The Afterlife of Images

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Abstract

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This study is about an intervention into history that rural Indians in highland Guatemala effect through visual forms. In rural church altars and in their homes Indians arrange local and foreign objects such as pieces of cloth, mirrors, rocks and flowers, Catholic icons, and colonial land documents. They actively take hold of these objects from the past and from the market place, re-defining the imported aesthetic of the Spanish Baroque and contemporary capital in their everyday actions.

Focused on a particular kind of history I remain within the realm of images throughout this thesis. In the first sections I work with the various ways that certain written texts, maps, photographs, and social strategies become images projected onto the bodies and land of Indians. From these writings and images produced by the invading Spaniards or the dominant State authorities, I move to the ways in which Indians contend with such projections through their own visual forms. Implicit throughout this thesis is the notion that images do have lives, historical and personal lives that we can follow and trace as they circulate through memory or between cultures.
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My thoughts on this thesis began in 1984 while I was listenting to Carlo Ginzburg talk about witch cults in rural 16th century Europe. He was speaking about a kind of history that would include people without writing. He wanted to listen in on a long-past dialogue: find traces or echoes that could become the material of a history alternative to dominant discourse. Searching for methods in such a realm led me to questions about Indians of the newly discovered Americas who had recently and violently encountered the Western world. His question then led to my question. How, if at all, could I hear something of Indians in their visual response to the advent of Western history into their lives? In 1986 I began specific research in Guatemala and the archives of the colonies. Possibly, however, this thesis began even sooner in me. After Carlo Ginzburg's seminar I moved in two directions, one towards the work I have set out to do in this text and the other towards myself through memory. There is something about this research into the liminal space between writing and images that has taken me back and forth as if through increasingly interconnected layers of the foreign and the familiar.

My advisor Mary Miller has helped me over many years to articulate my ideas and write my different texts in this
field where there are few guides or guidelines. In the shape and structure of my thoughts I have also been greatly influenced by seminars and conversations with Janet Berlo, Robert Thompson and the late Silvia Boone. Once into my research in Guatemala I began working with Carol Smith and George Lovell, each of whom have given me insights into their respective fields of anthropology and geography beyond what I could have come to without them. While in Guatemala, I travelled with Paola Ferrario who carried her large field camera into the most remote regions of the area helping me to put into photographs something of what we saw there. The hundreds of Indians that we met in the highlands welcomed us, and for the most part it was their kindness and willingness to share the intimacy of their images that have made this thesis possible.

Conversations with John D'Amico, Faye Hirsch, and Zirka Filipczak have greatly affected my thoughts and writing. Suzanne Shaker, Garance Franke-Ruta, Cornelia Blatter, Zoe Leonard, Jill Sharaf, Katurah Hutcheson, Marie-Claude Hays, and Emma Ellis-Cosegue have each in their own way contributed to aspects of this project and to my well being. Both my parents and step parents and brother and sister have lovingly supported my research and writing.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

I. Indian Interventions in the Field of History

In altars in rural churches and in their homes, Indians of highland Guatemala arrange local and foreign objects such as pieces of cloth, mirrors, rocks, flowers, Catholic icons, and colonial land documents. They actively take hold of these objects from the past and from the market place, re-defining the imported aesthetic of the Spanish Baroque and contemporary capital in their everyday actions. This study is about a form of intervention into history that rural Indians in highland Guatemala effect through these images and objects that they discretely cluster in their homes, along the roadside and cemeteries, and at particular altars in old colonial churches.

The transformation of imported cultural materials of conquest and colonization is part of the history of all the Americas. How such transformations occurred and continue to take shape, however, is different in each territory and block of time. Colonial violence and Western strategies of economic domination have a very different history in Haiti than in Mexico and different again in Guatemala. Guatemala is a country on the narrow Isthmus of Central America between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. High volcanic
mountains and deep valleys constitute what are known as the highlands. There the severe contours of geography often play a part in the history of the region. From peaks to valleys the highlands are spotted with hundreds of discrete towns or villages which remain separate and distinct from one another.

The specific topography of the Guatemalan highlands has often hampered incessant attempts at surveillance and domination of the region and has especially contributed to why so many Indians have been able to survive, flourish and perpetuate heterogeneous and enigmatic cultures. As part of and beyond the contingencies of topography, Indians of the highlands have a particular relationship to the land. Physical access to land affects the possibility and degree of autonomy they have been able to hold or carve out since the arrival of the Spaniards. And land, whether it is a place to live, or grow corn, or bury the dead, is simultaneously an internalized element of their minds that constitutes a kind of connective tissue or thread that runs through their beliefs, philosophy, and images.

