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Living on Scorched Earth:
The Political Ecology of Land Ownership in Guatemala's Northern Lowlands

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requirements for the degree of

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Environmental Science, Policy and Management

in the

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of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:

Professor J. Keith Gilless, Chair
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Professor Jake Kosek
Professor Nancy Peluso

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by Megan Ybarra

Abstract

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Doctor of Philosophy in Environmental Science, Policy and Management

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This dissertation examines Q'eqchi' Maya survivors of Guatemala's genocidal counterinsurgency campaign that burned over 440 villages to the ground. I argue that lowlands Q'eqchi's communities' struggles for land were not won or lost on civil war battlefields, but are still being determined through the contested politics of land ownership on scorched earth. I present the implications of my argument for territory, identity and development through four case studies based on 17 months of ethnographic fieldwork.

First, case studies of former development poles reveal that people displaced during Guatemala's civil war (1960-1996) associate the military's scorched earth counterinsurgency strategies with contemporary scorched earth conservation enforcement. I employ a political ecology approach to argue that conservation (creation and enforcement of protected areas) and neoliberal land policies (projects to map, title and register land that privilege private property) articulate in a single territorial project that facilitates the contemporary dispossession of small land holders.

Second, I show how genocide survivors articulate a Q'eqchi' identity through land claims in titling and conservation projects. Lowlands Q'eqchi's share narratives of suffering for territory, which they trace from the colonial period to the present. My ethnography reveals the challenges Q'eqchi' communities face in linking their land claims to the broader Pan-Maya movement, which is dominated by Western Highlands Maya. As such, I caution against subsuming Guatemalan politics of indigeneity to the politics of the Pan-Maya movement.

Finally, I show how conservation and development projects have become the terrain of post-war politics in Guatemala. Whether they like it or not, international development agencies have become arbiters of land conflicts. In the process, they must decide whose battle was righteous, who is indigenous, who is a peasant, which lands are sacred, and whose struggle for territory merits title and enforcement. Development projects that have important juridical and material effects on land tenure—land titling, community based natural resource management, payments for environmental services—largely ignore complicated war histories. Given that international development projects ally with regional and national elites, including the military, these projects can authorize violent exclusions that reproduce racialized hierarchies. I conclude by showing that who becomes a land owner and who becomes dispossessed not only decides outcomes of civil war struggles, but also shapes how people can forge their livelihoods in the future.

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On currency
Until 1987, the Guatemalan quetzal (Q) was pegged to the dollar. Today, the quetzal has an exchange rate of approximately Q8 = US$1. Purchasing power of the quetzal was significantly greater at the beginning of my historical focus (1954) than today, until it suffered a sharp decline beginning in the 1970s.

Today, the average daily wage for a rural unskilled worker is Q30 = $3.75 (approximately $75 per month). Peace Corps Volunteers in the region receive a living allowance calculated to approximate the wages of their development professional counterparts, approximately Q2,750 = $343.75 per month. Development professionals living in Cobán or Guatemala may have significantly larger wages. This reflects the common income differential between development professionals in the field (their superiors, who design and manage projects and policies, have significantly higher wages) and their target population.

Land measurements
1 manzana = 1.7 acres = 0.7 hectares = 16 cuerdas or "tareas";
    abbreviated as mz.
1 hectare = 2.4 acres = 1.43 manzanas; abbreviated as ha.
1 caballería = 45 hectares = 65 manzanas = 111 acres = 400 cuerdas

The land tenure agencies legally allowed landless peasants to claim 22.5 hectares per family in the Franja and 45 hectares (1 caballería) in Petén. This sets the standard for land tenure in the lowlands, although the amount of land people could claim varied in practice.

On orthography and pseudonyms
When writing Q'eqchi' words, I use the orthography endorsed by the Mayan Language Academy of Guatemala (ALMG). Most words are pronounced similarly to English, but letters followed by a ' have a glottal stop, and the x sounds like "sh." Q'eqchi' does not use gendered pronouns and should be read as neutral (including both men and women) where not otherwise specified.

As is common in the region, my use of Q'eqchi' words reflects the influence of Spanish. First, my use of some Q'eqchi' words is pluralized using the Spanish norm (adding an "s" or "es" at the end) in deference to English readers. Second, official Guatemalan place names often render Q'eqchi' words using spellings invented by the colonial Spanish or Ladino state officials. I maintain those spellings for clarity.

I changed the names of all people, communities and NGOs with a significant profile in my research to protect their identities. I have omitted or changed a few significant historical details, particularly for the scorched earth communities (Chapters 6 and 7), in an effort to protect them from potential reprisals. Some human rights activists were concerned about paramilitary reprisals for their historical relationship with EGP, whereas some paramilitary leaders were afraid of human rights trials. Likewise, the director of one NGO mentioned his ambivalence at significant attention from would-be

gring@ volunteers, and two others expressed concern that my findings could be read as a criticism of their work. I hope it is clear that my critiques are about the practices of conservation and development more generally, and that I admire the NGOs I had the privilege of working with, but I have also given them pseudonyms.

In assigning pseudonyms, I followed one general rule: the pseudonym would be in the same language as the original name. Many individuals have given names in Spanish, but they are known by Maya names in local communities and Pan-Maya political circles. For those people, I tended to assign a Q'eqchi' Maya name (e.g. B'ex, whose given name was Sebastian) if that was how I addressed them. Some indigenous NGOs follow a similar convention, going by the acronym of their Q'eqchi' name where they work, but offering a Spanish translation to funders and international researchers.

Preface

There were two poignant moments in my experience as a Peace Corps Volunteer in Guatemala that influenced my graduate work. First, my energy and naïveté led me to push the county planning office to travel to the Zona Reyna, the remote lowlands with hundreds of Q'eqchi' communities (we rode four hours in a pick-up truck, then hiked into communities for a week at a time). Once we arrived in rural communities in the Zona Reyna to talk about civil participation, women's rights, etc., we were confronted with the problems of language (there are no words for human rights in Q'eqchi', we were told). In one community, the women were unusually reticent; I was confused and frustrated—I had finally found people who actually wanted to hear our Peace Accords talk, but there was no conversation. Over dinner that night, I realized why. The only qualified driver on the treacherous road leading to the Zona Reyna, guide on our hikes to villages, and most recently stand-in interpreter, laughed as he told us about how he had been a Kaibil, part of the military's brutal special operations force, during the civil war. He knew about all these communities from guiding army units on brutal counterinsurgency campaigns. I realized that he made laviscious comments about young Q'eqchi' girls because he enjoyed the horror written on my face. It was little wonder that our overtures were met with silence when this was the man who served as our gateway to talk about women's rights.

I later had the opportunity to work with the municipal government on tourism initiatives, who were hoping to capitalize on the *gring@* backpackers who came through Uspantán to see Rigoberta Menchú Tum's (Nobel Peace Prize winner) homeland. We identified one site, a waterfall, as having the greatest potential for development as an ecotourism site. As the weeks went on, it was obvious that many community members were unhappy with the choice, but my colleagues in government offices either didn't know (many of them didn't live in Uspantán at the height of civil war violence) or wouldn't tell me why. I toured the town, professing my ignorance and asking for help from everyone I could, until I finally understood the underlying ambivalence about our chosen ecotourism site. This particular waterfall had been the army's chosen body dumping site during the violent counterinsurgency that rocked the countryside in the early 1980s. When I found the right questions to ask, the answer was simple—people weren't sure they wanted *gring@s* hiking to look at a pretty waterfall, because that was the place that most people went to pay their respects on the Day of the Dead (more went there than to the official cemetery).

The realization that development work always occurs on a terrain of sedimented history, and that memories of the recent civil war affected how people participated (or didn't) in our projects, made me feel woefully inadequate to the task at hand. How might development look different, I wondered, if we were more thoughtful with the thorny questions of history, culture, and local ecologies? The urgent need to understand unintended effects of the projects I participated in, coupled with a cautious idealism about the possibility to do development better, is why I decided pursue graduate studies.

One final note: Although I intended to address both race and gender in my work, gender relations are notably absent in my analysis. I had the opportunity to work with women struggling for land rights, but I do not present findings based on those fieldwork experiences. Unfortunately, this is because the groups I worked with were fearful and

harassed: one group suffered death threats and effectively disbanded in 2007, and another asked me not to write about their struggles, even using pseudonyms. My silence on gender dynamics is out of respect for their wishes.

Acknowledgments

Chapter 1

Introduction: Territory, Identity and Development

Interviewing an "Invader"

I came to the village of Sepac to study conflicts stemming from a land titling project. The Project, as villagers refer to it, is a consortium of conservation and development agencies, that intended to help communities bordering Raxhá national park through the Kafkaeque labyrinth of land titling. They hoped that land titling would create "land tenure security," thereby preventing local communities from occupying park lands. On my first day, however, my research was taken hostage.

Just a few hours after I moved into my bunk in Project offices,[1] I was evacuated. My colleagues said a tense situation had developed inside the park, about forty minutes on foot from the office. Apparently, an angry "mob" from Sepac took park employees hostage. As I tossed my backpack in the pickup, the official in charge explained that anyone affiliated with the Project or the park was being evacuated.

Earlier, a team of park guards, accompanied by armed police and soldiers, confronted a group of local "invaders" tending their crops inside the park. When officers attempted to arrest two farmers, forty men, women and children resisted. Brandishing their machetes, they demanded that the team of twelve guards, police and army put down their guns and took them hostage. The Project director was called in to mediate negotiations.

As we were riding back to Cobán, Project employees complained vociferously that their boss would not stand up to the "invaders." When I asked why it mattered so much—the Project is, after all, a separate institution from the park—they insisted that we should "stand with them" because they were our "brothers." One project technician was angry that the army would not kill hostage-takers, because "if you kill them, then they'll say it's a massacre." I was shocked that he resented human rights condemnations of genocidal massacres during Guatemala's recent civil war.

There is almost no traffic on this one-lane road, which is often impassable during the rainy season. We slowed down when we saw a truck headed towards us—it was the Project director, on his way to participate in hostage negotiations. While watching the employees nod and pretend to sagely agree with the director's stern warning that the most important thing is not to escalate the situation, I began to revise my understanding of Sepac. I was surprised that the army, park officials, and community members assumed that an NGO director should be in charge of hostage negotiations that did not involve any of his employees.

The standoff lasted over 40 hours and ended in a stalemate. The police did not arrest anyone, but they subsequently filed warrants for kidnapping charges. Since

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[1] Most Project employees stay in office bunks during the week and commute home to urban centers every weekend.

community members did not know who was named in the warrant, however, all the men involved went into hiding. Park guards asserted that the "invaders" beat and threatened to kill them. The "invaders" vehemently denied this, admitting only to taunting them. No charges were filed on these claims.

When I returned to Sepac a few days later, nobody wanted to tell me who the "invaders" were—some people claimed it was for my protection, while other people implied it was for their own. In the meantime, I had an interview with a community leader was cooperating with The Project. He explained to me that it was true that many people in Sepac wanted to burn down Project buildings. He hastened to assure me that they didn't want to burn people alive inside them. This was a direct reference to the civil war. There was an uncomfortable silence as we both looked around the Project office to see if anyone heard him. I tried not to be scared, but I resolved to move out of the Project offices.

Everyone else knew who the invaders were, but somehow nobody seemed to have the information when I asked for it. I had a few names of people I had found in archival records as unsuccessful petitioners for land rights, and I believed some of them were the same folks who were now leading the "invader" groups. One morning, I decided to walk around and ask some questions on the street, the fastest way in a small town to get the word out that I was looking to talk. I wandered the muddy road in sweltering heat, asking elderly women for directions to the houses of people I had not met. It was a kind of quid pro quo—in exchange for my story of how a Q'eqchi'-speaking *gringa* came to be standing on their porch, they would point me in the right direction. Eventually, I had the good luck to slide down a very muddy hill and land unceremoniously on my butt in front of a group of laughing children who confirmed that their father, Rodrigo, was the man I sought. They disappeared to tell their mother, who sent them to question me. I answered that no, I was not the park director, and no, I didn't want to arrest their father, I was just a *gringa* studying land tenure and I just wanted to talk to him so I could write about his story. Ohhh, a *gringa*, they said, like Peace Corps.

When Rodrigo returned home from tending his crops inside the park, we had our first interview. I told him that I was interested in land titling in Sepac, not the politics of the park. After staring at me for a long moment, he explained that those were one and the same thing.

Over the weeks, Rodrigo and other farmers who planted in the park told how they became "invaders" while other people became "owners" because of racial, religious and economic inequities in setting the park's boundaries. Sepac suffered a massacre, then literally rebuilt on the ashes of their dead. This is where the title of my project comes from. When I began conducting research, I wanted to know how massacre survivors are living on scorched earth. Most people do not think scorched earth massacres are connected to contemporary conservation policy, but they are to Rodrigo. He leads groups that attempt to (re)claim land held in protected areas, but the army arrests them, burns their homes, possessions, and crops, then camps on the ashes as it did after massacres in the 1980s.

Although I set out to study the politics of land titling and agrarian change in a separate sphere from conservation, Rodrigo and other community leaders insisted that they experience them as two aspects of a single political project. As such, my dissertation explores how the historical geographies of counterinsurgency affect

agrarian change, conservation and development in the northern lowlands. In order to think through who becomes a land "owner" and who becomes a park "invader," I work through the historical reproduction of racialized identities through insurgency, counterinsurgency and post-war development.

Background: Guatemala's Northern Lowlands

Guatemala is part of Central America, located directly south of Mexico and west of Belize. It is a small country, approximately the size of Tennessee, but if its many hills were stretched flat, it would be as big as Texas. According to the World Bank's poverty assessment, Guatemala is rife with social inequality—with a rural-majority population, the Gini coefficient for land is 79%, and three-quarters of the rural population is poor (extreme poverty is exclusively a rural phenomenon); poverty is highly correlated with indigeneity (Vakis 2003). Perhaps the most important event in Guatemala during the twentieth century was a 36-year civil war (1960—1996). This was a civil war in the sense that both Marxist-influenced insurgencies and broader revolutionary social movements were brewing in Guatemala beginning in the 1960s.[2] To characterize this as a class war or peasant struggle (as was common at the time), however, neglects an understanding of how indigenous peoples were redefining their own identities in relation to structural changes and social upheaval.

The military committed the majority of war-time violence. Many scholars disavow the use of terms like civil war, which implies violence on both sides. Instead, they analyze the conflict as the work of a "terrorist State, whose effects are worse and from which all society suffers now and in the future" (Taracena Arriola 2007: xxxi, translation mine). People who are familiar with state terror and dictatorship in Latin America tend to think first of Argentina and Chile, but Guatemala's war started earlier, lasted longer, and its military killed a greater proportion of the population. Although Argentina's "Operation Condor" made the Spanish term *desaparecido* (a person that the military forces to disappear, who is presumed dead) infamous, this term had already been in use in Guatemala for over a decade. Many brutal Latin American military regimes tortured people in seeking information on subversives, but the Guatemalan military tended to subsequently kill them (rather than jailing, as in other nations). Approximately 200,000 non-combatants—including women, children, and elderly— were killed or "disappeared," over 80% of whom were Maya peoples. Approximately one million people were internally displaced, and 150,000 people were refugees in Mexico.[3] Military and paramilitary groups were responsible for 93% of this violence (CEH 1999). In my study site, Q'eqchi' Maya understand counterinsurgency as attempts to both exterminate entire villages by a racist Ladino state—genocide—and to force survivors to learn Spanish and cease important spiritual and political practices— ethnocide.

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[2] The war began as a rebellion when large-scale ranchers dispossessed poor Ladinos farmers in the East. After the army brutally repressed the uprising, survivors regrouped as new guerrilla movements that sought to popularize the insurgency in indigenous areas.

[3] Only a third of the estimated population obtained official refugee status.
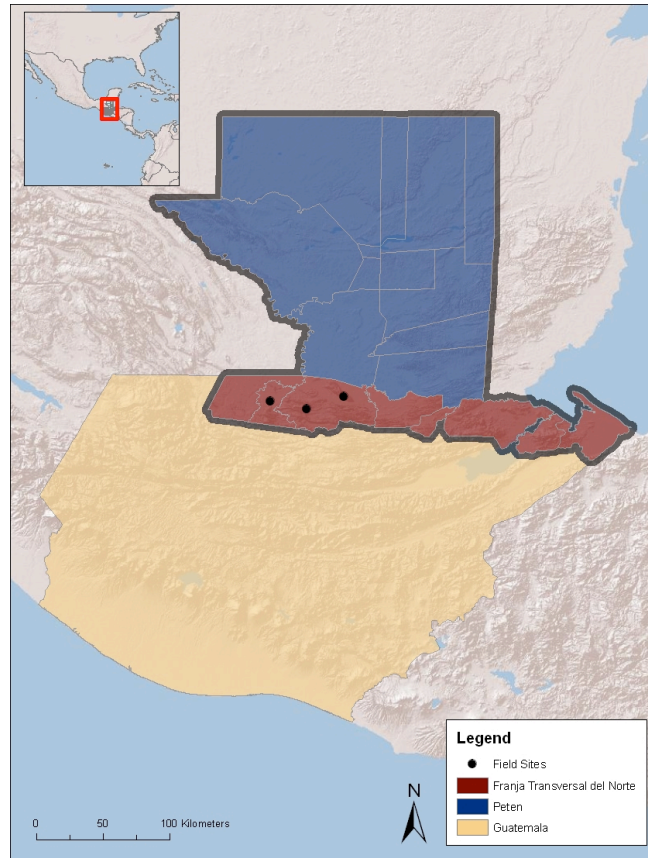
FIGURE 1.1: The Northern Lowlands, comprised of Petén department (blue) and the Franja Transversal del Norte (red). To the south are the hot East and the "Western" Highlands extend west from central Guatemala. Map by the author.

My work is on the northern lowlands, approximately one-third of the national territory, which is underrepresented in ethnographic scholarship on Guatemala. Beginning in the late 1980s, international conservation organizations, on the basis of ecological continuities and a political agenda to promote protected areas, dubbed this part of Guatemala (along with Belize and southern Mexico) the "Maya Forest."[4] In Guatemala, the northern lowlands are divided into two parts: Petén (in blue), the department farthest north, home to most of Guatemala's impressive archaeological ruins; and the lateral strip to the south, the *Franja Transversal del Norte* (literally, "Northern Transversal Strip," hereafter Franja; in red). Petén's population density was the lowest in the country from Spanish invasions until 1960.[5] While my dissertation addresses massive changes in Petén beginning in 1960, the focus of my work is on the Franja. In particular, I focus on the intersection of the Franja and the department of Alta Verapaz (on the map, center portion of the red strip). Beginning with their dispossession

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[4] The term Maya Forest is highly contested, particularly by those who self-identify as Maya and see protected areas as a reproduction of racialized dispossession. I discuss the genealogy of the term as part of a larger political project in Chapter 3.

[5] Following Mayan scholars, I do not use the word conquest. Contrary to popular belief, not all of Latin America was conquered within a few years of Spanish invasion and occupation, or even the first century. Tayasal, in contemporary Petén, did not fall until 1697. As late as 1900, there were still a few unconquered Mayas living in Petén (Jones 1989).

from their native highlands, which German immigrants used for coffee plantations, Q'eqchi's have been settling the Franja in search of land and livelihood. The region is also important spiritually and ecologically, as it is a karstic subtropical forest with significant cave systems, important both in conservation and Q'eqchi' spirituality.

There are two major groups that live in the Alta Verapaz lowlands: Ladinos and Q'eqchi's.[6] In the entire department of Alta Verapaz, approximately 20% of the population is Ladino and 80% is Q'eqchi'. Given that most Ladinos live in the departmental capital (Cobán), Q'eqchi's are an even greater majority where I conducted research. During the colonial period, the word Ladino referred to indigenous people who learned Spanish, intermarried with Spanish-descended colonizers, and played an intermediary role between Creole colonizers (born in the colony, but of pure Spanish descent) and indigenous colonized. Eventually, Ladino came to be seen as a negative term for people who were neither Spaniard nor Indian, but a cultural and biological miscegenation of Spanish, indigenous, and African peoples (Smith 1990; Martínez Peláez 2009).

Although postcolonial Guatemala is generally presented as having binary race relations between Ladinos and Mayas, there is considerable variation within both groups. Ladinos are generally perceived as dominant, but within this group there is a significant break between the rural poor and the upper social caste that actively self-identifies as white or Creole (Casaús Arzú 1992). Ladino identity is complicated in northern Guatemala for another reason—variation in European settlements has led to considerable diversity amongst Ladinos. In Petén, the Ladino population considers itself Petenero, proudly acknowledging a mix of Spanish, Maya, Mexican (both indigenous and Spanish), and English roots. In Alta Verapaz, there is a sizeable group amongst the Ladino population with German heritage.

The Q'eqchi' are one of 21 indigenous peoples who are legally recognized as Maya on the basis of ethnolinguistic characteristics.[7] The Maya comprise between 40 and 65% of Guatemala's population (Yashar 2005). Of the Maya, the Q'eqchi' have the third largest population and cover the most Guatemalan territory (as well as part of Belize). Nonetheless, the Q'eqchi' are socially marginalized to a greater extent than most other Maya peoples, which many scholars attribute to the fact that they are approximately 80% monolingual and their supposedly isolationist tendencies (Chapter 4). Relatively high poverty and illiteracy rates make it more difficult for the Q'eqchi' to mobilize as a group and represent themselves on a national level, although I am not convinced that this has been an important goal for Q'eqchi' political and spiritual groups. As a Mayan people who suffered massacres and displacement, but today are renewing their ethnic identity and expanding territorially, Q'eqchi's are important to an analysis of social dynamics in Guatemala and Mayan rights struggles.

There are two factors that affect how most people view the Q'eqchi'. First, while there has been a political movement to articulate a Pan-Maya identity based on a shared injustices and ethno-linguistic identity since Spanish colonialism (Warren 1998), this movement is unstable and shifting. There is significant diversity (historical, cultural, and

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[6] Chapter Three also includes a brief discussion of Peteneros, Itzaes and Mopanes; all three of these populations are specific to the Petén department.

[7] The assumption that one must speak an indigenous language to be an indigenous person may be problematic. All of the people I met who self-identify as Q'eqchi' also speak the language, so this is not an issue I address in my dissertation.

linguistic) amongst the Maya peoples, but both scholarly and popular works have a tendency to analyze one Maya people in depth with regard to a research topic, then generalize this analysis to all Maya peoples. Since most contemporary and historical ethnographic works focus on the Western Highlands, and particularly those Maya peoples who are powerful political players (e.g., K'iche' and Kaqchikel), allegedly general understandings of Guatemala's Maya peoples are most true for the dominant Maya in the Western Highlands, and least true for eastern Maya, including the Q'eqchi'.

The other influential discipline that has shaped the general understanding of the Q'eqchi' Maya is archaeology. A persistent understanding of the Classic Maya can be summarized thus: the ancient Maya practiced slash-and-burn agriculture and lived in low-density settlements, gathering primarily for religious ceremonies at magisterial buildings; the "collapse" of this civilization occurred because it failed to evolve, and slash-and-burn agriculture became irreparably destructive to the land as the population grew and land use became more intensive. This theory has lost credibility in recent years (e.g., Aimers 2007),[8] as well as debated in larger understandings of human societies (e.g., Diamond 2005; McAnany and Yoffee 2010), but nonetheless Q'eqchi' Maya agricultural and spiritual practices have been used to better understand ancient Maya civilizations. In terms of material implications, popular understandings of the ancient Maya and the "collapse" of their civilization have also been used as justifications to exclude swiddening Q'eqchi's from colonization projects beginning in the 1960s (Chapter 2) and from contemporary conservation projects in the "Maya Forest" (Chapter 3).

Finally, my own role in ethnographic fieldwork thrusts onto stage the role that *gring@s* play in Guatemalan politics, particularly in the context of contemporary conservation and development. Gringo is the Latin American term for a person from the US, but Guatemalans use it to refer generally to a rich, white foreigner. Although some Q'eqchi's occasionally use this term as a borrowed word (*aj griing*), the closest term is *Kaxlan* (pronounced kash-LAN), a term common in Mesoamerican languages to refer to Spanish colonists. *Kaxlan* came to be a modifier without negative connotations for items the Spanish introduced (e.g., bread is *kaxlan wa*, or "foreigner's tortilla"), but it is pejorative when used to describe people. Today, a Ladino development worker from Alta Verapaz, a French ecotourism operator, and I are all *Kaxlan*, much to the dismay of Ladinos. As I discuss in Chapter 3, many Ladinos invoke the CIA's role in overthrowing Guatemala's democratically elected government (1954) as emblematic of US imperial intervention. When *gring@s* pontificate on the need to remember genocide, some Ladinos point to *mestizaje* as the way forward (Chapter 8).

Research Design

At the behest of rural Q'eqchi' communities, I leveraged my role as a foreign researcher to ensure that Guatemalan authority figures gave people I accompanied the attention they deserved. Partly as a consequence of these actions, I found myself fielding Ladino resentment at my unwanted interventions in local race dynamics. As such, I used my polarizing identity productively as *gringa* (privilege,

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[8] Among other things, Classic Maya civilization had a much larger population than some scholars believed in the early 20th century, urbanization did in fact occur around some religious centers, and the Maya practiced advanced agricultural techniques including raised-field, terracing and wetlands farming as well as complex gardens to support a growing population.

education, affinities with indigenous peoples) to explore the minefield of race relations and land tenure in post-war conflicts. During fieldwork in a context of post-war violence, I was also occasionally afraid to reveal information about my research and myself—I found myself weighing the dangers of kidnapping threats, warning shots, or even Ladino ranchers from the East arriving at village study sites to ask questions about me by name. My experiences were still shot through with privilege, but I believe they contributed to my understanding of how palpable fear shapes people's political engagements.

The research presented here is informed by two years of service as a Peace Corps Volunteer in rural Guatemala; I subsequently conducted 17 months of fieldwork. Data collection included surveys, interviews and participant observation. I devoted the first four months of fieldwork to scoping research, including a study of surging violence in a land titling and cadastral project (Ybarra 2009), Q'eqchi' language training (I am fluent in Spanish), and a preliminary land tenure survey in the Franja. Given the complexity of agrarian struggles in the Franja, I opted for a case study approach. In designing my case studies, I sought to create positions that would fulfill two goals: first, that they would somehow be useful to the communities that I worked with; and second, that my case studies would facilitate my participant observation of communities' relationships with a broad political spectrum of governmental and non-governmental agencies.

For the ethnographic component of case studies, I assumed temporary affiliations and worked with three NGOs. First, New Horizons, a large international NGO that works in multiple sectors, of which land is just one. Although I have reservations about New Horizons' approach to agrarian conflicts and their implementation of a neoliberal land titling agenda, my colleagues are open to an array of political viewpoints and they helped me create a mutually beneficial case study, as well as graciously providing entrée to meetings with national and international policymakers. Next, Wakliqoo is a Q'eqchi' community association (with international funding) that provides political organization, education, and technical assistance for member communities in order to receive legal recognition for communally titled lands. It is of note that the director of Wakliqoo (who self-identifies as Q'eqchi') and the "lands" director of New Horizons (of Q'eqchi' and German heritage) have a longstanding antagonistic relationship that centers around their disagreements about what Q'eqchi' communities want and need.[9] Finally, The Project is a local NGO created by a consortium of international agencies (primarily a conservation BINGO) to work on agrarian conflicts and land titling as a mechanism to ameliorate environmental degradation in protected areas.

Each of four case studies examines land struggles through the lens of conservation and development, but the first case study examined the same problem in multiple communities. With New Horizons, I explored the question of privatization in the context of land titling in Q'eqchi' communities through archival research, expert interviews, and focus groups (Chapter 4). The other case studies entailed archival research, interviews, meetings, and participant observation living in a rural community. The second case study was at the invitation of Wakliqoo to work on a sacred place declaration as a way to help a community assert indigenous territorial rights (Chapter 5). The final two cases were of agrarian struggles of two former development poles, each

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[9] Both were bemused that I was working with the other, asking me questions that implied this was political naïveté on my part.

of which suffered a scorched earth massacre and resettlement under military control (Chapters 6 and 7). At a key moment in the 1970s, one community sought help with its conflict over ownership from the guerrillas, and the other sought help from the military. I present each case separately, showing how historical alliances shaped the trajectory of their post-war development.

Development: War by Another Means

The United Nations declared peace in Guatemala in 1996, officially ending a 36 year civil war. Since then, the country has received over $1.9 billion in "post-conflict" development projects. I am writing this dissertation against the presumptions of post-conflict development that violence ended with the signing of the Peace Accords, and I am also writing against a rising tide of proclamations that Guatemala is a failed state, because each of these narratives assumes an outcome that is not determined. I argue that the social genocide of Guatemala is not over—while military-sponsored massacres ended in the 1980s, counterinsurgency's effects are being institutionalized in current land titling and conservation projects that divide the spoils of war unequally among survivors.

An international coalition, including the World Bank, wrote these projects into the Peace Accord on "Socio-economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation" (1996; Figure 1.2, below). In brief, the accord acknowledges that a root cause of the war was staggering inequality. Moreover, the reference to the "agrarian situation" is an indirect acknowledgement that rural poor people's struggles for land drove the war for three decades, not communism per se. Although military violence died down by the 1990s, the rural countryside was still rife with land conflicts.

Rather than tackle the inequalities that sparked the war in the first place, the Peace Accords' international coalition, led by the World Bank, designed a new national project to create "tenure security" by formalizing land ownership on privatized land through cadastral mapping and titling of existing, undisputed rights. It also incorporated environmental efforts to fix nature in parks as part of the "Maya Forest." In the post-war, however, resolving land struggles is not simply a question of formalization via the grid, but judging the legitimacy of competing land claims generated at different moments of colonization and counterinsurgency. The problem is that these projects are an arena of mutual misrecognition—engineers implement land titling projects on the assumption of individualized, uncontested parcels, with an archive of ownership; whereas lowlands Q'eqchi's make land claims on the basis of bodily suffering for territory. These mutual misrecognitions seem to make sense— engineers update the cadastral registry with those parcels they can map to an archive of ownership, and many Q'eqchi's who have no archival proof of their dispossession and displacement into the jungle interpret their unheeded claims to mean that they have been judged unworthy. These pernicious effects are also material: formalizing war-time dispossession, privatizing property relations that communities claim as communal, and present-day coercive sales completed at the moment of titling.

Whether they like it or not, international development agencies have become arbiters of land conflicts: deciding whose battle was righteous, who is indigenous, who is a peasant, whether lands are sacred, and whose struggle for territory merits title and enforcement. In this way, people's struggles for land were not won or lost on battlefields, but are determined through the contested politics of land ownership on

scorched earth. It is the unsettled nature of the "firm and lasting peace," with its attendant specter of a failed nation-state, that gives post-war development projects the power to determine winners and losers.

Broadly speaking, there are two mandates for land-based development projects: conservation and economic development, often presented as complementary "sustainable development." Guatemala experienced a massive upsurge in development interventions after its civil war, but post-conflict development projects have had a pernicious tendency to confine social justice to the realm of popular education. Meanwhile, development projects that have important juridical and material effects on land tenure—land titling, community based natural resource management, payments for environmental services—largely ignore complicated war histories. As a result, international development projects tend to reproduce the military's counterinsurgency biases when deciding issues of land tenure. Conservation and development NGOs rely on a legitimizing nation-state, which in turn uses sustainable development projects to reproduce racialized social hierarchies and authorize violent exclusions. I am not arguing that development agencies intend to reproduce social hierarchies, but their alliance with regional and national elites means that development projects are often wielded to reproduce racialized privilege.

I use three key analytics to develop my argument throughout the dissertation: territory, identity and development. Below, I frame each analytic and develop a series of propositions that I attempt to show in the rest of the dissertation.

Substantive United Nations-Mediated Peace Accords in Guatemala
Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights (March 1994)
Agreement on Resettlement of Population Groups Uprooted by the Armed Conflict (June 1994)
Agreement for the Establishment of Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations and Acts of Violence that Have Caused the Guatemalan Population to Suffer (June 1994)
Agreement on the Identity and Rights of Indigenous Peoples (March 1995)
Agreement on the Socio-Economic Aspects and the Agrarian Situation (May 1996)
Agreement on the Strengthening of Civilian Power and the Role of the Armed Forces in a Democratic Society (September 1996)
Agreement on a Definitive Ceasefire (December 1996)
Agreement on Constitutional Reforms and the Electoral Regime (December 1996)
Agreement on the Basis for Legal Integration of the URNG (December 1996)
Agreement on the Implementation, Compliance, and Verification Timetable for the Peace Agreements (December 1996)
Agreement on a Firm and Lasting Peace (December 1996)

FIGURE 1.2[10]

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[10] The 1992 accord on uprooted population groups is not included in this table because it was a prior separate agreement between the Permanent Commission for refugees in Mexico and the Guatemalan government.

Territory

I use territorialization, or projects that produce territories as spaces with meanings that authorize political acts, as a key analytic to think through agrarian and conservation politics in the northern lowlands. Territoriality calls for a focus on representations of space (Lefebvre 1991), and Peluso and Vandergeest's (1995; 2001, forthcoming) work emphasizes that these representations are alive in planners' imagination as well as spatial practice, particularly in terms of proleptic, normalizing acts by a powerful state. This understanding is apt in the case of Guatemalan counterinsurgency, during which the military high command acted as the sole state authority for over twenty years (Nelson 1999).[11] Recent contemporary projects are constructed on sedimented histories of past territorial projects.

As such, I focus on the military (and its cooperation with USAID) in discussing the territorial projects of agrarian colonization (1954—1978) and scorched earth development (1979—1995). The military wrote the peace into its strategic counterinsurgency plan (Schirmer 1998), and my work traces the continuities from war-time projects into post-war development. In this current territorial project (1996—present), international aid agencies, conservation NGOs, and the Guatemalan nation-state collaborate in their vision of a bounded Maya Forest and a productive ownership society. In thinking about territorial projects as political acts, I examine how they are produced through ethnic, religious or economic imperatives (often all three) that are used to simultaneously make claims on land and imbue it with meaning. My work addresses the significance of territorial projects both on the land and on people.

<u>From labor to land</u>

My reading of Guatemala through territory is a significant departure from that of scholars who interpret agrarian histories as political projects to control peasant labor. Historical works show persuasively the time and energy the state and postcolonial elites spent on controlling labor (Cambranes 1985; McCreery 1994). Over the past fifty years, however, I believe there has been a significant shift—many elite plantation owners who previously coerced rural Q'eqchi's to work as serfs expelled families beginning in the 1950s, and the lowlands have progressively shifted towards accumulation through nature tourism, cattle ranching, and drug trafficking. As practiced in the Franja, these endeavors all require significant control of territory, but not labor.

To understand why scholars might still understand agrarian change in terms of labor, it is worth reviewing the history of labor coercion. Guatemala became an independent nation in 1821, when Creole elites seized power with the goals of both continuing territorial projects of accumulation built on racialized hierarchies and modernizing the state.[12] Creole elites transformed earlier Spanish colonial justification of

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[11] Hurtado Paz y Paz (2007) traces the militarization of the state in Alta Verapaz to the nineteenth century as a consequence of state promotion of European coffee plantations on indigenous lands. Schwartz (1990) also notes the strong role of the military in all state affairs in Petén, although his institutional history does not describe the military as a particularly violent institution before the civil war.

[12] Privatization occurred almost entirely under the liberals, but this was due to their greater ability to create and mobilize state institutions, not a difference in ideology, as earlier conservatives promoted the same policies (McCreery 1994). Nonetheless, it is common to show neoliberal policies as a recurrent history from liberalism (e.g., Grandia 2009b: 3), thereby privileging economic rationales for these policies.

ethnic and religious superiority into postcolonial hegemony, while also serving economic mandates through territorial expansion and a series of forced labor schemes (McCreery 1983, 1986). By the mid-nineteenth century, the liberal state invited western European colonists to claim land it declared "empty" and develop it as export-oriented plantations using indigenous labor. Guatemalan elites and the liberal state sought to improve the race by increasing the population of European descent, while also relying on these superior populations to take "wastelands" (*baldíos*) and incorporate them into the economy through productive use.

The most significant postcolonial immigration was that of Germans in the nineteenth century, who came to settle Alta Verapaz as coffee planters and traders. They claimed lands in both the Alta Verapaz highlands and lowlands, seizing Maya Q'eqchi' homelands as "wastelands" for conversion to coffee production, on which those Q'eqchi's who stayed became serfs. For the most part, German plantation owners also obtained title to northern lowlands of Alta Verapaz, but did not physically claim the land, because it was not apt for coffee production. Until the 1950s, the Q'eqchi's used the lowlands as a region of refuge from coercive labor practices (Aguirre Beltrán 1979).[13]

Racialized Dispossession

In Marxian interpretations of the region (Grandia 2006; Hurtado Paz y Paz 2007), the dispossession of indigenous communal lands for coffee plantations is of paramount importance as primitive accumulation. These interpretations offer considerable analytical purchase, because their emphasis on the violent nature of enclosures before the civil war (Thompson 1975; Perelman 2000), and primitive accumulation as an ongoing process (De Angelis 2004), establish the relevance of past enclosures to contemporary power relations. The problems with enclosure narratives may also stem from their strengths. The universalizing narrative enables the structuralist trap of failing to look behind the search for profits to cultural logics of meaning, including those of seemingly senseless violence in a culture of terror (Taussig 1987). The rise of the international coffee market was essential to radical reshaping of nineteenth century property relations, but the form this enclosure took was racialized dispossession.

Racialized dispossession was an important tool in forging racialized social hierarchies. In a nation with an indigenous majority, Creole elites "associated the traits of the proper citizen—literacy, property ownership, and individual autonomy—with whiteness and masculinity" (Applebaum et al. 2003: 4). In taking lands from indigenous peoples and giving them to Western Europeans, Guatemala's elites dispossessed them of their land and established a racial hierarchy "that functions as a privilege that has to be either maintained or reestablished; it is a matter of establishing a truth that functions as a weapon" (Foucault 2003: 268-269).

Dispossessing Q'eqchi's and forcing them to stay on their land as serfs under German trusteeship was about more than coffee production as profits. Racialized dispossession served the urgent need to "improve the race" in a degraded tropical milieu. Lamarckian strains of eugenics pointed to optimistic possibilities that new nations could improve upon their lot (Stepan 1991), and one way to do so was to foment

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[13] In the 1960s, concurrent with early agricultural colonization, the Alta Verapaz lowlands become valuable for their potential in cardamom production (Chapter 6), sparking another round of dispossession. This has only intensified over time, particularly due to conservationist work to sell nature to save it (McAfee 1999).

European immigration. Due to these histories of racialized dispossession, my dissertation focuses on a people who cannot make "time immemorial" land claims,[14] but shows how their identity as indigenous is nonetheless produced in relation to territory.

One is tempted to characterize the history of Guatemala's lowlands in terms of repeated moments of primitive accumulation: Spanish invasion, German colonization, land distribution so marked by military cronyism that the Franja was known as "The Generals' Strip," and post-war park creation. Each seemingly mimetic repetition unfolds a new story, and each story is one in which racialization is not an afterthought, but is constitutive of dispossession (Moore et al. 2003: 17). Here, I strongly disagree with the assertion that "many recent interpretations of Gramsci, especially within the field of cultural studies as led by Stuart Hall and Raymond Williams, seem to focus more on the skin than the skeleton," implying that a deep commitment to understanding cultural has led to pernicious neglect of economic structures. After all, "by highlighting the anatomy and the function of the skeleton, nobody was trying to claim that man can live without the skin" (Gramsci, in Grandia 2009a: 722). A serious engagement with *both* culture and materiality reveals that the hard bone of skeleton may be softer than cartilage and is dialectically produced. That nebulous thing called culture plays a constitutive role in our perception that economic structures are hard like bone. Cultural politics and material dispossession do not operate in separate spheres (Butler 1998), and my use of racialized dispossession emphasizes the role of race in Guatemalan land ownership.

Territorial Projects in the Dissertation

With a commitment to explaining the historical geography of the lowlands and the emergence of the region called the Franja Transversal del Norte, I identify three territorial projects as a framework for understanding the politics of land ownership: agrarian colonization (1954—1978); scorched earth development (1979—1995); and the post-war binary of Maya Forest and ownership society (1996—present). An underlying aim of my dissertation is to show how the seemingly disparate projects of colonization and counterinsurgency were intricately bound together through development.

The first territorialization began with the legislative creation of the Franja as an "agrarian development zone," envisioned as an agricultural frontier where the new US AID / militarized government alliance would actively work on territory as a milieu (Foucault 2003), improving both land and population to further a vision of the Guatemalan National Culture. The planner's vision for this land emerged as underutilized according to its productive possibilities, and the goal for the Institute of Agrarian Transformation (INTA) was to populate the Franja with young, able-bodied settler families, of mixed Ladino and Western Highlands indigenous ethnicities, who would together forge a national identity via bilingual education and cooperative labor, laboring to improve the land as family farms with a road system. In Chapter 2, I trace the consequences for the Q'eqchi' as "spontaneous" settlers who did not fit the planners' mold.

When the colonization project failed to enmesh territory and people in the framework for control of its choosing, the marginality that underlay developmental colonization became the foundation for genocidal counterinsurgency in the late 1970s

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[14] Although ILO 169 does not require indigenous peoples to make "time immemorial" claims to their territory, Latin American nation-states often use this standard to withhold legal recognition for indigenous peoples.

(Chapter 2). The Franja, as a frontier, became an unknown, dangerous space, and the population that inhabited it became "suspect Mayas." The military reworked its failure by deeming the territory and the population, the entire milieu, as vulnerable to the disease of the Marxist insurgents. I show how the military acted on Q'eqchi' homesteaders as potential insurgents, using state sovereignty as an imperative to protect the [Ladino] race at the expense of 30% of the Mayan population.[15] In carrying out counterinsurgency, the military imagined the jungle as a dangerous space, such that anyone hiding there could be killed on sight.

Guatemala's northern lowlands, as subtropical forests not suited for conventional intensive agriculture, used to be regarded as marginal lands. While the Q'eqchi' as marginal people settled on marginal lands have long been vulnerable to violent dispossession, often by paramilitaries and military officers expanding their cattle ranches, by the 1990s they became marginal peoples living on valuable lands. At this crucial time, as the civil war was slowly grinding to a halt, the land became valuable because international conservation NGOs decided buy nature to save it. Rather than buy nature from a myriad number of smallholders whom the state land tenure agency had never recognized as legal owners, it was easier for conservation agencies to negotiate directly with the nation-state, (re)constructing it in the process. In Chapter 3, I trace the genealogy of the Maya Forest, arguing that the conservation imperative seeks to fix nature in core protected areas and restrict smallholder agriculture to areas of lesser importance, offering land titles on smaller plots of land as a way to forestall extension of the agricultural frontier.

Identity

Thinking through the histories of racialized dispossession addresses "the ways in which such violence leaves traces on bodies of the people and the region, and the ways in which economic as well as physical violence continues to be reproduced through these legacies" (Pickles 2000: 145). I use racialized dispossession, linking territory and identity, to show how people's identities are produced through war-time violence. My focus is on how violence affects their contemporary political engagements with the nation-state and international development. During the civil war, political leaders on both sides represented struggles in terms of class war, subordinating questions of ethnic identity to this framework. Many on the left and right are concerned that contemporary representations of the war pose it as a race war with a class component (Nelson 2009: 123). Some Q'eqchi' communities struggled as part of a class (*popular*) movement that sought social justice and promised them land, but then experienced repression as racialized, especially in the case of genocidal massacres (Chapter 6).

Marginality is a way to think about "distinct and unequal subject positions within common fields of power and knowledge" (Tsing 1993: xi), a concept that shows how asymmetries of race, gender and postcolonial status are produced, rather than subordinating all these to class. Importantly, marginality is relational—this means that instead of trying to convince you that the Q'eqchi' in the northern lowlands are marginalized, I must first show how the Q'eqchi' were produced as serfs through

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[15] The military estimated that it would need to kill 30% of the Maya population in order to end support for Marxist guerrillas, but it stopped the counterinsurgency massacres earlier than planned due to the success of the campaigns in clearing the countryside (Schirmer 1998).

racialized dispossession, then became marginal in their status as migrant farmers settling the so-called agricultural frontier. In this way, planners' classification of the northern lowlands as remote, unsettled, and backward (Chapter 2) did not simply affect the territory, but also territorialized the marginality of Q'eqchi's as a new kind of subjectivity (Li 1999; Peluso and Vandergeest 2001).

When a group of people chooses between available juridical frameworks to define their social and material land management practices, they must do so within the determining lines of force material relations (Hall and Grossberg 1986: 57), consciously employing discursive practice to affect the trajectory of these material relations. In order to understand the contingent, contested and dynamic relationship between territory and identity in Guatemala's northeastern lowlands, I draw on Hall's concept of articulation. Articulation has two complementary meanings: first, the process of enunciating a collective identity or interpellating a social subject of a particular discourse, and second, conjoining that position to definite political subjects (Hall 1990, 1996; Li 2000). In Chapters 4 and 5, I refer to the latter meaning as "joining up" to emphasize both the agency of political subjects and how their articulation of an identity helps shape the trajectory of future political actions.

Hall's (1986: 53) conception of articulation is particularly useful because he emphasizes its conjunctural aspect: "It is a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time. You have to ask under what circumstances *can* a connection be forged or made?" Drawing on Gramsci, Hall directs us to think of fractured interests or identities that add up to a contradictory consciousness, like those of people who are at once entrepreneurial homesteaders, Guatemalans, and Maya. Rather than assume that the Q'eqchi' will always necessarily join up with the Pan-Maya movement based on their shared history of racialized dispossession, I consider in Chapter 5 the conditions that might make it desirable for them to do so. In Chapter 7, I show how ethnic identity was sometimes contingent on class and war-time positioning. Likewise, in Chapter 8 I consider the identity formations of people with a mix of Q'eqchi', Spanish and/or German heritage.

Articulations are contingent, but they are always built on organic structures. This is a point of political urgency given the tendency of some groups to attack the rights of indigenous peoples as socially constructed, or using invented traditions, and therefore somehow inauthentic.[16] There are always sedimented layers of history on which identities are produced from existing social relations in a particular way over long periods of time. Thus, in the case studies I address in Chapters 4 through 7, historical questions of racialized dispossession determine the horizon of today's possibilities and shape the field of negotiations. The "creative acts" I describe are a "selection and rearticulation of elements structured through previous engagements" (Li 2000: 169). I hope my analysis makes clear that such creative acts are necessary because the people I work with are making a history from circumstances not of their own choosing.

Finally, each articulation involves the cut of politics, producing what Hall (1995, 1996) refers to as "frontier effects" that bind symbolic boundaries, thereby marking a constitutive outside. Cautioning against a purely optimistic interpretation of identity politics, Hall notes identities are constructed through difference, which "entails the

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[16] In the case of the Q'eqchi' Maya, this question was particularly urgent in recent land rights struggles in Belize (Wilk 1999 and Wainwright 2008).

radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks" (Hall 1996: 5) that an identity is produced. In their struggles for a racialized repossession, the Q'eqchi' communities I studied often sought to spatialize the frontier effect, such that the constitutive outside became associated with non-community members, even rural Q'eqchi's who were able to escape the war's violence (Chapter 6) or urban Q'eqchi's who play key roles in the Pan-Maya movement (Chapter 5).

While I think that environmentalists' assertions that the Q'eqchi's can no longer farm maize (e.g., Nations 2006: 275) are paternalistic and modernizing, and likewise that leftist calls for class alliances to seek a "living wage" risk disrespecting the importance of land in agrarian struggles, I do not mean to suggest that the articulation of a Q'eqchi' identity is a panacea for the pressures of monocrop plantations, drug trafficking, and environmental degradation in the lowlands. I do, however, think that articulation of a Q'eqchi' identity forged in wartime violence is key to understanding the how territorial and development projects succeed and fail.

When lowlands Q'eqchi's make indigenous rights claims, they are also marginalized within the Pan-Maya movement, which is dominated by highlands Maya. The Pan-Maya movement has seized limited political opportunities for recognition by calling for indigenous rights based on the historical and cultural practices of dominant peoples (e.g. K'iche' and Kaqchikel), establishing a common cultural difference for 21 peoples via the image of a unitary Maya.[17] Focusing on lowlands Q'eqchi's, my research shows the potential disparate effects—which are not always positive—across diverse Maya peoples who do not fit with the image of the unitary Maya. Q'eqchi's are marginal within the Pan-Maya movement (relative to their population size). Instead of asking why Q'eqchi's do not participate more in the Pan-Maya movement, I take the question of their political engagement seriously. In Chapter 5, I examine what one community stands to gain, and what they might lose, by claiming their rights to a sacred place as Maya.

Development

Joel Wainwright's (2008) examination of the Maya in Belize asserts what he terms an aporia (an impasse that raises radical doubts): we cannot not want development. I confront this statement, with its attendant assumptions of benevolence and progress, in Sepac (Chapter 7), where people's reactions to development and the Project are so extremely negative that they threaten to burn the whole thing down. Throughout the dissertation, I address how a long history of improvement interventions, punctuated by civil war genocide, affects people's engagements with development.

I emphasize continuities between colonialism and postcolonialism (Cooper and Packard 1997), rejecting a single culmination of development as an international project (Escobar 1995). When indigenous people resisted elite impositions (paying taxes, buying shoes, etc.), "most Spaniards, creoles and ladinos assumed the Indian to be lazy, stupid, dirty and too much attached to his own, largely incomprehensible customs" (McCreery

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[17] Even those who critique "Maya" as an artifact of colonial representation use it heavily, also risking its reification (Wainwright 2008).

1994: 86).[18] In particular, elites believed Q'eqchi' systems of community organization and swidden agriculture were markers of inferiority. In 1867, the Verapaces governor described these customs as displaying a "lack of morals" (McCreery 1994: 167). In this way, cultural survival became proof of the need for trusteeship, and when Guatemalans invited Europeans to settle Q'eqchi' territory, it was with the understanding that they would become Q'eqchi' trustees. Li (2007) uses trusteeship to explain the relationship that results when one agent becomes authorized to improve the other, and the other participates out of a will to improve themselves. From the Dominicans to the Germans to the *gring@s*, development entails a relationship of trusteeship.

Although the dissertation draws significantly on Li's work, it is where I differ from her that explains my rejection of the notion that "we" cannot help but want development. Both Wainwright and Li show trusteeship in development as an uncomfortable embrace, but one imbued with benevolence on the part of trustees. Many of the rural beneficiaries of development projects I worked with do not approach development agencies and professionals as benevolent organizations, but rather as powerful agents with the potential to help or harm their communities. This is why communities like Yaab'alhix and Sepac (Chapters 6 and 7), which suffered massacres as Marxist guerrillas and paramilitary killers respectively, both approach current governmental and non-governmental agencies from a civil war history of moral debts and suffering for territory (Moore 2005) that must be vindicated in the post-war. In Chapter 7, I show how the community's historical struggles lead people on both sides of a land conflict to interpret a conservation BINGO as cooperating with the military to enforce civil war dispossessions.

In many development projects, target populations experience development and conservation agencies not only as far-away international forces, but also as wealthy power brokers who run regional and national offices. In Chapter 8, I reflect on my understanding that many Guatemalan development professionals had parents who were *finqueros* but lost their plantations, and how this might affect the way they help former serfs in their struggles for land and livelihood. Poor people's memories of trusteeship, both on the plantation and later under military control, also affect their participation in post-war development projects. I end this chapter on new paternalisms in development by reflecting on what is lost in the paternalistic relationship in revisionist neoliberalism, which is highly influenced by outcomes-based, single-shot interventions.

Finally, I focus on the civil war as a defining moment in Guatemala's development history to show how people engage with development as politics. Ferguson's (1990) antipolitics machine illustrates well the fairytales development agencies tell themselves, but this has little to do with local, regional, and national understandings of development in Guatemala. While cultural geography has made recent inroads in understanding development as a contested negotiation over space and place, my work highlights unequal power relations in those negotiations. I follow my Guatemalan interlocutors in seeing development as the primary forum for politics. Here the most important distinction is whether development is produced through contested negotiations (which implies shared discourse), or whether project implementation is the product of a mutual misrecogition. While these mutual misrecognitions can sometimes

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[18] This is an example of the famous backward bending supply curve for labor, a common colonial frustration (Tsing 2008).

enable unlikely productive alliances (Tsing 1999), they may also portend violence (Orlove 1991).

In Chapter 3, I lay the groundwork for my argument that international conservation and sustainable development projects are an extreme case of development as a mutual misrecognition. My dissertation reveals how saving the Maya Forest has entailed the cooperation of conservation BINGOs and national elites to reproduce racialized hierarchies (Chapter 3). As they are implemented and understood in context, national discourse censures Q'eqchi's as bad environmentalists, conflating swidden agriculture with new (and repeating) instances of cutting down the rainforest (Chapter 4). For their part, dispossessed communities interpret protected areas enforcement and land titling and payments for environmental services from which they are excluded as tantamount to a validation of the army's violent dispossession of their land, interpellating them as Suspect Maya (Chapter 7).

In the conclusion, I return to the question of how violence, past and present, ineluctably changes the meaning of conservation and development. Tracing civil war histories shows the violent production of territory behind the current binary project of Maya Forest and ownership society. Even though land titling projects seem to simply formalize dispossession, the current dynamics of drug trafficking, cattle ranching and conservation are not overdetermined. I look to the trajectory of conservation as part of the violent production of territory, and the trajectory of post-war land claims.

Chapter 2
From Colonization to Counterinsurgency:
Racialized Territorializations of the Franja Transversal del Norte

Introduction

> Wars are no longer waged in the name of a sovereign who must be defended; they are waged on behalf of the existence of everyone; entire populations are mobilized for the purpose of wholesale slaughter in the name of life necessity: massacres have become vital. It is as managers of life and survival, of bodies and the race, that so many regimes have been able to wage so many wars, causing so many men [sic] to be killed... If genocide is indeed the dream of modern powers, this is not because of a recent return of the ancient right to kill; it is because power is situated and exercised at the level of life, the species, the race, and the large-scale phenomena of the population. – Foucault (1978: 137)

For those acquainted with the bloody history of Guatemala's civil war, General Romeo Lucas García inspires fear and awe. Guatemala's truth commission credits his reign[1] as that when the spiral of counterinsurgency violence reached "unimaginable levels," expanding the military's focus on "annihilating the internal enemy, not limiting itself to combating the guerrillas but systematically attacking the social movement and the population in areas with a strong guerrilla presence, principally the Maya population" (CEH 1999: 2, translation mine). Today, while they acknowledge Lucas García's role in racialized violence that often left family members dead, many Q'eqchi' homesteaders remember fondly that Lucas García was a politician who kept his promise—he said they could become landowners in the Franja, and now they are landowners.

In fact, Lucas García oversaw the distribution of at least 104,652 hectares of land during his four year administration (Hough et al. 1982). Two USAID consultants recall that "for some time [before 1978], those involved in the planning and bureaucratic footwork surrounding the [colonization] project were aware that the government had named an executive coordinator for the [Franja]. He had visited the project group on occasion and shown interest in the work going on and the prospects of settling people in 'his' area" (Fledderjohn and Thompson 1982). As executive coordinator of the Franja, Lucas García not only settled people in his area, but was actively involved in the politics of colonization as development throughout the Franja. Likewise, when USAID planners considered canceling their project shortly following his ascendance to presidency, Lucas García declared that the project would be successful and no land speculation would be tolerated, so they remained all the way until the scorched earth campaigns made it impossible to work there anymore (Fledderjohn and Thompson 1982). At the same time as he was preparing to oversee the most blatant and widespread phase of genocidal counterinsurgency, he urged USAID consultants to continue their work on development as colonization.

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[1] Lucas García won the presidential election, but it was neither free nor fair. He was president from 1978 until Ríos Montt's coup in 1982.

Although subsequent scholars and solidarity workers have tended to treat genocide as a massive break in military and development action, Lucas García oversaw genocide and colonization *concurrently* as development. Military leadership saw genocide as part of larger biopolitical project to forge Guatemalan territory where it was "possible both to protect life and authorize a holocaust" (Foucault, in Agamben 1998: 3). In this chapter, I will argue that both development projects and genocidal counterinsurgency were two parts of a larger project to administer the Guatemalan population (Foucault 1978), one that was carried out by the militarized state with USAID support.

<u>Overview</u>

Planning and development in the wake of the 1954 coup, particularly the military's dual role in trusteeship and counterinsurgency, are crucial to understanding the shocking carnage that followed. This chapter speaks to the ongoing debates over whether Guatemala was torn asunder by race war or class war, but does not seek to provide a single answer for a diversity of situations across place and time. My focus is on the military state's relationship with settlers in the Franja, of which genocide was only one part. I show racism in all aspects of development as I retrace the Franja's contemporary history from planning through colonization to counterinsurgency. During this period, military elites had their tentacles in all state agencies with a presence in the Franja, including the army, INTA (Agrarian Institute, *Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria*), planning agencies, and the national mapping institute. I trace the downward spiral from a relatively benign form of racial government as the will to improve (Li 2007) to stark actions to defend the [Ladino] race (Foucault 2003).[2]

In the late 1950s, army elites and US planners represented the Franja as an empty or underutilized space. As I explain below, their particular vision for trusteeship was one of Lamarckian improvement, a racialized understanding of improving people and land that dates to nineteenth century Latin America (Stepan 1991). As such, the military planned to direct colonization to the Franja that would improve the land and the settlers through directed agricultural labor. The inevitable failure of this vision to materialize then became one factor that led to a new territoriality, one where counterrevolution flowed into counterinsurgency, and marginality on the frontier became dangerous to the military. Victor Montejo explains that the military imaginary of indigenous people slid from one of "Indians as savages to Indians as communists who threatened to seize private property" (in Warren 1998: 124), thereby interpellating all indigenous people as a subversive threat to the Ladino (military) state. Although this change occurred in 1970s military policy, it is not a singular moment—Sam Colop (1996) dates this understanding to Spanish invasion, when colonizers argued whether Indians were like themselves, and therefore needed improvement (through assimilation), or whether the Indians could never be like them and as such were doomed to inferiority.[3]

The tensions between improvement and miscegenation, *mestizaje* and *blanqueamiento*, social Lamarckianism and social Darwinism, have developed since at

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[2] In Foucault's study of state racism, part of the project that produces the modern state acknowledges the existence of only one "race," such that all others as deviants are a threat to the race.

[3] In Latin America, the general determinant of whether postcolonial states focused their attention on whitening or assimilation tended to be the proportion of the indigenous population. Due to its large indigenous population, Guatemala was assimilationist (Adams 2005).

least the Spanish colonial era. I trace how colonization of the Franja began as an improvement project for both the people and the land, but became something much darker under counterinsurgency. In attempting to understand the relationship between development and race war, I link Foucault's (2003) proposition that defense of the race is fundamental to the modern state with his analysis of the planner's vision of the milieu (2007). I do not use Foucault's work exclusively, but complement it with other works that are more suited to address issues of identity and the lived practice of development.

The period following the 1954 coup is crucial to understanding how developmental colonization and counterinsurgency articulate. Both of these, in turn, are crucial to understanding how identities are articulated and land ownership is justified in the contemporary northern lowlands. There are two factors that have led to this lacuna in the otherwise prolific literature on Guatemala: many Marxian scholars were disinterested in analyzing the logic of colonization, seeing it as little more than an attempt to place scales over the eyes of the rural poor (mystification) who needed to urgently devote their energies to revolution, and the Alliance for Progress more generally as a "convenient cover for the 'soft war'"(Jonas 1991: 71). Then, when the horrors of counterinsurgency became clear, it was difficult to ascribe sanity to the perpetrators, much less analyze their actions (Schirmer 1998).

Improving the Lamarckian Milieu

In the late nineteenth century, a debate raged between Social Darwinism and Lamarckianism, which would come to affect not only physics and biology, but also demography, sociology, geography and urban planning (Rabinow 1989). Creole elites who sought to transform the Latin America postcolony into nation-states were preoccupied with the question of whether they were doomed to rule over an inferior race, or whether they could improve it. Although British- and German-influenced eugenics seemed to suggest they were doomed, Latin America tended to associate with the French, whose application of Lamarckianism to colonial projects offered hope. As it happened, this was in keeping with Spanish biological assumptions, which assigned immutable qualities of race only to Jews and Moors. Colonial Spain linked caste to blood or ancestry, but allowed for room for maneuver based on social character (Fisher and O'Hara 2009).

Instead of a static habitat, Lamarck's vision of the milieu presupposed no fixed center, but was the "in-between" of a relational system. In a darker vision, life is pathos, and resists the challenges of its environment (to which it is no longer assumed to be made for) by deforming itself to survive (Rabinow 1989: 129). There are important elements of this that Latin American elites took up, particularly the notion that survival was an effort to adapt to a hostile environment, as many saw the tropics as something that could degrade their race (Stepan 1991). For optimists, however, the implication is that man [sic] can alter and improve his milieu. As briefly described in Chapter 1, Guatemalan elites invited Europeans to immigrate in the hopes that they would improve both the land and the natives as an underutilized tropical milieu. The mostly German immigrants instead took over the highly productive highlands (titling, but not using tropical lowlands), assuming their superiority and the need to improve the Q'eqchi' race through miscegenation as their right and duty. It is there that the vision of *mestizaje* as a cosmic race was born, a national people whose mixed ancestry means they are well adapted to their milieu (indigenes) and intelligent enough to improve their milieu (Europeans).

Neo-Lamarckianism persisted in colonial (and postcolonial) disciplines such as geography and planning, and I have found it to be remarkably apt in characterizing Guatemalan planning documents from the 1950s through the 1970s about how to reshape the Franja as a milieu. As I show below, planners sought to create a national culture founded on miscegenation between productive Ladinos and Western Highlands Maya (seen as more hardworking and trustworthy than lowlands Maya), who would then rework the land to make it productive. The colonization of the northern lowlands was another attempt to transform indigenous people through intermingling with Ladinos and trusteeship programs. Trusteeship is designed to enhance and direct a population's capacity to act, but in postcolonial nations, development is built into a structure of permanent deferral (Li 2007: 14), thereby rendering full citizenship a perpetually impossible goal. The pastoral function of the militarized state justifies horrific action, because "if they resort to violence, it is in the name of a higher good—the population at large, the survival of the species" (Li 2007: 5). Foucault (2003) draws our attention to how this higher good, the justification for biopower, always defends the race at the expense of a sub-race, an inner blight or a sickness inherent in some individuals who must be obliterated. The marginality that was created in lock-step with territoriality laid the groundwork to make Q'eqchi' homesteaders killable.

This chapter tracks two territorial projects: first, when planners and USAID call for colonization of the frontier by a population that would lay the foundation for a National Guatemalan Culture (1954-1978). When USAID and government planners designated the Franja as a marginal space for improvement, and the need to incorporate this territory into the geo-body of the nation (Thongchai 1994), they highlighted its perceived shortcomings and the urgency of their project came precisely from a perceived danger. Their representations of space called for a specific agenda of spatial practice. It then describes how the actual spatial practices of Q'eqchi' homesteaders confounded the planners' territorialization. While territorialization is almost always an unfinished project (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995; Moore 2005), planned colonization confronted its own failure in the rapidly appearing "spontaneous" (the commonly used term, then and now) communities throughout the Franja.

The second moment (1978 – 1995) is when the failure of the planners' project came together with Mexican and Belizean border anxieties and the contemporary threat of Marxist guerrillas, such that the military embarked on a project of racialized territorialization, a genocidal counterinsurgency that demarcated both jungle and indigenous people as dangerous, and expendable. I believe understanding this history is of tantamount importance, because some of these factors are resurfacing today in problems Q'eqchi' communities face in establishing themselves as legitimate landowners.

1954—1978: Frontier Inscriptions and the Creation of the Franja

In 1954, the US President Dwight D. Eisenhower authorized the first known solo CIA *coup d'état* of a foreign government,[4] Guatemala. The CIA (formerly the OSS) already had a distinct interest in private landholdings in Guatemala. Following World War II, an alliance of landed elite, military elite, and urban workers forced the

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[4] Although the CIA participated in the 1953 coup d'état of Iran (also believed to be of importance strategic importance due to petroleum reserves), this was with the British.

authoritarian dictator Ubico to resign,[5] opening up a space for the ten year "democratic spring." The most dramatic change was Decree 900, promulgated in 1952, an agrarian reform that created mechanisms for land expropriation from large plantations that used less than two-thirds of their arable land. In a massive attempt to ameliorate Guatemala's land inequality,[6] between January 1953 and June 1954, more than 500,000 hectares of land (about 17% of privately owned land) were expropriated and allocated to 100,000 farming families (Brockett 1998).

Following the CIA and Guatemalan military overthrow of a democratically elected government, the newly installed military dictatorship nullified the agrarian reform (Gleijeses 1991; Schlesinger and Kinzer 2005). In 1955, the US State Department signed an agreement with the newly militarized government to promote rural development through colonization and green revolution technologies.[7] The heavy hand of the US sometimes obfuscates endogenous forces at work, but my work focuses on how Guatemalan perspectives shaped the civil war and its aftermath.

Twentieth Century Frontier Colonization as "Agrarian Transformation"

> Frontiers are, of course, particular sorts of spaces—symbolically, ideologically, and materially. They represent the first wave of modernity to break on the shores of an uncharted heartland. As the cutting edge of state-sponsored forms of accumulation, frontiers are characteristically savage, primitive, and unregulated. At the margins of state power, they create their own territorial form of law and (dis)order… frontiers are also locally encoded in symbolic terms, and often carry a powerful ideological valency, particularly when national identity itself is seen to derive from "frontier stock," or if economic potential ("development") is seen to be wedded to the opening of the frontier.
> – Watts (1992: 116-117)

At least from the time that it was an independent nation, the Guatemalan state has promulgated colonization by foreigners as a way to make the land productive and foster a new nation. The state only officially encouraged internal colonization,[8] however, following the CIA coup with the abrogation of agrarian reform and a new law (Decreto 1551, *Ley de Transformación Agraria*, 1962)[9] with the goal of encouraging colonization of the northern "agricultural frontier" by offering land, credit and technical assistance to

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[5] For a fascinating discussion on Q'eqchi' memories of Ubico's paternalistic march to progress, see Adams (2001).

[6] The twenty-two richest families owned more land than did the poorest 250,000 landowning families (Brockett 1998), and landlessness was already high, due to the population of *mozos colonos* who lived permanently on plantations.

[7] It was fully six years after the diplomatic arm of the US government committed to supporting projects to mitigate the need for agrarian reform that it created the US Agency for International Development (USAID). Events in Guatemala predated and therefore informed the Alliance for Progress, President Kennedy's proposed ten year economic development plan to ward off the perceived communist threat from Cuba and strengthen the US's influence over Latin America.

[8] Colonization is generally understood as the "conquest, inhabitation, possession, and control of a territory by an external power" (Smith and Katz 1993: 70). In Guatemala and other Latin American nations, however, the extension of a newly designated "agricultural frontier" was via a process commonly understood as "colonization," sometimes referred to as "internal colonization" to emphasize colonization by citizens.

[9] This law modified Decreto-Ley 559, promulgated to annul agrarian reform in 1956. While 559 established the Department of Colonization and Agricultural Development, this was renamed the Institute of Agrarian Transformation (INTA) in the new law (1551) drafted in preparation for the Punta del Este conference to kick off the Alliance for Progress (Hough et al. 1982).

the rural population.[10] The Franja was the primary development focus for colonization efforts (Jones 1990), although planners considered it to be a second-best alternative to Petén (Peñaherrera 1979).[11] The Franja essentially consisted of the northern strip, from east to west stretching across Guatemala, with the exception of Petén.[12] In practice, however, most colonization and development projects were centered in the county[13] of Ixcán, El Quiché, and northern Alta Verapaz.

The primary goal of this legislation, and subsequent work of USAID partnered with the newly militarized Guatemalan state, was development through colonization. I do not dispute the judgment by Marxian scholars that colonization was a crude attempt to assuage the rural poor and distract them from agitating for true agrarian reform. The first major colonization project proposed for the Franja, the Sebol Project, specifically had the goal of "decongesting the agricultural land of the highlands, propitiating migration, principally the young population, toward new zones of development."[14] As with other Latin American tropics, including the Brazilian Amazon, USAID funded work to colonize the "underutilized" land as an "escape valve" for land-poor peasants (Hecht and Cockburn 1989; Jones 1990). The Sebol Project is of great significance because it was the first massive colonization development project designed by both US and Guatemalan planners. Moreover, this project was later subsumed into more massive projects, effectively becoming the starting point from which subsequent projects were crafted.

It is crucial, then, that the Sebol Project did not have its only goal as an escape valve, but had as a primary goal the "restructuring of already established housing, constructing Population Nuclei, with the goal that users can enjoy indispensable services for their social and economic development."[15] Even on the frontier in 1964, planners acknowledged the presence of "users," or previously existing populations in their discursively empty frontier; and second, they did not like the way these "users" had organized themselves. To those communities that already existed in the Franja, the proposed system of Nuclear Populations (a clear precursor to Development Poles) could have borne a striking resemblance to historical *reducciones* (Chapter 6). Nuclear Populations were designed to provide centralized services, often along new roads that were to be built (usually described in Spanish as *abriendo brecha*), as well as "restructuring" housing.

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[10] While the law technically gave the Guatemalan state the right to tax or expropriate underutilized lands, to the best of my knowledge these mechanisms have never been used. President Arévalo also had a marginally successful colonization of one town in Petén, but it never achieved the scale or legal backing of the internal colonization attempted just ten year later.

[11] In this chapter, I focus on the history of the Franja, but the militarized state took similar actions in Petén, creating a separate state agency (FYDEP) to promote incorporation of Petén into the nation and promote economic development through colonization and natural resource extraction.

[12] The total surface area of the Franja was 8,841 square kilometers, with limits at the Mexican border, Petén, Belize, north of parallel 15 degrees 40 inches, and meridian 89 degrees W (Comisión Interministerial 1980).

[13] In Spanish, this is called a *municipio*. It generally describes an urban center, the *cabecera*, and a network of associated rural villages.

[14] Gobierno de Guatemala (1964). Ante-Proyecto de Desarrollo Integral Sebol--Chinaja. Ciudad de Guatemala. SEGEPLAN Centro de Documentación 0001181. Pages 8-9. Translation mine.

[15] *Ibid*. Pages 8-9. Translation mine.

The document does not describe the users who were already living in the Sebol region, but in life history interviews, I found these to have been monolingual Q'eqchi' families who left private plantations to become individual homesteaders. These families neither asked permission nor informed the central government of their presence—they simply built humble houses with wooden walls and *manaque* leaf roofing. Rather than establishing fixed, rectangular parcels, families farmed small, discontinuous plots of land based on local ecological conditions (including soil productivity, drainage, and slope). Most families practiced swidden agriculture, a rotating system that allowed plots of land in shallow, sub-tropical soil to recover for 4-8 years before returning to plant again. These families lived in dispersed villages; in interviews, village elders typically stated that they were a 30-60 minute walk away from their closest neighbor, preferring to live on the land they farm.

In 1969, an American scholar assessed the dilemmas that Guatemalan administrators were already facing in the Franja. Carter (1969) noted that the quickest way to make the northern lowlands productive was to encourage the already existing system of "spontaneous" colonization, in which "slash and burn *milperos* [farmers]" follow road-building projects. He succinctly described their concerns with this program, however, noting that "while it would be opening an escape valve for the population pressure of certain highland departments and would be stimulating an increase in food production, it would also be limiting future population density in the lowlands to that sustainable by an extensive slash and burn system." Carter elucidates an important assumption of colonization planning, that the typical Q'eqchi' system of swidden agriculture was considerably inferior to "green revolution" techniques that foment agricultural intensification.[16] Thus far in archival research, I have been unable to find a planning document that studies or reviews studies of the potential efficiency of the swidden agricultural system. If data were available in academic circles, planners in Guatemala seem not to have considered it.

The fear that "archaic" agricultural techniques would dominate the new frontier motivated projects designed for centralization of both services and agricultural markets. Carter (1969: 145) predicts, "Once *milperos* overran the region on their own terms, it would probably be difficult to get them to turn to commercialized or intensive agriculture." Flagship settlements were to broach a new way forward to a new Guatemala. The reality was, of course, somewhat more complex—by and large, Q'eqchi' farmers overran the region on their own terms, eagerly participating in international markets for cardamom, but choosing not to "intensify" their agricultural practices.

