patronato 68-2-3. Jacaltenango was held by the younger son of Gonzalo de Ovalle. Ovalle was a prominent figure in the conquest of Guatemala, furnishing (at his own expense) men, weapons, and horses for the *entrada* of 1524. He later served as the *alcalde mayor* of Chiapas under the rapacious Francisco de Montejo; see AGI: Patronato 75-2-5 and Gerhard, *Southeast Frontier*, 152–3. Soloma was held jointly by Diego de Alvarado and Juan de Astroqui, the former being one of the many *hijos naturales* of the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado. Don Diego claimed that the *encomienda* of Soloma came to him by virtue of lawful inheritance from his father. This suggests, therefore, that Pedro de Alvarado had himself, between 1524 and 1541, held the *encomienda* of Soloma as part of his impressive private estate; see AGI: Justicia 280–4.
- 3 Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 388. Huehuetenango was the most lucrative *encomienda* in the entire Cuchumatán region. Rumoured to be a hosier by trade, Espinar fought with distinction in the conquests of Mexico and Guatemala, his feats in the latter campaign earning him such a prestigious *encomienda*.
- 4 AGCA, A1.39, leg. 1751, folios 78 verso, 81 verso, 192 verso, 211.
- 5 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 2808, exp. 40648.
- 6 AGCA, A1, leg. 1752, folio 17 verso.
- 7 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 2890, exp. 42579, 42580, 42581, 42587.

- 8 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 63–4.
- 9 AGI:AG128; AGCA, A3, leg. 2863, exp. 41698; Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:47–8, 349; Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 92.
- 10 AGCA, A3, leg. 2863, exp. 41698 and A3.16, leg. 2798, exp. 40470. Pimentel's landholdings around Huehuetenango are discussed in chapter 8.
- 11 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 2808, exp. 40633.
- 12 AGI:AG10; see also AGI: Patronato 61-2-4.
- 13 See, for example, AGCA, A3.9, leg. 2899, exp. 43044, which mentions a shortage of skilled mine workers in the Chiantla area because of high Indian mortality during an outbreak of typhus. See also AGI: Patronato 61-2-4, in which it is explicitly stated that the Indians of Chiantla and Huehuetenango "han venido en disminución" and that the *encomienda* "ha venido a menos."
- 14 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391.
- 15 AGCA, A1, leg. 1752, folio 17 verso.
- 16 AGCA, A3, leg. 2863, exp. 41698.
- 17 See Gibson, *Spain in America*, 118, who writes: "Historians once took the position that *hacienda* developed directly from *encomienda*. The two histories are now regarded as distinct."
- 18 Lockhart, "Encomienda and Hacienda," 416.
- 19 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 293.
- 20 AGCA, A1, leg. 1752, folio 17 verso. For comparative purposes, see Collins, "Colonial Jacaltenango," 74–103, which reconstructs the *encomienda* history of Jacaltenango.
- 21 Cook and Borah, *Essays* 1:17–25; Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 263–5; Miranda, *Tributo indígena*.
- 22 Archivo General de Simancas, legajo 6, número 53, *Sumario general de lo que valen todas las Indias a Su Magestad* and Wortman, *Government and Society*, 153. The former material is a financial summary compiled for the King's benefit using the latest fiscal accounts at hand. Although dated 1558, the information relating to Guatemala probably pertains to the late 1540s, since the Cerrato *tasaciones* are cited as the source of information.
- 23 Cook and Borah, *Essays* 1:20; Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 277.
- 24 AGI: Contaduría 969 (1595); 815 (1683); 973 (1710).
- 25 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:18, mentions that failure to collect the appropriate amount of tribute in the Ixil country at the end of the seventeenth century resulted in the imprisonment of six Indian *alcaldes*, who were thrown in jail for over two years. The chronicler himself considered such a long detention "severe and miserable."
- 26 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 131.
- 27 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391.
- 28 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 501, exp. 10261, 10263.

- 29 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 246, exp. 4912; Wortman, "Bourbon Reforms," 222–38. According to Wortman, "Government Revenue and Economic Trends," 277, the total government revenue from the Indian tribute of Guatemala in the early nineteenth century "averaged almost 100,000 pesos annually." Indian tribute was one of the four major sources of Crown income in Central America, the other three being (1) revenue from government monopolies such as tobacco, liquor, and playing cards; (2) taxes on trade and commerce; and (3) the state's share of the church tithe.
- 30 These words come from the *Libro mayor de la contaduría general de tributos del cargo de su contador Don Juan José de Leuro*, cited in Van Aken, "Indian Tribute in Ecuador," 431.
- 31 See, for example, AGCA, A1.1, leg. 6111, exp. 56055, concerning drought; A3.16, leg. 2901, exp. 43258, concerning earthquakes; A3.16, leg. 2899, exp. 43061 and exp. 43062, concerning fire; and A3.16, leg. 2899, exp. 43064, concerning locust invasions.
- 32 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 249, exp. 5036.
- 33 The word *repartimiento* is derived from the Spanish verb *repartir*, which means "to allocate, distribute, or partition."
- 34 Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 194.
- 35 Simpson, *Administration of the Indians* (Ibero-Americana 13), is an important contribution to our understanding of how the *repartimiento de trabajo* operated. Gibson, *Spain in America*, 143–7, contains a general review of the institution, as do Villamarin and Villamarin, *Indian Labor*, 16–19. Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 191–207, studies the operation of the *repartimiento de trabajo* in a specifically Central American context, as does MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 207 and 295–6.
- 36 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 295.
- 37 Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 71, 92, 289, 444; Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:47–8.
- 38 AGI:AG128. A *xiquipil* was a basic Indian measure of eight thousand cacao beans. Three *xiquipiles* equalled about as much as a *tameme*, an Indian porter, could carry. It would therefore have taken the labour of five able-bodied men to carry the necessary tribute from Suchitepéquez to Sacapulas, a distance of roughly one hundred kilometres. See Bergmann, "Cacao Cultivation," 87–91.
- 39 See MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 87. Various pieces of correspondence relating to sixteenth-century migrations from the Guatemalan highlands to the Pacific coast may be found in AGI:AG10, AG39, and AG40.
- 40 AGI:AG128. See also Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 193, 205.
- 41 Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 193.
- 42 Borah, *Century of Depression*, 39–40.
- 43 Webre, "Cabildo Membership," 234–40.

