The background of the book cover is a monochromatic, reddish-orange illustration. It depicts a mountainous landscape with a town nestled in a valley. The town features several buildings, including a prominent church with a tall steeple. In the foreground, there are palm trees and other tropical vegetation. The overall style is reminiscent of a woodcut or a detailed sketch, capturing the essence of the Guatemalan terrain and urban environment.

GREG GRANDIN

The Blood of Guatemala

A HISTORY OF RACE AND NATION

Duke University Press Durham & London 2000

The Blood of Guatemala

A book in the series

Latin America Otherwise Languages, Empires, Nations

Series editors:

Walter D. Mignolo, Duke University

Irene Silverblatt, Duke University

Sonia Saldívar-Hull, University of California

at Los Angeles

GUATIMALA





GREG GRANDIN

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ABOUT THE SERIES

Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations is a critical series. It aims to explore the emergence and consequences of concepts used to define “Latin America” while at the same time exploring the broad interplay of political, economic, and cultural practices that have shaped Latin American worlds. Latin America, at the crossroads of competing imperial designs and local responses, has been construed as a geocultural and geopolitical entity since the nineteenth century. This series provides a starting point to redefine Latin America as a configuration of political, linguistic, cultural, and economic intersections that demands a continuous reappraisal of the role of the Americas in history, and of the ongoing process of globalization and the relocation of people and cultures that have characterized Latin America’s experience. *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations* is a forum that confronts established geocultural constructions, that rethinks area studies and disciplinary boundaries, that assesses convictions of the academy and of public policy, and that, correspondingly, demands that the practices through which we produce knowledge and understanding about and from Latin America be subject to rigorous and critical scrutiny.

The Blood of Guatemala tells a two-hundred-year history of K’iche’ (Mayan) power, examining its dynamics both within the K’iche’ community and in relation to dominant Ladino political structures. In taking up an indigenous point of view, this account challenges traditional assumptions. We see, for example, the power wielded by K’iche’ elites, who acted as middlemen between state and community and who left an unheralded inscription on the Guatemalan nation. Their struggle for political legitimacy necessitated the development of a “Mayan” identity, and *The Blood of Guatemala* describes its genesis, redefinition, and broad vision of racial equality.

With its centuries-long sweep, *The Blood of Guatemala* documents defining changes in the political culture of that nation, including the shifting tensions created by competing concepts of race and ethnicity. This book also portrays the limits of the elite cultural vision, which was ultimately obscured by class antagonism within the Mayan community itself when K’iche’ elites refused to cede power to indigenous peasant groups mobilizing for land reform. Grandin boldly—and convincingly—argues that these actions helped contribute to the collapse of Guatemala’s brief democracy of the early 1950s.

TO THE MEMORY
OF MY FATHER, EDWARD

But then the blood
was hidden behind the roots,
it was washed and denied.

—PABLO NERUDA,

Canto General

Despite the opinion of some North American anthropologists who have all the vices of electronic computers and none of the virtues, Indians participate in every aspect of the country's economy: They participate as victims, but they participate. They buy and sell a good part of the scarce goods they consume and produce, exploited by middlemen who charge too much and pay too little; they are workers on the plantation and soldiers in the mountains, and spend their lives working and fighting. Indigenous society does not exist in a vacuum, outside of the larger context: Indians form part of the social and economic order, where . . . they are the most exploited of the exploited. The indigenous bourgeoisie of Quetzaltenango . . . is the exception that highlights the situation in which the descendants of the Maya live. The key to their liberation is the key to the liberation of the nation: Will they discover an identity that unites them with other Guatemalans in the struggle against the oligarchy and imperialism? Will they ever struggle, shoulder to shoulder, with other peasants and workers against their oppressors?

—EDUARDO GALEANO, *País ocupado*

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never ceased to shame and anger, the commitment, courage, and goodwill of fellow union members never ceased to amaze and inspire.

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The Blood of Guatemala



1. Guatemala, Western Highlands.

Introduction:

Searching for the Living among the Dead

The memory of the living gives life to the dead.