* * *

In Chapters Two and Three of this thesis I work with a series of written and visual documents from the 16th through the 20th century that politically and economically define
Indians of the highlands in relation to the land and to their own identity. Through a description and analysis of written documents, drawn maps, and photographs I look to how works on paper produced by non-Indians affect or reflect the location of Indians. In Chapter Four I focus on the strategies of the Guatemalan military, between 1960 and 1980, as they attempted to create and disseminate an image of the Indian as a foreign element to be used or eliminated within a perverse logic of the growing state. Here I go beyond the confines of works on paper into the visual realm of the landscape or the internal realm of psychological images.

With the full emergence of the figure of San Simon at the end of the 19th century I begin to unfold elements of an Indian response to the location of themselves within the dominant culture of emerging capitalism. Chapters Five and Six are the heart of the thesis. It is there that I trace the multiple ways that Indians in the late 1980’s use altars to respond to complex aspects of everyday life, a life where up until recently they have had few other places to articulate and visualize their own responses or interpretations.

* * *

Not all Indians in the highlands make altars such as
the ones I discuss in this study. One third of the Indians of Guatemala have over the past thirty years converted to different sects of Protestantism hostile to altars or any aspects reminiscent of Catholic or pre-Christian beliefs. These conversions were brought on by a wave of moralizing and mostly U.S. originated evangelists who view the four hundred year history of Indian and Catholic co-mingling as a hybrid form of Christianity analogous to paganism. This relatively recent campaign has intermittently been linked to the Guatemalan military and authoritarian despots. Between 1980 and 1983 evangelists and the military worked to extirpate rural Indian costumes and beliefs which centered on the use of images.\footnote{Evangelist conversions of highland Indians began as early as 1940 and have since become a central part of Guatemalan history and politics. Historians, ethnographers and even the casual traveller in Guatemala each note the prevalence of Indian evangelists and evangelist churches often built over night. For a detailed essay on the politics of Evangelism in the northern Highlands see, David Stoll, "Evangelicals, Guerrillas, and the Army: The Ixil Triangle Under Ríos Montt," \textit{Harvest of Violence}, ed. Robert M. Carmack (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1988), p.90-116. James Dunkerley in "Guatemala: Garrison State," \textit{Power in the Isthmus}, (London: Verso, 1988), p.425-517, discusses the role of evangelist ideology in Guatemalan politics since the CIA backed overthrow of Arbenz in 1954.} This new Protestantism promised a life of modest but steady income and a higher social status to all who renounced previous beliefs and the worship of images. In exchange for these beliefs Indians were taught a fervent adherence to the text of the bible and a universal
mankind, supposedly transcending any specific cultural identity.

The Indians of the highlands who make altars stand out in this environment both in the display of images in their local churches and homes and in their passionate insistence on local, rather than global spirituality or identity. In their altars Indians suspend certain objects, making altars into a place where elements of the past and present are transformed and interpreted. Objects which they choose for working out such relations and for storing memories are often icons of a transformed Catholicism. Carved and mass-produced images of saints are each approached as intercessors and witnesses. With these images of saints and shards of pre-Hispanic religions, Indians of the highlands arrange altars and enact a kind of performance which resolidifies their connection to the land. They create a conceptual space through which they enter and confront the details of the everyday and brutal losses suffered from violence and sickness.

After months of travel through the highlands I began to see these altars not only as evidence of the history of Indians but an Indian form of history making itself. Indian altar making irrevocably changed for me at that moment. My project ceased to become explanatory and became more comparative. I was not solely writing a history any longer but a historiographic study of an already formed historical
system. Mine is a discursive written history and theirs is more visual and performative.

II. Naming and Notes on Field Methodology

Archaeologists from the 19th century adopted the word Maya to name the ancient civilizations that lived from the Yucatan down through Honduras. They may have come upon the word Maya in Bishop Landa's *Relación de las Yucatán* written in 1565.² The name Maya may have passed down to Landa through Bartolomeo Columbus, brother to Christopher, who in 1506 first referred to the inhabitants of the peninsula as Maiam or Yuctacm. Such names were used by Indians in the early 16th century to describe the Yucatan Mexican peninsula itself or to describe the region near the former city of Mayapan on the coast of Mexico. Maya, however, was not a name that Indians used to refer to themselves collectively or as a way to describe their ancestors.³