- 44 AGCA, A1, leg. 157, exp. 10201; A1.22, leg. 2891, exp. 26645; A1.21.8, leg. 190, exp. 3860; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 215. Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:15–27, contains sharp criticism by the Archbishop of the extortions inflicted upon the Indians by Juan Bácaro.
- 45 AGCA, A3, leg. 224, exp. 4073; A3, leg. 2775, exp. 40090; A3.12, leg. 224, exp. 4012; A3.12, leg. 226, exp. 4084.
- 46 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 385–9; AGI:AG225; AGCA, A1.12, leg. 6095, exp. 55413 and A1.22, leg. 3024, exp. 29157.
- 47 Gibson, *Spain in America*, 147.
- 48 AGCA, A3, leg. 2775, exp. 40090.
- 49 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 201.
- 50 AGCA, A1, leg. 6001, exp. 52831; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 201–2.
- 51 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6096, exp. 55491.
- 52 Ibid.
- 53 Borah, *Century of Depression*, 42.
- 54 MacLeod, "Ethnic Relations and Indian Society," 194.
- 55 See Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 162, for a general discussion of the *caja de comunidad* and its abuse by Crown officials. For an example of the misdeemeanour in the Cuchumatán region, see (among many examples) AGCA, A1.73, leg. 2805, exp. 24655 and 24656, which concern pilfering in the late colonial period.
- 56 For an account of such malpractice in the Cuchumatanes, see AGCA, A1, leg. 2, exp. 23 and A1.24, leg. 4649, exp. 39688. Dated 1687, the former *expediente* includes documentation charging that the *corregidor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, Captain Joseph de Arria, caused the ruin of the Indians through, among other extortions, heavy taxation and forced acceptance of unwanted goods. An inquiry into Arria's conduct was undertaken by the *corregidor* of Quezaltenango, the charges against him having been laid earlier by the Bishop of Guatemala. The latter *expediente*, dated 1716, requests the Captain General of Chiapas, Pedro Gutiérrez de Mier y Terán, to conduct an inquiry into various abuses of office committed by the *alcalde mayor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, Lucas Colomo. The *expediente* contains allegations that Colomo, among other things, embezzled funds, falsified tributary numbers, did not pay the going rate for goods supplied to him, and was overzealous in his collection of tribute.
- 57 Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 132–3, has a general discussion of the *repartimiento de mercancías*. For Chiapas, see Wasserstrom, *Class and Society*, 43–9. For Jacaltenango, see Collins, "Colonial Jacaltenango," 127–30.
- 58 AGCA, A3.12, leg. 2897, exp. 43013; Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:124; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 214–17.
- 59 AGCA, A1.2, leg. 2245, exp. 16190. The government order decreed that "in

order to avoid violations to the Indians" the clergy could request no more than two chickens and a dozen eggs per day, along with a weekly delivery of one *fanega* of corn. Also on a daily basis, an Indian woman was to serve as cook and an Indian male was to gather fodder for horses.

60 Haring, *Spanish Empire*, 192.

61 Ibid., 192-3.

62 AGCA, A1, leg. 2, exp. 23.

63 Ibid.

64 AGCA, A1.1, leg. 6087, exp. 55071.

65 AGCA, A1.1, leg. 6095, exp. 55425.

66 AGCA, A1.1, leg. 6087, exp. 55071.

67 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 72; AGCA, A1.15, leg. 2893, exp. 26696; A1.15, leg. 4149, exp. 32864; A1.24, leg. 1585, exp. 10229; A3.9, leg. 2897, exp. 43005.

68 Disputes over land ownership and property rights are discussed in chapter 8.

69 For an account of the Totonicapán revolt, see Contreras, *Rebelión indígena* and Bricker, *Indian Christ*, 77-84.

70 Evidence of unrest at San Mateo Ixtatán, specifically opposition to the payment of tribute in 1803, may be found in AGCA, A3.16, leg. 2899, exp. 43052. For dissent at San Martín Cuchumatán, see A1.1, leg. 6922, exp. 56945, which concerns an Indian called Manuel Paz, who allegedly spoke out against Spanish hegemony in 1812. His anti-government sentiments were reported to the authorities by Friar Manuel Echevarría. The parish priest of Nebaj, Friar Francisco Domingo Dubón, reported widespread resistance to tribute collection in the Ixil area in 1819, many Indians fleeing to the surrounding hills rather than pay the tax. Other Indians left for the Pacific coast; see AGCA, A1.1, leg. 6118, exp. 56749.

71 Anna, *Loss of America*, 64-114; Bricker, *Indian Christ*, 77-84; Rodríguez, *Cádiz Experiment*, 85.

72 Bricker, *Indian Christ*, 80.

73 Ibid., 81; AGCA, A1.21, leg. 193, exp. 3944 and leg. 194, exp. 4966.

74 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:22-3.

75 Gibson, *Aztecs*, 93, considers the term *derrama* to cover "extra or unauthorized tributes" in general. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 316, defines the system more specifically as one whereby local officials bought goods cheaply and then sold them to the Indians at greatly inflated prices. The reverse of this practice was to purchase goods from Indians at rock-bottom prices and then resell them for a handsome profit. The *salutación* was an illegal tax that Indians were occasionally forced to pay priests or officials who passed through their communities; see AGCA, A1.22, leg. 2600, exp. 21351; Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:25; and MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 315, and "Ethnic Relations and Indian Society," 192.



- 76 AGCA, A1.1, leg. 6111, exp. 56055; 3.16, leg. 2901, exp. 43258; A3.16, leg. 252, exp. 5161; A3.16, leg. 2899, exp. 43064; A3.16, leg. 2899, exp. 43044; A3.16, leg. 249, exp. 5036; A1.14.7, leg. 386, exp. 8037.
- 77 Wasserstrom, "Spaniards and Indians," 107.
- 78 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6096, exp. 55491.

## CHAPTER 8

- 1 For a review of *hacienda* literature, see Mörner, "Spanish American Hacienda," 183–216 and Van Young, "Mexican Rural History," 5–61.
- 2 Borah, *Century of Depression*; Chevalier, *Formation des grands domaines*.
- 3 Borah, *Century of Depression*, 44.
- 4 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 230, 308.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 309.
- 7 Gibson, *Aztecs*, 406–7.
- 8 Taylor, *Landlord and Peasant*.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 201.
- 10 Taylor, "View from the South," 389.
- 11 Wortman, "Elites and Hapsburg Administration" and *Government and Society*, 15–16, 41–90. Wortman is particularly sceptical of MacLeod's characterization of the seventeenth century in Central America as being one of economic depression. For his part, MacLeod, "Ethnic Relations and Indian Society," 189–90, makes the point that "the monographic regional work on which ... general studies perhaps should have been based has hardly begun." In acknowledging that past research, his own included, must always be open to revision, MacLeod exhibits a maturity and flexibility of intellect all too rare in the academic world.
- 12 Taylor, "View from the South," 387–413.
- 13 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 80–95, 235, 374–89.
- 14 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:49–51; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 54–5, 75–8. According to Fuentes y Guzmán, there existed a rich gold mine near San Francisco Motozintla, the location of which the Indians of the town wished to conceal from the Spaniards. On one occasion, the natives led their parish priest blindfolded to the mine, allowing him to help himself to as much gold as he could carry. The priest, Friar Francisco Bravo, was granted this concession (after much persistence on his part) as he was soon leaving Guatemala to return to Spain. Although sworn to secrecy, the friar informed government officials in Santiago de Guatemala of the Motozintla mine before he departed for home. Representatives of the Crown, led by Licenciado Juan Maldonado de Paz, soon arrived in Motozintla and

demanded that the Indians inform them of the mine's whereabouts. Despite imprisonment, torture, and the threat of hanging (some Indians, the chronicler tells us, were actually executed for their silence) the natives refused to yield to Spanish intimidation. After eleven months of fierce interrogation, Maldonado de Paz returned to the capital without any gold to show for his extreme heavy-handedness. Upon his arrival in Spain, Friar Francisco Bravo donated the Motozintla gold he brought back to his home town of Málaga, where it was used to adorn an image of San Pedro Nolasco. See also AGI: Patronato 66-1-3.