—*Inscription above the entrance to Quetzaltenango's general cemetery, 1894*

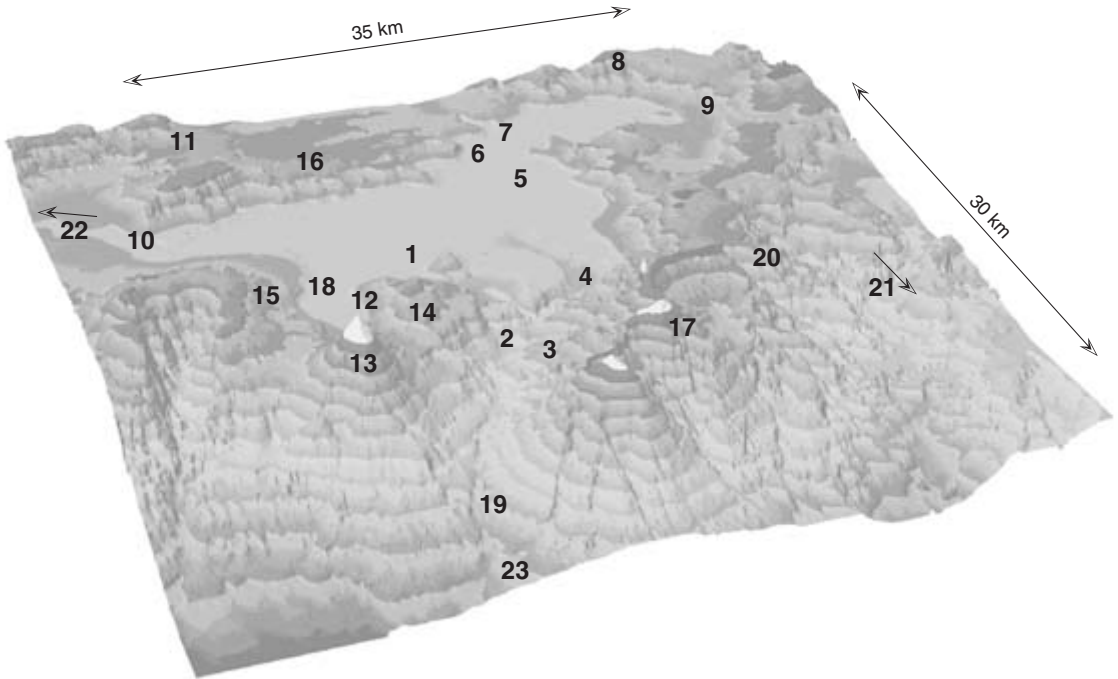
A Walk in the Cemetery

It is easy to imagine the city of Quetzaltenango's sprawling general cemetery as a metaphor for Guatemalan society. Shaded by bowers of pepper trees, elaborate mausoleums of prominent Ladino families line the main path at the front of the graveyard.¹ Gated enclaves segregate and protect the graves of wealthy European immigrants—Italian manufacturers and German planters and merchants who helped build Guatemala's coffee economy. At the end of the walk, stairs abruptly rise to a plateau where the poor are buried under crowded dirt mounds. Amid patches of wildflowers, simple crosses and headstones bear mostly Indian surnames. It seems as if even in death, Quetzaltecos could not escape an unjust and racially divided existence.

If one were to venture off the main path, however, and examine the lowland graves more closely, a more complicated picture of the city emerges. Mixed among the Ladino vaults, numerous mausoleums of Maya-K'iche's testify to the existence of a large urban indigenous middle class comprised of artisans, builders, farmers, merchants, and political elites. These Indians, their importance in regional and national politics, and how they managed to avoid the fate of similar indigenous communities are the subject of this work.

Just down the path from the pantheon of former Guatemalan president Manuel Estrada Cabrera, stands the tomb of Agatón Boj, who died in 1915. Boj, in his day a skilled mason and one of the largest employers in the city, built Estrada's tomb—replete with an ornate frieze and fluted columns—in 1907. A few rows away, Santiago Coyoy's modest grave understates his importance. In the late nineteenth century Coyoy was a key leader of his

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- | | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| 1 Quetzaltenango (2,350 meters) | 13 Volcano Santa María (3,772 meters) |
| 2 Almolonga | 14 Volcano Cerro Quemado |
| 3 Zunil | 15 Volcano Siete Orejas |
| 4 Cantel | 16 Sierra Santa Rita |
| 5 Salcajá | 17 Pico Zunil |
| 6 San Andrés Xecul | 18 Palajunoj Valley |
| 7 San Cristóbal Totonicapán | 19 Samalá River Valley (to Pacific Coast) |
| 8 San Francisco El Alto | 20 Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán (2,335 meters) |
| 9 Totonicapán | 21 To Lake Atitlán and the capital |
| 10 San Juan Ostuncalco | 22 To San Marcos |
| 11 Cajolá | 23 Santa María de Jesús (1,500 meters) |
| 12 Llanos de Pinal | |

2. Topography of Region Surrounding Quetzaltenango.

Courtesy of Ambroziak Third Dimension Technologies, Inc.

community; now only a hoe, sickle, shaft of wheat, and ear of corn carved over his name bespeak his position as one of the city's wealthiest late-nineteenth-century K'iche' landowners and farmers. Below him rests his wife, Micaela Pisquiy de Coyoy. Her burial plaque hints at the indispensable, yet often unacknowledged, role women's labor played in underwriting the economic activity of their husbands: market scales and measuring weights dangle over a basket overflowing with chilies and bread. Her



1. Agatón Boj (left). 2. Santiago Coyoy (right).

Courtesy of Sociedad El Adelanto.