It is debatable to what extent the planners in Guatemalan state agencies (INTA and SEGEPLAN) actually intended their colonization policies for the northern lowlands to benefit rural populations. Jonas (1991) and others gloss much of the counterrevolution as US imperialism, while Solano Ponciano (2005) describes in detail the military's plan for extraction of petroleum, nickel, and other non-renewable resources; there is also considerable detail in the plans about potential state-run logging corporations. As a result, there is a tendency to ignore the work that USAID and the Agrarian Institute (INTA) were doing to plan colonization, dismissing these plans as

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[16] While green revolution techniques had some success in the Western Highlands (and also are subject to the same environmental critiques as in other countries where they were widely employed), these techniques never took hold in the northern lowlands, primarily because the ecology of the karstic subtropics does not lend itself to the same benefits.

nothing but a front to create semi-proletariat workers for roads, oil, and other forms of accumulation.

Without dismissing these critiques, I want to insist that colonization plans were real, that they set the stage for subsequent settlement, and that the failure of the planners' ability to operationalize their plans on the population and territory was a factor in the wave of violence that followed. I argue that USAID and INTA planners did expect to benefit rural populations, but they did not see them as active participants in an agricultural market. For example, after it became clear that the vast majority of settlers were indigenous, all property that was assigned to groups of people or as communal property[17] was inscribed in the General Property Register (RGP) with a clause that stated that owners could only work the land with family members (no paid laborers), conserve existing boundaries, maintain good relationships with neighbors, follow existing forestry laws, and could not alienate the land without previous authorization by INTA.[18] The counterrevolution, an anti-communist movement obsessed with promoting capitalism, promoted projects that offered land to groups of families that did not have the right to buy and sell their land.

To understand this apparent contradiction, Li's (2007) work on trusteeship is crucial. Even as planners dreamed of an ownership society, there was actually a raging debate about whether or not the target population was capable of making the land *work* in individual ownership (Fledderjohn and Thompson 1982),[19] by which planners were only considering the ability of homesteaders to participate in international markets. Projects proposed common property arrangements, particularly cooperatives, as a developmental stage for indigenous people, who were seen as not yet capable of commercializing the fruits of their agricultural labor. For example, the goal of one cooperative project adjacent to the Sebol project was the "massive monetization of the indigenous population that currently operates as a subsistence economy." [20]

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[17] In the Franja Transversal del Norte, this was commonly through cooperatives or Collective Agrarian Patrimonies (CAPs). For the purposes of clarity, this is the one acronym of a Spanish term that I have translated into English. In my dissertation, CAP refers to *Patrimonio Agrario Colectivo*, while PAC refers to *Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil*, or "civil self-defense patrols," community-level paramilitary militias.

[18] A typical example: "La presente adjudicación queda bajo las siguientes condiciones: a) deben cultivar, habitar, trabajar y explotar el fundo que se les adjudica en forma personal y directa asistidos únicamente de su grupo familiar, b) conservarán y cuidarán los linderos existentes, c) mantendrán buenas relaciones con sus vecinos, d) les queda terminantemente prohibido talar bosques existentes siéndoles imperativo sembrar árboles para la creación de nuevos bosques sujetándose en todo caso a la Ley Forestal y e) les queda terminantemente prohibido ceder, gravar, enajenar o vender el fundo sin autorización previa del Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria."

[19] Also E.5.1 Franja Transversal (1975-1986). Latin American History and Culture: Series 5: Civil War, society and Political transition in Guatemala: The Guatemala News and Information Bureau Archive, 1963-2000. CIRMA Archives. Fledderjohn and Thompson were two consultants to AID who were forced to leave as the military began its scorched earth initiative in some of the same communities they worked in. In their assessment, Guatemalan project administrators regularly underestimated the abilities and ingenuity of homesteaders.

[20] Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria (INTA) (1972). Proyecto de Desarrollo de la Faja [sic] Transversal. Zona norte. Estrategia a seguir. Planificación agro-económica de loas asentamientos Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. Unidad de Planeamiento y Programación. Ciudad de Guatemala, Misión OEA-INTA. SEGEPLAN DOCU001090. P. 269. Translation mine.

Milieu: Making the Land Work

In the planner's milieu, I argue that it is not only a population that is affected, but also the land. The Sebol Project seems to assume that the land is "underutilized" for one reason—lack of roads. In typical modernization fashion, USAID planners posited that a road would provide needed development for Guatemala and needed primary resources for the US, particularly timber.[21] Although for the last 25 years, the international and *capitalino* (from the capital, generally refers to the rich Ladinos) communities have been advocating for park creation and environmental conservation, the first twenty years of international and *capitalino* intervention was explicitly geared towards deforestation.[22]

Much of the Franja, and all of the Franja where I conducted ethnographic fieldwork, is karstic sub-tropical forest. It is best understood as a unique ecosystem with a series of microclimates that bridge the gap between the colder highlands and the hot Petén jungle. When I started digging in archives for planning documents for the Franja colonization, I had one question on my mind: Was it ever a good idea to promote farming? The short answer is: not really, and certainly not intensive farming. The 1964 Sebol Project document suggests that as much as 25% of the entire region should be held as a forest reserve, but still promotes the deforestation of 750,000 hectares.[23] The Sebol Project suggests that much of the semi-arable land could be used for cattle ranching and managed forest, and that most crops should be planted only with caution. Here, Project planners assume that forest, grazing pasture, and permanent agriculture would be clearly separated and delineated; this stands in stark contrast to the spatial practice of swidden agriculture, which mixes forest and agriculture according to local ecological conditions. The Project also notes that many areas would not be ready for farming until there is better road access and drainage; it also calls for the removal of waste rocks (*desmonte*), which is a massive project in a landscape literally connected with limestone caves and underground rivers. Despite the Project's stated precautions and work goals, it was already opened up to colonizers, even though none of these basic conditions were ever met.

Most of the unwarranted optimism for farming in the sub-tropical forest came from a generalized green revolution optimism, a belief that with proper subsidies, credits, training, and inputs, entrepreneurs could make the land *work*, reshaping both the landscape and themselves in one fell swoop. Even the early Sebol Project noted that soils were silty, clay loam soil, and was only able to predict satisfactory yields after accounting for green revolution techniques, particularly the liberal application of fertilizer. A joint report by the National Economic Planning Council and USAID (1968:

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[21] Gobierno de Guatemala (1964). Ante-Proyecto de Desarrollo Integral Sebol--Chinaja. Ciudad de Guatemala. SEGEPLAN Centro de Documentación 0001181. In particular, the report points out that the US market for mahogany will grow in the 1970s, concurrently with the end of African supply, such that timber from the Franja jungle would be an important addition to wood from Southeast Asia.

[22] Nominally, of course, logging was to be sustainable, but for the most part, these projects seem to have advocated exporting timber as fast as the trees could be transported to the US. This is due in no small part to the institutional weakness of INAFOR/INAB, the National Forestry Institute (Ponciano 1998), especially in comparison to the military and Agrarian Institute.

[23] Gobierno de Guatemala (1964). Ante-Proyecto de Desarrollo Integral Sebol--Chinaja. Ciudad de Guatemala. SEGEPLAN Centro de Documentación SEGE0001181. From what I was able to glean, the Sebol Project intended those reserves to be a perpetual supply of lumber, apparently even including timber sales in estimations of peasant incomes.

50, translation mine) sums it up thus: "The soils in the region are poor and relatively infertile. Nonetheless, soil scientists agree that this natural lack can be counteracted with the application of fertilizer." Like indigenous people, the land was lacking, but could be made to work.

By the mid-1970s, actual farming made clear some potential ecological impacts (erosion, declining soil fertility, etc.), and planners attempted to sound the alarm about the pace of colonization. There was only one report that advised caution in promoting farming in the region, and it seems to have scandalized colonization project administrators (Fledderjohn and Thompson 1982). The report pointed to early evidence of soil erosion and opened with a warning: "It is necessary to remember the fragility of the ecosystems of the Franja and its restrictions and use limitations" (SEGEPLAN 1975: 13, translation mine). In terms of how to heed the warning, "Taking into account the strong pressure on lands in the public domain in the north of the country and the degradation of its natural resources due to the anarchic process of the colonization programs of INTA and FYDEP," the Planning Secretariat created this plan (SEGEPLAN 1975: 136), which was referenced, but not followed to the best of my knowledge. Already in 1975, the national planning department is clearly attributing environmental degradation to the "anarchic process" of colonization. Although no elaboration on this point seemed necessary on the part of the SEGEPLAN authors, this seems due to the supposed inherent negative qualities of swidden agriculture.

This seems to mark the point at which the planners turned on their target population. I want to emphasize that Q'eqchi' homesteaders believed that they were invited, and that they were invited as farmers to make the land productive. Although few received free or subsidized fertilizers and/or pesticides, many recall waiting in line to ask for them.[24] Even when centralized planning units began to critique colonization, regional Agrarian Institute offices continued to authorize settlements and begin land titling paperwork with little or no restrictions on farmland.[25] In this way, the militarized government did not work on the population at a distance (Foucault 2007) so much as constitute it. This is particularly true on the frontiers of civilization, where Latin American presidents (such as Juan Bautista Alberdi, of Argentina) have long asserted that "to civilize is to populate!" (Dennis et al. 1988: 71). Nonetheless, the Q'eqchi' population did not "civilize" the Franja as the planners had envisioned.

Today, planners lament that parks and other reserves were not even contemplated until after the "process of uncontrolled colonization" (e.g., Turcios Samayoa n.d.). The Planning Secretariat report (1975: 56-57) contemplated no such measures, simply stating that "if the agricultural development in this region continues in a disorderly form, it will cause the degradation of natural resources, especially the soils, water, and forest," quickly exhausting the agricultural frontier. The report goes on to speculate that a "disorderly" colonization will cause forests "to be incorporated in the areas of agricultural activity, where maize cultivation would predominate. In this way, the natural ecosystem would break to satisfy immediate needs, but that would drive the destruction of natural resources and the deterioration of the landscape… Once these

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[24] The few Q'eqchi' farmers I interviewed who have tried fertilizers claimed that it was not worth the effort, bringing greater fertility only for a short period of time, but then exacting a long-term toll on land fertility.

[25] Technically, 10% of communal land titles must be devoted to a forest reserve, but most people have learned that, in privatization, this reserve can easily be titled as individual farming plots.

resources are deteriorated, it would take thousands and thousands of years for their recuperation" (SEGEPLAN 1975: 61). This judgment seems to denigrate "immediate needs" like planting maize to feed one's family without suggesting a better way to meet those needs. The reference to "thousands and thousands of years" refers to the last time that the lowlands were widely used for maize production, with the ancient Maya who were widely seen as a primitive and destructive people.

As for working the land, there were two important ways in which the Franja as territory failed to materialize the representation of space. First, in those places where green revolution technologies were available to colonizers, agricultural intensification was relatively unsuccessful; in northern Alta Verapaz, interview data suggests that adoption of these techniques was not even an available option to entrepreneurial farmers who might have tried it out. Second, planners' obsession with agricultural intensification was tied to an idea that one-quarter of all the land should be held as forest reserves. Only one forest reserve was created in the entire Franja, however, that of Laguna Lachuá, which comprised approximately 4% of the total forest reserves that the Sebol Project claimed would be needed. Although planners then, and conservationists today, tend to focus on the need to preserve land in large, continuous blocks on maps (e.g., "The Maya Forest," Chapter 3), the landscape ecology literature suggest that dispersed Q'eqchi' settlements offer significant advantages for biodiversity. In fact, fragmented holdings more often have greater diversity in terms of a wide range of cultivated forest products and "wastelands" that are not converted to agriculture (Hecht 2004).

Still, planners tended to fret about the extensive land use of their uninvited guests. Q'eqchi' farmers were not unfamiliar with highlands farming and more intensive agricultural techniques.[26] In interviews, I was unable to elicit lengthy explanations about why swidden agriculture was appropriate to the lowlands; usually a respondent would laugh at me and say "that's how our fathers did it," or "that's what the spirit (*tzuultaq'a*) wants." At the same time, planners then and now do not feel the need to conduct empirical analysis on how swidden agriculture works (or does not) with the sub-tropical forest. Rather than address their own inability to appropriately plan for development of the region, most planners preferred to blame the "spontaneous" nature of the colonization, and the ways in which the Q'eqchi' made the land work.

<u>Milieu: Making the People Work</u>

Lamarckian concepts of milieu and the possibility to change the very nature of a population through working on its environment, have been influential to Guatemalan government and other Latin American nations since the nineteenth century (Stepan 1991). Grandin (2000: 142) identifies Lamarckian projects to improve national society through education, training and social integration for one reason: "Ladino reformers believed that Indian ethnicity needed to disappear for the nation to progress." We cannot understand this new era of development in the Alliance for Progress solely through the lens of imperialism, because national and regional contexts played key roles in determining the shape that colonization and development projects took in Guatemala.

In the 1960s, the Sebol Project had a series of objectives and operational plans, all of which were dedicated to operationalizing a vision of places called "Population

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[26] Most elders who escaped or were expelled from highlands coffee plantations had practiced intensive agriculture there on their family plots.

Nuclei" built on abstract space where "Indians and Ladinos work and share the same life (*convivir*) without any discrimination."[27] In striking similarity to Marxist texts that urged insurgency against the militarized government, the Sebol Project documents describe rural communities as "asleep," but instead of revolution, it posits that development will be their "awakening," which will show them opportunities to improve their lives and build "social capital."[28]

In order to construct this population, the project was to use a "morphological method… to achieve a change in social habits by <u>altering traditional social and physical structures that created the lag</u> [*condicionaban el atraso*]."[29] The end of the phrase highlights the confluence of international modernization and national Lamarckian narratives of the need to improve the population by working on its milieu. American imperialism saw all of rural Guatemala as lagging, or as a kind of Latino nation that was racially inferior. Ladino planners, for their part, saw indigenous people who live in rural areas as the problem that needed to be fixed, and which could best be fixed by creating an environment where they cease to be Indians and would become Guatemalans.

The Sebol Project envisions colonizers thus:

> With respect to the social, cultural, and economic qualities of the colonizers, broad criteria were established, limited only in terms of: a) the adults should be *castellanizados* [literally, Castilianized; that they speak Spanish]; b) favor the most needy; a firm belief that good assistance, in all aspects of development, will produce the immediate and in just one human generation, the necessary assimilation for the progress of the social conglomerate. Moreover, it is also believed at every point necessary a vital interchange, well-guided, <u>to produce the acculturation of the two large groups that comprise our population</u>. In plantations and the respective Population Nuclei, we will strive so that the Ladinos and Indians live together, without any discrimination. The positive values of both cultures will be exalted in schools, in sports, and in social relations it is undoubted that this will produce the fusion of both cultures to integrate a National Guatemalan Culture. [emphasis mine]

Although the language of the document at first glance seems to purport an optimistic hybridity, the planners assume that there are only *two* groups—Ladinos and Indians—such that the differences between each of the 21 Maya cultures are collapsed into a single racialized Other.[30] In order for the new hybrid culture to be forged in just one human generation, one culture must give. Given that the authors insist that all colonizers must be "Castilinized," it is clear that Spanish was to be the *lingua franca* of the Franja and that the indigenous peoples would assimilate into the larger (Ladino) National Guatemalan Culture.

To that end, learning Spanish was an utmost priority in colonization, and in a larger sense to contemporary development objectives, because of its "social and integrating" function, such that the existence of Mayan languages quickly became

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[27] Gobierno de Guatemala (1964). Ante-Proyecto de Desarrollo Integral Sebol--Chinaja. Ciudad de Guatemala. SEGEPLAN Centro de Documentación 0001181. Section 4. Page 13. Translation mine.
[28] *Ibid*, translation mine.
[29] *Ibid*, translation mine.
[30] USAID and Ladino Guatemalan planners are not the only actors who tend towards this useful binary. Most scholars who study the Pan-Maya movements also lump the Maya into a single category (Chapter 5).

considered a primary obstacle to the national project. [31] Schools were to attend to "social and cultural qualities of the colonizers," and were charged with the "success of the transculturation process."[32] In the Sebol Project, schools were not just supposed to be for children, but also dedicated to the technical "development" (*para que puedan desarrollarse*) of adults, with the state offering courses on nutrition, how to use natural resources, and "better farming techniques."[33] During the course of my fieldwork, I had the pleasure of attending a presentation on the importance of bilingual education, in which the Q'eqchi' Maya presenter began by recounting that the overriding goal of primary education in rural areas was to teach indigenous children Spanish to the exclusion of their native languages. "Thank God," he laughed, "our education system is so terrible, rural Q'eqchi's haven't had any trouble maintaining our culture at all."[34]

While it is common today to think of development as a contested negotiation over space and place (e.g., Radcliffe 2007), negotiations in this case were not made using the same set of assumptions. Planning documents outline a target population that would be part of a milieu to be worked on. The target population would participate in a particular kind of place-making that links up with a proleptic vision of the National Guatemalan Culture. Many Q'eqchi's accepted the invitation of colonization as a path to a better life. They did not, however, accept the precepts that underpinned the state's vision of a new life. Rather, they embarked on colonization as a kind of place-making that ignored developmental representations of space. This cleavage did not occur in the ways we are accustomed to seeing, primarily because the Q'eqchi' were not the guests to whom planners had extended an invitation, so they simply elided the offered pact.

From its first conception, this project was oriented to offer the opportunity of settlement in new lands to landless residents of the densely populated Western Highlands. A post-hoc assessment explains, "The land constraint for these people, largely of indigenous origin, could be easily correlated to their standard of living and it was logical that the settlement alternative should be offered there first" (Fledderjohn and Thompson 1982: 19-20). On one page, the Sebol Project notes that peasants from Quiché might be the best, because they already have experience in tropical forests, but in general, the documents say things like, "an Indian from the mountains, accustomed to the *milpa* [farming] system, will have to suffer many changes to convert himself into a producer of cocoa or rubber."[35] As late as 1975, projects were still formulated with the idea of bringing in colonizers from the Western Highland departments of Quiché,

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[31] Gobierno de Guatemala (1964). Ante-Proyecto de Criterios Educativos para la Educación Sistemática en el Proyecto Piloto de Colonización Interior en Guatemala (Sebol-Chinajá) presentado por la Oficina de Planeamiento Integral de la Educación, del Ministerio de Educación Pública. Ciudad de Guatemala. SEGEPLAN Centro de Documentación SEGE0001181: 3.

[32] *Ibid*, 2. Translation mine.

[33] *Ibid*. Translation mine. The hubris in teaching farmers how to farm is less obvious in Guatemala than other postcolonial nations, because the pitfalls of the Green Revolution were obscured by counterinsurgency violence.

[34] Wilson (1995) recounts strikingly similar comments, and this seems to be a common sentiment.

[35] Gobierno de Guatemala (1964). Ante-Proyecto de Desarrollo Integral Sebol--Chinaja. Ciudad de Guatemala. SEGEPLAN Centro de Documentación 0001181.

Sololá, Totonicapan, Quetzaltenango, and Chimaltenango, where they perceived the problem of unsustainably small farming plots to be the worst.[36]

While the former suggests an empirically greater need for the promise of new land, this need is also a social construction. While the aforementioned departments contained an inarguably land-poor population, it simultaneously excluded landless plantation workers on the Southern Coast and the Alta Verapaz highlands. This exclusion clearly points to colonization as a political project, one that would partner with familiar, legible and politically active groups while reproducing historical patterns of exclusion of others.

For the most part, these departments are comprised of the K'iche' and Kaqchikel peoples.[37] The K'iche' and the Kaqchikel also happened to be the populations that first allied with the Spanish during colonization, the peoples who made the indigenous land property regimes legible to the Spanish as permanent agriculture managed through hierarchical institutions, the peoples who were more likely to speak Spanish, and the peoples that Ladinos considered to be relatively industrious. These were the people who could, in conjunction with poor Ladinos, form a National Guatemalan Culture.

For the most part, however, the K'iche' and Kaqchikel peoples did not accept their invitation to colonize the northern lowlands.[38] Instead, and particularly in my case study area, the Q'eqchi' living just south of the land opened for colonization emerged as the entrepreneurial homesteaders. The problem with this is that they weren't perceived as the most needy. In life history interviews in three ethnographic field sites, over half of migrants to the Franja were born on plantations, but apparently were not considered "landless" or "land poor" by USAID and Agrarian Institute (INTA) planners. More disturbingly, the Q'eqchi' are thought of as the most "isolated" of the Maya peoples, exemplified by the fact that the proportion of the population which speaks Spanish is the lowest of all the Maya peoples (Chapter 4). In the eyes of the Agrarian Institute, this isolated people with no land ownership experience coupled with a stubborn refusal to learn Spanish was not capable of transculturating to (con)form a new, improved National Guatemalan Culture.

Spontaneous Colonization, or the Failure of Counterrevolutionary Development

The territorial order fell apart before it had even begun. As shown above, the planners' territoriality dictated centralized, state-sponsored Population Nuclei. I argue that a major factor in counterinsurgency violence in the Franja was an outgrowth of its failure to constitute the population through its developmental intervention. In particular, the military as an institution was beginning to suffer political backlash at the international level,[39] and weakness as a result of its inability to respond effectively to the

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[36] E.5.1 Franja Transversal (1975-1986). Latin American History and Culture: Series 5: Civil War, society and Political transition in Guatemala: The Guatemala News and Information Bureau Archive, 1963-2000. CIRMA Archives.

[37] Sololá has considerable cultural diversity, particularly around Lake Atitlán, but I am not sure to what extent the relationship between potential colonization projects and tourism projects around the Lake was.

[38] In terms of population proportion, their presence is almost insignificant in the entire departments of Petén, Izabal, and Alta Verapaz. Both K'iche's and Kaqchikels did, however, participate in colonization projects in the contemporary county of Ixcán, El Quiché.

[39] The policy of the United States was generally tolerant towards the extrajudicial violence of the Guatemalan military against its own citizens, but the Carter administration expressed concern

humanitarian crisis following the 1976 earthquake. In this context, the military's inability to control, let alone surveil, the population along its frontier became increasingly disturbing.

While planning documents go into great detail about the new national citizens it was going to create through homestead farming, government planners actually intended to allocate more land to extensive cattle ranching (International Development Services Inc. and U.S. Operations Mission to Guatemala 1961; SEGEPLAN 1975: notes a similar trend for Petén). Not as many cattle ranchers came as homesteaders, however, and many of them abandoned their lands in fear of violence (Chapter 8). This abandonment led to the loss of a key element in the Foucauldian milieu to forge a Guatemalan National Culture—the Ladinos, to whom the indigenous people were supposed to acculturate. Of homesteaders, the vast majority of these were Q'eqchi' Maya—not, as was expected, a happy mix of Ladinos and Western Highlands Maya.

Moreover, amongst cattle ranchers in the same area, current and former military personnel were overrepresented—so much so that the Franja is sometimes referred to as the "Generals' Strip." When Ladino ex-military personnel found themselves surrounded by a sea of Q'eqchi' communities that were not interested in working for low wages, many of these cattle ranchers either became angry or felt insecure and suspicious about their neighbors and offered to collaborate as military informers.

For poor Ladinos from the East, the military represented a new opportunity to join a nascent middle class through participation in entrepreneurial endeavors and/or receiving land as a reward for service. Some of Guatemala's military elite, including military dictators, came from economically humble backgrounds and excelled in trainings at places like the School of the Americas. By and large, Guatemala's military leaders were Ladinos, and indigenous people were overrepresented amongst foot soldiers.[40] These military leaders were not simply sitting in offices planning the destruction and subsequent rebuilding of the Franja as an intellectual exercise, but many of them were trying to create the conditions of possibility for an uneasy collaborative project that would allow them to replace the traditional coffee barons as the large-scale landowners in Alta Verapaz.

Traditional plantation owners abandoned their lands, whereas retired military men became cattle ranchers, also often serving as regional military commissioners. These landowners particularly invited the military to use their plantations as bases, either to accept displaced people who were turning themselves in to the army, or to conduct intelligence activities against their neighbors, whom they reported as guerrillas (as with the case of Setzuul, Chapter 5). The information landowners provided was occasionally related to personal labor feuds (Wilson 1995; Huet 2008), particularly in the Franja, where landowners constantly faced a labor shortage as peasants preferred to be landowners themselves. Cattle ranchers, who themselves had often become landowners

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over the state of the civil war in diplomatic fora (this was dramatically reversed during the Reagan administration). In 1980, President Lucas García authorized action against the Spanish embassy during a protest, and the police set it on fire, burning 37 people alive. Four survivors were later tortured and killed; the only survivor was the Spanish ambassador (for his riveting account, see Cajal 2000). Lucas García's failure to apologize and wild accusations against the Spanish was perhaps the nadir of the Guatemalan state's status in terms of international relations.
[40] The revolutionary forces also had chronic problems in terms of Mayan leadership, which led to a splintering off of many of these leaders in the mid-1980s.

through the opening of the frontier, resented those same aspirations on the part of their labor force.

Moreover, as discussed above, the vast majority of Q'eqchi' homesteaders were not part of state-sponsored projects. There were two kinds of colonization: "spontaneous," which means that the homesteader did not seek INTA or the military's help or advice until after they had settled on a piece of land; or sponsored, which meant that peasants organized in a group and asked INTA where they could form a new community.[41] While INTA sought to recruit homesteaders in the Western Highlands, these attempts largely failed (Fledderjohn and Thompson 1982). By the very nature of their lack of registration with the state, it is impossible to know exactly how many "spontaneous" communities dotted the landscape of the Franja. In Alta Verapaz, they were the vast majority.

By 1972, the Agrarian Institute lamented that colonization "has been and is still initially spontaneous and dispersed… they establish themselves in a disorderly fashion, seeking communication that the scarce roads offer and installing themselves precariously to develop subsistence agriculture" (Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria (INTA) 1972). In a reconnaissance of Sebol, project planners discovered that there is a great "floating" population that is attracted to "the possibility of finding a piece of land to settle in the region, even just to construct a small wooden hut to sell a few products for daily consumption and maybe work a little to produce corn for family consumption" (SEGEPLAN 1975: 26). In this way, homesteader spatial practices clashed with planners' proleptic representations of spaces. Rather than fostering entrepreneurialism through trusteeship to create a new National Guatemalan Culture, planners lamented subsistence production as reproducing archaic inefficiencies on the new frontier.

None of the Q'eqchi' settlers I interviewed remember themselves as "floating," "spontaneous" or "disorderly"—they regularly described their territorial order as dispersed (both in terms of villages and houses within the village), but they planned it that way. The founder of Setzuul described "keeping an eye out" for potential sites to found a village for years as he traversed the Franja as a rubber tapper. When Don Sebastián founded Setzuul, he first camped by the river, asked at the local Agrarian Institute office if there was a prior ownership claim, and then brought his wife to camp for a week and plant the first corn crop. He didn't actually move to Setzuul until the first corn crop was ready to harvest, when he invited other families he knew to move there (who then came to reconnoiter the land before establishing themselves). Similarly, in Sepac, settlers describe arriving and receiving permission from neighbors to build their homes and plant crops with the admonition, "not too close."

The reason why the Q'eqchi' villages are coded "spontaneous," then, was because they didn't ask the Agrarian Institute for direction on where to settle, but scouted the land themselves. Perhaps one unintended effect of this is that spontaneous settlers ended up with higher quality land than sponsored settlers, which was

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[41] By sponsored, I do not mean that INTA took any financial responsibility for helping the settlers. Of homesteader communities where I conducted in-depth land tenure interviews, only one of 13 reported having explicitly sought INTA permission prior to establishing their communities. When they did seek permission or legal title to their land, all communities reported having first either gone to the local INTA office or the military base (in one community, the closest INTA office was located on the military base).

exacerbated by INTA's tendency to sponsor colonization projects in areas of strategic importance with little regard to ecological factors (including agricultural productivity); Grünberg (2000) affirms the same phenomenon in Petén.[42] The reason why Q'eqchi' spatial practice seemed "disorderly" was because they organized themselves into dispersed villages, attempting to allocate enough land for crop cycles in swidden agriculture, which they considered more appropriate to the thin subtropical soils of the lowlands than agricultural intensification.

The end result of this "spontaneous migration" was that the Franja became predominantly indigenous (82%), and that proportion was even greater around the wider Sebol sector in northern Alta Verapaz; of the indigenous peoples, almost half were monolingual in a Mayan language (Comisión Interministerial 1980). In most of Alta Verapaz, there were few if any actually executed colonization projects because INTA refused to extend project benefits to dispersed Q'eqchi' homesteaders.

Even in Ixcán, the county with large-scale projects executed by both the Catholic Church[43] and USAID, consultants found that "the flow of spontaneous settlers continued with little or no order in placement, formality in land tenure arrangements or supporting services. Also, two groups placed by INTA earlier in the proposed project were bitter about their plight and nearly hostile towards visitors."[44] By their 1978 field visit, the consultants note ominously that "the army maintained a presence in the area and kept in close touch with events" through interrogations, relationships with community leaders, and informants (*orejas*) (Fledderjohn and Thompson 1982: 9).

By the 1970s, the Guatemalan military believed that it had largely suppressed the Marxist guerrillas. One group, however, sought refuge in southern Mexico (bordering the lowlands) and reorganized as the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (*Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres–EGP*).[45] EGP began recruiting immediately south of the Mexican border, primarily in the Franja including my case study region, northern Alta Verapaz. While the EGP was perhaps more active in the Ixil Triangle, northern Alta Verapaz was strategically important due to the oil pipeline that runs next to the highway. The frontier became a security threat—the military could not find the EGP, but they knew they were active in the Franja, because of EGP's assassinations and regular sabotage to the oil pipeline.

When the army began ramping up its presence in the Franja, then, it literally saw this territory as "unknown to Guatemalans" (International Development Services Inc. and U.S. Operations Mission to Guatemala 1961)—assuming only a Ladino, urban subset of the population as "Guatemalan"—and very treacherous. Thanks to US military

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[42] In both Petén and Ixcán, INTA and FYDEP (the Agrarian Institute dedicated to Petén) sponsored colonization projects along the Mexican border due to national anxieties, as I describe below.

[43] On these projects, and the singular history of Ixcán, see: Morrissey (1978), Falla (1993), and Manz (1988).

[44] As Morrissey (1978) describes, they were bitter because of the joint decision of the Catholic Church and INTA to cut plot sizes and essentially double the population living on the land, while promised projects and land titles still hadn't materialized.

[45] The EGP was one of four armed groups seeking socialist revolution at the time; these groups came together under the umbrella organization, Guatemala National Revolutionary Unity (URNG), which was the group eventually in charge of negotiating the Peace Accords with the military.

aid, the army had topographical maps, but these did not include the spaces populated by "spontaneous communities" in this territory, much less a census. Even though the army entered into a concerted effort to learn as much as it could about these "spontaneous" communities that were, literally, not on any map,[46] I believe the mere fact that these communities were not known to the modernizing military state threatened it. It seems that sponsored communities and cooperatives tended to become havens for displaced people during the *Rahilal* (time of great sadness, also referred to as *Cha'ajkilal* or "the troubles" in Q'eqchi'; or *La Violencia*, the Violence in Spanish), while spontaneous communities and cooperatives tended to suffer physical violence and/or displacement.[47]

If the militarized government was the prime mover for lowlands colonization, how did it so quickly come to see this territory as dangerous? On the ground, the shift in the military's gaze on the Franja felt so quick that Fledderjohn and Thompson describe recruiting potential settlers for colonization projects *concurrently* with what turned out to be the start of the military's scorched earth policy. I argue that to properly understand counterinsurgency violence in the Franja, we cannot only look at colonization projects as an imperialist outgrowth of the Alliance for Progress, but also the longer national history of the perceived need to police Guatemala's borders from incursions and its relationship to colonization.

Border Anxieties

From west to east, Guatemala has always felt the need to shore up its borders. In northern Huehuetenango and Quiché, the Mexican army invaded Guatemala and attempted to usurp its territory in the nineteenth century. In the 1960s, the northern part of Quiché and Alta Verapaz also were of increasing importance, primarily due to perceived possibilities for petroleum extraction. Petén, meanwhile, bordered Mexico and was subject to both Mexicanization[48] and Britishization from colonizers in Belize. Belize eventually became an independent nation in 1982, but Guatemala did not recognize its existence for a decade, and territorial disputes simmer through 2010.

Although the loss of this territory would seem to be a thing of the past, it remains surprisingly fresh even today, serving as a potent reminder of how quickly territory can be lost. Certainly, INTA and FYDEP's promotion of strategic locations was both to settle the frontier and to use these settlements as a kind of border patrol with Mexico. Guatemala's nationalism has often been tied to its military institutions, and this began with the Democratic Spring, which was begun by a member of the Guatemalan military who was democratically elected. President Arévalo was actually the first national leader to threaten to invade Belize. In an interesting twist, military general President Ydígoras Fuentes claimed that he had fashioned a reciprocal agreement with President Kennedy

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[46] Two primary examples of this are the army's creation of INACOP, the National Cooperatives Institute, to gather information from communities that wanted to form cooperatives as a way to defend their land, and its domination as the sole provider of topographical services for INTA in the land titling process.

[47] Here, I hew to the same definition as with communities, meaning those legal entities that were started on the state's initiative, not the community's. While I feel fairly confident that this statement holds true for Alta Verapaz, it may not for Ixcán, El Quiché, where I spent comparatively little time and more cooperatives were burned.

[48] Because of trading routes, during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, Mexican pesos were used as often as Guatemalan quetzales.

whereby the US would support Guatemala's recuperation of Belize as national territory in exchange for Guatemala's assistance with the Bay of Pigs operation. In the early 1960s, Ydígoras Fuentes nonetheless caused an international incident by walking across the border without stopping at checkpoints, claiming that he was still walking on Guatemalan soil. The veracity and viability of Guatemala's claim to Belize notwithstanding, the militarized government was insistent upon its relevance throughout the civil war, amassing troops along the border and threatening to invade multiple times during the 1960s and 1970s.[49]

The Revolution?

> May the blood of our Indian brothers and their examples of a firm struggle and their bravery strengthen all Indians in their continuing struggle to secure a just life: for a society of equality and respect, so that our Indian peoples can develop their culture now broken by the criminal invaders [earlier portions refer to both Spaniards and *gring@s,* but not Germans]; for a just economy where no one exploits others; with communal lands as in the times of our ancestors; for a land without discrimination; so that all repression, torture, assassination and massacres may be ended; so that forced [army] recruitment by kidnapping stop; so that we all have the same rights to work; so that we no longer serve as objects of tourism; for the just distribution and use of our wealth as in the times when the life and culture of our ancestors flourished. – Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC), 1980 Declaration of Iximché

Immediately following the military coup in 1954, some young military operatives began organizing against the coup government. Rather than an armed uprising of the peasants, the civil war began as an internecine conflict in the military. One group allied with the US CIA and conservative elites to implement counterrevolutionary reforms, while the other group supported the ousted president Jacobo Arbenz (himself a military officer) in implementing agrarian reforms, professionalizing the military, and resisting what they saw as US imperialism (Gleijeses 1991). They organized to fight these problems under a loosely Marxist framework, inspired by the successes of the Cuban Revolution (1956) and Ernesto Ché Guevara's *foquismo* theory. Many new members of the professional military were upwardly mobile Ladinos from Eastern Guatemala, so they dedicated themselves to organizing peasants who were resisting violent dispossession of their farmlands by cattle ranchers. The "Butcher of Zacapa," General Arana Osorio, led the military in decimating these movements, killing both peasants and leaders throughout the Eastern countryside.

Surviving guerrillas retreated across the border to Mexico, where they reformulated a strategy of radicalizing popular agrarian movements. Instead of organizing in the Ladino-dominant East, they targeted the northern lowlands (Petén and the Franja; also further into the Cuchumatanes). Although there were a number of independent guerrilla groups who eventually organized under the umbrella organization that represented them in the Peace Accords (Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity; *Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca,* URNG), I focus on the work of the Guerrilla Army of the Poor (*Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres*, EGP), as EGP was the active group in the Franja. Many guerrilla organizers were former military

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[49] The Q'eqchi' Maya live in both Guatemala and Belize, and in both countries their historical rights of possession, as well as their allegiance to the state, have been called into question. I believe that the fact that the Q'eqchi's' current territory transgresses national boundaries is related to their rights as indigenous citizens being called into question on both sides of the border, but this requires further research.

officers, and later college students and political organizers who were in their majority Ladinos from urban areas (*capitalinos*). When they ventured south into the Guatemalan jungle through the borderlands with Mexico, these young EGP organizers were somewhat romantic in recruiting peasants in the jungle (e.g., Payeras 1980). Of all the revolutionaries, EGP seems to have been the most open in understanding how racism articulated with class struggle, but they still saw their goal as one of raising class consciousness, arguing that discrimination against women and indigenous peoples would dissipate naturally during the Marxist revolution (Le Bot 1995).

Marxist guerrillas were not the only agents working on conscious-raising in Guatemala. As mentioned above, USAID funded international development projects that they wanted to be the "awakening" of rural peasants, modernizing them into the twentieth century. Many of these projects were agricultural cooperatives, primarily in the lowlands colonization zones, which were often organized by Catholic Action clergy. By the late 1970s, Catholics and cooperatives were major army targets, but these interventions originally occurred at the military state's behest. By the 1950s, Catholic Action emerged as a reactionary, anti-communist group that also encouraged rural believers to learn and follow the strict canon (discouraging syncretic practices as sinful). Many Catholic clergy then organized rural, indigenous peasants into agricultural cooperatives. Through this experience, and the military's creeping repression, many of these priests radicalized, embracing liberation theology.[50]

Labor and peasant movements also organized massive work strikes, and began to seriously consider questions of indigeneity and the nation. The Declaration of Iximché (epigraph, above), the triumphant coming out moment of the Peasant Unity Committee (*Comité de Unidad Campesina—CUC)*, points to injustice where military generals have split land amongst themselves in the northern lowlands because "in these same zones brother Ixiles, Quichés, Poconchíes, Kekchíes, and Achíes have been living for centuries; thus, they are most affected by the dispossessions of lands and massacres by the Army and the plantation owners."[51] This is of incredible discursive importance, as it marks a watershed when peasant organizers recognized differences amongst rural peoples, and highlighted the different relationships that indigenous people have to the nation and the state, as well as different claims for justice. CUC spoke of a future where "our Indian peoples can develop their culture now broken by the criminal invaders" and a romantic return to "communal lands as in the times of our ancestors."[52]

These three major sectors—church, peasant/labor organizers, and guerrillas—all hailed peasants (in their majority indigenous) with promises to seek social justice and ally with them in their land struggles. There was significant flow between these three groups, however, and guerrilla groups were particularly clandestine in their organizations. Today, in post-war rural communities, people still argue over whether some people were "really" priests or just guerilla organizers, whether peasant

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[50] Latin American liberation theologists focused on the plight of the poor and social justice struggles. Some were expelled by the army (Melville and Melville 1971), some were killed or died under suspicious circumstances, some joined the guerrilla forces, and some became the first witnesses to speak out against genocide (e.g., Falla 1993).

[51] Comité Alberto Fuentes. Declaration of Iximche, Declaration of the Indian People of Guatemala. 1980. Serie de Libros Infostelle 282, CIRMA Archives.

[52] This romantic vision of communal property as a return to a precolonial past continues to the present day (Chapter 4).

organizers were also guerrilla recruiters, and whether their sons were killed by the army or simply left in the night to join up with EGP. The meaning of being "with the guerrillas" is also unclear, as I have been told that someone like me traveling to rural communities to talk to people about land ownership and their struggles for social justice would almost certainly have been killed as a guerrilla, regardless of whether I had any actual affiliation with EGP. In particular, the major national peasant organization, CUC, was also allied with EGP by the late 1970s. Although the upper echelons of the organization were aware that much of CUC's decision-making power was held by EGP, it is not at all clear that rural communities that joined CUC knew they were also joining EGP. While many guerrillas believed that a majority of communities knowingly joined their struggle (Payeras 1980; Hurtado Paz y Paz 2009), many communities still argue today over whether that was the case (Chapters 5 and 6).

The general consensus is that there were never more than a few thousand actual combatants, although in the late 1970s the guerrillas claimed broad support and higher numbers of combatants. Military intelligence also overstated the guerrillas' influence in rural areas in the late 1970s and early 1980s, using this as a justification to expand institutionally and ramp up for major counterinsurgency campaigns against the non-combatant populations. Given the connections and confluences between armed revolutionaries and unarmed social movements, in the 1980s, successive army dictators used Maoist arguments, claiming that they would have to drain the sea [of non-combatant civilians] in order to catch the fish [the guerrillas] (Richards 1985).

1979—1995: Scorched Earth and Military-Controlled Development

Suspect Maya: Loyalty on the Frontier

> In the crisis of meaning that violence conceives, the territoriality of nations and the corporeality of people become privileged mediums for reorganizing the body politic and for forcibly controlling the movement of persons and ideas within the nation's material and cultural space. – Coronil and Skurski (2006a: 84)

Before describing actually occurring insurgency in the Franja, I want to describe the ways in which the Guatemalan military was poised to understand it. Instead of a National Guatemalan Culture, the villages that sprang up in the Franja did not have a strong relationship with the Guatemalan government, did not have schools that attended to their "social and cultural qualities" to ensure a successful "transculturation process,"[53] such that their commitment to the Guatemalan national project (unlike the planner's vision) was unknown to the Guatemalan military. The militarized nation-state invited settlers to claim the frontier in the name of the nation, using their settlement as a way to make its territorial claims (Coronil and Skurski 2006a). The presence of monolingual Q'eqchi's on the frontier, however, presented the military with a body politic that was historically excluded from the nation, and therefore might not act in its best interest.

When there is a slippage in a discursive understanding of external threats to the nation, these threats can become internalized to the nation and ultimately individual subjects (Kosek 2006). Stuart Hall (1978) describes how these subjects can become an 'enemy within,' Foucault (2003) as a sub-race which threatens the health of the race, and

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[53] Gobierno de Guatemala (1964). Ante-Proyecto de Desarrollo Integral Sebol--Chinaja. Ciudad de Guatemala. SEGEPLAN Centro de Documentación 0001181. Page 2. Translation mine.

I describe them here as "suspect." Kosek (2006: 200) identifies what is germane to my case here, explaining that this process of identification "serves as a means of internal othering, against which a narrow community of the nation defines itself and its patriotic loyalties." Here, a narrow community of military elites defined themselves as the protectors of Guatemalan race and culture, and Q'eqchi' homesteaders as Others, suspect Mayas.

In thinking about what made Q'eqchi' homesteaders expendable in the eyes of the military, I needed a term to explain the duality of their role in the eyes of the military. In reviewing the literature, however, I was unable to find such a term.[54] In her description of the military's program to rework the survivors of genocide, Schirmer (1998) describes the military's view of its loyal population as "sanctioned Mayas," but does not name those people it made expendable. Nonetheless, Taracena aptly describes this figure in his discussion of military violence against unarmed civilians who were overwhelmingly indigenous:

> "It is the suspect, he who can be hidden anywhere. The 'communist' is an infiltrator who serves foreign powers, puts down [*despreciar*] religion and traditional values, who wants to destroy the national, who does not respect either property or family" (Taracena Arriola 2007: xxii, translation mine).

The militarized government believed that it was difficult to find these people in the sea of population, especially when they spoke a Mayan language (instead of Spanish). For lack of a better term, I call them "suspect Mayas." In my use of the binary of the Suspect/Sanctioned Maya, this assumption is based on the military's binary viewpoint.

In reality, there was significant traffic of individuals back and forth between the binary over time, and people I talked to framed their loyalties in nuanced terms. For example, K'ux, a Sanctioned Maya who grew up in a development pole told me that he would vote for a party that would bring back the hard hand of militarized security (*mano dura*); he also told me that he would be willing to join the guerrillas in armed struggle for agrarian reform. While people live and die through discourses that interpellate them as Sanctioned or Suspect Maya, the lived practices of politics belie these binaries.

The perception of an internalized threat can become exacerbated on the frontiers, which have a powerful ideological valency (Watts 1992), where they can either be seen as key to the national identity itself or at the margins of state power. The Franja went from being the milieu that would foster Guatemalan National Culture to the margins of state power, representing the vulnerability of the military in policing its borders from insurgent incursions.[55] At this time, the entire Franja seems to have become perceived as a dangerous, subversive place, as well as all the people who inhabited it. Applebaum, Macpherson et al. (2003: 11) explain that, in Latin America more generally, "racial distinctions were created and reinforced through allusions to how place determined or

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[54] I am not using Hale's (2004) binary of *indio prohibido* and *indio permitido* because the suspect and sanctioned Maya are two identities that sometimes coalesce in the same person. Hale, as well as Velázquez Nimatuj (2008), also use the idea of *indio permitido* specifically in the context of neoliberalism, whereas my use of "sanctioned Maya" is broader both historical use and social context.

[55] Arguably, in the 1960s and 1970s these two competing visions were competing for the same souls and soils, but the overwhelming force of the 1980s scorched earth campaign largely settled the dispute by force.

shaped the racial characteristics of individuals and groups." During the scorched earth campaign, the military began to associate the Q'eqchi' who lived in the Franja with the threatening jungle, and this would have negative repercussions for both.

While I can better explain the relationship of different groups with the jungle in case studies (e.g., Chapter 6), the military's understanding of the jungle changed from one territorializing imaginary to the next. Under counterrevolutionary representations of space, planners posed the northeastern jungle as potential farmland—once all the weeds got cleared away. As the Q'eqchi' Maya settled the frontier, however, they did not clear away all jungle, leaving it untouched where it was not suitable for agriculture and/or where they hunted. When the Marxist guerrillas began to infiltrate Guatemala again, they hid from the army in the jungles. Thus, in the counterinsurgency territorialization, the jungle became dangerous—the guerrillas might attack the army in the jungle, and large predators and diseases were rampant.[56] Given that the army "knew" that anyone who was in the jungle must be an insurgent, military members had carte blanche to kill anyone they found hiding in the jungle. As I show in later chapters, these were rarely combatants; usually, they were internally displaced people who had fled their villages in fear.

At some point, the militarized state began to change in its attitude towards homesteaders in the Franja, and counterrevolution crystallized into a racist counterinsurgency.[57] In the communities I worked in, none of the homesteaders recalled a single moment when the tide began to turn, but rather families experienced a creeping fear and people believed they were headed for generalized doom. My case studies were, by and large, of poor Q'eqchi' farmers who stayed in Alta Verapaz, even if they spent years hiding in caves. These are the people who stayed as long as they could, reluctant to leave their homes if they had done nothing wrong. As rumors (*esil*)[58] grew, families went through a daily cycle of crucial choices that can be grossly summed up as: stay and wait, or flee for our lives? Many of the families I interviewed defended their choices to stay, arguing that nobody could possibly have anticipated the violence that the army was about to unleash against them; others were more reticent.

<u>Suspect Mayas in Unknown Territory became Killable</u>

The frontier is not only a place of possibilities, a field of intervention on which the state can write its representation of space and shape its people into citizens—the frontier is also a dangerous unknown. When counterrevolution becomes counterinsurgency, state discourses on modernization reshape colonial discourses, associating the state with civilization and insurrection with barbarism (Coronil and Skurski 2006b). The (Ladino) state's vision of Guatemala's indigenous population has

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[56] Predators that inspired fear included jaguars and large snakes; diseases included flesh-eating bacteria, dengue and malaria.

[57] Guatemalanists tend to point to the guerrilla assassination of the "Tiger of Ixcán" and ensuing backlash in 1975 (Stoll 1993); the military's failure to provide emergency services to the population after a massive earthquake in 1976 (Adams and Bastos 2003); or the massacre of Q'eqchi' peasants in Panzós in 1978 (Grandin 2004).

[58] *Esil* is the word used to describe both news as fact and unsubstantiated rumors. I think this was a key issue for homesteading families: while they didn't believe military propaganda, the rumors of mass killings seemed too extreme to be true. Other families believed the mass killings, but thought the victims were at fault for their relationship with Marxist guerrillas. Logically, they decided that if they hadn't allied with EGP, they had nothing to fear.

long been confused and contradictory, and certain veins of thought became more prevalent as three factors articulated: first, national economic instability;[59] second, although the military successfully resisted the IMF's attempts at fiscal reforms in the 1970s and 1980s, it was still an "international pariah" with regard to its human rights record (Jonas 1991); and third, Marxist guerrillas focused particularly on the indigenous population in their attempts to foment a socialist revolution.

The Guatemalan military began to see the indigenous population living on the frontier as "suspect Mayas." By this, I wish to signal two important and related strains in the Ladino military elites' imaginary of its indigenous population as a sub-group that threatens the (Ladino) Guatemalan nation: indigenous people are not fully developed in their capacities as citizens, and therefore cannot properly execute the duties of citizenship to defend the nation against outside subversives; and indigenous people do not share the Guatemalan National Culture, such that their loyalty to the nation is weaker. Moreover, their alterity means that their treason would have been less legible to the military. As a result, these "suspect Mayas" are holding the nation back from realizing its potential. In the succinct words of Ríos Montt (military dictator, 1982-1983), "When the Indian is ended, Latin America will be free."[60]

The tensions inherent in improving the indigenous population through trusteeship are long-standing, but in the mid-1970s the possibility of reshaping the indigenous population began to seem like a lost cause. In an interview, General Carlos Arana Osorio (president, 1970-1974), asserted:

> "The Indian is a weight, a counterweight that does not facilitate the country's development. The peasant or Indian; due to his way of life, his simplicity, and his ignorance is a fertile terrain for Marxist ideas; due to his way of thinking, his lack of cultural vision or of instruction, he is a robot" (Chávez 1983).

US and Guatemalan planners believed that the very same qualities that made the indigenous population malleable in their project to trusteeship might make them open to a Marxist ideology. Although it was less common, military planners also acknowledged that their lived experience of injustice and poverty could incline the indigenous population to be open to a socialist revolution. The actual number of supporters of the Marxist guerrillas can never be truly known, but the military estimated in the early 1980s that perhaps as many as 276,000 were "supporters," although only 1,200 were actually guerrillas (Schirmer 1998).[61] There is a great degree of consensus amongst scholars that military violence was totally out of proportion to the size of the threat, murdering approximately 200,000 people and displacing approximately one million people (CEH 1999).

Once the representation of space as a Guatemalan National Culture failed, military elites' primary stated goal became to save the nation from the communist threat. Foucault (2003: 81-82) describes the justification for the exercise of right over death thus: "State sovereignty thus becomes the imperative to protect the race. It

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[59] In the Alta Verapaz portion of the Franja, economic problems were not as urgent due to a burgeoning cardamom boom. Nonetheless, as Q'eqchi' entrepreneurs became increasingly invested in cardamom, they were less available to ranchers and plantation owners as a cheap labor source.

[60] Colección de Documentos IGE; Colección CIRMA. CIRMA Archives.

[61] Given that this is the Guatemalan military's estimate, we can safely assume this as an upper bound.

becomes both an alternative to and a way of blocking the call for revolution that derived from the old discourse of struggles, interpretations, demands and promises." Whereas peasant groups focused on a romantic return to precolonial harmony, the military identified Suspect Maya who became dangerous because of their lack of allegiance to the new, more modern Ladino state project. In this way, the military reworked its failure to incorporate the Franja into the geo-body of the nation by deeming the territory and the population, the entire milieu, as degenerate and therefore vulnerable to the disease of communism.

In order to defend Guatemalan society as a whole, the military saw it as urgent to wipe out the weak, the deviant, the sub-race—in the Franja, "spontaneous" Q'eqchi' communities that were not legible to the military became full of Suspect Mayas whose loyalty was unknown. Even rural paramilitaries who worked closely with the military described their fear of attending meetings on the base, of answering questions that questioned their loyalty to the Guatemalan state and the military in particular. The military elite ceased to discriminate amongst the Maya, speaking instead (drawing on Mao) of the urgent need to "drain the sea" of Maya people as a way to kill the "fish," or Marxist guerrillas. The difficult work of counterinsurgency intelligence became unnecessary once the military legitimated itself through biopower, killing suspect Maya indiscriminately in order to protect the larger population.

Whereas prior to the *Rahilal* (violence), the military was relatively ineffective in its attempts to work on the Franja's population and territory, the period of counterinsurgent violence and immediately after marked the apogee of state involvement. If Guatemala is now a "failed state,"[62] the only time when the national state could accurately be described as "modern" was during the genocidal counterinsurgency. Rather than view this as an aberration, violence was fundamental to the "modern" state, and violence is imbricated in processes of development.

<u>Violence in "Modern" State Planning</u>

In a 1982 document published by the Military Academy, Captain Juan Fernando Cifuentes analyzed the "Indian question" (basically, what do we do with Suspect Mayas?). Although EGP had only recruited about 1,200 people in the north, he saw its activities as a serious problem because it proved wrong "those that thought and asserted that 'our little Indians (*inditos*) would never be communists due to their trivializing characteristics, religiosity, respect of the military officer, customs (*costumbre*)[63] and more than anything due to their resignation of accepting their destiny'" (cited in Manz 1988: 19). Cifuentes goes on to discuss three possibilities of military action, all of which assume a psychological campaign to be waged on the indigenous population, "the ladinoization of the Ixil population so that it will disappear as a sub group distinct from

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[62] In March 2007, UN High Comissioner for Human Rights Anders Kompass called Guatemala a "failed and collapsed state" ("Iglesia insta a la prudencia," March 5, 2007, in the *Prensa Libre*).

[63] *Costumbre* is a denigrating term used to describe Maya culture. Although I know many proud Maya who use this term themselves, I believe it implies that the Maya lack a kind of consciousness of meaning and history to their actions that a "national" or "high" culture must have. In my fieldwork, Ladinos sometimes used *costumbre* to talk about how indigenous people have "lost" their culture, are no longer connected to the ancient Maya, and tend to perform cultural acts from habit or memory without understanding their original (lost) underlying meaning. The Q'eqchi' *qana'leb'*, is much more broad, referring to "our experiences, customs and beliefs."

the national mode;" embracing (or appropriating) Maya identity, customs and language; and ignoring culture and improving living conditions for the rural population. In the years to follow, the military used elements of all three strategies in counterinsurgency.

In 1980, the Guatemalan military released its National Plan of Security and Development, which was based on the "Beans and Bullets" premise: 70% of the rural population could be rehabilitated, and would receive food aid and development (beans); and 30% of the population was irrevocably damaged, and must be exterminated (bullets). The long-term plan was part of a greater attempt for the military to imbricate itself further in developmental processes and state agencies, in order to ensure modicum of control, even as it ceded executive office to a civilian.[64] The main objective of the plan was to provide "development within a context of rational and effective security," because "the war must be fought on all fronts: military, political, but above-all socioeconomic" (National Plan, cited and translated in Schirmer 1998).

30/70 Counterinsurgency Campaign Plan
Victory 82, or Operation Ashes: Scorched earth "pacification campaign;" actually began in 1981 in one study site[65]
Firmness 82, or Plan G: Troops would establish paramilitary patrols (PACs) and the provide emergency aid in the form of shelter, work and food (techo, trabajo y tortilla), particularly in work-for-food programs
Institutional Re-encounter 84: With the establishment of Development Poles, the army would again assert control over rural development, as well as allow a "return to constitutionality"
National Stability 85: A greater expansion of rural development programs and presidential elections[66]
Advance 86: The military government officially cedes the executive office to a democratically elected leader

FIGURE 2.1[67]

For the most part, I address the actual experience of the counterinsurgency campaign in Q'eqchi' communities in later chapters. It is of note, however, that, for the 70% of the population that the military planners decided to "make live," the military still very much intended to reshape this population, to mold them into citizens proud of the Guatemalan National Culture. In opposition to Suspect Mayas, Schirmer describes the military's efforts to re-incorporate Sanctioned Mayas into a newly reborn nation. Following the scorched earth campaign, military leaders eagerly returned to a "view of

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[64] Schirmer's (1998) penetrating analysis shows how the peace processes have largely mirrored the military's stated plan.

[65] The first major frontal offensive was at the end of 1981, when troops stormed in a wave from San Pedro Carchá through Chisec. In interviews, survivors described it as a clean sweep, in which no villages in their path were spared.

[66] It is important to note that the Guatemalan military has sought to expand its duties from security to maintain a large institutional presence. Today, one commonly hears jokes about how the military is even eager to take over as garbage men, but a major source of expansion has been into security for conservation purposes (see chapters 3 and 7).

[67] This rendering of the army's planned counterinsurgency campaign draws on Schirmer 1998, as well as CIRMA Archives and my fieldnotes.

the indigenous community as a child needing to be disciplined, 'ladinoized,' entrepreneurized—that is, 'forged' to fit the 'new' modern Guatemalan state" (Schirmer 1998: 114). In trainings that lasted for hours, the civilian affairs unit (S-5) taught rural communities to sing the national anthem, to march with guns (often using sticks), to hate communists, and that the scorched earth campaign was regrettably necessary to discipline wayward communities (Nelson 1988; Padilla 1990; Wilson 1995).

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have questioned the discursive creation of the Franja as a frontier, showing how this planner's imaginary at once envisioned possibilities for intervening in this milieu to shape both territory and population, and defined a new kind of marginality. Through a close reading of planning documents written by both Guatemalan and US planners, I showed the construction of the territory as marginal, and underlined the difference between the target population and actual Q'eqchi' homesteaders.

Following the CIA sponsored coup, I argued that military planners territorialized the Franja as a colonization project, one in which they would actively work on territory as a milieu, improving both land and population to further a specific vision of a Guatemalan National Culture. Importantly, this territorialization relied on centralized populations (Population Nuclei) that were in close contact with state agencies via development projects to ensure their loyalty and secure the frontier from Marxist incursions. I showed the failure of this territorialization project with the arrival of Q'eqchi' homesteaders who did not meet specifications for the target population (in terms of constructed need and acculturation), did not live in centralized communities (dispersed homes on plots of land), and did not have a relationship with state agencies (spontaneous, not sponsored). In particular, most Q'eqchi' communities did not delineate a centralized place for homes, forest reserve, and permanent agriculture, but lived on dispersed plots of land and practiced swidden agriculture.

By its very nature, state territorialization is an unfinished process (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995). When the colonization project failed to enmesh territory and people in the framework for control of its choosing, I have shown that the marginality that underlay developmental colonization became a foundation for genocidal counterinsurgency. The Franja, as a frontier, became an unknown, dangerous place, and the population that inhabited it became Suspect Mayas. The military reworked its failure by deeming the territory and the population, the entire milieu, as vulnerable to the disease of the Marxist insurgents. I showed how the military reworked its fears of Q'eqchi' homesteaders as potential insurgents, using state sovereignty as an imperative to protect the [Ladino] race at the expense of 30% of the Mayan population.[68] In counterinsurgency discourse, racism was not "an *effect* but a *tactic* in the internal fission of society into binary oppositions, a means of creating 'biologized' internal enemies against home society must defend itself" (Stoler 1995: 277). In carrying out counterinsurgency, military leaders envisioned the jungle as "dangerous," and anyone who was hiding there could be killed on sight. In the post-war era, I show how many

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[68] The Guatemalan military planned to kill a much greater proportion of the rural Maya population. Given their success in displacing over a million people and perceived acceptance of the surviving population, however, military leaders decided to cease the massacres earlier than they originally planned (Schirmer 1998).

Q'eqchi's transgress nature-society binaries, while joining up with a Pan-Maya social movement that itself is built on the war-time assumption of society in racialized binary oppositions.

In the chapters that follow, I hope to show that the discursive formation of the frontier, as well as its implications of marginality for both people and land, had consequences not only for the 1980s counterinsurgency campaign, but also for contested negotiations of post-war land tenure and development. This racialized territorialization not only built on and reproduced stereotypes of the Q'eqchi' as a people, but also contributed to the supposed separation between homes, agricultural lands, and protected lands (parks and forest reserves). For the survivors of the civil war in the Franja, questions of trusteeship and marginality shape the conditions of possibility for contemporary land claims.

Chapter 3
Making the Maya Forest, (Re)constructing the State

Race provides a critical medium through which the idea of nature operates, even as racialized forces rework the ground of nature itself. *Working together*, race and nature legitimate particular forms of political representation, reproduce social hierarchies, and authorize violent exclusions—often transforming contingent relations into external necessities. – Moore et al (2003: 3)

Introduction

In order to explain neoliberal conservation in Guatemala, we must understand how local actors—park guards and neighboring communities alike—view conservation as a legacy of counterinsurgency. In 2008, I had a long conversation with two hardworking park guards that culminated with them identifying the cause of their problems with surrounding communities as the Peace Accords. As one guard explained, before the Peace Accords, "we were all militarized," so people were too afraid to plant or hunt on park lands. When a park guard says that things were better when "we were all militarized," he expresses real nostalgia for the ability to enforce the inviolability of core protected areas with impunity. After the Peace Accords, people from surrounding communities began to encroach on the park, reviving old land ownership claims using new human rights justifications. Understandably, park guards who literally put their lives on the line to protect parks saw this as a negation of their mandate. With evident elation, one guard informed me that he had requisitioned the military to send armed soldiers to accompany him on a patrol later that week.[1]

Not long after the civil war officially ended (1996), park guards and administrators began advocating for the park's re-militarization. By 1999, illegal logging had gotten so extreme that a merchant pulled a park guard aside and complained that his (legitimate) business was suffering—he couldn't sell lumber because people just got it from the park—and tipped him off about where to find a major stockpile of illegal lumber. The embattled park guard reported it to his superiors. Two months went by without a response from the administrators in the capital, and he started to wonder if they weren't in on it. Finally, they summoned him to a meeting in the capital, "11 professionals, and just one peon, me." Still, the park guard believed that this was his chance to explain to the "professionals" in the capital what he was up against. He told them, "If we really love this park like we say we do, we need a *mano dura* operation."

When emergencies occur, park guards marshal their nostalgia for a time of authority, calling for a "*mano dura* operation"—literally, this means "hard-handed," but Guatemalans today understand *mano dura* to refer to a military campaign that violently represses people in order to impose social order. In the story above, the professionals from the capital listened to the humble park guard, and he got a *mano dura* operation,

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[1] This was the patrol that culminated in the confrontation described at the beginning of Chapter 1; the guard was one of the hostages.

putting a stop to illegal logging in the park for some time.[2] Equally important, this episode (and his retelling of it) reveals how Guatemala's conservation practices rework violent counterinsurgency strategies. In this chapter, I argue that conservation, especially when the military participates as the enforcer, serves to authorize violent exclusions and reproduce social hierarchies.

While many popular critiques of neoliberal conservation focus on the role of big international non-governmental organizations (BINGOs) imposing their agenda on postcolonial nations, my focus is on the ways the implementation of a conservation agenda became a major forum for post-war political struggles. First, at a time when other political projects seemed risky to the international development community, supporting conservation and sustainable development seemed like an unalloyed good. Conservation seemed disconnected from issues of race and social justice that animated the war, so international aid agencies could inject greatly needed money into Guatemala before the Peace Accords were negotiated (1996) or truth commissions presented their findings (e.g., REMHI 1998; CEH 1999). As is often the case, conservation projects relied on the creation of a national park system, and this also created a mechanism for international agencies to invest in (re)constructing the state. Initially, this reconstruction was supposed to strengthen civil governance, but increasingly conservation monies are used for military enforcement (Ybarra 2010b).

I argue that when conservation BINGOs implemented their international agenda, specifically through the invention of the international "Maya Forest" as a territory requiring their intervention to "save" it, their relative lack of understanding of Guatemala facilitated the political work of race and nature together (Moore et al. 2003). When the park system was implemented, it became internally racialized. The recent history of racialized violence in Guatemala's civil war punctuates a much longer history of racialized dispossession, and the colonial origins of conservation tend to lend themselves to racialization more generally. It is on the terrain of conservation politics that I discovered that my understanding of "living on scorched earth" can refer not only to historical counterinsurgency campaigns (1970s-1980s), but also to rites of physical dispossession of invaders in protected areas. Current park evictions in the Franja are eerily reminiscent of scorched earth campaigns—in both, the army burns down people's homes and crops, camping out to prevent them from reclaiming their land (although today it is not authorized to kill people).

First, I show how the Maya Forest was invented, such that the conservation territorial project limits the scope of politically acceptable agrarian struggles. Next, I describe how protected areas build on previous territorial projects of colonization (1954-1977) and counterinsurgency (1978-1995). To understand the current territorial project, I then explain how protected areas and parks work in lock-step to separate nature and agriculture. I finish the chapter showing how conservation reproduces subjectifications of racialized marginalities forged in counterinsurgency campaigns as a way of lessening competing land claims and imagining subjects in need of conservation trusteeship (Li 2007). The post-war park system (re)constitutes the state, and I argue that its role in racializing territory and environmentalism corrodes the legitimacy of the Guatemalan nation-state.

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[2] Newspaper articles from the same period report that illegal logging only stopped when the park ran out of its most valuable trees.

Inventing the Maya Forest

While a history of international conservation is beyond the scope of this project, tensions in the implementation of Guatemala's new park system undoubtedly reflected ongoing debates in the conservation and development community over the proper types of conservation interventions in postcolonial nations. Conservation BINGOs, notably World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) and The Nature Conservancy (TNC), began working in poor countries around the 1970s. The following decades of rapid growth witnessed the articulation of advances in conservation advocacy and science—a new environmental paradigm beginning in the 1980s that centered on the urgent need to protect "biodiversity" from anthropogenic destruction, documented through the new discipline of conservation biology and taken up energetically by conservation BINGOs and natural resource managers (Farnham 2007).

Although conservation BINGOs agreed on the need to protect biodiversity from human threats, they did not necessarily agree on the methods to achieve conservation. Conservation International emerged as the third major BINGO, with former staff from WWF and TNC, out of conflicts on whether there was a need to work with local populations living in and near newly created protected areas. The conflicts today over whether conservation BINGOs are well-funded and unaccountable to the indigenous peoples who are most affected by their actions (Chapin 2004) or whether "humans and animals do not mix well" and therefore humans[3] must be excluded from parks (Terborgh and van Schaik 2002: 6) date back to debates over sustainable development since the 1980s.

Conservation International played a particularly prominent role in the invention of the Maya Forest. Myers (1988) identified a way for conservationists to concentrate their efforts in combating the "mass-extinction episode underway," highlighting the state of environmental emergency by juxtaposing pictures of major logging and "shifting cultivation." Myers recommended that conservationists focus on tropical forests as key sites for intervention, and his seminal paper first characterized these key sites as biodiversity hotspots to describe their proportionately high endemic species and primary vegetation loss.[4] Conservation International was the first BINGO to organize its agenda around this term (Mittermeier et al. 1998), as detailed in its "rainforest imperative" agenda (1990) and its collaboration with McDonald's to create the "Rain Forest Happy Meal" in 1991.

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[3] Terborgh and van Schaik see park officials, tourists, and tourism concessionaires as appropriate human influences, but not local populations who live or extract resources from parks. Although they rightly point to a history of unsustainable resource extraction by local communities in parks, they do not acknowledge the similarly poor environmental track record of ecotourism.

[4] His original paper describes them only as "hotpots," but later coauthored papers take up the more popular term "biodiversity hotspots." The 1988 paper also focuses on endemic vegetation, while later works in conservation biology have also looked at animal species.
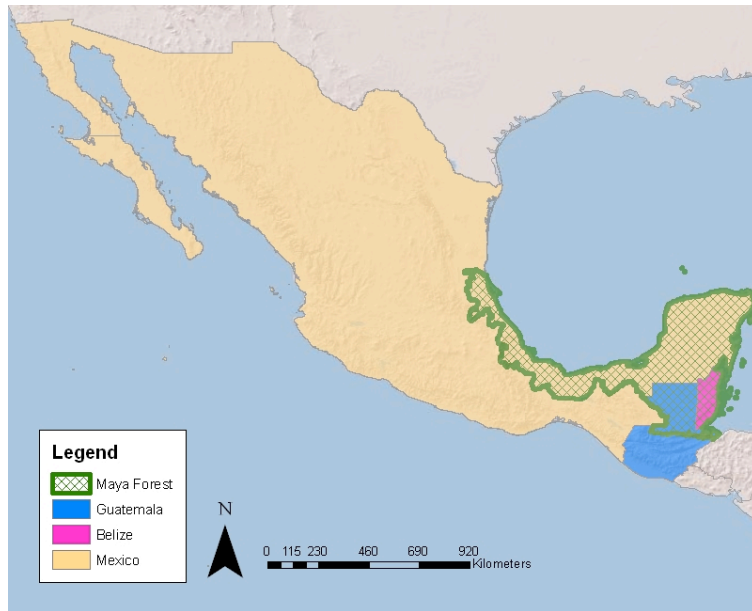
FIGURE 3.1: The Maya Forest (green cross-hatch) is comprised of northern Guatemala, Belize and parts of Southern Mexico. Map by the author, based on The Nature Conservancy and Conservation International promotional materials.

Conservation International identified Mesoamerican forests, eventually naming the "Maya Forest," (Figure 3.1) for the region that encompassed Guatemala's lowlands, southeastern Mexico, and western Belize (Mittermeier et al. 1998; Primack et al. 1998). The use of the term "Maya" is somewhat ambiguous in this context—does it refer to the ancient Maya, as does the "Maya Riviera" designed to attract tourists to archaeological sites? Or to the living Maya, who inhabit the Maya Forest? I suggest that it is both, but Conservation International's understanding of what the living Maya should look like was shaped by its early experiences with the Lacandón Maya in Chiapas, Mexico, whom Nations (2006: 134) describes as the "most traditional" of the Comunidad Lacandona because they were "isolated" until the 1960s. His narrative omits reference to their role in the Mexican government's authorization of massive logging in the "Lacandón Forest" in the 1960s, and implies that less "traditional" and "isolated" indigenous peoples do not deserve special consideration in conservation practice.

Satellite mapping shows that Petén had 50% less forest cover in the 1990s than it did in the 1960s (Ponciano 1998). These satellite images, supposedly portraying illegal logging perpetrated by Mexicans, were key evidence that environmentalists used to convince President Cerezo to create a national park system in the late 1980s (Nations 2006).[5] Real, measurable change in forest cover in lands where the military and USAID promoted deforestation (as colonization) became the rallying cry for international environmentalists, especially in the nascent field of conservation biology. Dan Janzen, a US biologist instrumental in the creation of the Costa Rican park system, urged his colleagues that if they "want a tropics in which to biologize, they are going to have to

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[5] Guatemala created its first ten national parks in 1955, but these (with the exception of Tikal) were "paper parks" until the 1980s (Ponciano 1998).

buy it with care, energy, effort, strategy, tactics, time, and cash" (Janzen 1986: 306).[6] As in other countries in Latin America,[7] environmentalists,[8] urban elites (*capitalinos*), and academics mobilized beginning in the 1980s to create a park system to protect northern Guatemala as an area rich in natural resources.

There had been little conservation work in Guatemala prior to 1990, but then work began quickly because "the conservationists who designed the [Maya Biosphere Reserve] believed they had a narrow window of opportunity in which to act" (Schwartz et al. 1996: 2). I have already described the urgency depicted using satellite images of deforestation, but I believe that an equally important source of urgency was the political opportunity presented by the waning of counterinsurgency violence before the Peace Accords were negotiated. Counterinsurgency campaigns waned when Guatemala had a civilian president, Vinicio Cerezo Arévalo, who signed the Esquipulas II Accord (1987) that laid the groundwork for the end of the civil war. Peace talks stalled for three years, however, as the military and conservative groups refused to accept a basic platform on human rights. During this time, Guatemala passed its Law of Protected Areas (Decreto 4-89) and the law establishing the national parks system (SIGAP) and the Maya Biosphere Reserve (Decreto 5-90).

There was a narrow window during which the Guatemalan government, as it was participating in a demilitarization process, was newly legitimate as a partner for a massive conservation program that affects one-third of the national territory. I suggest that that window would have closed in a few years because the proposed park system might well have been included in the Peace Accords process, which would have offered peasant and indigenous sectors the opportunity to critique the conservationist project and the ways it forestalled the cries for land that animated the war in the first place. This is particularly important as there were 42,000 legally recognized refugees who were still negotiating a return to their homeland, and over one million internally displaced people. Instead, the park system was created in a process that was fundamentally undemocratic and so lacking in transparency that baseline surveys conducted in Petén in 1990 and 1991 concluded that most people still did not even know about the Maya Biosphere Reserve's existence (USAID 1995), even though it spans 1.6 million hectares (44% of Petén).