³Searching through early ethnographies and archeological writings, it was only with the help of Mary Miller that I found a discussion of the origins of the word Maya in A.M. Tozzer's edition of Diego Landa's *Relación de las Yucatán*, Peabody Museum of Archeology and Ethnology, (Cambridge: Harvard University Memoirs, 1941), n.33 p. 7-8.
day refer to themselves with scores of heterogeneous names that locate themselves either geographically or by language group. For instance, those that live in the northern highlands of Guatemala are Quiché, or those that live in the southern region of lake Atitlán are Tzutujil. To describe themselves in general they use the word Indian or Indios in Spanish, a name mistakenly given to all indigenous people by Christopher Columbus when he believed he had landed within the realm of east India. Naming is a prerogative mostly exercised by those whose language constitutes the primary source for the construction of history. This prerogative fell to the Spanish. Until indigenous people of the diverse regions of the Central Americas redefine or rename themselves I will use the word Indian when writing in general or refer to people by their language group or town names, as they themselves do.

* * *

Archaeologic interest in southern Mexico and northern Guatemala began in 1750 when a group of Spanish militia inadvertently came across the ruins of Palenque in the north of Chiapas, Mexico. Seventy years later, in 1822, Antonio del Rio produced an extensive report with drawings of the
Palanque ruins.⁴ 19th century travellers such as the eccentric Jean Frederick de Waldeck, who actually lived with Indians in the ruins of Palanque, and the famous traveller John Lord Stephens, each reflect in their own idiosyncratic way about the relationship between the ancient people of these monuments and the contemporary Indians who lived in their vicinity.⁵ After de Waldeck and Stephens, travellers and scholars to the region remained exclusively interested in archaeological investigation of ancient Maya culture. As regards the Indians who live in this area of fallen pyramids, they dismissively regarded them as shards of a magnificent past. It has only been since the late 1930’s, however, with the work of Sol Tax, that the contemporary Indians of Guatemala have been recognized as a complex and vital people, important to historical or social scientific discourse.⁶

In subsequent archaeologic and early ethnographic

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⁴Antonio Rio, Description of the Ruins of an Ancient City Discovered near Palanque, in the Kingdom of Guatemala, in Spanish America, (London: Berthoud and Suttaby, Evance and Fox, 1822).


studies many scholars have referred to contemporary Indians of Guatemala as direct descendants of the Maya. In her book *Time and the Highland Maya*, Barbara Tedlock has done an extensive analysis of how the contemporary Indians of the highlands often dress in clothing directly linked to ancient Maya patterns, speak languages which have changed little from pre-Columbian languages, and more specifically practice aspects of a religion, especially in regards the reading of calendars, which can be linked to ancient Maya calendar reading. Anthropological work of this school, through which scholars link contemporary Indians of the highlands to the ancient highland Maya, is a form of historical reconstruction, an archeology of culture set on finding origins and continuous links from the past to the present.

This historical image of continuity and cultural survival from the pre-Columbian Maya to the Indians presently living in Highland Guatemala is a relatively new form of anthropologic and historic research. In 1961, when asked to reflect upon the survival of pre-Columbian culture, even the more magnanimous of historians, such as George Kubler, responded: "such survivals are so few and scattered that there assembling requires an enormous expenditure of a deep-lying shipwreck." He goes on to write that by the 18th century "survivals were by then beyond recall, and it is an autopsy that all posterior research has continued to
perform."

In this present work I steer clear of both Barbara Tedlock's search for continuity and Kubler's bold proclamation of the end of pre-Columbian culture. My project is at once more modest and more specific than theirs. I do not seek to trace the continuity of culture through comparisons in time, or pass a judgment on categories of cultures or chronologies. Rather, my interest is in how certain Indians in highland Guatemala have created a particular space for themselves in home and church altars, a space in which they create their own form of history. The context in which I see these altars is a dialectical one in which images circulate between Indians and non-Indians. The visual formation of projections, formed by the importation of images, or written texts, photographs, and military conscription - and the texture, aesthetics and everyday aspects of Indian conceptual and visual work within altars are ultimately the subject of this study. Aspects of the pre-Columbian past, or Christian liturgy, the commercial market and mass culture are each used by Indians to produce sophisticated visual forms that are conscious means to interpretation and expression, both actions crucial to human

survival.