3. Tomb of Micaela Pisquiy de Coyoy. *Photograph by Daniel Wilkinson.*

carved portrait also suggests the importance women had in maintaining ethnic identity, which, as we shall see, was crucial to the functioning of men's political and economic power: While in life Santiago donned Western-styled laped jackets and buttoned shirts, Micaela's sepulchral bust presents her in an intricately woven K'iche' tunic and hair wrap.

The cemetery reveals the city in other ways. The neoclassical tombs of notable liberal Ladino families, embellished with compasses, sextants, sphinxes, and glyphs, capture the confounding mix of European rationalism and mysticism that infused nineteenth-century Latin American liberalism. The crypts of various burial societies speak to the importance guilds and mutual aid associations continue to play in urban life. Memorials recalling historical events and liberal martyrs attest to the city's importance in national politics. That many of these tombs were built by skilled male K'iche' masons highlights the complex intersection of ethnicity, gender, class, and national identity in Quetzalteco history. And the many European and Mayan surnames not common to the city testify to Quetzaltenango's openness and cosmopolitanism.

Although Quetzaltenango did not experience the same levels of political repression that the Guatemalan military inflicted on other communities throughout the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, local activists were nonetheless selectively killed or disappeared. The large number of tombs of young men and women who died during these decades (both K'iche' and Ladino) provide glimpses of the hopes that motivated their lives and the forces that caused their deaths: "He struggled for a just and noble society"; "she gave her life for a new Guatemala." Similar epitaphs occasionally convey feelings left unexpressed in public life, belying the tranquillity that often seems to characterize the city's ethnic relations: On the tomb of Thelma Beatriz Quixtán Argueta, the city's K'iche' beauty queen who died at the start of her reign in 1970, are inscribed the words: "We have been beaten and humiliated, but the race was never defeated."

The cemetery also captures the evolving relationship between indigenous culture and state formation. Throughout periodic epidemics during the 1820s and 1830s, for example, indigenous communities vehemently resisted the efforts of liberal reformers to transfer burial grounds outside town limits. In Quetzaltenango, as we shall see, Indians repeatedly obstructed attempts to move their graveyard. Yet by the 1890s, Quetzalteco K'iche's had begun burying their dead in a public cemetery outside the city, in tombs embellished with Western symbols: broken columns evince

human mortality, sculptured angels point toward hoped-for redemption, and carved tombstones recall a person's life and work. How and why this turnabout occurred is one of the questions I hope to answer.

Purpose and Argument

This study examines the transformation of the city of Quetzaltenango's K'iche' community over the course of two centuries. Starting with the Bourbon Reforms of the mid-eighteenth century and ending with Guatemala's doomed land reform in 1954, this work will focus primarily, but not exclusively, on the actions and ideologies of patriarchs and political leaders within this community.

The astute ways in which K'iche' elders reconfigured communal relations and meanings so as to retain their social and cultural authority had a profound effect on the formation of the Guatemalan state and nation. I hope therefore to transcend the often narrow boundaries of community studies to link power and culture in two ways. First, I will examine how K'iche' elites brokered the regional formation of imperial and republican governments. Not only did they stand as intermediaries between the local Indian and non-Indian populations, but they also strategically played off national and local tensions to further their interests.

Changing political and economic circumstances led to shifting alliances and strategies. In the eighteenth and early nineteenth century, K'iche' *principales* (elders, community leaders) and local Creoles (specifically, American-born Spaniards but here Hispanic elites in general) developed a contentious yet mutually dependent relationship. In the face of political and economic changes that quickly transformed their Indian pueblo into a commercial, multiethnic city, principales came to rely on Creole elites for help to maintain their cultural authority, reinforce their political power, and gain access to capital. Creoles needed principales to help them administer the city and divide the plebeian population along caste lines, thus limiting the possibility of a multiethnic popular alliance. Following independence in 1821, as liberalism wore away at the ideological foundation of their caste authority, K'iche' elites allied with José Rafael Carrera's conservative regime in order to maintain their privileges and power. In the latter nineteenth century, the appeals of principales to the national government curtailed the long-standing separatist tendencies of highland

Ladinos and contributed to the centralization of power. Finally, in the 1950s, some K'iche' elites joined with local Ladinos in opposition to a national government that was encouraging popular organizing, and thus helped to end Guatemala's decade of democracy.