- 15 Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 71, 92; Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:47–8.
- 16 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:44–51, and Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 53–79, contain valuable summaries of the mining operations carried out at Chiantla by both Spaniards and Indians. There is also some documentation on the subject in the AGCA, including an interesting set of *expedientes* relating to lead working in the eighteenth century (A1.24, leg. 6091, exp. 55307; A3, leg. 224, exp. 4013; A3.9, leg. 2899, exp. 43044; A3.9, leg. 2900, exp. 43193). The famous image of the Virgin in the parish church, known as Nuestra Señora de Chiantla, was itself made from the silver of nearby mines. A large mural in the parish church, badly damaged in the earthquake of 4 February 1976, records the mining tradition of the community (see plate 20). For a discussion of colonial silver mining in Honduras, see Newson, "Colonial Mining Industry," 185–203.
- 17 AGCA, A3, leg. 2863, exp. 41698. A *caballería* is a unit of land measuring approximately 42 hectares.
- 18 AGCA, A3, leg. 2863, exp. 41698.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 AGCA, A3, leg. 2863, exp. 41696.
- 21 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 222–4, 310–29.
- 22 AGCA, A1.20, leg. 1495, exp. 9974; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 197.
- 23 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 197; Wortman, *Government and Society*, 32–3.
- 24 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 198.
- 25 Ibid.; AGCA, A1.43, leg. 2895, exp. 26738.
- 26 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 200–1; AGCA, A3, leg. 2775, exp. 49990; A1.24, leg. 6096, exp. 55491.
- 27 Plate 21 is a reproduction of a map that accompanies the general survey of late colonial life in Guatemala undertaken by Archbishop Cortés y Larraz between 1768 and 1770. The *haciendas* known as El Rosario and Chancol, two of the finest ranching operations established on the rich pastures of the Altos de Chiantla, are numbered 5 and 6 respectively. Other settlements represented are Chiantla (1); Aguacatán and Chalchitán (2);

- Todos Santos Cuchumatán (3); and San Martín Cuchumatán (4). The original sketch, an attractive watercolour, may be found in AGI: Mapas y Planos (Guatemala 151).
- 28 AGCA, A1, leg. 6001, exp. 52831; Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 201–2. The holdings of Barrutia were sold in 1830 to Joaquín Mont y Prats for 15,000 pesos. The estate was finally dismantled by the Guatemalan government at the end of the nineteenth century.
- 29 See, for example, AGCA:ST, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 1, exp. 8 and A1.24, leg. 1577, folio 3, which concern a title to seven *caballerías* of land on the Altos de Chiantla awarded to the Mercedarian monastery of Jacaltenango in 1708; AGCA:ST, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 1, exp. 7 and exp. 12, relating to land owned by *cofradías* in Aguacatán and Chalchitán in the early eighteenth century; AGCA:ST, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 1, exp. 17, which concerns land held privately by the parish priest of Cuilco, Friar Antonio González of the Order of Merced, in the mid-eighteenth century; and AGCA:ST Huehuetenango, *paquete* 2, exp. 3, dealing with land owned in the late eighteenth century by the parish priest of San Pedro Necta.
- 30 Simpson, *Administration of the Indians in New Spain* (Ibero-Americana 7), 44; Veblen, "Forest Preservation in Totonicapán," 339.
- 31 See, for example, AGCA, A1, leg. 6006, exp. 52897, which concerns a title to 27 *caballerías* of land awarded to the Indian community of San Andrés Cuilco on 25 May 1759.
- 32 AGCA:ST, El Quiché, *paquete* 1, exp. 4; Solano, *Tierra y sociedad*, 114–53.
- 33 See, for example, AGCA:ST, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 1, exp. 1 and *paquete* 2, exp. 8, both relating to a land dispute between Todos Santos Cuchumatán and Santiago Chimaltenango in the 1660s.
- 34 AGCA, A1, leg. 6042, exp. 53327.
- 35 AGCA, A1.11, leg. 6106, exp. 55864, 55865, 55802, 55800; AGCA:ST, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 1, exp. 7, 12.
- 36 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:24–5.
- 37 AGCA, A1, leg. 2, exp. 23; A1.17.7, leg. 210, 5008; A1.44, leg. 6115, exp. 56343; Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:126; Davis, "Land of our Ancestors," 253.
- 38 The problem of Lacandón raids up into Cuchumatán *congregaciones* is discussed more fully in chapter 6.
- 39 AGCA, A1, leg. 5983, exp. 52607; A1, leg. 6051, exp. 53484.
- 40 AGCA:ST, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 1, exp. 17.
- 41 AGCA, A1.45.6, leg. 386, exp. 8058.
- 42 AGCA, A1, leg. 5960, exp. 52251.
- 43 Ibid.
- 44 Ibid.
- 45 AGCA, A1, leg. 5976, exp. 52505.

- 46 Ibid.; A1, leg. 3025, exp. 29183.
- 47 AGCA, A1, leg. 5976, exp. 52505.
- 48 Ibid.
- 49 Davis, "Land of our Ancestors," 253.
- 50 Ibid.
- 51 AGCA, A1.57, leg. 6117, exp. 56583.
- 52 See, for example, AGCA, A1.45.8, leg. 5329, exp. 44907; A1.45.9, leg. 2928, exp. 27452; A1.45.8, leg. 2806, exp. 24672.
- 53 AGCA, A1, leg. 5979, exp. 52536. According to Recinos, *Popol Vuh*, 207 and 368–9, the Lamaq or Lamaquib were one of the groups that came from the East with the Quiché forefathers.
- 54 AGCA, A1, leg. 5978, exp. 52518. Towns on the *camino real* that ran through the Cuchumatanes between central Guatemala and Chiapas were obliged to put up both Spanish and Ladino travellers for the night. Food and lodging should theoretically have been paid for, at the rate of two *reales* per night; see AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6091, exp. 55307, dated 1805.
- 55 AGCA, A1, leg. 5979, exp. 52536; A1, leg. 5978, exp. 52518; A1, leg. 6051, exp. 53470.
- 56 AGCA:ST, El Quiché, *paquete* 1, exp. 5. Pichiquil remains today an *aldea* within the *municipio* of Aguacatán; see Morales Urrutia, *División política* 1:663.
- 57 AGCA, A1.45, leg. 6117, exp. 56588.
- 58 AGCA, A1, leg. 6055, exp. 53546; A1.45, leg. 6118, exp. 56709.
- 59 AGCA, A1.45.1, leg. 2806, exp. 24664. See also AGCA:ST, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 2, exp. 8 and A1.21, leg. 54800, exp. 47154.
- 60 AGCA:ST, Huehuetenango, *paquete* 2, exp. 11; B.100.1, leg. 1419, exp. 33408.
- 61 AGCA, A1, leg. 6025, exp. 53126; A1, leg. 6037, exp. 53257. For a fuller discussion of the conflict, see Hill, "The *Chinamitales* of Sacapulas." Plate 22 shows land in the vicinity of Sacapulas that became the focal point of bitter feuding towards the end of the colonial period. The smaller square, inside of which the church and the *salinas* (salt works) are represented, is the area Spanish authorities wished to see operated as *ejido* or common land. The territory below (west) and to the right (south) of the *ejido*, bounded by the letters A, B, C, and D, was to be held by the *parcialidades* Santiago and San Sebastián, the aboriginal owners of the *salinas* and of the land surrounding them on both banks of the river. The territory below (west) and to the left (north) of the *ejido*, bounded by the letters G, H, K, and M, was to be held by the *parcialidad* San Pedro, an "immigrant" group resettled at Sacapulas in the mid-sixteenth century. Dispute arose when San Pedro attempted to gain access to the salt works depicted in the map as forming part of the *ejido*. Santiago and San Sebastián eventually regained control over the *salinas* and adjacent land on the

south bank of the river, forcing the people of San Pedro to confine their activities to the north bank only. The map forms part of the complex litigation records contained in AGCA, A1, leg. 6025, exp. 53126.

- 62 AGCA, A1, leg. 6021, exp. 53084; A1, leg. 6060, exp. 53305; A1, leg. 6042, exp. 53327. A summary of the internal land conflicts at Sacapulas in the late eighteenth century may be found in Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 206–9.
- 63 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:24.
- 64 AGCA, A1.17.7, leg. 210, exp. 5008; Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:123.
- 65 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:23.
- 66 Plate 23 shows the Spanish *haciendas* and Indian *congregaciones* of Malacatán parish at the time of the general survey conducted by Archbishop Cortés y Larraz (1768–70). The Spanish *haciendas* represented are La Cal (7); Michicil (8); Chiquibal (9); Eleca (10); Ischol (11); Quiahtzui (12); Salchil (13); Zuchil (14); Cancabal (15); and Malo (16). The Indian *congregaciones* from which labour was drawn are Malacatán (1); Santa Bárbara (2); Colotenango (3); Ixtahuacán (4); San Gaspar Ixchil (5); and San Ramón (6). The original sketch, painted in the same watercolour style as plate 21, may be found in AGI: Mapas y Planos (Guatemala 147).
- 67 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6096, exp. 55491.
- 68 See, for example, AGCA, A1.1, leg. 6087, exp. 55071, concerning the passage of sheep driven overland from the Altos de Chiantla to Comitán.
- 69 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:23, 24, 32, 46–7.
- 70 Recinos, *Huehuetenango*, 204. The agricultural fairs at Chiantla were held on 2 February and 8 September each year, in conjunction with the Purification of the Virgin and the Nativity of the Virgin respectively.
- 71 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6096, exp. 55491 records the Moscoso holdings alone as paying “large amounts of sales taxes,” in addition to supporting a guild of hatmakers in Santiago de Guatemala.
- 72 This was particularly the case during and after an outbreak of disease. See, for example, AGCA, A3.16, leg. 2899, exp. 43049; A3.16, leg. 249, exp. 5036; and A1, leg. 6940, exp. 57766. All three *expedientes* discuss in the inability of the Indian population of Soloma to feed themselves, let alone pay tribute, after suffering from outbreaks of typhus and measles during the first quarter of the nineteenth century.
- 73 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:28, 31, 35.
- 74 *Ibid.*, 46; AGCA, A1.17.7, leg. 210, exp. 5008.
- 75 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:33–4.
- 76 Tovilla, *Relación histórica*, 208; Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:123; AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6115, exp. 56343 and A1.22, leg. 195, exp. 3947.
- 77 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:35; AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6115, exp. 56343.

- 78 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:23.
- 79 AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6115, exp. 56343; Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:42.
- 80 As discussed briefly in chapter 2, native holdings in Guatemala were most critically encroached upon during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The events of this period are analysed in more detail in Carmack, "Spanish-Indians Relations," 215–52. C.A. Smith, "Local History in Global Context," 204, reckons that "by the first decade of the twentieth century, Indian communities had lost about half of the lands they traditionally claimed during the colonial period."

## CHAPTER 9

- 1 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 374. For a different interpretation, see Wortman, *Government and Society*, 15–16, 72–90, 129–71.
- 2 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 130, 224.
- 3 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391.
- 4 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:18–22, 51–71; AGI:AG128; AGI:AG10. Sixteenth-century documentary sources that relate to the Indian population of Guatemala are examined in Zamora, "Conquista y crisis demográfica," 297–30.
- 5 A full discussion of how these figures were arrived at may be found in chapter 5.
- 6 The Cerrato *tasaciones* are subjected to a critical analysis in Lovell, Lutz, and Swezey, "Indian Population of Southern Guatemala." They are also appraised carefully in Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 138–40. For an evaluation of the Valverde *tasaciones*, see Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 143, and MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 130–1.
- 7 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 138–9; Veblen, "Native Population Decline," 494–5; Zorita, *Brief and Summary Relation*, 35–6, 271–3.
- 8 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 138–40; Veblen, "Native Population Decline," 495. In a letter to the king dated 30 April 1549, the *cabildo* of Santiago de Guatemala complained bitterly that "Cerrato cut tribute by half, leaving Spanish residents so poor that they can no longer maintain themselves"; see AGI:AG41, which also contains a letter from the *cabildo* dated 6 May 1549 claiming that "the tribute assessments are such that Indian towns scoff while we Spaniards weep." Another letter to the king, from Francisco de Castellanos and Francisco de Ovalle, estimated that the Crown received only 8,000 pesos from Indian tribute when it could in fact receive two or three times as much. This letter, dated 27 April 1556, specifically mentions that Cerrato reassessed tribute without undertaking tours of inspection beforehand; see AGI:AG45. The text of the *tasación* for Todos Santos Cuchumatán

actually records that the *encomenderos* of the community, Marcos Ruiz and García de Aguilar, were “offended by the assessment”; see AGI:AG128.

9 Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 143.

10 AGI:AG10.

11 Ibid. Valverde’s assessment reads as follows: “The town of Huehuetenango, belonging to the *encomienda* of Francisco de la Fuente, resident of [the city] of Santiago de Guatemala, was formerly assessed at 570 tribute payers, each one providing the *encomendero* with cotton cloth, a chicken, and one-half of a *fanega* of corn ... President Valverde and Doctor Villanueva assessed it at 367 tribute payers.”

12 AGI:AG45 and Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 140. A discussion of the various ratios used to convert tributaries into total population may be found in Lovell, Lutz, and Swezey, “Indian Population of Southern Guatemala.” See also Zamora, “Conquista y crisis demográfica,” 300–18.

13 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391. The total number of *tributarios* in the Cuchumatanes was 4040½. Huehuetenango was assessed at 156½.

14 Carmack, “Tecpanaco,” 139–40; Miles, “Sixteenth-Century Pokom-Maya,” 766; Veblen, “Native Population Decline,” 495.

15 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 19; Veblen, “Native Population Decline,” 496.

16 *Gucumatz* or *cocoliztli* is an undetermined type of plague. MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 19, believes that the descriptions of the disease resemble the symptoms of pulmonary plague. Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 264–5, suggests bubonic plague as the most likely diagnosis.

17 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 19; Veblen, “Native Population Decline,” 496. *Matlazáhuatl* is a disease of disputed origin that some scholars believe to be typhus; see S.F. Cook, “Incidence and Significance of Disease,” 321, and Gerhard, *Guide*, 23.