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While in the highlands my method of observation was to attend to the details and art of juxtaposition in the altars themselves. I observed the accidental and choreographed affect of candlelight and the addition of shapes and colors as Indians move close to, interact with, and recede from the sight of images and objects. On feast days I would watch how they processed these images of saints through towns, saints which took on different meanings in different contexts. During prayers or processions I listened to how they spoke and when I could I listened to what they said. When I spoke directly with Indians who arrange these altars, I asked who they were praying to, where the images came from, or what is an image of a saint. Yet, it was often through their questions about my presence and the equipment with which I traveled, that I came to learn about their relationship to images, belief and the past.

I will not begin these following pages too hastily, for without equivocation, I acknowledge the presence of my own subjectivity. No matter how shattered my perspective may become, I will always see from my point of view. And, in the process of seeing, researching, or analyzing it is from an historically specific point of view that I write.
I was not simply a visitor in the highlands of Guatemala. I am a university trained academic writing in a moment of time when inside and outside the academy global relations are being redefined. Western centers of capital officiate over third world economies, while at the same time universities are expanding their curricula to encompass a broader range of world culture; world culture not simply of the present but also of the past. Without changing our definition of history and our ways of writing, our endeavors to consider diverse, marginalized, or violently aggressed-against cultures, may wittingly or unwittingly align themselves as another form cultural imperialism. In our global curiosities are we just another tool of the assimilating apparatus of capital, or can we work against the grain of such an homogenizing process and system? At times there seems an almost nothing possible in the impulse to speak across cultures.

In writing regarding Indians of Guatemala I am not attempting to write or speak for them. Implicit in that presumption is a form of silencing. They are a living people who speak for themselves, most forcibly to me at least, through their elaborate altars. In my description and interpretation of these altars I acknowledge my subjectivity, and in that acknowledgement relinquish the monolithic paradigm of knowledge "about". I am not simply producing knowledge about someone else or another culture.
I am, rather, blatantly adding the process of my memory and choice of images to the circulation of memory and images by Indians in highland Guatemala. My words are not final or official: they are a layer, hopefully translucent at times, but no more than a layer within an increasingly dialectical exchange of intercultural realities. Ultimately my written text itself is a fragment and not frame. What I produce here is part of something discontinuous and larger than my perceptions. Though this may seem like acrobatics or empty rhetoric, this location of myself has come from being in Guatemala and from recognizing the places of reflection that Indians have made with images. My writing is a bridge from where I have been.
CHAPTER TWO
ELEMENTS OF CONQUEST AND OBSERVATION

I. Visual Writing: El Requerimiento

In 1512, a relatively young man within the court of Ferdinand and Isabelle, intent on sailing to the New World, was delayed in his travels. In what must have been a time of frustration and some idleness for him, stories of the New World riches and atrocities were of particular interest. Apparently the most affecting of these stories concerned the vast number of natives, already by that time called Indians, who were dying, not just in battle but simply dying on contact with soldiers and colonists. So this young man Martin Fernández de Enciso, while he waited for his boat to sail, sat down to write a text justifying European superiority over, and therefore subjugation of, all peoples found in the New World. With the help of Palacios Rubios, a much better known legalist in the Spanish and Papal circles, Enciso produced a text which transferred all guilt of Indian death onto Indians themselves; the name of this text was El Requerimiento¹, meaning The Requirement (figure 1)².

¹See Appendix I for a translation of the full text of the "El Requerimiento".
The essential argument of the text rests on the claim that mankind of all nations are here decreed under the authority of the Pope who was, according to Christian doctrine, most directly linked to the first two humans created by God. With this power and position the Pope was referred to as having granted certain portions of the New World to the King and Queen of Spain. According to the Requerimiento the inhabitants of these newly discovered regions need not by compulsion convert to Christianity, but they must obey Christian rule. If they do not obey, the text goes on to claim:

we will take away your goods, and will do you all the harm and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey, and refuse to receive their lord...And we protest that the deaths and losses which will accrue from this are your fault, and not that of their highnesses, or ours, nor of these cavaliers who come with us.

Within months of Enciso’s departure for the New World Pope Julius II ratified the Requerimiento, and, with the further approval of Ferdinand and Isabelle of Spain, it was decreed that this text be mandatorily read by aggressing Spaniards to Indian Warriors at the outset of each battle.

\[^2\] This particular image of the text of El Requerimiento was in the possession of Viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza, and dates from 1541, New York Public Library, Division of Manuscripts, 3Rich3,275r. Given the date of Mendoza’s copy it is clear that the Requerimiento was still being used forty years after it was written by Enciso. Mendoza’s copy incorporates, almost verbatim, Enciso’s original text, with some added flourishes that reflect the day to day life of the changing colony.
In comparison with other written documents regarding new
territorial discoveries and their inhabitants there is very
little that is new in the Requerimiento. What is different
is that somewhere in the process of being written and
ratified, the Requerimiento was made into an icon of sorts,
something that had to be physically carried into the place
of battle, held up, and actually read aloud. Decrees had
been written regarding the inhabitants of the New World:
this was the first, however, that required for its efficacy
a living Indian audience.