Second, the work examines how K'iche' elites subjectively experienced, and tried to control, larger processes of state formation and capital accumulation—processes to which Guatemalan historiography often assigns “objective status” and places outside the purview of the “ethnographic gaze.”² A central argument of this book is that the cultural anxiety brought about by Guatemala's nineteenth-century transition to coffee capitalism forced Mayan patriarchs to develop an alternative understanding of ethnicity and nationalism.³ As Guatemala evolved into an agro-exporting nation, communal customs of labor reciprocity transformed into class relations. In order to continue justifying their ability to mobilize indigenous labor, including female household labor, K'iche' elites needed to redefine the nature of their community. They developed a conception of ethnicity intimately linked to the progress of *la nación*. Unlike Ladinos, who viewed nationalism and indigenous ethnicity as mutually exclusive—the progress of the nation depended on the suppression of the Indian—K'iche' principales viewed these concepts as mutually dependent—one could not go forward without the other. For K'iche' elites, regeneration of the Indian would lead to civil and political equality, which, they argued, was the basis of a democracy. By linking the progress of the nation to cultural renewal, such regeneration justified the principales' position of caste authority to the local and national Ladino state; conversely, by connecting ethnic advancement to the progress of the nation, it legitimized to common Indians and women the continued political power of K'iche' patriarchs.

As with Ladino nationalism, K'iche' nationalism had to resolve contradictions: contradictions between the Ladinos and Indians; men and women; the wealthy and poor. To do so, K'iche' patriarchs developed a highly self-conscious ethnic identity promoted through an adherence to blood strictures, a search for common provenance, and the maintenance of cultural markers.⁴ They used new technologies, such as photography, and the establishment of new public rituals, such as a Mayan beauty pageant, to link the traditional to the modern.⁵ Women, with the children they bore and the clothes they wore, became subjected to increased patriarchal pressure as the bearers of cultural authenticity. This alterna-

tive national vision, however, could not take hold in a country rent by class and ethnic divisions. My study ends in 1954, when, prior to a coup that ended Guatemala's decade of democracy, the K'iche' community divided along class lines: Mayan elite founded an anticommunist committee and violently opposed land claims made by indigenous peasants under an agrarian reform law.

Violence and Nationalism

This is a book about nationalism, race, class, and gender. It is specifically about Guatemala, but its story is similar to that of scores of countries whose efforts to build a national culture ran headlong into the realities of economic dependency, ethnic division, and class struggle. Guatemalans today live with the consequences of that clash—a society dealing with the aftermath of nearly four decades of state terror and one of the most unequal distributions of wealth in the hemisphere.

Guatemalan history in the second half of the twentieth century is marked by momentous intervals of hope and mobilization, followed by fierce periods of reaction and repression. In 1944, following a thirteen-year dictatorship, middle-class revolutionaries took over the state and initiated a series of unprecedented social and political reforms that radically challenged the power of Guatemala's landed oligarchy. In 1954, however, an alliance between the United States' Central Intelligence Agency and sectors of the country's elite beat back this challenge, ending Guatemala's democratic opening. From this date forward, the Guatemalan state met nearly all demands for social reform with ever increasing violence and terror, which in turn drove broad sectors of Guatemalan society to oppose the government: from 1960 to 1996, armed insurgencies challenged the legitimacy of the state and the oligarchy; in the 1970s, trade unionists, Mayan activists, peasants, students, and social and Christian democrats came together to push for reform. No other country in Central America witnessed the level of political mobilization that took place in Guatemala during this period. According to the 1999 report of the United Nations-administered Truth Commission (officially known as the Historical Clarification Commission), the state responded to both the insurgency and civil movement with unthinkable repression, climaxing in 1981–82 in a yearlong bloodbath in which the army committed over four hundred mas-

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sacres, laid waste to hundreds of Mayan communities, and tortured, murdered, and disappeared over one hundred thousand Guatemalans.⁶