18 AGI: Contaduría 969; *Suma y memoria de los conventos, religiosos, pueblos, visitas y indios que hay en ... Guatemala y Chiapa de la orden de Santo Domingo*. The latter is currently housed in the Biblioteca del Palacio Real, Madrid, MS. 175. A copy of the document also exists in the Sauer Collection, Department of Geography, University of California at Berkeley.

19 The figure for Totonicapán is 5,000 *tostones*. Being the only figure among a dozen others that is expressed in such a conveniently round unit, it is likely a very rough estimate.

20 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 1601, exp. 26391.

21 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida* 259:15–18, 22–44.

22 Borah, “America as Model” and “Renaissance Europe”; Denevan, ed., *Native Population*; Dobyns, *Native American Historical Demography*. Cook and Borah, *Essays* 3:102, summarize their decades of collaborative research on the historical demography of central Mexico in one succinct sentence: “We

conclude, then, that the Indian population of central Mexico, under the impact of factors unleashed by the coming of the Europeans, fell by 1620–1625 to a low of approximately 3% of its size at the time that the Europeans first landed on the shore of Veracruz." Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 343, is equally concise. He writes: "To employ a very simple numerical device to emphasize the amount of depopulation that appears to have occurred, one Native American lived early in the twentieth century where about seventy-two had existed four centuries earlier."

- 23 Gibson, *Spain in America*, 43–7, 136–7. Gibson, *Aztecs*, 403, offers the following reflection on the *Leyenda Negra*: "The Black Legend provides a gross but essentially accurate interpretation of relations between Spaniards and Indians. The legend builds upon the record of deliberate sadism. It flourishes in an atmosphere of indignation, which removes the issue from the category of objective understanding. It is insufficient in its awareness of the institutions of colonial history. But the substantive content of the Black Legend asserts that Indians were exploited by Spaniards, and in empirical fact they were."
- 24 Las Casas, *Brevísima relación*, 45–50.
- 25 Las Casas, quoted in Sherman, *Forced Native Labor*, 182–4.
- 26 Crosby, *Columbian Exchange*, 35–58; Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 8–26; Gerhard, *Guide*, 23; MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 19–20, 38–40; McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, 176–207; Joralemon, "New World Depopulation," 108–27; Zamora, "Conquista y crisis demográfica," 318–22. For an early discussion of the issue with a specific focus on Guatemala, see Shattuck, *Medical Survey*, 1–2, 39–49.
- 27 Crosby, *Columbian Exchange*, 30–1.
- 28 S.F. Cook, "Incidence and Significance of Disease," 324; Dobyns, *Their Number Become Thinned*, 34–6.
- 29 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 20.
- 30 For an account of the first smallpox pandemic, see Crosby, *Columbian Exchange*, 42–58. Guerra, *Influenza*, suggests otherwise.
- 31 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 6–19. For a review of the effect of the Black Death on European society in the mid-fourteenth century, see McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*, 132–75 and Ziegler, *Black Death*, 232–59.
- 32 Motolinía, *Historia de los indios*, 13–14.
- 33 Shattuck, *Medical Survey*, 40–1; MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 19, 98. McBryde, "Influenza," 296–9, argues that the first pandemic to reach Guatemala from Mexico after 1519 was influenza.
- 34 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 40. Shattuck, *Medical Survey*, 41, on the advice of France V. Scholes, dates the pandemic to the year 1521. McBryde, "Influenza," 301–2, suggests that the date should be 1523.
- 35 Recinos, *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, 115. Shattuck, *Medical Survey*, 42, quotes



Fuentes y Guzmán as saying that early colonial Guatemala was densely settled until smallpox and measles from Mexico spread among the native peoples "like fire in dry grass, destroying entire cities of thousands of inhabitants."

- 36 AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6112, exp. 56104 and 56108.
- 37 For accounts of the existence of smallpox elsewhere in the Americas around 1780, see Stearn and Stearn, *Effect of Smallpox*, 44–9; S.F. Cook, "Smallpox in Spanish and Mexican California," 154–5; Simmons, "Smallpox Epidemic," 319–26; Swann, "Disease and Famine," 101–3; and Cooper, *Epidemic Disease*, 56–69.
- 38 AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507, folio 27 verso.
- 39 Ibid., folio 34.
- 40 Ibid.
- 41 Ibid., folio 49.
- 42 Such a high percentage of child mortality is not altogether surprising given that children constituted the majority of the non-immunized population. Regeneration of non-immunized populations permitted the occurrence of smallpox in seven- or eight-year cycles. See Swann, "Disease and Famine," 105.
- 43 AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507, folios 26 and 26 verso.
- 44 For a discussion of the operation of the same set of factors in a north Mexican context, see Swann, "Disease and Famine," 97–109.
- 45 AGCA, A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507, folios 46, 46 verso, and 47.
- 46 Ibid.
- 47 Ibid., folios 35 and 36.
- 48 Asturias, *Historia de la medicina*, 88. See also Dunn, *Guatemala*, 152, and Shattuck, *Medical Survey*, 42.
- 49 Hidalgo, "Descripción."
- 50 AGCA, A1.47, leg. 385, exp. 8012; Hidalgo, "Descripción."
- 51 Hidalgo, "Descripción."
- 52 AGCA, A1.47, leg. 385, exp. 8012, folios 2–3 verso.
- 53 AGCA, A1.47, leg. 192, exp. 3922; A1.4, leg. 6105, exp. 55836.
- 54 AGCA, A1.47, leg. 192, exp. 3922.
- 55 AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6105, exp. 55836.
- 56 AGCA, A1.47, leg. 192, exp. 3922.
- 57 Baxby, *Jenner's Smallpox Vaccine*, 38–88, 179–96; Razzell, *Conquest of Smallpox*, ix.
- 58 The quotation comes from AGCA, A1.47, leg. 4027, exp. 31012. For a full discussion of the Spanish medical mission, see S.F. Cook, "Introduction of Vaccination" 11:543–60 and 12:70–101.
- 59 S.F. Cook, "Introduction of Vaccination" 11:545–6.