Something that was actually happening between the Old
and New World created this change of protocol. During this
time, after long debate and scrutiny, Indians had indeed
been deemed human. No matter how great the difference in
culture and physical space, Indians, just like Spaniards
were make in God’s image. The young jurist Enciso,
anticipating his own witnessing of massive Indian deaths,
may have wanted the security of a physical bridge, brokered
over a piece of paper, that would protect him from his
conscience or fear of damnation. And, Enciso’s concerns
must have resonated with something in Pope Julius II and the
King and Queen of Spain; something had to be thought and
written and read aloud that would absolve all levels of the
Old World from responsibility for massive Indian deaths:
"And we protest that the deaths and losses which will accrue
from this are your fault, and not that of their highnesses,
or ours, nor of these cavaliers who come with us."

During these preliminary battle scenes when the Requerimiento was read aloud, Indians were more spectators of an event rather than receivers of a communication. Indians could not listen to logic of the text, for as was evident, it was written in a language they could not understand. Being a form of writing, however, the Requerimiento had within it, at least on some level, an intention to communicate. In excess of its form as a written address the added requirement of being read out loud to an Indian audience before battle highlighted this posturing towards dialogue, a dialogue which never really took place before the slaughter. The absurdity of the Requerimiento was not lost on the Spaniards themselves, especially ones involved in the day to day aggression of Spanish invasion. During an expedition under the brutal conquistador Pedrarias, when the Requerimiento was read before an actual battle, the historian Oviedo y Valdes ironically records from the field,

My lord, it appears to me that these Indians will not listen to the theology of this Requisition, and that you have no one who can make them understand it: would your honor be pleased to keep it until we have some one of these Indians in a cage, in order that they may learn it at their leisure, and my lord may explain it to them?\(^3\)

From Oviedo's account we learn something of the effect of the Requiemiento, that is, its uselessness as an appeal to Indian warriors to capitulate. What the Requiemiento did effect was the visual introduction of writing as a tool of conquest. Along with other novel accoutrements of battle, things such as cannon, horses, rifles and armor, Indians were comforted with the power of written documents, a power which was actually used in the form of written laws, decrees, histories and drawn maps to redefine their physical, cultural and spiritual realities.

Pre-conquest Indians of Guatemala had a written system of glyphs that was used historically in scrolls and on stone monuments. They also had written calendars and maps. Altogether, however, this technology of writing indigenous to Indians was not a correlate to the place or use of writing, its technology or ubiquity in 16th century Europe. The Requiemiento was not analogous as a text to anything that existed before the Spanish invasion. It was not decipherable by its posited Indian audience: alphabet, words and syntax all remained ineffable, but the image of the text and what it was associated with, often violent massacre, made its impression. Though not decipherable by Indians in the realm of reading and writing the Requiemiento was interpretable as a visual image of an element of the new authority that pervaded over their lives.

In 1519, seven years after he drafted the
Requerimiento, Enciso wrote from the New World and had published in Seville his Suma Geographia. In this early travelogue he echoes Oviedo's ironic remarks regarding the uselessness of the Requerimiento's being read in battle. He reports that in the few instances when Indians do understand, with the piecemeal help of a translator, they respond by saying they have their own lords, and then he goes on to boast of partaking in many vicious victories.⁴ The majority of the Suma is an account of his daily movements at sea as Enciso approached the New World and then a scattered description of the novelties of flora and fauna. He describes river ways and unfamiliar animals like the Iguanas that are, "great like lizards that have round heads and from the front part of the head to the tail are scaled."⁵

With the Suma, Enciso again turns to writing as he encounters the unknown. While in Spain the ominous unknown took on the form of massive Indian deaths and the possible repercussions for these deaths. When actually in the New World he turns away from this subject and turns to the realm of flora and fauna, a realm of life not so devastatingly affected as the human inhabitants of the region. His naming


⁵Ibid., p.22.
and locating rivers, places of movement and access, and his identification and cataloguing of animals, was a new source of comfort and empowerment for him. Whatever he witnessed in the New World in those early years of Spanish invasion turned Enciso sharply away from his earlier concerns with Indian life and death and turned him towards the pleasures of the Suma, or sum, towards cataloguing, and a will, once again, to wrap language in written form around the unknown.