Historians are nearly unanimous in their judgment that the Guatemalan liberal state, founded in 1871, was bereft of popular support and legitimacy.⁷ Analysts often use this absence of legitimacy to explain the intense state repression of the last forty years.⁸ The Truth Commission, for example, concluded that the origins of the political violence can be traced to an unjust social system founded on racism, economic exploitation, and political exclusion:

Due to its exclusionary nature, the State was incapable of achieving social consensus around a national project able to unite the whole population. Concomitantly, it abandoned its role as mediator between divergent social and economic interests, thus creating a gulf which made direct confrontation between them more likely. . . . Faced with movements proposing economic, political, social or cultural change, the State increasingly resorted to violence and terror in order to maintain social control. Political violence was thus a direct expression of structural violence.⁹

It is certainly true that the Guatemalan state, compared with most other Latin American nations, was much less successful in creating a national identity and establishing political legitimacy. A brutal model of capitalist development combined with profound ethnic divisions to prevent the evolution of an inclusive national project. Nevertheless, this study starts with the premise that the “failure” of Guatemalan nationalism needs to be explained, rather than presented as explanatory.

It is a common conceit among many scholars that nationalism is a social phenomenon that needs to be measured against the relative success of a handful of countries in constituting their populations as “citizens” by integrating them into a cohesive economic, political, and cultural project.¹⁰ Eric Hobsbawm, in his arguments against liberal theorists who posit common ethnicity or language as the origin of nations, has forcefully presented a class-based analysis of nationalism.¹¹ For Hobsbawm, nationalism is intimately linked to the organization of industrial capitalism and the formation of economic elites. While this perspective has reintroduced the concept of social struggle in analyses of national formation, it also has de-emphasized the ethnic content of elite nationalism. In so doing, Western biases are confirmed: nationalism is presented as uni-

versal; ethnicity is understood as particular.¹² In developing countries that have been unable to build or maintain a cohesive economic or political structure, emerging social movements attempting to construct or challenge national identities are often dismissed as “tribal” or “ethnic.”¹³

In this work, I try to separate the emergence of two competing ethnonationalisms—K’iche’ and Ladino—from the social processes of state and economic formation. Thus, the inability of Ladinos to project their national vision as universal is presented not as failed nationalism but as *a* failed nationalism.¹⁴ In so doing, just as I do not reject K’iche’ nationalism as “ethnic,” I also do not dismiss the ideology of Ladino reformers and revolutionaries as racist.

As this work will show, for both K’iche’ and Ladino elites, national identity mattered. In Quetzaltenango, the formation and maintenance of K’iche’ ethnicity was inextricably linked to the formation of regional and national consciousness. And many of the questions regarding race, culture, gender, and nationalism raised by today’s pan-Mayan movement—in which Quetzalteco K’iche’s are key players—have their origins in nineteenth-century efforts by Ladinos to create a homogeneous national identity. Rather than its being viewed, as it often is, as an entirely new occurrence emerging from the ruins of a failed Ladino national project, this work suggests that the pan-Mayan movement’s origins and development need to be understood within the social processes of state formation—the very processes that spawned the project the movement now seeks to displace.¹⁵

The book’s title, therefore, has a double meaning. It refers first to the contestation that took place throughout Guatemala as to what constituted national identity. Paradoxically in the late nineteenth century, as Ladinos increasingly stressed the cultural content of “race,” urban Quetzalteco K’iche’ artisans and merchants—Hispanicized in dress, occupation, language, and living conditions—insisted on defining race by blood. But this contestation over national identity failed to be resolved in a country rent by class and ethnic divisions, and herein lies the title’s second meaning. In 1954, the most serious effort by Ladino leaders to create an integrated nation collapsed under the combined weight of political division, class struggle, and foreign intervention. For the next four decades Guatemalan blood flowed as the most repressive state in the hemisphere slaughtered two hundred thousand of its citizens.

Culture and Power

Writing a history of power these days is a difficult task. Power, we are told, permeates all relations; multiple and shifting subjectivities, both within individuals and throughout societies, make it impossible to establish a standard on which to rank these relations, much less to take a stand and say here is where power resides and here is where it should be confronted. Across disciplines and regions, this complexity has confused academic writing and paralyzed political commitment.¹⁶ In Guatemala, this scholarly agnosticism, combined with the repercussions of a failed socialist revolution, unimaginably high levels of state repression, and the emergence of the pan-Mayan movement, has created a climate of intellectual doubt and uncertainty; the surety with which academics supported the guerrilla movement during the 1970s and 1980s has given way to self-criticism and intellectual revisionism.¹⁷ While this rethinking is a healthy corrective to the traditional arrogance of first-world intellectuals, much of it draws on deeply ingrained tendencies of Guatemalan historical and anthropological writing to situate the Maya outside of historical processes.