While this kind of imposition is exactly that which Chapin (2004) famously critiqued in his "challenge to conservationists," questions of sustainable development and indigenous rights did inform the creation of Guatemala's park system. Many criticisms of the growing international conservation sector emerged, and the most potent of these were those from indigenous peoples and human rights organizations. They

[6] My dissertation focuses on conservation as a political agenda and practice. While science, especially conservation biology, offers compelling insights to such phenomena as species extinction and habitat loss, I am interested narrowly in how these are used as evidence for mandates on protected areas through politics.

[7] More than 70 percent of Latin American parks were established in the 1970s and 1980s (Hecht 2004). In many of these countries, parks were established on lands earlier designated for internal colonization.

[8] Like Brockington et al. (2008), I refer to an institutional history of conservation, one dominated by Western institutions that intervene in the rural politics of poor countries, notably Conservation International, World Wildlife Fund and The Nature Conservancy. Although West (2006) carefully denotes the differences between scientists, practitioners, and advocates, in Guatemala many important players take on all three roles.

argued simply that conservation BINGOs acted like imperialists when they assumed that indigenous peoples did not value or understand their own ecosystems, wresting control from local communities and often dispossessing them. Although major figures including Terborgh and Redford (1991) warned of the fallacy of the "ecological noble savage" and the dangers of ecological degradation in "paper parks," by the late 1980s, most conservation project proposals had to deal with potential negative impacts on local human populations. As one former CONAP (National Council on Protected Areas, *Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegida*) official explained to me, that is why so much of Guatemala's protected area systems are not strict parks, but often allow for renewable resource use. I have serious concerns about how prejudices played out against marginalized groups, particularly monolingual Q'eqchi's, in the implementation of Guatemala's park system. Nonetheless, the conservation conflicts I describe below are distinctly shaped by conservationists' perceptions that they cannot simply dispossess rural people, but must justify dispossession by showing that people living in potential protected areas do not have historical rights or are unfit environmental stewards.

International conservationists joined up with international post-war development efforts to save Guatemala's Maya Forest through sustainable development.[9] Their efforts met with great success—approximately 30% of Guatemala's territory is now classified as a protected area, with the majority located in the northern lowlands. While understanding conservation in Guatemala as part of larger territorial interventions (e.g. the Puebla-Panama Plan and the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor) is important for a study of political ecology as it relates to the conservation and control thesis (Robbins 2004), as is understanding how neoliberalism[10] and conservation articulate more generally (Igoe and Brockington 2007; Brockington et al. 2008), I am interested in how national elites incorporated the making of the Maya Forest into the (re)construction of a state that reproduces existing hierarchies.

Whereas in decades previous these lands were part of the agricultural frontier, lands that were marginal in terms of location and productivity in relation to the Western Highlands, they now became valuable precisely because the lack of economic development left the landscape seemingly unsullied by human activities (cf. Denevan 1992). Where landscapes were working lands, conservationists called them deforested, and the people who made the land work became conservation's unwitting enemies, just as they had recently been the army's enemies. Almost none of these lands were uninhabited wilderness; the majority of Guatemala's parks today have people living in them, whether legally or illegally.[11] For very different reasons, the army, wealthy Ladinos, and international conservationists all interpellated poor people living on rural lands in the same way.

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[9] While sustainable development is a widely used and sometimes abused term, I refer to making development more ecologically sustainable in rural areas in poor countries that came to be of central importance to conservationists beginning in the 1980s (Redclift 1987), especially integrated conservation and development projects.

[10] According to Harvey (2007: 22), "neoliberalism is a theory of political economic practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade."

[11] Approximately 85% of Latin American protected areas are occupied by people, but eviction is more common in Central America than South America (Brockington et al. 2008).
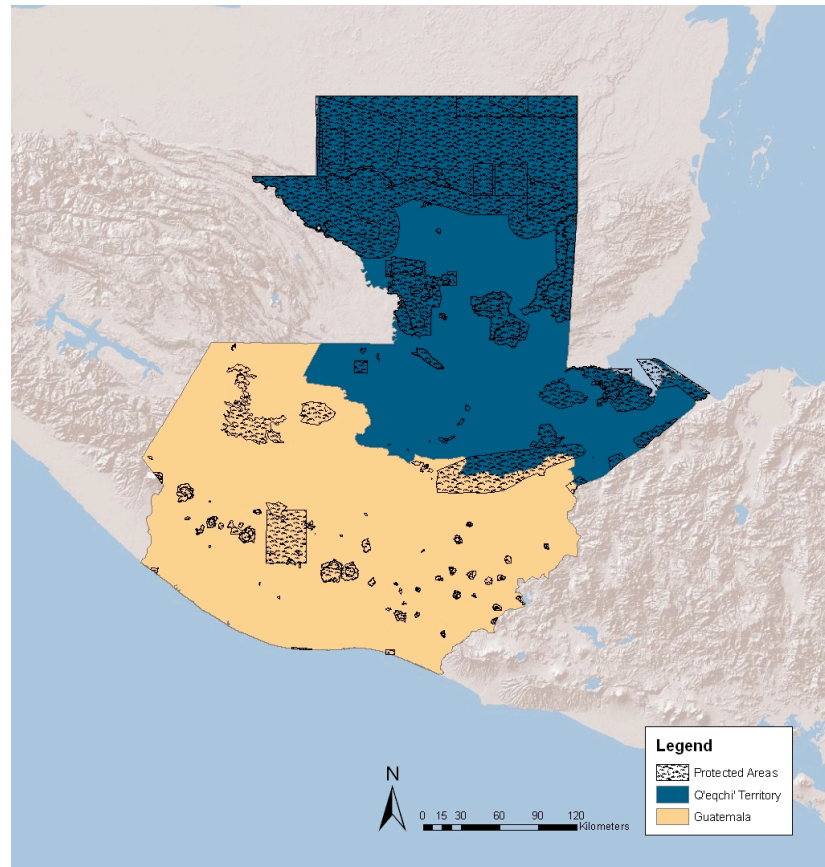
FIGURE 3.2: Q'eqchi' Maya territory (blue) is disproportionately affected by protected areas (cross-hatch). Map by the author; protected areas extracted from World Database on Protected Areas.[12]

The national park system overlaps considerably with both the Franja Transversal del Norte and with Q'eqchi' territory (Figure 3.2). This is no coincidence—similar actors (particularly USAID) saw potential in the sparsely populated sub-tropical forest, although the colonization project used opposite mechanisms of the conservation project (deforestation versus reforestation). In this way, development agencies funded the creation of the biodiversity crisis they now seek to combat. For their part, rural Q'eqchi's have long treated the lowlands as a region of refuge (Aguirre Beltrán 1979), although they were seen as beneficiaries of the colonization project and a hindrance to the conservation project.

Establishing ethnic territories—as I have done in the map above—is an act fraught with political problems. Due to difficulties of social movements during the civil war, Guatemala's Pan-Maya movement emerged as people identified ethnically on the basis of linguistic groups (Chapter 5). Instead of ethnicities, and never races, Maya

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[12] The WDPA is a joint product of IUCN and UNEP prepared by UNEP-WCMC and the IUCN-WCPA working with Governments, the Secretariats of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, collaborating Non-Government Organizations and individuals. For further information go to www.wdpa.org or contact: protectedareas@unep-wcmc.org.

peoples are referred to as ethnolinguistic groups and this is how they are mapped. The act of mapping Mayas, however, bleeds into Ladino concerns that calls for Maya autonomy or the reshaping of Guatemalan governance to better match ethno-linguistic populations (e.g., Cojtí Cuxil 1994) are tantamount to separatism. Of all Maya peoples, the Q'eqchi' have both the highest proportion of monolingualism and territorial expansion. While Figure 3.2 shows Q'eqchi's covering most of the Franja and all of Petén based on my consultation with the Guatemalan Mayan Language Academy in 2009, other groups vociferously object to mapping the expansion of Q'eqchi' territory as fact, arguing that instead maps should reflect only their Alta Verapaz homelands. Guatemala's national bilingual education program (*Programa Nacional de Educación Bilingüe*, PRONEBI), maps a small Itzá territory around the lake and maps the northern half of Petén as mixed "Spanish and Q'eqchi'," with a disclaimer at the bottom that the map shows only where languages are spoken and is not of ethnic territories. The fight to freeze Q'eqchi' territory to its pre-Hispanic location is simultaneously to delegitimize Q'eqchi' land ownership claims in the lowlands.

From Subversive Jungle to Political Forest

Counterinsurgency Erased Labor from Working Landscapes

In Chapter 2, I described the military's counterinsurgency as a project of racialized territorialization. For this project, military representations of space (Lefebvre 2007) relied on the strict separation between nature and agriculture. The military attempted to create a no-man's land as a way to separate jungle and village: here, the military systematically burned people, villages, crops and livestock, attempting to erase dispersed Q'eqchi' villages based on swidden agriculture in favor of a new abstract space available for resource extraction, new settlements and permanent agriculture. While the fate of the no-man's-land depended greatly on local contexts, the military's counterinsurgency as spatial practice (Lefebvre 2007) had important effects on the landscape.

I argue that contemporary conservation practice still favors a separation between nature and agriculture (Tsing 2005; Ybarra 2010b; Peluso and Vandergeest forthcoming), which in northern Guatemala is only possible due to the work of counterinsurgency. Whereas lowlands communities used to be dispersed, fears of the army and guerrillas alike contributed to widespread choices to centralize village homes.[13] Meanwhile, the military's scorched earth campaign effectively halted colonization in many places, preserving the jungle. Of approximately one million people who were displaced in Guatemala, many were not able to subsequently reclaim rights to land they possessed (Manz 1988, 1992). Of refugees who left the country and later returned, between one-third and two-thirds were unable to reclaim their land immediately (Hanlon 1997; Worby 2001).

While development planners' early representations of space failed to envision conservation, the spatial practice of counterinsurgency nonetheless created a political forest. Peluso and Vandergeest's (2001: 800) conception of a political forest is a "fictitious construct based loosely on the foreign categorical notion of natural biological forests." Counterinsurgency practice in Guatemala contributed significantly to the transformation

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[13] Most of these communities still practice swidden agriculture, so they have created significant commutes for themselves in this new territorial order.

of the northern lowlands from subversive jungle to political forest. As with Peluso and Vandergeest's formulation, this designation of forest was less about actual land use and cover than the political agreement of groups in power that this land *should* be forested.

Recent work building on the political forest has emphasized the discursive move from "jungle" to "forest" with their attendant imaginaries (Peluso and Vandergeest forthcoming), but in Guatemala's Maya Forest, these two terms sit uncomfortably together. In English, and particularly in work funded by Conservation International (CI), and USAID this region is known as the Maya Forest, ever since CI coined the name in the 1990s. In Spanish, on the other hand, it is known as the Maya Jungle (*Selva Maya*)—urban Guatemalans and the army still imagine the jungle as a wild place fraught with peril, and the people who live there as savages (Marginality, Trusteeship, Improvement, below). In national and local understandings of the Maya Jungle, it still needs to be tamed; where counterinsurgency was once an imperative, now savages must be tamed through the "war on drugs" and improved through development, and the land (inadequate for farming) must be conserved as a tourist attraction.

Coercing Conservation

From my fieldnotes:

> I head over to the Project office only to discover that Alex, who was supposed to give me a ride to visit leaders from Quixpur, the other community that farms in the park, is too busy threatening people in Sepac who are late on their land payments that they'll lose their land if they don't pay up. (A favorite threat is, "If we don't make the payments, they'll give the land to the park invaders.") … The Project director was pretty careful in telling me that these guys could take me hostage when I interview them. It's possible that he was trying to scare me off--this community has some pretty solid historical rights that the Park and the Project have trampled on, lying to them in the process, and the guys at Quixpur have signed copies of agreements that they would be adjudicated their land and it would be excluded from the Park when it was measured in 2000/1 (the Park broke its word because a park guard denounced the agreement as a crime in the capital, which led to massive political backlash). Project director also questioned me closely about why I wanted to talk to these guys, since they live on the other side of the park from Sepac. Per his advice, I sent a letter to these guys suggesting a meeting place that they don't have keys to [so they couldn't lock me inside the building, as they did to the park director in 2005].

> Meh, I thought. This probably isn't going to work out, but if you don't try things for due diligence at least, you don't try much in Guatemala. So, I hustle up a ride and we head over to the community, arriving only an hour late. The association building is empty. I walk away from the Project employee, standing by the fence trying to look as *gringa* [foreign, harmless, naïve] as possible. A guy ambles up. Hey, I say (in Q'eqchi'), you wouldn't happen to be a Quixpur leader, would you? He glances sideways and says, I got your letter. I go through the spiel of who I am, tell him I just want to hear their story about their experiences with the park and the roundtable negotiations. He doesn't want to talk alone. He says he'll see if he can't round up some folks to talk with me. I go back to hanging out for 10, 20, 30 minutes, assuring the Project driver that in just a few minutes we can leave.

> 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 guys materialize. With paperwork. They were actually really sweet, and their confusion and frustration over how and why they lost their land was poignant. For my part, I may have stirred up some trouble. We talked about ILO 169, land rights, where they could find a better lawyer, and why I thought they'd have a tough time

keeping their land inside the park. They were just happy to have someone talk to them. The idea of these guys taking me hostage was totally laughable, but let's just say I'd never patrol their land with park guards either… We pull out maps, we talk about legal measurements. They get the gossip from me on what's up with the three park communities from Sepac ["invaders," Chapter 7], becoming quickly annoyed that those "invaders" are getting "attention" and they're not.

My brief meeting with representatives from Quixpur, a community that lost its historical land rights, illustrates the relationship between violence and the political forest. First, both employees of a sustainable development NGO and park employees tried to convince me that I should not visit Quixpur, portraying the community as desperate people willing to do anything—including take *gringas* hostage—in order to assert their land rights. Second, and equally importantly, the local mayor of Quixpur was anxious and unsure of whether to meet with me. Whereas people affiliated with the park stressed the violence this community might be willing to perpetrate, community leaders were acutely aware of their own vulnerabilities to violence, particularly in terms of warrants issued for their arrest.

While the story of Quixpur's plight is paradigmatic, it is by no means unique. When the land titling agency (INTA) first contemplated a park in the 1970s, it encountered several existing communities, including Quixpur, a dispersed community comprised of Q'eqchi' homesteaders who practiced swidden agriculture, but also had cardamom plants and cattle pastures. Military officials and foresters arrived at their homes and told them they had to move outside the park's boundaries. When I asked how they explained the park, Quixpur leaders said they were told, "this is a place for animals, not people."[14] During the civil war, communities challenged military officials only at risk of great personal harm. So, the community of Quixpur moved and re-established itself, paying INTA 10% of the price of the land and INTA issued them a provisional land title. During the early 1980s, military officials told residents of Quixpur that they would have to take up residence in a neighboring village in order to prove that they were not "subversives." Residents did so, but many continued to harvest cardamom—all considered themselves owners of the land they made payments on, and many even have receipts of tax payments.[15] At the end of the 1980s, a military cartographer came through. They remember that he promised Quixpur that their land would be outside the park, but instead he mapped their lands inside the expanded park boundaries.

While the park system recognizes Quixpur's historical legal rights to the land, it asserts the primacy of its claim over former residents. In an interview, a CONAP representative denied that the agency owes Quixpur compensation. Quixpur's experiences with the nascent, then expanding, park have always been marked by coercion—all interactions with military officials during the civil war inherently carry this possibility. By the mid-1980s, however, counterinsurgency territorializations began to nominally change and the army encouraged many communities to return to their homes (this coincides with its creation of development poles, Chapters 6 and 7). When the residents of Quixpur attempted to return home, however, they discovered their

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[14] It seems that the literal translation into Q'eqchi' of protected area (*k'olb'il na'aej*) was not widely used at least until the 1990s. When many Q'eqchi's were displaced for parks, they were told that the land was being saved for animals.

[15] I have found this to be rare in rural Guatemala.

interpellated identities had shifted from potential "subversives" (Suspect Maya) to "park invaders."

Conservation and development professionals posit this problem as one of marginality rooted in poverty, but Quixpur leaders see it as an injustice rooted in civil war counterinsurgency. They asserted that the only reason the army was able to push them off their land in the first place was because they are Q'eqchi', and specifically because they could not speak or read Spanish—they could not assert their rights. Nonetheless, they insisted that this dispossession was supposed to be temporary, only becoming permanent when the military and conservation BINGOs expanded the park. Now, even though some of them can read and write Spanish, they cannot get their land back because they are powerless in comparison to other actors that claim their land.

Park officials, often in tandem with the military, utilize some of the same scorched earth tactics from counterinsurgency. In particular, they repeatedly burn down cardamom plants, swiddens (both active plots used for maize, bean, and other food crops and fallows), cattle pastures, and any homes Quixpur residents attempted to rebuild. During the civil war, the military repressed people living in these lands because it was guerrilla territory, as though the jungle itself was subversive. By the end of the war, the military (and park officials) repress people because they are harming the political forest. In response, Quixpur residents have taken park officials hostage, burned down a building designed to house ecotourism activities, and stated that they will only abandon their land when the park officials murder them.[16] It is poignant that, based on their experience, they never threaten anyone else with death but rather assume that they will become murder victims.

Quixpur's experience is representative of some of the conflicts between local communities and nascent parks. When the park system was created, CONAP's "approach was to impose and enforce the law" as it saw fit, which did not include educating the affected population about what kind of rights they might have under new conservation and protected areas laws (Sundberg 2003: 725). In fact, CONAP officials viewed the military as an ideal support agency because it is "respected" (Sundberg 2003: 726). While this statement seems inflammatory given the Guatemalan military's poor international reputation with regards to human rights, park guards and conservation professionals refer to "respect" as a way of signaling that the military is the only agency that can effectively police the borders. In the context of the civil war, I suggest that displaced communities did not regard the law's "imposition" as legally sanctioned, but as part of a longer history of injustices, in which powerful people used an armed military to perpetrate whatever actions they wanted without regard to justice. Whether for counterinsurgency or conservation, their experience of dispossession is the same.

(Re)constructing the State through Conservation

Although Peluso (1993) asserts that international conservation agreements assume the nation-state's sovereignty over its territorial boundaries, the case of Guatemala reveals how these kinds of agreements can actually constitute of the nation-state in two ways. First, Guatemala was transitioning to democracy—after forty years of militarized government, the state's legitimacy could not be taken for granted, but had to

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[16] These types of statements are familiar throughout conservation conflicts in Guatemala; I have heard statements or threats (against park guards) in this vein in Uspantán, El Quiché; Cobán and Chisec, Alta Verapaz; and southern Petén.

be purposively created through political processes (e.g. Peace Accords, Truth Commissions) and development projects (political education of citizens, ensuring the "rule of law"), including those that created a park system and marshaled development monies to support it. Second, the nation-state's territorial claims for conservation did not have a significant historical basis—the park system in Guatemala is only twenty years old.[17]

As practiced in Latin America, conservation is predicated on either buying nature from the state or reproducing the federal government as the arbiter of property. While Harvey (2007) shows that neoliberalism is less an attempt to revitalize capital accumulation than a class project, I suggest that neoliberal conservation as practiced in Guatemala seeks to maintain a historical group in power on the basis of race (class plays a role, but racialized identities are privileged).[18] International conservation NGOs rely on a legitimizing nation-state, which in turn uses sustainable development projects to reproduce racialized social hierarchies and authorize violent exclusions. I am not arguing that international conservation NGOs intend to reproduce social hierarchies, but their alliance with regional and national elites to implement conservation projects means that these are wielded to reproduce racialized privilege.

Parks as a Hub for Post-war Violence

Most of the violence I have described thus far is related directly to displacement, but coercion and embodied violence remain an important facet of Guatemalan conservation today. In the 1980s, the US transitioned from providing military aid on the basis of counterinsurgency to the "war on drugs." After US Congress prohibited counterinsurgency funding to Guatemala because of human rights abuses, the "war on drugs" became an acceptable way for US interests to fund the same institution for a nominally different purpose. The maps, planes, bombs, and other assistance the US provides all work with the same institution—the army—and often on the same territories, although nominally for a different purpose.[19] On the Guatemalan borderlands with Mexico, however, the transition from counterinsurgency to the "war on drugs" felt particularly subtle.

Park boundaries are also not subject to a single moment of enclosure, but must be regularly policed if they are to continue to exist. Many parks in Latin America and Africa have been recognized as havens for guerilla movements, migrants and drug traffickers (Price 2003; West et al. 2006). Much of Guatemala's Maya Forest was earlier a haven for guerrilla movements, and now receives significant traffic from migrants headed to Mexico or the US, as well as homesteaders and drug traffickers. Most of the people I have interviewed who have homesteaded in parks in Alta Verapaz or Petén did so after being displaced. Some groups were physically displaced during the civil war or

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[17] By contrast, Peluso and Vandergeest's (2001) work dates state claims to a political forest to the colonial era.

[18] Other works on Guatemala make more general claims to the reproduction of racial hierarchies in general (Casaús Arzú 1992), as well as in relation to neoliberalism (Hale 2004, 2006). I am not aware of any that does so in the conservation context.

[19] Most of what I know about US assistance for the "war on drugs" and the extent to which it includes parks is from off-the-record conversations I had with US military and Drug Enforcement Agency officials from 2003 to 2005. The CIRMA Archives have reports regarding the environmental degradation caused by military campaigns against drug crops dating to the mid-1980s.

creation of protected areas; others were economically displaced when they could not afford to pay for the parcels they farmed in land titling projects.

Some homesteaders have tenuous relationships with drug traffickers and/or cattle ranchers. Large-scale cattle ranches follow in the wake of land clearing by small-scale farmers (Jones 1990; Nations 2006). This pattern is repeated in park invasions, and in some cases homesteaders who invade parks enter into patronage agreements with absentee "landowners." These "owners" (*finqueros*) assert territorial control over land inside parks, in some cases even gaining state titles to these lands (which is illegal),[20] and agree to protect homesteaders in exchange for their acting as informal caretakers.

During my 2006 fieldwork, this information was publicly acknowledged in a series of *Prensa Libre* newspaper articles on the phenomenon they called "*narcofincas,*" which translates to the ranches or plantations owned by *narcos*, drug traffickers. The newspaper articles covered the role of lands cleared (for supposed use as cattle ranches) in order to crash-land planes carrying drugs on landing strips inside parks. In 2009, police raided a plantation close to one of my fieldwork sites. I was bemused to read in international newspapers that the rumors I heard repeatedly when I lived there were proven true—at one *narcofinca*, a Mexican drug trafficking gang trained young men with military experience how to traffic drugs, take hostages, and assassinate people. The point is that drug plantations are predominantly located in or around parks, both because the parks are located in borderlands and because they tend to have relatively low-density populations. The corresponding drug traffickers escalate levels of violence in their need to protect valuable drugs.

Thus, while park and army officials regularly police and/or perpetrate violence on park invaders, this violence is differentiated. Park officials police poor people who farm on the land, but they rarely interfere with drug trafficking. Park officials would like to stop drug traffickers, as in some cases they suspect that drug traffickers are the same people who used to illegally take high-value timber from parks.[21] For their part, local people often asserted that the same people who are now drug traffickers used to engage in illegal resource extraction, and before that they were military officers and commissioners who abused their positions during the civil war to steal people's horses and cardamom crops. While parks prevent communities like Quixpur from reclaiming their land, they seem powerless against drug traffickers.

Mapping the Ownership Society

In lieu of agrarian reform, post-war Guatemala has been transformed into an ownership society. Instead of adjudicating messy social justice claims, the Peace Accords have been implemented through the mapping, titling and registering of supposedly pre-existing claims. In this vision, poor people should get title to the assets they already own ("dead" or "hidden" capital) and use them as collateral for entrepreneurial investments

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[20] The exact mechanisms for land titling in these cases are opaque, but newspaper articles implied a combination of fear and bribery. Less than a year later, a number of Property Register employees were arrested as part of a bribery/extortion conspiracy. It may be the very lack of transparency that gives these kinds of actions such power—everyone knows that the law bends for powerful people, but nobody is exactly sure how.

[21] One reason why park officials do not arrest drug traffickers is because they often patrol without guns or do not have adequate support to dominate drug traffickers in a confrontation.

(de Soto 2000). In other words, they are responsible for buying into the ownership society. I discuss the expectations of this vision and its implications for indigenous genocide survivors in Chapter 4. In this chapter, I want to emphasize that the creation, demarcation, and development of Guatemala's protected areas is also built from the same neoliberal foundation. A basic assumption of neoliberal conservation is that poor people have high discount rates, meaning that they are more likely to sacrifice future benefits in order to realize a profit today. Given that international conservationists are willing to pay top dollar to have a tropics in which to biologize and recreate (Janzen 1986), neoliberal conservation economically justifies dispossessing poor people, since the value of their consumption of non-renewable resources is rarely equal to the willingness to pay of a bird-watching *gring@*.

Neoliberalism Articulates with Sedimented Histories

Neoliberalism (or neoliberal capitalism) is not a universalizing or totalizing force (Gibson-Graham 2006; Sparke 2008); as such, it manifests differently depending on particular social and historical contexts. In post-war Guatemala, green neoliberalism manifests through BINGOs that "buy nature to save it" (McAfee 1999) and World Bank sponsored cadastral mapping and land titling projects. The prime mover behind this territorialization that seeks to fix nature in parks and agriculture in private property are not the Guatemalan nation-state, but an international alliance including the World Bank, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and NGOs including Conservation International, Mercy Corps and CARE. Conservation International has played a key role, beginning with the invention of the Maya Forest, in this territorial intervention. This is particularly important because Conservation International became an independent NGO out of a disagreement with World Wildlife Fund's move towards community-based conservation, favoring instead conservation based on "science," naming transboundary forests and popularizing concepts like biodiversity hotspots to justify the organization's new mandate (Brockington et al. 2008: 164).

Like McCarthy and Prudham (2004), my concern is less with analyzing the impulse to use nature wisely than to examine how neoliberal conservation legitimates a particular kind of social order. Whereas liberalism was the accompanying ideology to the industrial revolution, neoliberalism has become the discourse through which property is widely reconfigured to "free" up nature, facilitating accumulation by dispossession (Harvey 2003). These neoliberal projects are predicated on buying nature from the state, often reproducing a weak national government as the arbiter of property. As I describe below, neoliberal conservation projects then offer land titling projects that seek to responsibilize poor homesteaders for their own development, encouraging them to take out loans on their land to "modernize" their farming practices, instead of disputing the parks' land claims.

This case of coercing conservation (Peluso 1993) is not just an international project. Although international organizations wield a hefty upper hand in power relations with Guatemalan agencies, they may have the same experience as US state officials did with increasingly bloody Guatemalan military dictators. LaFeber (1993: 260) notes that while US officials originally thought they controlled the militarized state, they later hesitated to cut off aid "much as one hesitates to stop feeding a pet boa constrictor." So, my research seeks to explain why national elites and power brokers cooperate in land titling and conservation projects. More importantly, I show how their participation in these projects ineluctably transforms them.

Peace Accords and Land Titling

At the same time as an international coalition attempted to fix nature in parks, the international development community began to think about ways to fix landed property in an ownership society. Like lowlands colonization in the 1960s, titling of private land was presented as an alternative in response to broader calls for agrarian reform. Post-war territorialization of parks and private lands legally emerged through peace accords negotiations that officially ended the civil war (1994—1996). On a broader level, the international development community transmogrified calls for agrarian reform into a series of programs designed to promote land ownership amongst the rural poor while reinforcing capitalist democracies. These strategies include elimination of subsidies to scale, progressive land taxation, modernization of land registration systems, systematic land titling, mortgage banks and land banks (Shearer et al. 1991; Carter and Mesbah 1993).[22] The international conservation community spearheaded early land titling efforts in Petén because of beliefs that this would "stabilize the agricultural frontier" and keep landless farmers from "invading" the forest (Grünberg 2000; Gould 2006).

The strategy the World Bank uses to implement technical land administration projects is called market-based reform, which is based on a "willing buyer-willing seller principle, avoiding conflict and improving suitability because beneficiaries choose and negotiate desired land" (World Bank 1998a: 8). The existence of a willing buyer and willing seller does not change power dynamics in favor of the poor, which is why the rural poor are offered subsidized loans to purchase land, usually through a state-operated land bank. Recently, many systems have been implemented using a two-pronged approach, including both a land fund (market-based land reform, or giving poor people loans to buy private land) and land administration (modernization of land registration systems and land titling) programs. Improving titling systems concurrently with reforms is purported to increase "tenure security," create loan collateral for smallholders, and lower transaction costs in land sales (World Bank 1998a, 1998b; Deininger 2003). This language—and, as such, the mandate for a land fund and a land administration project—was written into Guatemala's Peace Accords. While a number of the Accords addressed land tenure, the language of a willing seller-willing buyer appears as the mechanism to achieve social justice and peace.

Important political tasks identified in the Socio-Economic Accord and the World Bank's (1998a, 1998b) proposals—including settlement of long-standing land conflicts and implementation of a progressive land tax—have been abandoned, but the tasks of establishing a cadastral-based land registry and land titling continue apace. Guatemala has taken on significant debt to receive land administration projects from the World Bank and the UNDP. While the land bank functions of the Land Fund (*Fondo de Tierras— FONTIERRAS)* have largely failed (Garoz and Gauster 2002), the cadastral project is expanding (World Bank 2005). The first phase of the cadastral mapping and registry project was in Petén, and in 2009 World Bank is preparing to expand the project south and west across the nation, beginning in the Franja. As they are implemented, these projects may well serve to formalize, even exacerbate, existing inequities (Gauster and Isakson 2007; Ybarra 2009).

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[22] Measures that would ameliorate inequities, particularly progressive land taxes and eliminating subsidies that favor economies of scale, are rarely politically feasible to implement (Deininger 2003).

The Longer View

Land titling as a solution to avoid agrarian reform has a national history in addition to the World Bank's formulation of market-based land reform. In Guatemala, the 1980s strategy of development poles was tied to emergent ideas that later became known as market-based land reform. Ríos Montt, the influential military dictator, solicited ideas for strategies that he could implement *concurrently with* scorched earth and pacification strategies (Chapter 2). At his request, USAID presented Ríos Montt with a report in 1983 that suggested a strategy of commercial land markets, colonization, and worker-owner corporations (Padilla 1990).

While his dictatorship was relatively brief, both sets of military strategies— scorched earth and land markets—continued through the 1980s. Through the Penny Foundation, USAID funded a land bank with the goal of making loans to peasants for land purchases.[23] As described in Chapter 2, colonization projects continued during counterinsurgency. This sometimes involved settling sanctioned Maya onto scorched earth as a way of erasing claims of massacre survivors. A few worker-owner corporations were attempted on plantations with worker conflicts, but owners did not share landholdings with workers (Padilla 1990). Finally, development professionals agreed that systematic cadastral mapping would have to wait until counterinsurgency campaigns ended, but they actively promoted INTA's land titling work. As for the progressive politics that might underpin market-based land reform, the army's assessment seems apt: "We should not confuse [land titling] with Agrarian Reform or something similar" (Ejército de Guatemala 1986: 129, translation mine).

Sparke (2006) cautions that we have a critical responsibility to resist the pathologization of place by describing the global processes of dispossession that account for local efforts at repossession. At the same time, rather than simply point to an international history of market-based land reform, I argue that we must understand sedimented civil war histories that imbue rules for land mapping and titling as the framework for an ownership society with deeper meanings based on histories of racialized territorialization and accumulation through dispossession. Here, I suggest that the political forest is racialized, and that racism plays an important role in Q'eqchi' struggles for repossession of place and territory.

Making the Maya Forest: This Park is my Land, this Land is your Park?

When I returned to Guatemala as a researcher on a human rights fellowship in 2006, I wanted my research subjects help me frame a research question that simultaneously supports a social justice agenda. I attended a barbeque at the Committee for Peasant Unity (*Comité de Unidad Campesina*—CUC) headquarters, where I found myself earnestly explaining my interest in exploring the relationship between conservation projects and the Peace Accord on the agrarian situation. A woman leaned over to her friend and shouted over the din of music and chatter, "Oh, just another *gringa* here to study parks." Stung, I asked her what she thought I should study. The two peasant organizers lectured me that there was already too much research on parks and advised me to look at struggles for land that occur outside parks. While I dutifully set off to explore the relationship between violence and land titling (Ybarra 2009), that view

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[23] This is the primary precedent to the state-run FONTIERRAS. It is telling that project participants were unable to pay back the loans to buy their land.

was short-sighted. In fieldwork where I attempted to exclude the overstudied park issue, I found myself repeatedly confronting the relationship between struggles for land inside and outside of protected areas.

Parks and land titling are two interlocked elements of the post-war territorialization, which seeks to fix nature in parks and intensive (not swidden) farming in bounded and measured polygonal plots (suited to the capabilities of cadastral mapping, rather than local ecological conditions) where all ownership rights accrue to one person. Given that both emerged from the peace negotiations to end the war, this is not a state territorialization (Vandergeest and Peluso 1995), but a para-state territorialization, where a coalition comprised of the World Bank, the UNDP, Guatemalan state agencies (CONAP and FONTIERRAS), Conservation International, and others work together to realize this representation of space (Lefebvre 2007). While they disagree on important points, all these groups are committed to an agenda of conservation in parks and agricultural development on individualized plots of land.

Whereas the international histories of conservation and agrarian development are different, they come together in the World Bank's work to discover the price of nature (as land), define and enforce property rights, and foment markets (McAfee 1999). This language of "defining and enforcing property rights" reveals a particular viewpoint, one that privileges legibility of property relations for a centralized state and international organizations (Scott 1998).[24] Just because previously existing property relations were not legible to the state does not mean that they did not exist or were undefined. Park creation and privatized land titling in this sense do not simply "define" rights, but often constitute enclosures, restricting poor people's access to natural resources in favor of assigning all property rights to a single owner. This is particularly true of national parks, where vast tracts of land are inscribed in the Property Register in the name of the park system (CONAP), although many poor Q'eqchi's assert that "they [the government] sold the land to the *gringos.*"

Agrawal and Gibson (1999) lay out a common understanding of international conservation's history: early conservation assumptions were that if local communities had managed resources wisely in the past,[25] they are now managing resources unsustainably, thereby necessitating intervention. While many of these ideas still exist, by the 1990s, communities had become the locus of conservationist thinking. The fact that these two valences of conservation ideology were at work simultaneously in Guatemala as it created its park system points to a possibility that Agrawal and Gibson's narrative does not explicitly acknowledge. In Guatemala, community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) is predicated on the existence of fortress conservation (Brockington 2002). By this, I mean that CBNRM would not obtain project funding if it was not seen as supporting the all-important core zones of conservation from which human activities are excluded.

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[24] A book on conservation of the Maya Forest describes the problem as a "lack of land tenure" (Primack et al. 1998: 16), by which they seem to be signaling more correctly a lack of formal property rights established, recognized and organized through national governments.

[25] In the Guatemalan case, it often seems that international researchers seek to find and valorize "ecologically noble savages" (Redford 1991; Hames 2007), whereas Ladino-dominated national NGOs tend to assume that local communities do not know how to properly manage natural resources.

In northern Guatemala, as in many other poor countries, fortress conservation is part of a typology of protected areas, each of which has different allowed land uses. In the Franja, many communities participate in CBNRM for the promise of state-recognized land ownership, trading their participation in conservation projects for land titles. As with market-based land reform, an assumption behind conservation projects is a particular kind of economic rationality, one that assumes local communities will only become good natural resource stewards when they have proper economic incentives. The problem with this assumption is two-fold: first, we cannot assume a unitary community that participates in conservation projects (Agrawal and Gibson 1999); and second, we cannot universally ascribe an individualist economic rationality to landed property regimes.[26]

CBNRM and other sustainable development projects are occasionally presented as win-win-win-win-win-win-win (Grandia 2007), but have never been understood as such in communities I have worked with. During my work as a Peace Corps Volunteer (2003—2005) and in fieldwork (parts of 2006, 2007 and 2008), I witnessed people react extremely negatively when presented with conservation "opportunities." In many cases, they would either threaten or actually take the prime mover (usually a CONAP representative) hostage to attempt to prevent conservation's encroachment on their lands. It should be very difficult to dismiss this desperate reaction as "ignorance" (e.g., if they fully understood how CBNRM would benefit them, they would welcome it), because these kinds of reactions are becoming more common as conservation projects have an increasing presence in Guatemala, not less common.

Fortress Conservation

When the Guatemalan park system was created in 1989, it established over 180 protected areas at once, most of which did not previously enjoy protected status. Those parks located along the borderlands with Mexico (in Ixcán, Sayaxché, La Libertad) are the ones that tend to be most differentially porous. Park guards cannot influence the regular movement of drug traffickers and other people who illegally extract natural resources, but they regularly evict poor, squatting farmers. With the notable exception of parks that entailed major evictions in order to capitalize on potential tourist sites, the park system tended to be created in and around areas that seemed to meet a general set of criteria: relatively low-density human populations and designation as part of the "Maya Forest."

To the extent that poor people were already farming in the Maya Forest, much of their activities were highly restricted during counterinsurgency campaigns. When the campaigns ended, however, they found that the military and international conservationists alike had discursively reshaped their farmland as degraded tropical forest.[27] Instead of homesteading peasants, many families became landless peasants whose efforts to repossess their land are now described as "park invasions." I highlight

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[26] Q'eqchi' Maya culture and its spiritual relationship to the land as exemplified by the *tzuultaq'a* comes to mind as a counterexample (Chapters 4 and 5), as well as the culture of Ladino landowners whose cattle ranching is often more important in terms of social status than profit-making (Chapter 8). The latter was a major problem in development interventions to creating a willing buyer-willing seller land market in Guatemala because largeholders seemingly inexplicably refused to sell land, or offered it only at extremely inflated prices.

[27] Materially, massive park creation triggered a simple productive squeeze on available non-park lands.

poor people in my description of whose land became enclosed because rich and politically powerful people have a relatively large degree of latitude in changing the shape and land use of parks. In Lake Raxhá (Chapter 7), wealthy factions of some communities were able to move park boundaries while others were not. In the Candelaria Caves National Park, a number of cattle ranchers found that their land was declared a park, but categorically rejected any attempts to change their land use, which the Ministry of Culture accepted without challenge (Chapter 5).

Whereas land-titling projects close to core protected areas are often hailed as CBNRM successes, it is in the inequitable climate of park creation that they serve to fix—if not exacerbate—inequalities. Development agencies that run land titling projects point to their success in terms of helping local communities attain legal ownership and participation in forestry projects. In my fieldwork, however, I was struck by the fact that, in "success story" communities, usually no more than half of resident families had their names on land titles; where land was individually titled, the proportion was even smaller.[28] Only those families who attain legal title to land may participate in agroforestry projects and receive attendant income streams. While this is in some cases a major boon to participants, non-landowning families find that it is increasingly difficult to rent land, estimating that the cost of renting land went up by 40% on average over the span of five years (as owners gained legal title and access to agricultural projects); moreover, many observed that neighbors participating in projects no longer let them "borrow" land,[29] such that they were becoming increasingly reliant on family connections.

Community-Based Natural Resource Management (CBNRM)

Rural communities that gain legal title via CBNRM agreements also have equity issues, although these tend to manifest in different ways.[30] In contrast to land titling projects outside protected areas, CBNRM agreements tend to favor land titles that are granted at the community level (not individual level), thereby making land development and commodification significantly more difficult. For the most part, FONTIERRAS will only award land titles for those communities that had a file pending with INTA previous to the protected area's declaration; equally important, FONTIERRAS will only award title based on INTA's previous assessment of political boundaries (not the community's historical claims or current land use). In many cases, this means that plots of land that are furthest from the community center may be lost to a (re)constituted forest reserve. Most community leaders do not reallocate plots, but leave those community members landless.

While communities nominally agree to specifically territorialized land uses and conservation practices, I have found that this is not necessarily onerous. Most

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[28] I attended a number of land titling ceremonies and received land payment data for one community close to Laguna Raxhá Park. Although I asked Project employees for access to this information in the entire region surrounding the park, they refused to give it to me.

[29] In Q'eqchi', "borrowing" land includes use of land both with and without monetary or labor payments. Neighbors without familial ties tend to exact some form of payment; family members may ask for some form of payment, depending on their relationship and perceived opportunity cost.

[30] This section focuses on CBNRM projects that are related to land titling, particularly in protected areas buffer zones in the Franja. As such, it is not applicable to community forestry concessions in Petén. I thank Norman Schwartz for this clarification.

community members appear not to honor these agreements, except when they correlate with their normal spatial practice or provide income streams. Q'eqchi' communities that do conform to new land management regulations must cease hunting, although game has historically been an important component of their diets (Wilk 1997); and in many cases, they must cease practicing swidden agriculture (Chapter 4). While they often gain the opportunity to participate in development projects, Q'eqchi' communities that participate in CBNRM must submit to surveillance and educational interventions on a fairly regular basis as basic conditions for those projects.

As shown above, local people's ability to repossess their lands is shaped in important ways by conservation territorializations with attendant sanctioned land uses. In this era of neoliberal land titling, people's ability to repossess their lands is also tied to their historical marginalization during counterinsurgency campaigns and how that has been reworked in conservation discourses. While in later chapters (4-7) I focus on how people speak and act in the politics of post-war land ownership, I sketch some of the conservation sector's subjectifications below.

Marginality, Trusteeship, Improvement

From my fieldnotes:

> Yet another *choque* [conflict] in a conversation I had with people who work on development projects for communities bordering the park:
>
> Him (standing in front of a map, gesturing to me behind a desk in the park's administration office): So, the park extends all this way to the south, huh?
>
> Me (oversharing): You see this box here? That's where the park was when it was declared in 1975, although not inscribed in the Property Register. This part here, to the south, they added in 1991 without legal backing, which is why they have so many problems there with the communities that they're trying to evict as invaders.
>
> Him: Well, sure, but think about how those people were living. They didn't have real villages, just a few small huts (*ranchos*) here and there, not even real houses, no water, no electricity. They were living like savages, really.
>
> Me (challenging): I think that's exactly why people say they don't have any right to the land they live on, and they call it "empty." But just because they're poor shouldn't mean they don't have any rights, should it?
>
> Him: I guess calling them savage is racist, huh?
>
> Me: (no response, because this must be a rhetorical question, right?)
>
> Him: (after a pause) Well, anyway, it's hard to say they own anything, because they just cut down the forest and plant in different places every year.
>
> Me: …I'm not sure I think it's fair to say they don't have rights to the land because they don't farm like highlanders. You know, if they used the same agricultural intensification practices as the K'iche' do in Toto[nicapan], the land would be used up (*agotada*) in just a few years. That's why they rotate their fields, because the soil is so thin.
>
> Him: Yeah, they should never have been here anyway. This whole area (gestures to park annex on map) should always have been a park, because the land isn't apt for farming.
>
> Me: It's certainly not apt for high-density populations.
>
> Him: Yeah, they should stop having so many children.
>
> Me: It's probably more helpful to provide birth control and development alternatives than to evict people from their homes.
>
> Him: (mumbles social niceties and walks off, clearly disagreeing with me)

Although more explicit than most, the conversation represented above is one that I have had a number of times with people who work in the Ladino-dominated conservation sector. These conversations usually begin with me attempting (with mixed success) to elicit at least tacit acknowledgement of people's prior land use, if not ownership, of protected areas. Acknowledgement is usually followed by the conservation professional's protestations that people had poor infrastructure, inadequate farming practices, and insecure legal tenure, anyway. When I push these arguments to their logical conclusion, asking why marginality is tantamount to a lack of rights, I have occasionally been accused of being a meddling *gringa*.[31]

Ladino conservation professionals have wondered why *gring@s* interested in conservation don't spend more time telling their fellow Americans how to conserve. On three distinct occasions, I have heard a version of the following statement: we should have killed off all our indigenous people, like you *gring@s* did, then we wouldn't have these problems [poverty, conservation, land pressures] (see also Casaús Arzú 1992). I take these comments seriously because they highlight the thorny issues of conserving previously "marginal" lands inhabited by marginalized people. Moreover, as a corollary to Tsing (1993: 17), Q'eqchi' marginality within the Guatemalan nation cannot be divorced from Guatemalan marginality in reference to the United States. I suggest that the ill-will Ladinos feel toward meddling *gringas* is not unrelated to Conservation International's designation of the Maya Forest and calls to save an international patrimony.

As Guatemala's national conservation organizations have grown (with international money), Ladinos have disproportionately taken on major leadership positions. Beleaguered conservation professionals find themselves defending their actions to meddling *gring@s* who see both conservation and indigenous peoples' rights as international issues (instead of national), as well as national indigenous rights organizations that accuse them of racist practices. In her study of conservation in Petén, Sundberg (2003) categorized excuses for exclusionary practices as follows: the narrow scope of each NGO's work; the poor quality of Guatemalan democracy; and the "cultural traits" of the Maya Biosphere Reserve's inhabitants. Whereas Grandia (2009a) points to the failure of red (Marxist) and green (environmental) alliances in the silences around cattle ranchers as the primary source of environmental degradation, she only outlines these issues in terms of class (conservation professionals own cattle), not race-- even when she cites conservation professionals' statements such as "We don't do *brown* issues. We do *green* issues" (emphasis in original).[32] The boundary work involved in separating brown (marginalized races) issues out of green (conservation) issues reveals the way that protecting nature also purifies a dominant people (not-brown) as a race (Kosek 2004). Racism did not simply arise in a moment of crisis, in Guatemala's scorched earth campaign, but is woven into the biopolitical state—the post-war conservation

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[31] This has important historical precedents, most notably the US CIA's role in the *coup d'etat* of 1954 that triggered the civil war. Although many people are unaware of the US's role, well-educated professionals are more likely to know and reference it.

[32] A variation of this is common on an international level, but it often pits development as poverty alleviation against conservation (for example, the debate sparked by Sanderson and Redford 2003)—the language of poverty points to this as a problem of class, whereas in Guatemala this is framed as one of race ("brown" issues).

agenda reworks acts of racialized dispossession given the urgent need to conserve the Maya Forest and racialized marginalities.

Marginality: Peteneros versus "Invading Maya Cousins"

In 1995, 86% of individuals from 15 conservation NGOs responded that immigrants are responsible for the deterioration of the Maya Biosphere (Soza 1996: 153, in Sundberg 2003). When I read this finding, I place scare-quotes around the word immigrant. The use of terms like Petenero and immigrant in Petén remind me of a situation closer to home. As a teenager in southern California, I was acutely attuned to the stigma associated with the label immigrant, and how that term had much more to do with exclusion (not-belonging) than it does with the actual act of crossing the border or national citizenship status. In southern California, when someone shouts out, "Go back to Mexico!" whether this invective is directed at a person born in Mexico, Guatemala, or the United States is immaterial—the point is that as an "immigrant," they are not welcome. Peteneros and Ladinos use the term immigrant in much the same way— whether or not a person was born in Petén does not determine whether they are classified as an immigrant.

The race- and place-based identities at play in Petén, the hub for most conservation organizations, are the basis on which relational marginalities are produced. First, while Petenero in Spanish should simply mean a person who is from Petén, this identity is much more particular than for other departments[33]—being Petenero implies being the descendant of a group of frontiersmen (women figure little in this history) descended from Spaniards, British pirates and Mexican loggers who lived in Petén prior to the 1950s and had livelihood practices based on sustainable resource extraction of rubber or chicle, as well as extensive farming and cattle ranching (Schwartz 1990). Due to this descendance, Peteneros see themselves as natural conservationists and the rightful owners of Petén (Schwartz 1990; Sundberg 1998). When conservation came to Guatemala, this viewpoint was reproduced in project proposals that stated that "new immigrants bring inappropriate technologies" and "do not have knowledge of the value of the forests" (USAID 1990: 256-257). Both the USAID and World Bank projects managed to sidestep the question that a significant proportion of immigrants who seemed not to value the forest like Peteneros were indigenous peoples, often fleeing genocide.[34]

In direct opposition to the seemingly global phenomenon of upholding ecologically noble savages (Redford 1991), in Petén non-indigenous Peteneros are seen as natural stewards, and they also enjoy disproportionate representation amongst conservation professionals. The extent to which development and conservation professionals recognize the rights of indigenous peoples in Petén is inversely proportional to their population size. While in Petén this is particularly noticeable because the largest population is also the "immigrant" indigenous population, these concerns have been reflected throughout Guatemala since national debates over indigenous rights to territory beginning with the Peace Accords process. In numerous casual (but heated) conversations, Ladino friends have explained to me that Guatemala

[33] As a contrast, being Quichelense does not connote race, ethnicity, or livelihood practices; in my experience, anyone who was born in or lives in Quiché can comfortably claim that title.

[34] In the case of the World Bank (1998a, 1998b), I do not know why the indigenous peoples' safeguard was not triggered, but the World Bank did not consider questions of indigenous peoples in its rural land tenure projects until phase two in the Franja.

cannot recognize indigenous rights to territory because they'd lose the whole country. The "we" that would lose the country must then be Ladino.

The indigenous people with the lowest population in Petén is the Itzá, numbering just under 2,000 people,[35] whose precolonial territory spanned Petén and Yucatán, Mexico;[36] the Itzaes also had a postcolonial stronghold, Tayasal, which did not fall to the Spanish until 1697. Although the Itzá were historically denied a stronger or "time immemorial" status (Sundberg 2003), they have enjoyed a newly elevated status in relation to other indigenous peoples in conservation projects (e.g., Chayax Huex et al. 1998). The next indigenous people with time immemorial rights are the Mopanes, whose precolonial territory probably included Petén and parts of Belize. To the best of my knowledge they are not enjoying the same development aid as the Itzaes, perhaps because they have tended to live with Q'eqchi's.

At the bottom of the indigenous hierarchy are the Q'eqchi', whose precolonial territory was centered in Alta Verapaz and has slowly extended into Petén, for which Nations (2006: 271) dubs them "invading Maya cousins" (in contrast, he describes the Itzaes as conservationists). Moreover, recent development work that valorizes Mopán and Itzá practices contrasts these with Q'eqchi' land use as destructive and points to their inability to adapt to ecological conditions in Petén (e.g., Atran et al. 2002). Since the Franja has not had other indigenous peoples for centuries, Q'eqchi's are the only major indigenous population, all of whom are similarly categorized as "migrants" (Chapter 4). Grandia's (2009b: xxxv, translation mine) defense that Q'eqchi's are not inherently "anti-environmental nomads" is telling—she references the "political, economic and historical factors that have contributed to the erosion of Guatemalan Q'eqchi' natural resource management," without similarly pointing to the political, economic and historical production of conservation practice such that it disproportionately affects marginalized people.

In Guatemala, recognition and nonrecognition tends to correlate with certain peoples, but this is more a question of practice than codification (Vandergeest 2003). Conservation NGOs and scholars recognize and approve of the practices of Peteneros, Itzá, and Mopán, while simultaneously disapproving/excluding practices of the Q'eqchi'. In Petén, the status of Peteneros as good stewards of the land is inviolate. Ladino migrants from the east are often accepted into Petenero society, perhaps both because they are seen as willing to adapt Petenero land practices (Atran et al. 2002; Adams and Bastos 2003) and because the perceptions of them as violent do not encourage exclusion. Q'eqchi's, even in the second and third generation, are seen as immigrants who can never attain Petenero status. As an example of great importance, when I interviewed a CONAP official in 2006, he insisted that only "immigrants" invaded parks. Having just been shown confidential information by another park official, I pointed out that CONAP's own census of groups living inside parks found that the majority were born in Petén. He explained that the invaders may have been born in Petén, but they were not Peteneros.

Trusteeship

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[35] Atran et al. (1993) estimate only a few hundred Itzáes. The 2002 Guatemalan Census recorded 1,983 people.

[36] I am not sure if their movement across the contemporary Guatemala-Mexico border is why Sundberg (2003) refers to them as "migrant agriculturalists;" presumably this relates more to their current agricultural practices.

Relational marginalities serve to (re)produce a population in need of improvement. I follow Li's (2007) insight that contemporary development builds on earlier colonial histories in important ways. Most importantly, international conservation reflects other forms of colonialisms in that both are predicated on guarding natural and cultural patrimonies for populations assumed to need guidance in how to value and preserve them (Stoler 2008: 198). I highlight the continuities in colonialisms to point out that since improvement projects began in the context of constituting social orders by racializing society, ascribed deficiencies to a given population have always been interwoven with racism. As I showed in Chapter 2, the language of improvement travels eerily well between improving the race and improving economic society. Li (2007) posits that development projects designed to reduce the distance between trustees and marginal subjects actually perform boundary work in placing the two on opposite sides of an unbridgeable divide. Her argument is apt for the case of sustainable development in Guatemala's Maya Forest, which exhorts marginal subjects to become members of the ownership society and respect natural patrimonies, but makes sustainable livelihoods structurally impossible.

As an industry, international development must carefully navigate a contradictory position, offering proof of successful development projects on the one hand, and evidence of the dire need to continue funding the industry on the other. The existence of marginal subjects becomes incredibly useful to perform this difficult task. West (2006) points to the fact that people are judged as failures when they do not conform to a project's image of them, which was never true in the first place. I suggest that it is of tantamount importance that conventional wisdom about what it means to be a good subject changes, such that marginal subjects' success in an earlier paradigm (colonization) becomes failure in a new one (conservation).

During colonization projects, entrepreneurial subjects could establish their place in an ownership society by "improving" the land. Sustainable development projects pathologize this same behavior by recoding it as "deforestation." Sundberg (2003) ties the lack of participatory methods to implement Guatemala's park system to people's presumed inability to understand conservation. I suggest this is due to their success at an earlier development imperative—improving and settling land. Rather than seek to understand the context within which people are produced as subjects and work with them as partners, sustainable development projects continue to offer circumscribed opportunities for "participation." When marginal subjects inevitably fail to participate as called for in a given development project (which is enacted within a larger context of constantly changing metrics and expectations), conservation professionals view "participation" as an unwieldy imposition. It is in this context that the trustee's stance slides from "let me help you…let me show you how to do it, *let me do it for you*" (Li 2007: 47).

In conservation and development projects, the reproduction of marginality can become a rationale for racialized dispossession. Marginal communities that fail to organize as unified communities or that do not meet the required CBNRM conditions discover rather quickly that the opportunity to receive land titles in exchange for self-discipline can devolve into coercion—development projects that grant land titles in exchange for conservation behaviors are in a position to take them back. This is particularly true when communities are titled communally (Collective Agrarian Patrimonies—CAPs). Although I never understood this when visiting NGOs and

participating communities, when looking at copies of land titles in FONTIERRAs archives, I saw that land titles clearly state that communities must continue to implement CBNRM in order to maintain their land rights.

Disturbingly, I found some communities who were *not* participants in CBNRM projects had this language written into their land titles and they knew nothing about it (until I asked them). When I asked someone who worked on some of the early land titling/conservation projects in northern Alta Verapaz, he expressed complete bewilderment.[37] Both CBNRM participant communities and non-participant communities had the exact same language written on their land titles and received titles in exchange for a ceremonially small amount of money. My concern is that the latter group received this price as resettled displaced people (in compensation for war-time losses), *not* because they agreed to conservation easements, curtailing hunting activities, etc. In this way, they are now set up to lose their land as failed subjects of a development project to which they never consented or even knew about. These occurrences are not generally representative of CBNRM or development, but the fact that these kinds of failures can happen without a community's consent or knowledge should serve as a stark warning about the context in which land titling projects occur in the Maya Forest.

The Limits to Improvement

I have focused thus far on the relationship between marginality and trusteeship in sustainable development projects because it is poor people, often Q'eqchi' Maya poor people, who are the subjects of these kinds of projects. While this makes sense from a development perspective, it seems incredibly inefficient from a conservation perspective. An important lesson from political ecology is that there may be undue focus on the rural poor in land degradation in comparison with the power of capital as a material force in degradation (Hecht and Cockburn 1989; Watts and Peet 2004). This is certainly the case for Guatemala's Maya Forest, although the development and conservation agencies (GOs and NGOs) I interviewed did not acknowledge this unless I explicitly asked them. Although I have already mentioned above the extent to which large landholders are exempted from conservation's disciplining practices in protected areas, I offer a brief overview of predominant economic activities in this region.

First, land-extensive cattle ranching has predominated as a land use since major colonization efforts in the 1960s. According to Grandia (2009a),[38] land-extensive cattle ranching has led to the destruction of half of Petén's forest cover since the 1960s. Cattle ranching is popular not because it is lucrative,[39] but because it serves other important functions: a way of establishing tenure for land speculation, a visible sign of wealth to garner prestige, and a means of territorial control for illicit activities. Some development professionals in Petén asserted that cattle are not economically viable for most people, and that almost all ranchers are actually drug traffickers (*narcofinqueros* or

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[37] I did not pursue this issue with FONTIERRAS or other state agencies out of concern that it might harm the communities in question.

[38] She does not explain how she came to this conclusion. Sundberg (2004: 47) claims 50% loss of forest cover due to "logging and ranching industries as well as maize farmers." I have not seen any direct comparisons of small-scale farming, plantation agriculture, and extensive cattle-ranching in terms of deforestation or current land use.

[39] One development professional explained the lack of economic viability to me as a joke: In other parts of Central America, men ask each other, How many head of cattle per *caballería*? But in Petén, we ask, How many *caballerías* per head of cattle?

narcoganaderos). This is becoming increasingly true in both Petén and the Franja, particularly as Mexico's "war on drugs" pushes drug gang activity south into the borderlands with Guatemala. As such, even ranchers who want nothing to do with drug trafficking find themselves coerced into either selling their land at artificially low prices or letting drug traffickers use their land.

Second, petroleum companies with interests in the Franja and Petén have been looking for and developing oil wells since at least the 1950s (Solano Ponciano 2005). In terms of territorial expansion, petroleum concessions have been less influential in the Maya Forest, but they do highlight the flexibility of conservation law enforcement for powerful entities. In the Maya Biosphere Reserve, the government granted concessions for petroleum exploration and extraction from 1985-1993 (Ponciano 1998); all concessions granted after the Reserve was created in 1989 were illegal according to the national parks law.[40] I have not seen any studies on the environmental impacts of petroleum extraction and transportation through core areas of the Biosphere, but there are presumably significant negative impacts. Perhaps more importantly, transportation necessitates roads, and deforestation alongside these roads as a way to establish tenure (often for speculation purposes) has been decisive and swift (Sader et al. 1994).

Finally, there are large-scale agricultural plantations in the Maya Forest; of these, African oil palm as an agrofuel has recently undergone the most scrutiny (e.g., Hurtado Paz y Paz 2008). While there were certainly a great deal of land purchases for African oil palm in both Petén and the Franja, I would like to precaution against an unquestioned assumption that these crops will be processed for agrofuels. As an alternative to petroleum, agrofuels prices are subject to major fluctuations; their production is currently only economically viable if petroleum prices rise sharply (and stay high) and/or major subsidies are provided. There are only a few major companies that are buying (or in the case of PADESA in Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, leasing) land for African oil palm, and many were slow to convert land in 2008 as petroleum prices began falling. The company with the longest time producing oil palm in the area, Olmeca, had more than 13,500 hectares in Petén in 2006 (Ybarra 2009) and has since expanded south into Alta Verapaz. It is of note, then, that Olmeca has not yet actually transitioned into agrofuels production—rather, it continues to produce oil palm for traditional markets, including cooking oil and use in soaps, lotion and lip balm. Although I remain unconvinced that agrofuels production is cutting into smallholder food production in Guatemala, land purchases and land concentration do denote a rise in plantation monocrop agriculture, and therefore significant environmental degradation.

<u>No Justice, No Peace? Land Conflicts in the Lowlands</u>

Research on territory and development in Guatemala must not simply follow the tendency of development projects to work on marginalized people without acknowledging the context in which they are produced as marginalized. Sustainable development projects tend to overlook the negative environmental impacts of such activities as cattle ranching and monocrop plantations, but largeholder territorial expansion and conservation protected areas expansion together comprise the new land squeeze that limits the possibilities for agrarian livelihoods.

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[40] CONAP did not approve these concessions, and there was a general outcry amongst environmentalists, but the *Procurador General de la Nación* approved the contracts anyway (Corzo Márquez and Obando 2000).

Colonized lands in northern Guatemala, now known as the Maya Forest, are undergoing the land concentration already familiar in the Western Highlands. It is extremely difficult to estimate landholdings in Guatemala, not only because of the ongoing work to update the national property register with cadastral mapping, but also due to extensive informal sales and violent dispossession where documentation is a secondary matter. To the extent that this can be tracked, Carrera (2000) estimates that land sold in the northern lowlands (Petén and the Franja) comprised 70% of the nation's sales.[41] Although certainly some of these land sales are from smaller plantations and smallholder plots for people who are selling in the context of urbanizing their lives, many land sales in the northeast take place in a context of debt and coercion.

As should be evident, land concentration in the hands of CONAP, ranchers, and agricultural corporations is not a peaceful process. As I have shown above, poor people's attempts to repossess their lands in protected areas has been both pathologized and criminalized. Unlike in other Latin American nations (e.g., *Movimento Sem Terra* in Brazil), land occupations of privately held lands are punishable under Guatemala's criminal code as land invasions, which are violently repressed. Moreover, USAID experts concluded in 2005 (ten years after agrarian conflict resolution projects began operating) that there were probably over 10,000 land disputes, 300 different county boundary disputes (there are fewer than 350 counties total) and 120 different completely unregistered parcels (*baldíos*) that may herald multiple sets of land conflicts (Brown et al. 2005). The actual number may be much greater, because many "closed" cases are still simmering, and others are never registered.

Conclusion

I began this chapter by pointing out the overlap between the conservation designation of Maya Forest and Q'eqchi' ethno-linguistic territory. Guatemala's northern lowlands, as subtropical forests not apt for intensive agriculture, used to be marginal lands. In the 1960s, the military identified these lands (Petén and the newly named Franja) as sites for colonization; but their targeted population of Ladinos and Western Highlands Maya refused to colonize, and instead Q'eqchi' homesteaders arrived to practice swidden agriculture. While the Q'eqchi' as marginal people settled on marginal lands were always subject to violent dispossession, often by paramilitaries and military officers expanding their cattle ranches, by the 1990s the Q'eqchi's found themselves marginal people on valuable lands.

With Conservation International leading the way, the Central American tropical lowlands became the Maya Forest, a valuable "biodiversity hotspot" that provided "ecosystem services" through "natural capital." At this crucial time, as the civil war was slowly grinding to a halt, the people living in rural areas became marginal people living on valuable land—valuable because "*gringos*" as conservation BINGOs were willing to buy nature to save it. Rather than buy nature from a myriad number of smallholders whom the state land tenure agency (INTA and FYDEP, then FONTIERRAS) had never recognized as legal owners, it is easier for conservation agencies to negotiate directly with the (re)constructed nation-state. Today, CONAP and other agencies charged with sustainable development seek to enforce the Maya Forest territorialization by fixing nature in core protected areas; restricted land uses with tenuous land titles via CBNRM

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[41] Petén and the Franja together comprise about half of Guatemala.

in buffer zones; and restricting subsistence agriculture to areas of lesser importance, offering land titles on smaller plots of land as a way to forestall extension of the agricultural frontier.

Although conservation and sustainable development projects may have seemed like a politically safe area for international aid agencies waiting on the Peace Accords, I argued that the creation of a national parks system had major implications for agrarian struggles, limiting or making impossible land ownership in one-third of Guatemala's territory. Moreover, aid agencies and BINGOs focused their efforts on (re)constructing the nation-state as the arbiter of property and the guarantor of national patrimony. Uneven enforcement and pervasive stereotypes (Chapter 4) in development practice, however, mean that large corporations and rich Ladinos are free to pursue both legal and illegal economic development, while the marginalized rural population is policed out of land ownership and resource use. Violent conservation enforcement, therefore, reproduces racialized social hierarchies. In post-war land conflicts, the blatant difference between the rhetoric of the Peace Accords and rural realities eats away at the legitimacy of the Guatemalan nation-state.

I have focused thus far on how dominant representations of space and spatial practices are produced in different territorial moments. I have also shown how these territorializations (re)produce the Q'eqchi' Maya as marginal subjects. Territorial projects rarely succeed in the form they are envisioned, however, and this is often because people do not accept the subjectifications they entail. Today, Guatemalan development professionals often lament the ways that indigenous poor people "misunderstood" or were "tricked" (*engañados*) into believing that the Maya Forest was named as such because it belonged to them, often occupying parks and claiming that they are owners as the rightful descendants of those earlier Maya who left towering archeological wonders. These Maya are not naïve people who were tricked,[42] but actors who contest the use of the Maya image to their detriment, reproducing them as marginal subjects. In the next chapters (4-7), I turn to the Maya Forest as lived place to show how people position themselves in relation to development projects and their struggles for land.

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[42] The trope of the indigenous person being tricked was used during the civil war to justify genocide because of their supposed vulnerability to Marxist guerrillas. Today, it is used to explain why indigenous people join up with peasant and Pan-Maya movements to demand cultural and territorial rights. For a nuanced discussion of *engaño*, see Nelson (2009).

Chapter 4

Slashed and Burned: The Debate over Privatization of Q'eqchi' Lands

> I do think that we are still required to think about the way in which ideological/cultural/discursive practices continue to exist within the determining lines of force material relations… Material conditions are the necessary but not sufficient condition of all historical practice. – Stuart Hall, interview with Laurence Grossberg (1986: 57)

Introduction

Even through the rages of war-time counterinsurgency and post-war drug trafficking violence, Q'eqchi' Maya homesteader communities engage in a kind of place making that facilitates local interpretations of national laws and international development projects (they call the latter simply *tenq'*, or help). In Chapters 2 and 3, I described the regional historical contexts in which Q'eqchi' communities make claims to the land ownership. I argued that legacies of counterinsurgency and genocide have important implications for post-war conservation and development projects in Guatemala's northern lowlands. In this chapter, I examine articulations of Q'eqchi' identity through land ownership, focusing on agrarian conflict resolution and land administration projects that seek to establish a single owner for a unified land parcel, and then map, title and register his land rights.

As I described in chapter 2, the militarized state then opened up a "new frontier" for agricultural colonization in the northern lowlands. The state land titling agency (first INTA, now FONTIERRAS) originally allocated land to the vast majority of these communities communally. As communal property, each person whose name is on the title has rights to an equal share of land (*partes alícuotas*); in this paternalistic arrangement, only FONTIERRAS has the right to add or remove an owner's name to the title. This arrangement makes it extremely difficult to arrange for inheritance of land rights, particularly when parents do not want to pass rights of a single parcel to a single child. Today, FONTIERRAS and non-governmental development agencies encourage communities to privatize their land during the titling process,[1] offering individual titles to alienable plots of land. Communities often eagerly use this process to ensure "land tenure security" in the form of inheritance, titling the land in the name of eldest sons.

Most Q'eqchi' homesteaders who settled the frontier were not land-poor families whose ability to eke out a livelihood on the land was challenged by increasingly fragmented plots,[2] but were born as serfs who realized the promise of ownership for the

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[1] If INTA originally tracked a community for communal land title, communities must finish the communal land titling process, then apply to privatize their land. This mimics a common teleology that poses communal property as part of a developmental process that will necessarily evolve into modern private property.

[2] These land-poor families were the target population of agricultural colonization with a goal of creating an "escape valve" to ameliorate the need for agrarian reform and win the hearts and minds of colonizers.

first time, becoming homesteaders seeking title to their land. During counterinsurgency campaigns, the military reframed land allocation as a reward for nationalist, anti-communist loyalty. Worthy owners were expected to colonize and defend their land from Marxist guerrillas and cooperate with the military to secure the nation. The "self-defense" paramilitaries (PACS) were explicitly a defense of private property (Sáenz de Tejada 2004; Viaene 2009). Today, these people have fractured identities as both migrant (homesteader) and indigenous (Q'eqchi') that would seem to decouple the isomorphism of place and identity. Nonetheless, trenchant binary imaginaries of indigenous common property and (white) entrepreneurial individual property persist.

In this context, the state offers Q'eqchi' communities in the Franja two land titling options. They can title their land communally (CAPs),[3] or they can privatize their land. CAP titleholders have equal rights to land designated at the community-level (FONTIERRAS will not designate or recognize plots); owners do not have the right to sell lend without FONTIERRAS permission, and must prove that a person has died before designating the person who inherits their rights. With individualized titles, owners are directly linked to specific plots of land and have the right to rent or sell land without FONTIERRAS oversight. This chapter asks whether Q'eqchi' communities prefer individual or communal titles, and why. Further, it explores how Q'eqchi' communities articulate an indigenous identity through their land titling choices.

This chapter is based on tensions between two NGOs I had the pleasure of working with: Wakliqoo, a development NGO run by and for Q'eqchi's that promotes communal land titles as part of its platform; and New Horizons, a development NGO with significant international funding with a lands team that works on agrarian conflict resolution and promotes individualized land titles. For my case study with New Horizons, they asked me to research the "legal and cultural sustainability" of communal land titles. The project director believed that communal titles are unsustainable and Q'eqchi' communities want to privatize their lands, so NGOs should help them in this process. Given that New Horizons encourages privatization and Wakliqoo advocates communal titles, I used their ideological stances to approximate the spectrum of land titling politics.

In preliminary research I conducted in lowlands Q'eqchi' communities in 2006, many leaders refused individual interviews, insisting that I interview multiple people together and in Q'eqchi'. These leaders explicitly told me that I should learn Q'eqchi' and respect their wishes to be interviewed as an organized community. These wishes guided my decision to learn Q'eqchi', my structuring of group workshops, and my decision to represent communities as groups who speak together in this chapter. For each of the six communities selected as cases, I conducted archival research, conducted interviews with development professionals, held one-day community workshops with landowners (attendance ranged from approximately 15 to 75 people, depending on community size), and follow-up interviews with community leaders. Finally, I wrote a policy paper in Spanish, which I distributed to colleagues for their feedback, then published locally (Ybarra 2010a).

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[3] Collective Agrarian Patrimony, or *Patrimonio Agrario Collectivo.* For purposes of disambiguation, I refer to this as CAP by its English acronym. In the dissertation, PAC refers to paramilitary groups that were part of the military's national counterinsurgency campaign against Marxist guerrillas.

First, I look at the ways that lowland Q'eqchi's remember racialized dispossession and land tenure security. Then, I examine two imaginaries, or common understandings groups of people have that underlie their expectations for how Q'eqchi's fit into Guatemalan society and the kinds of property relations they have. One imaginary views Q'eqchi's as part of an ownership society founded on private property, while the other places Q'eqchi's in a "tribal slot" based on a mythical notion of indigeneity that authorizes common property. I then describe the role of stereotypes of the Q'eqchi' in property policy debates. In my work with New Horizons, we conducted workshops on land privatization in six lowlands Q'eqchi' communities, but I only describe two here: Esperanza, a community that chose private titles; and Roqha', a community that chose communal title. I conclude by addressing the implications for Q'eqchi' identities and property regimes in Guatemala's northern lowlands.

Understanding Property & Identity

When a group of people chooses between available juridical frameworks to define their land management practices, they must do so within "the determining lines of force material relations" (Hall and Grossberg 1986: 57), consciously employing discursive practice to affect the trajectory of these material relations. In order to understand the contingent and contested relationship between property and identity in Guatemala's northeastern lowlands, I use Hall's (1995, 1996) conception of articulation. Drawing on Gramsci, Hall directs us to think of fractured identities that amount to a contradictory consciousness, like those of people who are at once homesteading farmers, Guatemalans, and Q'eqchi' Maya. Rather than assuming that Q'eqchi' Mayas will necessarily articulate an indigenous identity with its attendant common property regime, we must consider the conditions that make it possible and desirable for them to do so.

In articulating their identity through property relations, lowlands Q'eqchi's also determine who is included in their communities and who is excluded. The "tribal slot" imaginary assumes that excluding non-indigenous members from ownership is one defining characteristic of Q'eqchi' communities. In practice, however, many Q'eqchi' communities do not define themselves solely by ethnic identity, but assert the right to grant community membership on the basis of spatial or historical factors. Tania Li (2000: 169) describes articulation as a "creative act," one that is a "selection and rearticulation of elements structured through previous engagements." In examining articulations of property with identity, there are optimistic possibilities in the creative act of articulation and radical politics in their exclusions.