- 60 AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6091, exp. 55306, folio 160.
- 61 Ibid.
- 62 AGCA, A1.47, leg. 193, exp. 3929.
- 63 Ibid.
- 64 AGCA, A1.47, leg. 2162, exp. 15558; A1.47, leg. 385, exp. 8012; A1.47, leg. 191, exp. 3905.
- 65 See, for example, AGCA, B.82.3, leg 1095, exp. 24046, 24048, 24050, and 24069, all of which concern an outbreak of smallpox throughout highland Guatemala in 1829–31. The disease was particularly destructive of human life in the Cakchiquel region, especially in San Juan Comalapa and surrounding communities. Other more isolated outbreaks are recorded for San Miguel Totonicapán in 1824 (AGCA, B.68, leg. 98, exp. 2694); San Antonio and Santa Ana Huista in 1825 (AGCA, B.99.2, leg. 1412, exp. 32999); and the Verapaz in 1826 (AGCA, B.82.3, leg. 3587, exp. 81954). Dunn, *Guatemala*, 151–3, also comments on the problems related to the eradication of smallpox in Guatemala.
- 66 Zinsser, *Rats, Lice and History*, 253–64. Gage, *Travels*, 263, has the following description of a typhus outbreak in Guatemala in the early seventeenth century: "The year following [1631] all that country was generally infected with a kind of contagious sickness, almost as infectious as the plague, which they call *tabardillo*. This fever in the very inward parts and bowels scarce continued to the seventh day but commonly took its victims away from the world to a grave the third or fifth day. The filthy smell and stench which came from those who lay sick of this disease was enough to infect the rest of the house, and all that came to see them. It rotted their very mouths and tongues, and made them as black as a coal before they died. Very few Spaniards were infected with this contagion, but the Indians generally were taken with it."
- 67 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6106, exp. 55666.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 255, exp. 5719.
- 70 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6106, exp. 55666, folio 1. Aguirre later arranged for a doctor, one Vicente Bolinaga, to spend over three months travelling throughout the Cuchumatanes, at the cost of six pesos a day, attending to the sick and needy.
- 71 Ibid., folio 28; A1.44, leg. 6097, exp. 55507.
- 72 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6106, exp. 55666, folio 28.
- 73 Ibid.
- 74 Ibid., folio 27.
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 AGCA, A1.49, leg. 192, exp. 3911.
- 77 AGCA, A1.49, leg. 6102, exp. 55699; A1.24, leg. 6101, exp. 55668.

- 78 AGCA, A1.49, leg. 192, exp. 3911, folio 51; Hidalgo, "Descripción."
- 79 AGCA, A1.24, leg. 6102, exp. 55697; A3.1, leg. 2894, exp. 42846; A3.16, leg. 242, exp. 4814; A3.16, leg. 244, exp. 4869.
- 80 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 141, exp. 4811; A3.16, leg. 141, exp. 4811; A3.16, leg. 242, exp. 4814.
- 81 AGCA, leg. 249, exp. 5036; A3.16, leg. 245, exp. 4909, folio 2.
- 82 AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6107, exp. 55898 and 55899.
- 83 AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6107, exp. 55899 and 55900.
- 84 AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6107, exp. 55899.
- 85 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 243, exp. 4853.
- 86 Ibid.
- 87 AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6107, exp. 55898.
- 88 Ibid.
- 89 Ibid.
- 90 Ibid.
- 91 Ibid.
- 92 Ibid.
- 93 Ibid.
- 94 Ibid.
- 95 Ibid.
- 96 Ibid.
- 97 AGCA, A1.4, leg. 6107, exp. 55940.
- 98 Ibid.
- 99 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 249, exp. 5036.
- 100 Ibid., folio 4.
- 101 Ibid., folio 4 verso; A3.16, leg. 243, exp. 4853.
- 102 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 249, exp. 5036, folio 1.
- 103 Ibid., folio 3.
- 104 Ibid.
- 105 Ibid.
- 106 Ibid., folios 4 and 5.
- 107 Ibid., folio 4 verso.
- 108 Ibid., folio 2.
- 109 AGCA, A3.14, leg. 386, exp. 8037, folio 8.
- 110 See, for example, AGCA, A1.47, leg. 2162, exp. 15559; A3.16, leg. 249, exp. 5036; and A1.14, leg. 386, exp. 8037.
- 111 AGCA, A3.16, leg. 2899, exp. 43049.
- 112 AGCA, A1.47, leg. 2162, exp. 15559; A1.4, leg. 6107, exp. 55898.
- 113 For an illustration of this tendency, see Collins, "Colonial Jacaltenango," 48–58, which indicates that population trends in Jacaltenango differed considerably from the general Cuchumatán movement discussed above.

- 114 See chapter 5, note 4, for a listing of studies that document post-conquest Amerindian depopulation throughout Spanish America.

## CHAPTER 10

- 1 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 374–89.
- 2 The characterization is that of Pierre and Huguette Chaunu, quoted in MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, xiv.
- 3 Diego de Garcés, writing in 1570 to the *audiencia* of Guatemala, transcribed from AGI:AG968 and published in Carmack, *Quichean Civilization*, 379–83.
- 4 See C.A. Smith, “Beyond Dependency Theory,” for a discussion of the contemporary core-periphery relationships that characterize national and regional development in Guatemala.
- 5 MacLeod, *Spanish Central America*, 374–5.

## CHAPTER 11

- 1 Newson, *The Cost of Conquest and Colonial Nicaragua*.
- 2 Fowler, *Evolution of Ancient Nahua Civilizations*.
- 3 Hall, *Costa Rica*.
- 4 Farriss, *Maya Society*.
- 5 Clendinnen, *Ambivalent Conquests*.
- 6 Jones, *Maya Resistance*.
- 7 Gasco, “Cacao and the Economic Integration of Native Society.”
- 8 Watson, “Informal Settlement and Fugitive Migration.”
- 9 Chance, *Conquest of the Sierra*.
- 10 van Oss, *Catholic Colonialism*.
- 11 Feldman, *A Tumpline Economy*.
- 12 Luján Muñoz, *Agricultura, mercado y sociedad*.
- 13 Vigil, *Alonso de Zorita*.
- 14 Kramer, “Politics of Encomienda Distribution.”
- 15 Borg, “Ethnohistory of the Sacatepéquez Cakchiquel.”
- 16 Hill, *Pirir Papers and Colonial Cakchiquels*.
- 17 Orellana, *Tzutujil Mayas*.
- 18 Orellana, *Indian Medicine*.
- 19 León Cázares, *Levantamiento en nombre del Rey*.
- 20 Martínez Peláez, *Motines de indios*.
- 21 Lehnhoff, *Espada y pentagrama*.
- 22 Zamora, *Los mayas de las tierras altas*.
- 23 Bertrand, *Terre et société coloniale*.
- 24 Piel, *Sajcabajá*.

- 25 Hill and Monaghan, *Ethnohistory in Sacapulas*.
- 26 Sáenz de Santa María, "Estudio preliminar," lviii.
- 27 AGI:AG 53, "Probanza de méritos y servicios de Gaspar Arias" (1541).
- 28 AGI:AG 58, "Probanza de Francisco de Castellanos" (1545).
- 29 AGI:AG 58, "Probanza de méritos y servicios de Gonzalo de Ovalle" (1556).
- 30 Kramer, "Politics of Encomienda Distribution," 151.
- 31 Sáenz de Santa María, "Estudio preliminar," lvii.
- 32 AGI: Patronato 60-5-6, "Probanza de méritos y servicios de Francisco de Utiel" (1556).
- 33 AGI:AG 110, "Probanza hecha en nombre de la ciudad de Santiago" (1531).
- 34 AGI: Patronato 69-1-5, "Probanza de méritos y servicios de Rodrigo Ruiz" (1569).
- 35 Kramer, "Politics of Encomienda Distribution," 191.
- 36 *Ibid.*, 200.
- 37 AGI:AG 41, "Cabildo de Santiago al Rey" (1535).
- 38 Lehnhoff, *Espada y pentagrama*, 81 and AGI: Patronato 66-1-3, "Probanza de méritos y servicios de Pedro González Nájera" (1564).
- 39 AGI:AG 9A, "Alonso de Maldonado al Rey" (1539).
- 40 AGI:AG 152 and 153, "Autos hechos sobre la reducción de los indios del Chol y Lacandón y Mopán" (1696).
- 41 AGI:AG 225, "Audiencia de Guatemala al Rey" (1714).
- 42 Kramer, "Politics of Encomienda Distribution," 419.
- 43 Fuentes y Guzmán, *Recordación Florida*, 259: 47.
- 44 AGI: Justicia 1031, "Juan de Espinar con Pedro de Alvarado sobre el pueblo de Huehuetenango" (1537–40).
- 45 *Ibid.*
- 46 *Ibid.*
- 47 *Ibid.*
- 48 *Ibid.*
- 49 *Ibid.*
- 50 *Ibid.*
- 51 *Ibid.*
- 52 *Ibid.*
- 53 For an extended discussion of the events summarized here, see Kramer, Lovell, and Lutz, "Fire in the Mountains."
- 54 Fuentes, *Latin America*, 33.
- 55 Tax, "Municipios," 444.
- 56 Martínez Peláez, *Patria del criollo*, 441–570.
- 57 AGI:AG 94, "Pedro Ramírez de Quiñones al Consejo de Indias" (1556).
- 58 AGI:AG 168, "Fray Juan de Mansilla al Rey" (1552).
- 59 AGCA, A1, leg. 1511, folios 215–18 (1556); van Oss, *Catholic Colonialism*, 35.
- 60 AGI:AG 168, "Fray Juan de Torres al Rey" (1555).

- 61 AGI:AG 168, "Fray Tomás de Cárdenas y Fray Juan de Torres al Rey" (1555).
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 AGI:AG 168, "Fray Pedro de Betanzos, Fray Alonso Mella, Fray Antonio Quejada y Fray Juan de la Cruz al Rey" (1556).
- 64 Ibid.
- 65 Ibid.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Ibid.
- 68 Ibid.
- 69 Ibid.
- 70 Ibid.
- 71 For more on Zorita and the Dominican-Franciscan confrontation, see Lovell, "Mayans, Missionaries, Evidence and Truth."
- 72 Vázquez, *Crónica*, 2:32.
- 73 Ximénez, *Historia*, 1:191.
- 74 AGI:AG 168, "Fray Tomás de Cárdenas y Fray Juan de Torres al Rey" (1555).
- 75 Ibid.
- 76 AGI:AG 159, "Testimonio de los autos hechos sobre la perdición general de los indios de estas provincias y frangantes continuos que amenazan su libertad" (1689).
- 77 Ibid.
- 78 Ibid.
- 79 Ibid.
- 80 Ibid.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Ibid.
- 84 Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral* 2:48.
- 85 Ibid., 2:117.
- 86 Ibid., 2:135.
- 87 The vicissitudes of *congregación* may be explored further in Lovell and Swezey, "Indian Migration and Community Formation." Orellana, "Idols and Idolatry," looks at the survival of Mayan rituals throughout the colonial period and beyond.
- 88 Sauer, "Plant and Animal Destruction," 146-7.
- 89 Farriss, "Indians in Colonial Yucatán," 34.
- 90 Lutz and Lovell, "Core and Periphery"; Newson, "Indian Population Patterns."
- 91 Among other things, Diego Muñoz Camargo's *Historia de Tlaxcala* records services rendered by Tlaxcalan soldiers to the Spanish Crown during early

wars of conquest. The manuscript copy housed in the Special Collections Department of Glasgow University Library, in addition to an informative text, contains scores of pen and ink drawings, many of which depict the places where Tlaxcalans fought in Guatemala.

92 Cook and Lovell, *"Secret Judgments of God."*

93 Cortés y Larraz, *Descripción geográfico-moral.*

94 Scott, *Weapons of the Weak and Domination and the Arts of Resistance.*

95 Cojtí Cuxil, "Lingüística e idiomas Mayas," 24.

96 Cojtí Cuxil, *Configuración del pensamiento político.*

97 Lovell, "Surviving Conquest" and "Maya Survival in Ixil Country".

98 In 1582 the Dean of the Cathedral of Guatemala, Pedro de Liévano, informed authorities in Spain (AGI:AG 10) of a crisis brought about by native depopulation. He wrote: "What causes the Indians to die and to diminish in number are secret judgments of God beyond the reach of man. But what this witness has observed during the time he has spent in these parts is that from Mexico have come three or four pestilences on account of which the country has been greatly depopulated." God's "secret judgments" are discussed in Lovell, "Disease and Depopulation." Cholera, which spread to Guatemala from Mexico, resulted in the hospitalization of one of its first victims, Gabriel Zacarías, on 21 July 1991. See *Crónica*, no. 186 (2–8 August 1991): 22.

99 Recinos, *Annals of the Cakchiquels*, 115.

# Bibliography

This study is based on familiarity gained over the past thirty years with a variety of unpublished and published materials housed in academic repositories in Canada, Guatemala, Scotland, Spain, and the United States. In addition to mentioning the archives and libraries visited in connection with the investigation and before listing a number of titles that may be considered fundamental research aids, it is perhaps useful to comment briefly on what sources proved most fruitful for the purpose of this study. Several suggestions regarding topics that demand future inquiry can also be made.

## PRIMARY ARCHIVAL SOURCES

Unpublished documents covering the entire colonial period were consulted in the Archivo General de Centroamérica (AGCA) in Guatemala City and in the Archivo General de Indias (AGI) in Seville. The AGCA was used more heavily than the AGI because the existence of an unusual but functional catalogue in the former facilitates a more efficient extraction of data than the unwieldy organization of the latter.

In the AGCA, the *fichero* (card index) of the following subjects brought the highest returns: Agricultura; Ayuntamiento; Epidemias; Esclavitud; Estadística; Encomendia; Fundación y Traslación de Poblaciones; Indígenas; Legislación; Minas; Patronato; Peticiones; Planos y Mapas; Provincia de Guatemala; Relaciones Geográficas; Tierras; Tasaciones; and Tributos. Anyone who has worked in this archive cannot help but be impressed by the Herculean labour that went into its organization by the late José Joaquín Pardo, the man responsible for classifying much of the documentation extant for the colonial period. The colonial contents of the AGCA have been microfilmed, not entirely satisfactorily, and may be consulted in this form at McMaster University Library in Hamilton, Canada. Effective utilization of the Guatemalan materials at McMaster is hampered not only by blurred and therefore unusable photography, but also by the absence in Hamilton of Pardo's idiosyncratic *fichero*. A guide to the AGCA has been published by Jorge Luján Muñoz. His booklet, when read in



conjunction with the bibliographic essay of Christopher Lutz and Stephen Webre, provides the basic orientation and insight that every researcher who works in the AGCA needs at the outset.

In the AGI, because of the greater volume of documentation and the more subtle complexity of the archive's inner logic, perseverance is the key. Research here focused primarily on sixteenth-century *encomienda*, tribute, and population data, all of which are scarce commodities (for the Cuchumatán region at any rate) in the AGCA. The section of the AGI known as the Audiencia de Guatemala, comprising some 973 *legajos*, is marvellously rich, but poorly classified in comparison with the AGCA. Work in the AGI, while always exciting, tends to proceed at a slower pace, particularly if a local or regional study is being undertaken. Other sections of the AGI in which relevant information was located include Contaduría, Indiferente General, Justicia, and Patronato. For orientation purposes, the reference section of the main reading room at the AGI contains an unpublished guide to the archive's sixteenth-century Guatemalan materials. This guide, bearing the call number Salón 127, was prepared by E.M. O'Flaherty as part of a microfilm project funded by the American Philosophical Society, an institution that now has copies of some seventy thousand documents relating to early colonial Guatemala.