Two questions have dominated Guatemalan academic interest. The first, chiefly a historical problem, concerns the ways in which liberals after 1871 were able to establish political control and lay the foundation for what became Guatemala's modern agro-exporting nation state. The second question, largely an ethnographic consideration, addresses the ways Indians have managed to resist, at least to a qualitative degree, strong pressures of cultural assimilation while still maintaining to this day a recognizable community structure. Despite the fact that Guatemala, with its unique historical and cultural legacy, provides an auspicious opportunity for multidisciplinary work, history and anthropology have shared an uneasy relationship. Historians for the most part offer generic and facile summaries of cultural change, and anthropologists give no more than cursory nods to larger, national-level social and political processes. Neither historians nor anthropologists have as yet produced a thickly described study of historical and ethnic transformation.

The central question of nineteenth-century Guatemalan history turns on two successive attempts by liberals to create a cohesive state with political and military, if not cultural, hegemony. In the years following independence from Spain in 1821, enlightenment liberals limited the in-

stitutional power of the Catholic Church and abolished the corporate protection of indigenous communities.¹⁸ Elite factionalism and a massive popular rebellion, however, soon smashed the liberal dream. Beginning in 1839, the conservative Rafael Carrera ruled Guatemala and dominated Central American politics for twenty-six years.¹⁹ In 1871 liberals once again took power; and the state, led by the coffee planter Justo Rufino Barrios from 1873 to 1885, passed legislation that made indigenous land, labor, and revenue available to the rapacious needs of the new coffee economy and a burgeoning bureaucracy.²⁰ While the deleterious effects on indigenous *municipios* of the reforms decreed by the first liberal regime pale in comparison with those enacted by the “coffee state,” no sustained popular resistance ensued after 1871.²¹ Why?

Guatemalan historiography is still in its infancy, and the responses to this question fairly reflect the academic literature’s nascent development. Preliminary answers have focused on the state’s increased technical and financial ability to repress Indian dissent.²² Recently, mostly because of the meticulous work of David McCreery, historians have begun to pursue more sophisticated inquiries. The process of land expropriation and labor exploitation now seems less abrupt than historians had previously assumed, and continuities between the conservative and liberal regimes are being stressed.²³

Despite this increasingly subtle interpretation of Guatemalan state consolidation, however, some sharp edges still remain. In Guatemala, where exploitation *generally* runs along ethnic lines, literature tends to code Indians as victims and Ladinos as villains. Thus, historians still hesitate to examine the complex relations that bind the Maya to their communities as well as to Ladino society. McCreery wrote in 1994 that Indian “relations with the elites and the state have been almost entirely those of reaction and avoidance.”²⁴ Indigenous culture, then, remains analytically juxtaposed to and distinct from class and state power.

This dichotomy is reflected in historians’ account of cultural survival. In Guatemala, as in many areas of Latin America, the persistence of Indian ethnicity is most often explained away by theories examining the “articulation of modes of production,” that is, how dependent capitalism not only allows but needs other relations of production to function.²⁵ In Guatemala this reason is often used to account for the persistence of Mayan communities. Unable to support a full-time labor force, coffee production relied on Indian communities and their noncapitalist relations

of production to supply the subsistence needs of seasonal workers. Indian communities, in effect, subsidized Guatemala's transition to coffee cultivation. This conceptualization is very useful in understanding why seemingly subordinate modes of production—along with their cultural correlates—not only linger on but at times thrive. However, it does little to explain how individuals both simultaneously reproduce and understand alternative consciousness—be it Indian ethnicity or popular nationalism—and how that reproduction and understanding inscribe local, regional, and national relations of power and dominance.

These theories often adhere to a top-down analysis of cultural transformation: the ability to articulate a nationalist discourse is assigned solely to the dominant social class (read the bourgeoisie). Subordinate classes are capable only of conceptualizing fragmentary or parochial identities. Hence as articulation takes place, nationalism or liberalism, the universalizing discourses of the dominant, trumps ethnicity, the localizing identity of the dominated. Weak, dependent capitalist development produces a fragile, defensive nationalism that is constantly challenged by local discourses, centered on ethnicity or some other manifestation of regionalism.