II. Disease and the Underpinnings of Colony

In 1525, when the Spaniard Pedro de Alvarado set out to conquer Guatemala, there were roughly 2,000,000 Indians living out across the land in multiple heterogeneous communities speaking over twenty-one different languages. By 1550, just twenty-five years after the beginning of Alvarado's military campaign, 1,500,000 Indians had died.6

6Woodrow Borah and Sherburne F. Cook's Essays in Population History present overwhelming evidence of hundreds of thousands of Native American deaths within the first 25 years after European contact. Also, for more reflective and broad view of the historical impact of the Spanish invasion on Indian demographics see Borah's "New Spain's Century of Depression," (Ibero-Americana: 25, 1951): 2-42. The most devastating causes of death were disease, displacement, and demoralization. For a specific essay on the historical demographics of Indians in Guatemala since to arrival of the Spanish see W. George Lovell, "Surviving Conquest: The Maya of Guatemala in Historical Perspective," in Latin American Research Review, (Volume 23 Number 2, 1988): 25-57.
These deaths came from the cumulative effects of disease, despair and casualties from battle. Epidemics of smallpox and typhus had travelled into Guatemala some three years before the arrival of Alvarado himself. Thousands of Indian warriors were therefore weakened by disease before battles even ensued. These diseases were a harbinger of the many more diseases to come that would travel across the mountain hills and valleys, travel more easily and effectively than combat itself. After small-pox and typhus came the even more devastating airborne infections of pulmonary plague and then measles.

In the 1500’s Europeans had years of exposure and the attendant build up of resistance to complex bacteria and viruses transferred across the different countries of Greece and Africa on the Mediterranean and across lands as far and diverse as Asia. Conversely, the Americas and their islands had a distinctly more homogeneous economy of infections which posed much less of a threat to their foreign invaders. Disease was like a silent army itself killing from within communities of Indians that would later or simultaneously be ravaged by actual battle and the burden of foreign laws.

At its worst, disease alone devastated whole villages or reduced them to less than ten percent of their people. Bodies were literally withered by foreign disease, by
foreign technologies of war and foreign customs all brought in at once with the ceaseless effect of death. The collective trauma of such losses irrevocably contributed to the shattering of Indian life as it was known before Spanish invasion. Over the 500,000 Indians that did remain specific laws and regulations were drafted between New and Old world authorities to enfold them as subjects within the realm of the Spanish court.

Unlike Mexico, with the centralized government of the Aztecs, Guatemala was a socially and politically fragmented region. The diverse topography of Guatemala consisted of difficult to traverse highland mountains and coastal tropical areas. The fertile coastal lands were colonized first leaving the highlands to scattered battles that never effectively conquered or colonized the remaining Indian communities.

By 1543 there were three main laws that affected relations between the Spanish court, colonists, the Church, and Indians. The first instituted was the encomiend. It was a system by which the Court allowed colonists to receive their own tribute from Indians. This tribute temporarily served to support the early colonists in their attempts at transforming the Americas into a lucrative source of income for themselves and Spain. For instance, in 1549 in the highland town of Scapulas, 160 different Indian families were mandated to pay their Court tribute to the assigned
encomendero Cristóbal Salvatierra. This tribute amounted to ninety-six units of salt (each unit being 1.5 bushels), eighteen dozen chickens, and sixteen Indians for a period of service. Most tribute in the early colonial period was managed in this manner. Available raw material that Indians were accustomed to produce were accepted as tribute, such as salt in the Sacapulas region and corn from Nebaj or cotton from Todos Santos. When that did not amount to the needed tribute, labor could and was substituted for payment in materials.

As a pendant to the encomienda the Crown instituted another law called the repartimiento, or allotment. This was a law giving Spanish landowners in the New World access to Indian labor. Up to one fourth of any given Indian community could be mandated into labor for these Spanish landowners. They would be paid one real a day, a currency roughly equivalent to 1/8th of a peso, or what became known as a "piece of eight". This system, which lasted until the end of the 18th century, was the main source by which colonists were officially given access to Indian labor.

Indians, devastated by disease and battle, were often unwilling to be further subjected to the new laws of their invaders. They would often scatter up into the furthest regions of the highlands to seek an uncensored subsistence.

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7Archive of the Indies, Sevilla, Guatemala, 128.
life. