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## 2 Survivors on the Move: Maya Migration in Time and Space

ON 22 March 1991, at a ceremony held in a snowy Ontario town more than four thousand kilometers from the village in which he was born, a Q'anjob'al Maya named Genaro Tomás Castañeda became a proud new citizen of Canada. Genaro's experience during the decade prior to becoming a "Q'anjob'al Canadiense" mirrors the disruptive lot of countless thousands of Guatemalan Mayas who had to flee their communities because of the country's civil war (Morrison and May 1994; Nolin Hanlon and Lovell 1997). The personal circumstances surrounding Genaro's situation represent a happier outcome than most, for the majority of the 1 million or so Guatemalans now believed to live and work in the United States and Canada do not enjoy the security and stability afforded by legal citizenship (Jonas 1996). The Maya diaspora to which Genaro belongs today has a transmigrant dimension dizzying in its scale, complexity, and local and national impact. Migration as a cultural phenomenon, however, has deeper roots than most people realize, and in one form or another constitutes a recurrent theme in the shaping of Maya history. Archaeologically, Maya origins begin with migration, the most distant ancestors being among the nomadic bands that trekked across the Bering Land Bridge millennia ago to enter the New World from the Old. Ethno-historically, the *Popol Vuh* tells us of what might best be thought of as semi-mythic migrations on the part of more recent ancestors, who are said to have entered Guatemala from the Gulf Coast of Mexico. These primordial migrations, epic though they may have been, concern us less than do population movements that occurred during colonial times (1524 to 1821) and, secondarily, during the national period, from 1821 on. Our aim is twofold: first, to establish a framework within which the migration experiences of Maya peoples in Guatemala may be understood and explained; and second, to illuminate admittedly general categories and considerations with more grounded case specifics.

Migration, we believe, is a crucial element in the story of Maya survival. We view Maya migration as a rational, multidimensional reaction

to the daily challenge of survival, whether the challenge arose last year, a decade or a century ago, or in the wake of the Spanish conquest almost five hundred years ago. Continuity in certain key patterns of survival comes as a surprise only if we fail to identify, analyze, and at least try to unravel the complex web of past and present migration experiences. Migration, in fact, is such a ubiquitous feature of Maya life that it would be possible to envision a cultural history that harnesses the theme as its principal organizing concept, as David Robinson (1990) has observed for colonial Spanish America in general.<sup>1</sup> Here we must settle for something far less ambitious: first, the presentation of several basic notions that help us conceptualize the phenomenon of migration; and second, an examination of some of the historical factors most responsible for allowing us to link Maya survival so closely to Maya migration.

### ROBINSON'S MIGRATION MATRIX

In his overview of migration in colonial Spanish America, Robinson (1990:5) provides us with a useful typology, one in which he considers three dimensions to be critical—those pertaining to space, time, and migrant ethnicity. Beyond our limited focus on Maya migration, Robinson incorporates into his scheme of things the distinct ethnic groups that constituted colonial society—Europeans, Blancos, Mestizos, Mulatos, Negros, and Indios. Within a three-dimensional matrix (see Figure 2.1) Robinson depicts graphically the interrelationship between the dimensions of space, time, and ethnicity in the process of migration. While we do not concern ourselves here with the multiethnic dimension of his matrix, Robinson's breakdown of space and time is pertinent to what we have to say. Robinson identifies four variations of population movement in space: rural to rural; rural to urban; urban to rural; and urban to urban. In terms of time, he divides migration into three categories: periodic, temporary, and permanent. Periodic migration, in turn, is subdivided into four types: circular, which Robinson (1990:8) defines as "migration that results in a return to an origin," daily, monthly, and seasonal. Robinson's essay warrants a close reading by anyone seriously interested in the topic, no matter their temporal focus. In fact, research on the national period as well as on colonial times, most notably the work of Castellanos Cambranes (1985), McCreery (1983, 1994), and Woodward (1983, 1993), reveals migration on the part of

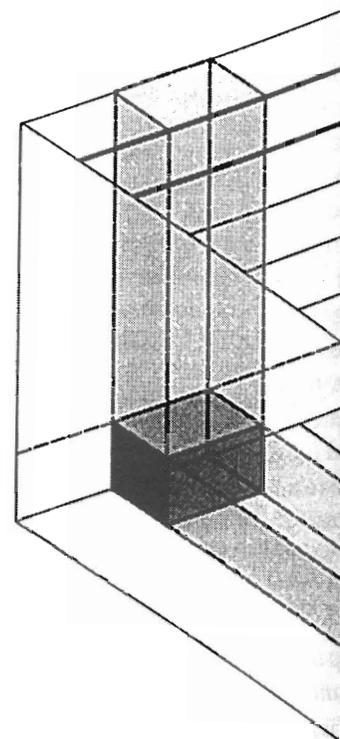


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### MIGRATION CATEGORIES

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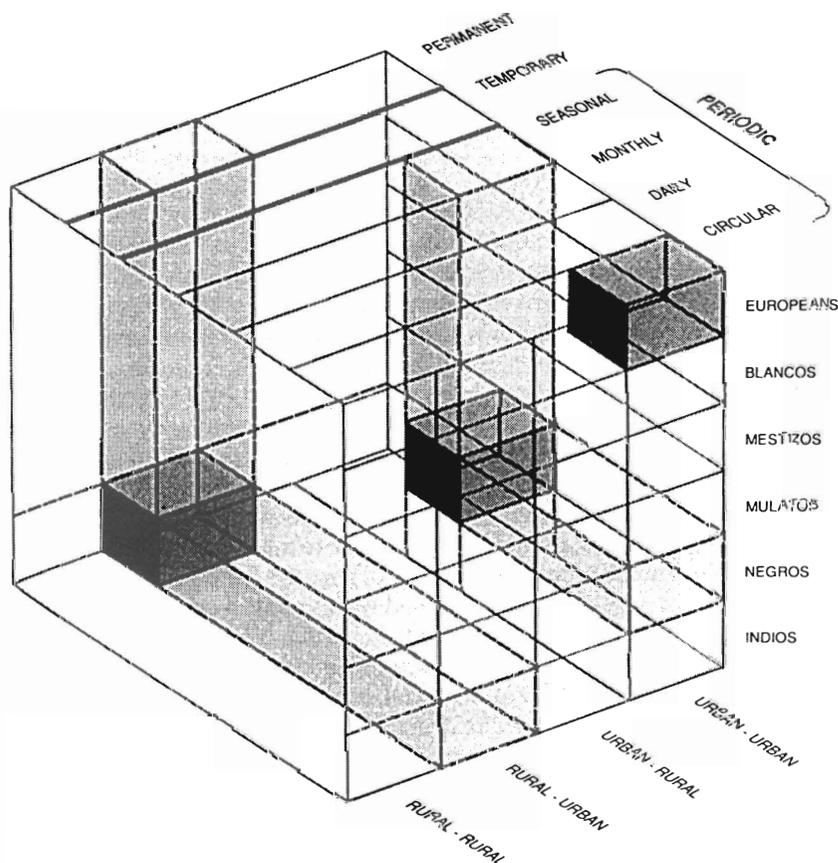


Fig. 2.1 A Matrix of Colonial Migration. (Robinson 1990. Reprinted by permission of Cambridge University Press.)

Maya Indians in Guatemala to have been continuous and widespread. Even though we cannot do justice to all the different aspects of Robinson's ideas, we believe that his schema does allow us to conceptualize Maya migration with some insight and a degree of rigor.

#### MIGRATION CATEGORIES

In conceptualizing Maya migration, especially for the colonial period, it is important to consider its forced and voluntary characteristics, as Robinson does. Under the first category we examine (1) the post-

conquest enslavement of Indians and their removal from their homes to locations where their new masters thought their labor would be most appropriate or lucrative; (2) *servicio personal*, the mobilization of Indians in the quarter-century after conquest to work in diverse locations for the benefit of privileged Spaniards (*encomenderos*) who held them in a tribute grant known as an *encomienda*; (3) *servicio ordinario*, a form of cheap labor, and the *repartimiento de indios*, a form of *corvée* labor; and (4) *congregación*, a policy of resettling dispersed peoples into nucleated places in order to exploit their labor more efficiently.

In addition to these overt forms of forced migration, we also consider the part that migration played in the obligation of every adult Indian (women were exempted only after 1754) to pay tribute either to *encomenderos* or directly to the Crown. For an untold number of Indians, especially male tributaries, tribute payment meant the obligation to travel, often long distances, to obtain goods specified for payment or to earn cash.

Robinson divides voluntary migration in colonial times into several categories. He notes that persons were attracted to other places, especially to urban ones, by the promise of a better-paying job, an easier life, or even the appeal of the unknown. Indians were also drawn to nonurban centers of Spanish economic activity, including cattle ranches (*haciendas* or *hatos*), wheat farms (*labores de panllevar*), sugar estates (*ingenios*), indigo plantations (*ingenios de tinte añil*), and areas of cacao production. While, as Robinson indicates, there was a negative side to migrating to these operations, part of the attraction for Indians was security, protection by a seemingly powerful *patrón*, and, in many instances, the avoidance of onerous tribute, *repartimiento*, and communal labor demands back in their communities of origin. Not all migration to these estates, however, was entirely voluntary, for movement could be fueled by necessity, indebtedness, or the lure of a cash advance that was given under contract, thereby requiring the debtor to travel to the place where the creditor wanted him or her to work for a specified period.

Another form of voluntary migration involved Indians abandoning settlements for areas beyond the reach of Spanish jurisdiction and therefore Spanish control. There the immigrant might settle in an unsubjected area free from obligations to *encomenderos*, landowners, parish priests, or their own leaders (Conchoá Chet, n.d.). Farriss (1978, 1983, 1984) offers many such examples in the context of colonial Yucatán, where she differentiates between processes of flight, fugitivism, dispersal, and drift.

Besides being pulled or pushed, voluntary migrants were also drawn to communities for personal reasons. We suspect, from looking at the evidence, often sought this escape route, but however, couples would migrate for other reasons or simply to seek a new

## FORCED MIGRATION IN

Forced migration, as noted in the context of (1) slavery; (2) *encomienda*; (3) *servicio ordinario* and the *repartimiento*; and (4) settlement known as *congregación*.

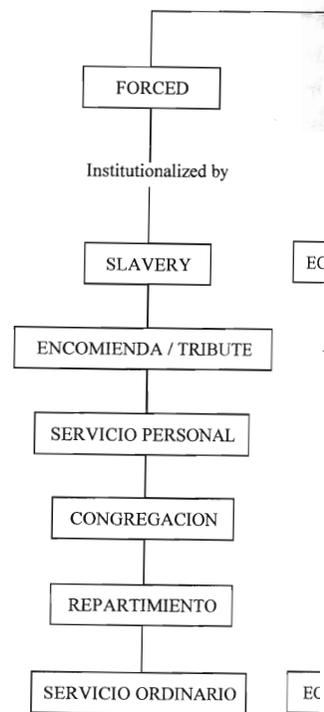


Fig. 2.2. Mig

Besides being pulled or attracted toward opportunities for work, voluntary migrants were also pushed from or came to reject their native communities for personal, familial, societal, and institutional reasons. We suspect, from looking at colonial tribute lists, that Maya men more often sought this escape route than did Maya women. Occasionally, however, couples would leave together, either to escape local conditions or simply to seek a new life elsewhere.

### FORCED MIGRATION IN COLONIAL GUATEMALA

Forced migration, as noted above, will be discussed in the institutional context of (1) slavery; (2) *encomienda* and *servicio personal*; (3) *servicio ordinario* and the *repartimiento de indios*; and (4) the policy of resettlement known as *congregación* (see Figure 2.2).

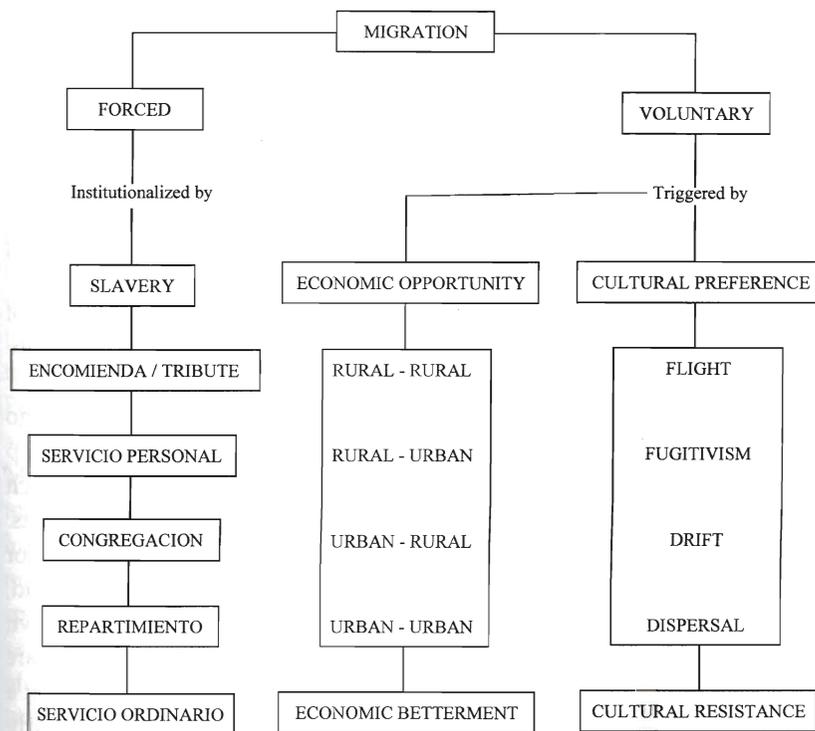


Fig. 2.2. Migration in Colonial Guatemala



demora in Honduras must have been very high indeed. But this did not cause their Spanish masters much worry, as long as slaves were cheap and their supply still plentiful. We suspect that some of the survivors of these annual migrations settled, after emancipation, in the small pueblos, milpas, and barrios clustered around Santiago.

Other slaves involved in gold-placer mining within Guatemala may not have had to leave or, at least, travel so far, but the level of hardship they suffered was comparable to that of those who migrated annually to Honduras. Thanks to a detailed document dating from the mid-1530s, we know relatively more about a *cuadrilla* or gang of slaves from Huehuetenango. Unlike the slave gangs sent to Honduras or those working around the capital, who could be thrown together to form a heterogenous mix, the slaves at Huehuetenango hailed from there or from nearby settlements; the placer mining they were forced to carry out was thus within a day or two by foot of their homes. While the work was arduous, these slaves did not have to suffer severe changes in altitude or travel long distances; if they survived, they were likely able to remain in or close by their native communities after emancipation (Kramer, Lovell, and Lutz 1991; Kramer 1994).

All slaves, even second-generation slaves born into their status, were eventually freed. But large numbers of slaves from Guatemala, and considerably more from Nicaragua and Honduras, ended up far removed from their places of origin (Newson 1986, 1987; Sherman 1979). Some were dragged off with Spanish masters who, dissatisfied with the limited economic opportunities of Guatemala, sought to make their fortunes in Mexico, Panama, or in the conquest and exploitation of Inca Peru (MacLeod 1973). Other slaves were sold for profit by their owners and "exported" to these distant parts (Jopling 1994). Few if any of those Mayas forced to migrate so far were ever able, even if they so desired, to return to Guatemala. We know that Pedro de Alvarado carried off hundreds of Indian slaves from Guatemala to Peru in the 1530s (Sherman 1979:56; Cieza de León 1998:331-37) and that others lived in conspicuous numbers in the city of Antequera, Mexico, in the early seventeenth century (Chance 1978). A sampling by Lockhart (1968:200) of slave-related documents for the years 1531-43 suggests that over two-thirds of Peru's foreign Indians were of Nicaraguan origin, "with the rest divided quite evenly between Mexico and Guatemala."<sup>2</sup> Documentary evidence from sixteenth-century Panama likewise demon-

strates that some liberated Guatemalan slaves ended up in that jurisdiction (Jopling 1994). Whether or not they survived, as did those who dwelled in Antequera, is unknown.

*Encomienda and Servicio Personal*

In the period 1524 to 1550, Indians held in encomienda paid tribute in a variety of prized items such as cacao, salt, and cotton cloth, as well as commonplace products like maize, wheat, and turkeys. Like slaves, they also had to perform a variety of chores. Payment for ordinary produce or the carrying out of labor services within their communities—planting crops or herding pigs, for example—did not require them to journey far from home. It was, however, the obligation to furnish more exotic items of tribute and the need to work away from home that caused Indians to move about, often over considerable distances.

After Spanish enterprises of mining gold and exporting slaves, the most sought-after commodity in sixteenth-century Guatemala was cacao, a lowland crop grown almost exclusively by Indians primarily on the Pacific coastal plain and, to a lesser extent, in other lower-lying regions. Even though it was a lowland crop, because cacao was a highly valued export item for Mexico and Europe, many highland communities were required to supply specified amounts of it to their Spanish encomenderos. Cacao had been much in demand even before the Spanish conquest, and highland peoples such as the K'iche' and Kaqchikel, among others, had sought successfully to gain control over some cacao lands before 1524. Thus the highland Maya had established networks through which they could continue to obtain the product, either by exchange or purchase. Nonetheless, heavy Spanish demands, combined with the disruptions brought about by outbreaks of disease and heavy mortality, placed a high premium on cacao, which made it consequently even more difficult and costly for Indians to obtain. Spanish encomenderos who only held highland pueblos, intent on getting their hands on cacao, demanded that part of their annual tribute be paid in the lowland crop. This meant that their tributaries, collectively or individually, had to acquire enough cacao to meet the twice-yearly payments, which in turn meant that it was necessary for Indians to trek far away to get hold of it. Due to epidemic disease and population loss, cacao regions suffered early on from a chronic labor shortage. Evidence

exists of highland Maya in jobs (MacLeod 1973).<sup>3</sup> At from as far away as Verapaz of encomienda.

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exists of highland Maya migrating to the lowlands to fill some of these jobs (MacLeod 1973).<sup>3</sup> At least some of this long-distance migration, from as far away as Verapaz, was motivated by the tributary demands of *encomienda*.

Even in the later decades of the sixteenth century, when tribute items were more regimented and such exotic items as feathers and jade had been removed from town assessments, Indians still had to pay tribute in maize, chickens, and cash. How, in the context of a subsistence economy, tens of thousands of tributaries came up with the necessary cash points to hundreds of creative solutions. Many of these must have involved the sale of labor and crops, as well as the trade of artisan goods, all activities that imply some degree of migration.

Aside from migration involved in getting hold of the requisite goods and cash to pay tribute, every Indian community or *pueblo* was required to deliver its tribute, whether it be to a Spanish *encomendero* or to treasury officials in Santiago. Imagine thousands of Indians descending on Santiago twice each year from all over Guatemala, their own backs or those of their animals laden with maize, wheat, chickens, cotton cloth, cacao, and coins. The bearers from a particular *pueblo* were accompanied by one of their *cabildo* officers, an *alcalde* or a *regidor*. These delivery trips, made every six months in June or December, took from one or two days to several weeks to complete, depending on the distance from any particular town to the Spanish capital. If a *pueblo* was small, the amount of tribute to be hauled would not require many bearers. That of a large town, however, would require upwards of forty to fifty bearers. Like other labor tasks shared by able-bodied men or tributaries, delivery of tribute items rotated among the entire population, one's turn coming up again sooner in a smaller, depopulated *pueblo* than in a larger one. Bearers were paid for this task, but not handsomely. The same could not be said for those Indians who faced the burdens of *servicio personal*.

*Servicio personal*, the unpaid forced labor supplied to one's *encomendero*, had a short but painful history for Maya Indians, if not for their Spanish masters. *Encomenderos* in Santiago were furious when Cerrato and his officers almost totally abolished *servicio personal* on top of having emancipated Maya slaves and cutting the actual amount of tribute in goods and cash that Spaniards received. Maya voices are largely silent or, more accurately, absent regarding the hard-

ships involved. Still, despite all the other unmitigated pain they suffered, the reform of *servicio personal* must have offered some relief. The Spaniards, on the other hand, could not have disagreed more. They made their feelings explicitly known in Spain, complaining loudly of the unfairness and the ruin that would soon befall the colony (Sherman 1979). Examining the details of two cases of *servicio personal* furnishes some idea of why the institution was loathed by Indians and much valued by Spaniards.

For the 1530s, evidence for the *encomienda* of Huehuetenango and some adjoining towns held by Juan de Espinar indicates that he had access to the labor of between two and three hundred Indians under the terms of *servicio personal*. These Indians worked alongside his slaves, both men and women, as navies and cooks, having to travel some ten to fifteen kilometers to the Río Malacatán, where Espinar had established a gold panning operation. While many others were forced to work within the boundaries of the *encomienda* itself, large numbers (forty every twenty days) were sent to work as servants and laborers in Espinar's house in Santiago and on his rural estate nearby. When the tour of duty of one group of forty was over, another group the same size was sent to replace it (Kramer, Lovell, and Lutz, 1991; Kramer 1994).

A town to the east of Huehuetenango, Sacapulas, had a different experience. Having its own source of salt, Sacapulas was required for its *servicio personal* to provide the pueblo's two *encomenderos* (they split the tribute paid) with four *fanegas* (about 460 pounds) of salt each month. A group of Sacapultecos, however, had to haul the salt by tumpline to their *encomenderos'* houses in Santiago, almost one hundred kilometers to the south. These tasks ended in mid-1549, but often one hardship was replaced by another. Sacapulas, for example, henceforth had to substitute fourteen substantial loads of cacao for locally produced salt. The travel necessary to obtain cacao, fetched in distant Suchitepéquez and delivered to the capital, required more time and distance than carrying salt to Santiago (Lovell 1990:113-14).

While *servicio personal* underwent some changes in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially with respect to Indian movements undertaken to perform it, other forms of forced labor were quickly devised to replace the services lost. What Spanish authorities proffered with one hand, they took away with the other.

*Servicio Ordinario and the*

In many ways, *servicio ordinario* was supposed to eliminate some of the most onerous aspects of *servicio personal*. In the leagues of Santiago and other parts of the colony, Indians were exempted from slavery late in the sixteenth century. Under the *encomenderos*, *servicio ordinario* was supposed to be performed by the residents of the capital. Under the *encomenderos*, a multitude of tasks and projects to be done included weeding public buildings and plantations, tilling fields, and tending to the household (house), procure hogs from the surrounding area, and procure pork and lard at regulated prices. Indians who worked for *servicio ordinario* in Santiago were required to provide their own kitchens as well as fodder for the animals at regulated prices.

Before *repartimientos de indios*, *servicio ordinario* served as a mechanism for the state to plant, weed, and harvest the land. It is known about *servicio ordinario* continued to exist in and around the capital period (Lutz 1982; Webre 1991). The system or exchange of commodities was maintained a system that forced Indians to work constantly in order to satisfy the state's needs. Another means of procuring labor for the *repartimiento de indios* is seen in the archival sources than is seen elsewhere. It still remains poorly studied. In the case of *servicio ordinario*, the *repartimiento* for the benefit of Spanish colonists was devised solely for the enrichment of the state, a heavily felt in and around Guatemala where Indians were known as *indios*, as its name implies,

*Servicio Ordinario and the Repartimiento de Indios*

In many ways, *servicio ordinario* took up the slack after Cerrato tried to eliminate some of the more blatant abuses of *servicio personal*. *Servicio ordinario* was supposed to apply only to Indians who lived within five leagues of Santiago and was targeted at those who had been emancipated from slavery late in the 1540s and who lived in the milpas or in the barrios of Santiago. Unlike *servicio personal*, a service given only to encomenderos, *servicio ordinario* was intended to benefit all Spanish residents of the capital. Under its terms of reference, Indians carried out a multitude of tasks and provided labor for a pittance. Jobs that had to be done included weeding city streets, cleaning out latrines, sweeping public buildings and plazas, providing wet nurses, and making tortillas. Other Indians were forced to work in the *matadero* (slaughterhouse), procure hogs from wherever they could buy them, and provide pork and lard at regulated prices. Indians living in the countryside close to Santiago were required to supply loads of firewood for Spanish kitchens as well as fodder for animals, all at cheap, massively subsidized prices.

Before repartimientos de indios were well established, *servicio ordinario* served as a mechanism for supplying Spaniards with labor to plant, weed, and harvest their grain crops (Lutz 1996). Relatively little is known about *servicio ordinario* after the late sixteenth century, but it continued to exist in and around the capital until late in the colonial period (Lutz 1982; Webre 1986). Unlike a free labor market or free sale or exchange of commodities, the Spanish authorities created and maintained a system that forced large numbers of Indians to be on the move constantly in order to satisfy the demands placed upon them.<sup>4</sup>

Another means of procuring and hence displacing Indian labor was the repartimiento de indios.<sup>5</sup> Though better documented in terms of archival sources than is *servicio ordinario*, the repartimiento de indios still remains poorly studied. Like its predecessors, *servicio personal* and *servicio ordinario*, the repartimiento de indios existed solely for the benefit of Spanish colonists. Unlike *servicio personal*, it did not exist solely for the enrichment of encomenderos and so its impact, while most heavily felt in and around the colonial capital, spread to all parts of Guatemala where Indians could be mobilized. The repartimiento de indios, as its name implies, was designed to distribute Indians to those

Spaniards who needed their labor at reduced salaries within about a day's walking distance from the pueblo of the assigned Indians.

Who was subject to the repartimiento de indios and what kinds of jobs and services did they perform? Evidence exists from all over Guatemala of repartimiento Indians having been allocated to work on wheat farms, on cattle and sheep ranches, and in mining operations. Most extant data, however, are concentrated in the Valley of Guatemala, which contained some seventy Indian pueblos and barrios, and pertain mostly to the distribution of Indian labor to the region's hundred-odd wheat farms and, secondarily, to a handful of large sugar estates. Indian pueblos also provided common laborers and at times skilled workers in the building trades to construct and repair public and private buildings in Santiago. In times of disastrous earthquakes, the city's demand for repartimiento labor greatly increased. Spanish owners of bakeries, producers of the staple bread for the Spanish population of the city, also received allotments of *panaderos* from San Juan Comalapa.

Data on the distribution of Indian labor to the wheat *labores* and sugar estates exist for the late seventeenth century as well as for other periods. If we were to map this data, it would show that, during almost the entire year, thousands of Maya were forced to hike five to ten kilometers, some more, some less, to work for a week at a time on a Spanish wheat farm. The pay was always low, varying from three to five *reales* for a six-day week, a rate of payment in place from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth century.

It was the wheat farms in the Valley of Guatemala that demanded the largest numbers of repartimiento Indians week in and week out, usually for forty-nine weeks of the year. Repartimiento obligations were usually suspended for three weeks of the year, at Christmas, Easter, and the annual celebration of a pueblo's patron saint. Thus, for example, San Juan Comalapa and San Juan Sacatepéquez would have had the week around 24 June, St. John's Day, free. However, as the patron saint's feast day coincided with the due date of the first tribute payment—the other was at Christmas—at least some people had to be prepared to carry tribute to Santiago. About one-quarter of all Indian tributaries at any given time were allocated repartimiento duties. Since the obligation was assigned on a rotating basis, this meant that roughly once a month every able-bodied tributary had to take a turn. If a town was required to supply repartimiento labor for the maximum period of forty-nine weeks,

then an individual tributary shifts, some three months

Migration induced by tremendous strain on town life, and harvesting of Indian life, it must have caused one-quarter of a town's migration time. While, no doubt, Indians but near other places when repartimiento disruptions, the pueblos in close proximity to the

#### *Congregación*

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then an individual tributary would have to serve about twelve weekly shifts, some three months in total, performing low-paid duties.

Migration induced by the burden of repartimiento must have put a tremendous strain on town economies, including the planting, weeding, and harvesting of individual and communal lands. In terms of family life, it must have caused many inconveniences and hardships to have one-quarter of a town's men of tribute-paying age away at any given time. While, no doubt, Indian communities far removed from Santiago but near other places where Spaniards lived had to contend with repartimiento disruptions, the pressure was felt most keenly by those pueblos in close proximity to the capital city.

#### *Congregación*

Encomiendas encompassed, in varying spatial degrees, one or more communities that Spaniards referred to as *pueblos de indios*, Indian towns in the municipal sense of central place and surrounding countryside, segregated areas where non-Indians in theory were not supposed to reside. Upon arrival in Guatemala, Spaniards observed that, morphologically, Maya settlements were decidedly more dispersed than nucleated, with what little urbanization as had developed restricted to defensive hilltop sites not in the least conducive to proper and efficient administration. The policy of congregación was designed to deal with this anarchy, and pueblos de indios were the result of its widespread implementation (see Lovell and Swezey 1990).

As promulgated by Spanish law, congregación was a means whereby Indians dwelling in scattered rural groups were brought together, converted to Christianity, and moulded into harmonious, resourceful communities that reflected imperial notions of orderly, civilized life. To the church, especially to members of the Dominican and Franciscan orders, fell the difficult job of getting Indian families down from the mountains and resettled in towns built around a Catholic place of worship. The mandate to create these new settlements and the rationale behind it are spelled out clearly in a royal order issued on 21 March 1551:

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 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. (Simpson 1934:43)

The rhetoric of congregación belongs very much to what Carlos Fuentes (1983:33) calls the "legal country," a colonial fiction distinctly at odds with the "real country" that came into being. In the overall vision of empire, few single endeavors differed in outcome so markedly from original intent as did congregación, prompting contemporary observers to express outrage, astonishment, and despair that such a grand plan could amount to so little. But congregación did, from early on, leave an enduring mark on the landscape. In fact, pueblos de indios created by regular and secular clergy in the course of the sixteenth century persist today as *municipios*, or townships, which Sol Tax (1937:44) considers "the primary (and possibly final) ethnic units" appropriate for anthropological inquiry. No sooner, however, had Spaniards resettled Indians where they deemed suitable than many drifted back to the mountains they and their families had been moved from. Why did this happen? What caused the grip of congregación to become undone?

Foremost is the fact that congregación was carried out not by persuasion but by force. The displacement of entire families against their will made it unlikely that members who found the experience disagreeable would stay put. Indians repeatedly fled to outlying rural areas to escape the exploitation they suffered while resident in town or nearby. There they could be free of compulsory demands to furnish tribute, provide labor, work on local roads or the parish church, and serve as human carriers. They also sought the refuge of the mountains when disease struck, its occurrence in (and impact on) pueblos de indios correctly perceived to be less disruptive than arms-length subsistence in the hills. Furthermore, Mayas farmed the highlands more efficiently by living not in large, agglomerated centers but in small, dispersed groups close to the lands they believed to be inhabited by the spirits of their ancestors. Congregación, in terms of the two basic categories in which migration can be discussed, thus represents a process in which forced

displacement in one direction and movement in the opposite.

## VOLUNTARY MIGRATION

Even if Spanish imperial administration was a roughly institutionalized system of extracting cash from Maya tributaries, in one way or another, as they pursued their objectives actually hindered by the actions of others opened up opportunities for migration. We examine several options for migration, considering Robinson's four categories: rural-rural, urban-rural, and urban-urban. Examples of these migration flows are drawn from archival and published sources.

Under the very noses of Spanish officials, as elsewhere in southeastern Mexico (Robinson 1984), engaged in a host of activities, including trade, seasonal movement to distant lands, and grimages that carried a spiritual dimension. However, these movements were economically rational in nature. Given the tensions that existed between many individuals and indeed communities and the historical experience with minimal order. Robinson (1990:10) notes that migration from adversity, or to avoid it, are important 'solutions' for colonial conditions. Voluntary migration were temporary or intolerable or an "opportunistic" migration moved permanently. In the case of the rural and permanent forms of voluntary migration.

### *Rural-Rural Migration*

Rural to rural migration was a significant form of population movement in the colonial period. The fact that Guatemala then was a Maya society. We noted above a Maya

displacement in one direction could eventually result in voluntary movement in the opposite.

### VOLUNTARY MIGRATION IN COLONIAL GUATEMALA

Even if Spanish imperial ambitions had not established such a thoroughly institutionalized system for extracting surplus labor, goods, and cash from Maya tributaries, many natives would still have migrated, in one way or another, as they had in pre-Hispanic times. Certain colonial objectives actually hindered migration or made it more difficult, but others opened up opportunities that had never existed before. Below, we examine several options available to a would-be migrant by considering Robinson's four categories of movement: rural-rural, rural-urban, urban-rural, and urban-urban. Wherever possible, we provide examples of these migration flows by presenting brief life histories based on archival and published sources.

Under the very noses of Spanish authorities, Indians in Guatemala, as elsewhere in southeastern Mesoamerica (Wasserstrom 1983; Farriss 1984), engaged in a host of voluntary migration activities, including trade, seasonal movement to utilize faraway fields, and religious pilgrimages that carried a spiritual reward. Most of these movements, however, were economically motivated and usually of a temporary nature. Given the tensions that could exist in Maya-Spanish relations, many individuals and indeed groups or families used their collective historical experience with migration as a creative response to the colonial order. Robinson (1990:10) observes: "One thing is very clear: migration from adversity, or to opportunity, became one of the most important 'solutions' for colonial Indians." While many forms of voluntary migration were temporary, when the "adversity" factor became intolerable or an "opportunity" more than just appealing, people moved permanently. In the scenarios we reconstruct, both temporary and permanent forms of voluntary migration are evident.

#### *Rural-Rural Migration*

Rural to rural migration was probably the most common form of population movement in the colonial period, a phenomenon related to the fact that Guatemala then constituted an overwhelmingly agrarian society. We noted above a Maya predilection to live in dispersed rather than

nucleated forms of settlement. Suffice it to say that one solution to Spanish demands was to abandon one's obligations entirely, maybe even deserting a wife and children and fleeing beyond the limits of Spanish control to live a fugitive life among others who had also fled oppression. This solution was more practical for Indians living adjacent to northern frontier zones, less so for those living closer to the watchful eye of officialdom farther south.<sup>6</sup>

For the latter, especially those living in or near the Valley of Guatemala, one migratory option was to seek refuge from the demands of life as a tributary by becoming a resident laborer on a Spanish estate. Since many such migrants were attempting to hide their past, it is difficult to trace their origins. Further, landlord interests in securing permanent workers clashed with those of Spanish authorities committed to the efficient functioning of the tribute system. Indian leaders charged with assisting Spanish bureaucrats in collecting tribute were anxious to see those who might have fled return and pay their share. In 1716, for example, the native representatives of San Juan Amatitlán complained of the "continual flight" of their tributaries to work in Santiago and other parts. They noted, on the basis of discreet inquiries, that over 100 of San Juan's 280 registered tributaries had left for the capital and its environs and that others sought refuge on Spanish haciendas or in Spanish settlements. Successful migrants must have learned how to disguise their past identities; doing so was one way to avoid being dragged back to pay unpaid tribute debts and meet unfulfilled labor obligations (Lutz 1982:288, 164-76; Lutz 1994a). At times compromises were negotiated whereby an absent tributary paid his share, or his patrón did, in exchange for being allowed to remain unharassed on a Spanish estate or in an urban household (Lutz 1982:296 n. 11).

#### *Rural-Urban Migration*

While we often think of the migration of Indians from the countryside to the city as a more recent phenomenon, it was also a feature of colonial Santiago. Indians migrated to the colonial metropolis, a city in its heyday of about thirty thousand inhabitants, to escape tributary obligations, as did those who fled from San Juan Amatitlán. Others, however, upped and left to take advantage of commercial opportunities.

Such was the case of a group of nineteen tributaries from Chichicastenango who moved to Jocotenango in the mid-seventeenth century,

many marrying into a K'iche'-tiago. There they made a living in *tierra*, in the city's market. Despite these Maxeños paid tribute in religious festivals honoring its Spanish authorities formally recognized Jocotenango over the objection of Chichicastenango. Unlike other rural areas, Chichicastenango had a strong sense of identity with Santiago. Migration to Santiago was permanent. Perhaps some members had the strength to return to Chichicastenango, but many belonged, or to become more so. There was thus cultural solidarity. In numbers (Lutz 1982:296, n. 11) one of the largest groups of Indians in the nearly continuous flow of migration moved to the capital to work in the city, whether in a stately mansion or in a modest situation in a poorer district. In coerced labor, it must be said, is the business of categorizing domestic labor. Indians often had commercial contacts in the city as a priest in an Indian community, a maid or even a child (Lutz 1982:296, n. 11) in native settlements where young men and husbands meant that domestic labor was favored by young women; rather than out prospects with aging parents, it increased the chances of marriage.

#### *Urban-Rural Migration*

Just as some Indians fled to the city, did others flee from it for previous reasons, including some "Mayanized" Indians from Tlaxcala, were often far more aware of the much better knowledge of the local market. An option for savvy, city-based

many marrying into a K'iche'-speaking *parcialidad* of that suburb of Santiago. There they made a living by selling woven clothing, *ropa de la tierra*, in the city's market. Despite their long residence in Jocotenango, these Maxeños paid tribute in their native town and helped to pay for religious festivals honoring its patron saint, Santo Tomás. In 1672, Spanish authorities formally recognized the migrant group's residence in Jocotenango over the objections of "hometown" officials back in Chichicastenango. Unlike other rural-urban migrants, this group maintained a strong sense of identity with its place of origin, even though its move to Santiago was permanent. Precisely because they constituted a group, members had the strength to resist the pressure exerted on them either to return to Chichicastenango, where traditional elders believed they belonged, or to become more socialized to the urban ways of Santiago. There was thus cultural solidarity and not just greater physical security in numbers (Lutz 1982:296, n. 12; Lutz 1994a). In terms of size, however, one of the largest groups of immigrants in Santiago was comprised of the nearly continuous flow of young Indian girls and women who moved to the capital to work in Spanish and ladino households, whether in a stately mansion in a wealthy neighborhood or in a more modest situation in a poorer district. The line between voluntary and coerced labor, it must be said, is often blurred when it comes to the business of categorizing domestic labor, then as now. Spaniards and ladinos often had commercial contacts or family ties with someone who served as a priest in an Indian community, both reliable means of securing a maid or even a child (Lutz 1982:286-87, 295 nn. 4-6; Lutz 1994a). In native settlements where young men were absent, a shortage of eligible husbands meant that domestic labor in Santiago might be looked on favorably by young women; rather than remain unwed and live without prospects with aging parents, a move to the city could conceivably increase the chances of marriage.

#### *Urban-Rural Migration*

Just as some Indians fled to the city to escape their tributary lot, so also did others flee from it for precisely the same reason. Urban Indians, including some "Mayanized" Mexicans whose ancestors came from Tlaxcala, were often far more acculturated to Spanish ways, and had a much better knowledge of the language, than their rural counterparts. An option for savvy, city-based tributaries was thus not just to move out

to the countryside to escape tax obligations but to try and pass themselves off there as ladinos. In short, for some Indians migration was a means of traveling across ethnic as well as physical space. However, while documentation exists on urban tributaries fleeing their barrios, it is difficult to find evidence of where they ended up. This, of course, was precisely because they could more successfully melt into Spanish-ladino society than other Indians could. To make oneself invisible in this way was the desired goal of many migrants.

#### *Urban-Urban Migration*

Colonial Guatemala being such a rural society, there were limited options for Indians to migrate from one urban place to another. A number of Santiago's tributaries did venture out, however, to purchase merchandise for sale in the city or to carry goods bought there for sale in other towns. These petty vendors always ran the risk of being accused of *regatonería*, or acting as intermediaries, and therefore, in the eyes of Spanish authorities, of interfering with the flow of trade. Despite strict regulations, these hispanized urban vendors, Indians and ladinos alike, managed to buy maize, cotton thread, and other commodities in order to do business in Santiago.<sup>7</sup> Those involved in a long-distance venture, say traveling to Quezaltenango or Totonicapán to buy wheat, often received official sanction for their movements back and forth, as supplying wheat to Spanish residents of Santiago was looked on with approval (Lutz 1982:341).

There were, no doubt, other kinds of urban to urban migration, but they fail to show up in the historical record. The ambulatory ways of Antonio Natareño, an Indian tributary from Quezaltenango, are an exception. Natareño first went to Santiago de Guatemala to deal in *ropa de la tierra*; like many migrants he would have disappeared without a trace had it not been for the fact that he was apprehended for conducting an illicit relationship with an Indian woman who, like himself, was married (Lutz 1994b). When the authorities ordered that his *ropa de la tierra* be seized, it was discovered that Natareño had an impressive inventory packed in huge bundles "that the said Antonio sells in the public plaza of this city." In the four bundles found, which together weighed more than 550 pounds, was unearthed an array of woolen cloth or *jerga*, presumably from the workshops of Quezaltenango and neighboring towns. The quantity of cloth in Natareño's possession sug-

gests that he was a merchant. He owned a house that, like the others, had wooden doors and windows, chairs, boxes, and a bed. For livestock the merchant had chickens, and one rooster. That the vendor of wool

The woman with whom Natareño lived in Santiago. She also sold wool. An eight-year-old man, like Natareño, had a household profession a weaver. In both marriages, Natareño was within four to six days of his wife. A judge in Santiago de Guatemala should be appointed to Natareño, in future transactions, after which period Natareño was fined the amount of the case, but surety was given and, most likely, he went back and forth as a par-

#### MIGRATION DURING

As a result of more successful migration trends: (1) population agriculture; (3) war and eruption of civil war (see Lovell and Lutz 1994).

The demographic fluctuations, have in fact approached the total that we reckon inhabited (Lovell and Lutz 1994) associated with the re-

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gests that he was a merchant of considerable standing. In Santiago he owned a house that, even though it had a thatch roof, boasted a patio and wooden doors with keys. The house was furnished with tables, chairs, boxes, and a bed, as well as pottery, crockery, and other utensils. For livestock the merchant had a mule, four Castilian hogs, sixteen chickens, and one rooster. The search of Natareño's house also revealed that the vendor of woolen cloth had at least one servant.