Guatemalan ethnography, on the other hand, has been very sensitive to the processes by which social actors reproduce and interpret their cultural world.²⁶ And as anthropology became more historically and globally minded, Guatemalanists increasingly studied the links between power and culture.²⁷ But as in history, a sharp divide continues to exist between the two concepts, with “communal authority” examined as something apart from “state power.”²⁸ Common questions are concerned with how global processes such as colonialism, capitalism, increased commodification, or the creation of a centralized state had an impact on the social structure of indigenous communities. Yet with few exceptions, there is no exploration of the ways in which culture infused ongoing state formation.²⁹

This work argues that only through an examination of the long-term historical role popular classes played in the transformations that swept Guatemala before and after independence, can we develop a deeper understanding of the political turmoil of the last forty years. Neither dependency theory, which understands the state and foreign capital to be omnipotent, nor the current academic fashion to situate subalterns outside of larger hegemonic processes, is useful in explaining the tenacity and endurance of *both* popular culture and the state.³⁰ This is true even in a country such as Guatemala, which resorted to extreme levels of violence

and terror to maintain order. What is needed, I believe, is a methodology that bridges the two positions. Drawing on the work of cultural theorists, such an approach is being created in similar regions of Latin America, such as Mexico, Nicaragua, and the Andean countries.³¹ This study is an attempt to apply this methodology to Guatemalan history.

What I have found most useful in this approach is the emphasis on struggle in the creation of social meaning. Florencia Mallon's work on popular nationalism in Peru and Mexico, for example, has been extremely helpful in my understanding of the alternative national vision of the K'iche' elites. In challenging theories that view nationalism as a "positivist, unilinear" process of historical development that "assigns no creative role to nonbourgeois classes," Mallon has suggested a more fluid, dynamic model.³² In studying the development of nationalist consciousness among Peruvian and Mexican peasants, she raises two questions that are pertinent to the study of Guatemala: To what degree can nationalism vary according to class? And to what extent do certain forms of nationalist consciousness develop in conflict with and contradiction to the process of national unification? It is the latter question in particular that provides us with a useful analytic distinction in studying ethnicity's link to the development of nationalism. By separating feelings and expressions of nationalist consciousness from the process of national unification, we can examine how the transformation and expansion of ethnic identity in Guatemala came into conflict with the national project of Ladino elites. Where my work differs from Mallon's is in our characterization of local discourses of the nation. What she describes as "popular nationalism," I identify as the nationalism of regional brokers, in important ways no less elitist than its Ladino counterpart.³³

Likewise, my use of the concept of hegemony draws on the work of such writers as William Roseberry and Jeffrey Gould. Rather than a set of common beliefs that binds subalterns to elite projects, hegemony is understood as a "common material and meaningful framework for living through, talking about, and acting on a social order characterized by domination."³⁴ This view rejects *both* a totalizing Geertzian or Foucaultian view of ideology *and* a conspiracy theory of hegemony, through which elites consciously manipulate symbols, rituals, and language to gain the consent of the governed.³⁵ Roseberry in particular insists on restoring the political meaning of hegemony first suggested by Gramsci.³⁶ In examining the material relations and social alliances that produce a

ruling class, we can understand how a set of ideas of how society should be organized becomes dominant.

Three points are crucial in understanding hegemony's relationship to rule and historical change. First, although hegemony here operates within a "common framework," not all in society have the ability to project their ideas as the dominant vision for social organization. Through the material processes of state formation and capital accumulation, certain classes and subgroups within those classes gain differential access to political and economic resources—such as, legal backing, military force, control of means of production, communication, and education—which in turn allows them to project their vision as the dominant vision. Second, in order to be truly effective, hegemony needs to create a "common social and moral project that includes popular as well as elite notions of political culture," so that those in power are "able to rule through a combination of coercion and consent."³⁷ This common project could include religious symbols and rituals, local and regional histories, language, as well as ideologies that cut across class divisions and unite individuals in gendered or ethnic alliances. Finally, elites themselves are bound by this project, and it is here where struggle and change occur. Dominated groups can use the language associated with their rulers to make demands.

Beyond Florencia Mallon's academic work on popular groups in Mexico and Peru, the nationalist rhetoric of the Zapatistas in southern Mexico is a striking example of this phenomenon.³⁸ And in Nicaragua, Jeffrey Gould has charted how peasants' creative interpretation of liberalism, hacienda paternalism, and Somocista populism "exacerbated divisions in the agro-export elite, and thereby pushed the regime to rely exclusively on its only remaining base of support, the National Guard."³⁹

The importance of this approach is that it not only makes room for the histories of popular actors, but it also depends on them for an integral analysis of how power functions and change occurs. Along with other highland communities, Quetzalteco K'iche' political participation contributed to the failure of the first postindependent liberal regime (1821–38), the defeat of a highland separatist movement (1838–40), the endurance of Rafael Carrera's long conservative rule (1840–65), the establishment of the liberal coffee state (1871), and both the triumph *and* defeat of Guatemala's democratic revolution (1944–54). This work attempts to understand these events in light of the political consciousness that informed ethnic relations.