Remembering Racialized Dispossession

I argued that conservation facilitates the continued dispossession of lowlands Q'eqchi's (Chapters 3 and 7), and in the next chapter, I describe the economic-spiritual relationship Q'eqchi's have with the land. In this chapter, I argue that Q'eqchi's' political engagement with legal property mechanisms is primarily shaped by their history of racialized dispossessions.

In a political meeting I attended in a rural community of Alta Verapaz, a national Pan-Maya organizer described his current work as part of a longer history of resistance and the persistence of Mayan culture. After his words were translated into Q'eqchi', a leader named Pedro responded. I noticed a few differences between his narrative and

that of the national representative that are worth mentioning. First, the national representative ascribed primary importance to Spanish invasion 500 years ago, but Pedro asserted that the original crime for Q'eqchi's had been their dispossession 200 years ago, referring to the arrival of Germans who took possession of Q'eqchi' lands as coffee plantations. Second, the national representative talked about cultural persistence, but Pedro referred to material struggles. Specifically, Pedro argued that the continued survival of Q'eqchi's was resistance; although state authorities refuse to listen to their pleas, because they smell of having worked in the sun all day, Pedro insisted that they must continue to struggle. While the national representative talked about Mayan culture as a single ethnic social movement, Pedro described the trajectory of his political formation in the Catholic Church and now as a non-Christian Mayan priest in terms of his continued struggle for land in the face of repeated dispossession.

The following night, I attended a ceremony in Pedro's community, and I asked him about his impassioned speech. I asked him about the Germans, hoping to find out more about his understanding of nineteenth century European land claims. After we sat down on plastic chairs and lit cigars, however, Pedro told me about one of his earliest childhood memories: a German *finquero* ordered his home burned down and left his family homeless. As he told me the story, I understood that the *finquero* was a descendent of one of the Germans who successfully started a coffee plantation where Pedro's family lived and worked. Into the twentieth century, it was not uncommon for serfs to tend to the *finquero*'s crops in return for the right to build a home and plant maize crops for themselves.[4] In the 1950s, probably because the *finquero* was afraid that serfs would claim his land as part of the agrarian reform (Pedro ascribed no rationality to the traumatic act), the *finquero* evicted all of the serfs, burning their homes and crops so they would have nothing to return to. He remembers wandering with his family, desperate and hungry, because of that first dispossession. When Pedro finished his story about the German dispossession and watching his home burn, he alluded to the fact that his second home was also burned down. He did not explain his second scorched earth experience, but I knew that Pedro was internally displaced during a military attack in the 1980s. I think it is more than my shaky Q'eqchi' that led Pedro to connect my question about nineteenth century German dispossession with twentieth century German dispossession, and then with the military's scorched earth campaign. Pedro believes that people can burn his home down and get away with it because he is Q'eqchi' and they are *Kaxlan*. I argue that this understanding shapes the trajectory of his political engagements with land titling projects.

Many lowland Q'eqchi's do not think of land tenure security in terms of their future ability to profit from their land, but rather from their ability to fight back when foreign interlopers intrude. Below, I describe two property regimes and their attendant imaginaries. I am not convinced that most rural Q'eqchi's share either of these imaginaries, however. As I sketch below, leaders who prefer communal property believe it provides a measure of protection against forced sale to violent *Kaxlan*, whereas leaders who prefer individualized title often do so because they see that powerful *Kaxlan* control their lands by exerting total control over them, and they hope to emulate this strength. I believe the disjuncture between the way Q'eqchi' communities view land privatization

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[4] Plantation owners tended to strictly forbid Q'eqchi' serfs from planting cash crops, and I have heard stories from this same period where people claim their parents were ejected from the plantation because they were caught planting their own cardamom.

and the Guatemalan development community views illustrates why so many post-conflict land titling projects sink into a quagmire.

Imagining an Ownership Society of Individualized Property

Historically, Latin American states posited privatized land rights as the natural culmination of land tenure modernization (Applebaum et al. 2003). According to this idea, which Platteau (2000) calls the evolutionary theory of land rights, land begins as open access, but increasing scarcity provokes an evolution towards private property because it is economically efficient, culminating in an ownership society. In its most recent iteration in development, poor people need property titles in order to join an ownership society, one where they can use titles as collateral for access to credit and take responsibility for their own development (e.g., de Soto 2000). As a consequence, a citizen in the ownership society takes "material possession [to] indicate his legitimacy in the national society where his value as a rational subject is measured by his ownership of market commodities" (Valdivia 2005: 297). Many scholars associate the resurgence of what I am calling the ownership society with neoliberal imaginaries (Harvey 2005; Akram-Lodhi 2007; Mansfield 2009).

In Guatemala after the 1954 CIA-sponsored coup, the militarized state promoted the ownership society as opposition to communism, in which the capitalist and good citizen produces goods for the market and defends his land from communists. During the 1970s and 1980s, the army massacred people it deemed "subversive" or "suspect" and facilitated the land titling process in communities that actively allied with the army through paramilitary group participation. During the 1990s, Guatemala became a signatory to important indigenous rights conventions that address territory (e.g., ILO 169), but in practice FONTIERRAS still treats privatization as inevitable. Guatemala also promotes market-based land reform through post-war development projects, which encourage individualized property in order to assure that an owner will reap long-term benefits of his agricultural investments through increased access to credit (Deininger 2003).

Imagining the Tribal Slot for Indigenous Common Property

There is well-developed literature that establishes the viability of common property amongst indigenous peoples, and as a signatory to ILO 169 Guatemala has committed to protecting indigenous land rights. Grünberg (2003: 141) summarizes the dominant trajectory of views on indigenous lands: following Hardin's "tragedy of the commons," Latin American states tried to privatize land for greater efficiency; today, following Ostrom (1990), we know that communal land tenure is often more organized and equitable.[5] He further cites the importance of social capital in well-organized communities as the primary explanatory factor in their sustainable resource management. Grünberg is an important scholar and development consultant; his use of Ostrom and the necessary element of social capital are illustrative of the assumptions of Guatemala's post-conflict development.

This important model for managing common pool resources is based on new institutionalism, which shares theoretical roots with the evolutionary property rights school that posits privatized property as its most efficient expression. While the two

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[5] Much of the common property literature suggests that common property regimes are not necessarily more equitable, but they often ensure greater resource access for poor people (e.g., Baland and Platteau 1996).

underlying social imaginaries of property are different, they share affinities for rational choice theory and an emphasis on social capital in describing and legalizing social institutions.

In developing a model for common pool resources, Ostrom (1990) explicitly focuses on cases with renewable resources, where substantial scarcity exists,[6] and where no externalities exist. Most importantly for my study, the cases in Ostrom's landmark volume tended to be bounded, ethnically homogenous, and do not have unequal power relations with absentee or outside members. Where unequal power relations existed, they were not subjected to in-depth treatment. While later works on common property resources importantly acknowledge that all property regimes are dynamic (e.g., Ostrom et al. 1999) and that institutionalizing common property regimes can even exacerbate inequities (Sick 2008), in practice, scholars and policy-makers may still seek out cases of seemingly timeless, equitable traditional management of common pool resources in indigenous communities.

As it was originally framed, the Collective Agrarian Patrimony (CAP) is a paternalistic state mechanism to grant land access to any group of poor peasants, but does not privilege indigenous peoples. In fact, state land agencies discriminated against settlers who practiced swidden agriculture, including Q'eqchi's (Schwartz 1995). The Peace Accords that ended Guatemala's civil war called for special recognition of indigenous land rights. Instead of passing new laws, however, state agencies and development professionals in the Franja have associated the existing communal property mechanism (CAP) with a "tribal slot" (Li 2000) for "ecologically noble savages" (Hames 2007).

Instead of affording new opportunities to indigenous peoples, the "tribal slot" has added a set of social norms that indigenous people must perform in order to qualify for the existing common property mechanism; if not, the assumed rule is that all land will be privatized. Q'eqchi' communities that articulate their identity as indigenous must confront an idealized vision of "ecologically noble savages" who preserve their culture untouched by Western norms and whose agricultural practices are in harmony with nature and each other. To the extent that their lived practices inevitably differ from the "tribal slot," they may be denied indigenous rights.

This tendency becomes a bias when operationalized into a project with a target population of indigenous people, because the search for an "authentic" indigenous social life often involves seeking an immutable culture that "predated and survived the ravage of civil society" (Povinelli 2002: 36). The notion of the commons was created at the colonial moment of enclosure (Maurer 1997), when European colonizers laid claim to American lands and did not leave indigenous people's property regimes untouched, thereby rendering the timeless ideal impossible. The "tribal slot" was created when colonizers dispossessed indigenous peoples, which constituted their racialized identities and the "tribal slot." As such, it is impossible to find an indigenous people with an immutable culture that has not changed during colonial and postcolonial histories.

Moreover, the "tribal slot" imaginary often fails to account for diversity amongst indigenous peoples. Different Maya peoples have had their land tenure management systems recognized with differing degrees of success. K'iche' Mayas have been the most successful in achieving legal recognition for their management of forested lands in

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[6] Ostrom does not address questions of scarcity as a social construction.

Totonicapan and Quetzaltenango (Grandin 2000). Whereas K'iche's have a long history of hierarchical land management and clear delineation between forests and agricultural lands, Q'eqchi's practicing swidden agriculture seem less successful at delineating and managing common lands (Katz 2000).

Despite these difficulties, Wakliqoo organizes Q'eqchi' communities to seek legal recognition of their lands as common property. When Wakliqoo began promoting land titling, the executive director met with a FONTIERRAS lawyer to ask for advice on the onerous two-year process for inheritance following death. In an interview, he laughed through tears as he recalled that the lawyer responded, "it is best not to die." Although Wakliqoo employees find the CAP inadequate to community needs as a legal mechanism, they actively discourage communities from privatizing their land. Wakliqoo embraces the "tribal slot," claiming that all Q'eqchi' communities should legalize their land as a CAP, but it must often combat harmful stereotypes, as I describe below.

Slashed & Burned: Stereotypes of Q'eqchi' Communities

There are three important parts of a composite Q'eqchi' stereotype in development discourse that calls into question their long-term need and ability to hold their lands as common property:[7] their tendency to migrate out towards the frontier to live in "isolation," their lack of environmentalism in practicing swidden agriculture, and their entrepreneurial agricultural practices. In interviews and participant observation in 2007 and 2008, development professionals—both Q'eqchi's and non-Q'eqchi's—confirmed or denied these three stereotypes as part of the debate over how the development community should help lowlands Q'eqchi's manage their lands. Despite these ongoing debates, large development agencies with international funding, like New Horizons, propose and implement projects that treat these stereotypes as inherent qualities constitutive of lowlands Q'eqchi' identity.

It is commonplace to hear that the Q'eqchi' are the most "isolated" of the Maya peoples, which is generally attributed not only to the fact that they have the highest rate of monolinguism among Maya peoples (66%), but also their seemingly strange habit of migrating out along the agricultural frontier. Alfredo, a German-Q'eqchi' professional with New Horizons, repeatedly explained to me, "The Q'eqchi's like to go as far out as is possible to settle. I don't know why, they just move farther and farther out on the frontier; they're not happy to settle on the good land they received in the first place." The implied norm is that families should settle into centralized communities close to an urban area, whereas the Q'eqchi' irrationally move further away from civilization. Even works from scholars who write in solidarity with communities that suffered brutal repression during counterinsurgency campaigns of the early 1980s tend to describe Q'eqchi's as "seminomads" who "cut down a little bit of jungle to plant subsistence crops" (Yoldi and Amézquita 2000: 22). Here, authors reproduce stereotypes of Q'eqchi's as nomads by conflating them with swidden agricultural practices and repeated migration.

One structural explanation is Q'eqchi's' repeated dispossession (due to coffee plantations, then cardamom plantations, and today cattle ranches) and their subsequent search for land that will not have any competing claims to it (Grandia 2006). This claim

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[7] My discussion is limited to stereotypes that directly affect Q'eqchi' land tenure management as indicated to me by development professionals who work on these issues.

has considerable merit—in 17 months of fieldwork collecting land tenure histories, I found that even Q'eqchi' communities that moved or were displaced multiple times want long-term land rights. On the other hand, if the stereotype were true that Q'eqchi's simply like to repeatedly migrate to the jungle, they would be responsible for substantial destruction of subtropical karstic rainforest. On this basis, some conservation and development professionals argue that these communities do not deserve land titles.

Development agencies that promote indigenous common property find that the stereotype of repeated migration makes it impossible for them to make claims to lands that they "traditionally occupy" under ILO 169.[8] In order for Q'eqchi' communities to qualify for experimental structures such as an "indigenous reserve" (based on IUCN's category of Indigenous Protected Area using language similar to ILO 169), they would have to show that they have "customary" land uses and that these are "sustainable" (Bonham et al. 2008). When I interviewed the executive director of the NGO that authored the concept of "indigenous reserve," she explained to me that the Q'eqchi' are the exception that prove the rule—in contrast to successful experiences with other Maya, Q'eqchi's in the Sierra de Chinajá failed to manage the land sustainably. As such, they do not deserve special recognition or protection for "indigenous reserves."

Whereas elsewhere development projects are often designed to capitalize on indigenous environmental knowledges, in the northern lowlands they are more often framed as "an alternative to destructive slash and burn agriculture."[9] In funding the implementation of Guatemala's parks system, focused specifically on the Maya Biosphere reserve, USAID attributes deforestation entirely to population growth and "slash and burn agriculture" (1990: 2), noting that government officials and conservationists alike point to farmers as "'bad guys'—destroyers of the forest" (1990: 262). USAID provided initial funding for land titling in the early 1990s, and professionals who implemented the project confirmed that they preferred individualized titling. Although some professionals noted that titling at the community level offers greater flexibility for communities to reallocate land in relation to fallows, this is a moot point for agencies that believe swidden agriculture is inherently harmful. Even Wakliqoo, a Q'eqchi' association that advocates for common property, asks scholarship recipients to promise not to practice swidden agriculture.

Whereas many people seem to think that Q'eqchi's practice "destructive slash and burn agriculture," empirical research is more varied, often showing that intensive technologies (not employed by swidden farmers) have been decisive in massive deforestation (Hecht 2004) and that swidden agriculture can even promote biodiversity (Park 1992; Sponsel et al. 1996). Moreover, both Q'eqchi's and Ladinos practice swidden agriculture in the tropical lowlands (Carr 2004). Still, the debate over the sustainability of Q'eqchi' farming practices often becomes a determining factor in whether and how they should receive land titles, particularly if one of the agencies also has a conservation mandate.

To the extent that Q'eqchi' communities are homesteaders, many in the development community interpret Q'eqchi's as neither needing nor wanting

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[8] Some states deny rights to peoples who cannot claim to have occupied the same territory since time immemorial, although indigenous rights struggles seek to change this restrictive criterion (Gordon et al. 2003).

[9] Counterpart International Press Release, October 4, 2004. http://www.counterpart.org/Default.aspx?tabid=340&metaid=EACS0149-606&skin=ec.

"indigenous" rights, which they believe protect non-capitalist traditions. Since the 1970s, rural communities have enthusiastically participated in growing cardamom for export, which farmers produce on family plots. Agencies like New Horizons believe that cash cropping is best suited to the ownership society model, and that individualized land titling is an important prerequisite to access to credit and marketing of cash crops. One Ladina from New Horizons denied the existence of common property amongst lowland Q'eqchi's: "Look, I've gone out, I've asked them if they have communal lands. You know what they tell me? The closest thing they have is a soccer field! That is *not* communal land." On the other hand, agencies like Wakliqoo assert that Q'eqchi' indigenous customs are based on labor reciprocity and spiritual practice in maize production (Wilson 1995) such that Q'eqchi' culture necessitates common property. Most Q'eqchi' communities in the Franja farm a mix of cash and subsistence crops, and many of them have different practices for each type.[10]

Some, but not all, Q'eqchi's bear a resemblance to the stereotypes presented here; some, but not all, development professionals hold these stereotypes. The point is that they are part of the debate over whether to privatize Q'eqchi' lands when they are legally titled. Combined, stereotypes of swidden agriculture as destructive and inefficient with the repeated habit of wandering out to the subtropical forest and cutting it down to establish temporary communities suggest that Q'eqchi's do not need or deserve land titles. My concern is not whether Q'eqchi's are deserving subjects, but to problematize the standards by which they are judged as worthy (or not) of land titles, whereas cattle ranchers are simply assumed to have a right to "private property."

Development professionals' understanding of Q'eqchi' culture influences their promotion of property regime in land titling. Wakliqoo uses Q'eqchi' cultural practices to advocate for common property, while New Horizons points to economic entrepreneurship as evidence that Q'eqchi' communities need individualized titles for increased access to credit. These debates may never be settled, but suggest that Q'eqchi' identity has important implications for land tenure.

Justifications for private land titling center around market participation for cash crops, but five of six communities in land tenure workshops unanimously agreed that using land as collateral for access to credit would not increase their market participation. All six communities asserted that they did not attain land titles for access to credit. In workshops, those Q'eqchi' communities that chose to privatize their lands said they did so because it seemed like a secure way to bequeath land to their children.

Articulations of Q'eqchi' Identity through Property

My argument for how property and identity articulate is two-fold. First, I argue that past experiences influence present choices for property regimes. Q'eqchi' homesteader communities in the Franja were all founded on a history of racialized dispossession, unequal access to land, and clear examples of both military and state agencies privileging privatized property titles over other kinds of land claims. With the same goal of bequeathing land to their children, different histories lead different communities to make strategic choices regarding legalized property regime.

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[10] For example, Q'eqchi's do not need to ask for ceremonial blessing before planting cardamom or coffee (cash crops), but go through a purification process and overnight ceremony (*mayejak*) before planting maize.

Communities that embrace a common property regime do so for land tenure security as a strategy to deal with memories of past and fears of future dispossession by powerful outsiders, whereas communities that embrace an individualized property regime do so because their past experiences lead them to believe that the only secure way to bequeath land to their children is via privatized titles. Of the different rights and responsibilities that comprise a property regime, Q'eqchi' communities expressed greatest concern with the right to determine who will have an access right, and how that right may be transferred (inheritance).

I explained the property binary in Guatemala (private titling as part of an ownership society or a tribal slot for indigenous common property) and how the debate over stereotypes of Q'eqchi's relates to where they belong in the binary. Second, I argue that in choosing between two juridical property regimes, Q'eqchi' communities effectively articulate an identity. Communities that title their land communally must position themselves in relation to the romanticized "tribal slot" for indigenous common property, representing their Otherness in a way that is both legible and acceptable to development and state land tenure agencies. For their part, Q'eqchi' families with privatized titles find themselves part of an imaginary that assumes they will shed their indigenous past in favor of an entrepreneurial future.

Buying into the Ownership Society? The Contradictions of Privatization

Esperanza is a community comprised of 225 Q'eqchi' families (55 couples as title-holders and their descendents). Most community members devote their time to household reproduction and agricultural production of maize, beans, and chili peppers. A significant source of income comes from rental payments by a petroleum company, and a few community members also have jobs with "the Company."[11]

A few families founded Esperanza about forty years ago when they decided abandon their lives as serfs and found a community. These leaders went to ask at the land-titling agency (INTA) where land was available. An INTA representative told them they would have to cross through Finca Yalpemech, which was owned by General Lucas García, to reach their new lands. Lucas García had a reputation as a brutal military commander during the counterinsurgency campaign of the 1980s. In interviews, some owners said they were scared, because they decided to walk through the plantation without asking permission, but everyone made the journey safely. The community members established their homes and worked the land.

A few years later, the highway was constructed and The Company built a pipeline alongside it. As the years went on, the community consulted with INTA to get legal title to their lands. On INTA's instructions, they used rope to measure out 14 hectares of land per household. In 1980, then-president Lucas García sent military officers to visit the community, offering to trade them their land for a new settlement in Ixcán Grande. The community leaders went to visit the land, but decided that the soil was of poor quality, so they rejected Lucas García's offer. Although the local mayor (*alcalde auxiliar*) told me he was not scared of reprisals, I remarked during the community workshop that I would be scared. Although nobody said they were scared, a few people nodded their heads, and one person spoke up. He said that 60 families

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[11] This is how the community refers to the administrator of petroleum concessions and the pipeline.

decided to move north to Petén that year, implying that they were scared.[12] The mayor intervened and insisted that this was because they wanted more land.

In 1984, INTA completed a household census, measured the outer bounds of the community's land (but not family parcels, as they do in private land titling), and centralized the community in plots along the highway. As was the norm in Guatemala's colonization zones, the community paid a lower price after proving they were poor and did not own land. Although INTA gave them 20 years to pay for their title, the community paid off their land in 10 years, receiving title as a Collective Agrarian Patrimony (CAP) in 1994.

As soon as the community finished the communal titling process, they privatized their land: this entailed paying an engineering firm to map individual parcels and paying a lawyer to register the individual titles for the parcels. When I asked them why they did it, the common refrain was that they decided to do it "so the land would be more secure." When I asked if they had ever had a land conflict, they said no,[13] but the mayor said he believed neighbors had fewer skirmishes over boundary lines.

There were, however, various land tenure problems that came to light during the workshop. First, the communal title included a forest reserve, which they privatized together with agricultural plots.[14] The mayor does not believe that individuals have the right to take whatever wood they please, but must ask permission. Nonetheless, there are a number of community members who take wood without asking permission because "they paid for it." Second, community members are worried about how to pass land on to their children. Some fathers placed their sons' name on their title during the privatization process; those that did not said they do not know how to bequeath land to their children. And finally, the community is worried about members who sell their parcels.

Approximately 35 (of 90) landowners have already sold their parcels, in most cases without notifying their neighbors or the community. These 35 parcels have been sold to eight owners; the community described all owners as outsiders (*Kaxlan*), Ladino absentee ranchers. Esperanza community leaders are worried because there is a piece of land that they left in communal title. For over twenty years, Esperanza has been leasing its communal land to The Company for use as a warehouse in exchange for yearly payments. The mayor receives these payments each year and each family whose name is on the communal title receives an equal share of the payment.

When 35 families left, the mayor ceased paying them and correspondingly increased each remaining family's payment; he did not transfer payments over to the ranchers. The community believes the ranchers, as outsiders whose names were never on the communal title, do not have the right to payment. The ranchers assert that because they bought plots from owners, all of those rights should transfer over, including the income stream from the communal land. I asked the community members why they did not privatize their rights to the land they lease to the Company, as with

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[12] Q'eqchi' migrants to Petén often say that they are looking for land, but they may eventually reveal that they no longer felt safe in their previous communities due to civil war violence during the early 1980s (Grandia 2006).

[13] When asked if their interactions with Lucas García counted as a "conflict" (*ch'a'ajkilal*), they laughed and said no.

[14] This is not legal, but is common practice.

the forest reserve, and they told me it was in order to negotiate as a single entity with The Company.

When I asked community members if they would sell their land, they answered with an emphatic no. The mayor assured me that he had extracted a promise from all owners not to sell their land. When I asked them why they did not want to sell their land, they said it was to "give a piece to our sons and daughters." An elderly man asserted that they must treat the land with respect (implying that selling land is disrespectful), because it is the *tzuultaq'a* that gives them permission to work the land and offers them food. Although in the social imaginary of the ownership society, alienation is fundamental to private ownership, the community's *de facto* rules prohibit it.

It is important to remember that a community is a dynamic group that comes together based on a shared location, negotiates a set of shared values, then creates tradition through cultural practices. Although the 55 families that today comprise Esperanza are concerned about losing their community to outsiders, these attitudes have been shaped by the experience of watching neighbors sell their land. It is impossible to know what former neighbors believe,[15] but their viewpoints may be considerably different.

Esperanza offers key insights into the slippages that occur when Q'eqchi's buy into the ownership society without fully embracing its attendant identity. The community, as it exists in 2008, does not condone the right to buy and sell land as it is granted on their titles, but insists that neighbors and children have rights over land alienation as well. In terms of the forest reserve, even the most forceful advocate of privatization (the mayor) did not believe that owners had the right to cut down the forest as they choose; they still needed to follow rules and ask permission.

More important were the criticisms of families that sold their land to Ladinos (*kaxlan*). When I asked about the sale of land, none of the people in communities mentioned the sale of land amongst community members and their family, except to dismiss it as a non-issue. They all described the sale of land by a Q'eqchi' community member to a Ladino outsider as an outrage, however, and many were of the opinion that those community members did not have a right to sell their land without first obtaining the rest of the community's permission. Although they acknowledged (when asked) that members have *de jure* rights to sell their land to "outsiders," they insisted that their *de facto* rules were more important.

I also want to point to the contradictions that occurred when I asked people about fears of dispossession. Some people said they were afraid, some said they were not. Homesteaders were born as plantation workers and knew the fragility of their land tenure security as they set out to establish new homes. As they went through the land titling process, they came into contact with a violent military leader who wanted their land. In this context, anxieties about land tenure security are truly palpable. In communities like Esperanza where powerful outsiders want their land, and community dynamics mean that many people sell their rights and leave, private titles may seem more secure.

Pitfalls and Possibilities for Q'eqchi' Communal Property

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[15] We asked about the whereabouts of neighbors who sold their land, but the mayor explained that they did not stay in contact with them or know their whereabouts.

I now turn to briefly describe the case of Roqha', a community of 1 Ladino and 33 Q'eqchi' families.[16] In 1982, they found the land they hoped to settle and went to research its ownership at the local INTA office. In 1985, INTA granted them permission to settle the land. They said that "each man took the land that interested him," without asking permission or writing it down as they do today.

In the mid-1980s, community members remember that someone calling himself an engineer from Cobán heard about their land and came to take over (*agarrar*) the best 180 hectares. Community members described an atmosphere of constant tension, in which he even shot at them, and had them jailed as "invaders" (of his purported private property) and "guerrillas" (a few years earlier this charge could have led to extrajudicial killing). The community members are proud that, although three of them spent a week in jail, the judge threw the case out. Due to this conflict, they decided to title the land as a Collective Agrarian Patrimony (CAP) as a way to enforce strong exclusionary rights against this and other interlopers.

When they asked INTA for their land, the designated "social" price was set at Q25,000 (~$25,000). Seven families abandoned the community in 1993, both due to the community's remote location and the cost of the land. From 1993 to 2002, the land agency had paperwork on file, including a family census, but the community was not mapped and did not have title.

In 2002, Wakliqoo invited Roqha' to participate in a community mapping project and negotiate a lower title cost. Wakliqoo mapped the outer boundaries of the community, as well as local land uses and individual parcels for community validation. FONTIERRAS only recognizes the outer community boundaries, but the community uses parcel maps to enforce its internal rules. Given that so much of their land is not suitable for cultivation, they purchased the land at a nominal price as part of a conservation easement. The US researcher who ran the project created rules for the reserve land: no hunting, no burning, and no cutting wood.[17] Roqha' eagerly accepted these conditions because they only had to pay approximately $13.50 to receive title to 810 hectares.

In terms of land sales, there are two people who sold their land rights after the 1993 census but before the 2003 title was granted (this is illegal, but common practice). These community members do not have their names on the title, as FONTIERRAS does not allow community members to sell their rights before they have been granted ownership. Community members expressed concern with one buyer, a Ladino who lives on the land with his family.[18] The Ladinos are also poor farmers (not cattle ranchers), but they do not participate in local property governance, as I describe below.

When I asked them about future possibilities of land privatization, they responded that they have considered it, but it is expensive. All community members agreed that they did not want access to credit—they said it was irresponsible to risk

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[16] Of these, only 24 families had their names listed on the CAP title. The families insisted that instead of being called *no-parcelarios* (not-parcel owners), as is common in the Franja, that we refer to them as *herederos* (inheritors). As most of the workshop was in Q'eqchi', we simply referred to them as "children."

[17] Hunting comprises an important part of the rural Q'eqchi' diet and burning is integral to swidden agriculture (Wilk 1997), so these were significant land management restrictions.

[18] The community does not treat the Ladino family as members and they were not invited to the land tenure workshop I facilitated.

their land as collateral when they owe it to their children. The only person who advocates for land privatization is the Ladino. In an interview, he asserted that he wants private title because he does not want to be associated with the community in a common title (even though his name is not on the current title).

With the help of Wakliqoo, the community established a register of land plots and corresponding owners. The household head makes choices about the distribution of rights to his parcel; these are recorded for consultation in the event of a dispute. The land committee uses the register as a sign of power, and individual owners only have the right to bequeath land or abandon it; they cannot sell the land, but cede administration of the land to the committee in the event of abandonment. Community members understand that their internal rules do not have *de jure* authority, but the mayor said he believed they should. There are occasionally problems with firewood collection in prohibited areas, but the local mayor asserted that their property register worked well. The only exception to this is the non-participating Ladino family, which does not attend meetings, register their land, or participate in work-days. The community cannot pose sanctions on the Ladino, because he knows the state does not recognize their rules.

The register embodies the contradictions that underlie this hopeful project—it is at once a representation of Roqha's internal property relations and the external property relations Roqha' would like to have. Wakliqoo encouraged a number of communities to produce this register as an artifact of Q'eqchi' land management practices and asked FONTIERRAS to legalize the register as customary indigenous management. By making an indigenous council the local arbiter of property, Roqha' seeks to impose rules regarding land management and exclusion, excluding extra-community sales from legal recognition (so that no individual member has the right to sell land to a non-member). In so doing, Roqha' must perform its cultural difference, making an implicit argument that as an indigenous community it has a way of life and a territorial vision that is fundamentally different from that of Ladinos, such that it deserves special state protection.

These Q'eqchi' communities want recognition from FONTIERRAS, but do not accept the paternalistic role of FONTIERRAS as the arbiter of property. Another lowlands Q'eqchi' community I studied for two months had a problem with a man who abandoned the community but later attempted to reclaim his rights. According to FONTIERRAS, only the administrators in the capital have the right to exclusion. Still, the mayor told me they were considering invoking ILO 169 to assert their rights to administer their land according to "custom." Despite FONTIERRAS' warnings to the community that it cannot expel this man, their spatial practice has effectively made his return impossible—they planted maize on his parcel. According to customary logic of swidden agriculture, planters' rights establish that anyone else who attempts to take over the land is a usurper. In order to avoid individualized legal battles, community leaders planted corn together, thereby establishing the entire community as the responsible party for the actions. By including a former (Q'eqchi') member of the community as part of the constitutive outside, this community spatialized (rather than racialized) its exclusionary rights, pushing its Otherness to the limits considered acceptable by the Westernized state.

Conclusion

Colonial, developmental and conservationist framings of swidden agriculture as a driver of land degradation in tropical forests are far from new. Likewise, scholarly interventions that examine the empirical validity of these suggested relationships are not new (among others, Conklin 1961; Dove 1983, 1993; recent works on Q'eqchi' include Van Ausdal 2002; Wainwright 2008). The many decades of intractable debate signal that the question of Q'eqchi's as swidden agriculturalists is less one of ecology and more of whether they are subjects deserving of land ownership.

Questions of the "tribal slot" for indigenous common property will be difficult subjects to tackle in Guatemala for years to come, such that finding appropriate technical solutions is a long-term iterative process. To that end, scholars, development practitioners, and policymakers alike must grapple with complexities when formulating projects, policies and safeguards that deal with property regimes for indigenous people. In our workshops, questions of land tenure security through legal title and use of land as collateral were of surprisingly little interest. Instead, Q'eqchi' leaders suggested that their primary concern was that the state recognize their broader rights to management and exclusion of property rights.

Q'eqchi' communities do not fit the imaginary of the "tribal slot" and CAP, but they nonetheless articulate an indigenous identity and demand state recognition. Although the findings of this study are preliminary, they suggest that Q'eqchi' homesteader communities seek two scales of rights. At the individual level, homesteader families want both the community and the state to recognize their rights to family plots, which they have the right to bequeath to family members. According to community rules, however, families do not have the right to alienate their land—either by selling without approval or losing to indebtedness. At the community level, Q'eqchi' communities assert the right to expel members, reallocate abandoned land, and approve (or not) any land sales within the community. While privatized land privileges the individual scale of property and CAPs privilege the community scale of property, neither juridical form of land tenure affords the assemblage of rights and responsibilities that Q'eqchi' communities lay claim to. Rather than the state (CAP) or the individual (private title), Q'eqchi' communities demand that the state recognize community-level governance of land management, exclusion, and alienation.

Further collaborative research is necessary to validate my postulate of two scales of rights more generally amongst Q'eqchi' communities. Different communities reasonably make different land titling choices. Dynamic communities whose population is often in flux, mixed communities with different histories (e.g., former serfs living with farming families, or former paramilitaries with returned refugees), or even communities of similar families with divergent land uses (farming versus cattle ranching) may rightly reject the two-scale system I described above. Communities that understand their group identity's history as one of racialized dispossession may reshape their defensive position by articulating a Pan-Mayan identity that affords them rights as indigenous. Other Q'eqchi' communities may have land tenure histories and management practices that shape a different trajectory, one that favors private land titles. This simply highlights the continuing need for multiple juridical frameworks for land tenure, without necessarily signaling a fundamental difference in their understanding of their own identities as Q'eqchi' Maya.

In this chapter, I have attempted to show the ways in which a seemingly simple choice—to privatize, or not to privatize—actually entails articulating concomitant identities that are attached to different property regimes via imaginaries. Those Q'eqchi' communities that embrace the CAP must use the available juridical framework to position themselves in relation to romanticized "tribal slot." While the Pan-Maya movement has two grand narratives of loss, that of Spanish colonization and the more recent genocidal counterinsurgency campaign, it also insists that the (Ladino) Guatemalan nation-state must acknowledge and accept the existence of multiple Mayan institutions that predate the existence of the nation. For lowlands communities comprised primarily of migrants, many of whom suffered displacement and/or repression during the counterinsurgency campaigns, it is very difficult to articulate an alterity in terms of long-term, stable Pan-Maya institutions that are legible to state land tenure agencies. Nonetheless, many Q'eqchi' communities articulate this identity as a creative act, attempting to legitimate their identity as indigenous in order to exclude Ladino land buyers.

While I have argued that embracing a property regime in this case necessarily entails associating with a group identity, this articulation is always contingent and never complete. *De facto* land management practices of Q'eqchi' communities on both sides of the property binary contravene *de jure* definitions of both communal and private land tenure in Guatemala. I have shown that some Q'eqchi' communities are actively working to reshape the meaning of both individualized and common property regimes in Guatemala. In doing so, they reshape the way scholars and practitioners understand Q'eqchi' Maya identity.

Chapter 5

Territorializing Identity: Indigenous Rights to Sacred Places

As part of an official Ministry of Culture (MICUDE) commission, Setzuul leaders, MICUDE employees, and I map park boundaries to demonstrate that the tourism hotel owned and operated by Girard, a French speleologist, is inside a national park. This strikes me as strange because Girard asked MICUDE years ago to create a park that included his hotel—as far as I know, one of the few things that MICUDE, Girard, and Setzuul community members agree on is that his land is in the park. What is in question is if his hotel is on his land that he bought, or if it is still Setzuul's land (both in the park). The MICUDE archaeologists carry a small hand-held GPS unit. Hey, I lean over to Javier, joking, don't all you Wakliqoo employees have better equipment? I know they do, because I got a grant to get them a third GPS unit significantly more sophisticated than the one MICUDE is using for its "official" map. Later, Javier and other Setzuul community members consult with MICUDE officials on how to get a better reading under the constraints of cloud cover. There are no clear boundary markers, so to validate boundary markers on our map we will have to enter the hotel compound, which we had hoped to avoid. Even though Setzuul leaders still believe they are on their own land, the mayor, Pascual, is visibly nervous. Joking, I lean over and ask, is it dangerous? I don't think so, he said, smiling but serious. I don't think the German Shepherds are loose today. As we duck under a barbed wire fence, then walk toward the caves, a security guard fires a warning shot in the distance and I instinctively shudder. What, I wonder, is the point of yet another map?

Introduction

In the previous chapter, I looked at Q'eqchi' communities and their ability to articulate an identity within an authentic "tribal slot" (Li 2000). Claiming their right to the tribal slot would afford lowland Q'eqchi's special rights and protections as indigenous, but hewing to the established property binary would imply agreement with the "rules of the game." I showed that many Q'eqchi's argue for recognition of a customary land rights system that does not conform to either the image of the "tribal slot" or the (non-indigenous) ownership society, asking FONTIERRAS to recognize their rules as indigenous customs under ILO 169.

In this chapter, I follow one Q'eqchi' community's struggle to obtain *de facto* land rights through a sacred place declaration following the *de jure* success (and *de facto* failure) of a counter-mapping[1] project. A group of Q'eqchi's settled Setzuul as a community in 1970 on lands that include the most impressive caves of a complex stretching more than 20 kilometers along Candelaria River. Their wartime displacement articulated with foreign interest in using the caves as a tourist site, and they have been embroiled in land conflicts ever since. In this conflict, the "words, images, symbols,

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[1] Counter-mapping refers to appropriating the state's (or World Bank's) mapping techniques and representation to legitimize customary and/or indigenous claims.

forms, organizations and movements used by [Q'eqchi's] to talk about, understand, confront, accommodate themselves to, or resist their domination are shaped by the process of domination itself" (Roseberry 1996: 80). As Roseberry makes clear, Q'eqchi's can and do contest their land rights without fundamentally questioning the rules of the game. Moreover, in seeking national recognition for Maya culture, the Pan-Maya movement creates its own rules that Q'eqchi's must follow, imposing a kind of ethnic absolutism (Gilroy 1992). Despite Setzuul leaders' admirable struggle, their participation often legitimates and strengthens dominant institutions, both state institutions and Mayan NGOs. Setzuul's struggles are undoubtedly important political acts of contestation that have received national publicity, but their acceptance of the rules of the game has made it impossible for them to win.

This chapter follows the drama in Setzuul chronologically: settlement, wartime displacement, coercive entry of a foreign ecotourism operator, and subsequent efforts to expel him through violence, counter-mapping, and finally a sacred place declaration. In so doing, I show the limits of technical development projects (including counter-mapping) seeking land titles, as well as how Q'eqchi' spirituality at a territorial level conflicts with Western property models. Following on the heels of their land titling success, I describe the contradictions Setzuul faced when it engaged in political alliances with Wakliqoo, a Q'eqchi' community association, and Oxlajuj Ajpop (OAP), a Pan-Maya NGO based in the capital. Although articulating a Q'eqchi' identity through the Pan-Maya movement seems like a natural fit, this political work confronted skeptics both inside and outside Setzuul. Ultimately, I believe these difficulties contributed to the failure of the sacred place declaration, and the skeptics are correct that this work did little to eject the foreign interloper from Setzuul's property (as of September 2009).

Wartime Struggles

I do not know who lived on the lands I call Setzuul prior to 1900, although archaeological findings suggest Maya settlements and regional use of the caves for religious ceremonies dating back to the Early Classic Period (200 – 600 CE). A European laid claim to the land as a plantation in the late nineteenth century, and in 1903, Dieseldorff (a prominent German coffee producer) purchased the land; sale records indicate that the plantation came with eight Q'eqchi' serfs (*colonos*) (Kit 1998).[2] Dieseldorff did not develop the land, however, and he seems to have lost it when the Guatemalan state dispossessed Germans of their land during World War II.

To the south was Carchá, a highlands county full of dispossessed Q'eqchi' serfs working on German-owned coffee plantations. Sebastián, Setzuul's founder, had already traveled up through Chisec when he accompanied his father as a child during forced labor campaigns in the 1940s. As an adult, Sebastián regularly traveled all the way north to Petén, where he made money collecting chicle (for gum production), and he looked for land as he traversed the region on foot. In 1970, he found the abandoned land (*baldío*) and asked the land agency (INTA) for permission to settle it because of its close location to the new highway and access to the Candelaria River. He planted crops, but he and his wife did not move to Setzuul until the first maize crop was ready for harvest. He invited other Q'eqchi' families living on a plantation to join him, and the community steadily grew. Although Sebastián was in contact with INTA officials over the years, INTA did

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[2] This is the only record of Q'eqchi's living on the land prior to 1970.

not open a file to process Setzuul's land title until 1978.[3] At that time, local officials informed Sebastián that he would need to measure parcels and settle families into a centralized village. He and a few others walked the land in their claim to convince settlers to centralize. Most refused, and at least ten families rejected Setzuul altogether because they had already established a separate community on the same land. Sebastián denies such a community ever existed, but I interviewed people who claimed to live there until they resettled in Setzuul for safety in the mid-1980s.

Sebastián also denies that Setzuul had any contact with EGP guerrillas in the 1970s. He acknowledges that EGP was widely active in the zone, but claims that when he met a guerrilla on the road one day, he lied and told them that Setzuul wasn't organized and didn't have any committees that EGP could come talk to. The same highway that attracted Sebastián to Setzuul also brought significant military and guerrilla presence. By the 1970s, the Franja region was known as "The Generals' Strip" because retired military members received land in return for their service, and the highway was built next to an oil pipeline, so the military was focused on protecting the pipeline as a matter of national security. For its part, EGP was active along the highway because the newly settled communities might be open to a revolutionary message: the majority of villagers were former serfs who were taking risks to settle new land, were upward economically due to their participation in cardamom markets, and had some exposure to Catholic Action catechists and liberation theology. Other folks in Setzuul, notably those who were Catholic in the 1970s, told me they had regular contact with EGP. Pascual, the local mayor and my host, showed me where a group of EGP guerrillas used to camp out. According to Pascual, the guerrillas would visit other communities and come back to rest in Setzuul every few days. In Pascual's opinion, Setzuul was not an EGP supporter community—the people didn't have problems with EGP, but they didn't give them free food, either.[4]

Most military officials received land titles in the Franja and immediately sold them, never setting foot on their land. Setzuul's troubles began when a former officer of the presidential guard (*Estado Mayor Presidencial,* a group notorious for committing political assassinations) decided to establish a cattle ranch on his land next to the community. Although at first some community members worked on his ranch, the relationship eventually soured. By 1981, nobody would work on his land, and they accused him of enclosing part of Setzuul's land as his ranch. A lone Ladino in a sea of Q'eqchi' communities, he was afraid that EGP would try to kill him, so he asked the military for help. The military built a temporary post on his ranch that they staffed for about one year, during which time they patrolled the region intensely, looking for guerrillas "below the bush" (the Q'eqchi' word for the guerrillas was *aj rub'elpim,* literally, the people below the bush).

By early 1982, all families had to abandon Setzuul. A few families actually moved onto the cattle ranch / military post, others moved to nearby large communities, and some returned to family homes in Carchá. Wilson's (1995) study of Q'eqchi' resurgence focuses on communities that fled together, which facilitated community cohesion and

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[3] Sebastián said he believes this is because he did not know how to write letters.

[4] At the time, it was widely known that the military considered selling food to EGP members a crime meriting extrajudicial killing, and failing to report EGP presence to the army also brought significant suspicion. A military slogan was, "For the guerrilla, neither bread nor tortilla" (Remijnse 2002).

group identity. Post-war Setzuul, on the other hand, is rife with conflict, and I believe this is related to the fact that some families allied with the army, some with EGP; some lived with communities that subsequently suffered massacres, others lived on a ranch with a military detachment. Despite these critically different experiences, most community members (enough to give leaders a moral mandate) remember the army as the primary perpetrator of violence and see the Frenchman's success in usurping their land as state racism (below).

Setzuul was abandoned for one year, and when community leaders resettled, there was still significant counterinsurgency violence in the region. The military detachment posted on the neighboring ranch, however, was moved—some people believed this was because Setzuul had been cleared of suspicion, but one man told me it was just because they finished building a bigger base nearby in Raxruhá.[5] Sebastián explained that, in his capacity with the land committee, he continued to check in with the army on a regular basis.

By 1983, the army was advertising on the radio that there were free lands for (re)settlement throughout the Franja. The military directed the legislature to pass a law so that INTA could declare lands "abandoned" and rescind people's land rights if they fled for extended periods during the violence (Manz 1988). The army and INTA actively encouraged Ladinos from the Southern Coast and the East to take over formerly indigenous community lands (Nelson 1988; Padilla 1990; Brett 2007). When they heard that they could lose their land, most[6] Setzuul families decided to resettle under army auspices—this required them to commit to living in a resettled, geographically centralized, village (people said they did it for "safety") and to institute paramilitary patrols. Most Setzuul respondents remember that the violence died down by the late 1980s. Nonetheless, as Pascual explained, laughing, the community military commissioner didn't cede his role until the Peace Accords were signed, and he conspicuously owns the only gun left from the paramilitary patrols.

Ecotourism, or Accumulation by Dispossession

A French speleologist, Girard, claims that he explored most of this region in the late 1970s and 1980s, and I have been able to confirm extensive explorations in at least three other communities.[7] Two of these communities are very proud that they expelled Girard using violence and death threats to keep him from taking over their caves. In at least one of these communities (San Marcos), they were in a position of relative power because Girard had abandoned the tourism infrastructure there for a few years. More importantly, the leader of the group that burned those buildings down and threatened to kill him or his employees was a Q'eqchi' community leader above reproach—he

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[5] The timing of the armed military detachment in Raxruhá fits with this assertion, and Ladino ranchers began to bring their problems to Raxruhá. Where possible, Q'eqchi' community leaders would travel to the Cobán military base (even though the Chisec or Raxruhá bases were closer) to seek help from Major Rosales, because he was Q'eqchi'.

[6] Sebastián and others asserted that all the members of new Setzuul were the same as old Setzuul, but I interviewed a few people who arrived and paid an entrance fee to take over someone else's parcel in 1984. Most communities do not like to admit to this practice, as it is illegal after INTA conducts a household census during the land titling process (see also Chapter 7).

[7] Of these, two now run community-based tourism projects; interlocutors in the third only showed me the cave and told me the name of the *tzuultaq'a* after I promised not to reveal information to outsiders that might send them looking to steal the site.

served the army out of the Playa Grande military base (see Chapter 7) and returned home as an Evangelical minister. By contrast, when Girard moved to take over Setzuul's land, community members were still suffering under a cloud of suspicion because of the Ladino military veteran's accusations of them as subversives. When Girard moved to take over their land, they reasonably feared that the military might kill them as subversives if they reacted violently against Girard.

My understanding of Girard's position on the land conflict's origin is based on promotional materials, paid tours, and copies of letters he wrote in legal files, but I did not conduct an interview with Girard. I intended to ask him for an interview, but decided not to after I participated in a MICUDE commission and Girard's security guards fired warning shots at us. Girard first came to explore the caves in the late 1970s, and Sebastián was one of his paid guides. For about two decades, he claimed in written materials to have "discovered" the Candelaria Caves, but on a tour in 2009 a guide explained that the local population had always used the caves, but Girard was able to explore further than they because he brought spelunking equipment.

On my 2009 tour, a guide also presented Girard's justification for usurping Q'eqchi' lands—he explained that all profits from Girard's "ecotourism" go to "conservation" and "the community of Setzuul." Most community members vehemently deny that this is the case, and I have never seen evidence of any aid or community development projects from Girard outside his hotel compound.[8] Still, Girard's claims as a benevolent trustee have significant salience in ecotourism, an industry with significant start-up costs that builds on networks of rich, privileged people (who talk only with each other, and do not speak Q'eqchi' anyway). A European development professional, who later became a steadfast supporter of Setzuul and Wakliqoo, told me that at first he was happy that Girard had taken an interest in the Candelaria Caves and encouraged community leaders to work with him. He did so because he believed Girard could help Setzuul develop and promote the site much more successfully than the community alone.

In letters I obtained from community and FONTIERRAS archives, Girard claimed that he had special knowledges necessary to administer the site, specifically speological knowledge of the caves and their importance, and environmental knowledge on how to conserve the Candelaria Caves. Girard claimed that Q'eqchi' communities had destroyed similar sites in the region through their ignorance. By contrast, Girard claimed that local communities had conserved the Candelaria Caves only under his guidance. In a classic trusteeship relationship (Li 2007), he claimed that he was training local Q'eqchi's on how to administer the site, but they somehow had not learned how to do this during the 30 years of his tenure. For his part, the European development professional told me he turned against Girard when he realized that the Frenchman was not sharing his profits with Setzuul and San Marcos.

In 1984 and 1985, Girard paid for experts to conduct archeological and speological studies to attest to the caves' unique value. Community members told me he camped periodically near the caves, in tents outside the community center. He was just like you, they told me, he said he was a researcher (*aj tz'ilok rix*) and that he was going to

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[8] He has a junior high inside the compound, but this is not a public school. Hotel employees send their children to the school, but most people's children commute to school in Raxruhá.

study the caves for his thesis. They believed that he would do the same thing as I did, study in Setzuul for a while, then go back to where he came from.[9]

By 1987, however, Girard began felling trees and building permanent structures. Although he asked for permission, the Development Council (*Comité Pro-Mejoramiento*) rejected his proposal to build a home by the caves so he could be more comfortable during long-term explorations "because we thought he would take [our land] from us." Eventually, about 15 young men went to his campsite "to scare him." Nobody would tell me what threats they made, but subsequently Girard went to the military commissioner in Chisec "to whine," as one leader explained it. Soon after, the commissioner arrived in Setzuul to inform community members that they had to let Girard live by the caves or "we will fuck you up" (*vamos a joder a ustedes*) and leave their bodies like stray dogs (*chuchos*) on the highway, referencing public massacres under Lucas García (1978–1982). After this visit, the community military commissioner acted as an enforcer, and also worked for Girard building his ecotourism hotel.

In the late 1980s, Girard claims that he bought the land around the caves.[10] Community members' memories of his declared intentions to buy the caves are much less clear. One community leader (who has since abandoned Setzuul) thought the community might benefit from the foreigner's work. He approached Girard and explained that, even in a communal land system (CAP, Chapter 4), "each individual owns a piece of land" and told him who controlled the two parcels that included the caves Girard wanted. At this time, Setzuul did not have legal title. According to INTA (and later FONTIERRAS) standards, no resident who is included in the community census has a right to sell his land without the land agency's prior permission. This permission is contingent upon proving that you are Guatemalan and do not already own land elsewhere. Girard would not have met these requirements. Although *de facto* land sales are common under these circumstances, they are not legal. This means that if Girard had bought two parcels from Setzuul, his purchase would have been illegal.

The actual circumstances around the purported land sales are opaque at best. As I understand it, Girard got one man drunk and bought the rights temporarily (until he finished his research and returned to France) to the area that included the caves, but he did not buy the parcel at this time.[11] Over the years, Girard bought the rest of the parcel piece by piece, and hired the seller as an employee at his ecotourism hotel. The image of an indigenous man swindled out of his home under the influence of lies and alcohol, to find himself working on the land he used to own, has a powerful history in Guatemala (McCreery 1994). The other sale was more complicated, because the owner did not want to part with any of his land, not even the caves where he couldn't plant crops. The paperwork was not in the FONTIERRAS archive, but my understanding is Girard has a

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[9] This is congruent with most foreigners' visits to Guatemala, which are usually one-time stays that do not engender long-term relationships or repeat visits. Even after living in Uspantán for two years and telling people I'd visit the next year, people were shocked when I actually showed up the following year, going so far as to refer to my brief visit as a "miracle."

[10] If one actually compares the two parcels he says he bought with the area he has fenced in, it is clear that he has encroached on caves that he doesn't even claim he purchased as private property.

[11] Years later, a Peace Corps couple had permission to build a home on someone's land, leaving them the house when their two year term of service was up. Respondents pointed to their promises as the same as Girard's in this situation.

bill of sale from the second community member, which Setzuul leaders assert was signed under coercion (i.e., at the behest of the Chisec military commissioner).

Under these circumstances, it is hard for me to see how this land sale has any moral or legal validity, but Girard used this to build a hotel and international dignitaries and national military authorities attended the inauguration. At these and other events, regional and national Guatemalan officials praised Girard's work as important economic development. Although they understood that a foreigner was profiting from their natural patrimony, they did not believe that the local Q'eqchi' community was capable of bringing in international tourism dollars as Girard did.

The relationship between Girard and Setzuul simmered over the years.[12] At first, some community members thought he just maintained the large house he built, but they realized that he was profiting from their land as a tourist site when groups of foreigners started to show up, bypassing the community center completely and heading directly for what was actually a hotel. A few community members worked for Girard, but leaders continued to pursue the land titling process that slowly inched along. In 1996, archival records show that Girard tried to register the land as his, but the local INTA official informed him that this was impossible, as Setzuul had a prior claim to the land he wanted. Setzuul leaders were not informed of Girard's actions, and they did not even know their land was declared a park until it eventually halted their land titling process.

This Land is my Land, this Land is your Park? Reprised

After Girard's attempts to title Setzuul's land failed, he promoted the creation of a park around his hotel. By the late 1990s, CONAP (the national park service) had successfully created a park system and either bought out or evicted a significant portion of people living on park lands. According to a CONAP official, Girard approached them first, and CONAP was extremely interested in declaring the Caves a park. When they learned of the ongoing land conflict with Q'eqchi' settlers, however, CONAP officials told Girard they would not declare the caves a park until the land conflict was resolved first.[13] Girard's efforts met with success at the Ministry of Culture (MICUDE), where officials declared the park as a Cultural Patrimony on the basis of Girard's archeological reports of ancient Mayan artifacts. Ironically, Ministry of Culture officials did not realize there were *living* Mayas settled on the land. Setzuul leaders affiliated with Wakliqoo insist that Ministry's park map was sloppy because it was based on office work (*trabajo de gabinete*), not fieldwork; and that the maps are not valid because they did not participate in walking boundaries, as is customary. Others have told me that Talita Kumi (a Catholic NGO) did arrive to measure the park boundaries, but Setzuul leaders were suspicious and refused to talk to them.

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[12] Girard and his Guatemalan manager had a complicated set of relationships with many individual community members. The manager married a Q'eqchi' woman from Setzuul and claimed this gave him the right to build a home there. Some community members also have made more personal allegations of abuse (not directly connected with the land conflict) against Girard. I am familiar with the substance of these claims, but I do not address the ongoing criminal investigation here.

[13] Archival records indicate that CONAP was publicly considering incorporating the Candelaria Caves into its park system as late as 2001; it seems that the hostage situation (below) is what led to CONAP's waning interest. When I spoke with a CONAP official in 2009, he told me they would now like to include the Caves in their national park system, but the Ministry of Culture does not want to share institutional control of the site.

The common refrain in Setzuul and the other two communities that found themselves mapped into a park is that it was "declared a park in secret" (*decretó al Patrimonio a escondidas*) because they did not know about it until after it was legally declared. The dimensions of the newly declared Cultural Patrimony did not cleanly match up with Setzuul's boundaries. Instead, it traversed a longitudinal strip that encompassed the caves and overlapped with Setzuul and supposedly two other communities. (Since the mapping process did not set out boundary markers, these were in dispute until 2002.) In 2000, when Setzuul leaders went to check with FONTIERRAS on the status of their land title, they were informed that the price had risen from Q60 to Q400 ($50) per hectare, an increase of 667%. The local FONTIERRAS official suggested that he could cut them a deal if they agreed to split their land into two parts, ceding the park lands to the state. Setzuul's response: what park?

The Limits of Counter-Mapping

"More indigenous territory can be reclaimed and defended by maps than by guns." – Nietschmann (1995: 35)

"A mere title is no assurance at all that the issuing entity will act on the promissory note. In the absence of that assurance, a title can be a symbol of willful deceit." – Bromley (2009: 21)

In Chapters 3 and 7, I address the conflict between protected areas and smallholder farms. In this case, however, any conservation mandate was simply a mechanism for the park's creation—MICUDE declared a Cultural Patrimony on the basis of archeological remains and the caves, but Girard's primary intent seems to have been to establish himself as the park's administrator. The case of the Candelaria Caves kicked off a regional counter-mapping movement to reclaim and "defend indigenous territory" through mapping (Nietschmann 1995), and I originally selected it as a case because I thought it would highlight the optimistic possibilities for indigenous groups struggling for autonomy, as others have done (Stocks 2002; Grandia 2006). Instead, I present this case to highlight the limits of liberatory social movements like the Pan-Maya, and to apply the critiques of land formalization projects to counter-mapping as a reminder that simply making maps and issuing titles does not create land tenure security (Bromley 2009).

The impact the park's creation had on people varied with their social status and rights in land. First, there were a number of cattle ranchers (including the ex-military official who hosted the army detachment) who had significantly deforested land inside what became the park. They evinced no interest in the park and refused to participate in management plans, nor were they concerned that anyone could restrict their land use. They were correct; the Ministry of Culture and CONAP regularly restrict land uses in protected areas by communities while leaving massive cattle ranches untouched because they are "private property," as though communal property is "public." In recent years, some cattle ranchers have sold their land to ecotourism operators, which has led to a greater sense of isolation and insecurity in Setzuul. Likewise, another community already had a registered land title when the park was declared. It is my understanding that this community allied with the army as paramilitaries during the war, and they have threatened people who ask them to participate in the park's management or have

asked to pay for access to the caves.[14] The park strengthened Girard's tenure security because he had no claim registered with the land titling agency (INTA, then FONTIERRAS), but his relationship with MICUDE left him well placed to administer the park under the Ministry's authority.

Second, there were three communities (Setzuul, San Marcos and Ikb'olay) that had not finished the land titling process and discovered that the Ministry of Culture had made a claim on their land that superseded theirs. Between 1999 and 2001, these three communities did not coordinate their efforts. Above, I mentioned INTA's suggestion in 2000 to Setzuul that they divide their land into two parts, effectively ceding the more valuable piece to the Ministry of Culture under Girard's trusteeship. This rendering is from an official memorandum that I read in the FONTIERRAS archives. Setzuul leaders, however, recall multiple meetings with FONTIERRAS officials in which they were told they would never receive title to their land and repeated suggestions that they come to an agreement with Girard, who now held power over them. While this advice may have been well-meaning and politically astute, it gave Setzuul leaders the false impression that Girard had a substantive legal claim on their land.

So, Setzuul leaders entered into an agreement with Girard, whereby he promised to give them money to pay for a significant portion of their land title and give them royalties from his ecotourism business, and they would let him continue to operate his hotel. A neighboring community, San Marcos, entered into a similar agreement with Girard. Both of these agreements soon collapsed, because Girard stopped making royalty payments not long after he had a signed document that he used to assert his land rights. Girard also partnered with the ex-military rancher, offering to pay him for tourists' use of road access. This relationship eventually soured, reputedly because Girard did not pay the rancher as promised. The rancher then closed access to both Girard and community members, each of whom eventually created different access roads. Today, everyone "knows" who you are allied with depending on which road you use to enter the community.

The third community, Ikb'olay, discovered all of this when regional FONTIERRAS representatives presented them with agreements with San Marcos and Setzuul (provided by Girard) as evidence that they (Ikb'olay) had sold their land rights. The secretary of Ikb'olay's land committee told me he was shocked when he saw the documents because, "we were getting screwed over for peanuts, just a few thousand quetzales" (Q1000=$125). They had never even seen Girard before, let alone sold their land to him.

In 2001, the three communities had a series of meetings with FONTIERRAS about their land rights. In the most memorable meeting, FONTIERRAS and Ministry of Culture officials finally went to the community of Ikb'olay to address the problem of the park. The secretary of the land committee recalled that officials came in with a condescending attitude, starting by telling the community members that they didn't understand the fact of the park ("*la gente no entiende*") and began a pedantic explanation of the park's boundaries. In fact, the secretary explained, the people did understand and

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[14] One group that asked permission to pray at these caves suffered death threats, and they told me they believed it was because the owners are Evangelical and not Q'eqchi'. This community-based Q'eqchi' spiritual group was one of the first to answer Setzuul's call to validate their caves as a sacred place (below).

they were angry that state officials treated them poorly while stripping them of rights to the land they settled, suffered through the war on, and planned to give to their children.

A number of people surrounded the government commission with plastic tanks they claimed were full of gas, threatening to douse and burn them.[15] They did little to substantiate their threats, but they probably did not need to—the image of a horde of savage Indians threatening a few Ladinos has had powerful salience since the colonial period (Hale 2006). The Ministry of Culture representative started crying, and the FONTIERRAS representative wrote out a short document agreeing to title Ikb'olay's land at a discounted rate. The European development professional who works with Wakliqoo asserts that this conflict was what gave all three communities the power to negotiate a land settlement. Immediately after they returned from their hostage experience at Ikb'olay, however, the FONTIERRAS employee wrote a letter to the central office reneging his promise and recommending that the agency refuse to deal with any communities that hold employees hostage.

At this point, Setzuul's history diverges from typical dispossession stories because a few powerful people intervened: two Peace Corps Volunteers, one of whom had connections to USAID; a European development professional who today oversees most development projects in Chisec; and a few urban Q'eqchi' environmentalists, who created Wakliqoo with the help of the aforementioned foreigners. FONTIERRAS first refused to meet with representatives from any of the three communities, but after USAID intervened on the communities' behalf, it scheduled a meeting with the relevant representatives.

As the leaders of Setzuul know all too well, the same law looks different when it is implemented for a poor, indigenous community than when it is implemented at the behest of a rich and powerful development agency. USAID funded a project for a US anthropologist to teach Q'eqchi' community leaders how to map their land uses and land claims, then use this information to present a land management proposal to the Ministry of Culture so the communities could finish the land titling process. Wakliqoo employees recall this as an empowering experience, and they are proud of their expertise, which many of them now use in helping other Q'eqchi' communities in Chisec.[16]

Since the Ministry of Culture's map did not have a great degree of precision with regard to community locations, the team also mapped the park's boundaries. Ironically, when they mapped the cave system that supposedly overlapped with Ikb'olay, the boundary lay a full 150 meters outside of the community. The community that struggled the most against usurpation of their land discovered that they were fighting against nothing more than a technical error on a map ("*el francés tiró un mapa falso, así que peleamos por gusto*"). In 2002, FONTIERRAS officially stated that it did not intend to evict the two communities whose land overlapped with the park. FONTIERRAS did not mention Girard, which implies they never considered evicting him in the first place. The coalition working with Setzuul and San Marcos presented maps with their land claims and a plan to manage their resources sustainably and in accordance with the values of

[15] Community members and affiliated groups said that the tanks were empty; when I interviewed a Ministry of Culture representative, he declined to speculate.

[16] These experiences also gave them greater authority in the community and in the region. In so doing, it exacerbated existing inequities and rewarded younger, Spanish-speaking, educated Q'eqchi' men while effacing traditional, often monolingual, authorities.

the Cultural Patrimony. In 2003, they received provisional titles; until the payments were made, the land would remain under state tutelage, but was inscribed in the community's name in the National Property Register.

It is at this point that a number of observers declared success—poor, indigenous communities mapped their counter-claims to the land, and they got land titles. When I came to an agreement with Wakliqoo's director to take on Setzuul as a case study, this was my understanding. Although this is true, there are two important mitigating facts that mean I cannot end the story here. First, in a 2008 meeting, a FONTIERRAS lawyer revealed that the land agency has changed its policy on the community titles. FONTIERRAS will not release the titles from its tutelage (*tutela del estado*). When I protested that I thought it was legally obligated to do so once the communities finished paying for their land, the lawyer waffled and said he would only do it if the Ministry of Culture directed him to. Although this is a symbolic issue (the question of state tutelage normally matters only in a land sale, and Setzuul has promised not to sell its land), it makes the communities' victory seem hollow and reinscribes the state's authority in the community.

Second, Setzuul expected, and repeatedly requested, that the state evict Girard, who was squatting on land they now own. Years later, when I asked Setzuul residents why they thought Girard hadn't been evicted yet, they would laugh and say, he's white, he's French, he's rich, or he's *Kaxlan*. In multiple interviews and meetings people said, if he were poor and Q'eqchi' like us, the state would have evicted him years ago. Today, if members of Setzuul try to walk onto *their* land that Girard is squatting on, they risk being bitten by German Shepherds or shot at by guards. Even during the months when Setzuul and the hotel seem to peacefully coexist, the specter of military coercion hangs heavy over uniformed guards with guns, as well as the German Shepherds, which the army commonly used in counterinsurgency campaigns.

<u>Concluding Thoughts on Counter-mapping</u>

Although some observers questioned counter-mapping years ago (e.g., Peluso 1995), institutional obsessions with mapping remain strong both in major international organizations like the World Bank (through land administration projects) and indigenous community associations like Wakliqoo (counter-mapping marginalized people's land claims). The case of Setzuul, however, exemplifies the difficulties in taking down the Master's house using his tools (Lorde 1984). Wainwright and Bryan (2009) identify this as a recourse to the liberal foundations of citizenship and property, which were used to exclude indigenous people in their original formulations. Wakliqoo tried to use a mapping project to attain the state's recognition of the community's collective ownership, but the act of mapping did not fundamentally address the root of the land conflict. Instead, it revealed that the map and the title were little more than tools that the state wielded from a foundation of institutional racism. Setzuul's inability to attain eviction orders for their invader reinscribes their differentiated citizenship, such that indigenous citizens have less recourse to the state than a foreign entrepreneur.

Although the men who had participated in Wakliqoo's mapping project remember their mapping work with pride and point to it as a source of land tenure legitimacy, the rest of the community has categorized this experience differently. When the *gringos* brought the attention of USAID to their case, they negotiated with power; when they left and USAID forgot them, they slumped back into intractable problems. To them the technologies that created representations of space were nothing more than

tools, what was more important was the change in power relations that authorized their spatial representation. As Bromley (epigraph above) rightly asserts, Setzuul sees FONTIERRAS' issuance of title as willful deceit. After all, what is the point of a land title that does not grant its owners the right of exclusion?

Since 2003, Girard's lawyers and Setzuul's leaders have regularly met over a series of legal battles, including meetings where the attorney general urged Setzuul leaders to sign papers recognizing Girard's land tenure. These meetings stopped after the famous Mayan rights lawyer, Amílcar Pop, called the district attorney claiming Setzuul as a client. Community leaders cite this as an example of discriminatory behavior on the part of the state. The district attorney was unethically favoring Girard, a foreigner, over Guatemalan citizens, because he thought they were just "ignorant Indians" (in the words of a Setzuul leader) who would sign away their rights—until they got a lawyer. This is the same district attorney who would have to prosecute Girard for squatting and ask for his eviction. In addition, local park guards (community members from Setzuul and San Marcos) have lodged complaints that Girard or his employees have committed the following infractions against the laws governing Cultural Patrimonies: cut down trees without permission, built new structures, possess dogs inside the park, carry and shoot guns inside the park, and steal archeological relics for personal use. As of 2009, none of these charges have yet been investigated or prosecuted.

Over twenty years of conflict has taken its toll, both financially and emotionally, on the people of Setzuul. While there is a core group of families that will never concede Girard's rights, many families have accepted that Girard's hotel is there to stay and they are fundamentally skeptical of political activism, including Wakliqoo and the sacred place declaration. In the second half of the chapter, I describe Setzuul's failed attempt to use a sacred place declaration to finally evict Girard. To place this action in context, I first summarize Guatemala's Pan-Mayan movement (on the Guatemalan case: Wilson 1995; Warren 1998a; Nelson 1999; for a Latin American overview: Yashar 2005), then Setzuul's experience in joining up with the movement through the sacred place declaration. As is true with the rest of the dissertation, my reflections on what this case can tell us about the possibilities and pitfalls of Q'eqchi' identity and the Pan-Maya movement should not be taken to represent the opinions of the people I worked with.

Indigenous Rights Movements in Guatemala

> "The [Pan-Maya] movement has done more for the emancipation of Indians than their innumerable revolts since the Conquest." – Le Bot (1995: 106, translation mine)

The Indian Question

Until the latter half of the twentieth century, it was socially acceptable in Guatemala to call an indigenous person, "Indian" (*indio*). Under colonial and liberal regimes, the primary Indian question was whether Indians could be properly integrated into a productive Guatemalan society; and if so, how racial mixing and trusteeship could support these aims (Chapters 1 and 2). Most people accepted that Indians and Ladinos were two separate races living in a plural society (Guzmán Bockler and Herbert 1970), but that the acute Guatemalan version of this Latin American "problem" would ease through *mestizaje* and "de-Indianization," the disappearance of indigeneity in the rise of agricultural capitalism (Euraque et al. 2005). With the rise of Marxism in Latin America,

the influential intellectual Martínez Peláez (2009: xxxii) argued that "just as there were no Indians prior to the colonial regime creating them, so it follows that none will exist once Guatemalan society has developed in such a way as to erase all surviving structures of colonialism." In other words, the Marxist revolution would make problems of cultural difference and social inequities moot.

By the 1970s, many groups in the Western Highlands openly rejected the term Indian as racist, preferring instead the term *naturales* (natural people),[17] signaling both their precolonial history and implying a special relationship with the land. By this time, there was a core group of upwardly mobile indigenous people who organized themselves as such (e.g., Konefal 2009), but most political activity was channeled through resistance to militarized government in leftist movements affiliated with the guerrillas. The stakes in remembering social movements from the 1970s are high, because they tend to quickly devolve into attributing blame for the violence that rocked the countryside. Remembering the 1970s also signals whether and how interethnic alliances can be forged in the future.

I remember one clear example of this from a county governance meeting (*Consejo Municipal de Desarrollo*), when a Ladino development professional from the capital in charge of an NGO's projects in Uspantán took the floor to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the burning of the Spanish embassy in Guatemala. By 1980, extrajudicial violence had already begun in Uspantán, and a group of indigenous peasants affiliated with CUC went to the capital to protest military violence. There, they met students from the University of San Carlos, of whom one was apparently this development professional. When other forms of protest failed, a few students and the Uspantenense peasants symbolically took over the Spanish embassy to protest the violence. In violation of international law, the military police stormed the embassy, burning it and killing everyone but three people. Of them, the two surviving peasants were kidnapped from the hospital and their tortured corpses were left on campus streets as a warning; the Spanish ambassador to Guatemala was the sole survivor (Cajal 2000).

Although evidence points to the police and the military as the perpetrators of this violence, rumors persist that the student group deliberately burned down the embassy, sacrificing themselves and the peasants. Both the student group and CUC were affiliated with a major guerrilla group (EGP). In the multilingual uproar that took over the meeting, only one thing was clear—the professional who believed he was commemorating urban student-indigenous peasant solidarity (which he continued today through his development work) did not speak K'iche'. Amongst K'iche's, questions were more complicated: Were all the men who died really members of CUC? Did they know CUC was part of EGP? Did they know they were going to die? Were they willing martyrs who should be memorialized? Or was this just a bitter reminder of how Ladinos on the right *and* left used indigenous people when they wanted? The fact that present-day K'iche' leaders do not know the answer to these questions of their fathers, coupled with the fact that none of the bilingual K'iche's chose to translate this heated debate for the benefit of the former university student, point to the instability of alliances for social movements, both then and now.

Both guerrilla and leftist (*popular*) movements promised indigenous people that they would be lifted up in the rising tide of social justice. These Ladino-dominated

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[17] This term dates to the Spanish invasion (Lovell and Lutz 2009).

movements tended, at best, to see race as one way to experience what is actually class oppression. Even though some leaders may have had more nuanced understandings of race, class, and agrarian dynamics, all of these organizations tended to subordinate indigenous rights to a political movement based on a materialist economism (Hall 1980).[18] They expected indigenous organizers to toe the party line, using cultural affinities in recruitment and telling indigenous communities that racism would disappear in the revolution (Le Bot 1995). Given the dangerous nature of recruiting, these organizations were often amorphous, and some recruiting occurred through Catholic Action. I have interviewed a number of rural Q'eqchi's, including ex-combatants, about their relationship with these leftist groups, but few of the outside organizers themselves. As with the Spanish embassy protest, surviving lowland Q'eqchi's are often unsure or ambivalent about their community's political relationships—both because key community leaders were assassinated and because they are suspicious of what was lost in translation.

Emergence of the Pan-Maya Movement

In the Western Highlands, there was a complicated constellation of alliances and actions that led to some groups splitting from the *popular* movements and reconstituting themselves as Maya, primarily through ethnolinguistic projects. By the late 1980s, it was clear that there was a vibrant group whose primary goal was to expose the contradictions in a political system that purported to be egalitarian but promulgated a monoethnic, monolingual image of the Guatemalan nation (Warren 1998a). Although many groups participated in the negotiation of the Peace Accords and continue to be active on various fronts in struggles for social justice, they have a number of critics on the Left who accuse them of wrongly favoring race over class. This is not unrelated to revisionist memories of the civil war—Ladino Leftist leaders posed it as a class struggle for 30 years, then felt betrayed when truth commissions described the military's brutal repression as "genocide." Some leaders who believed they were working in solidarity with Mayas believe that the deaths of many Ladino activists have been erased from racialized war memories.

By contrast, Pan-Mayanists argue that Ladinos both wield Hispanic privilege and suffered irreparable culture loss from any putative indigenous heritage. Even through the time of the Pan-Maya ethnic resurgence, many indigenous people, notably Rigoberta Menchú Tum (Burgos-Debray 1984), also think that indigenous people who became serfs on plantations have necessarily lost their culture to plantation life. As I argued in Chapter 4, this displaces Q'eqchi' homesteaders—as former serfs—from Mayan cultural authority.

Amongst waves of North American anthropologists, issues centered around where people fit on an Indian-Ladino spectrum (Adams 1957; Adams and Bastos 2003) and a series of essentialist debates that Warren calls the four fallacies of "Indianness" as propagated by North American ethnographers. Given their continued salience in Guatemalan politics, they are worth citing at length: 1) ethnogenesis models that point to a single moment that constitutes indigenous identities (e.g., Spanish invasion,

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[18] Hall describes the idea that all instances of conflict are dominated by class struggle as "classical Marxism;" guerrilla groups in Guatemala seem to have been Marxist, Marxist-Leninist, and Maoist, but they all held to this assumption. EGP, the group active in the Franja, was concerned with issues of race to a greater degree than other organizations, but ultimately held this assumption as well.

nineteenth century liberal dispossession, twentieth century genocidal massacres); 2) ethnic identity is little more than a defensive reaction to the dominant Ladino culture; 3) ethnicity will wither away in the individualism that accompanies capitalist development (in this dissertation, the ownership society); and 4) an obsession with pure, most isolated, or most traditional traditions based on static culture and assumes any change is tantamount to culture loss (Warren 1998a: 70-71). Sadly, all four of these fallacies can be found in contemporary politics and analysis, and the latter is particularly prominent in the Pan-Maya movement.

Many Guatemalan Maya still hew to a "cultural survival" position (Field 1994)—with its attendant binary of culture loss—because it facilitates a moral imperative to advocate protections for indigenous people. In recognition of the difficulties power inequalities raise for anthropologists who became the arbiters of cultural loss/survival, anthropology (and other disciplines using ethnographic tools) have moved away from fixed ethnic markers and towards processual views. Anthropologists today often understand Maya as an identity forged in resistance to the dominant Ladino state, whereas many Maya (anthropologists and organic intellectuals alike) seek to recover (*rescatar*) their heritage from early colonial texts and wise Maya elders. Those Maya peoples who do not have early colonial texts and whose wise elders did not survive the war, such as the Q'eqchi', look to powerful Western Highlands Maya for cultural guidance.

As it has risen in prominence as a national political sector, the Pan-Maya movement has come under attack. An important facet of criticisms of the Pan-Maya Movement is essentially that Pan-Mayanists are becoming *indios permitidos* (Hale 2004), which is a neoliberal, multicultural take on Schirmer's (1998) Sanctioned Maya. Hale warns that they risk abandoning broader struggles for social justice in favor of cultural tokenism within a liberal state, which recognizes their right to indigenous dress, language and cultural but makes sustainable livelihoods structurally impossible. For their part, many Pan-Mayanists struggle against stereotypes that conflate indigenous peoples with rural poverty, arguing that they reinscribe indigeneity as marginality.[19] The problem with this is that many rural Mayas (including many of the Q'eqchi's I interviewed throughout this project) argue that their lack of education and poverty are the result of institutional racism, but they also insist that their suffering for territory through the war is founded on an inherent association between indigenous people and their rural lands.

At the outset, the sacred place claim I describe below seemed like it offered a powerful Pan-Maya response to the "cultural critique," because claiming territory as sacred in a Mayan cosmology (*cosmovisión*) is fundamentally a material claim to land. That is, sacred place claims link the politics of *distribution* with the politics of *recognition* (Watts and Peet 2004). At the same time, I believed that connecting material and cultural politics in one sacred place was scaled down (and potentially more viable) than a broader call for redistribution of resources (e.g., Gordon et al. 2003). I chose the case of Setzuul because I hoped it would offer insight into levers that would force the

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[19] At the far end of the spectrum, some conservative Ladinos argue that educated Maya who live in urban areas by definition are not indigenous. Although this employs a narrow, stereotyped understanding of indigeneity, this was operationalized in the Guatemalan census until at least 1994 (Tzian 1994; Cojtí Cuxil 1995), in that census-takers mark educated people who speak proper Spanish as "Ladino" without asking them how they self-identify.

Guatemalan nation-state to recognize indigenous claims to land where calls for agrarian reform had failed. Mayan territorial claims (e.g., Cojtí Cuxil 1996) are powerful and threatening to Ladinos in Guatemala, but cleavages that clearly emerged in Setzuul's claim were the power relations between rural Q'eqchi's who lack a codified culture but maintain an agrarian lifestyle and urban Mayas (primarily K'iche's and Kaqchikeles) who are well-versed in "Maya" culture but do not live off the land.

Candelaria Caves becomes *Q'ootiha'*: The Work of Setzuul's Sacred Place Declaration

In the previous chapter, I described memories of racialized dispossession as formative in lowlands Q'eqchi' identity, and I also suggested that some Q'eqchi' communities spatialized the frontier effect (Hall 1995, 1996), marking other Q'eqchi's as part of the constitutive outside because they did not suffer for territory (Moore 2005). The Pan-Maya movement in Guatemala actively performed the work of ascribing a new, positive subject position for a unitary Maya and hailed the Q'eqchi's as subjects, but the people of Setzuul were not simply summoned into place. Below, I tell the history of Setzuul's sacred place declaration as a case study in the articulation of them as subjects with the discursive formations of the Maya (Hall 1996).

In the 2000s, the families of Setzuul found themselves in an awkward position. USAID funded the mapping and titling of the community, as well as infrastructure and training in ecotourism, then declared success and moved on. Community members run the small tourism project, but they resent that they control less impressive cave sites and have fewer economic opportunities than Girard, who continues to profit off their land. In a way that seems to be more creeping and insidious than singular events that affect the community as a whole, Girard has spent years chipping away at community cohesion by offering jobs to some people (and not others); meanwhile, the Guatemalan government has awarded Setzuul title, but this means that community members are paying for the land that Girard still controls. As the years drag on, the demoralizing truth has set in that state authorities (e.g., the district attorney, Ministry of Culture, and Land Fund) are perfectly willing to sacrifice what institutional legitimacy they have to let Girard continue to occupy private property. Wakliqoo has been the only organization that continued to support Setzuul leaders in their struggle against Girard.[20]

A few months before I became involved in the case, the director of Wakliqoo and Javier, a dynamic Setzuul "tribal elder" (Tsing 1999) who also worked on Wakliqoo's mapping team, sat down to talk about how to address Setzuul's legal problems with Girard. Setzuul needed a lawyer, but Wakliqoo didn't have any money to fund the cause. Instead, the director suggested that Javier get in touch with Amílcar Pop. The Pops are one of the few prominent Q'eqchi' families on the national scene, notably for their participation in Pan-Maya political action. Amílcar was incredibly busy in his work with Rigoberta Menchú Tum to create a new Maya political party, but he made time to meet with Javier and agreed to take on the nationally famous case of Setzuul. As mentioned above, it took nothing more than a phone call from Amílcar Pop to dissipate some of the more egregious political machinations.

In that first meeting Javier told Amílcar about Setzuul's case, and Amílcar suggested that Javier contact Oxlajuj Ajpop and declare the Candelaria Caves a sacred

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[20] Other development professionals have suggested that Wakliqoo's attachment to the failures of Setzuul has caused it difficulties in fundraising.

place. Around this time, Wakliqoo's director suggested that I contact Javier. I was supposed to find Javier at a meeting at a different set of caves, but when I awkwardly interrupted a blessing ceremony (one *gringa*, many Q'eqchi' men, and a few women sitting on the floor with small children) looking for him, he was not there.[21] Undeterred, a few days later, I hopped out of a microbus in front of the big USAID sign and walked the thirty minutes to Setzuul's tourism building. I explained who I was, what information I sought, and how I thought I would use it. All the men present quickly consented to my research, and to my surprise, Sebastián immediately launched into the story of how he founded Setzuul. I realized Setzuul elders thought I intended to conduct my research over the course of a few hours, as many others apparently have. Luckily, Javier was headed out of town after the meeting as well, and we cleared things up on the walk back to the highway. I asked him about his meeting with Oxlajuj Ajpop, the Mayan spirituality NGO, and the requirements to get their sacred place recognized by the Ministry of Culture. He said, it's no problem, we can get it all worked out except one thing. He couldn't remember what it was, so he dug his notebook out and flipped through it until he found the word: anthropology. We need anthropology. Can you do that for us? Oh yes, I said, smiling, that's perfect.

Tzuultaq'a, the True Owner of Setzuul

Strangely enough, I cannot tell you how Javier explains the caves as a sacred place. As a truly skilled tribal elder (Tsing 1999), Javier's work seems to consist more of helping people sympathize with the families of Setzuul, and less actually representing their thoughts and beliefs. At the second meeting with Oxlajuj Ajpop I attended, one of the K'iche' lawyers asked, what's a *tzuultaq'a*? Oh, Javier said, that means cave in Q'eqchi'. While that is a true answer, it is also incomplete. As I gave the requisite anthropologist's answer, I wondered if perhaps Javier wasn't a bit embarrassed. *Tzuultaq'a* is a difficult word to translate,[22] as it signals both the sacred and secular in a way unfamiliar to those coming from the Judeo-Christian tradition. As a composite word, *tzuultaq'a* literally translates to hill-valley, and it usually refers to either a sacred hill or a cave, as what makes the landscape come alive. As Wilson (1995: 66, emphasis in original) explains, the "*tzuultaq'a* **is** the land, as well as being a spirit inhabiting it." *Tzuultaq'as* are at the heart of the binary in the Q'eqchi' way of life, as hill-valley, spirit-material, man-woman. *Tzuultaq'as* are often referred to generally as both father and mother *(Qawa' Qana')*, although individual *tzuultaq'as* are either male or female.

Tzuultaq'as are not global spirits (like the *pachamama* of the Incas), rather they are specifically territorialized beings that inhabit a landscape as owners of land and animals, and Q'eqchi's must ask permission to plant and to hunt on the land of the *tzuultaq'as*. To many Q'eqchi's, the *tzuultaq'a* is the only legitimate owner of the land, and they see this as a fundamental contradiction with "the 'Ladino' notion of land as a material good that belongs to the State of Guatemala and that, in an arduous and expensive ritual called 'paperwork,' is converted into a commodity" (Milián et al. 2002: 74, translation mine).

Historically, Spanish and Ladino institutions have intentionally attacked the relationship between Q'eqchi's and *tzuultaq'as*. As part of the Spanish Conquest, the Dominican brotherhood attempted to take over sacred hills for God by building churches on top of them, as with the Calvario in Cobán (Figure 5.1, below). These efforts

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[21] I later found out that he was ill with malaria.

[22] I offer a more extended description of the concept in Ybarra (2008); interested readers may also see Wilson (1995), Grandia (2006), Grandin (2004), and Kahn (2006).

met with mixed success, as Q'eqchi's developed syncretic practices that continued to honor *tzuultaq'as*. During the civil war, both Catholic Action and Evangelical churches attacked the *tzuultaq'a* as pagan, or even devil-worship, and strongly discouraged Q'eqchi's from honoring *tzuultaq'as*.[23] It is important to understand in the following discussion, then, that the majority of Setzuul residents are Evangelical, and that Catholics mentioned in interviews that Salesian priests still disapprove of spiritual practices that revere the *tzuultaq'a*.

FIGURE 5.1: Dominican appropriation of a *tzuultaq'a* through a *calvario*, or church on a hill.
(Photograph by the author.)

Q'eqchi's believe they must develop a relationship with *tzuultaq'as* over time, learning the name and wishes of a place's *tzuultaq'a* through worship, offerings, and dreams. Wilson (1995) describes Q'eqchi' migrants to the lowlands as lost, because they did not know the land or the spirit that inhabits it. For her part, Adams (2001) points to the belief of highland communities that the *tzuultaq'as* followed migrants to the lowlands, perhaps implying a more mobile relationship.

By the time he founded Setzuul, Sebastián was already a practicing Evangelical;[24] he told me he appreciated the caves both for their natural beauty and as a sacred place, but would never worship in them. Attempts to define and locate *tzuultaq'as* can border

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[23] Moreover, the home of the *tzuultaq'a* tends to be in caves (*ochoch pek*), remote hills, or areas with dense foliage—during the army's scorched earth counterinsurgency campaign, these became subversive jungle, and people congregating there (especially at night, as is customary with ceremonies) could be killed on sight as guerrillas.

[24] It is not uncommon to hear that a major shift towards Evangelical Christianity occurred during counterinsurgency campaigns, and especially in the early 1980s after the military dictator Ríos Montt repeatedly broadcast his affiliation with the Evangelical Church. There are a few isolated cases in which indigenous communities seem to be slowly returning to the Catholic Church (e.g., Yaab'alhix), but Evangelicals were a growing population prior to the war.

on the farcical, leading to one Mayan priest's assertion at his first meeting in Setzuul that "a *tzuultaq'a* cannot be measured" on a map. That fact that counter-mapping necessarily entails the translation of Q'eqchi' geographies into GIS coordinates is yet another factor in Setzuul's inability to utilize liberal property laws to its advantage.

<u>From the Capital to the Caves</u>

So, based on lawyer's counsel, Setzuul sought advice from a professional Maya NGO, Oxlajuj Ajpop, whose name means "Ministry of Mayan Spirituality" in K'iche', on how to get the Guatemalan Ministry to Culture to declare the Candelaria Caves as "sacred." Oxlajuj Ajpop is a nationally known and influential NGO that has two major projects: first, to pass a Law of Sacred Places of Indigenous Peoples as mandated by the 1996 Peace Accords (in 2009, pending a vote in the legislature); and second, to organize a national council of Mayan priests. Most Pan-Mayan groups have internal power differences by class, ethno-linguistic group, and gender (Warren 1998b; Nelson 1999); for its part, Oxlajuj Ajpop enjoys significant representation amongst K'iche's, Kaqchikeles, and Mames, but had relatively weak ties to the Q'eqchi' people in 2008. (This is the reason why I had to explain to Oxlajuj Ajpop lawyers that *tzuultaq'a* is the Q'eqchi' word for a sacred place, a sacred entity, and a cave.) OAP organizers seized this opportunity, sending out K'iche's to hold meetings in Spanish about sacred places and organize a local branch of Mayan priests.

Although Oxlajuj Ajpop told Javier he needed an anthropologist's report, lawyers assigned to the case tried to exclude me from meetings, arguing that I could not possibly understand the Mayan cosmology that underpinned the sacred place claim. Later, a K'iche' priest was invited as a guest speaker to a political meeting and religious ceremony (*mayejak*) in Setzuul. Speaking in Spanish, he argued that foreign anthropologists (with a pointed glance at the author, sitting on the ground with notebook in hand) came to Guatemala to claim that his people did not suffer genocide in the sixteenth century,[25] so we were facilitating Ladino subjugation of the Maya today. Javier did not translate this barb in Q'eqchi' as it was rendered in Spanish. His deft maneuvering between two apparently dueling parties he wanted to support Setzuul's claim inspired me to believe that this scheme just might work.

My understanding of Setzuul's plan was two-fold: in Alta Verapaz, we needed to call on Q'eqchi's to come to our support and state publicly that they believed the Candelaria Caves were a sacred place; in the capital, we needed to pressure MICUDE to legally recognize our claim. Once MICUDE recognized our claim, we hoped to marshal a broad alliance (MICUDE, Oxlajuj Ajpop, regional Q'eqchi' priests, Wakliqoo, etc.) to put together a convincing campaign to show that Girard, a foreigner, was profaning a Q'eqchi' sacred place with his disrespectful behavior in imposing an entrance fee of Q30 ($3.75) on Q'eqchi's who wanted to pray in their sacred site. The fee excluded the poorest Q'eqchi's from the site. We would seek sympathy by posing our argument as a challenge: Would you let a non-believer pitch a tent in your church and charge admission?

<u>Naming the *Tzuultaq'a*</u>

As an organization, Wakliqoo has a particular kind of flair, in which representatives make sweeping, dramatic statements, then think about how to back

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[25] He referred to empirical studies that suggest more indigenous people died from foreign illnesses than physical violence in the Spanish invasion.

them up with hard work later. It is to the organization's credit that they put in the work later because they care deeply about Wakliqoo's mission. As the director explained it to me, they would be happy to hire a Ladino development professional, but people who accept fieldwork jobs (more work, less pay) and keep them are invariably Q'eqchi's from the rural communities Wakliqoo serves. When the director told two employees to organize Q'eqchi' priests, he did not know if Q'eqchi' priests were organized in the region, much less their opinion on the Candelaria Caves.

The new regional Q'eqchi' priest association, Oxlaju Tz'i' (OT), quickly became the authentic link between the communities' land claims and Mayan spirituality. In retrospect, it strikes me as important that OT representatives never coordinated with the Catholic group that practices the *mayejak*, led by Javier's father-in-law, but instead with Wakliqoo and the Setzuul tourism committee. Syncretic Catholics were not invited to join the OT council and were effectively marginalized from their own sacred place. I also failed to take them into account at first.

Unlike OT representatives, who in their majority suffered greatly during the war (some were former guerrillas, many resettled in new communities) and outright rejected the Church and all things Ladino, the position of Setzuul's Catholics was somewhat more difficult. Although the elders told me a lot about the *tzuultaq'a* that melded well with ethnographical accounts I had read, and regularly went on pilgrimages to make offerings and bless their maize, their practices had been significantly affected by the politics of the war. The elders who led the Church had settled in Setzuul from another Chisec community in the mid-1980s. When they moved to Setzuul, people did not much enter the caves, because to do so was to be marked as a guerrilla. (In fact, the first time they saw Girard in the caves, they reported him through the paramilitary system as a guerrilla.) Although the elders tried to revive their practices, the Salesian priest in Raxruhá has been openly disapproving, and the younger generation seems less interested in it to the extent that other observers found little evidence of Q'eqchi' spiritual practices (e.g., García 2007).

In recent years, as a number of tourists shuffle through the caves and the occasional Q'eqchi' visitor brings maize for a blessing, Setzuul Catholics began performing ceremonies in the cave. When the tourism committee learned that Girard was charging extra to have a priest perform ceremonies as an extra service to tourists,[26] they quickly put Setzuul Catholics to work performing similar ceremonies for foreign tourists. Now, as they prepared a claim that Girard was desecrating their sacred place, some tourism committee members seemed embarrassed of this practice.

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[26] The "priest" is an elder from Setzuul who used to participate in Church *mayejaks*; since he began working for Girard, he stopped participating in the Church.

FIGURE 5.2: Setzuul Catholics perform a ceremony for foreign tourists.
(Photograph by the author.)

Setzuul elders seemed neither surprised nor offended by this turn of events, and Javier's father-in-law managed to stay apprised of major events. So it came about that although Q'eqchi's had been living around this stretch of the caves for well over thirty years, OT decided that the next important step in the process would be to get to know the site, get to know the spirit, and ask permission to come and worship. They also planned a later three-day trip to visit the stretch of caves that both Setzuul and San Marcos control. During the trip, they identified more cave formations, venerated pre-Columbian ruins, and established their relationship as the descendents of the ancient Maya who worshipped the same spirits centuries ago (for an example of one song, see Appendix 5.1).

The new president of OT was a dynamic leader, having previously been: an active participant in Catholic Action, an EGP guerrilla, a leader of a displaced group of Q'eqchi's successfully seeking land in Chisec after the war, and now a Mayan priest who rejected both the Ladino left and God. He walked authoritatively through the caves, naming formations, and tapping a tall formation like a xylophone, moving his foot to the music. Finally, he settled in the middle of a large cave, where he decided to have the meeting, although Sebastián fretted that his choice would damage the caves, as the USAID consultant (to the mapping project, above) had specifically warned him not to let people burn incense or fires in caves with colored formations. The OT president gathered up the pre-Columbian ceramic shards scattered on the cave floor, then prepared a fire and lit a massive incense ball, letting the smoke billow around him, communing with the *tzuultaq'a*.

When he finished he announced that the *tzuultaq'a* had made its name known in the smoke: *Qana Q'ootiha'*, or the place where the water turns. When I told community members from Setzuul about the name later, they all accepted it, nodding their approval. In a later interview, I asked the president to explain the territorial reach of *Qana Q'ootiha'*, and he declined to speculate (possibly in rejection of my territorial vision). I pushed, pointing out that there were more than 10 kilometers of caves included in the park alone, and asked if he believed *Q'ootiha'* might be the *tzuultaq'a* for the entire stretch. He responded that he would have to walk the cave complex to know for sure, but in the absence of evidence he considered it entirely possible that there is another

tzuultaq'a, with a different name and personality, which controls a different stretch of the caves.

People in Setzuul were excited about the first regional meeting in their community to honor the caves as a sacred place, and tourism committee members from both Setzuul and San Marcos organized the event. They gathered flowers and avidly discussed the best flower arrangements to mark the four cardinal points, trimmed the lawn for their guest center, and prepared massive quantities of food. Even I was up by 3AM, as the ad-hoc meat committee decided that the vegetarian ethnographer should act as a participant-observer in butchering the pig. In terms of numbers, the meeting was a huge success—people came from as far as Petén, and both highlands and lowlands Alta Verapaz.

Setzuul's sacred place claim became the catalyst for OT. It turned out that a number of lowlands Q'eqchi's had trained in Petén or Chisec and now considered themselves priests. They wanted a regional organization to affiliate with to protect themselves from accusations of being witches,[27] and they wanted to worship together. They were also enthusiastic about affiliating with Oxlajuj Ajpop, as many were familiar with the work of a few influential K'iche' Maya priests who were on the executive council. Importantly for Setzuul and San Marcos hosts, the Q'eqchi' priests were also enthusiastic about the sacred place claim, and absolutely considered the caves a sacred place. One group from Raxruhá had gotten into a rather significant conflict attempting to access the stretch of caves closest to their village, giving up only after they received death threats. I easily found two different groups of lowlands Q'eqchi' priests who attempted to ask the *tzuultaq'a's* blessing for their maize seed, but were deterred by the fees Girard charged to worship in the caves.

FIGURE 5.3: Part of the worshipping circle performing a *mayejak* in the caves.
(Photograph by the author.)

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[27] Some Maya priests present at the first meeting said they suffered threats of physical violence as 'witches', and one stated that he had been jailed.

The political meeting was held for about five or six hours in the tourism reception hut, then the women led the first ceremony, a *wa'tesink*, giving food and drink to the *tzuultaq'a* to ask for a blessing and inaugurate our work. After a quick dinner break (we could not eat until the *wa'tesink* was performed), we all pulled out flashlights and filed into the cave. The elaborate ceremony lasted until dawn, and priests employed ancient Mayan ceramics from the caves (including the tall pot center-right, at the edge of the offerings, Figure 5.3), and offerings including Q'eqchi' moonshine (*b'oj*), incense, and candles. The *mayejak* itself consisted of long prayers, ritual dancing, and healing of sick people.[28] I saw the Wakliqoo director around midnight, and he laughed, expressing surprise at how many people showed up and how important the sacred place declaration was to them. Even though he was the one who authorized the event, the director was surprised at the authenticity and urgency it now conveyed.

Some community members of Setzuul enjoyed themselves—children stayed up the whole night, and Catholic elders danced and prayed. Although I was having too much fun to notice that night, it quickly became clear in the following days that a number of folks from Setzuul (including those who merely heard about the meeting, or went to the political meeting but not the *mayejak*) were scandalized by two things about their guests. First, many of us danced and drank *b'oj*; while few were truly drunk, Evangelical ministers were quick to remind their flock that these were forbidden activities. Second, during the *mayejak* many Q'eqchi' priests openly declared their identities as something most people in Setzuul had never heard of: non-Christian Maya. By this, they explained that the Christian God was clearly the god of the Spanish and German invaders, so worshipping him didn't make any sense for the Q'eqchi'. Instead, they wanted to worship using Maya practices in the Maya cosmology, in which God (as such) doesn't exist.[29] In the weeks leading up to this, a few Evangelicals from Setzuul explained to me that a *tzuultaq'a* was really just a kind of angel,[30] but subordinate always to God. Their guests' assertions left no room for compromise in syncretic interpretations of the *tzuultaq'a*.

As the sacred place claim process dragged on (see below), community members in Setzuul and San Marcos became increasingly uncomfortable with the pact they had entered into with OT. Although there is always variation within communities, Setzuul today tends to pose itself as a community of folks who resettled under the auspices of the army, and some reflect on the violence of the 1980s as though they were between two armies (Stoll 1993). For their part, some OT members acknowledge that they were active supporters of the failed revolution. Although they allied with the movement under the promise of social justice, their perception of EGP's failure, and the Catholic

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[28] When I visited another community the following day and had an opportunity to ask what ailed the sick people, the symptoms they described to me sounded like depression and anxiety after civil war violence and shunning by Evangelicals. A major function of the healing ceremony is to bring that person back into the fold of her or his community.

[29] Some Pan-Maya traditions celebrate a similar figure to God, *Nim Ajaw*, but this was not the case with Oxlaju Tz'i'.

[30] This seems to be part of an alternative set of Q'eqchi' practices related to some communities that converted to Pentecostalism, which include children's special ability to commune with the *tzuultaq'a*, *tzuultaq'as* as angels, and spirit possession in *mayejaks* (Adams 2009). These are not universal, and relatively rare amongst Q'eqchi' communities; the non-Christian Mayan priests who participated in the sacred place declaration disapprove of these beliefs and activities.

Church's subsequent difficulties in protecting them and making sense of the violence, has led them to a hardliner Maya stance. Both of these groups are authentically Q'eqchi', and both are war survivors. This means that they agree on their perception of the state's institutionalized racism (then and now), but not necessarily the positive actions they should take to fight racism. That said, if the sacred place movement had led to tangible results in a few months, it is possible that the tenuous alliance would have held.

Instead, Oxlaju Tz'i' bloomed while the quest to wrest the Candelaria Caves from Girard seemed to wither. While OT's work supported Setzuul's claim to the caves, it also asserted a moral claim for all Q'eqchi's to use the caves for religious ceremonies. In one of the first meetings of OT with Setzuul and San Marcos, the communities agreed that official OT members[31] did not have to pay to pray. If OT members simply wanted to visit the caves, they would receive a discount by presenting their identification cards. The morning after the first meeting, a number of OT members actually paid the reduced fee (~$1.25) to go on a tour of the caves they spent most of the night praying in, and this boded well for the agreement. Wakliqoo also subsidized food and transportation to the initial meetings, but these funds quickly dried up.

Without the funding, excitement, or results, some members of the tourism committee began to resent their role as hosts to OT meetings. Eventually, during a meeting held at San Marcos, the tourism committee told OT leaders they were not welcome unless they paid to have meetings there, and a park guard/tourism committee member/Evangelical priest told me, scoffing, "We don't believe in that stuff they do." Apparently, Wakliqoo employees had promised a number of things that they had failed to deliver on, and the tourism committees associated OT, the sacred place initiative, and me with Wakliqoo. As such, they didn't want to help any of us, unless they got "results."

After I finished my case study and moved on, having submitted my report to community committees, Wakliqoo, OAP, and MICUDE, I continued to attend OT meetings. In one meeting a few months after the conflict in San Marcos, an OT member remarked that OT still unconditionally supported the declaration of Candelaria Caves/*Q'ootiha'* as sacred, but pointed out that members understood that Wakliqoo and the communities used them—inviting them as evidence to back their claim, then making them feel unwelcome when they were no longer needed. For their part, Setzuul community members believe they supported the sacred place initiative and acted as good hosts, but this initiative failed, just like all those before it. In the next section, I study up, showing the problems of Setzuul's sacred place initiative in the national panorama.

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[31] Members would be required to present an identification card provided through OAP. While OT members were pleased to pay dues to OAP in exchange for the identification cards (to ward off "witch" accusations), this is part of the NGO-ization of the Pan-Maya movement (Nelson 2009).

Joining Up? The Contradictions for Q'eqchi's in the Pan-Maya Movement

> For the K'iche' elite it was a short rhetorical step from claiming the role of defenders of the impoverished, Spanish illiterate K'iche's from their own city's hinterland… to speaking on behalf of all Guatemalan Indians. In the mid-1890s, they began to use a phrase that would appear repeatedly in their written works: they claimed to speak not just on behalf of the 'Indians of Quetzaltenango in particular' but for those of the 'indigenous class in general.' – Greg Grandin (2000: 143)

Grandin's historical work on the K'iche' Maya in Quetzaltenango provides a nuanced analysis of their identity struggles, including questions of class differentiation and the urban/rural divide. While he shows cleavages within the K'iche' people that help explain political movements leading up to the 1954 *coup d'état*, his work still maintains a clean binary—K'iche' politics amongst a differentiated K'iche' people, and K'iche' politics in relation to the Ladino population. Grandin's elegant analysis does not examine the effects of K'iche' elites purporting to represent "all of the nation's Indians" (131) on the other Maya peoples they speak for. I first read his book as a Peace Corps volunteer living in Uspantán, where the dominant K'iche's celebrate the Uspanteko minority and shun lowlands Q'eqchi's, so I was particularly attuned to this silence. Without for a moment lessening my admiration for the work of the Pan-Maya movement, I do think the movement is mature enough to consider some nuances in its representations of regional, class and cultural differences about the diverse peoples within the larger Maya community. In this chapter, I use differentiation amongst the Maya to push the movement to consider the consequences of ethnic absolutism (Gilroy 1992), and take on the difficult task representing Mayas as a differentiated alterity instead of having the dominant speak for all.

<u>Q'eqchi' + Maya = Contradiction?</u>

Amongst Maya peoples, as with other indigenous peoples, observers have noticed that some people seem "more indigenous" than others (Brockington et al. 2008: 122). For example, Kahn (2006) says that when Pan-Maya organizations first arrived in Izabal (eastern Franja), presumably from the capital, they considered the Garífuna, an Afro-Caribbean people, more indigenous than the Q'eqchi', and accordingly failed to invite Q'eqchi' representatives to their activities. This is an important example because Afro-Caribbean peoples in Latin America have had significant difficulties claiming indigenous rights (Gordon et al. 2003), but Western Highlands organizers apparently thought they had better historical ties to the land than Q'eqchi' migrants. In fact, the ability of Q'eqchi's to claim territorial rights as the only Maya people expanding their territory is a highly controversial question (Chapter 3).

I have never heard claims that the Q'eqchi' are less indigenous than others, especially given their high rate of monolinguism in an indigenous language and women's tendencies to wear indigenous clothing (*traje*). Instead, they are portrayed as bad environmentalists with little traditional ecological knowledge (Chapter 4), and less high culture. As a Salesian Catholic priest asserts, "unlike other races of Guatemala, [Q'eqchi's] do not have Literature, and they do not know their historic past; they live only in the present" (de Leon V. 1984: 36, translation mine).[32] Others simply see Q'eqchi's as notoriously "closed" and difficult to work with. Grünberg, a scholar of Central American indigenous peoples, comments that "many Q'eqchi's barely realize

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[32] Q'eqchi' priests in OT worry about their lack of pre- and early- colonial texts, telling me that learning from Kaqchikel and K'iche' writings is the only way they can recover their lost past.

they live in a country called 'Guatemala', and the more strong is their community fabric, the famous Mesoamerican corporativism, the less interest and need they have to articulate themselves to the *Kaxlan*" (Grünberg 2003: 119, translation mine). As I show throughout this dissertation, lowlands Q'eqchi's generally are very concerned about individual and state racism, but this does not necessarily lead to their participation in the Pan-Maya movement (as Grünberg implies it should). Wakliqoo, a community organization fiercely concerned with Q'eqchi' rights, tends to associate its struggles considerably more with ILO 169 and indigenous peoples in other countries than Guatemalan Pan-Maya NGOs and the Peace Accords. As such, I ask not why the Q'eqchi' are so closed and politically disinterested, but why—in their related political struggles—Q'eqchi's often do not join up with the Pan-Maya movement.

<u>Pan-Mayanism from the Capital</u>

I had the opportunity to travel to the capital with a Wakliqoo employee who lived in Setzuul and participated in the public declaration of the proposed Law of Sacred Places.[33] At the presentation, a short religious ceremony was performed,[34] and the crowded room was filled with people in *traje*, people in Western clothes, and *gring@s* (in both *traje* and Western clothes). As I read through the text of the law, I was both pleased that it explicitly addressed the problem of natural resource extraction and dismayed at the use of K'iche' language as though it were universally Maya. Both the law and the presenters repeatedly referred to *aj q'ij* as Mayan priests; in Q'eqchi' I have heard this role referred to as *aj k'atolmayej* ("one who burns offerings"), *aj k'amolb'e* ("one who shows the path," leader), or *aj ilonel* ("one who sees illness," healer), but in Q'eqchi' *aj q'ij* is meaningless. I leaned over to my associate from Wakliqoo and commented that almost all the *traje* in the room was K'iche',[35] asking him if he knew what all the words in K'iche' meant. As he told me no, *aj q'ij* did not mean anything to him, a woman wearing K'iche' *traje* turned around and shot me a dirty look.

Issues of language have been brewing since the inception of the Pan-Maya movement, and there was significant debate in the recent past over whether K'iche' or Kaqchikel should become a kind of *lingua franca* Maya language (Warren 1998a); the fact that none of the other 19 languages was considered evokes their marginality. Although this proposal failed, Alfredo told me that he and other Q'eqchi' representatives eventually dropped out of the Mayan Language Academy's project to create a universal alphabet. The alphabet was developed based on the strongest linguistic work (of K'iche' and Kaqchikel), but when it was applied to Q'eqchi', some words could no longer be pronounced phonetically. As such, he believes the Summer Institute of Linguistics spellings are more adequate to spell and pronounce Q'eqchi', even though he prefers the politics of the Mayan Language Academy.

Although it may seem that questions of semantics are little more than that, I argue that the homogenization of the Maya as ethnic absolutism serves to make the unitary Maya strange to lowlands Q'eqchi's. If Q'eqchi's perform their identity in a way

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[33] As of 2009, the proposed law is still under debate in Congress. Political observers speculated in 2008 that the law would be very controversial, less because it reinforces the multicultural nature of the Guatemalan state, and because of potential implications for mining and petroleum concessions.

[34] In contrast to much longer ceremonies, in blessings for political events Mayan priests often must find a way to seek blessings in ten minutes or less.

[35] Different Maya groups have different distinguished *traje*. *Traje* also varies by township.

that makes them legible as unitary Maya, they act in ways that seem inauthentic in Q'eqchi' culture. A few weeks later, I was sitting down with Javier to look at a letter he had drafted to Oxlajuj Ajpop and was surprised by two things. First, he had spelled OT's name in K'iche' [Oxlajuj Tz'i', where the second j is unnecessary in Q'eqchi'], and second, he repeatedly referred to Mayan priests as *aj q'ij* in the letter (not *aj k'amolb'e* or *aj k'atolmayej*). When I questioned him on this choice, he explained that he had talked about it with other Q'eqchi's from Wakliqoo, and they agreed that it made sense to write to NGOs in the capital using the word they understood to mean Mayan priest—otherwise, OAP might not know what they were talking about—while using their own language amongst themselves. It struck me as ironic that they had to write words that signaled their Maya-ness in a foreign language.

Writing the word in Spanish (*sacerdote Maya*) is seen as less authentic and not adhering to the true meaning of religious leadership,[36] but it seems to me that *aj k'amolb'e* are not the same as *aj q'ij* either, which Q'eqchi's have framed to me in terms of their own lack—they are not "daykeepers" in the same manner the K'iche' word suggests, and often know little about the Maya calendar. Many OT participants are now learning about the Maya calendar from K'iche' interlocutors, who sometimes also direct them on minutiae of how to pray "correctly." Q'eqchi's involved with this sacred place claim expressed interest in learning from K'iche's, not because they thought it was the same as their own culture, but because their history of dispossession and culture loss was so great that they had no choice but to salvage knowledge where they could. I am sympathetic to these ideas, but I raise the doubt here that understanding Q'eqchi' spiritual practice as "less pure" or "less knowledgeable" might create a different kind of culture loss, as well as foment gnawing insecurities that bode poorly for Q'eqchi' participation in the Pan-Maya movement.

Wrestling Power from the State

Above, I have focused on how Q'eqchi's discipline themselves in order to become active participants in a non-state Pan-Mayan movement. Nelson describes the relationship between groups like the Pan-Maya and the state as the piñata effect: everyone hits the state, but they also expect sweets. She also describes the state's attitude towards Mayan culture as one that attempts to homogenize and hegemonize it, fixing these categories in law (Nelson 1999: 123). Since then, the nation-state's legitimacy and ability to hegemonize the Maya has eroded, and many national NGOs have successfully competed for development monies without attacking the state. Organizations like Oxlajuj Ajpop, however, are still hitting the state, but instead of begging for sweets, they try to wrest power from the state and become the bearer of (development) sweets themselves.

At Setzuul's first meeting with MICUDE regarding our sacred place claim, a curious thing happened. My understanding was that OAP told us we needed to complete a specific and somewhat onerous process to establish the Candelaria Caves as a sacred place. Instead, mere minutes after the MICUDE lawyer called our meeting to order, he said that MICUDE could officially declare the caves as sacred right away. I was immensely pleased, and Javier seemed like he was about to accept this offer on behalf of Setzuul, when the OAP lawyer interjected. No, she said, the community may want to

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[36] This because phrases like "Mayan priest" allow Ladinos and other Western readers to assume likenesses to the priests they know. As a consequence, they may construct a separation between religious and political duties that does not exist in Mayan spiritual practice.

declare it themselves and have MICUDE simply recognize their declaration as valid. Why were we making things more complicated for ourselves, I wondered? When I later asked my Setzuul interlocutors about it, they told me they had also understood the path we were following as the only possibility.

In a subsequent meeting with OAP, it became clear that there were two possibilities: MICUDE could declare the sacred place, which would reproduce its role as "co-administrator" of the park and bearer of multicultural national patrimonies; or the community could declare the sacred place itself, then ask the mayor, governor, and MICUDE to simply affirm its declaration, which minimizes MICUDE's importance as site administrator. OAP presented the latter path as a way for Setzuul to assert control over the caves from MICUDE, which has power over the community as the administrator of cultural patrimonies. MICUDE originally declared the park as a cultural patrimony completely unaware that the community existed. When Setzuul, with Wakliqoo's help, presented their claims to MICUDE, however, the community quickly won allies. Setzuul was the first community awarded the right to "co-administer" a cultural patrimony, and as such a few community members receive salaries as park guards.

For the most part, OAP's description of MICUDE meddling in Setzuul affairs was inaccurate. If anything, Setzuul leaders wanted MICUDE to play a more active role in advocating for community members and disciplining Girard, who does not enjoy the right to "co-administer" the caves. Setzuul leaders agreed to the sacred place initiative because they believed it would strengthen their claims to the caves over Girard. As it became clear that accompanying organizations were treating theirs as a national test case rather than attending to the particulars of their case, and that MICUDE allies were becoming alienated from Setzuul, community leaders became increasingly ambivalent.

MICUDE employees, even those people who actively supported Setzuul's land claims, were generally skeptical of sacred place declarations and specifically angry about OAP's use of them to criticize MICUDE's work. It seems that much of this is related to MICUDE's longer history, and the ways in which, until the 1990s, cultural patrimonies were almost always defined as pre-Columbian archaeological sites. As part of the larger histories of *mestizaje*, the Ministry of Culture venerated indigenous peoples of the past while largely ignoring those of the present. Even though this began to change in the post-war period, MICUDE still has far more archaeologists than anthropologists, one of whom frankly told me that he was suspicious of contemporary sacred place claims, because it was impossible to "scientifically verify" them as he claimed they could for the ancient Maya.[37]

On a later visit to the capital, I met with a Ministry of Culture delegate to ask her about the larger politics of sacred place claims, and their implications for Setzuul's initiative. The bitter history between MICUDE and OAP extends back to some of OAP's early calls for MICUDE to recognize sacred places that were threatened by industrial development. She pointed out that MICUDE wanted to help OAP, but could not because her ministry does not have the right to expropriate privately titled lands. When OAP's campaign failed, some members publicly accused MICUDE of racism. This is part of a

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[37] He also told me that he supported Setzuul's claim that the community was the rightful trustee of the caves, not Girard. This particular archaeologist was uncomfortable with the politics of contemporary sacred places, but not the rights of indigenous communities to land.

complex power struggle that relates to race, but also to questions of academic discipline, political parties, and the permeable boundary between GOs and NGOs.

As we sat in McDonald's, she picked up my to-go cup of Coca-Cola and said, "You know, this cup can be sacred if [Oxlajuj Ajpop] says it is... but they'll only say it is if they have an interest in it." She implied that this interest was financial, citing examples where OAP exerted financial control over entry fees to sacred places. OAP's relationship had moved beyond piñata paternalism, and instead OAP was wresting control directly from the state as the authority on sacred places. While the MICUDE employee disingenuously implied that her ministry was a disinterested player, I was nonetheless swayed by her claim. In the text of the law presented to Congress, OAP proposed that it would create a council of Maya priests that would decide on sacred place claims (instead of MICUDE archaeologists and lawyers); OAP would convene the council with representation from all Maya peoples and use state funding, but have total autonomy from MICUDE.

As the weeks turned into months in our sacred place claim, local groups at the community level began grumbling and fighting with each other, and municipal and departmental declarations became mired in regional politics (with the mayor and the governor). Although the sacred place initiative pushed Pan-Maya politics in the capital, it did little to ameliorate Setzuul's plight.

Conclusion

> Though they seem to invoke an origin in a historical past with which they continue to correspond, actually identities are about questions of using the resources of history, language and culture in the process of becoming rather than being: not 'who we are' or 'where we came from', so much as what we might become, how we have been represented and how that bears on how we might represent ourselves. Identities are therefore constituted within, not outside representation. – Stuart Hall (1996: 4)

In their sweeping study of conservation, Brockington et al. (2008) identify two major cleavages in the international indigenous movement: first, that between indigenous peoples and other marginalized peoples who do not fit the tribal slot (Li 2000); and second, inequities amongst indigenous peoples. These are complex, difficult subjects, but I want to start by reiterating that my case is distinct from one that Brockington et al. (2008: 122) summarize as "some people are more indigenous than others." In Chapter 4, I showed that what is in question is not the indigeneity of Q'eqchi's, but the notion that they are a special or noble people. The Q'eqchi' themselves know that they are indigenous people, although there are always questions at the frontier with people who did not suffer during the war, are wealthy, live in urban areas, are the product of mixed marriages, or some combination thereof. In the next chapter, I will expand on Wilson's (1995) understanding of Q'eqchi' identity by showing how lowlands colonizers often came together on the basis of ethnolinguistic identity, rather than community or county of origin, the typical basis posed by Mayanists (e.g., Tax 1952).

Q'eqchi's historically believed in the *Ch'olwinq* as a savage, unconquered people with special powers who live in the forest and can transform themselves into jaguars, emerging only to trade cacao. Through the early twentieth century, the *Ch'olwinq* were directly connected to living Lacandones who never submitted to the Spanish in the West

(Sapper 1998), and Manché Chol in the East (Grandia 2006), whereas Q'eqchi's learned under the Dominicans to call themselves by the borrowed word, *kristian* (where Christian means "civilized people"). In the post-war renaissance however, and particularly amongst non-Christian Q'eqchi's, the word *kristian* has fallen out of fashion. In the 1980s, the Salesians said the closest word the Q'eqchi' had to describe themselves as indigenous[38] was *tzaqal winq* or *yaal aj winq* (authentic or true man), but it seems more common for Q'eqchi's to have referred to themselves as *laa'o neb'a'oo* ("we the poor") or *laa'o aj k'aleb'aal* ("we the rural" or "we the peasants").

While educated Q'eqchi's in Cobán told me that *ch'olwinq* referred to the savage past, Setzuul was the first place I had monolingual Q'eqchi' speakers explain to me that <u>they</u> are the *ch'oolwinq*, meaning that they are strong, brave and true. Thus, they appropriate the savage image for themselves in the contemporary process of becoming (epigraph, above), rather than reproducing the break that implies Christianity brings civilization. I mark this difference by changing the spelling: *ch'olwinq* has only one o because it refers to the Ch'ol people who largely died out and/or intermarried (Grandia 2006), but *ch'oolwinq* has two o's, transforming the word to "men of the heart." I had a long talk with Pascual during my first few weeks in Setzuul. Although my conversational Q'eqchi' was still shaky, Pascual was very explicit in citing bloodlines for Q'eqchi' identity.[39] He spent a fair bit of time explaining to me that he was a *ch'oolwinq* and I never could be—his people were closer to the land, and they had been here for generations. Then he lifted his grandson into the air and cooed, "Yes, you're a *ch'oolwinq*, aren't you? Yes, you are. We're still here."

<u>Joining Up</u>

In the context I worked in, it seemed universally accepted that Q'eqchi's are indigenous, and the only question was to what extent that afforded them different or special rights.[40] Leaders of the Pan-Maya movement have represented Q'eqchi's as one of the Maya peoples they speak for, and that ineluctably changes how Q'eqchi's today represent themselves (Hall 1996). It does not, however, mean that Q'eqchi's will necessarily join up with the Pan-Maya movement.

There are important differences between Q'eqchi' spirituality and Pan-Mayan generalizations about spirituality. Whereas general prayers at a national level tend to be conducted in K'iche' and reference a global *Nim Ajaw*, Q'eqchi's do not employ this language, and their spiritual relationships are not global, but territorialized. The *tzuultaq'a*, which was key to Setzuul's sacred place claim, is territorialized as the true owner of a place, especially wild animals and the land. Q'eqchi's develop a relationship with the *tzuultaq'a* through planting cycles and prayer. If they pray at a general level, it tends to be to the thirteen *tzuultaq'a*s, a figurative device that invokes Q'eqchi' territory at a regional level, but not the nation of Guatemala, and certainly not the world. While many Q'eqchi's have adapted in an attempt to share in the Pan-Maya movement,

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[38] The more obvious *aj q'eqchi'* is said to refer only to speakers of the language, not indigenous identity; the usage can be ambiguous.

[39] I also asked him if a German descendant of a plantation owner who spoke Q'eqchi' could be Q'eqchi' and he said no, definitely foreign (*Kaxlan*). When I asked about a man whose father was German, but whose mother is Q'eqchi', who speaks Q'eqchi', the mayor paused a moment and then said, yes, he is Q'eqchi'.

[40] This is an issue for any indigenous people in Guatemala, particularly given that the Maya are a "minority" people who probably comprise the majority of the population.

invoking *Ajaw* and learning to call themselves *aj q'ij* (in K'iche') to represent themselves as Maya brothers, this work is not easy or natural.

Nonetheless, joining up with the Pan-Maya movement is one of the few political options lowlands Q'eqchi's have in post-war Guatemala. In their perpetual process of becoming, Q'eqchi's are not self-sovereign subjects, but a people who must constitute their identities within existing representations (Hall 1996: 4). Setzuul leaders recognize that a racist military state that supported Girard's dispossession of their lands. Although their counter-mapping attempt was eventually successful in marshalling the neoliberal post-war state to issue them a land title, this title turned out to be little more than a symbol of willful deceit. It was only as a last resort—after the neoliberal Guatemalan state refused to treat Setzuul leaders as full citizens and protect their claims to exclusionary property rights—that tribal elders began to explore their ability to claim their land in a tribal slot (Li 2000) for sacred places through the national Pan-Maya movement.

In a number of important ways, Setzuul's contingent and shifting alliance with OAP in a failed sacred place claim bears resemblances to Setzuul's alliance with USAID and foreigners participating in counter-mapping.[41] In both cases, Setzuul leaders were sympathetic to the larger politics of the project, but had a distinct set of interests that centered on their conflict with Girard. Setzuul leaders join up with powerful outsiders to both combat historical state racism and motivate the nation-state to act on their behalf to evict their invader. To the extent that these alliances do not serve that overweening purpose, Setzuul leaders lose interest (and legitimacy with their own community members) in joining up with outside groups.

Even if Setzuul leaders were never again to join up with the Pan-Maya movement, this alliance had important effects. It was a bit of a revelation to some folks in Setzuul to see that their struggles, and their caves, were important to other poor Q'eqchi's in both nearby and far-flung communities. This mobilization clearly strengthens leaders' claims that this struggle is about more than just one Frenchman and fifty Q'eqchi' families. Setzuul's struggles are also about institutional racism, property regimes, and sacred places at regional and national levels. On the other hand, the homogenizing efforts by both OAP and OT have contributed to increasing ambivalence about Mayan religious and political practices in Setzuul. I tend to agree with OT leaders' conclusions that lowlands Q'eqchi's have suffered greatly, both in the recent and colonial past, and that they will never be able to fully recover the cultural and historical memory that has been lost. It does not necessarily follow, however, that it is better to take on Western Highlands spiritual practices than to practice the syncretic Catholicism as learned from one's parents. These are difficult questions in representing one's self to others, as well as to herself. My concern here is that if Setzuul leaders are ambivalent about syncretic *mayejaks* that this should be a growing recognition of the contingency in syncretic Catholicism, <u>not</u> because a non-Q'eqchi' Maya leader specifically told them it had no value.

Over a decade after the Peace Accords, the role of the Pan-Maya movement is always contested, but never its existence. Beginning with counterinsurgency repression and into the present day, courageous Maya throughout Guatemala work together as

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[41] In 2009, the Candelaria Caves were declared a sacred place, but I continue to refer to it as a "failure" because shows little promise of helping Setzuul evict Girard.

part of a national Pan-Maya movement to valorize their culture and claim their rights. With some trepidation, I join this discussion to ask that Pan-Maya movement leaders continue to think very carefully about the unintended effects of ethnic absolutism (Gilroy 1992) that is based on a representation of Western Highlands culture. Although historically, and to some extent into the present day, Maya leaders had to shore themselves up against outside criticism by presenting a united front, I believe their successes have taken the Pan-Maya movement to the point where it can allow for a greater plurality of Mayas. This opening will be of considerable importance for lowlands Q'eqchi's, who do not conform to the image of the unitary Maya, but nonetheless struggle for indigenous rights in Guatemala.

Chapter 6

Suffering for Territory: Remaking Place in a Development Pole

A History Told in Helicopters

The first time the metal vulture (*so'solch'ich'*) flew over was in the 1970s. By then, there were three villages (Yaab'alhix, Semox, and Ya'alkob'e) of dispersed Q'eqchi' families, each living in a modest hut on the plot of land they farmed. One village elder recalls that at first, the metal vulture passed through but nobody landed, they just dropped rocks. Rumors started to flow, but respondents insist that they didn't understand that these were supposed to be boundary markers until it was too late. The rocks portended dispossession.[1] First, the engineer came to measure the land and prepare to open up the road that would cut through Yaab'alhix and Semox (some interviewees insisted that this blonde[2] was actually Ricardo Sapper, a powerful German-descended plantation owner, who lied and said he was "just an engineer," whereas others claimed never to have seen Sapper). Along with the engineer came *gringos* seeking "gold."[3] The county mayor paid people to build the road that extended from the county seat out to the lake, but some people said they still didn't understand what Sapper was doing.

Finally, the news came. One by one, the plantation (*finca)* administrator visited the communities to let them know that they were on "private property," and they would have to work on the newly created neighboring plantation, Chimax, one week of each month. Today, nobody admits that they worked on the plantation, but everyone remembers bitterly that neighbors accepted the terms offered and became serfs; some even moved onto the plantation. According to an article published in *Le Monde*, approximately 120 families disputed 1,350 hectares of Sapper's land claim. The article described the tensions between Sapper's registered, but heretofore unclaimed, land title and the communities' history of living on the land. Tragically prophetic, the article has defiant quotes from Q'eqchi' residents: "I will place all my children in a row; they will have to kill them first and then us" and "You [Sapper] are the one who loses, because we will only leave dead."[4] Although national narratives describe an undifferentiated

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[1] Although Europeans claimed land in the lowlands in the nineteenth century, they rarely took physical possession, because it did not have significant earnings potential. In the 1970s, the successful introduction of cardamom as a cash crop led to increased land values in the lowlands. The German's physical claims (based on paperwork filed in the capital perhaps 100 years prior) on the land described here were part of a regional process.

[2] *Q'an is*, literally, "yellow head;" used to refer to foreigners.

[3] Falla (1980) reports foreigners searching for petroleum, but they did not find any. Village elders who remembered the *gringos* did not usually claim to know exactly what they were looking for, but they set off dynamite, which was enough for community members to realize they were going to extract natural resources. I discuss this later in the chapter.

[4] Latin American History and Culture: Series 5: Civil War, society and Political transition in Guatemala: The Guatemala News and Information Bureau Archive, 1963-2000. PG.4.6 Lucas García Regime, 1978-1982, Reel 12. CIRMA Archives.

genocidal scorched earth campaign, Yaab'alhix survivors insisted that Sapper specifically sent the army to kill them because they asserted their land rights.

In interviews, both people who were children and adults merged their memories of the metal vultures that brought Sapper's men for the first time and those that brought the army in 1981. According to survivors, the army planned to massacre three communities, but only reached two in time. They killed 49 women and children. Survivors were escapees, hiding out in the jungle for one to two years. As the army's bombing campaigns became increasingly fierce over the months, survivors moved into their sacred caves and used them as bomb shelters.

In June 1982, the metal vultures began to hail not bombs, but words—promise of Ríos Montt's[5] so-called amnesty. In both Spanish and Q'eqchi', the army used local spokespeople to urge those displaced to turn themselves in, promising not to kill them. Almost all of Yaab'alhix's residents today eventually turned themselves in, living in camps in the county seat until the army supervised rebuilding of one large community where five once existed (Yaab'alhix, Semox, Xya'alkob'e, as well as Sajolom and one other village), built literally on the ashes of the homes, crops and people they burned. Community members of the (re)constituted Yaab'alhix underwent psychological training, and men received guns and training as a paramilitary "civil defense patrol" (PAC).

As a development pole, the army regrouped survivors from five displaced villages to live together in one single community, Yaab'alhix. The army promised the villagers that the land would be theirs now, and that Ríos Montt would build them a school and a meeting hall. The villagers got the buildings, but they also got trouble. News (*esil*) spread that the German's son was coming to claim his father's land from the community. "I heard good things, I heard bad things; they said another massacre was coming. What could we do?" Kux's father recalled his anxiety leading up to another arrival of the metal vulture (helicopter) that portended outside interventions.

Unlike the time of the massacre, however, the question was not rhetorical. With the guns the army gave them, the villagers organized not to ward off Marxist guerrillas (the supposed purpose of the PAC), but to keep an eye out for the German's son. When the metal vulture appeared on the horizon, all the men in Yaab'alhix came together for the first time as a community. As Cristian Sapper, son of one of the most powerful landowners in the region (Ricardo Sapper), prepared to land his helicopter, he faced several hundred angry Q'eqchi' men with guns pointed at him. Village elders always chuckled when they recounted that Cristian lied and said he was lost on his way to a plantation and asked for directions. With their guns still in hand, community members gave him directions and watched him leave. In taking up the army's guns as weapons against the German landowner, Yaab'alhix articulated a new identity as a Q'eqchi' community, and in so doing reworked the military's attempted territorialization of them and their land as a development pole.

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[5] José Efraín Ríos Montt was a Ladino and career military officer. He attended the School of the Americas in 1950, and played a minor role in the CIA-sponsored coup overthrowing the democratic government in 1954. In 1978, he left the Catholic Church and converted to the Church of the Word. His influential friendships with Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson began the networks of US Evangelical aid to rural communities that continue to the current day.

This chapter narrates Yaab'alhix's history of dispossession as a case of suffering for territory, where territorial struggles are constitutive of cultural identities (Moore 2005). Following the massacre, the army saw this no-man's-land as a blank space on which to execute its plans, whereas Q'eqchi' villagers saw it as a soiled place to be remade. Liisa Malkki's (1992, 1995) work interrogates assumptions that territorially uprooted people are also uprooted from their culture. Instead, she points to the possibility that the experience of displacement can become the locus for meaning. The Q'eqchi' of Yaab'alhix forged a collective identity through displacement as both a place and process (Malkki 1995), as well as their subsequent struggles for repossession (Sparke 2006). While the military's counterinsurgency territorialization project failed, this does not mean that the survivors of Yaab'alhix entirely succeeded in repossessing their land, either. Moreover, discourse of a shared experience of suffering did not always match up with differentiated experiences; this chapter also points to fractured post-war identities.

Survivor Positioning

When I asked Yaab'alhix's community leaders for permission to conduct research, they said yes on two conditions: first, that I help out at the local junior high with English classes, and second that I give them a gift myself.[6] As part of that agreement, K'ux, the president of the community development committee, accompanied me during all interviews and acted as both interlocutor and host throughout my stay in Yaab'alhix. One teacher was very interested in my work, but pessimistic about my ability to research Yaab'alhix. This is because Yaab'alhix was a development pole, which is generally understood as consenting to army projects and failing to embrace a liberatory politics. This is in direct opposition to communities like his, a former Community of Population in Resistance (CPR), so named because they organized themselves in the jungle in resistance to the army's forced resettlement. CPRs forged a life for themselves in the jungle under the difficult conditions of counterinsurgency. They succeeded in linking up with international solidarity networks and negotiating a right to return in a manner similar to returned refugees, receiving land as reparations (not buying it). As such, they received more aid and political education than those groups who were demobilized and resettled by the army, such as Yaab'alhix. As the teacher explained, "You should come research our community. We understand the value of this research, and we've already cooperated with someone else who wrote a book (e.g., Sichar Moreno 2007)… These communities don't get it, they are very closed, they don't want to work together, they don't understand the value of research."

In some ways that teacher was very wise. By and large, the communities that would have been easier for me to research were those that were politically active and had positive experiences with solidarity during the civil war (e.g., CPR and returned refugees).[7] While CPRs are paradigmatic of the ways in which the Guatemalan body

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[6] As they explained to me, "Our history, what we know, is valuable to you, so you should give something to us for it in return."

[7] I received another invitation when I happened to meet the community mayor of a returned refugee community at a roadside store, waiting for a bus. After a conversation that focused on the pitfalls of migrating to the US with stories of xenophobia and racism, he invited me to come live in his community for a few months without so much as a business card from me, let alone a letter of introduction. I have not yet had a chance to take him up on his offer, due to the structure of my case selection.

politic is healing (Nelson 1999), they constitute a small minority of the population. Moreover, their experiences are in no way representative in terms of the politics of post-war land ownership in Guatemala. I decided to talk my way into a community that neither had extensive experience with the international solidarity community nor a development NGO.[8]

Even though Siebers (1999) criticizes Wilson's (1995) influential work for focusing too much on communities that suffered physical violence, in the lowlands of Alta Verapaz, this was actually the norm. In the 1980s, it seemed that these communities were utterly dominated by the army (Nelson 1988; Padilla 1990); activist-scholars worked with other communities to forge a politics of redemption. Nonetheless, communities like Yaab'alhix comprise a significant portion of the one million people who were internally displaced and returned to rural livelihoods with only the army's help in transitioning.[9] As such, they are key to understanding the politics of post-war land ownership.

Blank Spaces, Soiled Places

<u>Scorched Earth</u>

> Through terror, the Guatemalan state defined Q'eqchi's as national citizens and exerted its "right" to kill them. It exercised its monopoly over the means of violence, which meant that indigenous communities no longer had to contend with individual plantation owners and their local thugs but instead faced a national army representing a single state. – Wilson (1995: 257)

In chapter 2, I discussed the meaning that military planners ascribed to its territorialization projects, both colonization and genocidal counterinsurgency. Here, I ask, what about the military's target(ed) population? Did they see it as class war? Race war? A project to save the nation from the Marxist scourge? While these are difficult questions to ask of massacre survivors, their interpretation of this pivotal event is key to how they position themselves today. In thinking through survivor stories, I do not focus on truth claims—as Mick Taussig (1987) counsels, these histories of violence are neither true nor false, but real. The narrative that follows does not seek to evaluate insurgency and counterinsurgency, but rather the memory work around these events in Yaab'alhix today.[10] I argue that Yaab'alhix leaders did not face a "single state," as Wilson (epigraph, above) asserts. They did understand their vulnerabilities in terms of a national racist

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[8] Ricardo Falla (1980) visited and researched these communities as part of his undergraduate thesis on land, roads, and petroleum in the Franja, but I never found anyone who remembered him. When I asked K'ux, my primary interlocutor, he speculated that the army probably killed Falla's informants (most of the community leaders of Semox died during the counterinsurgency campaign). He had not seen Falla's thesis until I gave him a copy.

[9] A variety of sources, including USAID, the UN World Food Program, CARE, and even the Evangelical religious organization the 700 Club provided aid, but communities tended to experience all of these as "gifts" from the military.

[10] This chapter is based on interviews with over twenty people, as well as three months of participant observation, during which time I volunteered at the local school, accompanied one group (one of the five previously existing communities) in their efforts to resolve a historical land conflict, and was occasionally invited to participate in spiritual ceremonies, both "Catholic" and "Maya."

project between elites and the military, but forging alliances with individuals within a differentiated state is how marginalized communities like Yaab'alhix survive.

Of those survivors who chose to talk about the army's violence, the most difficult part of the conversation was their interpretation of the years leading up to when the army scorched the earth. In the late 1970s, Semox and Yaab'alhix developed a tenuous relationship with EGP operatives. While community leaders remember seeking help in their conflict with the German, the army interpreted this as a solid alliance that made them into subversives. The Truth Commission's report began with an antecedent that was widely reported at the time—a few years prior to the massacre, Sapper's guards killed men from Semox, but one man escaped and survived.[11] The most politically organized of the three communities, Semox, tried to legalize as a cooperative in order to gain title to the land; the community also made broader political contacts, as it appears in contemporary national and international news stories. Sapper's men killed four leaders in retaliation. I met the lone survivor, a quiet man who moved to Petén after getting defrauded of the community's entire savings.

The murders radicalized both Semox and Yaab'alhix, who ended up in talks with EGP through contacts with the Catholic Church.[12] "They didn't talk about things of God, but things of the guerrilla," one community member recalls.[13] Nobody I met from Ya'alkob'e reports having contacts with EGP, and they seemed to have proportionately more men who worked at Finca Chimax when called (working as payment of rent implies acceptance that Sapper owned the land).

When I talked with one woman who was particularly open about the massacre, she acknowledged that a number of community leaders sought advice from and agreed with EGP leaders (*wankoo sa' aatin*), but pointed out that Semox and Yaab'alhix were simply looking for advice on their land problem wherever they could get it. Since EGP leaders hadn't given anyone in either community a single gun, she considered them noncombatants, and the army's massacre, even if a political retaliation, to be grossly unfair against people incapable of defending themselves (let alone attacking the army).

Just a few people recalled that the army came to talk to them twice before the massacre. About one month before the massacre, the army came and held meetings in three communities, asking them about their conflict with Sapper, accusing them of consorting with EGP, and warning them that they would suffer consequences if anything else happened. One week before the massacre, an army representative showed up and announced that the army would be coming in a week. He ordered all community members to clear out all the brush on the paths leading to their homes, implying that they would do maintenance work on the road that passed through the communities.

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[11] I changed key details in the Truth Commission's report to help protect the community's identity.

[12] It was community members themselves who delighted in telling me about how Sapper's men tried to hunt him down for months afterwards, laughing as they recounted how he had to scurry and hide in the jungle every time Sapper's men or the military came around.

[13] The villagers who lived in Semox at the time of the massacre were not guerrillas, but some family members did leave the village during the years leading up to the violence to join EGP. Stoll (1999: 282) asserts that "rural guerrilla struggles are an urban romance," but this critique of the urban left leaves the decision of some rural indigenous youth to join EGP seemingly flat and empty, when in fact this brave move to join up was the basis of the fragile revolutionary alliance.

One of Semox's few female survivors described this visit to me. We talked for a while, and finally I burst out, I'm just so curious—how did you get away when everyone else got caught?[14] She laughed, and poking at the fire's embers, explained the army's visit and how she subsequently warned her husband not to clear a path to their home. Why did you tell him not to do it? I asked. She looked up from the fire in surprise and said, because I was scared of the army. In this sense, the Q'eqchi's dispersed spatial practice saved some of the people who lived on the outskirts. They were not particularly visible to the army, and their scattered locations offered opportunities for escape into the jungle.

Most people that I interviewed, however, insisted that there was no precedent, no warning, no possible way that they could have known what was to come. Early one morning in October 1981, almost one hundred soldiers arrived in Semox and rounded up everyone they could, gathering all women and children together on the soccer field. On that particular morning, the men were out in the hills training with two EGP members, and the women had just begun to prepare a celebratory meal. Military officers tortured and raped women, forcing them to finish cooking the meal they were preparing for their husbands and to dance for their entertainment.[15]

Up in the hills, the men heard screams, and shots, and saw when the army burned down all the homes but one. One of the men couldn't bear to wait in the hills. As his companion recalls, this man "broke the rules; the men were never allowed to travel alone" (according to EGP rules) for their protection, but he tried to sneak down to find out what was happening in Yaab'alhix. The army caught him, brought him back to the village, and tortured him until he gave up his companions in the mountains.

A few of the men recalled that EGP leaders with just two guns were able to hold off the army troops long enough for the villagers to escape. K'ux, who was a child at the time, interjected during interviews to speculate that if all the men had been training with guns (not sticks), they would have fought off the army and saved the village. As it was, the men of Semox and Yaab'alhix escaped into the jungle, while the army herded the women and children into the largest house, shot them, and burned the house down. By the time the army continued its campaign on to Yaab'alhix and Ya'alkob'e further down the road, the other communities had all abandoned their homes. When I asked one man in Ya'alkob'e how they knew to hide, he told me they could see the smoke beginning in the morning, and that eventually they could even smell the flesh burning. They didn't wait to see what happened; they ran for their lives.

I asked some of the village elders in Yaab'alhix why they thought the army came to kill them. One man said, "they killed just to kill." I accepted this and had begun to ask him about land inheritance practices, when K'ux interrupted me to ask this man 50 years his elder, "No, don't you think it's because of Sapper?" All he got in response was a noncommittal head shake as the old man intently focused on the slow rhythm of his

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[14] Almost all the other survivors I interviewed from her village were men.

[15] Details of this massacre coincide with those that CEH has found to be both crimes against humanity and are repeated in other communities throughout Guatemala in such a way as to suggest a planned army strategy. Among those characteristics are: arriving early in the morning or on a market day to surround as many people as possible and forcing women to cook and dance for them, as well as raping young girls and women before killing them.

hammock, rocking back and forth.[16] Most people asserted that Sapper ordered the army to have them killed because he wanted their land. Folks ascribed varying degrees of agency to army members themselves, but many went so far as to argue that the army was simply carrying out the orders of rich, *Kaxlan* people, as it always has.

Across the spectrum of interpretations offered of this singular violent day, the one constant was their understanding of racism as a major factor in the massacre. The survivors, who have today reconstituted themselves as the community of Yaab'alhix, did not believe that the army wanted to kill them just for being Q'eqchi' Maya. Nor, in direct contrast to Wilson's assertion quoted above, did they believe that the massacre defined a breaking point, where they "faced a national army representing a single state" (1995: 257), which was how the army sought to represent itself. Instead, they understood the army as representing Sapper's power, not power of a unitary state. At the same time, they believed that the enabling factor for the army to kill them was their identity as Q'eqchi' Maya, which marginalized them from access to powerful patrons who could protect them and made them expendable, less-than-human in the army's logic of biopower (Foucault 1978, 2003).

Surviving Racialized Territorialization

When the army burned down all the homes in Semox, Yaab'alhix and Ya'alkob'e, survivors fled to the jungle, a time that one elder referred to as "lost in the hills" (*tz'qeqtzo sa' li tzuul*). In this section, I describe villagers' decisions to enter the jungle as one of becoming interpellated as Suspect Maya and losing their homes to the army's no-man's-land; I also explore how villagers reworked their experience of displacement to position themselves as Q'eqchi'. One village elder described this time as "then came the bush" (*chaalk re li pim*); while this particular person denied knowing anything about the guerrillas, it is perhaps not a coincidence that the guerrillas were known as *aj rub'el pim* in Q'eqchi', or "people from below the bush."

The army's logic of obliteration offered few options: either villagers would stay as the army demanded, and be killed; or they would flee the army's onslaught, which the army took to be an admission of guilt, thereby making them killable on sight. Everyone I had the opportunity to meet from these three villages chose the latter option, making them less-than-human and killable on sight as Suspect Maya. As described in Chapter 2, I use the term "Suspect Maya" to describe how the military came to pose certain Q'eqchi' people as the "enemy" within, a sub-race that threatens the health of the Guatemalan nation and culture, narrowly defined.

There was quite a bit of traffic, both literally and metaphorically, between the Suspect Maya and the Sanctioned Maya (Schirmer 1998) who supposedly allied themselves with the army's national project. In fact, when I tried to determine exactly how the villagers of Yaab'alhix (the closet village to Semox, where the massacre took place) managed to escape so quickly, I discovered that two different groups warned them in the days leading up to the army's assault. First, a wizened old woman explained to me that they had been stockpiling basic necessities (food, clothes, machetes, grinding

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[16] K'ux would have pressed him further, but we had already talked about how to handle situations when he believed that people were lying or withholding information. Kux's preference was to point out discrepancies and push for more information, and I think this was because of his interest in learning these histories. Still, I explained to him that I didn't want to ask people intrusive questions when it seemed like answering them would be harmful.

stone for corn) in the caves for a few months because EGP warned them that a major counterinsurgency campaign was coming. Second, the woman told me that about a week before the massacre, she had heard warnings from a family member in Sajolom.

Just a few years earlier, when the villages of Semox and Yaab'alhix began to have problems with the German, a number of families left to settle a new village, which they named Sajolom. Whereas the army treated the villagers of Semox and Yaab'alhix as Suspect Mayas, the army treated the villagers of Sajolom as Sanctioned Mayas. As such, the military commissioner in Sajolom received privileged information regarding the upcoming attack. However, there was still significant traffic and strong kinship ties between Sajolom, Semox and Yaab'alhix. A number of people living in Sajolom (Sanctioned Mayas) warned family members in Yaab'alhix (Suspect Maya) of impending military action. Sajolom's status as sanctioned was precarious; less than two months later the army killed eight people and burned the village to the ground (the majority of the villagers escaped). Within weeks, villagers from Sajolom became Suspect Mayas and rejoined family members from Yaab'alhix in the jungle.

According to Alfonso Huet (2008: 77, translation mine), who worked in the Verapaz lowlands during the counterinsurgency campaign, "the objective was clearly to create a no-man's-land, a territory where neither the presence of human housing nor anyone's entrance was permitted, with the military purpose of declaring as enemies all people who moved there, persecuting them and systematically destroying their sources of food, in order to force them to turn themselves in or be eliminated." Military planners relied on simplifying assumptions to police the no-man's-land, even if they could not yet control it. Sanctioned Mayas, the 30% of the population that the army had decided to "make live" (Foucault 1978; Schirmer 1998), were only protected by that identity as long as they remained in militarized towns; the jungle belonged to the guerrillas; and the no-man's-land, "depopulated and devoid of crops and domestic animals" (Wilson 1995: 218), was subject to strict policing as former red zones supposedly under guerrilla control.

While Wilson, Huet, and other scholars often point this out as no-man's-land, my Q'eqchi' interlocutors never described it as such. I believe they would have described it as empty (*yamyo*), but in reviewing my fieldnotes they focused on their losses concurrent with the army's violence on the land. To them, it was never a no-man's-land, but *their* land that the *army* had taken by force. The army saw this no-man's-land as a blank space on which to execute its plan, whereas Q'eqchi' villagers saw it as a soiled place to be remade. From the army's perspective, strict policing was necessary because the no-man's-land was in fact a permeable border: the points of entry and exit for non-combatant villagers who were searching for family members, returning to bury their dead with respect, or seeking to disappear into urban areas. Survivors understood all too well that anyone caught in the army's no-man's-land would surely be killed, and they believed that the army wanted evidence of the massacre to be visible, as though to warn other Q'eqchi' villages of their potential fate.

At first, only a few brave souls ventured out to see what would happen, and they seemed almost paralyzed by the lack of respect shown to the dead, the inability to bury the bodies. A woman from Yaab'alhix returned to Semox a few days after the massacre to see what had happened. She remembered that everything was burned up, there were bodies everywhere, and dogs were eating the bones and rotting flesh; one woman was still sitting up straight, just as she was right before they burned her. I asked her if that

was when they buried the bodies and we both choked up as she explained that no, she had returned alone because everyone was afraid, and she was afraid that if the army saw her, they would kill her, too. After perhaps a month, the husbands and fathers of the Semox dead organized. They returned at night to clandestinely bury their dead in a mass grave—not in a no-man's-land, but on the ashes of their former homes. I argue that the important act of burying loved ones was key to the community's subsequent rejection of the army's interpellation of the no-man's-land. Rather, to the extent that this has been taken up, it is by scholars of the counterinsurgency campaign who note the brutal success of the army's territorial project. I do not dispute this in the short term, but its long-term meaning is very different from what the army intended.

Wilson (1995: 221) describes Q'eqchi' communities as leaving their homes for the forest en masse, with little dissent. With the massacre as the impetus, however, most interviewees described leaving as a choice that was made suddenly by households. Most people were in the small groups they fled with at first, and families met up into larger numbers little by little. As Wilson (1995) notes, forest existence was communal, such that work and the products of all work were divided evenly amongst villagers. When I questioned this in interviews with elders, some stressed that everyone was on the verge of starvation, and they had no other option; a few other elders, however, laughed and explained to me that if EGP found out about any problems in equal sharing of work and food, they killed the person who caused that problem. K'ux remembers this from his childhood, as well, and spoke admiringly of EGP's ability to enforce its rules.

For the first few months, families lived in smaller groups in the hills, but the army's bombardment campaign sent them into the caves in larger groups. In Q'eqchi' spiritual practice (including syncretic Catholicism), caves are sacred places as the home of the *tzuultaq'a*, a territorialized spirit that is the ultimate arbiter of property, blessing Q'eqchi's with the right to live and work the land (Chapter 5). While Catholic priests had been either tolerant or ignorant regarding the spiritual significance of caves, Evangelical policy harbored no such ambivalence—converts were not allowed to pray in caves, nor light candles, nor offer sacrifices, as these were to court the devil. The army, while appropriating the image of the *tzuultaq'a* for its propaganda (Wilson 1995; Ybarra 2008), characterized caves as places of the guerrilla, and any meetings there as necessarily being related to insurgency. In this case, the army was not incorrect, as interviewees reported stockpiling food and clothes on guerrillas' advice, and when the guerrillas stayed with them in the caves, villagers did provide them with food and shelter. Family members who perished during their time in the jungle were usually buried in the caves, as well.[17]

Villagers tended to describe their lives in the jungle in terms of hardship, monotony, and fear (in that order). Once families grouped together, most groups listened carefully to the radio for news, and they also had visits from either EGP or Catholic Church representatives at least once a week.[18] Families used these visits as

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[17] One of the former communities that now lives in Yaab'alhix seeks a right of return and places special importance on the caves there, citing their importance less as a sacred place and more as a placing of shared suffering (loved ones are buried, children were born); they also hope to develop it as an ecotourism site.

[18] Villagers in Yaab'alhix described EGP and the Catholic Church with a significant amount of slippage, as though some considered them to represent the same organization. This varied widely by informant, and with an individual informant, across times and places.

another way to gather news and share information. For Yaab'alhix, which was settled long before the Franja was created, this was the first time that villagers saw themselves as part of a larger community—an imagined community of Q'eqchi's seeking refuge in the jungle (Anderson 1991), producing a collective identity from a shared experience of displacement (Malkki 1995). This identity formation was more intense, and directly imbricated with wartime suffering, for communities that were displaced for extended periods.

During the early 1980s, approximately 80% of the rural communities in Chisec county were internally displaced (Wilson 1995). Moreover, Chisec, as well as northern Cobán, had acquired a reputation at the departmental level as "guerrilla" territory such that people who successfully sought refuge through kinship ties in San Pedro Carchá or other highlands towns recall that they lied about where they came from; others lied about their home villages when traveling to the departmental capital, Cobán (García 2007; Ybarra 2008). There was place-based discrimination even amongst Q'eqchi's living in the Verapaces, as Sanctioned Mayas attempted the impossible task of avoiding association with Suspect Mayas.

Q'eqchi's who were displaced during the war were careful to point out, however, that not even those Q'eqchi's who were Sanctioned Mayas were truly safe. In more than one village, I was regaled with the story of a few paramilitary leaders from Cooperativa Xuctzul Sehux whose cruelty fostered a strong relationship with the army. They went to the county seat to have a meeting with the army, then stayed to have a good time, and were traveling home on the road at night. The road became a no-man's-land at night, as traveling was not allowed, but these Q'eqchi' paramilitaries believed that their papers protected them. An army patrol shot them on sight, however, without giving them a chance to establish that they were sanctioned, not suspect.

Today, survivors explain that only rich or privileged people could seek shelter in urban areas, and they are not always eager for the return of community members who did not suffer for territory in the jungle with them. As Guayo, a community leader, explained, rich [Q'eqchi'] people and Ladinos left,[19] "seeking the paths where they could save their lives," whereas "we united in the mountains, but just the Q'eqchi's." Although Guayo had just acknowledged that some of the rich people who could leave the bush were Q'eqchi's, his next statement refers to the production of a Q'eqchi' identity in the mountains that necessarily excludes those people who had the ability to seek livelihoods elsewhere. Suffering for territory (Moore 2005) is not simply the deployment of property claims, but the production of an identity. As I argued in Chapter 4, some Q'eqchi' communities are using their suffering for territory to spatialize what Hall (1996) terms the "frontier effect" to show how identities are constructed out of difference.

"Amnesty"

In March 1982, General Ríos Montt led a coup that seized power from Lucas García. Ríos Montt combined his Evangelical beliefs with racialized counterinsurgency, continuing Lucas García's scorched earth campaign. In June 1982, he announced a 30 day "amnesty" for villagers to turn themselves in, promising a "state of war" immediately following it. Almost all villagers I met in Yaab'alhix turned themselves in

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[19] His formulation assumes that all Ladinos have money and networks in urban areas.

through the amnesty process (although not during the first 30 days), anywhere from one to two years after they fled to the jungle.

In 1982, planes stopped raining death and started raining propaganda. According to Guayo, planes pronounced the amnesty in both Q'eqchi' and Spanish, saying "Come back, y'all (*muchá*), the army isn't killing people anymore." People were supposed to turn themselves in as entire communities. One man from Yaab'alhix tried to turn himself in alone, and the army turned him away. They told him that if he didn't bring his "friends" they would send 500 people into the mountains to kill him.[20] He returned the next day with his family and was accepted into the *campamento* (army camp to receive and resettle displaced people) in the middle of the Chisec county seat. All interlocutors reported being questioned, but only a few had significant problems,[21] and they did not report anyone being killed.[22]

This is in stark contrast to many other reports. In gross monthly estimations, violent deaths in the countryside nationally were higher under Ríos Montt than Lucas García, actually peaking in July 1982 (Ball et al. 1999). I am somewhat inclined to attribute this to Ríos Montt's massive campaigns focusing on Huehuetenango and El Quiché to the west, whereas the major campaigns in Alta Verapaz were under Lucas García. Still, Huet (2008: 102-103) collected testimonies of survivors who came to turn themselves in for the amnesty, but saw the army killing people, so they decided it was a trick and fled back to the hills. This is possibly because there were fewer massacres, but the average number of people killed went up (Huet 2008).[23]

Villagers who successfully enrolled in the army's amnesty program were brought to the army's *campamento* in the center of Chisec while they waited for resettlement. When I asked people to describe life in the *campamento*, they invariably described the food they received (beans, dietary supplements like *incaparinha*, sugar, tortillas), as well as receiving blankets and clothes. While some men bitterly recalled the cramped living quarters, most women were relieved to have food and a place to sleep every day. Most of the people in Yaab'alhix I spoke with did not immediately go down from the hills into the camps, and as a result, they did not have to labor to rebuild urban infrastructure (e.g., Nelson 1988).[24]

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[20] His wife also participated in the interview, and she stated that she would have left, in case her husband brought the army back to kill everyone, but her children were sick. The rest of the displaced community abandoned her in case he brought the army back to kill them as subversives, and they refused to tell her where they were going.

[21] Based on military intelligence, a few men were repeatedly questioned, beaten, and when they moved to Yaab'alhix, confined to their homes for months.

[22] It is possible that people from the reconstituted Yaab'alhix were killed and villagers chose not to tell me about it; it is also possible that the army was relatively successful in killing all of the "known subversives" from these villages in the years prior to the so-called amnesty. Sanford (2004: 139) recounts an interview with an army official in the Chisec *cabecera* who explained that if anyone was on their list of subversives, "we take them" and "they die." A third, and not mutually exclusive from the first two, possibility is that the army killed people from Yaab'alhix after they turned themselves in and before other villagers realized they came out of the jungle.

[23] It is also possible that this is due to differentiation within Alta Verapaz: memories of violence in the Cobán lowlands (where Huet conducted research) stretch through the 1980s, whereas most interlocutors in Chisec posited massive violence from 1979—1983 only, followed by years of surveillance and coercion.

[24] EGP burned down city hall, then the army destroyed much of the rest of town.

In accepting the amnesty, villagers effectively accepted the army's judgment that they had conspired with the guerillas and needed the state's "forgiveness," which should have served to increase their feelings of culpability. In the *campamento*, the villagers were subjected to army propaganda. In interviews twenty years later, nobody ever mentioned the "re-education" without prompting, which they simply referred to as talks. Many people claimed not to remember the army's propaganda campaign, effectively forgetting ethnocide. One person summed it up as, "You, women, now we are here. We didn't want to do what we did, thanks be to God that you're alive[25]… You must live better now. We don't want to hear anything about EGP, don't talk to them again or the same thing will happen that happened before." While this political organizer remembered the gist of the propaganda, she was much more impressed by the army's threat to perpetuate more violence than its attempt to make villagers culpable for the massacre that the army committed.

When describing the experience of about 300 Q'eqchi's who circumvented the army's amnesty program by seeking help directly from the Catholic Church,[26] Wilson (1995) makes clear the army's frustration that its system failed, particularly with regard to its use of returned displaced people for military intelligence. Similarly, villagers described, in tones of awe, the story of one young man who left to join EGP and eventually was able to return directly to Yaab'alhix without first having to live in the Chisec *campamento*. While the army attempted to interpellate villagers who left the jungle through the amnesty mechanism as repentant for their sins of consorting with the guerrillas, villagers in Yaab'alhix did *not* internalize this subjectification.[27]

Guatemalan Army's Territorialized Strategy

"Experts imagine building upon a clean slate not just physically but socially—constructing a new society in which the delinquent structures of the old order will not intrude." – Li (2007: 278)

Rather than excluding counterinsurgency from analysis as a horrific break, the meaning and practice of counterinsurgency is an important layer in the history of Guatemalan development and trusteeship. Rural, indigenous communities that suffered during counterinsurgency campaigns remember development aid and how it was tied to their suffering during the war, even though they did not internalize the army's discourse on that development. The phase that followed scorched earth genocide, "pacification," was not the effective end of the war, but a new phase, "a War of physical,

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[25] This phrasing is not coincidental. Kux's father, perhaps the religious leader of greatest importance to the Q'eqchi' and Catholic communities of Yaab'alhix, bitterly explained that there was a significant amount of Evangelical proselytizing in the *campamento*, which he attributed directly to Ríos Montt. While he admitted that many people converted, he claimed that most of them are returning to syncretic Catholic-Q'eqchi' traditions.

[26] While Wilson points to this as a triumphal experience, I had the opportunity to visit the resettled village in 2007, when they were informed that the Church had not properly bought the land they lived on and the meeting where they had to decide whether to give up half their land or attempt to buy it, again. The key Church leader who brokered the deal no longer lives in Guatemala, and refused to respond to requests for information.

[27] The phrase *nim li qamaak* (our sin was/is great) was echoed in every interview Wilson (1995) conducted in Acamal and Rosario, but I only heard it once in Yaab'alhix.

social and ideological reconstruction of the regions devastated by the scorched earth operations" (CEH 1999: translation mine).

As mentioned in Chapter 2, for the population that military planners decided to "make live," the military returned to its previous notions of reshaping the population and molding them into citizens proud of the Guatemalan National Culture. Particularly in development poles such as Yaab'alhix, military leaders intended to discipline surviving Suspect Mayas, "rehabilitating" the "indigenous community as a child needing to be disciplined, 'ladinoized,' entrepreneurized—that is, 'forged' to fit the 'new' modern Guatemalan state" (Schirmer 1998: 114).[28] The most important part of the military's plan was using development poles to rehabilitate Suspect Maya into Sanctioned Maya—people would repent for their sins against the state. Rehabilitation, re-education in the *campamentos*, was not the goal, however. The military's goal was to develop a paternalistic relationship in which it reproduced the loyalty of Sanctioned Maya through their participation in international development projects. In the army's vision, it made people live who rejected the guerrillas in favor of military trusteeship, and the army was the only conduit for improvement through development.

When its counterinsurgency campaign reached its peak, the military relied on four pacification strategies (Schirmer 1998):

1) the creation of the S-5, a military unit that served both intelligence and propaganda purposes;

2) the Inter-Institutional Coordinator, a decentralized system that the army used to co-opt and control international aid money;

3) paramilitary troops (PAC) to teach rural villages to 'defend' themselves against guerrillas and making local leaders directly responsible to the army; and

4) development poles, located on the new frontiers between the army's territory and the guerillas', designed to show people allied with the guerrillas in the jungle that they could live better by turning themselves in.

S-5 infiltrated the rural population, but the army classified the details of the unit's work. Moreover, the approximately 2,000 troops did not identify themselves or wear uniforms, and a substantial number of operatives were women and/or indigenous people.[29] In Yaab'alhix, nobody could remember anyone from the military staying more than two months after the development pole was built, and most people remember working side by side with Q'eqchi' foot soldiers to build a town (not their Ladino superiors). The Inter-Institutional Coordinator was arguably incredibly important in terms of reworking older systems of paternalism to fit newer bureaucracies, while keeping the army informed and in control at every level.[30] The decentralized

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[28] Foucauldian discipline and neoliberal overtones are in the original text, where Schirmer paraphrases interviews with Guatemalan military leaders.

[29] Latin American History and Culture: Series 5: Civil War, society and Political transition in Guatemala: The Guatemala News and Information Bureau Archive, 1963-2000. PG.5 Counterinsurgency, Reel 16. CIRMA Archives.

[30] The *Coordinadora Interinstitutional Nacional* was created by Decreto 111-84, "*Ley Orgánica del Sistema Nacional de Coordinación Interinstitucional para Reconstrucción y Desarrollo*," the legal

development system had uneven effects, but still exists in the form of the development council system (*Consejos de Desarrollo*).[31] The Inter-Institutional Coordinator and local "betterment" committees were both created as a response to rural devastation in the wake of the 1976 earthquake. Following the army's man-made devastation, the army reworked the meaning of "reconstruction" to refer to rebuilding villages that it had purposively burned down. In using "improvement" committees as part of a counterinsurgency hierarchy, the army signaled to rural communities that development was a reward for nationalist loyalty.

As with the military's development system, PACs had uneven effects, varying greatly by local power dynamics within a community, as well as with regard to that community's relationship to the army. While Sepac's PAC was the most violent in the county of Cobán (Chapter 7), the Yaab'alhix PAC reported very little in the way of violence.[32] Even those people who admitted to having a relationship with EGP prior to the massacre and when they lived in the bush claimed no contact with the EGP after they (re)built a community as development pole.[33] The only time the PAC ever organized to train their guns at any target was when they scared off the German plantation owner from landing his helicopter.

In the late 1980s, the army coordinator called the PAC leader to the base in Cobán and asked if he had ever seen "the enemy." When Yaab'alhix's PAC leader responded that the men patrolled regularly, but had seen no sign of insurgents, the army coordinator instructed him to turn in the guns and gave the PAC permission to disband. Most people in Yaab'alhix did not consider the army to be a particularly useful or powerful ally, but the PAC did have one important effect—the army gave them guns. When I started the Yaab'alhix case study, I believed survivors would ascribe high levels of power to the army, but most people interpreted the massacre as evidence of their own marginality because they are Q'eqchi, rather than the army's innate power. Suffering for territory (Moore 2005) became integral to their identity without ascribing a corresponding identity to the army as the agent of that suffering. Instead of the army, Yaab'alhix villagers constituted their Other as *Kaxlan*, urban, and powerful men who could make the army do their bidding. When the military armed the men of Yaab'alhix,

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precursor to today's hierarchical Development Council system. This law superseded the army's earlier institutional structure, the Committee for National Reconstruction (CRN).

[31] When Nelson published her book in 1999, she judged it unlikely that Guatemala would pass laws to legalize the Development Council system that bore a striking resemblance to the Inter-Institutional Coordinator. By the time I was a Peace Corps Volunteer in 2003, a major part of my job was to teach people the 2002 laws on decentralized governance, which did legalize the Development Council system. I worked with Community Development Councils (*Consejos Comunitarios de Desarrollo—COCODEs)* for a solid year before I fully understood that when two groups were in competition for municipal recognition as a COCODE, they often fell out along opposing lines during the civil war. Since my Peace Corps training posed the COCODEs as a new phenomenon, I was unprepared for the plethora of development and pro-improvement committees that were all created 30 years ago, much less their intense power struggles.

[32] This correlates with my findings from both interviews with leaders in Chisec and archival work.

[33] Many young men who left these villages to join EGP never returned; I met a few of them who demobilized years later and now live in another village in Chisec, with little contact with Yaab'alhix.

however, they gave them power to protect themselves and their families from great vulnerability.

When I asked K'ux what the village's greatest problem with EGP was, he pointed to their failure to give the people guns. He claims that many villagers would definitely join a revolution again—but only if the guerrillas provide arms. In today's rising insecurity, many Q'eqchi's are reaching back to lessons learned during counterinsurgency—and buying their own guns. As my host responsible for my safety, K'ux regularly lectured me about walking alone, accepting rides from strangers,[34] or going anywhere at night.[35] In my first week in Yaab'alhix, K'ux pointed to the mangy mutt, Sultan, huddled in the shade to avoid the tropical sun and said, "Sultan will provide for your security. Maybe you're sleeping, you don't know what's going to happen…" His voice trailed off and his brow furrowed, so I chirped up with a perky, "but Sultan knows!" and we laughed together. More seriously, K'ux proceeded to brandish his gun, and he insisted that I hold it. He explained that it was for safety, and that many trustworthy men in town had guns. I only ever heard him shooting at birds when he went to bathe in the river, but he and other community members believed their guns ensured their safety. The fact that PAC guns came from the army elicited no loyalty, and the community would have used them for civil self-defense (*auto-defensa civil*) against *any* outsider they considered a threat.

Development Poles

The most important of the military's "pacification strategies" were development poles, strategically located model hamlets on the frontier between army-controlled territory and guerilla-controlled territory[36]—e.g., the no-man's-land—that the army rebuilt with development aid in an effort to convince Suspect Mayas to come out from the jungle via the amnesty process, repent, and re-integrate into Guatemalan society. Although there was little consensus about which villages were actually development poles (Nelson 1988; Padilla 1990), the key sites for intervention tended to be the northern borderlands, almost all of which were in the Franja. Development poles were at the forefront of the military's territorial work to bring the Franja back into the fold of the [Ladino] nation.

While the imagery of the development pole has particular salience amongst *gring@* solidarity activists and academics (e.g., Black 1984; IGE 1984; Nelson 1988; Padilla 1990; Stoll 1990, 1993; Brett 2007), this was not the case when I went to Chisec in search of a development pole. When I explained to Mauricio from Wakliqoo, a Q'eqchi' NGO, that I wanted to find a development pole to study violence, property and development, he laughed and said, good luck finding a, well, whatever it is you're calling it. According to the law (Decreto 65-84), fifteen rural communities and the county seat (*cabecera*) of Chisec were development poles. Nonetheless, in both of the

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[34] Hitchhiking is common practice in Guatemala, although considered more dangerous for women.

[35] K'ux was right, too. I got robbed one day when I was walking to Yaab'alhix, although I never told him.

[36] I focus very little on what the army believed to be guerrilla-controlled territory primarily because the army wildly overstated the magnitude of the Marxist guerrillas' control in these lands. Although this is not true of all communities, the communities I worked in bear few traces of guerrilla influence.

development poles that I selected as case studies, nobody ever used this term, unless in response to my use of it.

Although Yaab'alhix was declared a development pole by law, interlocutors do not recall it as a development project with fanfare, but simply an opportunity to return home... or close to home. The village that is today Yaab'alhix is comprised of the families that the army assigned to it (those reporting a village of origin of Yaab'alhix, Semox, Ya'alkob'e, Sajolom, and one other village). When I asked a village elder who had settled Sajolom why he didn't return there, he responded that the army told him he couldn't, or they said he'd go back to being a guerrilla (he denied having been a guerrilla in the first place). When I asked why, he shrugged, and said there were too many caves, so the army told him it was *puro guerrillero* (purely of guerrillas).

There were three major narratives justifying development that emerged in Guatemala. First, the army provided infrastructure (using international aid money) to repentant guerrillas, who often disavowed any previous involvement with *popular* social movements and embraced an Evangelical church simultaneously. The army's second discourse of development, particularly in terms of international affairs, was that it provided aid to people who suffered from guerrilla sabotage. The army asserted that it formulated its development plans "with the patriotic impetus to work to create conditions for the lives of men, women, children and seniors, community members that most suffered from the onslaught of foreign violence, and were uprooted from their homes, could return to them and make their lives" (Gobierno de Guatemala 1985: vii, translation mine). The army asserted that thousands of Guatemalans were taken "prisoner by massive kidnapping on the part of the subversion," who could now return under the "broad and functional amnesty" to voluntarily return to their homes, "a safe place, comfortable, and that is theirs, to tranquilly dedicate themselves to rebuild [*reedificar*] their futures" (Gobierno de Guatemala 1985: vii, translation mine). Although military documents pose the army as facilitating a right to return and providing development services, in most cases, multiple villages were centralized and mixed. Finally, beginning with the triumphant return of refugees and CPRs, some development projects were justified because people suffered at the hands of the army and deserve reparations. The point is that all three narratives are explicitly political and pose development as a mechanism to designate legitimacy and implement justice.

Trusteeship

"Development poles: decision and action underway"

"Development poles: new populations surge"

"Development Poles: property with liberty"

"Development Poles: services with assistence"

--Army slogans, in special supplement to the Prensa Libre national newspaper (Ejército de Guatemala 1986)

The military planned for counterrevolutionary development, with development poles as a centerpiece, even in massive counterinsurgency, such as Ríos Montt's "beans and bullets" program. Wilson (1995: 233) asserts that "all Q'eqchi's got from the army, however, were the bullets." While they may not have been beneficiaries of major development projects, Q'eqchi's comprised a major target population for the army. Unlike Western Highlands communities that were more likely to be easily accesible

from the capital or communities with direct connections to international soldarity groups (both refugees in Mexico and Communities of Population in Resistance), these communities had little outside contact that was not mediated by the army.

In fact, while most Q'eqchi' communities in the Franja met the National Commission for Attention to the Repatriated, Refugees and Displaced (CEAR)'s definition of displaced because they changed their habitual place of residence due to becoming the objective of counterinsurgency campaigns or fear of military actions (CEAR 1993: 1-2), none of these communities were included in CEAR's reports (e.g., CEAR 1996). While these communities are generally recognized as internally displaced (*desplazados*),[37] they were specifically excluded from CEAR's reports, and therefore any potential development aid flows (including money for political education or psychological assistance). More than this, these communities' choice to participate in the so-called amnesty undercut leftist solidarity claims, such that it was in the interest of neither leftist groups nor the army to claim that these communities were internally displaced.[38] Instead, the army wanted to claim that it had effectively disciplined the population. As an army official in Chisec told a researcher (Padilla 1990: 148, translation mine), "We don't want the people to think that we are pressuring them, you know? It's all psychology. Now, principally, what we want is to help with development."

Rather than debate whether or to what extent the army actually fulfilled its promise of development and executed planned projects (Gobierno de Guatemala 1985),[39] I suggest that a more important point is that the army leadership established itself as an international coduit for development funds, and communities understood projects to flow directly from the given military dictator in power.[40] The army's visible control over development project facilitated its social control of "pacified" communities, even through multiple elections processes (Schirmer 1998). Moreover, the connection between counterinsurgency and "post-conflict" development was just as direct as that outlined between colonization and counterinsurgency in Chapter 2. For example, Julio Corsantes, schoolteacher turned S-5 agent, reportedly ran the development pole at Saraxoch, reputed to be one of the most violent (in terms of

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[37] Most communities I worked with tended to use the Spanish word *víctimas* (victims), reflecting their struggles to have claims recognized through the National Compensation Program (PNR), but they would refer to violence and their time living in the jungle as *rahilal* (great sadness).

[38] Indeed, according to the National Compensation Program (PNR), none of the communities who now live in Yaab'alhix qualify for compensation as displaced (interview data, as well as participant observation at a PNR compensation conference for victims). Although some lived in the jungle for more than two years, suffering through multiple bombing campaigns and losing loved ones to illness and hunger, they did not travel far enough from their homes to qualify for compensation on this count.

[39] I refer to the *Documentos Básicos para Reasentamiento* for individual development poles, which SEGEPLAN (National Council for Economic Planning) elaborated at the army's behest to outline a list of projects, budgets, and timelines. I obtained copies of four plans for communities in Chisec, including Yaab'alhix.

[40] In many ways, this system is similar to older systems of paternalism, both in terms of plantation owners and national governments. While international aid agencies insist that post-war development monies (the Peace Accords promised $1.9 billion) be allocated based on need and technical factors, many rural communities understand the Development Council system as a reworked version of the clientelist decentralized system created by the army.

repression) and tightly controlled in the northeast.[41] When a researcher visited the development pole, Corsantes brandished his international connections proudly: "Everything here is from USAID: the new houses, the tin roofs, the cement, everything, down to the last nail" (Black 1985: 18). Years later, when the military functions of Saraxoch were shut down as part of the "post-conflict" process, the mayor named Julio Corsantes the coordinator of "rural development" for Cobán's county government (Huet 2008: 213). As I discuss in Chapter 7, continuities from colonization to counterinsurgency to post-conflict development were also prevalent at the local level in many communities.

Although solidarity groups claimed that the army's primary goal was to compete with economic elites (CACIF) for control over economic resources by skimming money from development aid (arguably the biggest cash cow in town) (IGE 1985), its affiliation with trusteeship also allowed the army to legitimate itself to urban and international audiences. By 1984, AID allotted $1 million for the construction of schools, roads and water facilities in "model villages" (Jenkins 1984). The army also had a direct connection with the World Food Programme, which it used in food-for-work programs in development poles where it sometimes forbade villagers to plant their own crops.[42] The final, and very influential source of funding, was from Evangelical churches, particularly the Gospel Outreach church based in Eureka, CA and the 700 Club. These both provided aid to the army for development projects and sponsored multiple "mission" trips, whereby North American Evangelicals traveled to Guatemala to pay for and help build infrastructure or provide medical services.[43]

When community members from Yaab'alhix, whom I think of as having little loyalty to the army after it massacred their loved ones, asked me to help them write letters asking for development projects, I was surprised at a tense moment. K'ux, as president of the Community Development Council, declared that their community infrastructure was in a shambles, and that they had been "abandoned," but another community leader interrupted him. Tersely, he pointed out that they should not forget that Ríos Montt built the outside market structure, the school, and the central meeting hall, to nods of agreement. To the best of my knowledge, most of the assistance money that came to Yaab'alhix was via the World Food Programme and USAID, and the infrastructure mentioned was actually built during the Mejía Víctores regime (after Ríos

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[41] Other reports also claim that Julio Corsantes ran the development pole at Acamal. Latin American History and Culture: Series 5: Civil War, society and Political transition in Guatemala: The Guatemala News and Information Bureau Archive, 1963-2000. PG.5 Counterinsurgency, Reel 16. CIRMA Archives.

[42] Villagers in Yaab'alhix did not report being forced into food-for-work programs, but described this as a way to bridge the gap between when they were first able to plant and when their first harvest was ready. One village leader also pointed out that they were working on rebuilding their own community structure, and that this was little different from the physical labor (*mano de obra*) most community development projects require today.

[43] Most of the aid money was funneled through the *Fundación de Ayuda a los Pueblos Indígenas* (FUNDAPI). In the 1980s, Evangelical mission trips were sent primarily to the Ixil Triangle, not to the Verapaces. Mission trips continue to the present day in all regions of Guatemala, including the Verapaces. Non-Evangelicals are often excluded from this assistance—they resent it and sometimes claim that this is a major cause of conversion to Evangelical churches. Cultural exchange or direct relationships seem to play a relatively minor role, as most people who participate in mission trips speak little Spanish and no Q'eqchi'.

Montt lost power in a military coup). When I asked K'ux about this later, this same man who expressed a willingness to take up arms in a revolution if the opportunity came, insisted that Ríos Montt fulfilled his promise in the amnesty and helped them rebuild the village. When I told him I thought the money didn't come from the army, but international assistance programs, he told me I was wrong.[44] The point is not whether this understanding is true or false, but that it is real (Taussig 1987)—this frames the way Yaab'alhix understands its relationship with the broader development community, and the work of development today.

Reducciones Reprised: Changes in the Resettled Land

As others have noted (e.g., Wilson 1995), development poles bear a marked resemblance to earlier projects of state territorialization. It is worth reviewing these failed projects to territorially concentrate the indigenous population both because the persistent reproduction of Q'eqchi' spatial practice is repeatedly identified as something deficient, in need of improvement (Li 2007), and to highlight the significant of the success of the military's pacification project in concentrating a significant portion of the Q'eqchi' population in the Franja.

Unlike other regions of Mesoamerica, the Spanish Crown did not implement the *encomienda* system (allocating land and indigenous people to Spanish nobles). Instead, in the "Lands of War" (*Tezulutlán*),[45] Spain's failure to conquer the local peoples led the king of Spain to give Bartolomé de las Casas and the Dominican order permission to conquer the region through religious conversion.[46] Due to these special circumstances, the region was excluded from military incursions and the *encomienda* system.[47] The Dominicans eventually won over the Q'eqchi', perhaps less from conversion for the goal of religious salvation than strategic political alliances with Q'eqchi' elites in exchange for

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[44] I lost the argument because I could not point to a massive sign saying "This building was paid for by USAID," etc., which everybody knows is how international entities take credit for helping poor people.

[45] Tezulutlán is widely reported as the name for the Verapaces under early Spanish colonialism. Although this is commonly translated as "Lands of War," the word is probably Nahuatl and scholars believe the term was *Tecolotlán*, or "lands of owls" (Recinos 1950: 112).

[46] De las Casas is renowned both for propagating the "Black Legend," whereby Spanish colonizers are treated in an exaggerated fashion as massacring and mistreating indigenous inhabitants of the Americas, and as a kind of savior of the indigenous peoples, due to his passionate protestations to the Spanish Crown regarding its policy of assigning indigenous people as a Spaniard's property in their allocation system, called the *encomienda*. (It is notable that de las Casas's proposed solution to a perceived lack of labor sources in the Americas was to import slaves from Africa. He was convinced that indigenous people in America had souls, but not indigenous people in Africa.) There are those who dispute his legendary status (e.g., King 1974) however, so I will direct my comments primarily towards relatively well-known actions by the Dominican order and their Q'eqchi' subjects.

[47] While I have found little solid archival data on this matter, I am intrigued by the notion that their exclusion from the *encomienda* system meant that the Q'eqchi' had to do comparatively less work to make their land tenure system legible to the Spanish. This would be particularly important in terms of the extent to which land tenure management of swidden agriculture (which lowlands Q'eqchi' practice, but not highlands K'iche' and Kaqchikel) was legally recognized by the Spanish Crown, and later, the postcolonial state.

promises not to expropriate their land. After they brokered this deal, the Dominicans renamed this region *La Verapaz*,[48] or land of true peace.

Although the Dominicans kept their promise to protect Q'eqchi' lands from the *encomienda* system, they nonetheless included the Verapaces in their concentrated resettlement (*reducciones*) project.[49] The intent of the project was to centralize the population in a way that made it easier for the Dominicans to administer the population of their territory.

While this clearly imposed a hardship on the Q'eqchi', it is difficult to know to what extent they suffered; Sapper (1998) believes the majority of the population died,[50] whereas King (1974: 26) attributes the ghost-town appearance to Q'eqchi' resistance, noting "one gets the impression of constant gathering up and fading away of Indian town populations." At first, only males were concentrated in the towns, but eventually they were permitted to bring wives and establish families. For the most part, the centralized lifestyle did not seem to appeal to the Q'eqchi', as most families were attempting to maintain their crops, but now at a significant distance. In addition, Sapper claims that the majority of Q'eqchi' who were moved into concentrated resettlements lost their land, whereas those groups who successfully maintained their rural lifestyles were eventually awarded state recognition of their lands as communal.

While the Dominicans attempted to affect a population (Foucault 2007), working on the Verapaces as a milieu in which to make land productive and to make the people into (Spanish) law-abiding, tax-paying Christians (if not citizens), this project failed. The "Indian towns" roughly correspond to urban county seats with centralized populations (*cabeceras*), but the majority of the Verapaces population lives (both then and now) in rural areas, in relatively small villages.[51] When Cobanero development workers refer to the Q'eqchi' as the most "isolated" of the Maya peoples (Chapter 4), they are signaling the failure of the Dominican population concentration project to change how and where the Q'eqchi' population lived. In the post-war era, this refers to the army's similar failure to affect a centralized population that practices permanent agriculture and extractive activities (not *milpa* farming, much less swidden agriculture), as well as its failure to create a National Guatemalan Culture (Chapter 2).

Yaa'balhix: a New Territorial Order

Even when development projects fail to achieve their goals, they have contradictory effects that should not be easily dismissed (Ferguson 1990). While the army's development pole failed in terms of its major goals (e.g., attracting the "subversive" population of displaced people to convince them to turn themselves in,

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[48] The Verapaces were split into two departments, Baja Verapaz and Alta Verapaz, in 1877. My interest lies with Alta Verapaz.

[49] These are also occasionally referred to as *congregaciones*, or congregation projects (Lovell 1988); the meaning is the same.

[50] While Sapper writes as a historian and ethnographer, he is not an entirely disinterested actor, as his family owned vast areas of historically Q'eqchi' lands. It is possible that it was in his interest to believe that the majority of the population died out, thereby disabling potential inheritance claims.

[51] Even today, the assumption of legibility in such works as *Seeing Like a State* does not apply to rural Guatemala. When I arrived to work with the municipal planning office of Uspantán, El Quiché, in 2004, my first task was to come up with a list of all the villages located in the county. They did not know how many villages there were, much less all of their names.

attracting international development aid), resettlement in development poles does point to the ways that army counterinsurgency strategies affected rural Q'eqchi' spatial practices.

By the early 1970s, the army's counterinsurgency strategy sought to group the rural population together in order to control the jungle and the borderlands with Mexico as a way to control contacts with potential subversive groups (Padilla 1990);[52] for similar reasons, the guerrillas were happy to work with a dispersed population (Huet 2008). For the most part, it seems that the army's strategy was largely unsuccessful. As mentioned in Chapter 2, new Q'eqchi' communities were usually dispersed, with nuclear families living together in homes on the plots of land they were actively farming. To the extent that communities did centralize their populations in the 1970s, I found that this occurred only in the event that the land titling agency (INTA) promised communities that they would conduct a census as part of the land titling process, but only after they rebuilt homes in a centralized area. The majority of the communities I encountered completed this process in the 1980s, when displaced peoples resettled.[53]

While the army's counterrevolutionary population concentration project failed, it succeeded to a great degree following the scorched earth campaigns of the early 1980s. The army perhaps most obviously directed the process of concentrated resettlement from multiple villages into one, but other communities also experienced concentrated resettlement. As a contemporary newspaper article summed it up: "a population that once lived scattered over a large expanse is now concentrated in easily guarded, and controlled communities" (Jenkins 1984). While the counterinsurgency purposes of concentration were most clear during the 1980s,[54] these are less important now than other changes in the land.

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[52] In my fieldwork sites, this was primarily EGP, but also often included *gring@* development workers and Catholic Action lay organizers.

[53] Even in cases that were not development poles, Q'eqchi' communities often made decisions regarding the act and timing of their resettlement decisions under duress. For example, while they lived in the bush, village leaders from Setzuul used to check in with the army every month or so. At one of these meetings, the army told them they would have to re-establish their village or forfeit their land. This was due to a new INTA law that the military established to finalize the dispossession of displaced peoples (Manz 1992), but it was also used as a threat to re-establish Sanctioned Mayas on their land.

[54] In addition to those listed here and in Chapter 2, the Church in Exile was also concerned that some of the development projects funded by USAID were massive sterilization programs (Colección CIRMA, Serie de Documentos IGE). While these may have been funded under the umbrella of population and environment and seemed innocuous out of context, when part of the Guatemalan army's development regime for an indigenous target population, some church members worried that sterilization was an extension of genocide.
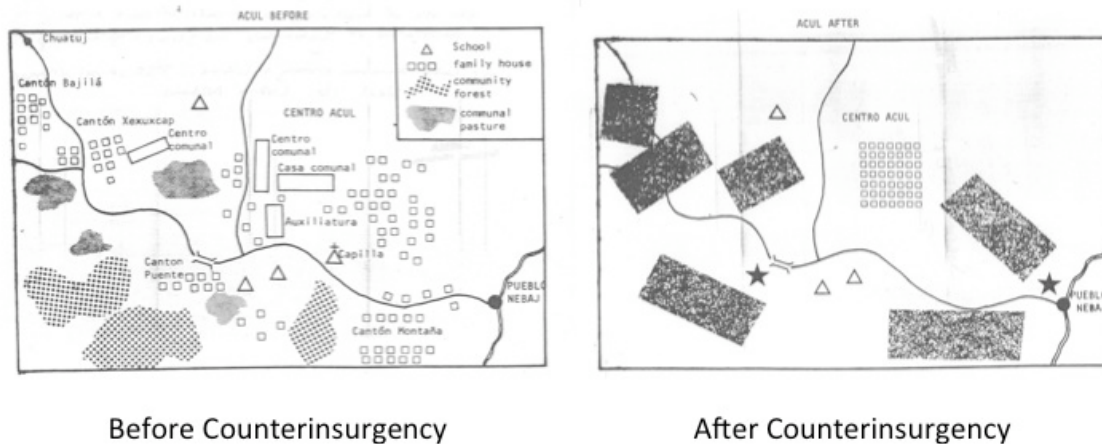
Before Counterinsurgency   After Counterinsurgency

FIGURE 6.1: Territorial reorganization of Acul, a development pole. In the figure on the right, stars represent army bases and rectangles represent scorched earth; commons, such as cattle pasture and forest, are not shown. From Anonymous (1988), adapted from Guatemalan Church in Exile. Used with kind permission by Cultural Survival.

As noted in Chapter 3, the military's scorched earth project effectively created a political forest, the meaning of which transitioned from subversive jungle to endangered rainforest in this post-war era. Apart from the political forest that would become the target for international conservation, however, the military, the land titling agency (INTA) and international development agencies (including USAID) all effectively worked to enforce a previously impossible separation of nature, agriculture, and housing. In development poles, all family houses were built on square grids, often on plots as small as 40 meters squared, which affected gardening practices.[55] Whereas previously Q'eqchi's had a series of irregular (i.e., not rectangular), rotating swiddens, and local institutions for taking of timber and other resources, development poles had rectilinear agricultural plots and a mapped, delineated forest reserve. Some resettled communities recreated property rights on a relatively equal basis, but in development poles, a military commissioner established these rights based on perceived army loyalty and personal relationships.

This was not the first program of this magnitude attempting to change Q'eqchi' livelihoods and relationships, but this time village centralization seems to have stuck.[56] When I asked about it, elderly Q'eqchi's pointed out that this was difficult for their social fabric. First, men effectively have to travel much longer to get to their plots of land; many people I know have to commute one hour each way. More importantly, physical closeness seems to increase conflicts. Walking down the hill one morning on the way to an interview, K'ux and I literally wandered between two women screaming at each other, one standing at the edge of her lot, with her husband and two children next to her, and the other standing on the path with her daughter behind her. Within a moment, both were waving machetes, and one woman threatened to kill the other,

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[55] As King (1974) notes, even in urban Cobán, both Ladinos and Q'eqchi's preferred to build their homes at the back of a plot, with tall shrubs and flowering plants offering relative privacy. Most rural homes also have gardens, including fruit-bearing trees, and domestic animals living near the house.

[56] This is positively correlated with counterinsurgency—in northern Cobán and Chisec, where counterinsurgency campaigns were most intense, most villages are centralized. In Chahal, where counterinsurgency campaigns were relatively lax, most village homes are still dispersed.

feinting towards her, but only slashing at her shrubs. K'ux was embarrassed that I witnessed this event, and asked me to step back while he attempted to mediate.

From what I was able to glean, the precipitating event had to do with one woman's pig encroaching on the other's garden, but K'ux explained that these women had conflicts that dated to civil war problems. I do not want to dismiss old enmities, but to suggest that centralization, and its association with surveillance, exacerbates these problems. An observer of development poles in the 1980s noted that neighbors fight more often and domestic animals have to be tied up (Padilla 1990).[57] In the villages I lived in, people were nominally expected to tie up their domestic animals (especially pigs), but nobody did. Elderly women explained to me that they never used to have to worry about domestic animals ranging too far, but now it was a constant problem; and whereas visiting a neighbor used to be an event to look forward to, now people can just drop in whenever they feel like it, even when it's an imposition.[58]

If village elders do not like these aspects of centralization, why do they maintain this imposed territorial order? The answer I commonly received is that it is "safer" to live in centralized villages. Even the elderly woman who survived the massacre because she lived in a home far from the center assured me that it is safer to live in centralized villages. Although I regularly and persistently asked about this, not even interculturally adept tribal elders (Tsing 1999) could explain this to me. From what I was able to glean, the answer was self-evident to civil war survivors—living in the jungle, or on farmed plots that seemed like jungle, even twenty-five years after the scorched earth campaigns ended, is dangerously foolhardy. Q'eqchi's understand that they are sanctioned to live only where the military and/or land tenure agency designated on the map, and they are loathe to move back out. I can think of one exception that proves the rule: in Setzuul, one man I never met still lives way out on his farming parcel. There was a slight note of awe in Javier's voice when he said, "He just refused to move to the center. (Why not?) He wasn't afraid. (Why wasn't he afraid?) Who knows [*saber*]." I argue that these inchoate fears of a past and future of racialized violence and dispossession are what reproduce centralized villages in Q'eqchi' spatial practice, despite its inadequacy for agricultural and social practice.

Property and Agrarian Power Relations

> The army is the ultimate judicial authority in Alta Verapaz and the rest of the indigenous highlands. Disputes over land, adultery, animals eating others' crops, and even witchcraft accusations are continually carried to the army bases. Villagers perceive that the military exercises the real power, and they often approach them before going to the civilian authorities. – Richard Wilson (1995: 240).

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[57] Norman Schwartz described the difficulties of domestic animals, particularly pigs, in close quarters as contributing to conflict in centralized Q'eqchi' communities in Petén as well (personal communication).

[58] Most of the women that I spoke to described these things as negative phenomena. In dispersed villages, one's closest neighbor would be a 15-60 minute walk away. Now, neighbors regularly greet each other, even when one is using the latrine.

Despite orderly grids of villagization, power relations and spatialities were multiple, entangled, and not monopolized by a sovereign state rationality. – Donald Moore (2005: 21)

Despite the army's signs proclaiming that development poles were "antisubversive villages" that are "ideologically new" (Wilson 1995), Yaab'alhix has not viewed the army as an ultimate authority for some time. Rather, like Moore (above), Yaab'alhix leaders do not work within a sovereign state rationality, but mediate complicated relationships with local and national civilian governments, the army, and the landed elites. To understand Yaab'alhix's imbrications in power relations, we need to understand the history of their struggles to become recognized owners of this land. Sikor and Lund (2009) show that institutional authority and property rights are recursively constituted. In my case, despite the army's sovereign exercise of the right of death over life (Foucault 2003, 2007) during the massacre, its later inability to establish the villagers as the legitimate owners of their land led to a corresponding loss in its authority.

When it came time for villagers to return to Yaab'alhix,[59] the army authorized former members of five villages to relocate to a much larger Yaab'alhix, building their homes on literally scorched earth.[60] Some villagers thought little of their historical conflict with Sapper, and a few specifically mentioned that they knew he was already dead.[61] One woman said, "the army didn't know anything about Sapper, maybe, they just told us to leave [the *campamento*]." Village leaders were originally very concerned about their ability to gain title to the land, however. In fact, Guayo told me that he asked the army about it, but Major Rosales told him that since Sapper was dead, the army could reallocate the land.

When the army and new villagers set up camp in Yaab'alhix, they did not encounter any problems. It was not until a year later, when the army (with USAID money) inaugurated public buildings, that Ricardo Sapper's son came calling. In rural Guatemala, state agencies usually refuse to build a school or meeting hall unless a community has established itself as the sole claimant to the land.[62] In response, Sapper's son came to Yaab'alhix to tell the villagers they didn't have the right to build anything on his land, but he was met by angry paramilitaries with guns, not quaking serfs. Later, through the plantation administrator, Sapper's son sent word that they didn't have the right to build a meeting hall, nor did they have any rights to *his* land.

The new village leaders (comprised of surviving leaders from Semox and Yaab'alhix) did not respond directly to the plantation administrator. While leaders did not mention it, another man who was present when the administrator came claimed that he threatened to expel them all from their new homes, and take the community buildings as plantation property. Guayo traveled to the military base in Cobán to ask the military to help them. When he asked for help, Major Rosales just shrugged and said, it's

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[59] Villagers used the word *sutq'ii*, even those who were originally from a neighboring village.

[60] Villagers could not remember where all the clandestine graves were, such that one man actually found a secondary gravesite while building his home in the middle of town.

[61] Sapper was reputedly murdered in the capital by guerrillas.

[62] The community does not need to have actually completed the land titling process, but the state does not have the right to build public infrastructure on 'private property,' usually referring to plantations.

his land, I guess. The major acknowledged his earlier proclamation that the land would be theirs, and nobody would "bother" them, but could not help him. Even in death, Sapper's private property claims superseded the army's territorialization. The major's unwillingness or inability to intervene on its ally's (as a military-promoted development pole) behalf led the leaders of Yaab'alhix to conclude that being the military's ally is not particularly useful.

In the mid-1980s, residents of the new development pole found themselves in dire straits. Having allied with the army through the amnesty agreement, they forfeited the sympathies of rich foreigners and their attendant solidarity monies. They were living on "private property" and could be expelled, possibly back to the jungle, at any moment. They went to the land titling agency (INTA) to ask for help to buy the land, but gave up because INTA seemed like it could take years. They asked the Catholic Church for help to no avail. Finally, they threw their lot in with a man who purported to represent the "Maya Association," who asked for all their money to pay association dues before brokering a land sale, then absconded.

Out of options, and out of money, while walking down the street in the capital, Guayo (the only member of the expedition who could read and write) spotted a shingle that advertised a lawyer. They walked in. The lawyer heard their case, and advised them to form their own association and negotiate directly with Sapper's son to buy the land. The plantation administrator was pleased to finally be dealing with a lawyer representing a community that recognized Sapper's land ownership, and he apparently gave the village leaders constant encouragement. "Now you're on the right path," he would say.

By this time, most villagers were at least subsistence farming, and some farmers from Ya'alkob'e were able to recoup parts of their cardamom plants.[63] Where possible, villagers recovered the same plots of land they used to work, but new residents from the two farther villages had simply staked out new plots of land. With the land purchase, villagers had the option to buy land at a price that was more than double Sapper's price only ten years ago. To pay for the land, villagers sold crops and domestic animals, but primarily they had to work on the Chimax plantation as day laborers.

Villagers discovered that their development pole actually comprised two, not one, land titles. Given that they had been violently dispossessed, internally displaced, and defrauded all within a few years, they had little money to buy land. As such, the plantation administrator suggested they purchase the title that corresponded to their village center, while keeping open the possibility that they could buy the other half for their children in a few years. Most villagers made payments within three years, and those who were able to purchase more than 10 *manzanas* were very vague about where they derived the earnings to buy more land. Suffice it to say that this began a continuing process of economic differentiation in Yaab'alhix.

Villagers who did not believe they could make payments left in search of land elsewhere. Their first destination was a national park, although the army expelled them. Many villagers purchased small amounts of land, which they later had to sell. Some villagers even sold their homes in the urban center and moved onto their farming plots,

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[63] The army burned down all the cardamom in Semox and Yaab'alhix, but some cardamom plants in Ya'alkob'e survived.

such that the community may be in a process of slow dispersion, one that is marked by economic difference.

Meanwhile, many villagers would now like to purchase Sapper's neighboring title, but the land is embroiled in a conflict. Ironically, the Committee for Peasant Unity (CUC) is sponsoring a group of Q'eqchi' "landless peasants" to invade the plantation and assert control without paying for it. In doing so, they are erasing Ya'alkob'e's historical existence, as well as its survivors' claims of suffering for territory. While CUC representatives in the capital purported to know little about the case, it came to blows recently, with former residents of Ya'alkob'e (now in Yaab'alhix) and the "landless peasants" fighting each other with machetes in the central park of the county seat.[64] Despite the fact that these two groups seem to be similarly structurally positioned, they have radically different alliances (Li 2000).

For the community of Yaab'alhix as it exists today, then, a whole host of institutions were either unwilling or unable to help them pursue their claims (the army, the Catholic Church, the land titling agency, and peasant groups); this has substantially weakened leaders' interest in strong social relations with any of these groups. In literally buying their village, Yaab'alhix leaders created an identity as a self-reliant, Q'eqchi' community. As a consequence, this village, which was torn asunder and pieced back together, has strong local authorities and institutions.

Remaking Place

> Identities are the names we give to different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past. – Stuart Hall (2003: 236).

The army's re-education attempts following its scorched earth campaign failed generally (Wilson 1995; Huet 2008), and Yaab'alhix's identity was not overdetermined, even with the massive violence people suffered. What makes Yaab'alhix as a place is not its internal history as a massacre site, but its imbrications in broader property relations with the German plantation owner and how these articulated with the army's development pole plans such that the community finally rejected the army's trusteeship in favor of local autonomy (Massey 1993; Li 2007: 28). Even though the army succeeded in shaping the agricultural and social spaces of Yaab'alhix, it failed to form subjects as Sanctioned Mayas.

Instead of forming their identity in concert with the army's interpellation of them as Sanctioned Maya, community members of Yaab'alhix reworked their identity through the experienced of shared suffering during massacre, persecution and starvation in displacement,[65] amnesty and return (Malkki 1992, 1995; Moore 2005). If Q'eqchi's did not have a larger regional identity prior to the counterinsurgency campaign (Wilson 1995), communities torn asunder that reformed did so on the basis of a shared language and experience—today, they call this being Q'eqchi'.

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[64] Since then, villagers told me they have been afraid to assert claims to Ya'alkob'e, despite their resentment at these more recent usurpers. Instead, they seek to buy land, but cannot afford to buy it without financial assistance. As former villagers of Sajolom lost their land due to irregular or illegal practices by INTA, they are seeking financial assistance to buy a plantation as restitution.

[65] In the case of Yaab'alhix, more people died of illness and starvation in the bush than the army massacred.

Village elders in Yaab'alhix explained to me that now they know leaders in other communities in Chisec and Cobán, and they participate in spiritual and political acts with them;[66] sometimes their children even marry each other. To some extent, they knew each others' sacred places prior to the counterinsurgency campaign,[67] but elders explained to me that they really got to know each other when they shared histories of displacement and loss in the *campamento*, while they waited for the army to place them in different development poles. When they had to make a new community, they overcame distrust of spying on each other for the army by bonding over shared suffering and Q'eqchi' culture. Rich people, white people, urban people, all of these came together to form a constitutive outside through which the Q'eqchi's of Yaab'alhix (re)defined themselves.

The new villagers of Yaab'alhix self-consciously constructed place through active processes of work (Escobar 2001; Gordillo 2002). In particular, when Yaab'alhix was reconstituted as a development pole, villagers' spatial practice (Lefebvre 2007) remade a place called home on scorched earth. While the army built the school and the meeting hall, the villagers of Yaab'alhix labored on their land, as well as on Finca Chimax (the same place most proudly refused to work as serfs in the years leading up to the massacre). After they bought their land, K'ux, still a young man who spoke little Spanish,[68] went to Cobán and reported the massacre as a crime. As part of the national project of recuperation of historical memory, villagers participated in digging up clandestine graves and offering testimony that clearly identifies the army as the responsible agent for their deaths.[69] Finally, folks from Yaab'alhix participated in commissioning and inaugurating a monument to their dead.

Remaking place is much more than the recuperation of loss. In Yaab'alhix, it is the ongoing struggle to create the conditions of possibility for their children's agrarian livelihoods, which includes calling upon a history of suffering. When the community of Yaab'alhix asks for development aid, they do so not under the rubric of improvement, but compensation for war-time suffering. In spiritual practice, both Catholic and non-Christian Maya, the Q'eqchi's renew their reciprocal bond with the land through the *tzuultaq'a*. Each time they prepare the land for planting, they must ask the *tzuultaq'a* for permission to plant through a group process of worship. Whereas these practices have been abandoned or atomized in other lowlands Q'eqchi' communities (Wilson 1995; Siebers 1999), they are experiencing a protracted rebirth in Yaab'alhix. According to K'ux's father, the 1980s witnessed mass conversions to Evangelicism; in the 1990s, the Catholic Church reneged on its previous policy against worship of the *tzuultaq'a*, reaffirming them as Q'eqchi' practices within the Catholic religion. Today, even the *chinames* (saint brotherhoods) laugh at the notion that they must be condoned by the

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[66] To the extent that these two are differentiated.

[67] During a major fire in the 1940s, entire families traveled to a sacred place many hours' walk away in Chisec. This implies some kind of previous relationship with the land and people there, because this *tzuultaq'a*, while important in Chisec, is not recognized as one of the 'thirteen' *tzuultaq'as* that most people know about.

[68] Like many his age, K'ux dropped out of school when his family lived in the jungle. He eventually took classes and learned to read and write through adult education programs.

[69] Unlike groups with solidarity connections, nobody from Yaab'alhix has offered testimony in Spain or the US, but they referenced an imagined *gring@* audience when they told me their histories.

Church, and K'ux is one of a growing number of leaders who declares himself non-Christian Maya.

These practices are not only spiritual beliefs, but relational beliefs that signal a lack of allegiance with the Guatemalan national state and the Catholic Church. In Yaab'alhix, religious leaders point to their relationship with the *tzuultaq'a* as part and parcel with their survival.[70] In particular, they retell the story of the *Kaxlan winq's* (foreigner) encroachment on the *tzuultaq'a's* land, which is also their land, when Sapper built the road through their communities. These *Kaxlan* were speculating in subsoil resource extraction, dynamiting the sacred hills. Religious leaders were very concerned about what to do, so they went to a sacred place, where the river meets the mouth of a cave, to offer gifts and seek advice from the *tzuultaq'a.*[71]

In a dream, the *tzuultaq'a* came to one of the men and told him not to worry, that the *tzuultaq'a* would deal directly with the *Kaxlan winq*. According to some, the *tzuultaq'a* came to one of the white men in a dream and told him to leave; according to others, one of the men died in a dynamite explosion—by all accounts, the *Kaxlan winq* left shortly thereafter. When spiritual leaders tell me this story today, they are celebrating their triumph over the attempt of outsiders--Germans, Ladinos, and *Gring@s* alike are all *Kaxlan winq*, part of a constitutive outside of this community--to dispossess them. In contrast, they point to their repossession of the land through not only purchasing land titles, but also a dynamic relationship between the community of Yaab'alhix and the *tzuultaq'a* there, which is the rightful arbiter of property.

Conclusion

The last time a helicopter landed in Yaab'alhix, it was Cristian Sapper and his plantation administrator. With much fanfare, the plantation owner exchanged the final payment for the land title to Yaab'alhix. While in many ways this is a liberating story, it is instructive to remember that the villagers of Yaab'alhix won their land not on the basis of international programs to recognize and compensate them for having suffered a genocidal massacre, but rather through their labor on the German's plantation. Nonetheless, suffering for territory (Moore 2005) is still the primary narrative that villagers use in property relations, in state patronage, in international development, and in their identity work. In Yaab'alhix, one must suffer for territory to be Q'eqchi'. In this way, I hope I have shown the contradictory effects of identity politics—while the villagers of Yaab'alhix have overcome racialized dispossession, their repossession is also racialized and spatialized.

Transitions

In many respects, Yaab'alhix is the Q'eqchi' development pole *par excellence.* The primary difference between my understanding of Yaab'alhix and that of observers of wartime violence (e.g., Le Bot 1995) is that the crippling ethnocide perpetrated in development poles was surprisingly fleeting. While many solidarity activists express concern that what was in the 1980s a class war is now remembered as a race war (Nelson 2009), Yaab'alhix survivors remember this differently. Many villagers allied with people

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[70] On this, see also Huet (2008), whose book title translates to "The Sacred Jungle Saved Us."

[71] By this time, the *tzuultaq'a* had revealed its name to them. I do not proffer details of location and names here out of respect for K'ux's father's fear that foreigners would profane and/or expropriate their sacred sites if they knew about them.

who fomented revolution in terms of class, but they did so because these outsiders promised to help them in their struggle to possess the land. When their villages were reduced to scorched earth and their family members were massacred, however, villagers believe they were expendable as Q'eqchi's, not poor people. They believe that they suffered for territory in a way that Ladinos did not, and this belief forms the core of their post-war identities.

I present another development pole in Chapter 7, but villagers' identities and struggles are fundamentally different from those of Yaab'alhix. It is easier to sympathize with villagers from Yaab'alhix than those of Sepac. Whereas villagers of Yaab'alhix are renowned massacre survivors, villagers of Sepac are reputed to be perpetrators, those who personally benefited from the state's seemingly irrational and overblown violence. Sepac residents are well aware of their regional reputation—it is hard not to when the better part of a county is comprised of grown victims' children who fantasize about your death—and they resent it. Some villagers complain that their parents were killed by paramilitaries, too, but solidarity aid snubs the entire town as "murderers" (*asesinos*). Former paramilitary leaders complain that the left has got it all wrong: they lived in fear of the army, too, and their shady negotiations and violent actions had the same goal as everyone else, to save their land and their lives. In the following pages, I examine three evolving binaries in a town that was always rife with inequalities: descendents of plantation owners and their serfs; paramilitaries and "subversives;" and now land "owners" and landless park "invaders." Both claim marginality, both live in fear of past and future violence, and both groups look to international development NGOS as the arbiters of these claims.

Chapter 7

Living on Scorched Earth: The Production of Land Owners and Park Invaders

Introduction

Sepac is a community that isn't—although INTA registered "Sepac and Tal" as one community when the military designated it a development pole, none of its residents agreed to this. In other places where INTA mapped multiple communities into one polygon, these communities ignored INTA's judgment continued to manage their land separately.[1] In Sepac, however, Ladino paramilitaries controlled the Improvement Committee, and later the land committee, so they also took (and never gave back) control of the land of all the smaller communities, as well as would-be plantations. For years, people lived in the centralized urban area, unable to farm their land due to fear of guerrilla attacks and army accusations (of consorting with guerrillas in the jungle), and reliant on military food aid. When displaced families began to return to their homes in other communities, a politically precarious if joyous event, some Q'eqchi' families from Sepac asked for permission to go with them. That is, families living in Sepac believed they would live better lives if they joined communities of Suspect Maya than if they stayed in their loyal community. This chapter examines those families who were dispossessed multiple times (a non-legal land titling process in the 1970s, park creation and expansion, forced resettlement during civil war violence), but who finally became landless only through a sustainable development land titling project in 2004.

Although my case study was going to look at the problems of displaced families in current land titling projects, local interlocutors quickly redirected my attention to the co-production of the park and Sepac through violence (Chapter 1). Chapters 5 and 6 showed how communities come together and fall apart during war-time violence; this chapter deals with the aftermath of a community that turned its violence inward. Sepac's location near a new park and the new Playa Grande military base placed pressure on this community-that-isn't to organize both land ownership and loyalty, because the army told Sepac leaders that they must demonstrate their loyalty to the nation by organizing themselves in a manner that was spatially legible to the army and govern themselves as paramilitaries. The army's motto of development poles as "property with liberty" continues to the present day.[2] Most landowners paid a high price for property, and many survivors (and victims) lost their liberty.

I develop three ideas in this chapter. First, in previous chapters, I have shown how poor, rural Q'eqchi's have suffered for territory (Moore 2005) and the frontier effects of this discourse, which pushes both Ladinos and Q'eqchi's who were insulated from violence and displacement, to the constitutive outside (Hall 1996). As such, they cannot make the same moral claims to territory. In Sepac, however, the people who

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[1] Today, NGOs like New Horizons call these "land conflicts" where INTA made a "mistake," which they fix by legalizing the division of the single parcel into multiple parcels along community boundaries.

[2] Slogan: "Polos de desarrollo: propiedad con libertad" in the army's glossy insert, **"**Polos de Desarrollo" 13 de enero de 1986, Prensa Libre. From CIRMA Archives, SIG 85 Infostelle.

wield the discourse of suffering for territory are paramilitaries[3] who made their Faustian bargain with the military, then had to police their village and others to perform their loyalty on a regular basis. Although they do not deny that Sepac's landless majority also suffered during the war, community leaders under militarization imply that this suffering is deserved because EGP collaborators brought counterinsurgency violence upon themselves.

Second, Sepac is a case of what I call development without trusteeship. Wainwright (2008) insists that we all want development, even when it fails us. Li (2007) usefully frames development as the will to improve within the relationship of trusteeship, which she critiques as paternalistic while maintaining an assumption of benevolence. Sepac leaders established a relationship of trusteeship with the military by the late 1970s that continued for years. In post-war development, however, this relationship has been torn asunder and both former paramilitaries and their survivors reject trusteeship under the banner of sustainable development. Within the region, development professionals do not fault the Project for this enmity; in fact, friends repeatedly warned me against conducting research in such a difficult and even dangerous community. While Sepac can be a difficult and dangerous place to live, locals' resentment towards the Project offers insight into post-war development in Guatemala.

Third, I trace the production of war-time marginalities, which were based on the articulation of race, class and religion and could not be easily reduced to any one factor. In the post-war era, suffering and marginality have crystallized as racialized identities. In Sepac, this has the effect that paramilitaries' claims of suffering for territory are sometimes misinterpreted; as I discuss in Chapter 8, many elites are opting for indigenous identities, even as others attempt to police them out. The reduction of complicated war histories to a single discourse of ethnic identity can be problematic, but discourses of ethnic identity and racism proliferate in the post-war. Given the difficulty that outsiders have of sorting between Sanctioned and Suspect Mayas, in the post-war people who believe their work promotes social justice resort to the simplified understanding that Mayas suffered racism, which manifested as genocide at the hand of Ladinos during the civil war. Mayas practice ethnic absolutism (Chapter 5) because people they believe have not suffered racism and do not share their values also claim Maya identity and post-war privilege. For their part, Ladinos reject the term and the shame of committing injustices that comes with it (Chapter 8).

I recount Sepac's history as it was told to me by community members including former paramilitaries and their victims, other regional folks (in terms of Sepac's war-time reputation), and development professionals (in terms of contemporary land conflicts). As with other chapters, I attempted to supplement my ethnography with archival work, but I was unable to find key documents containing information that should have determined the legitimacy of conflicting claims between the park administration and Sepac community members. When I submitted a white paper detailing the problems in both community members' claims *and* those of the park and the Project, the Project Director expressed concern that I treated community members'

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[3] As I stated in the previous chapter, all men living in development poles (and almost all rural communities) were forced to patrol during the 1980s. When I say "paramilitaries" in this chapter, I refer to local military commissioners, patrol heads, and other leadership positions that liaised between the army and the community, and would have also led any massacres.

claims as "truth," but was also clearly surprised that I treated the claims of government officials and development professionals with the same level of skepticism as former paramilitaries. While all three of these key actors wield authority in Sepac, I believe each of them hid information or lied when presenting their narrative to me; this is also true of at least some dispossessed community members. My concern here is not to ferret out the Truth, but to think through what these slippages and shifts over time can tell us about identity, property, and post-war development.

In the pages that follow, I begin with the possibilities for the land that became Sepac, detailing different life paths to Sepac and subsequent conflicts, as well as the nascent park problem. In the next section, I tell how local elites' Faustian bargain led to the militarization of Sepac and paramilitary loyalty led to the designation of Sepac as a development pole. Unlike Yaab'alhix (Chapter 6), Sepac was a hub for internally displaced people at a regional level who came under the control of violent paramilitaries who were retrenched by their own scorched earth massacre. The following section, development without trusteeship, addresses the Project's work in Sepac and the different reasons both landowners and landless have for rejecting the Project's overtures. The final section examines the question of whether the war-time binary of killer/survivor has shifted to owner/invader, pointing out what is at stake in reproductions of marginality in the transition from war to post-war.

A Playground, a Park, a Home

INTA stated that "spontaneous" communities (once it accepted their existence) should plan and coordinate their settlement of colonization areas with state agencies. Of the three in-depth case study communities (Chapters 5–7), Setzuul most closely matches this history: first asking INTA for permission, then settling the land, and finally registering a land claim with INTA as a unified community. Yaab'alhix did not match this model because a series of smaller, dispersed communities settled the land in the early twentieth century, well before INTA was established to promote state-backed colonization. For their part, the people who came to live in Sepac were a number of decentralized, dispersed communities (most people recalled six) amidst two aspiring *finqueros* attempting to create plantations, then a number of displaced people forced to move to the urban center.

The official history of Sepac begins in the early 1950s, when two cousins separately attempted to establish plantations in the zone of "pure jungle." Each of the cousins was descended from a different family plantation (the Portillo and Mendoza families), and each was violently expelled from his family plantation during power struggles over inheritance.[4] The Portillo and Mendoza families had historically feuded, but the two outcasts supposedly lived peacefully as neighbors for some years. Pancho Mendoza had two Spanish surnames, but José Portillo's second surname was Q'eqchi', and today some Portillos proudly claim that they are Q'eqchi' (Chapter 8). Each man sought to claim his own section of the jungle for a new plantation. Although their descendents admitted to me that neither man wanted to join a community, and that a few groups of Q'eqchi' families were already living in the area when the two men

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[4] As they explained it to me, Spanish-descended plantations were commonly ceded to the oldest son in order to keep the plantation whole. This practice also reproduces land tenure inequalities (Collea and Amato 1986).

showed up (former serfs from local plantations, including those of the Portillos and Mendozas), they asserted that this does not change their role as "founders" of the "community."

Either way, the Mendoza and Portillo families did not find or found Sepac as in common colonization narratives. For their part, former plantation serfs left in search of a better life farming in the jungle and forming approximately six small communities (*caseríos*) in lands they already knew from fishing in Lake Raxha' and hunting along the trails to its southwest. Some people told me that their parents believed they were settling the land as owners, and were surprised to discover that the Portillos and Mendozas tried to treat them as serfs. Although these repeated attempts failed, and neither man enclosed the land as his own plantation, this set the tone for coercive relationships that continues into the present.

The land that came to be known as Sepac encompassed between 2,250 hectares (according to park administrators) and 3,600 hectares (according to community leaders). All parties agree that the lake was never part of Sepac, but differ on the extent of Sepac's land northeast towards the lake. During the 1960s, one of the German-descended elites from the county capital in Cobán appropriated the lake and began bringing rich tourists to visit it, using it as his personal playground. Eventually, military elites found out about this and dispossessed him of the lake. They carved out an airstrip next to the lake and also used Lake Raxha' as a vacation site. Locals report that both of the Lucas García brothers regularly visited the lake, which would have been facilitated through Romeo Lucas García's role as coordinator of Franja colonization, and then president (Chapter 2). As Sepac residents tell the story today, there was no indication that this would affect their land rights.

FIGURE 7.1: Lake Raxha', a local tourist attraction since the 1960s. (Photograph by the author.)

I have not been able to find any INTA records for this period, but as the Portillos and the Mendozas heard that their lands were part of the declared "Zone of Agrarian Development," they began to seek title to the land as one large community. In keeping with contemporary bureaucratic practice, the titles were not immediately forthcoming, despite Mendoza and Portillo's attempts to leverage their families' power with the governor. Around 1973, Pancho Mendoza opted for a new option that seemed to have better results, titling the land as a cooperative[5]—but he left out the Portillos.

When the Portillos found out that the Mendozas had already begun to map and title the land without them, they told me they were livid. When I asked Portillos why this happened, they said the Mendozas had always held themselves apart, and they thought they were better than the Portillos because they were more Ladino and better educated (recall that José Portillo's mother was Q'eqchi'). When I asked the Mendozas, they claimed that the problem was that the Portillos were "all military commissioners," and that they were responsible for much of the region's violence. There is some truth to the accusation. After the coup in 1954, the military appointed Adolfo Portillo military commissioner for the region to watch out for communist threats. In the early 1960s, Adolfo had one of the Mendozas killed as a "communist" over a land feud. As the revolutionary threat became more real (due to EGP presence), Adolfo appointed and supervised all local military commissioners in the area. He tended to appoint his sons as local military commissioners, as he trusted them and some of them served in the military. This is how the Portillos came to run Sepac—Adolfo ran his children off the plantation as illegitimate heirs, but kept them close (as military commissioners) to ward off the communist threat. When EGP operatives assassinated Adolfo Portillo on his plantation in 1981, Portillo paramilitaries in Sepac retrenched, convinced that this was a kill-or-be-killed war.

In 1973, then, anyone who came to Sepac looking for land found two cooperatives, one controlled by the Mendozas and the other controlled by the Portillos. On either side, the controlling family wanted to charge them an "entrance" fee to settle in the community. While this is not unusual today in the region, local committees usually charge these fees after the community is established and has made significant legal process in getting title to their land, building a school, and perhaps a soccer field. My understanding is that the Mendozas and Portillos had made little progress in this sense, and that their "entrance" fees were higher than the norm. Families that agreed to pay these fees did so because they believed (incorrectly) the community was well on its way to legal title.

Meanwhile, most families who paid these fees had already settled the land (some even before the Portillos and the Mendozas), but felt coerced into paying or abandoning their crops and homes. Instead of continuing the legal process with INTA, both the Portillos and the Mendozas hired a "cartographer" and a lawyer with questionable skills to map and title their land. Today, when people use these maps to assert their rights to land inside the park, administrators dismiss them as imprecise sketches (*croquis*). In both cooperatives, land was allocated into unequal parcels, ranging from 10 hectares to more than 100 hectares, sometimes without regard for people's current crop holdings. Many people farmed only a few hectares that were spread out over a significant area; the

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[5] Cooperatives did have great success in achieving land allocations and efficient titling processes, but this had more to do with powerful institutional support from USAID and the Catholic Church.

ruling families assigned them contiguous plots of land that often did not include their existing cardamom plants, which was a crippling loss that Portillos and Mendozas alike refused to redress. In a manner that was illegal (then and now) for their property regime (CAP, Chapter 4), the Portillos and Mendozas allocated land "according to one's capacity to pay" (Killers and Survivors, below).[6]

Other families did not even know that their land was being mapped into parcels, which someone else would claim. It is difficult to determine how many people were living in Sepac and lost their land during this process—some Portillo and Mendoza descendents insisted it couldn't have been more than a few families, whereas other residents estimated perhaps one-third of the families living in Sepac at the time of this first mapping and titling process lost their land. A community leader further up the road who was born in Sepac and dispossessed of his father's land after he was killed during the war, assured me the proportion was much closer to half the families.[7]

The deaths that follow in its wake attest to the bitterness this 1970s illegitimate land titling dispossession engendered. Of the three men who ran the titling process in Sepac and other communities in the region, one was dead and the other two fled the country in the next few years. In order to write up the paperwork, the lawyer designated a "previous owner" who sold the land in individual parcels to other people, a process that INTA did not affirm, and the paperwork was not sufficient to register land in the National Property Register. Current Portillo leaders assured me that everyone understood that the titles were not legal, but other families asserted that they did not speak Spanish (let alone read and write it), and they would not have paid money for illegitimate land titles. At any rate, the men who collected the money, including one man whose name was also listed as the "previous owner" on the paperwork, were killed in an EGP assassination in 1981. In a rare point of convergence, interested parties[8] agree that conflicts over this first land titling process angered many people, and that some of those people joined EGP.

Lake Raxha' National Park

In 1975, as part of the colonization process of the Franja, Lake Raxha' was declared a reserve measuring ten square kilometers. Here is where the park's location becomes problematic—the maps are not based on any fieldwork, or even necessarily professional cartography, so "ten kilometers squared" is a floating declaration that hangs over the region without cohering to a specific place. Moreover, as with the "land titles" above, the park was never legally titled (the state has to legally recognize, map and grant itself ownership of the land), nor was it registered in the National Property Register. To any agricultural homesteader, all of the land in the area would still seem to be a *baldío*: empty and available. The law also supported this perception until after 2000.

There were at least two communities already settled in the park; two other groups declare today that they are reclaiming historic community land, which park and Project officials vehemently deny. They classify all four groups as "invaders." I

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[6] This is illegal precisely because CAPs were created as a land ownership opportunity for landless families.

[7] When I told them I would like to speak to those families, he told me I couldn't—most of them were dead.

[8] I asked Project and park officials, but they told me they didn't know anything about the earlier titling process, although they had seen the papers and the sketches. It didn't matter, they told me, because it had no legal backing.

discussed the case of Quixpur in Chapter 3, and I reference it here as a litmus test of the park's relationship with local communities. In the 1970s, Quixpur was located in the northeast of the park, but military officials came through and told them they could not have the land and must relocate. Per the military official's suggestions, most of the families relocated to a place south of the park, and they proceeded to pay for land titles and even pay land taxes and keep receipts (legally required, but not common). To the west, Yalicoc was located in Sepac's sphere of influence, although most people were excluded from the "opportunity" to join the first land titling process. When military officials came through to demarcate park boundaries, they also told Yalicoc members that "we don't want people here, this will be a place for animals." Some families relocated to a community to the north of the park, and others went south to join the Portillo section of Sepac. When I asked why they did not ask for help or protest their removal, a paramilitary leader told me, "at that time, you could accept or not, the result was the same."

According to the government's declaration (although property laws were not followed), the park's area totaled 10,000 hectares, and the polygon was a square. Today, the park has expanded by half to approximately 14,500 hectares, and it looks like a rectangle extending south, with an odd bite missing out of it (Figure 7.2, below). That bite is Sepac's land, or (they say) what's left of it. When did the park expand to its current size? What is at stake here is whether INTA and the president *actually intended* to appropriate more than ten kilometers squared for the park in the 1970s, and whether this was communicated to local communities well before the park's legal title was finally issued in 2004.
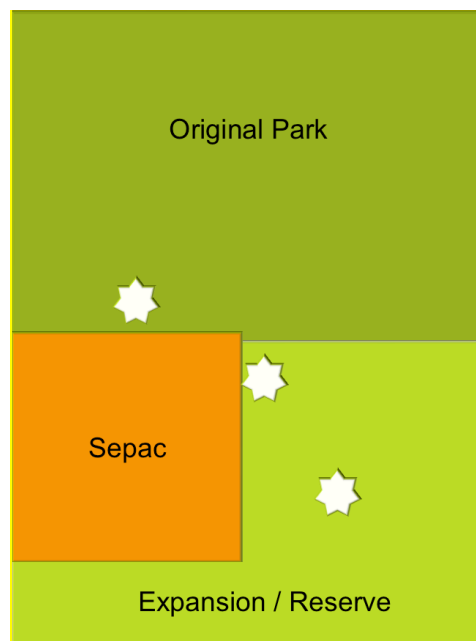
FIGURE 7.2: Representation of the current park/Sepac boundaries, adapted from INAB and Project maps (for confidentiality purposes). The dark green to the north represents the government's original declaration and the light green to the south represents the 4,500 reserve/expansion that was titled as part of Park Raxha' in 2004. The area of Sepac's current land title is in orange, but residents claim their land used to extend by up to one-third to the north and east. To the north and east (in territory Sepac disputes with the park) are the three areas where some people illegally plant and one group lives, represented as white stars.

At this point, the narrative popular with Sepac community members and that of conservation and development professionals diverges radically. Although the latter group tends to present theirs as the "unbiased" or "truthful" account, I do not treat their accounts as unbiased because many park employees see themselves the park's advocates, and Project employees have their own careers and development agendas to think about. Moreover, park officials often speak to the intentions, plans, and veracity of events that they themselves did not witness. Through the mid-1980s, no state official tended to the park; and the first two park guards were not in residence until about 1988. Thus, park guards are probably the most reliable sources on post-war park politics, but neither witnessed nor have records that address war-time park politics.

Most people involved with the conflict had fairly strong opinions about its origins and the veracity of other people's accounts—to wit, people repeatedly warned me about how "everyone," often naming specific individuals, lies. War victims wanted me to know that paramilitaries lied about their responsibility for massacres, paramilitaries wanted me to know that survivors were really subversives, and park officials wanted me to know that all community members in Sepac lie about the park. A senior park guard was adamant that, even though the 1975 park declaration mentions only 10,000 hectares, government agencies (specifically INAB, the national forestry institute), were always planning to expand its territory, and in fact always treated the 5,000 hectares to the south as a "reserve." When I asked if this meant that both INAB *and* INTA officials (which requires significant agency cooperation) had been telling would-be homesteaders since the 1970s that they could not settle in the 5,000 hectares that were not-yet-park, he unhesitatingly replied yes.

My understanding of INTA's work at the time is that it was not particularly organized and coordinated. For example, some Q'eqchi' respondents would tell stories of being told at a local INTA office that they could not have the land they wanted. Before giving up, they would always ask at another INTA office, and sometimes would receive a different reply. Moreover, FONTIERRAS' archive of Setzuul's land case (Chapter 5) reveals that the same office gave contradictory responses over time regarding the same case. That said, the senior park guard's response struck me as credible. Guatemala did not have a system that followed IUCN guidelines on different zones for protected areas until 1989, and informal institutions are often more powerful than legislated ones. I asked park and Project employees for information on the park from the 1970s and 1980s, and they claimed to have absolutely no records. This seemed less credible to me, especially since Quixpur leaders showed me copies of meeting records from the park files in the late 1980s (*Libro de Actas*) that validated their claims—the signature at the bottom was of the person who most emphatically denied the existence of these records (today, a senior park guard).

As part of my archival research, I had already looked at USAID and the national planning institute's (SEGEPLAN) archives with no evidence of an auxiliary "reserve." In an old document in the INAB archives, however, I did find documentation that referred to a reserve. More in keeping with my understanding of INTA's strategic goals (agricultural colonization and claiming the frontier for the nation, *not* prescient environmentalism), the document I found had a small, inset, figure that showed where the "reserve" was in relation to Lake Raxha'. This imprecise map (Figure 7.3, below) makes clear that the only other reserve contemplated was to the north bordering Mexico, not extending south from the park. Unlike the senior park guard's assertion that the

reserve was to act as a buffer for the lake, the planning document describes the purpose of the reserve as to provide a buffer between Mexico and Guatemala for national security purposes. Given that this area later became a zone of passage for guerrillas living in refuge in Mexico to travel to Guatemala, then a "red zone" target for scorched earth counterinsurgency, the latter explanation holds significant weight.
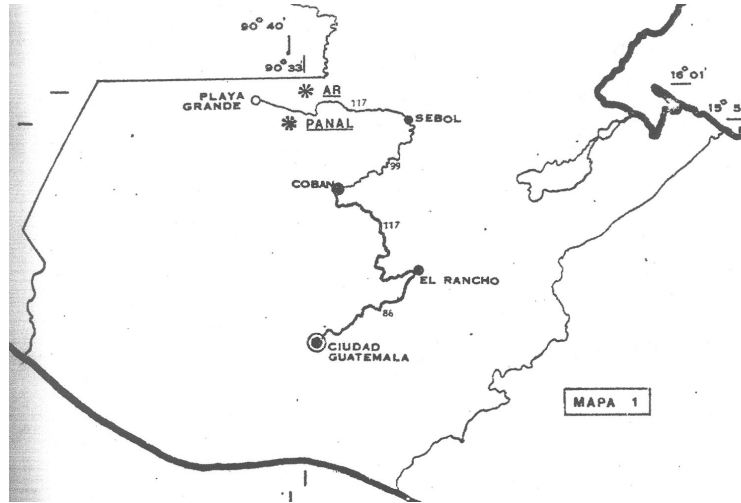
FIGURE 7.3: From the Forest Institute's archives, an old plan showing the Reserve ("AR") due north of Raxha' Park ("PANAL"), not south towards Sepac.

I turn now to the dominant narrative in Sepac, which holds that in the 1970s, and through counterinsurgency, their understanding of the park's location and size was the same as that shown in Figure 7.3, not its present-day expansion (Figure 7.2). This narrative has its own complications: I was unable to find any supporting documentation for Sepac leaders' assertions, but neither did I find any documents that contradict them. As local leaders tell it, the park was legally declared in 1975 to be 10 square kilometers, but in subsequent years military engineers who came to measure the park's boundaries and put down markers (*tirar mojones*) attempted to expand the park significantly, even more so than it is today. They claimed specifically that the state wanted to expand the square park south, closing the rectangle and including all of Sepac. One of the Portillo family members attributed this attempt directly to Lucas García, who at the time was coordinator of the Franja.[9]

Local elites assert that military leaders wanted to expand the park and completely dispossess them of their land, but they successfully thwarted these attempts. In particular, some Portillo descendents told me that their parents used their connections with the military to find out what was going on with the park's expansion and how they could combat it. They discovered that, because their land was neither inscribed in the Property Register nor titled through INTA, that as far as Lucas García was concerned, they did not exist. A colonel suggested to them that they should legalize themselves as agricultural cooperatives, because the process was much faster than land titling through

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[9] He became president in 1978.

INTA, and Lucas García's own policies favored cooperatives.[10] By 1979, both the Portillo and Mendoza cooperatives were legal, although they did not have land titles.[11]

These Ladino elites managed to protect their land by swearing loyalty to Lucas García and the military. Although their legalization as cooperatives gave them a bargaining chip, the military did not simply leave their land be. Instead, Sepac elites cut a deal: loyalty for land. Although former paramilitary leaders emphasize their fear and lack of power in relation to the army, their loyalty to the army in the 1980s proved to be particularly gruesome. Sepac Ladinos have a reputation as comprising one of the most violent paramilitary groups in the region, killing, raping, and dispossessing people, including in their own town.

Before I move on to the war-time configuration of Sepac as a community for the first time, a post-script is in order on the measuring and boundary marking that occurred after Sepac elites claim that the army agreed not to enclose their land in the park. Military engineers measured the boundaries of the 10,000 hectare park, and got a "community leader" to sign the act recognizing the boundary between the community and the park (to the north; the east supposedly stayed open). Of course, Sepac was still not a "community" in any real sense of the word. The Portillos allege that a Mendoza, either out of ignorance or spite, signed the act that ceded the northern slice of the Portillo cooperative's land to the park. The Portillos did not fight this—by definition, they did not care about geographically marginal lands, because their parcels were all centrally located. In terms of people who actually paid for land in the "land titling" process, then lost it to the park, everyone I was able to trace was Q'eqchi' and Catholic (marginalized people). For their part, all the Catholic Q'eqchi's in Yalicoc just a little further north also lost their land to the park's boundaries, and they were unaware of the deal that the Portillos and Mendozas made when a few families moved south to Sepac.

A Faustian Bargain: Development Pole

Due to the subversive action to kidnap population groups to integrate them into their armies, in the area of Playa Grande, a great number of people suffered the destruction of their homes and fields for cultivation by these subversive groups, having produced massive migrations towards the mountainous zones and borderlands [*lugares fronterizos*] in the Mexican Republic. This situation caused the creation of the Playa Grande military base, whose principal objective is to establish conditions of security for the population and, in this way, make viable the return of the inhabitants of this area to their place of origin. – Government of Guatemala (1984: 27-29, translation mine)

In propaganda (above), the militarized government justifies placing the Playa Grande region under intense military control in order to "establish conditions of security for the population," that fled to Mexico to avoid forced guerrilla recruitment. This far-fetched narrative is belied by the military's propaganda in the region, which asserted that displaced people "sinned" by associating with subversives, and must "repent" or be killed (Chapter 6). Although there were a few incidents of guerrilla murders and massacres, this amounted to no more than approximately 3% of the total war-time

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[10] By the early 1980s, it was clear that this policy had radically shifted, and cooperatives in La Libertad, Petén; Ixcán, El Quiché; and Chisec, Alta Verapaz; were all targeted for counterinsurgency violence.

[11] They also took out substantial loans for agricultural investments, all of which failed during war-time violence (guerrillas also destroyed some equipment); see below.

violence (CEH 1999). To hear Sepac Ladinos tell the story, however, this violence was centered around the Playa Grande region, where EGP first became active in the 1970s. Moreover, they lay claim to one of the few documented massacres committed by EGP.[12] In this section, I first explain how the confluence of the park and the massacre made Sepac the ideal ally for the new Playa Grande military base, then detail more about the structure of the "new" Sepac, focusing on paramilitary and development organizations.

EGP began activities in the region by 1972, and emerged publicly with the murder of a famous plantation owner, the "Tiger of Ixcán," in 1975. With wide eyes, former paramilitaries recount that EGP operatives arrived in Sepac to recruit people for the revolution. Other observers also confirmed that EGP was particularly successful recruiting in Sepac, attributing this to unjust land distribution by the Portillos and Mendozas. The military commissioner at the time, one of the Portillos, told me that the army placed significant pressure on him to find the subversives. On a particularly heated visit to the military base in Cobán, the coordinator told him that if he did not find and report the subversives that were surely operating in the Sepac area, he would be forced to kill the military commissioner for abetting them. Although he expressed regret that people had to die, the local military commissioner believed he had to report *someone* to save his own life.

As it happens, the Portillos had converted to an Evangelical religion some years prior, and Catholics were becoming increasingly suspect for recruiting guerrillas through liberation theology. In 1970s campaigns, the army did carefully differentiate between Protestants and Catholics. Some Evangelical churches even gave out identification cards to their members (Sichar Moreno 1998), who believed they could give them to army officials to prove their loyalty. Later campaigns discriminated only by location and race, and many Evangelical Mayas were killed. So, the military commissioner waited and watched until a few men attended a meeting at the church. He admits today that, to the best of his knowledge, these men were not guerrillas;[13] he just reported them to the military base as subversives because he had to report someone. Today, he thinks that it is regrettable that the army killed the people he named (more than ten people the first time), but still asserts that counterinsurgency violence was justified by a real insurgency threat.

Sepac's strong affiliation with the army made it a logical place for survivors of counterinsurgency initiatives to turn themselves in seeking a reprieve from military violence. By 1980, perhaps 1,000 people had already arrived escaping violence. At some point, formerly displaced people tell that the army went on a sweep in local communities around Sepac. The army patrol ordered all adult men to gather and hand in their identification cards (*cédulas*); they told them they were going to give them back after running a security check, and the men had to go to the military base to claim their cards. Surviving family members claim they were told to go to Sepac to wait for their men, who went to the military base and were disappeared. Many of those men were disappeared.

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[12] A number of acts of violence from the 1960s through the 1980s that occurred either in Sepac or by Sepac community members are corroborated in Guatemala's truth commission (CEH 1999). As with other chapters, I have changed names, numbers, and dates to protect the identities of those involved.

[13] A victim's son and another person detained by the army also deny involvement with EGP.

Meanwhile, the Sepac center became an EGP target. In the early 1980s, EGP carried out targeted assassinations of the men whose names were on the (invalid) land titles as original "owners" and those who collected money from people—the people who were in charge of taking money and dispossessing poor Q'eqchi' peasants. Less than a year later, EGP operatives massacred 26 people. The massacre was targeted, and in that way strangely familiar: EGP knew where the local mayor, military commissioners, and paramilitary leaders homes' were. In this way, the massacre is unlike the genocidal massacres that truth commissions denounced (REMHI 1998; CEH 1999), because the leaders EGP killed were more likely to be Ladino, Evangelical, and with ties to the military (not Catholic Q'eqchi's, or other Suspect Maya). Most people believe former Sepac community members were with the EGP operatives—one former paramilitary said of them, "they came to attack their own people." EGP killed these leaders and their families, then burned down their homes. When I broached the subject of Sepac's reputation as harboring the most brutal killers in the region, former paramilitaries pointed to this massacre as the turning point in their forgotten war. Although truth commissions blame them, they believe they allied with the state to defend their liberty after they were attacked.

This begs the question, why attack Sepac, of all places? For the most part, EGP was targeting wealthy plantation owners, not maize farmers. First, EGP did kill the Portillo man who ran both the family plantation and recruited military commissioners throughout the region, and the organization was well aware of Sepac's family and military ties. This is indisputable. Another claim that I was only partially able to verify also has particular salience. In the early 1980s, the military began using paramilitaries to commit massacres. Sepac paramilitaries were reportedly responsible for a brutal, early massacre of a Q'eqchi' community in the area, raping women, killing more than 100 people, stealing goods and animals, and burning down all their homes. Today, people repeatedly told me that one way I could identify the murderers[14] in Sepac was by their horses—the truly brutal assassins who led the massacres always took the best of their victims' horses as their own. According to these informants, EGP planned a smaller, more targeted action, but it grew in the heat of the moment because some of the operatives included people who sought revenge on Sepac paramilitaries for assassinating their families.

¨Self-Defense"

I mentioned the formation of paramilitary patrols (*Patrullas de Auto-defense Civil,* "Civil Self-Defense Patrols") in Chapter 6. In Yaab'alhix, this was mainly to show how massacre survivors living in a development pole reorganized themselves in such a way that their PAC did little searching for subversives, and the only "self-defense" they described to me was against the German-descended plantation owner who came to claim their community as his inheritance. Sepac is at the other end of the PAC spectrum, such that paramilitary bosses actively rooted out "subversives" and participated in massacres. Even in Sepac, however, there were a number of displaced men who had to patrol in order to prove their loyalty to the military state, or risk imprisonment or death.

Benedicto Lucas García organized the PAC system on a national level in 1981 (Le Bot 1995), but the military commissioner system was active in northern Cobán since the

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[14] Their use of the word *asesino* served to strip these men of their moral defense that they were following orders of the Guatemalan military.

1954 coup, and interviews suggested that the paramilitary system in Sepac began before the national system. If Sepac leaders made a deal with the Lucas García administration in the late 1970s to secure their "property with liberty," this relationship was still wound up with fear and violence. The army directed PACs in massacres (which meant having to share booty stolen from victims) in order to use them as human shields. Soldiers feared EGP in the jungle, so they used local paramilitaries as "safari beaters;"[15] this discouraged EGP from many surprise attacks, because these would be remembered as subversive murders of civilians. In general, if soldiers detected revolutionary activities in a community, they would kill PAC leaders and the local military commissioner as retribution (Sichar Moreno 1998). This is why military commissioners believed they must kill or be killed. In the Playa Grande region, it was often the case that if the army took in a military commissioner for questioning, he was tortured more viciously than other civilians (Yoldi 1996).

The effectiveness of the military's counterinsurgency campaign relied on people spying on and killing their neighbors, and on ragtag paramilitaries assembling to kill other poor communities. Indeed, the minefield truth commissions had to deal with the fact that, by and large, the people committing genocide were themselves indigenous. Here, two clarifications are in order. First, indigenous people did commit genocide, but the people who ordered genocidal massacres were primarily Ladinos. In Sepac, some paramilitary bosses now point to their Q'eqchi' roots (Chapter 8), but locals understood them as Ladinos from the 1960s because they were the descendents of plantation owners who sought to coerce labor from poor Q'eqchi's as serfs on land they claimed as a plantation. Second, the Portillos' and Mendozas' participation in military and paramilitary violence reinscribed their Ladino identity. Even amongst indigenous people, paramilitaries reportedly "became Ladino" when they committed murders and massacres (Remijnse 2002; Nelson 2009).

In this way, Mayas racialized violence as Ladino acts of genocide, and pushed the actions of soldiers and paramilitaries to the constitutive outside (Hall 1996). One returned refugee who fled Playa Grande in the wake of a massacre reflected that not all paramilitary patrollers are bad people. He recalled that one patroller explained that his own son was killed by paramilitaries, "so if I keep patrolling, it is as if I had killed my son. So it's better that I stop being a patroller. But if I abandon the PAC, they will probably kill me too, so I better keep patrolling, but each time a little less, and without working so much" (Sichar Moreno 1998: 62, translation mine). Mothers have pictures of their sons in military dress on the wall of their homes, but insist that when the army killed other family members, it was racist. This is why contestations over war-time violence and legitimacy of land claims are also over racial identities.

<u>New Sepac</u>

In a speech, Colonel Sanchez, of the Army's School of Ideological Warfare, said the biggest hurdle was the identity and existence of 23 different indigenous peoples, which has providing them with a sense of autonomy and hindered the state's objective of creating an authentic Guatemalan identity (Manz 1988). Development poles would redress this "problem" by forcibly mixing indigenous peoples and encouraging "dependency on the Ladino economic system" (Jordahl 1987). As Sepac came together, it

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[15] Latin American History and Culture: Series 5: Civil War, society and Political transition in Guatemala: The Guatemala News and Information Bureau Archive, 1963-2000. PG.5 Counterinsurgency, Reel 16. CIRMA Archives.

should have put ethnocide into practice, because it was a town run by Ladinos and populated by Q'eqchi's. Their immobilization for safety purposes, however, meant that almost nobody in town was engaged in any economic activities. Everyone survived on the food and supplies the army provided, which strengthened its relationship with Sepac. Some of this funding was reportedly provided by USAID and the UN World Food Programme, but everyone remembers that the paramilitaries were the ones who distributed the food, for which "loyalty" was a basic requirement.

It is around this time that Sepac became a village (*aldea*) even if it never became a community in a social sense. Although the army began authorizing people to live in the urban center years before, the Portillo and Mendoza cooperatives believed they had split the urban center down the middle—one side of town to the Portillos and their allies, and the other side to the Mendozas. Each associated cooperative had its own building and equipment, although EGP burned these in the massacre.[16]

The army, however, did not recognize this cross-town split. Since the army only made one agreement with village representatives (i.e., paramilitary leaders) it treated the two cooperatives as the single community of Sepac. Thus, when the military (G-5) came to map the community as part of INTA's land titling process, the engineers only mapped one set of boundaries for the single community of Sepac that included the Portillo cooperative, the Mendoza cooperative, and a nearby smaller village (*caserío*). INTA designated this community eligible for land titling as a CAP, since by the mid-1980s the cooperatives were defunct. As such, each owner legally should have had access to equal parcels of land (*partes alícuotas*).

The Portillos and Mendozas quickly became concerned by this turn of events, as their families "owned" most of Sepac's land. They successfully lobbied the engineers to wait to conduct the census until displaced families had returned home (or at least were no longer living in Sepac), but the engineers mapped in only 2,100 of the 3,360 hectares the Portillos and Mendozas claimed. Although military violence was still high, EGP was largely in retreat, and most of the major acts of violence slowed down by the mid-1980s. Sepac's leaders did not advocate for the internal refugees to return home to their villages because they believed it was safe, but rather because they wanted to prevent people from claiming land in Sepac. The military assisted them in this policy, offering to accompany at least four communities in returning to their lands, threatening to give their land to new settlers if they did not return.

When I first came to Sepac, I believed that in the mid-1980s there were many internally displaced families who were afraid to return home, so they stayed, becoming landless peasants in Sepac. Actually, according to everyone I was able to interview, there were very few families that did not want to return home, and almost everyone who was allowed to did. Some interviewees claimed that their communities were deemed to be in "subversive" territory because of their location deep in the jungle (which today is a park). Although park administrators scoff at this as a tall tale, explaining that those people never had a community and were not allowed to settle this new land because it was the park's "reserve" (later incorporated as the park), I note that this narrative is very similar to that of one community that became part of Yaab'alhix (Chapter 6). With those possible exceptions, not only did all displaced people living in Sepac leave in the late

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[16] The Portillos tend to forcefully blame EGP for the fact that so many people today are mired in debt. The slump in cardamom prices and people's inability to tend to their crops suggests that the cooperatives would have failed anyway.

1980s, but most accounts suggest that a number of "Sepac" families left with them. No records were kept, but paramilitaries estimated that up to 40 Sepac families who were excluded from the land titling process resettled into other communities in the region.[17]

Improvement Councils: Violence and Betterment

In Chapter 2, I argued that improving the population has been a vocation of Guatemala's elites since the colonial period, but the military effectively took over primary development functions when it partnered with USAID to promote agricultural colonization of the northern lowlands. The various lacunae in institutional memories of development NGOs in Guatemala are not necessarily unique (in almost all cases, it seems that conservation NGOs decried deforestation of fragile rainforests throughout Latin America without acknowledging the role of the Alliance for Progress in promoting deforestation through colonization), but happily manage to avoid addressing the ways rural Guatemalans remember development as a relationship forged in violence. Relationships created during war-time violence built on older paternalistic relationships. The war-time relationships transferred trusteeship to the military and military commissioners (as plantation owners, often earlier trustees), who developed relationships with citizens. These citizens had to demonstrate their loyalty to the military (and opposition to so-called Marxist revolutionaries) not only to receive development aid (*tenq'*), but also to establish themselves as the population that the military wished to make live (Foucault 2003).

When the first development poles began as "strategic hamlets" in 1982 (Le Bot 1995), the military had significant leverage over the population. People lived in fear, as scorched earth campaigns made clear that one did not have to be a guerrilla to be massacred as a Suspect Maya. When the military told survivors to move to villages like Sepac, and warned them against returning home because they could be killed on sight as "subversives," military officers ensured their ability to monitor these populations and their economic control over displaced peasant farmers.

In Sepac, Ladinos with connections to the military (especially the Portillo family) became paramilitary leaders, local mayors, and presidents and secretaries of the Improvement Committee (*Comité Pro-Mejoramiento*, precursor to contemporary COCODES). Displaced people were subject to "customary" labor requirements the Improvement Committee mandated, as well as training and patrolling with the PACs. When PACs were not serving as safari beaters for army patrols, they performed basic labor (*mano de obra no-calificada*) for development projects, including road construction, school construction, and irrigation projects, without remuneration. Ríos Montt made the "Bullets or Beans" strategy of killing some of the population and feeding the rest in a coercive trusteeship famous, but this strategy predated and outlasted his reign. Agencies who funded food-for-work programs included USAID and the World Food Program, but people in development poles remember only the army. This is because the army accepted the food aid on behalf of Guatemala, then distributed it through the paramilitary system to villages. CARE still runs food-for-work programs in the highlands, but it is less coercive today because people are allowed to plant crops without risking their lives. As the 1980s progressed, the army lost some of its funding from major aid groups due to bad publicity (e.g., Jordahl 1987), but it gained funding

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[17] I do not know if they were included in the land titling process in these other communities. Today, as few as half of families living in villages in northern Cobán are included on land titles, more than can be accounted for by simple demographic growth.

from Catholic and Evangelical churches. Evangelical churches send missions where US parishioners fund and help build infrastructure projects on vacations to the present day, a practice rural Guatemalans associate with war-time reconstruction.

Contemporary reports show that the army had less direct presence in Playa Grande than other regions (such as Raxruhá and Chisec, Chapters 5 and 6), because the military in Playa had strong relationships with Ladinos and Evangelicals who acted as spies (*orejas*), reporting on and controlling their own neighbors.[18] Le Bot (1995) attributes this to the military's eagerness to work with existing traditional authorities, whereas the guerrillas tended to subsume them to external institutions. In communities like Sepac, however, the military simply killed Catholic and Q'eqchi' leaders who did not agree with its agenda, then gave Evangelical Ladinos authority over (and responsibility for) the community.

In many communities in Guatemala, authority and development were reworked in the name of loyalty during the war. In the post-war, when international development agencies sought to establish a presence on the ground to implement a promised $1.9 billion in development projects, these were often the "traditional leaders" they worked with to implement participatory rural appraisals and community-based natural resource management. Whether development agencies like it or not, this means their projects may be implemented through a haze of coercion.

In the highlands, Nelson (2009) points out that since PACs have taken over present-day development councils (COCODES), former military officers and PAC leaders who raped women and killed their husbands today act as their representatives seeking project funding for women's committees. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in Uspantán, I encountered this situation in both highlands and lowlands communities. The worst part about it was that these projects, no matter how patently ridiculous (e.g. "the women need barbed wire to fence in their cattle") were dutifully noted as Gender and Development "successes" in municipal development, Peace Corps, and funding agency records. For some people, benefitting from post-war development projects means accepting the authority of war-time murderers as contemporary leaders and liaisons with development agencies.

Rejecting Trusteeship, Rejecting Development

Wainwright's (2008) work restates a common belief in the context of Belize: we cannot not want development. Wainwright poses this as an aporia, fraught with tension because "we" all strive for development, even though we know that development projects often fail. Moreover, they place us in a postcolonial bind, whereby people from the US and the UK come to places like Guatemala and Belize to identify problems, then fix them. Wainwright makes the choice not to analyze the power dynamics amongst Belizeans, or Mayas, but I dwell on this because I argue that it is identity formations that explain why people in Sepac outright reject development in the post-war. I do not mean that they will not accept donations (some people solicit them), but many resent the strings attached: the will to improve, which requires beneficiaries to act as though they must improve themselves in order to escape poverty; and the trusteeship relationship

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[18] Latin American History and Culture: Series 5: Civil War, society and Political transition in Guatemala: The Guatemala News and Information Bureau Archive, 1963-2000. PG.5.2 Model Villages. Reel 16. CIRMA Archives.

required to induce improvement, which is laden with power inequalities. I am familiar with cases in Guatemala where people demand trusteeship, even under conditions of inequality and dependence (e.g., Ferguson 2006: 22), but the limits of trusteeship hold important lessons.

To the extent that the two are thought of as separate in Guatemala, I am referring here to development as intentional practice (indeed, an intervention) rather than an immanent economic process (Cowen and Shenton 1996). When people in Sepac reject development this is not necessarily a liberatory move to post-development (Escobar 1995). Moreover, it reveals that romanticized notions of "the local" in development is not only disabling because it strips local politics of their agency as a passive recipient of global forces (Hart 2001), but because romanticized ideals of community also fail to account for profound inequalities at local levels (Agrawal and Gibson 1999; Blaikie 2000).

Development underwent a fundamental transition following World War II. Guatemala's 1954 coup and the subsequent US plan to promote agricultural colonization to ward off calls for agrarian reform prefigure the Alliance for Progress in important ways, particularly in the increasing intensity of interventions in rural livelihoods. These projects were not just about improving land and people, but also about the Guatemalan state's need to affirm that it controlled territory through loyal citizens who patrolled the jungle to prevent the incursion of Marxist subversives. Even though in Peace Corps training I learned about development in Guatemala as an artifact of the Peace Accords, rural communities understand this as part of a longer history where trusteeship required loyalty to the (military) state. Although Li (2007) emphasizes the seemingly benevolent (if patriarchal) aspects of the will to improve in trusteeship relationships, the case of Sepac reveals that trusteeship is often shot through with coercion and violence, particularly in the context of the civil war.

I first became aware of the pitfalls of community-based development as a mechanism for the reproduction of war-time coercion through the COCODE system in Uspantán, and this phenomena is common in rural areas that experienced significant war violence. The polarization of development politics in Sepac, however, and the subsequent rejections of the Project, have a much greater air of resentment than I have seen elsewhere. Throughout rural Guatemala, it is common to hear about unequal distribution of benefits both between and amongst communities, as well as accusations of corruption. Survivors in zones of high conflict assert they have not been adequately compensated; people in zones of less conflict assert that they suffered during the war, too; and people in the east assert that their war-time losses from the 1960s have been forgotten in the tide of *gring@s* obsessed with genocide and the Maya. In front of development professionals, however, rural project beneficiaries usually act obsequious and grateful.

This was not the case of the Project's experience in Sepac. Although I knew that tensions ran high in Sepac, I assumed that these was largely directed by survivors against their former paramilitary persecutors and not at NGO employees. At the beginning of this dissertation (Chapter 1), I described how the hostage situation on the first day of my case study quickly disabused me of that notion. The hostage situation in the park between farmers and a roving patrol of park guards and military is sadly rather ordinary in Guatemala. Still, the notion that locals might retaliate and take violent action against Project employees if the military harmed farmers in the park suggested that

people in Sepac believe that the Project, park administration, and the Guatemalan military, are affiliated with each other.

The Project was created as a sustainable development consortium with funding by a conservation BINGO and European development agencies to legally establish the park's boundaries. In so doing, the Project offered funding, international political will, and technical expertise to finish the land titling process in surrounding communities. Once communities had legal title to their land, the Project began working to attain international funding for reforestation projects as carbon sinks that would benefit both the park and surrounding smallholders. There are three major reasons why most people resented the work of the Project, which should have been to their benefit. First, the Project paid to turn a paper park into a real park, one that is enforced by the military. Second, in most communities, somewhere between one-third and one-half of families became landless when they were excluded from definitive titles. I analyze the political production of owners and invaders below. Third, the Project hired local community leaders who live in the region and speak Q'eqchi'. The Portillos and former military operatives filled a number of key leadership roles,[19] and people associated them with the coercion and violence of counterinsurgency.[20]

To the extent that Project employees did not tell me about their war-time affiliations (most didn't), other people did. For example, the day I hitched a ride to Quixpur (Chapter 3), as soon as I hopped in the truck, the driver said, I saw that book on your desk about the war (Huet 2008). Cautiously, I told him I thought Huet had written an important regional history that was valuable to my analysis. The driver gave me an appraising look and asked me if I knew who I was working with. He pointed out that the Project employee I talked with for an hour the previous afternoon on the front steps of the Project building was a military operative who had killed many people in Ixcán, just like in the book I read. You know, he said in a somewhat ambiguous tone, many of us want them dead. To this day, I am unsure how much Project leaders know the relationship of leader/employees to communities in the region.

The Project makes an effort to hire a few local employees, but most people who work in rural communities like Sepac are actually from the urban center, Cobán. Administrators often switch off weeks traveling between the capital and Sepac, whereas employees usually travel to the region on Monday morning and leave Friday afternoon. Depending on which side of the park they are working on, employees either bunk at the park or in the NGO's building in Sepac. When I began my case study, I lived there, too.

In interviews, I asked people personal information about their experience during the war, their perception of the park's work, and of the Project. Since I did not have a neutral office to invite them to, I sometimes went to people's homes for interviews, but I did not want to impose on them, as people often offer food and drink to guests (even when they are very poor). One early interview was with the president of the Sepac COCODE (Community Development Council, the present-day improvement council), a mild-mannered man who I believed to have a good relationship with the Project, since the Project funds and supports much of the COCODE's work. We had a friendly chat,

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[19] I do not explain these roles in detail to help maintain the confidentiality of these people.

[20] While I am aware that the development literature often glosses this as "elite capture," I do not use the term because I am wary of the implied norm: most development projects are not captured by local, regional or national elites. While it might be the goal to have non-elites benefit from development projects, this is not the norm in my experience.

and I was excited to discover that his father was one of the first settlers of Yalicoc, a community that was excluded from the cooperative land titling processes and subsequently mapped into the park. He also made a point of telling me that he was a local representative for the national truth commission about the war, which implies disagreements with the army's actions during the war. I tried to ease into the Project's work, asking him what he thought of it, and he agreeably noted that they were making strides in important development issues. At any rate, he said, smiling, they still all want to burn this place down. I peered over my cubicle wall, hoping vainly that nobody else was in the office to hear our conversation. Who? I asked. Everybody, he replied. Since when? I asked. About since they got here; then he paused for a moment before saying, you know, they probably wouldn't burn it down with people inside, though. Although the COCODE president tried to soften the blow, he actually made it worse, as I hadn't understood that Sepac community members might threaten to burn Project employees alive.

Community members' expressions of hostility, if not actual threats, against the Project, clearly marshaled war-time violence into the post-war development context. Burning buildings down was a common insurgency and counterinsurgency tactic during the civil war. In the Sepac massacre of 1981, EGP burned down homes as punishment for people it believed cooperated with the army and/or participated in killing innocent villagers. In this context, it is clear that people who want to burn down the Project building would do so as a retaliation or punishment for the NGO's perceived affiliations with the park administration. The symbolic nature of the Project building is also relevant in this case. When I obtained a map of the urban center from the 1980s, I realized that the Project building is where the "Self-Defense Center," or paramilitary building, used to be located. Although in other circumstances this move—from repressive regime to sustainable development—would have been liberatory, it seems that many people in Sepac actually associate the Project with power relations forged in coercion and violence.

Equally important, people in Sepac believe that the Project, as an institution, is benefiting from disingenuous claims to help local people and communities. When I returned from a jaunt visiting fruit seedlings for the Project-supported cooperative, I was surprised that a local I had not yet met asked me if Project employees had also told me about the chile cooperative. (They had not.) This man, who wouldn't tell me his name, said when the Project first started working in Sepac, they started a chile cooperative. He asserted that local people were at first really interested in the project, and increased their chile production, but the cooperative fell into debt and had to shut down because, among other problems, cooperative administrators could not access a market to sell their product. The angry man told me that he refused to invest more money and time with the Project because it had already failed him, noting cryptically that these projects always failed.

I think he was referencing the longer history of cooperatives in Sepac, hearkening back to the two cooperatives started by the feuding Portillo and Mendoza families. Those cooperatives were supposed to help local people get better prices for their products by facilitating access to a cardamom dryer. Families associated with the cooperative took out loans to pay for equipment, which was lost during civil war violence; EGP burned at least some equipment in the massacre. In the post-war, many families remember their participation in failed cooperatives as a relationship based on

coercion. Moreover, some widows had to sell their family's land when they were informed in the 1990s that they were responsible for their husbands' debt.[21]

It is only after beginning to understand this history of development in the context of coercive relationships that I can say there are many people in Sepac who do not want development. Unlike the post-development school, their rejection of development is not a rejection of global capitalism or imperialism. Rather, their rejection of development is a rejection of coercive, and sometimes violent, relationships of trusteeship. People in Sepac are not swayed by the anti-politics machine (Ferguson 1990). Instead, their understanding of development is fundamentally political. In this context, a rejection of development is a rejection of the power dynamics in the trusteeship relationship. People who suffered under the thumb of paramilitaries in the development pole reject the Project as a continuation of their power over the community. For their part, some former paramilitaries also reject the Project; although some of this can be attributed to the Project's usurpation of their strangle-hold on Sepac politics, I have come to understand that ruling families are more upset that the Project at first attempted to renege on the military's promises vis-à-vis the park.

Firming up the Paper Park

In this era of conservation, sustainable development, and going green, it can be difficult to point back to the 1970s and claim that these were not foregone conclusions. In the case of Laguna Raxha' Park, however, I would like to do so, particularly since it did not become a national park in the category of an exclusive park until after the law establishing a national park system was passed in 1989. All parties acknowledge that Q'eqchi's were farming the Raxha' forest reserve when it was declared. What is at issue is if the military officials appropriately told them they did not have a right to farm in the reserve, if the military officials' warning was legally binding; and *who* those people were, and if they (or their children) can claim rights to the land today.

Sepac community leaders assert that they saved their land at the expense of their neighbors. They were not happy to lose 30 *caballerías* of their land claim, but their understanding was that proportionately fewer people would be included in the land title, so those people farming on the 30 *caballerías* simply lost out. Not coincidentally, Q'eqchi's who lived in the jungle had difficulties advocating for their claims because they did not speak Spanish, and the military believed their land was EGP territory. Some people who were living in the reserve's expansion zone (*ampliación*), or the 4,500 hectares registered as a park that were not declared in 1975, claim that they were told to leave because of the guerrillas, but not that their land would become a park.

In the late 1980s, the land titling agency told Sepac leaders that everyone living in the community had to be included in the census as a land claimant, and that they would all be eligible for an equal share of the land. Sepac leaders protested vociferously, and archival records indicate that they threatened INTA officials. As far as Sepac leaders were concerned, there were two possible options: give the restricted land title to a select number of families, or expand the land claim and include all families. Giving title to less land to all families would improve the livelihoods of the landless, but submerge other families in poverty.

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[21] One woman I interviewed claimed not to know that her husband had taken out a loan in the late 1970s, and was shocked that the bank threatened to seize her property or send her to jail on the basis of this debt.

In the 1990s, when international conservation organizations started thinking about how to make the "paper" park" into a "real" park, Sepac's attitude was notably different from that of other communities in the park's vicinity. This is not because they are inherently more violent or "conflictive," but because Sepac was the community that hoped to (re)settle the 4,500 hectares the park expanded onto. Like other communities, in a survey in 1997, 100% of Sepac residents said that the Raxha' park has benefits including oxygen, water, and is a source of protein (from hunting and fishing).[22] In Sepac, however, "they object to the expansion (*ampliación)* of the reserve of the [park], because this was taken from them, according to some of those interviewed, large extensions of land, which makes them upset (*molestos*), because not only do they have problems with the distribution and tenure of land, but these events make them worse off" (UICN and INAB 1997: 20, translation mine).

When the Project conducted socio-economic studies of local communities affected by the park, its partnership with the National Forestry Institute (INAB) meant that it also took on INAB's position in the conflict. The tension is clear because of the conflicting language in the above sentence about the 4,500 hectares eventually included in the park: Sepac locals always refer to this land as an expansion [*ampliación*] of the park, implying that park administrators wrongfully asserted rights over a new tract of land; INAB and other park administrators, however, always refer to this as a reserve [*reserva*], implying that the park's land has extended 15,000 hectares since its inception. Although I doubt that in 1975 the national government declared a 10,000 hectare forest reserve while implicitly (undeclared) holding onto a 4,500 reserve of the forest reserve (recall Figure 7.3), the notion of a "reserve" (to the park) clearly existed at some point before it was registered in the National Property Register in 2004. Regardless of when state institutions first conceived of expanding the park, when people began farming again in the late 1980s, new park guards discouraged them from planting in the entire 14,500 hectare polygon.

When asked about their opinions on the park in 1997, some people mentioned that they were angry with park guards due to confrontations with people who are inside the park (UICN and INAB 1997). The diagnostic is vague about who is inside the park, why they have confrontations with park guards, and why this would make other people angry. Beginning around 1988, two park guards were stationed in Raxha', and they quickly got into confrontations with multiple communities. Quixpur leaders have signed documents attesting that they struck an agreement that the park guards would give permission to continue farming in the expansion/reserve zone, and in return Quixpur residents would report other people's encroachment. On the other side of the park, park guards acknowledged that Sepac residents had cardamom plants inside both the original and expansion/reserve park lands. In one signed agreement, the current park administrator told residents they could continue to harvest their cardamom, but not plant any maize or other new crops in the park.

My understanding is that Sepac residents never respected this agreement, and continued to plant, harvest, and hunt in the park. Since there were only two guards for 10,000 or 15,000 hectares, people probably often took resources without confronting guards. When I interviewed park guards, they contextualized this event, pointing out that there was massive logging going on inside the park in the late 1990s, and they

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[22] Park guards prohibited hunting and fishing at least ten years before the survey, but these practices evidently continued openly.

believed people in Sepac participated in large-scale illegal resource extraction. (It was this illegal logging that led one park guard to advocate for a return to *mano dura*, Chapter 3.) They never acknowledged the issue of cardamom plants, which is evidence of historical land use and rights (as *mejoras*, or improvements), and occasionally claimed that maize planting did not occur until well into the 2000s.[23]

Sepac is not an undifferentiated community, however. When I interviewed people in Sepac about resource extraction, a number of people told me that paramilitaries harvested cardamom inside both the original park and the expansion/reserve. They did not have the right to these products, because they did not plant the cardamom, but they took advantage of the fact that the rightful owners were either dead or too scared to reclaim their rights. At least some of the people harvesting cardamom in the park into the 1990s were former paramilitaries, and I am not sure when others began to reclaim their alleged families' crops and land. I believe it is unlikely that former paramilitaries would have planted maize inside the park, as they tended to have land closer to their homes. As for the landless, their status as landless was not as clear in the 1990s, and it was still relatively easy to rent land in Sepac. Correspondingly, satellite maps suggest relatively little clearing for planting maize or beans in the park until at least the late 1990s.

Killers and Survivors, Owners and Invaders?

In this section, I do not claim to have verified specific allegations on the part of people who are farming inside park lands. To the contrary, I believe that people farming in the park and in Sepac lied to me in instances I was able to verify (and some that I wasn't); I also believe the same thing about park administrators. Not all people will fit comfortably into the binaries I suggest, but their discursive salience is why "invaders" persist in making claims and joining up with peasant organizations from the capital.

As of my last visit in July 2009, there were three "invader communities" that lived in Sepac and planted in Lake Raxha' National Park. To the north of Sepac is Yalicoc, a group of Q'eqchi's living in Sepac who claim to have descended from families the military forced to regroup in Sepac in 1976 when they first established the park boundaries. Most people in Sepac claim that the original ten square kilometer park's boundary was set further north than it is today.[24] Along that slice Yalicoc families care for old homes, a cemetery, and various plants and use these to point to their historical relationship to the land they farm communally today. To the east of Sepac, there is another area called Sipatec, where families farm land and claim historical rights. Although some people told me their fathers died in the war at the army's hands, truth commission documents suggest that EGP killed their fathers for participating in the

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[23] This was inconsistent in my fieldnotes, as sometimes they seem to have been in agreement with the idea that people were planting maize, albeit without their permission, during the 1990s. One time a guard clarified and said this was a different group of people planting in a different place than those of today, and therefore I should not consider their agricultural practices in the 1980s and 1990s as long-term historical practices of the people farming in the park today.

[24] Park guards protest that this is preposterous. In many other cases, it is common that the area specified on the titles is not how much land a person or community owns; rather, it is how much land he possesses. Here, at least one boundary marker disappeared. Community members believe this is simply because the park was not cared for until the late 1980s, but park guards asserted that locals threw away the marker.

Portillos' land titling process. One possibility is that these two groups were families who allied with the Portillos in the land titling process, but were excluded from the deal with Portillos made with the army.

The third group claims a different history from the first two, farming land called Semakooy to the southeast of Sepac (not directly bordering Sepac, but further in the park). These Q'eqchi' families claim to be genocide survivors. [25] They claim to have settled in Sepac, but when they were excluded from the land titling process in the late 1970s, they moved east to establish a new community. Just a few years later, the army told them they were living in subversive territory because it was the middle of the jungle, accused them of living in a guerrilla camp, and forced them to move into Sepac (becoming landless). Subsequently, at least a few men were killed as "subversives." Today, they claim that their status as genocide survivors means they deserve land as reparations, and eschew association with the other two groups. Although all three groups tend to plant and sow maize communally, only Semakooy has homes inside the park. Every time the judge orders an eviction from the park, a military group burns their crops and their homes; then residents rebuild again.

All three of these groups insist that one cannot understand their status as "invaders" without understanding the inequitable land titling process in Sepac. Indeed, the Project's work to title the land was the trigger for massive maize plantings inside the park. According to this narrative, paramilitaries committed massacres and terrorized neighbors, and the military rewarded their loyalty by making them the community leaders who speak for Sepac. When the Project titled their lands (below), community leaders successfully excluded other people from ownership. For their part, genocide survivors, people who lost family members to the war under the army's policies that disproportionately affected Catholic Q'eqchi's, claim that their dispossession is a continuation of the army's prejudices. These families are only invaders if one accepts that the park's claim on the land supersedes theirs. Today, owners and invaders alike declare: "We didn't invade the park, the park invaded us!"

Land Titling in Sepac: Did Killers become Owners?

> [The Indian] is only one two-faced figure haunting post-war Guatemala, waiting to be unmasked. Another is the war perpetrator, who committed dastardly deeds and then, seemingly acknowledging their badness, covered them up by 'disappearances' and clandestine cemeteries, and by hiding ill-gotten gains off the books. – Diane Nelson (2009: 10).

When I asked Project employees how it was that some people became owners and other people became landless, they first told me that the people who were not included on titles were children of the landowners, who would inherit the land. When I insisted that there were families who were not included in the land title at all, they told me that these families must have arrived too late (i.e., after INTA conducted its first census) to be included in the process. The process of war-time displacement and relocation never entered into the conversation. For their part, Sepac paramilitaries described their land ownership as a reward for loyalty, a harrowing and long-term relationship with the army that they had to enter into in order to save their land. Finally, landless people in Sepac assert that they were repeatedly excluded from their land rights

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[25] At least two family progenitors are registered as being killed as subversives by the army in the early 1980s.

under threat of violence, until eventually the Project paid for the formalization of their dispossession.

The first historical process of exclusion was when the Portillos and Mendozas formed cooperatives and paid professionals to map land. A number of people who could not pay their share (as defined by the Portillos and Mendozas) of the cost of titling and mapping lost their land. Some stayed, some left permanently, others left and returned as violence escalated in the region. The 1970s maps were neither legal nor cartographically valid, and former paramilitaries fight for their recognition because this is when they first formalized their claims to much larger parcels of land than their poor and illiterate neighbors. Neither the military nor INTA recognized these claims.

Instead, the military directed INTA to map Sepac's claim in 1985 as part of the process of declaring Sepac a development pole. I have found no references or records to a census conducted of families at that time, which is the normal procedure. My understanding is that Sepac leaders advocated to forcibly return Suspect Maya to their own villages, then conduct a census. In 1985, Sepac lands ceased to be open land (*baldío*) and were inscribed in the Property Register with the nation as owner, but as a parcel with the name "Sepac and Tal," where Tal was the name of one of the smaller communities the cooperatives swallowed up.

On the official INTA map, it lists the land to the north as "Raxha' National Park;" although the park was not legally inscribed in the Property Register, INTA included the 10,000 hectare park on all its maps. To the east, the reserve/expansion is still listed as empty terrain (*terreno baldío*). Sepac leaders wanted 30 *caballerías* of the empty land to be inscribed as part of their claim, but INTA cartographers (who reportedly carried guns and were military employees) refused. Sepac leaders claim that this refusal was not because of the park, but some other reason that INTA did not give. According to archival records from the late 1970s, INTA refused Sepac's large land claim because it would have allocated twice as much land per family as the law allowed.

The INTA map included another unwanted intrusion into Sepac's land—a community forest reserve. These were legally required, although the extent to which the reserve truly exists depends. In Sepac, probably because of close proximity to the park and sustainable development projects, the reserve land did affect people's parcels, meaning some people had to change where they farmed. The INTA map allocated land that Sepac's cooperatives hadn't yet divvied up, which was smaller than the forest reserve. In response, Sepac paramilitaries allocated this land to their family members who had been affected, while excluding others.

In keeping with INTA's policy for the region, INTA designated Sepac as eligible for a land title as a Collective Agrarian Patrimony (CAP, Chapter 4). Although other kinds of land titles allowed for differential, privatized holdings, the CAP asserts that landowners on the title will all be owners in equitable parts (*partes alícuotas*). The implication of this was that Sepac paramilitaries could not hold 90 hectares while their neighbors held only 7 hectares—they should split the difference, such that each family held 15 hectares, only deviating in response to specific issues of soil quality and access to water.

Sepac leaders knew that the law dictated that they make their landholdings equitable (at least amongst owners), but they actively ignored it. In 1989, because displaced people had returned home and violence in the region waned, INTA returned to Sepac to conduct a census of all families, who would become owners. When INTA

employees attempted to conduct the census, they reported that PAC leaders threatened their lives, warning that they could not include some families. In FONTIERRAS and community archives, there is a record of this meeting, in which the INTA representative asserts that he will not grant Sepac land title unless all families are included. Even after the paramilitary system was disbanded when the war ended in 1996, PAC leaders continued to assert control through the Land Committee, which they formed for the exclusive purpose of charging people money to build homes and refusing access to land to outsiders.

In the late 1990s, the Project received funding to title both the park and surrounding communities. Sepac quickly emerged as a "problem" community, and the Project attempted to address its land conflicts through its Land Forum. Although digital records (or at least reports to funders) should be available, Project administrators told me they had no records of any Land Forum meetings, and that it was impossible for me to contact the Land Forum administrator. Park employees noted that this administrator meant well, but was a troublemaker, because he told local communities that the park was still a *baldío*. When I interjected that he was correct, and the park was a *baldío*, one guard's response was: It was a *baldío*, but it wasn't. When I asked why it wasn't a *baldío*, he said the state had already claimed that land as the park and reserve, it just hadn't formalized its claim yet. As a sustainable development consortium, park employees believed that the Project should have increased the legitimacy of the park, not made the error of pointing out its weaknesses to landless peasants interested in making counter-claims.

For their part, many Sepac community members scoffed at the Land Forum, saying that it was a waste of time, because there was a lot of talking, but no decision-making. At the Forum, FONTIERRAS, Project, park, Sepac leaders, and Sepac's dispossessed community members all participated. Project administrators were supposed to be the neutral facilitators of the forum, but I believe this was impossible. The Project only came into existence in order to support the park, and in this case to support legalization of the park's expansion. Also, some Project employees were from Sepac, either on the Land Committee themselves or from one of the two ruling families. Unless they were excluded from participating in Sepac's case (which they were not), it is hard for me to see how they could not have influenced the resolution of this case in their families' favor.

Despite the fact that it remains illegal, the Project paid for FONTIERRAS to map and formalize the inequitable land tenure in Sepac. While FONTIERRAS refused to expand Sepac's claim or ignore the forest reserve, it simply legalized Sepac's land claim. FONTIERRAS issued a title that asserts that all title holders have equal rights to the land, and the Land Committee tells people how much land they can claim, then force them to pay their share of the land's cost on that basis. In 2008, one Portillo encouraged the president of the Land Committee to be more coercive with people late on their land payments. On the basis of his suggestion, the Land Committee president (who was also a Project employee using a Project motorcycle) drove around town to tell people, "If you don't pay for your land, we'll give it to the invaders."

Boundary Work: Did Survivors become Invaders?

It is fairly easy to see that paramilitary killers and their families are the largest landowners in Sepac. Those men who protested they had relatively little land had already divided it amongst their children during the land titling process. Sepac is

famous as the home of paramilitary killers at a regional level to the extent that human rights organizations eschew working in Sepac. It is much more difficult to show that today's park invaders are yesterday's genocide survivors, however. Even people sympathetic with the work of the national truth commission (CEH) point out that some of its dates on this region are wrong, and locals claim that the commission does not include all the war-time deaths. Just in terms of the politics of positionality, it is difficult not to notice that the local truth commission representative is today the president of Sepac's COCODE and a landowner, while the leader of the official civil war Victims' Committee is a member of one of the invader groups, Semakooy. As landowners seem more likely to have bloody war histories, so too invader groups seem more likely to be in the process of receiving financial compensation because the military disappeared a family member.

Still, the Project director expressed gentle skepticism when I raised this possibility, and Park administrators and guards were openly hostile to the idea that "invaders" might be telling the truth when they claim they have historical rights that the army unfairly and illegally took from them during civil war repression. Although park administrators in particular have access to evidence that they did not share, it is important to understand that the claims of marginalized people are notoriously difficult to prove, often by design. As I mentioned above, one of the ways that the army forced people to come onto the military base was by confiscating their identification cards. It was impossible to live without identification during the war, and even today the police regularly pull all men off the bus and ask them to show their identification cards, bringing people to the station who cannot produce one. In fact, one of the programs the United Nations facilitated for returned refugees was registering births and deaths, and providing new identification cards. In interviews in all regions of the northern lowlands, people have told me that the military intentionally burned their identification cards and land titles (see also Manz 2004). Without these, people could neither claim their lives nor their livelihoods.

The only way that one can prove land tenure that supersedes a park is to have a file registered with INTA that pre-dates the park's legal creation. Nonetheless, INTA and FYDEP are notorious for losing people's files. In fact, Semakooy representatives have a card that INTA issued with their case number from the 1980s, which they claimed would show that they asked INTA to legally redress the military's violent dispossession of their lands. FONTIERRAS was unable to locate the corresponding file, so park guards' assertions that these families never farmed inside the reserve/expansion until after 2000 stand as accepted fact. During a 2008 visit to the FONTIERRAS, an archivist told me, "You see all these files? This isn't even half of what used to be here in the 1980s." When I asked her what she thought happened to the files, she told me the people who didn't want others to find out what they had done [during the war] threw them away.

According to park administrators, there are four "invading groups" that farm in Park Raxha'. I discussed the one not based out of Sepac, Quixpur, in Chapter 3; they have all the requisite paperwork to show that they received land titles, but the park still classifies them as "invaders." Semakooy (discussed above) leaders hold themselves apart from the other two groups, claiming that they alone are the Sepac group with a legitimate claim to park lands. For their part, Yalicoc and Sipatec, have a few members who have maps and titles showing they paid for their land as part of the Portillo

cooperative. Project administrators correctly assert that these are geographically imprecise and have no legal backing. Nonetheless, I have a difficult time accepting this logic because Sepac paramilitaries used the same imprecise and non-legal titles to assert their rights to greater shares of land in Sepac. Why should the Project accept the same paperwork in one instance, but not the other?

If one discounts the paperwork because of its lack of legal status, all these two groups have is physical evidence of tenure inside park lands. The evidence they have is as follows: ruins of old buildings (especially the foundations, or *horcones*), cemetery plots, cardamom and coffee plants (Figure 7.4, below). Park administrators assert that there is no way for "invaders" to show they are the same families as those who established tenure in the 1960s, and at any rate they lost their land rights when the park was declared. Some of the families living where Yalicoc now farms moved north to found another community. Since Yalicoc members chose not to, park administrators argue that they do not owe any compensation to any of these families.

FIGURE 7.4: Sepac "invaders" tending to the ruins of old buildings and a cemetery inside Park Raxha'. (Photograph by the author.)

Each side—park administrators and farmers—has become progressively hardened in its position. Whereas there were clear opportunities to negotiate solutions when the Project began, now that the boundaries of both Sepac and the park have been legalized, that door has closed. Unfortunately, with every passing year, families organize to plant in the park, as they have nowhere else to plant, and park guards organize to arrest them with military patrols, as it is their job to protect the park. Enmity grows on both sides, as hostage situations take their toll, and the state Secretary for Agrarian Affairs cannot find a solution. This tacitly opens the door for violent evictions. This cycle of violent evictions may repeat itself or escalate, as most families farming in the park were fairly convincing in their assertions that they had nowhere else to go, and that they would die before they stopped farming in the park.

Conclusion

In material ways, the people farming in Sepac insist that their war-time positionalities produced their post-war marginalities. Poor, Catholic Q'eqchi' families who were able to buy into the Portillos' "land titling" were more likely to lose their land, as the Portillos literally assigned them marginal plots further away from the urban center. These plots are the parts of the community that the Portillos ceded to the military for the park. During increased violence in the 1980s, marginalized families had to seek refuge in Sepac, begging for a home and food, while physically ceding their claims to the land they farmed. In the post-war, these families argue that they have suffered just as much as other displaced and returned refugee families, but human rights organizations ignore them because they live in the same town as notorious paramilitary killers. Moreover, development professionals claim that they are "park invaders," which makes them lawbreakers, bad environmentalists, or even *narco*-peasants (Ybarra 2010b). In the post-war era of human rights, these groups assert their rights, and they see environmentalism as simply another mechanism for injustice. This is why so many people in Sepac declare: "We didn't invade the park, the park invaded us!"

During the war, people's marginalities came from the articulation of race, class and religion. Some poor Mayas who were Evangelical still got land with the Portillos, and less-poor, educated Mayas bought land from the Mendozas. Class, in the ability to buy land, created insiders and outsiders in the first instance. Religious matters became acute in the late 1970s after a Portillo military commissioner reported guerrilla activity through the Catholic Church. In the final instance, the military's criteria of race as Q'eqchi's also made people vulnerable, and no Q'eqchi' family living alone in the jungle was allowed to stay in their home.

Today, all these elements have been reduced to Q'eqchi' as an ethnicity. Amongst wartime survivors, such as those from Semakooy, it matters a great deal who participated with paramilitaries and with how much enthusiasm. They see their identity as Q'eqchi' as absolutely imbricated with their war-time experience, such that people who did not suffer or worse—who committed acts of violence on behalf of the military—become Ladinos. In the post-war, they argue that these people do not need "human rights" development, and should not receive money as war victims. Meanwhile, some former paramilitaries have joined other groups planting in the park, and they presented their identity to me as marginalized because they are Q'eqchi' peasants. The reduction of race, class, religion, and political identity to one, ethnic identity, only works in massacres where the army's work was much less nuanced than in Sepac. I do not know the circumstances under which some people came to be paramilitaries, or what kind of violence they themselves suffered, so I do not wish to police people out of their human rights claims. At the same time, this is precisely what their neighbors and foreign human rights organizations are doing in the post-war.

The stakes in who becomes an owner and who becomes an invader are not simply in who wins the civil war, but also in how people can forge their livelihoods in the future. These livelihoods, and people's negotiations of them, still occur in an environment of coercion and violence. When groups like drug traffickers step into the void left by the nation-state, this is not an undifferentiated move. Rather, drug traffickers seek to work in communities shell-shocked by the war, who distrust the authorities too much to ask for help (because they may be coerced or bribed into collaboration with drug traffickers). When I was living in Sepac in 2008, I heard multiple

and persistent rumors of a drug *finca* just outside of town, with military men and Zetas (Mexican drug cartel), guns, and plans. I mentioned this to a *gringa* who was volunteering in Sepac and she laughed and said, you can't believe everything you hear here; everybody lies, you know.

Everybody lies, but kernels of truth are powerful. Quietly but insistently, people whispered about the drug trafficking den just down the way from Sepac, and whether there would be violence. There wasn't any while I lived there, but in March 2009, the Guatemalan police and the US DEA raided the *finca*. Two Mexican Zeta commanders and 37 trainees fled, leaving behind grenades, rifles and ammunition on the "cattle ranch" whose primary territorial purpose was as a landing strip for smuggling drugs. According to later reports, many of the recruits working with the Zetas are former *kaibiles*, elite killing troops trained by the Guatemalan army. According to police, they found the drug trafficking *finca* because locals reported that the Zetas were trying to recruit young men. Although to an outsider these histories might seem like a series of events in a small town that is particularly unlucky, in Sepac the army imposed the park and now the army is coercing them again, both through drugs and conservation. These two sources of fear are very different, but the effect coalesces in town as a single set of rumors. In Sepac, death is always close, and the military is always closer.

When people in Sepac reject development, they are rejecting the relationship of trusteeship, particularly the ways in which trusteeship is imbricated with coercion and threats under the army's watch. In Sepac, the one thing drug traffickers, the park, and the state land titling agency all have in common is that the military seems to control them. The military's loyalty comes at a high price. At least two former paramilitaries were writing tell-all autobiographies, and one did so with the explicit purpose of taking other people down with him if surviving family members of his victims made good on threats to kill him. Former paramilitaries made difficult choices, and they are not necessarily happy living with the consequences. This is particularly true since former paramilitaries had a difficult time getting the military to give them property with liberty. Although Sepac leaders thought they definitively won their land in the 1970s, they had to fight the same battle again in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s. For their part, Sepac's landless see development as a relationship between powerful locals and powerful foreigners who talk about human rights, yet support the park without regard to its consequences.

When people in Sepac say they want to burn the Project down, they are implicating current sustainable development work in their war-time experiences of violence. As a conservationist myself, I argue that we would do well to listen. At the very least, de-militarizing conservation in Guatemala would significantly mitigate locals' perceptions that *gring@s* care more about trees than people, and that we are willing to partner with violent people to protect those trees. If conservation and development in places like Sepac are to succeed, development practitioners are going to have to think though how war-time violence is also implicated in present-day sustainable development projects. Although important development ethnographies assume benevolence in the will to improve (Li 2007) or claim that harm emanates from capitalism in development (Goldman 2005; Wainwright 2008), this is not how people in places like Sepac see the situation at all. They are not mystified by the fairy tales development professionals tell themselves (Ferguson 1990), but understand development as politics. Moreover, post-war development occurs through relationships

of trusteeship, which local "beneficiaries" understand as partnerships marked by violence and coercion. Given that trusteeship is always already a relationship marked by unequal power relations, the violence of trusteeship in Sepac is extreme, but not unique.

Chapter 8

The Ladino Question in Land Tenure and Development

> Power is not something that can be possessed, and it is not a form of might; power is never anything more than a relationship that can, and must, be studied only by looking at the interplay between the terms of that relationship. One cannot, therefore, write either the history of kings or the history of peoples; one can write the history of what constitutes those opposing terms. – Foucault (2003: 168)

Introduction

In my interviews with Portillo former paramilitaries (Chapter 7), I tried not to think they were bloodthirsty killers who deserved to be roundly condemned, but rather to be attentive to how they saw their choices as constrained within local and national politics. Although some people thought I was walking blindly down the primrose path by listening to murderers, I believe that post-war human rights discourse and condemnations of genocide has engendered their contemporary social exclusion. In turn, isolation fosters their untenable revisionist histories of war-time actions. Nonetheless, I managed to horribly offend one of my more open and interesting interlocutors. After our first conversation, I added information he gave to me onto a provisional family tree I sketched to track the relationships between Portillos and Mendozas. As I sat down for my second visit, I produced the family tree and told him I had a few clarification questions. He seemed impressed that I had made an effort to understand the genealogical underpinnings of Sepac's conflict. We talked for a few minutes, when his countenance suddenly turned cold. He may have been a murderer, but Ramón was too polite to kick me out because I had offended him. I asked a filler question and took the time to think—What did I say?

I realized that I had offended Ramón because I referred to his family members as Ladinos. In the post-war, it is not uncommon for Ladinos to reject this term, but I tended to think of this as a *capitalino* conceit. In fieldwork in 2006, I discovered that a number of families living in protected areas in Petén self-identified as Mestizo, but a CONAP official told me these were primarily children of returned refugees who had one indigenous and one Ladino parent. Still, I found it hard to believe that the descendents of a major *finquero* who were directors of paramilitary genocide in Playa Grande could see themselves as anything but Ladino. I never found a socially appropriate way to ask Ramón about my offence, but I subsequently peppered Ramón's cousin with questions. He told me that they all knew some Q'eqchi' because their grandmother was Q'eqchi', therefore the Portillos were also Q'eqchi' Maya. I told him that *finqueros* also spoke Q'eqchi', the better to order their serfs around, but since all the Portillos spoke Spanish in the home, didn't wear indigenous dress, didn't celebrate Mayan ceremonies, and had strong military ties, it was easier for me to understand them as Ladinos. His response was a belly laugh, and we agreed to disagree.

At the end of my fieldwork in 2008, I considered the matter largely closed. Although the Portillos claimed to be Q'eqchi', other people in and outside town seemed

to think it was appropriate that I referred to them as Ladino. I thought that the Portillos claimed their Q'eqchi' identity in order to mitigate the claims that they were Ladino paramilitaries controlling and killing their Q'eqchi' victims under the watchful eye of a racist state. I was surprised when I returned in 2009 to discover that these claims were not just a revisionist past, but also a present.

I called up a friend who negotiated land conflicts in the Franja in 2009 to get the scoop on a case, only to hear that the Portillos had joined up with CUC in an effort to get a land conflict resolved in their favor. This same family that reported EGP sympathizers to the military so they could be killed, and ruled an entire development pole with relative impunity, asked CUC for legal assistance. As I described in Chapter 2, CUC was the emblematic peasant rights organization that was directly affiliated with EGP and clandestinely fomented Marxist revolution. This history is still important in the post-war, and CUC advocates on behalf of marginalized peasants and indigenous peoples in their agrarian struggles. My friend knew about the Portillos' regional reputation, and he laughed as he told me that CUC was advocating for them in their conflict with a German-descended cattle rancher. I scoffed and said, so what, they're indigenous peasants, now? There was nothing to do but exchange barbs about peasant organizations that came in from the capital without understanding who they represent.[1] Had it not been for my interviews with several Portillos the year before, I would have considered this extreme political opportunism. The fact that Ramón Portillo seemed more offended to be called a Ladino than a killer, though, is sufficiently jarring that I suggest we rethink the Ladino question in land tenure and development.

Historically, Latin Americans have asked themselves the Indian question, which can be grossly summed up: How do we develop our nation when we have all these damn Indians?[2] In the multicultural backlash, Mario Roberto Morales asserted that a Ladino was anyone who did not want to call himself an Indian (in Adams 2005: 170; also Martínez Peláez 2009). Post-war accusations of genocide have articulated with older Hispanic prejudice, such that photographer Diego Molina explains, "The ladinos are liars, traitors, charlatans, thieves, hypocrites, cowards, co-opted, sold out, and always taken advantage of" (Nelson 2009: 11). Today, just as Indians articulate Mayan identities, Ladinos grope towards a new identity, hoping to leave old prejudices behind in new articulations of *mestizaje*.

In the new era of human rights, indigenous identity formations, and multiculturalism, some scholars are asking how we can approach Ladino identities (Hale 1999; Adams and Bastos 2003; Morales 2004; Euraque et al. 2005; Hale 2006a). Specifically, what does it mean to be Ladino in twenty-first century representations of *mestizaje*? How do erstwhile Ladinos make claims to land and development in the wake of popular, if not successful, indigenous social movements? For the monolingual Q'eqchi' communities I work with, these people will always be *Kaxlan*; but for the people themselves, forging a new Mestizo identity is an increasingly urgent political project.

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[1] This is not an empirical truth, but one of the conceits of rural fieldworkers, in this case a *gringa* ethnographer and an NGO employee whose job is to resolve land conflicts in rural communities.

[2] Many Guatemalans see the answer to that question along a spectrum that ranges from providing them economic opportunities through development to exterminating them (e.g., Casaús Arzú 2004: 103). In conversations over the years, relatively few Ladinos have questioned the premise on which they ask themselves this question.

I first outline two alternative narratives of loss to the more familiar Q'eqchi' narrative of racialized dispossession (Chapter 4): German (or German-descended) plantation owners during World War II as "Nazis;" and *finquero* flights during the civil war to save their lives from marauding guerrillas and uprising indigenous mobs. I ask what happened to the children of landless *finqueros*, pointing to my own experience of working with these folks in development projects, and questioning how their heritage foments new paternalisms in post-war development as trusteeship. Finally, I briefly show how *mestizaje* and its attendant identity of Mestizo have resurfaced in post-war Guatemala. In an era of *gring@* impositions—ecotourism, human rights, conservation, neoliberalism—I show how some people are claiming that they are Mestizo in their struggles against *gring@* imperialism.

Alternative Narratives of Loss

Racialized Dispossession: Germans as Nazis

Racialized identities in post-war Guatemala seem so fixed that it can be difficult to remember that people relate to each other through an articulation of race, class, and history. The department of Alta Verapaz, where I conducted most of my fieldwork, is widely considered special in this regard because of its strong German influence. In a study based on fieldwork in the 1950s, King (1974) identifies six "socio-cultural groups:" Ladino, Ladino-Indian, Indian, German-Indian, German-Ladino, and German. Of these, he asserts that Ladino is the most fluid term, and his work explores how identities are articulated through neighborhood (*barrio*) and kinship.

In a process initiated by conservatives and implemented by liberals (McCreery 1994),[3] indigenous lands were declared *baldíos* (empty) and opened up to private ownership, which Guatemalan elites believed was more economically efficient than 'common property.'[4] Privatization and modernization in nineteenth century Guatemala took the form of racialized dispossession, serving not only to create a new class of coffee elites, but also producing racialized hierarchies in nascent Guatemala. On the basis of this dispossession, Guatemalan elites invited Germans to create coffee plantations using the labor of the Q'eqchi's who used to own it, asking only that they act as trustees to their Q'eqchi' serfs in return. Through a series of debt mechanisms and vagrancy laws, the liberal state authorized capitalist entrepreneurs to coerce indigenous labor on plantations.

While not denying the profit motive, the dispossession of the Q'eqchi' in favor of German-owned coffee plantations also was "a matter of establishing a right that is stamped with dissymmetry and that functions as a privilege that has to be either maintained or reestablished; it is a matter of establishing a truth that functions as a

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[3] The institutionalization of this privatization occurred almost entirely under the Liberals, but this is due not to a difference in ideology, but an ability to create and mobilize state institutions, particularly due to the problems of yellow fever under Carranza (a Conservative dictator) and the increased incentives of coffee under the Liberals. Thus, unlike Grandia (2006) and others, I consider this as nineteenth century modernization, rather than a specifically Liberal phenomenon.

[4] Today, the state and development NGOs adjudicate lands as common property that many lowlands Q'eqchi' communities assert have a mix of individual and common property rights (Chapter 4).

weapon" (Foucault 2003: 268-269). Guatemala was part of a well-documented effort in the Americas to define citizenship in terms of civility, where indigenous populations were viewed as troublingly inadequate by Creole elites—it was not only Sarmiento who believed that indigenous people needed stewardship before they could take up citizenship, but also Bolívar. For both Latin American figures, there existed a hopeful possibility in Lamarckian concepts of eugenics—while the tropical milieu posed a significant threat to the development of the race of a nation, Lamarckian readings offered optimism for the possibility of shaping a milieu that would foster a new, productive population (Stepan 1991).

To that end, Guatemalan elites came to the uneasy conclusion that they needed to populate rural areas with model citizens who would teach the indigenous population how to become entrepreneurs, while also improving their bloodlines. If we can imagine for a moment that is it indeed true that "most Spaniards, creoles, and ladinos assumed the Indian to be lazy, stupid, dirty, and too much attached to his own, largely incomprehensible customs" (McCreery 1994: 86), particularly when indigenous people resisted an elite imposition (taxes, buying shoes, etc.), it becomes possible to see the question of rural Guatemala—the vast majority of the country—as in dire need of stewardship. In particular, Q'eqchi' swidden agriculture and community organization were deemed inferior; in 1867, the governor of the Verapaces described these habits as a "lack of morals" (McCreery 1994: 167).[5] As the Creole elites were not numerous enough to provide such stewardship, they came upon the solution of inviting European homesteaders to become citizens.

While Guatemala's elites established a particular kind of truth based on citizenship, race, and productivity to justify the invitation of the Germans to colonize Guatemalan lands, they did not dictate the form of the economy or race relations. Rather, these were contested and produced through social relations of production between plantation owners and workers (Smith 1990: 23), and land rights that were articulated, defended and lost in a new discourse of rights. Most Europeans did not intend to become homesteaders, but plantation owners and traders who would remain European, not become Guatemalan. Today, people in the Verapaces refer to the Europeans collectively as "Germans," who are a majority in the European immigrant wave that also included English, Belgians, French, Spanish and Swiss. By 1897, German citizens owned at least 6,000 *caballerías* in Guatemala (Wagner 2001).

The first major wave of German migration ended with World War I, when many German merchant houses and farms were first blacklisted; some properties were expropriated, but returned to their owners in 1921 (Wagner 2001). Between World Wars, the Germans still owned about half of all coffee-producing acreage and ran 80% of the German-owned trading houses (King 1974). Most plantations continued to route their commercial exports and investments through German companies. This, combined with the fact that Germans and their Guatemalan-born descendents remained German

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[5] Although the quote I cite here offers little context, it fits remarkably well with a current narrative in Alta Verapaz, one where the lowlands Q'eqchi' are morally lacking because they "hang around in their hammocks all day" (a stereotype any ethnographer scheduling round-the-clock interviews knows is untrue), rather than laboring on the land. In these narratives, elites in the regional capital espouse a belief that the Q'eqchi' practice swidden agriculture not due to local ecologies, but because it is less labor intensive. Likewise, they prefer to work in their own communities rather than on plantations because they lack the moral fiber to work hard.

citizens (often not even registering as foreign nationals), left the Germans vulnerable to expropriation.

More recent German immigrants actively participated in Nazi celebrations in Alta Verapaz, even organizing a local party group (NSDAP) after 1933 (Cobán German Club 1967 (1938)). In 1938, the Roman Congregation of Seminaries and Universities published a circular condemning the "racist theories that in a scandalous way propagate the current German Reich." The Church's response to German privileging of blood and race is Lamarckian in tone. Rather than assert equality across diverse peoples, the Archdiocese asks, "is there not a preponderant place for the environment, education, and for interior forces of moral and spiritual order, that exercise some influence over the psychological development of each human personality, with their 'intellectual and moral qualities'?"[6]

When Germany declared war on the United States, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS, the precursor to the CIA) identified Guatemala as a "Nazi center in Central America" and deemed it a threat because there were over 3,000 German citizens who directly controlled 40% of the country's coffee production (Wagner 2001: 173). In January 1942, the Guatemalan dictator Ubico (1931–1944) sent 115 Germans and one Italian to detention camps for prisoner of war exchange (King 1974). The OSS issued an official blacklist of German-owned firms operating in Guatemala, targeting German-owned coffee plantations in production (Figure 8.1, below), while ignoring German-owned land that were not in productive use (i.e., the lowlands).

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[6] Revista Eclesiástica, Órgano Oficial de la Arquidiocesis de Santiago y de la Diocesis de los Altos y de la Verapaz, Ano XIV, No. 2, Guatemala, abril-junio de 1943, Redacción y Administración, P. Bernabé Salazar, 18 folios. Colección Taracena Arriola: Caja 1, No. 9. CIRMA Archives. Translation mine.
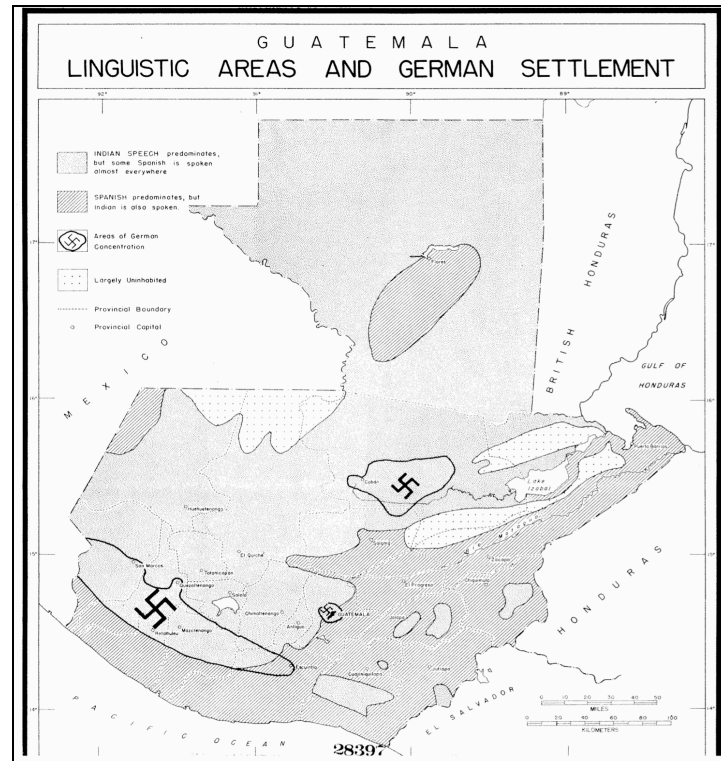
FIGURE 8.1: Guatemala, Linguistic Areas and German settlement, demarcated by swastikas. Compiled and drawn in the Branch of Research and Analysis, OSS. (Courtesy of Earth Sciences and Map Library, UC Berkeley.)

Ubico expropriated German-owned properties in 1944 in the name of the nation, and many of these became *fincas nacionales* (national plantations). The actual extent of German dispossession is unknown, because most plantation owners resisted dispossession using a variety of techniques, including bequeathing land to relatives with Guatemalan citizenship, placing deeds in trust with Guatemalan lawyers or administrators, and simply returning later to reclaim this land (King 1974). During the democratic spring and agrarian reforms that preceded the 1954 coup, the state allocated most of the *fincas nacionales* to peasant cooperatives, including approximately 160,000 hectares in Alta Verapaz.

Many development professionals I worked with in Guatemala have German heritage. While they were often reticent at first, those with stronger family ties generally asserted that the Germans in Guatemala were not actually Nazis (at least, not families with roots dating to the nineteenth century). Many described their parents' or grandparents' land losses during World War II or the subsequent agrarian reform as the reason why they chose professional careers. These development professionals, whose cadastral knowledge far outweighs mine, were often vague or ambiguous about when and why their family members lost their land. According to Wagner (2001: 174), many "rightful owners" hoped to regain their land after World War II (as they had after World War I), but the communist-influenced government did not relinquish these properties.[7]

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[7] Her tenuous implication is that the Germans would have regained all of their former property were it not for the democratic spring (1944-1954).

In Chapter 6, I described Q'eqchi' communities' memories of Cristian Sapper's sudden appearance and dispossession of their lands. From the Sapper family point of view, however, they had been the rightful owners of a complex of plantations since they claimed them in the late nineteenth century. After the 1954 coup, the Sappers were one of many families who moved to physically reclaim their family legacy in coffee plantations. In the 1960s, as the cardamom market developed, they took possession of lands titled in the nineteenth century for the first time, like Yaab'alhix. In interviews with the administrator of a major land titling project in Carchá, he revealed that German families reclaimed lands that they actually never had title to. I mentioned to him that a Yaab'alhix leader had been skeptical of the Sappers' land claim in the 1970s; he responded that such skepticism was warranted. He told me that two communities of Q'eqchi' serfs on a Sapper plantation asked his NGO for a loan to buy the land they had been working on since time immemorial, and as serfs since their nineteenth century dispossession. In cadastral research, however, he discovered that the Sappers had never owned the plantation's land; so he titled the land in the community's name and they became landowners.[8] German-descended Guatemalans are aware of the political problems their dispossession narrative presents, so they rarely talk about it with *gring@s* like me. Nonetheless, as I suggest below, I believe their heritage as plantation owners affects their contemporary development practices.

Finquero Flight, Indigenous Lands?

In my understanding of land tenure and development in the Franja, German narratives of loss converge with those of would-be *finqueros* who lost their land during upheaval in the countryside during the civil war. I understand the war as genocidal on the basis of massive scorched earth campaigns from the late 1970s and 1980s, but development professionals' memories challenge me to think through the implications of social revolts and revolution in the 1960s and 1970s. In a similar fashion to the ways civil war hardened ethnic identities, the war seems to have hardened land inequalities amongst Guatemala's agrarian elites.

Land ownership amongst Guatemala's elites is notoriously difficult to track, but my impression is that the 1960s marked the beginning of significant change. The significant expulsion of plantation serfs and new investment by some plantation owners I described in Chapter 4 was not simply a response to new economic opportunities to the Central American Common Market, but also a response to fears of indigenous and peasant revolts. Even after 1954 coup, some elites were afraid that an agrarian reform was a significant possibility, and expelled their serfs to keep them from claiming plantation lands through historical tenure. After the Cuban Revolution (1959), many *finqueros* became afraid that a Guatemalan revolution would also succeed. In Guatemala, these fears were racialized—Adams and Bastos (2003: 233, translation mine) identify a contemporary Ladino "fantasy of the possibility of an indigenous revolt that would place at risk both the security they enjoy thanks to their control of the State, and the hegemonic community they imagine."

Seemingly impending social change provoked two responses from *finqueros*: fight or flight. Some *finqueros* allied with the army, often becoming regional military commissioners (Chapter 7), and military professionals became *finqueros*, informing older

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[8] This is how he presented the story to me in an interview, but the community was still in a conflict resolution process with the Sapper family company as of 2009.

coercive practices on their plantations with innovations in counterinsurgency. When reflecting on a massacre on the plantation where he worked, a Q'eqchi' man says, "I think it was probably ordered by the rich, because the rich thought that we wanted to become owners a second time of our lands. So, because of that, what did they do? Send soldiers to kill us" (Huet 2008: 100, translation mine). As with Yaab'alhix (Chapter 6), many Q'eqchi' communities understood the army's repression as a preventative measure by *finqueros* to keep them from becoming landowners. On many plantations, there were some improvements following guerrilla violence. For example, Wilson (1995: 237) notes that after EGP shot the Chamá *finquero*'s wife, workers were paid back-wages. In the long run, however, *finqueros* afraid for their lives either sought to reassert domination or abandoned their lands.

Those *finqueros* who did not fight for their plantations fled in the face of real or perceived death threats. After all, EGP used the murder of a *finquero*, the "Tiger of Ixcán," to announce its revolutionary movement in the northern lowlands. Not only did this announce to serfs and peasants that EGP would challenge existing power hierarchies and agressively promote agrarian reforms, but this announced to *finqueros* that their lives were in danger. In the case of Yaab'alhix (Chapter 6), the reason why Cristian came to claim the plantation in the late 1980s was because his father, Ricardo Sapper, was murdered, reportedly by guerrillas. As a result, the Sappers lost control of much of their land—they eventually severed their relationship with their plantation administrator, who swindled them out of company profits,[9] and most of the family today lives in Germany and Honduras. Without denying the massacres the military later committed, families of former landed elites chafe at portrayals of them as all-powerful, when they also lost their land in a context of violence.

Finquero flight was both real and symbolic—for some families, this meant moving their homes from the plantation to the capital, whereas for others this simply meant ceasing to visit and control their absentee properties. The potential EGP triumph was rife with Ladino sorrow. When a prominent Ladino left Nebaj for good in 1977, he supposedly said, "with me closes a phase of Nebaj's history. My father was the first Ladino to arrive to the town, one son is an engineer, the other is a doctor and I, thanks be to God and to the little Indians [*inditos*], I am already rich. I am leaving. I don't want anything to do with this place." (Le Bot 1995: 188, translation mine). In order to save their lives, Ladinos disengaged from plantation production and regional politics. For their former serfs, this was a loss of security as an important trusteeship relationship (Chapter 4). Likewise, family patriarchs began to re-envision providing for their children's future in terms of education and professional careers (instead of bequeathing plantations).

While this phenomenon was probably not evenly distributed, a number of *finqueros* abandoned their plantations in Alta Verapaz (Wilson 1995); the Ixil Triangle (Stoll 1993); Jacaltenango, Todos Santos, and San Andrés Semetabaj (Adams and Bastos 2003); and Lake Atitlán (Warren 1993). A few analyses have taken *finquero* flight into account when looking at indigenous political power (e.g., Stoll 1993; Warren 1993), and former serfs today have stronger land claims where plantation owners relinquished their land rights during the war. In some cases, they eventually purchased the land (Chapter 6), and in others their physical possession and willingness to fight for the land affords land tenure security (Stepputat 2008). Below, I explore how *finquero* flight affected

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[9] In 2009, the plantation administrator and the Sappers were still embroiled in a lawsuit.

Ladinos' understanding of their own identity, and offer some thoughts on how development ethnographies might account for *finquero* nostalgia in our portrayals of contemporary trusteeship.

For the Ladino landed elite, Guatemala's civil war and attendant Marxist social critiques heralded a new crisis. When they lost their plantations, Ladino landed elites also lost the foundation of their social identity. To be a *finquero* is not simply to own land, but land ownership is the basis of the *finquero*'s role as employer, trustee, and political figure of power in local government. At the same time as some *finqueros* lost the material basis for their identity, they were subjected to critiques by Marxist thinkers. For example, Mario Payeras (1997: 10), an EGP operative, wrote that Ladinos were both a part of the dominant class and an oppressive cultural group, asserting that Ladino as an ethnic-cultural identity is a ripped [*desgarrada*] consciousness, claiming that the very genesis of such an identity was a perversion of colonialism. When *finqueros* became nothing more than Ladinos, the Ladino identity became problematic. As the Pan-Maya movement reframed indigeneity as an ethnic identity with mixed success (Chapter 3), the movement also succeeded in displacing Ladino identity as one of class dominance into an ethnic group that illegitimately controls the state (e.g., Nájera 2004).

New Paternalisms in Development

As agricultural development has waned in importance, so has development waxed. At the same time, many descendents of *finqueros* realized they might not inherit their family's plantation, instead attending school in the capital and preparing for professional careers. One colleague of mine from Peace Corps, Mayor Víctor Hugo Figueroa Pérez, explained to me that his family owned significant plantations in the Zona Reyna (northern Uspantán), but they had to relinquish them to EGP control during the war. Although he had been to the plantations as a child, he pursued a university degree in agronomy and worked in the US for a few years, never intending to take back the plantation. After the civil war ended, his family sold their plantations through government programs to Q'eqchi' families that occupied them, and in one case to a group of returned refugees.

I did not know that Víctor had any relationship to the Zona Reyna when I first worked in Uspantán's municipal government (most people did not, as it was at least a treacherous four hour drive). I was pleasantly surprised that he agreed to my idea to travel to the Zona Reyna and conduct community development workshops there, as it implied a significant financial commitment for his cash-strapped municipal government. After we returned from one such visit to 31 de Mayo El Tesoro (the returned refugee community), Víctor told me that that land used to be his family's. When I last saw him in the census (INE) office in 2009, he was busy explaining to the Director of Cartography that he should re-map the communities and re-count the populations in the Zona Reyna, because INE's current calculations failed to take into account all the communities that were created when *finqueros* abandoned their land in the early 1980s violence.[10] Although his family was one of the more prominent *finquero* families that abandoned land in the Zona Reyna, he did not mention it.

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[10] INE's census data on population is used to determine how much money the central government gives municipal government.

People in Uspantán asked Víctor to run for mayor not only because of his professional qualifications (my initial assumption), but because his father was remembered as a good *patrón* who helped people when he was *finquero* and mayor. Even though Víctor was no longer a *finquero*, people asked him to run for mayor because they wanted him to be their trustee. Although he confided in me that he wanted people to take responsibility for their own development, Don Víctor dealt with a never-ending queue of people asking for personal favors, both large and small. As a Peace Corps Volunteer, Víctor was an ideal "host country national" boss. He liked US rock and understood *gring@* culture, ran his office like a business, balancing the political and administrative needs of the mayoral office. His savvy made it all the more striking for me that he truly understood the kind of development that I envisioned and, while he tried to accommodate my vision where possible, he also explained to me that Uspantán communities expected a different kind of development, one that entailed more guidance and responsibility on my part than I was initially willing to offer.

Although some party figures asked Víctor if he would be interested in a higher office, he decided to run for reelection as mayor instead. When I talked to Víctor about it in 2005 (prior to his successful reelection campaign), he told me that Uspantán was his home, and that he felt an obligation to help the people who live there. I do not believe that Víctor wanted to stay in Uspantán because he enjoyed the power, or the money, or simply because he did not want to leave home. Rather, the impression I developed was that Víctor's *noblesse oblige* had roots in his *finquero* heritage. Whereas previous administrations tended to ignore the Zona Reyna, Víctor committed significant financial resources to providing services ranging from SWOTs to Q'eqchi'-speaking employees in the birth records office. It is my understanding that this was due to his family's relationship with the Zona Reyna, and his sense that his family's obligations to their former serfs did not end when they lost the plantation.

I dwell on his story because I believe it is paradigmatic for how former *finqueros* understand their present work in politics and development. In Víctor's case, I can say unequivocally that his sense of *noblesse oblige* worked to the county's benefit. Unlike the previous municipal government I worked with, where I had effectively been run out of town for telling people their rights and obligations in terms of transparency in government, Víctor tolerated and even encouraged my naïve political agenda for community development. Most people like Víctor honestly want to help people, and it is important to understand that when they act as trustees in their development relationships, it is not simply because that is how they are most comfortable—it is also because their constituents (or beneficiaries) <u>ask</u> them to.

Likewise, for some development professionals, their family history plays a significant role in how they approach development projects. Alfredo, the program director I worked with at New Horizons, told me that his grandmother was Q'eqchi' and his grandfather was German. Although his family had a plantation, Alfredo told me that his family lost the land due to irregularities in the cadastral process—the lawyer his grandfather hired to title the lands told him it would be costly and unnecessary to register his claim, and that the title would be legally sufficient. Eventually, the title was no longer sufficient and Alfredo's grandfather lost the plantation. When I learned this, I interpreted Alfredo's decision to specialize in the land administration modernization projects in Petén differently—the entire goal of the project was to help people legally map, title and register their lands. This is what Alfredo's grandfather should have done,

and how he lost the family plantation. This revelation also changed how I understood our ongoing disagreement over the validity of Girard's non-legal land title claim against Setzuul's legal, registered title (Chapter 5). Although I never confronted him about it, I wondered if perhaps my insistence that Girard's paperwork was bunk did not remind him of the grounds on which his grandfather lost his land.

Alfredo is a network hub in the Verapaces. Researchers like me ask him for tips on case studies, he writes and administers grants on mapping and titling lands, he is a major partner for the new mapping agency (*Registro de Información Catastral, RIC*) in their attempts to meet the "social" needs of their World Bank project, and he is a mediator for land conflicts. Alfredo told me about how he was able to extend the outreach of a program that teaches people about the cadastral process by giving out business cards to *finqueros* at a soccer game in Cobán. Suspicious, they asked him if the program was only for poor peasants. Alfredo assured them that everyone deserved this information, not just peasants. Through his family connections, Alfredo knows all the old plantation families. Through his work, Alfredo also knows most of the major peasant leaders (CNOC, CUC, COCIP, Alianza Campesina) and he often criticizes their actions, but sincerely enjoys helping them resolve land conflicts. On a number of occasions, I can recall sitting in Alfredo's office as he regaled me with a tale of finding a solution to a seemingly intractable conflict between, for example, a community of demobilized paramilitaries and returned refugees who claim the same land, but refuse to live with each other… When suddenly, the phone would ring and a peasant leader would be on the phone asking advice on whether a potential *finca* for sale had any problems (such as an invalid title or violent squatters) before they agree to purchase it for landless peasants. Above all else, the importance of people like Alfredo speaks to the continued impossibility of World Bank projects to create efficient markets based on transparent markets. If you don't know an Alfredo, you don't know what you are buying.

Alfredo is an intermediary for people who work at cross-purposes not only because of his job, but because he was born into it. As a person with German, Spanish and Q'eqchi' roots, Alfredo grew up in the *finquero* culture but is not a *finquero*; he also grew up in Q'eqchi' culture but is not quite Q'eqchi'. Still, Alfredo tends to frame his own racial ambivalence (Hale 2006b) in terms of "both and," not "either or." Alfredo capitalizes on his intermediary position by being in the know and getting along with a diverse array of actors. Although I consider Alfredo a neoliberal, and he probably considers me a crazy *gringa* socialist, Alfredo and I have built a relationship built mostly on mutual respect, but also that the need of *gringa* researchers for his knowledge is what garners Alfredo prestige.

If Alfredo is an effective broker and information source to me, he is something else entirely to rural communities. When he shows up in an SUV with a cellphone strapped to his belt, Q'eqchi' communities see power. When he talks to them in Q'eqchi', they feel *confianza*, an immediate bond of trust. Part of the reason why Alfredo does not have a high opinion of some rural communities is because they trust him enough to confess their weaknesses. While in a legal dispute, a community may claim to have occupied a *finca*'s land since "time immemorial" and that they are owed decades of back-wages, in Alfredo's tutelage, they will confess that a number of families only moved onto the land in the 1990s. They do not simply confess, however, they also ask Alfredo for guidance. More often than not, Alfredo will advise them on their best course of action. This is why Alfredo has a stream of supplicants in the same way Víctor does.

Alfredo and Víctor are fluent in both neoliberal development and trusteeship. I found myself in an ethical quagmire when I tried to reconcile poor people's supplication for a relationship of trusteeship[11] and my ideas that people should contribute their own time and labor in their economic development, and that they should ultimately be responsible for their own prosperity. As frustrated as I was that people expected me to contribute the most time, money, and reputation (*cuello*) for projects that benefited them (not me), I finally decided that making people responsible for their development in microfinance and agricultural projects was unfair. In practice, rural communities do not get to choose which projects they participate in, so neither should they suffer the consequences of failures when responsibility is shared across the line of trusteeship. Rather than espousing an ideology, it seems to me that Alfredo and Víctor accept neoliberal precepts as the rules of the game to work with powerful foreigners' money.

Even though they occasionally broker deals that leave rural communities ultimately responsible for debts and conflicts incurred, most development professionals who work in Guatemala consider themselves trustees. They develop relationships with communities, and most of those communities understand that if they fulfill their obligations for one project, they will be first in line to receive the next project. This is why Setzuul had multiple NGOs working on mapping, tourism, conservation, scholarships, indigenous rights, and women's rights; and Yaab'alhix had none.

I have two concerns about the complicated articulation of neoliberalism and trusteeship through development projects in Guatemala. First and foremost, the displacement from *finquero*-serf to "*ingeniero*"[12]-community relationships strongly reproduces paternalism in these new trusteeship relationships. As I have signaled, many communities actively seek out this relationship, as they might have asked a *finquero* in the past to be their child's godfather. The problem I have is that project beneficiaries seem to believe (or at least want to bind) development professionals into reciprocal relationships similar to trusteeship on the plantation. By and large, however, these attempts fail. For example, when a serf asks the plantation owner for a loan because he has a sick child, this increases the serf's indebtedness to the *patrón*. It does not, however, signal that the serf will ever repay his debt. People understand that if you are rich and you loan a poor person money, s/he may not pay you back. Rather, measures of indebtedness are often paid through increased loyalty. In development, however, engineers with a project in Ixcán arranged for Q'eqchi' rural smallholders to plant trees using loans, which they would pay back using income from a reforestation project. When the trees died, smallholders were shocked that the bank threatened to send them to jail if they did not pay back the loans. Ironically, I visited one community of Ixcán where the majority of smallholders sold their land to an African oil palm company to pay back their reforestation project debt. Some of the technicians from the Ixcán reforestation project worked for The Project in Sepac (Chapter 7), and I asked them if there was anything they could do to help people who were losing their land. They seemed puzzled by my question, and said they regretted that the project had not met its

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[11] Specific activities include: help them write letters; help them buy land; pay for high school scholarships for their daughters; show up to a land conflict meeting in a politician's office with Q'eqchi' community leaders and place a digital recorder on the desk with a flourish, announcing that I will write about the meeting in my study of 'human rights.'

[12] Literally engineer, a common term of respect that people use for development professionals, regardless of their actual career or degree attainment.

goals, but the funding ran out and the funding agency no longer worked in Ixcán, so there was really nothing to be done. I cannot help but think: a *finquero* would never get away with that.

Second, many *finqueros*, especially those with strong German and other European roots, rationalized their privilege in terms of indigenous inferiorities. In short, they believed that Europeans and their descendents were more able to improve the (indigenous) people and the land. This is not simply a colonial phenomenon—in the context of land grabbing and 20th century lowlands colonization, Carter (1969: 144) describes the "absentee landowner" (*finqueros*) thus:

> He is generally appalled by what he considers to be the destructive techniques of Indian agriculture and would like to see the lowlands developed on the basis of large-scale, commercialized enterprise. While he may tolerate a few slash and burn squatters, seeing in them a source of needed labor, he certainly does not want all of his land taken over by them.

I worry that old paternalisms reproduced in new development regimes tend to carry these self-serving biases with them. I find the salience for the debates over stereotypes of lowlands Q'eqchi' farmers not in science, but in history. *Finqueros* see themselves as landowners (regardless of whether they mapped, titled and registered their property with the state), whereas they see indigenous people as "squatters" who are good as a source of labor, but incapable of managing the land wisely themselves (Chapter 4). Foreign development professionals often learn how society works from national development professionals. This is why meddling gring@s should be concerned with funding NGOs with significant ethnic diversity—if Mayas only work in "human rights" and low-level field positions in economic development, then the understanding of international development agencies on economic development may skew towards the *finquero*'s viewpoint.

Mestizaje as a Weapon against Imperialism

Gring@s like me do not only tend to miss the fact that many *finqueros* were dispossessed in Guatemala's twentieth century upheaval. We may also be particularly tone-deaf towards understanding why it is that some Ladinos reject the term as appropriate at all—they not only reject the historical origins of the name, but they honestly and earnestly believe that they do not wield cultural and economic privilege over Mayas. Since 2003, I have steadfastly ignored these Ladinos-who-would-be-others and their viewpoints, but my research and Obama's 2008 campaign pushed me to see this differently. Many of my Ladino colleagues warned me over coffee that the US was far too racist to elect a black president. One friend of German descent told me that he was on the left (too), but warned me that he was afraid Obama's election was actually a neoconservative conspiracy—clearly, Americans were being manipulated to vote for a black man, so he could be assassinated and conservatives could plunge the US into a security state. My steadfast answer was that we in the United States are still racist, but we are moving forward, and that a majority of us might just be willing to vote for a black man if he seems like the most qualified candidate. This admission (we are racist) seemed to help me get better answers. Although I am surprised, I can now say that most Ladino development professionals honestly believe that Guatemala is less racist than the US, even when directly confronted with their recent history of genocide.

Moreover, many Ladinos believe that *gringas* like me are prejudiced against them, and they wield the discourse of *mestizaje* as a weapon against perceived *gring@* imperialism. The idea that *mestizaje* can be a tool for people to deny their own privilege and delegitimize the Pan-Maya movement is well-established (e.g., Hale 2002), as are the ways that Ladinos might use *mestizaje* as a national identity against foreign interlopers (Gould 1998). A major site where Ladinos fight for what they believe to be their rightful place is in development.

Development arrived en masse in Guatemala in the humanitarian crisis following the 1976 earthquake. By and large, foreign (white) donors tended to bypass traditional routes of power that led through local governments (Adams and Bastos 2003), the hub of *finquero* networks. Development agency presence subsided during war-time violence, with the military insisting that it was the hub for rural development (Chapters 6 and 7). With the international pledge to provide $1.9 billion in development to post-war Guatemala as part of the Peace Accords, development agencies set up offices throughout the nation. Particularly given the role of racism and genocide in the civil war, many development agencies brought in foreign experts to run projects using local fieldworkers who spoke an indigenous language, reproducing international hierarchies through wage inequalities (Warren 1998: 182). Many Ladinos feel that they were discriminated against by foreign NGOs who want to employ only Mayas. One prominent Ladino intellectual wrote that "Ladinos ought to organize defensively against the offensive of the Maya ethnicity orchestrated, financed, and promoted by economists and foreign academics who do not understand our mixture and for whom we, the Ladinos, are the villains in the picture" (Mario Roberto Morales, in Adams 2005: 171). Nowhere did this seem more true than development projects that sought recognition of racism and genocide. In practice, however, they tend today to form part of a familiar hierarchy—New Horizons has a foreigner in charge of its national projects, a wealthy *capitalino* runs national operations, Ladinos are project managers, and Mayas are fieldworkers.

For Guatemalans, the domain of development is fraught with racial and political tensions. One night at dinner with a Mayan colleague, he revealed to me that he was a former guerrilla fighter who hid his past when he got his first job in development. Although I do not think I pressured him, he went to great lengths to explain why his earlier, revolutionary work did not conflict with his current development projects. He told me that he had been accused of simply carrying out foreign conservative agendas, and he angrily denied that this was true. Accusations of foreign manipulation, of course, were hailed at communist revolutionaries long before development professionals.[13] The historical past of this accusation strengthened the sting for my friend. For their part, a number of Ladinos have complained to me about foreign "volunteer" programs (including Peace Corps) where inexperienced, young gring@s with a poor command of Spanish take away good jobs and order local professionals with more site-specific knowledge around.

For Mestizos (whom I offend by calling Ladinos), the situation is even more complicated in the Verapaces. Nelson (2003: 135) describes *mestizaje* as something that differentiates Mestizos against "*white* aggressors, including internal elites and external

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[13] Revolutionaries also claimed that the Guatemalan military was manipulated by the US government. While perhaps more directly true (in terms of relationships and funding with the CIA, US and Israeli militaries), this discourse has faded from historical memory.

(read gring@) interventions." Even this is a kind of conceit, because gring@s are far from the only white aggressors in Guatemala. At least up until World War II, Germans specifically held a higher social rank (and distinguished themselves from) Ladinos (King 1974); today, those with German roots once again hold themselves above Ladinos. I have friends who prefer to self-identify as German-Q'eqchi', not Ladino or Mestizo.

When Ladinos take up the mantle of *mestizaje*, their argument tends to be that all Guatemalans have Spanish and Indian heritage, but now they are a unique Guatemalan race, which can only overcome its obstacles if people put aside their ethnic and class differences and work together in a broad alliance for progress. This political discourse is prevalent not only in upper class communities and the capital, but also in peasant groups that accuse Maya insistence in recognition of indigenous rights as necessarily detracting from (non-Maya) peasant rights. In development, there is significant and unabashed slippage between "progress" and "improvement." Correspondingly, an unwillingness to take up the mantle of *mestizaje* is interpreted as a lack of "will to improve" on the part of project beneficiaries (Li 2007). When wielded against foreigners, Ladinos also tend to argue that they necessarily understand cultural politics better than international development professionals, so they are best positioned to improve "our Indians."

Underneath the *mestizaje* discourse, many Mestizos still seem nostalgic for past paternalistic relationships. One afternoon, when I accompanied a New Horizons professional as he gave a talk on land mapping and titling, the local judge invited us to a ceviche lunch in his office with other development professionals and police officers. The judge quickly directed the conversation to the scandalous way the new foreign *finqueros* were buying up land in the Polochic for sugarcane ethanol production. Although we also talked about how difficult it was to work with peasants, who were so distrustful of the army and the police, and often seemed sneaky about their motivations, we spent the vast majority of the lunch talking about the scandalous behavior of these new *finqueros*. The judge asserted that traditional Ladino *finqueros* worked the land and made money, but they also treated their serfs well. These new *finqueros* refused to take on serfs, hiring people only as day-laborers and refusing to let them plant crops on their lands. In particular, one Spanish *finquero* refused to allow vehicles onto the plantations to transport workers, forcing them to walk longer distances; and also refused to allow workers access to local water sources, forcing them to carry their own water in significant summer heat. What was striking to me was that the Ladino judge and police chief did not frame these scandals in terms of international human rights or labor laws, but paternalistic plantation culture. The foreign *finqueros* were giving Ladino *finqueros* a bad name, and this lack of respect for a reciprocal culture was scandalous.

Conclusion

> Another wounded subject stands behind the scarred indigenous body: the liberal subject who wielded the frontier blade and nearly fatally wounded himself in the process – Povinelli (2002: 53)

My research project set out to understand how Q'eqchi' Mayas are forging livelihoods and claiming land on scorched earth in places like Sepac. In Sepac, however, I was captivated by the dilemmas of former paramilitaries and their identity crisis—they were undeniably Ladino when they ordered and acted out genocide against their neighbors, but possibly Maya when they marshaled Q'eqchi' genealogies, language, and

economic marginalization in the face of a foreign interloper on their land. Ramón Portillo seems neither Ladino nor Maya, while Alfredo seems both Ladino and Maya. I have yet to arrive at answers, but this seems to pose two Ladino questions in land tenure and development. First, who is a Ladino? I am not convinced that using the term Mestizo, or simply switching back to a universalized "*campesino*" (peasant) struggle solves this problem. There is still significant work to be done in understanding how the Pan-Maya movement has provoked a Ladino identity crisis.

The second question is: What does it mean that yesterday's Ladino *finqueros* are today's development professionals? I argue that the resurgence of old plantation paternalisms in new development projects has contradictory effects. Many marginalized communities actively seek out paternalistic relationships with a trustee. Trustees provide political advice, important information, and economic benefits to their beneficiary communities. Importantly, when community leaders are confronted with potential crises, they have a network of trustees they can call to ask for help, which is a post-war safety net.

Although trustees feel bound to help beneficiary communities within project relationships, these relationships are necessarily temporally bounded. If a community runs into a problem with a water pump or reforestation trees after the project has already been declared a success, development professionals no longer have the wherewithal to address new problems. Ladinos in development still use paternalistic models to explain the need for improvement on the part of beneficiaries, but they are now less obligated to help realize the utopian improvement.

Chapter 9
Conclusion

Introduction

The central contribution of this work has been to show how civil war violence extends into post-war development. I have argued that both conservation and land formalization projects, as they have been implemented in Guatemala, serve to pass judgment on both land claims and their attendant political legitimacy. Although technical projects are formulated with objectives rooted in conservation and economic development, thereby eliding thorny questions of social justice, my work has shown how project beneficiaries engage with these projects and their attendant institutions in a context of violence that emerged in the civil war, but did not end in 1996. Violent death rates have dropped since the height of war-time violence, but the communities I work with today are nonetheless negotiating their rights claims through memories of violence and present threats stemming from drug traffickers, gangs, and foreigners who appropriate lands for nominally sustainable development enterprises, such as agrofuels and ecotourism. Below, I briefly address some of the implications of my work for development, territory and identity.

Development

I have argued that participants in land titling projects understand them as passing judgment on their land conflicts. This understanding emerges from sedimented war-time histories of development as counterinsurgency, particularly given the US government's participation in promoting agricultural colonization to relieve pressures for agrarian reform following the CIA-sponsored coup (1954). With the Cuban revolution (1959), Guatemala became a model for development as anti-communist politics in Latin America. The Alliance for Progress (1961) pledged US aid for Latin American countries in a bid to keep Cold War dominoes from falling. Likewise, the failed Bay of Pigs invasion (1961) was launched from Guatemala under the insignia of the Guatemalan Air Force. Later, as Marxist guerrillas experienced limited success in Guatemala, development poles were explicitly political—they served both to reward loyal citizens with food, water, shelter, and electricity and to lure subversives back into the fold.

Beginning in the 1990s, the working assumption for agencies like USAID was that development was again about progress and poverty reduction to soften the blows of an inexorably globalizing economy, reflecting broader trends in revisionist neoliberalism. The Cold War sputtered out with the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the collapse of the Soviet Union (1991), but it is still dangerous today to be labeled a "communist" or "subversive" in rural Guatemala. From the 1990s to the present, government and non-government agencies pose development aid as promoting democracy, peace, conservation and education in a non-partisan manner. Given the

historical context of the Cold War, however, in Guatemala the choice of project beneficiaries and local partners are understood as political choices that condone the actions and claims of some groups over others.

The story I am telling of development as war politics is more than a reference to the past. In countries like Guatemala and Afghanistan, US efforts against drug trafficking and terrorism are not only linked to contemporary concerns about Al Qaeda, but strengthen the importance of Cold War genealogies. Since a terrorist attack on US soil on September 11, 2001, US foreign policy has explicitly linked counterinsurgency to development, going so far as to pose development as long-term prevention of terrorism (e.g., Clinton 2010). The invocation of September 11th is emblematic of an important disjuncture: while many in the US remember this as the day of a brutal attack by foreign terrorists who hate American freedoms and do not merit the protections of the Geneva Convention, Latin Americans remember two September 11ths. Three decades before the attacks in the US, September 11, 1973 marked the CIA-supported military coup of a democratically elected president. Much of the region plunged into military dictatorships and political violence for decades. From this perspective, both September 11ths point to violent imperatives by US and Latin American political forces. Thus, if those in the US want to fully understand the consequences of our current actions, we would do well to connect the War on Terror not only to the War on Poverty, but also to recognize its resonances with the Cold War. I hope my work on post-war development in Guatemala addresses an important lacuna, highlighting the implications of these sedimented histories for current conservation and development practice.

Territory

Since the 1980s into the present, social movements and scholars alike have decried the privatization and commodification of crucial resources ranging from water to traditional environmental knowledge. Perelman's (2000) contribution marked a resurgence of scholarly interest in understanding local resource struggles in terms of primitive accumulation. In Guatemala, Grandia's (2006) depiction of repeated cycles of primitive accumulation reflects popular narratives that risk collapsing foreign and national dynamics of dispossession into a single, unstoppable phenomenon.

I have argued that the civil war[1] marked a new form of dispossession. It seems that the successful uprising of underpaid labor with attendant possibilities to transform from serf into smallholder farmer articulated with plantation owners' reactions to fears of guerrilla-inspired land takeovers. Today, the primary sources of income in the lowlands—conservation and ecotourism; cattle ranching; and drug trafficking—are not labor intensive. If anything, my work cautions that effects of current dispossession may be more pernicious than previous cycles, given that powerful actors with shadowy connections are not interested in controlling labor, but in expelling competing claimants from their lands. The few places where older assumptions about paternalistic relationships still hold are in the realm of cattle ranching/drug trafficking, where landless peasants are rewarded with land access and protection in return for watching over the *patrón*'s land.

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[1] This dates to the early 1950s, as some plantation owners reportedly sold off their land and/or expelled serfs to minimize their vulnerability to impending agrarian reform.

One of my goals was to examine where the economic imperatives for territorial projects held and where they did not. Rather than primitive accumulation, I have used racialized dispossession as an analytic to understand the violence inherent in the post-war social order, or to look behind the search for profits to cultural logics of meaning, especially in terms of violence (Taussig 1987). We can only believe that indigenous struggles are produced within the framework of class struggle (Le Bot 1995: 280-281) if we analyze violence within a logic of profit. In Chapters 5, 6, and 7, I have shown the ways in which Q'eqchi's suffered for territory at the hands of state racism, and that logics of profit did not subordinate culture.

If Nelson (2009) and others are correct that issues of race and ethnicity have taken on increasing importance at the end of Guatemala's civil war, then we should be attentive not only to the ways that the Pan-Maya movement privileges ethnicity over other identities, but how some peoples are increasingly marginalized on that basis. In Alta Verapaz, people historically understood and acknowledged their ethnic identities as a mix of Spanish, German and Q'eqchi' heritage. As I argued in Chapter 7, those people who were marginalized experienced this as an articulation of class, religion, kinship, and ethnicity before and into the civil war.

Today, I argue that the frontier effects for how many people differentiate each other are much more stark: Q'eqchi' or *Kaxlan*; suffered for territory or did not. Those Q'eqchi's who suffered for territory feel the need to stake out this identity because they know and resent that post-war development projects require significant documentation and collaborative participation. Q'eqchi's who told me they suffered for territory also explain that they do not have documentation, because they lost all their papers along with their homes; and that it is unreasonable to ask them to collaborate under coercion. It is their way of signaling that the deck is stacked against them, and that they want land titles and conservation projects that take their identities into account, rather than simply excluding them. Nonetheless, their effective exclusion from land titling projects serves to formalize their dispossession. The development projects that mark them as deficient subjects, bad environmentalists, or simply "park invaders" serves to reinscribe their marginality in the post-war hierarchy on the landscape.

Given that World Bank-funded land formalization projects are ongoing, there are still significant opportunities to hold the state, and the Bank, accountable. The Land Administration Project began in the northeast and is extending its territorial reach south and west (Figure 9.1). The first phase of the World Bank's Land Administration Project was focused on Petén because project framers reportedly believed that there were fewer land conflicts that in the rest of the country, and relatively few indigenous peoples. In the first phase of the Bank's project in Petén, project administrators simply claimed that there were few indigenous people--presumably ignoring the Q'eqchi' population as 'migrants'—and did not fulfill the required participation activities to meet the indigenous peoples' safeguard. Although the second phase of the Land Administration Project is supposed to cover the northern lowlands over the next ten years (World Bank 2005), planning meetings with RIC in 2008 suggested that they would focus on the Franja next. Required meetings for indigenous peoples reportedly offered such circumscribed opportunities for 'participation' that Wakliqoo and other Q'eqchi' representatives walked out on the meeting. They told me later that they did this because they thought the meeting was a farce, and they walked out so that World Bank

consultants could not claim them as "participants" who agreed to the structure of the project.
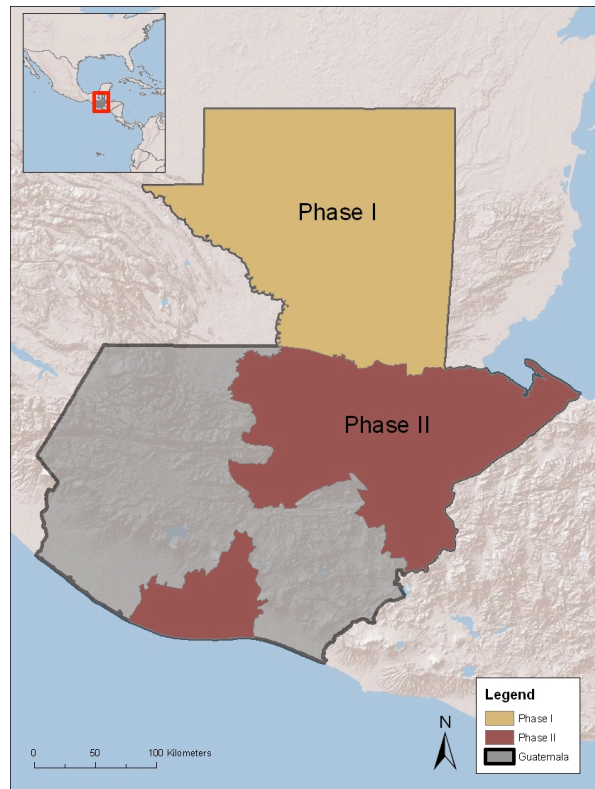

FIGURE 9.1: Territorial extent of World Bank's Land Administration Project. Phase I covered Petén; Phase II is scheduled to include Alta Verapaz, Baja Verapaz, Izabal, Chiquimula, Escuintla, Sacatepéquez, and Zacapa. Map by the author.

The Land Administration project is by no means the first development project to implement neoliberal land policies in the Franja, or elsewhere in Guatemala. As it stands, pilot versions of these projects have encouraged privatization of community lands, even when community leaders assert communal management rights (Chapter 4); they have limited mechanisms to deal with Q'eqchi' sacred places (Chapter 5) that are not easily demarcated spaces, such as altars; and they have no mechanisms for social justice claims by massacre survivors in the formalization of land ownership (Chapter 7). The Guatemalan state remains unwilling to change development projects and pass land laws in order to comply with its legal commitment to indigenous territorial rights as a signatory to ILO 169. The World Bank's violation of indigenous rights to participation and territorial autonomy, combined with clear warning signs from pilot projects, offer opportunities for Maya peoples and their supporters to demand accountability.

Even as the current territorial project to conserve nature in parks and incorporate the rest of the land into private parcels that constitute an ownership society seems dominant, there is also a nascent articulation of a Q'eqchi' territorial project. I fear my work has fallen into the trap of many scholars, because it is easier to identify and analyze grand state projects than common sense understandings of territory that are not part of a hegemonic project. The assumption of both Westernized political systems and of their scholars seems to be that territoriality in modern international politics must be "disjoint, fixed and mutually exclusive" (Ruggie 1993: 168). As Ruggie notes, we still

need to work towards understanding contingent and dynamic territorial relationships. It seems to me that Q'eqchi's in lowlands Guatemala are engaged in territorialities that are connected, floating (but not adrift) and overlapping; moreover, their territorial engagements look different in different arenas. It may be the privileging of the nation-state that has led others to conclude that the Q'eqchi' as a people are relatively isolated from politics.

Identity

In Chapter 4, I attempted to show what is at stake for rural Q'eqchi' communities that are slotted into privatized ownership societies through land titling projects, concluding that many communities chose individualized land titles without correspondingly affirming the legal implications that title owners do not have responsibilities in their property relations to their families and their communities, particularly in their putative right to alienate land. Why is it that the Q'eqchi' struggles seem to take place only at the level of property, and why is there a seemingly inexorable drive towards privatization and alienation? As other scholars have shown (e.g., Gordon et al. 2003), formalizing individual community rights may undermine the legitimacy of broader territorial claims. Proponents of individualized land titling point to Q'eqchi' participation in these projects as evidence that they "want" privatized rights, but workshops revealed that many people assert community property relations that directly conflict with their *de jure* titles, particularly in individual rights to land alienation.

Many political activists and development professionals believe that until Q'eqchi' leaders engage with the Pan-Maya movement to articulate their struggles as part of a national crisis, they will be doomed to lose a series of seemingly small battles for property. While I agree that the shift towards land privatization is part of a national political project of revisionist neoliberalism, this project is not only relevant on a national level. Unlike the first phase of the World Bank's project in Petén (Grandia 2006; Gould 2009), Verapaz communities are being re-routed from a path to communal title towards private titles, which links up with twentieth century debates over paternalism versus capitalism in economic development of the Franja. Given the World Bank's implication in land formalization projects, and precedents ranging from Thailand to Kenya to Nicaragua, Q'eqchi' struggles are also part of an international project.

Rather than asking why the Q'eqchi' do not engage with the national Pan-Maya movement, we should think about the implications of their lack of representation. In other words, we should not subsume the politics of indigeneity to the politics of the Pan-Maya movement. Instead of looking only at how Q'eqchi's engage with the Pan-Maya movement, I have found that Q'eqchi's articulate an identity as people with a shared language and history of suffering for territory, and also as part of an international imagined community of indigenous peoples.

Wilson (1995) draws their history as roughly in parallel with the ethnogenesis of the Pan-Maya movement once it reappeared in the public eye in the mid-1980s. Likewise, my notes are littered with comments from Q'eqchi' elders that "we did not know who we were, we did not know until [activists] came and told us we were Q'eqchi', that we are Maya." In listening to their land tenure histories, however, a series of important events provided the conditions of possibility for an ethnic consciousness beyond the closed corporate community. When they left the plantation to homestead in the lowlands, Q'eqchi' families asked for permission and assistance from other

homesteading Q'eqchi' families, often borrowing maize until their first harvest. Although these relationships of trust are networked along plantations of origin, Setzuul is common in having three major plantations of origin located in three distinct counties—its founders agreed to live together on the basis of a shared language and identity. Next, even as the army evoked a rupture of Sanctioned versus Suspect Maya, many Q'eqchi's came together in the jungle to survive. Those survivors who were temporarily stationed in the Chisec development pole got to meet neighbors from nearby communities for the first time, and they developed a bond through sharing the similarities in their stories. For many, it was sitting in the camps in Chisec waiting to return home that they saw that Q'eqchi's were massacred and forcibly resettled, but Ladinos were not. For me, these stories of identity work through shared memories of suffering for territory are constitutive of a lowlands Q'eqchi' identity, which is powerfully salient in a more material way than the Pan-Maya movement's broader narrative of shared Mayan identity.

It is true that many lowlands Q'eqchi's demand autonomy at a community level, but they are also highly attuned to regional politics. Thus, Sepac "park invaders" angrily remonstrate human rights organizations for lumping them all as killers, pointing out their similarities to other survivors around Park Raxhá, particularly those communities that also lost land in the park's constitution. The assumption that Q'eqchi' communities only care about their own communities is prevalent, but not necessarily true. Although Mauricio, Wakliqoo's director, did not believe that Q'eqchi' priests were interested in Setzuul's struggles, they were. Even though Wakliqoo focused its invitation on affiliated communities in Chisec, Q'eqchi' priests came from as far as Petén in solidarity with Setzuul's struggle for territory and in recognition of the Candelaria caves as a Q'eqchi' sacred place. More than simply being summoned into place, many Q'eqchi's are mobilizing as "uninvited guests" (Grandia 2006) on the political scene as they so recently did the lowlands.

The cases of Setzuul and Yaab'alhix pointed towards the contradictions for lowlands Q'eqchi's in joining up with Marxist guerrillas, Catholic liberation theologians, and the current Pan-Maya movement. While Q'eqchi's are not deeply committed to the Pan-Maya movement, many of them are committed to part of a broader international indigenous movement. As a Peace Corps Volunteer in the Western Highlands, I came to know the Peace Accords as a frame of reference for human rights and indigenous peoples' rights. In the lowlands, by contrast, the point of reference in speeches, pamphlets painstakingly translated into Q'eqchi', and workshops, is ILO 169. This is emblematic of Q'eqchi's looking beyond the national to the international arena of indigenous rights. When Pan-Maya organizers came to Q'eqchi' communities I was studying, people did attend their meetings and engage with their ideas. With the exception that some Q'eqchi's took to the Pan-Maya privileging of the Spanish invasion (instead of nineteenth century dispossession under the Germans), most people seemed amenable to the idea that Maya peoples shared a common pre-colonial ancestry as evidenced by ethnolinguistic similarities, and that Maya peoples alike suffered from discrimination by the Guatemalan nation-state. I rarely heard them talk much about these meetings afterward, however.

On the other hand, when a group of approximately forty people had the opportunity to travel to the Nicaragua Mosquitia to hear about one group's success in achieving territorial autonomy, people were buzzing about it for weeks. The general

consensus seemed to be that the Nicaraguan tribe had land of extremely poor soil quality, but that their new initiatives to organize themselves regionally and <u>tax</u> those companies that appropriated or extracted natural resources was admirable. Many people wondered if it wasn't possible for Q'eqchi's to institute a similar system at a county (*municipio*) level.

Most of the people that I talked to about political organization and territorial autonomy did not express clear critiques of national organizing, or explain why so little political mobilization seemed to be aimed at the Guatemalan nation-state. As an important exception, Mauricio, the Wakliqoo director, and I discussed this on numerous occasions in relation to Setzuul's sacred place declaration. He told me that many Q'eqchi' peasants around Chisec had participated in the 1950s agrarian reform, only to face retaliation after the coup in 1954 because their names were on the list of local agrarian committees. Although they were headed in the right direction, they attempted more than their organizing had laid the groundwork for. Mauricio (skipping over the parallel case of the Marxist guerrillas) believed that the Pan-Maya movement suffered from similar problems—it was not reaching people in rural communities well enough to incorporate them into the movement, but it purported to represent them anyway. While the Peace Accords is the tool of Pan-Maya movements, Mauricio asserted that a regional Q'eqchi' movement for autonomy could use ILO 169 to organize for territorial rights. In this way, Q'eqchi' political engagement is both less and more than the Pan-Maya movement.

Violence, Past and Present

The trajectory of territorial claims in Guatemala is fundamentally shaped by burning questions of indigenous rights, or the lack thereof. After years of critiques of protected areas displacement, conservation agencies are attuned to the rights and participation of indigenous peoples. Likewise, through the signing of the Peace Accords and conventions including ILO 169, the Guatemalan nation-state has a new set of responsibilities to recognize indigenous peoples. This is why development officials rework the Maya Forest to claim that the Maya disappeared from Petén (Gould 2009: 135) — so they can discount claims of living Maya as immigrants. Q'eqchi's understand the discursive and material implications of these claims, and they engage with them in their territorial struggles.

Conservation and development projects become the terrain through which peoples become legible to outsiders (West 2006: 9), and how many Q'eqchi's become legible as Mayas. More importantly, it is through the process of becoming worthy beneficiaries, negotiating and participating in projects that communities in my case studies came to place themselves in the world and in relation to each other. Outsiders knew the community of Sepac as "murderers," such that they were shunned by human rights organizations and their participation in the Project was conditional on conservation practice. Moreover, it was through the differentiated process of participation in development projects that people in Sepac reworked war-time binaries of paramilitary/subversive into owner/invader. As is usually the case, these binaries are often not empirically correct, but they nevertheless play a crucial role in people's political engagements.

More than simply a question of indigeneity, my narrative of territorial projects (colonization, counterinsurgency, and Maya Forest) has emphasized the recursive

relationship between violence and territory. Simply put, post-war Guatemala is not post-conflict. The myriad agrarian struggles that animated the war throughout the countryside did not burn out with the signing of the Peace Accords, but simmered on. Personal and political violence served to produce peoples and territories during the war, which enables the reproduction of these meanings in the present.

I believe the failure of neoliberal land policies meant to facilitate private ownership of productive parcels and conservation of public parks was written into these plans. Government and non-government agencies alike have few mechanisms to manage festering violence, much less seek peaceful resolution. This dissertation has highlighted the role of Q'eqchi' swiddeners as subjects whose agrarian practices transgress the vision of the Maya Forest and the ownership society in separate spheres. Paradoxically, the uneven implementation of this territorial project has made the Maya Forest fertile ground for another set of illicit practices, such as human and drug smuggling. The War on Drugs is taken to authorize violent exclusions as the Cold War once did. Men with military training have joined drug gangs, bringing with them counterinsurgency training. As such, the violent production of territory is re-articulating through competing practices of conservation and drug trafficking.

Scorched earth massacres were a horrific part of the military's counterinsurgency campaign, obliterating over 440 villages in just a few years. Thankfully, violence on this scale is firmly in the past. When the military burns homes and crops in contemporary conservation practice, however, it evokes both the violence and the ethnic genocide of scorched earth. If counterinsurgency served to erase land claims of indigenous homesteaders from the landscape, then post-war coercion serves to reinscribe their marginalities.

The Maya Forest would not have a 1.6 million hectare reserve were it not for counterinsurgency interrupting and reworking colonization. Conservation projects often use participatory mechanisms to share benefits with local populations, but these are unequally distributed in communities and counties with violent power relations. For their part, land formalization projects purport to foster "land tenure security" for individual owners, but cast a blind eye to the violence of the grid. Rather than asking if lowlands smallholders want privatized land, we should ask how historical war geographies have shaped current tenure. If conservation and development agencies are to avoid reproducing war-time violence and racialized hierarchies, they must first acknowledge them.

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Timeline of Key Historical Events

Date	Event
1530	Spanish invasion begins: Although the Spanish successfully consolidated their power through alliances with the K'iche' and Kaqchikel societies, their attempts to win Q'eqchi' territory through military campaigns (the last in 1530) failed. The Spanish allied with the K'iche' and called the region "Land of War" (*Tezultlán*), and the Q'eqchi' allied with the Tz'utzujil, who taught them how to resist Spanish war tactics.
1537	"Peaceful" conquest of the Verapaces: The Spanish governor gives authority of Q'eqchi' territory to Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, who took control via religious conquest and political alliances. In exchange for their exclusion from the cruel *encomienda* system, Q'eqchi' leaders submitted to Spanish power and the region was renamed "Land of true peace" (Verapaz in Spanish).
1697	Successful Spanish campaign to conquer Petén, but some unconquered Maya reportedly live in jungles of Petén and northern Alta Verapaz through the early twentieth century.
1821	National independence for Creole elites; little change for the majority of the population.
1850 – 1900	Massive dispossession of Q'eqchi' lands; German immigration to establish coffee plantations; first and only national cadastral survey conducted.
1940	Germans are dispossessed from coffee plantations as Nazis; some are deported to the US for potential exchange as prisoners of war.
1944 - 1954	"Democratic Spring" and comprehensive agrarian reform; nationalized German lands rehabilitated as cooperatives; beginning of military institutionalization.
1954	Coup d'état by CIA and conservative military leader; agrarian reform rescinded; disaffected military members begin plotting revolution.
1960	Legal creation of the Franja Transversal del Norte (Northern Transversal Strip) as an Agrarian Development Zone in anticipation of Alliance for Progress (1961).
1960s	Failed attempts by former military members to take over the state based in the East; some Marxist guerrillas escape to Mexico.
1962	Law of Agrarian Transformation (Decreto 1551): establishes land titling processes for unused land (*baldío*); creates Agrarian Transformation Agency (INTA) to promote colonization and land titling.
1975	Guerilla Army of the Poor (EGP) officially arrives in northern Guatemala (from exile in Mexico), assassinating a famously cruel plantation owner, the "Tiger of Ixcán"
1978	Guatemalan army massacres approximately 50 Q'eqchi' peasants in Panzós, Alta Verapaz, over a land rights dispute; the Peasant Unity Committee has its first official protest.

Date	Event
1980	Protesters occupy the Spanish embassy in the capital, security forces burn it down with 37 people inside, later killing 4 survivors; Spanish removal of embassy marks the height of Guatemala's status as a political pariah; US officially rescinds military funding.
1981 - 1983	*Rahilal* (great pain or sadness) / Scorched Earth campaign: military and paramilitaries massacre, rape, and burn both homes and crops, leaving 200,000 people dead or "disappeared," over 80% of whom were indigenous Maya. One million people were also internally displaced (perhaps 45,000 made it to Mexico as refugees, mostly from Petén and Huehuetenango); about 80% of the population of northern Alta Verapaz is displaced. Ríos Montt's 1982 "amnesty" led to a massive wave of displaced communities turning themselves in for resettlement under military auspices.
1983 - 1985	Military establishes Development Poles, reinforces military commissioner system, and controls development through community development councils.
1989	Law of Protected Areas (Decreto 4-89); Establishes the National Parks Council (CONAP) and the National Parks System (SIGAP) including the Maya Biosphere Reserve (Decreto 5-90), with little participation or knowledge of affected communities. This is also during the time period when peace talks were stalled because the military and political conservatives refused to accept a basic platform of human rights.
1990 - 1996	Renewed negotiations begin under the 1990 Oslo Accord. The final 1996 Peace Accord officially ends the civil war.
1999	Law of the Land Fund: the Land Fund (FONTIERRAS) officially takes over the functions of INTA and FYDEP as an entity independent from the Ministry of Agriculture.
2005	Law of Cadastral Registry: Legally authorizes the World Bank's proposed system to map, title and register lands for greater "land tenure security."

Acronyms

BINGO: Big International Non-Governmental Organization. As used in the dissertation, it often refers to conservation BINGOs, such as Conservation International, the World Wildlife Fund for Nature, and The Nature Conservancy.

CAP (Collective Agrarian Patrimony) *Patrimonio Agrario Colectivo*: form of legal communal land tenure in the Franja. See Chapter 4.

CBNRM (Community-Based Natural Resource Management): conservationist term for resource projects that involve local, affected communities, who may or may not have ownership over the project or resources involved. See Chapter 3.

CEAR (*Comisión Nacional para la Atención de Repatriados, Refugiados, y Desplazados*): National Commission for Attention to the Repatriated, Refugees and Displaced. Although many people in my study communities met CEAR's official standards to be included in the internally displaced population that would be granted financial and psychological assistance, they were practically excluded. See Chapter 6.

CEH (*Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico*): UN-backed truth commission on the civil war. Although the truth commission did not have any relationship with potential prosecutions, the 12 volume report ("Memory of Silence") attributed over 90% of human rights violations to state forces and determined that genocide had occurred.

CIA: US Central Intelligence Agency, formerly the Office of Strategic Services. See Chapters 2 and 8.

COMG: Consejo de Organizaciones Mayas de Guatemala; now part of COPMAGUA, Coordinación de Organizaciones del Pueblo Maya de Guatemala

CONAP (*Consejo Nacional de Areas Protegidas*): National Council of Protected Areas; Guatemala's national park administration, created in 1990.

CPR (*Comunidades de Población en Resistancia*): Communities of Population in Resistance; non-combatant mobile communities affiliated with the guerrilla groups living in the jungles

CUC (*Comité de Unidad Campesina*): Committee for Peasant Unity; national organization of peasant groups, allied with EGP during the civil war and suffered significant repression.

EGP (*Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres*): Guerrilla group that affiliated with URNG national alliance; active in the Franja Transversal del note.

FAR (*Fuerzas Armas Rebeldes*): One of the guerrilla groups that affiliated with URNG national alliance; active primarily in Petén.

FONTIERRAS: Guatemalan Land Fund that took over INTA's land titling functions in the 1990s. The name "Land Fund" originally came from the institution's role in market-based land reform to facilitate loans for land purchases, but this project was largely deemed a failure and is currently an unfunded mandate.

FYDEP: Petén's land agency, run by the military, from the 1960s through the 1980s.

GO: Government Organization; state agency.

ILO 169: Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: Advocates for the rights of indigenous groups to develop their own ethnic and cultural characteristics; to protected their cultural and spiritual practices and sites; and to gain recognition of their customary laws and land tenure systems. Guatemala is a signatory, but Pan-Mayan activists argue that laws and practices still do not fully account for the principles of ILO 169.

INTA (*Instituto Nacional de Transformación Agraria):* National Institute of Agrarian Transformation, charged with land titling throughout the nation, with special focus on newly colonized lands. During the Peace Accords process, as a response to claims of inefficiency and corruption in INTA, a new state agency was created (this agency is now subject to the same criticisms). See FONTIERRAS.

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization; often referred to as nonprofits in US context.

MICUDE (*Ministerio de Cultura*)**:** Guatemalan Ministry of Culture, controls some protected areas that are declared cultural patrimonies.

PAC (*Patrullas de Autodefensa Civil*): "civil self-defense patrols," community-level paramilitary militias during the civil war. All men and boys living in rural communities had to participate in PACs, whose activities ranged from irregular patrols with sticks to massacre perpetrators. See Chapters 6 and 7, as well as Remijnse 2002.

RIC (*Registro de Información Catastral*): Registry of Cadastral Information. As of 2005, RIC graduated from a World Bank project arm (UTJ-PROTIERRA) to a permanent state agency. As part of the World Bank's Land Administration Project, RIC is charged with mapping all land parcels, public and private, in the nation.

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

URNG (*Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca*): National Guatemalan Revolutionary Unity; the alliance of guerrilla groups operating in Guatemala; created in 1982, URNG played the key role in negotiating the Peace Accords and today continues as a political party.

USAID: US Agency for International Development

USDEA: US Drug Enforcement Agency

Glossary

Baldío: The Spanish rendition of *terra nullius*, abstract space supposedly devoid of property claims. Nineteenth century designations of *baldíos* marked the greatest dispossession of Q'eqchi' lands. Under twentieth century Franja colonization, Q'eqchi'es eagerly sought and settled *baldíos* (in Q'eqchi', *yamyo*, or empty).

Canche (Spanish): Blond, foreigner, gringo

Capitalino (Spanish): Literally, person from Guatemala's capital city; refers more generally to wealthy, educated, privileged Guatemalans.

Catholic Action: Beginning in the early 1900s, this Church organization was formed to purge pagan elements from religious practice; in the late 1950s, Catholic Action allied with the counterinsurgency state to purge communism from the countryside. By the late 1960s, however, many priests and laity in Catholic Action took up the beliefs of liberation theology; as such, Catholic Action allied with the left and became a counterinsurgency target itself. In rural Q'eqchi' communities, Catholic Action allowed young upstarts to wrest power from traditional authorities at the cost of traditional syncretic practices; by the late 1980s, Catholic Action returned to Q'eqchi' communities and tried to participate in the cultural ethnogenesis with mixed success (see Chapter 6).

Ch'oolwinq (Q'eqchi'): Literally, "men of the heart." Historically, this word has referred to the savage or unconquered Ch'ol people, whereas Q'eqchi's became civilized Christians (*kristian*). Some Q'eqchi's reworked the meaning of this word from *Ch'olwinq* to *Ch'oolwinq*, using it to identify themselves as indigenous.

Creole: supposedly of direct Spanish descent, refers to privileged Ladinos who consider themselves "white" or deny that their heritage includes indigenous ancestors

Desaparecido (Spanish): "Disappeared." Refers to civilians that the military forcibly disappeared who never returned. In many cases, people believe the army kidnapped, tortured and killed these civilians, but they were unable to prove death without a body. The truth commission recorded 6,159 specific cases of "forced disappearance" (CEH 1999), but the total number is believed to be much greater.

Finquero (Spanish): Plantation or cattle ranch owner; these are often Ladino and absentee in the northern lowlands.

Gringa (Spanish): an American (or European) woman in Latin America; as Nelson (1999) details, the term can be dismissive, offensive, and/or affectionate.

Gring@ (Spanish): Latin American term for man or woman from US.; the @ symbol is gender-neutral, as a combination of both the feminine (a) and masculine (o).

Kaxlan winq/ixq: Q'eqchi' word for non-indigenous person, includes all Ladinos and Gring@s.

Ladino (Spanish): Under colonial Spain, a Ladino was usually a non-Spaniard (indigenous or African) who spoke Castilian Spanish, often taking on an intermediary social position between colonizers and colonized. Today, the term is widely used to refer to any non-indigenous person. Many non-indigenous people reject the term due to negative connotations; see Chapter 8.

Maya (Spanish, Q'eqchi' borrowed term): 21 peoples, differentiated ethnolinguistically, who lived in Guatemala prior to the Spanish invasion. This includes the influential K'iche' and Kaqchikel peoples, who tend to represent the Maya peoples at a national level through the Pan-Maya movement.

Maya Forest: Term invented by conservationists to describe the "biodiversity hotspot" that encompasses subtropical and tropical forest including southern Mexico, northern Guatemala and all of Belize. The use of the term was key to lobbying for protected areas, particularly that of the Maya Biosphere Reserve, in Guatemala.

Mayejak (Q'eqchi')*:* religious ceremony, often to ask for blessing before planting corn; see Chapter 5.

Mestizaje (Spanish): Latin American term to refer to racial mixing, often portrayed as a national identity forged from indigenous and Spanish heritage (without reference to African or other European roots). In Guatemala, the concept of Ladino was originally similar to the *mestizaje* project, but has since come to refer exclusively to a "non-indigenous" identity. On this, see Taracena Arriola (2005).

Petén: Department located just north of Alta Verapaz; contains the Maya Biosphere Reserve and is the heart of the "Maya Forest."

Q'eqchi' (also Q'eqchi' Maya): The Q'eqchi' are one of 21 indigenous peoples collectively referred to as Maya that are recognized in Guatemala (on the basis of language). Of the Maya, the Q'eqchi' have the third largest population and the cover the most Guatemalan territory (as well as part of Belize). Nonetheless, the Q'eqchi' are socially marginalized to a greater extent than other Maya peoples, which many scholars relate to the fact that they are approximately 90% monolingual.

Sanctioned Maya: term for indigenous people the military treated during the counterinsurgency campaign as a "loyal" population; "view of the indigenous community as a child needing to be disciplined, 'ladinoized,' entrepreneurized—that is, 'forged' to fit the 'new' modern Guatemalan state" (Schirmer 1998: 114).

Suspect Maya: my term for how the military interpellated the Q'eqchi'es and other indigenous people during its counterinsurgency campaign as the "enemy within," a sub-race that threatens the (Ladino) Guatemalan nation and culture.

Ladino military elites' imaginary of its indigenous population as a sub-group that threatens the (Ladino) Guatemalan nation: indigenous people are not fully developed in their capacities as citizens, and therefore cannot properly execute the duties of citizenship to defend the nation against outside subversives; and indigenous people do

not share the Guatemalan National Culture, such that their loyalty to the nation is weaker. Moreover, their alterity means that their treason would be less legible to the military. As a result, these "suspect Mayas" are holding the nation back from realizing its potential. In the succinct words of Ríos Montt (military dictator, 1982-1983), "When the Indian is ended, Latin America will be free."[1]

Rahilal: Q'eqchi' word for time of great sadness or pain, usually used to refer to Guatemalan military counterinsurgency campaigns or the Spanish colonial invasion of Maya lands.

Sepac: community pseudonym, see Chapter 7.

Setzuul: community pseudonym, see Chapter 5.

Tzuultaq'a (Q'eqchi'): Literally, "hill-valley," the *tzuultaq'a* is a specifically territorialized spirit that inhabits a landscape and is centered either in a cave or on a hilltop. The territorial relationship between the Q'eqchi' and the *tzuultaq'a* is at the center of their spirituality, affecting both their understanding of landed property and their willingness to participate in a broader pan-Maya territoriality. See Chapter 5.

Yaab'alhix: community pseudonym, see Chapter 6.

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[1] Colección de Documentos IGE; Colección CIRMA. CIRMA Archives.

Appendix 5.1

Below is a translation of one of the impromptu songs performed by a Q'eqchi' priest while visiting the sacred place, *Xch'ool Tzuultaq'a*, for the first time. His song was prompted by one area that contained precolonial remains.

Ch'ina us ru li pek,	The stone is beautiful
Wank xcostiiy re li kamenaq	Here lay the rib bones of the dead
Arin li xyaab' jwal tiik naxye jultik we laa'in	Here the word was said right, I remember
Arin wankin anaqwan	Here I am now
Arin nasaho' linch'ool	Here I am content
Arin xook'ulunk laa'o	Here we have arrived
Taqak'e ruka' li kamenaq	We will give drink (offerings) to the dead
Qajaw qeme	Our kings
Arin wankeb' li kamenaq	Here lay the dead
Arin wankeb' li qana' qayuwa'	Here lay our mothers, our fathers
Mak'achin li rahilal xe'xk'ul li eb' li qana' qayuwa'	The distaster that befell our mothers, our fathers, was great
Xb'aaneb' laj español li xe'k'ulunk arin	By the Spaniards who arrived here
Arin nasaho' naqek'a	Here we are content
Arin xqataw x'baq'el li k'ula'al	Here we found the bones of children
Xe'kaamsi xb'aaneb' laj español	They were killed by the Spaniards
Arin wankeb' li qaxe'qatoon	Here are our ancestors