In Spain, short visits were made to the Archivo General de Simancas, the Biblioteca del Palacio Real, and the Real Academia de la Historia in order to determine whether or not these repositories hold pertinent Cuchumatán data. Although nothing of great substance materialized, it was important none the less to look. Trips to the Newberry Library in Chicago and to the University of California at Berkeley proved more productive. Research at the Newberry Library meant (among other things) a rare opportunity to look at the *Popol Vuh*. Work at Berkeley offered, in addition to the riches of the Bancroft Library, the pleasure of discovering some interesting items in the Sauer Collection, housed in the Department of Geography.

Two regrets must be recorded. The first concerns the frustration, felt by other scholars also, at not having had ready access to the Archivo Eclesiástico de Guatemala, an archive that must contain a wealth of material relating to the affairs of the colonial church. The second involves not having made use of parish records. Such an oversight may now seem inexcusable, but at the time when information was being gathered it made more sense, given the regional focus of the study, to concentrate on the AGCA rather than work through individual parish holdings in the countryside. Not until I spent a few days in Jacaltenango, where Maryknoll sisters have organized a small archive and museum, did I realize the extent to which orders calling for historical documentation to be sent to Guatemala City have not always been acted upon. What this oversight means is that, although an attempt has been made to locate and to scrutinize as many colonial documents as possible, no doubt a significant number were missed. When these sources are unearthed by future research, it can only be hoped that they will elucidate rather than obfuscate the content of this study.

## PUBLISHED SECONDARY SOURCES

With respect to the published literature, mention has already been made in the Preface of the outstanding work of the Berkeley School, perhaps best represented in the Ibero-Americana monographs, and of the exceptional contribution of Murdo MacLeod. To these pioneering efforts must be added Robert Carmack's *Quichean Civilization* (1973), which provides a critical analysis of the major documentary sources relating to past and present-day highland Guatemala. This bibliographic guide will serve students as a basic starting point for many years to come.

Until detailed archaeological and ethnohistorical investigations with an explicitly Cuchumatán focus are conducted, an understanding of the pre-conquest experience of the region and its peoples must be tentatively derived, in large part, from an extrapolation of the work of Carmack and his associates in the Quichean area. It should be noted, however, that some scholars disagree with what they view as Carmack's "literal interpretation" of the documentary sources, particularly the *Popol Vuh*, and point out that, contrary to the ethnohistorical account of Toltec invasion from the north, the archaeological record of the Quiché basin shows a strong continuity from Classic to Post-classic times (Ruth Gruhn, personal communication). Carmack has synthesized over twenty years' work in the field in a volume entitled *The Quiché Mayas of Utatlán* (1981). The lack of sufficient anthropological work in the Cuchumatanes similarly necessitates speculating that the findings of field-work undertaken elsewhere in highland Guatemala, or even in parts of Mexico, apply also to Cuchumatán communities. There is a need, for example, for diachronic community studies that examine the evolution of Indian social units in order to establish, among other things, whether or not they have continued in association with certain landholdings since pre-conquest or colonial times. In the context of Chiapas, George Collier (1975) argues in favour of such continuity while the research of Robert Wasserstrom (1983) suggests otherwise. The study of land tenure and inheritance conducted by Shelton Davis (1970) for Santa Eulalia serves as a model example of the kind of historically oriented anthropology that is urgently required. Such an orientation by Anne Collins (1980) has produced a fine reconstruction of how the colonial experience in Jacaltenango resulted in the formation, along the lines first suggested by Fernando Cámara (1952) and Eric Wolf (1957), of a classic "closed corporate peasant community." The research of Robert Hill (1981) indicates a similar process at work in Sacapulas. The apparent contradiction in the evidence for Chiapas clearly indicates that Mesoamericanists, while striving for a longer view and an amplified context, must be more aware of the spatial and temporal limitations of their findings. One senses, after a perusal of the volume of essays edited by Murdo MacLeod and Robert Wasserstrom (1983), that matters of geographical and historical specificity will loom large in future Mesoamerican research.

For the three-hundred-year period of Spanish rule in Central America, Lesley

Byrd Simpson's *Studies in the Administration of the Indians in New Spain* (1934-40) and the work of Howard Cline, Peter Gerhard, and Adriaan van Oss are crucial to an understanding of *congregación* and the day-to-day administration of empire. William Sherman's *Forced Native Labor in Sixteenth-Century Central America* (1979) fills a large gap in our awareness of how Spaniards controlled and exploited the Indian population during the first century of colonial rule. The role that government played in shaping Central American colonial society has been addressed by Miles Wortman (1982). Our knowledge of colonial life in and around the capital city of Santiago de Guatemala owes much to the labours of Sidney Markman (1966) and Verle Annis (1968), and has been considerably enhanced by the more recent work of Christopher Lutz (1976, 1982). Before an accurate picture emerges of Indian and Spanish landholding in colonial Central America, regional studies similar to the ones undertaken by Charles Gibson (1952, 1964), William Taylor (1972), David Brading (1978), Herman Konrad (1980), and Eric Van Young (1981) for parts of Mexico will have to be initiated. An edited volume (Carmack, Early, and Lutz, 1982), in which a dozen or so contributors present population profiles at the local or sub-regional level, provides a thorough overview of highland Guatemalan historical demography. This particular issue was the subject of a special seminar at the twenty-seventh meeting of the American Society for Ethnohistory, held at Albany, New York, in October 1979. Sessions similar to that one, organized as part of a larger learned forum, would not only advance communication between scholars, but would also serve to review past trends and suggest future directions.

Two of the great chroniclers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Antonio de Remesal and Francisco Antonio de Fuentes y Guzmán, have left behind valuable data on the Cuchumatanes. Remesal's work contains exceptionally detailed information on the operation of *congregación*, and is one of the few early sources that explicitly mention a decline in the size of the Indian population owing to the ravages of epidemic disease. Remesal may have been inspired to write the first colonial history of Guatemala by the example of his fellow Dominican Bartolomé de las Casas, but he was in many ways more assiduous and analytical in his work than was his mentor. The writings of Fuentes y Guzmán are marvelously rich, probably because the chronicler served in 1672 and 1673 as *corregidor* of Totonicapán and Huehuetenango, a charge that enabled him to become personally acquainted with the Cuchumatán terrain. Of the twenty-seven chapters that form Book Eight of the *Recordación Florida*, twenty-one are devoted to a discussion of the history and geography of the Cuchumatanes. Fuentes y Guzmán's first-hand knowledge of the Cuchumatán region lends his account greater credibility than certain other parts of the *Recordación Florida* that deal with subjects beyond the chronicler's ken. The report of Pedro Cortés y Larraz is the best eighteenth-century account of the region, the original replies to his queries written by parish priests (AGI:AG 948) containing significantly more data than the archbishop's summary.

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