In Quetzaltenango, at least since the Cortes de Cádiz (the Spanish parliament formed during the Napoleonic crisis) at the beginning of the nineteenth century, indigenous political leaders had to contend with liberalism—an ideology that threatened their caste power. From this contention emerged by the end of the nineteenth century an alternative nationalism that drew heavily upon Ladino elite notions of progress, race, and nationalism. This K'iche' nationalism failed to take root. The harsh realities of Guatemala's model of development and the limits of dependent capitalism overpowered this alternative vision of the nation. By the 1950s, the K'iche' community had split along class lines; caste struggle—the incessant fighting over city resources between Indian and Ladino elites—gave way to class struggle as urban K'iche' elites initiated a campaign of intimidation and repression against rural indigenous campesinos organizing under the aegis of Guatemala's vaunted agrarian reform. The ensuing political instability contributed to the local collapse of Jacobo Arbenz's government and helped usher in the four decades of state terror that followed.

This work starts with the assumption that indigenous culture as it is understood today has been formed within the very same historical processes—colonialism, capitalism, and state formation—that have produced a variety of outcomes, including Ladino identity, resistance, repression, racism, ethnic revival, nationalism, and political illegitimacy. In the studies cited above, popular classes are portrayed neither as autonomous nor powerless in the face of economic and political transformation; they are not the heroic redeemers of history, the silent victims of colonialism and capitalism, nor the autonomous bearers of precapitalist and pre-state traditions.

In Guatemala today, however, it is difficult to take this approach. A number of factors have combined to reproduce the view that popular classes, in particular the Maya, have a history and a culture apart from the forces that have produced the Guatemalan state.⁴⁰ Even though caste affiliation was formed and strengthened as a result of colonialism, capitalism, and state formation, the ongoing salience of indigenous identity has contributed to the belief that Mayan culture exists outside of national life. Unlike what took place in many areas of Mexico, Guatemala's peripheral colonial and early republican economy did not break down indigenous ethnicity into a more homogeneous rural identity.⁴¹ With the introduction of coffee cultivation in the mid-nineteenth century, the creation of Guate-

mala's agrarian proletariat took place along clearly defined ethnic lines. The development of a republican racism in the nineteenth century further deepened caste divisions. Guatemala's political trajectory usually entailed alliances between conservatives and indigenous communities.⁴² When liberals took control of the state and its ideological apparatus in 1871, Indian political participation was either denied or portrayed as reactionary and ahistorical.⁴³

Recent events have reinforced this bias. Indians participated on a mass scale in the revolutionary upheaval of the 1970s and 1980s.⁴⁴ Organizations comprised of Indians continue to give life to what remains of an oppositional movement. Nevertheless, there are strong pressures at work to deny this participation. The failure of the revolution combined with the inability of the rebel groups to protect their indigenous base against horrific levels of military repression led many of their early supporters to rethink and to distance themselves from their initial political commitment. Further, the rhetoric of Guatemalan resistance reinforced the denial of indigenous participation. After 1983, when in retrospect the rebels lost all chance of gaining state power, the struggle became no longer understood as a fight for revolutionary change but rather as a rearguard defense against wholesale slaughter. The formulation of indigenous rights, reinforced by a worldwide interest in the plight of native peoples, came to be an effective weapon in forestalling army violence. In many communities, the argument "Not the guerrillas, not the army" kept the military at bay to various degrees.

Framing the violence in this fashion, however, has transformed the memory of the repression. Until 1981, the majority of victims of state violence were Ladinos—students, peasants, union organizers, politicians, and revolutionaries. Not until the military launched its scorched earth campaign in 1981 were Indians targeted as Indians. Throughout this repression, the state never stopped killing Ladinos. Nevertheless, rather than being remembered as directed against a multiethnic popular movement, the terror at times is described as the "third Mayan Holocaust."⁴⁵

The intent of this work is not to dismiss this point of view but rather to understand how and why it was produced.⁴⁶ I argue that scholars and activists need to be particularly careful about understanding history, conflict, and violence in simple, dichotomous terms.⁴⁷ In the particular case investigated here, it means examining contradictions *within* a community and alliances *between* Indians and Ladinos so as to understand how the