The woman with whom Natareño had an affair was an Indian from Santiago. She also sold clothing in the plaza and was married to a fifty-eight-year-old man, like Natareño a Quezalteco. Her husband, again like Natareño, had a house on the northern edge of the city and was by profession a weaver. Due to the "serious inconveniences" caused to both marriages, Natareño was ordered to leave the capital for his home within four to six days and lead a "married life" there with his legal wife. A judge in Santiago ruled that one of his colleagues in Quezaltenango should be apprised of the situation in order to ensure that Natareño, in future transactions, only visit Santiago for eight days at a time, after which period he should leave. For his indiscretions, Natareño was fined the sizable sum of fifty pesos. This is all we know about the case, but surely there were numerous other vecinos of Quezaltenango and, most likely, other large towns, who regularly migrated back and forth as a part of their day-to-day routines.

#### MIGRATION DURING THE NATIONAL PERIOD

As a result of more sustained research on the colonial period, we actually know more about Maya migration trends in Guatemala between 1524 and 1821 than we do for much of the post-Independence era. After the demise of Spanish rule, we see four key themes having an impact on migration trends: (1) population growth; (2) the emergence of plantation agriculture; (3) widening socioeconomic disparities; and (4) the eruption of civil war (see Figure 2.3).

The demographic factor is a crucial one. Maya numbers, with some fluctuations, have increased to the point that by the 1950s they approached the total estimated population of approximately 2 million that we reckon inhabited Guatemala at the time of Spanish contact (Lovell and Lutz 1995). Despite the violence, death, and dislocation associated with the recent civil war, a Maya population of between 5

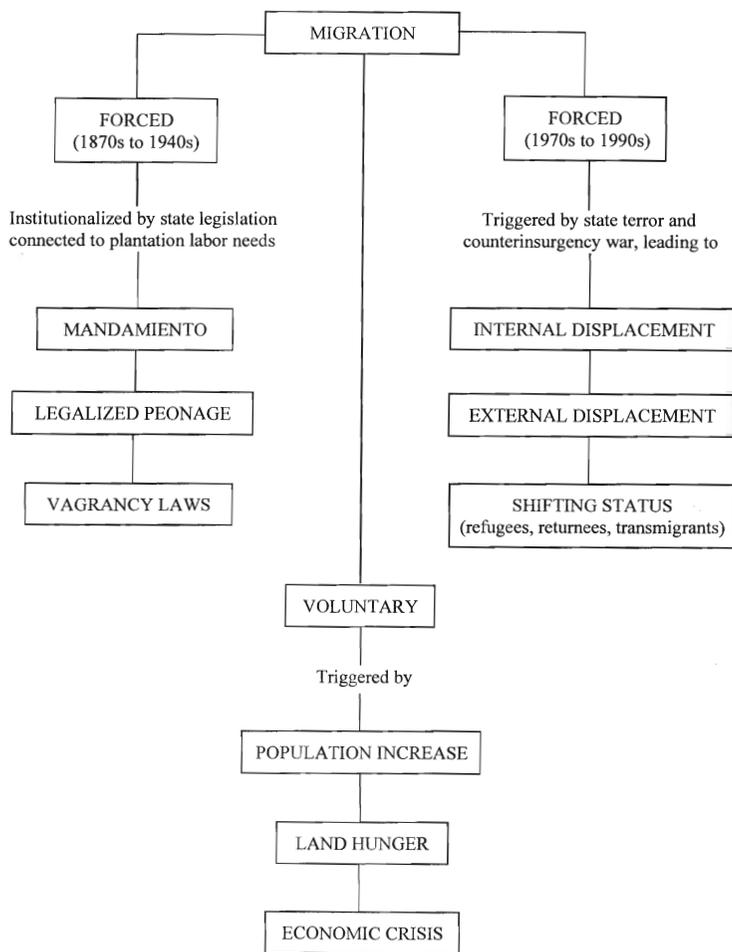


Fig. 23. Migration in Postcolonial Guatemala

and 6 million today constitutes about half of a national population of between 11 and 12 million.

Maya population—slowly rising until about fifty or sixty years ago and then accelerating rapidly since—has increased substantially since nationhood (Early 1982; Lovell and Lutz 1996). Guatemala's non-Maya population has also increased, following more or less the same temporal pattern, but even more rapidly. This long-term population growth

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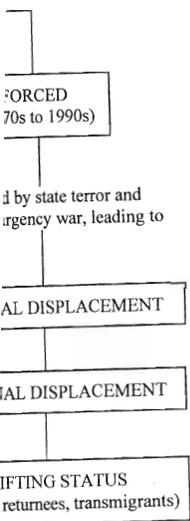
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has increasingly meant that more and more people, of all ethnicities, are in competition for the use of a fixed amount of land and ever-shrinking amounts of other resources, including such domestic essentials as wood and water.

Simultaneously, as both Maya and ladino populations have grown, internal and external economic stimuli have caused an ever-increasing concentration of agricultural lands in the hands either of ladinos or of whites of largely European descent. Changing patterns of land ownership, like population growth, is a complex process with roots in the late colonial period. Among others, Pinto Soria (1989), Castellanos Cambranes (1985), Davis (1997), McCreery (1994), and Carmack (1995) have begun to demonstrate the extent to which Maya lands were appropriated by both legal and illegal means for the benefit of a tiny minority of agro-export entrepreneurs, for the most part ladinos but also those of more recent foreign descent (see Lovell 1995). Beginning soon after independence, land began to be redistributed in order to modernize Guatemala. Some of these development schemes failed and many smaller national recipients of redistributed lands soon lost their holdings to larger, better-connected national and foreign landowners with access to capital, technology, and foreign markets.

What drove this redistribution of land first were crops that had a long history in the region, especially the dyestuffs indigo and cochineal. But this was just the beginning. Coffee cultivation, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century under Rafael Carrera and continuing and intensifying, with the so-called Liberal Revolution, under Justo Rufino Barrios, was the driving force behind non-Indian land accumulation. More recently, other large tracts of land, generally in lower-lying regions, have been appropriated by foreign companies and individuals (national and foreign) for the cultivation of bananas, sugar cane, cotton, cardamom, and the raising of beef cattle (Williams 1986).

Directly and indirectly, this long history of land seizure and accumulation has resulted in the displacement of Maya from hereditary lands in the highlands, the Pacific piedmont, and coastal regions. In the nineteenth century, the Maya population had not yet regained the numerical strength it had at the time of Spanish contact, and consequently the loss of such lands might not have seemed so crucial. At the time, ladinos and others saw Maya communities as wasting Guatemala's primary natural resource, its land, by letting it sit idle.



Guatemala

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This, at any rate, was the justification for appropriating huge tracts of Maya lands for export agriculture.

Even though the Maya lost great quantities of land, they still, until perhaps a half-century ago, had sufficient resources and low enough population densities so that what Castellanos Cambranes calls the "coffee state" had to force large numbers of highland Indians to migrate to piedmont and coastal plantations. Under a state-operated system of institutionalized recruitment, Mayas were compelled through devices of forced labor, or *mandamiento*, debt peonage, vagrancy laws, and generalized rural repression, to provide cheap, subsidized labor to the agro-export sector and to the state for such tasks as road construction (Castellanos Cambranes 1985; Handy 1984:94).

Virtually all regions of Maya Guatemala felt the impact of Liberal agrarian policy. Even the highlands, largely untouched by land losses, were nonetheless affected by the state-run mobilization of coffee *fincas* labor. McCreery has calculated that by the 1880s "at least one hundred thousand" highland workers migrated to coffee fincas each year (McCreery 1983:758). Lest one think this figure insignificant, in the demographic context of the times it represents roughly one in twelve Guatemalans, one in eight Indians, and as many as one in five highland Indians.<sup>8</sup>

As *mandamiento* was gradually phased out in the late nineteenth century, debt peonage became the primary instrument used to force large numbers of Maya to migrate annually in order to furnish their labor. It was under Jorge Ubico in 1934 that debt peonage ended but was immediately replaced with an even more onerous vagrancy law. As Whetten (1961:121) notes, "under the old law the laborer could be idle, legally, if he could manage to stay out of debt. Under the new law he must work or be punished as a vagrant." Jones (1940:162) makes a similar point.

Under the "revolutionary" presidencies of Arévalo and Arbenz (1945-54), the vagrancy law was abolished. Serious land reform efforts began under Arbenz, but this program came to a halt with his overthrow in 1954 (Handy 1984; Gleijeses 1989). Scattered figures for the post-1954 period demonstrate continued growth of labor migration. The data do not provide a clear breakdown by ethnicity but it appears that the vast majority of migrants were Maya. Some 200,000 migrated annually in the 1950s, more than 300,000 in the late 1960s, and approximately half a million in the 1970s (Lovell 1990:28).

Caught in the grip of the base, the great majority of the population that the upsurge in The population displaced thousands of families in the region, the repercussions of the come.

Meanwhile, as did the Mayas continue to migrate or lack of opportunity in the praise our conventional, the literature. No longer, in Huehuetenango or a sole reference points in a work far from their place across the southern United where Mayas from Guatemala war. Concentrations of found much farther north, and even in parts of Mayas as rural, village-based Guatemalan writer Miguel myriad, ongoing improvisation whatever it takes to make unfamiliar North American home.

While the Guatemalan violence and repression, political of people seeking economic million are presently sent in form of family remittances rural communities, can be a Guatemalan newspaper *Pr* in 1995 the Q'anjob'al community lion dollars in family remittance sand Mayas from Santa Elena most of them in California. a transnational realm that

Caught in the grip of rapid population growth and a shrinking land base, the great majority of Indians found themselves in desperate situations that the upsurge in violence in the early 1980s only exacerbated. The population displacements of the war years, for the hundreds of thousands of families involved, constitute a tragic form of forced migration, the repercussions of which will afflict Guatemala for some time to come.

Meanwhile, as did their forefathers centuries ago, Guatemalan Mayas continue to migrate in order to survive, responding to adversity or lack of opportunity in ways that force us, again and again, to reappraise our conventional, at times erroneous representations of them in the literature. No longer, for instance, can we consider a highland town in Huehuetenango or a coffee plantation in Escuintla to constitute the sole reference points in a fixed spatial universe, for Mayas now live and work far from their places of origin. They are especially numerous across the southern United States, in California, Texas, and Florida, where Mayas from Guatemala fled during the violent years of the civil war. Concentrations of Guatemalan Mayas, however, may also be found much farther north, in the cities of Chicago, Boston, and Providence, and even in parts of Canada. Static portrayals of Guatemalan Mayas as rural, village-bound "men of corn," to use the term of the Guatemalan writer Miguel Angel Asturias, must be reconciled with myriad, ongoing improvisations, for survival hinges, as ever, on doing whatever it takes to make ends meet, including testing the waters of an unfamiliar North American urban setting thousands of miles from home.

While the Guatemalan Maya diaspora began as a response to violence and repression, political refugees have since been joined by a flood of people seeking economic and social improvement. An estimated \$500 million are presently sent or taken back to Guatemala each year in the form of family remittances, the impact of which, at the level of individual communities, can be considerable (House 1999). For example, the Guatemalan newspaper *Prensa Libre* reported on 13 November 1996 that in 1995 the Q'anjob'al community of Santa Eulalia alone received \$3 million dollars in family remittances, dispatched by the more than six thousand Mayas from Santa Eulalia who live and work in the United States, most of them in California. Coming to grips with migration networks in a transnational realm that extends to the United States and Canada, as

well as neighboring Mexico, is today as much a reality of Maya life in Guatemala as confronting the demands of *encomienda* and *mandamiento* was in bygone eras. A historical perspective on Maya migration reveals them indeed to be survivors on the move.

#### NOTES

1. Robinson (1990:2) notes that "one of the most interesting aspects of preparing an overview of colonial migration is the discovery that almost every study concerned with colonial Latin America published in the past, be it on administrative structures, the Church, landholdings, taxes, population fertility—all have some component or other related to migration."

2. Lockhart (1968:200) notes that the estimates of Nicaraguan slaves may have been exaggerated, as "the Spaniards had a tendency to name the whole after the largest part." This tendency was also apparent in sixteenth-century Guatemala, where the ethno-linguistic designations "guatimalteca" and "utlateca" were used as catch-all terms when identifying mixed groups of Indian slaves.

3. Gasco (1991) has unearthed evidence that shows that in eighteenth-century Soconusco, communities were inhabited by "foreign Indians" from forty-three towns who spoke as many as thirteen different languages. See also Lovell and Lutz (1995:68–69).

4. See Dakin and Lutz (1996) for native testimony of how Indians suffered under the excessive demands of *servicio ordinario* in the 1570s.

5. See Lovell and Lutz (1995) for a discussion of sources related to the operation of the *repartimiento de indios*.

6. Regarding this point from a Yucatecan Maya perspective, and also from that of the Itzá Maya who lived unconquered in the territories in between, see Farriss (1984) and Jones (1989, 1998). For rich information on one of Guatemala's frontier zones, see Percheron (1990).

7. *Casta regatones*, but not Indians, were often accused by the Spanish authorities of shaking down rural traders and bearers. See Lutz (1982:338, 341) and Lutz (1994a).

8. The first official published Guatemalan census (1880) shows a total population of 1,224,602. Indians constituted 844,744 or 69 percent and *ladinos* 379,828 or 31 percent of Guatemala's total population. A look at department totals suggests that approximately 84 percent of the country's Indians lived in the highlands in 1880 (Guatemala 1880).

CATHERINE L. NOLIN

### 3 Flight, Exile, Guatemalan 1981–1998

CENTRAL AMERICAN politically unstable regions Nations rhetoric calls the region's then 20 million within Central America its neighboring Mexico and (CIREFCA 1992b; Jonas 1990s indicates that prominent feature of Central attracted little international

Within Central America seemingly endless statistics (1994; Manz 1988a). Other certainly witnessed political previous period, however placement, and destruction two decades (Morrison and economic reform (1944–54 Guatemala, as a modern Handy 1994). Armed co forces and guerrilla insurging what in the 1970s, and r (Lovell 1995). Numerical chilling: some 200,000 persons highest in any country in Latin Mexico alone, and an estimate roughly half the entire Central population when the violence between 8 and 9 million persons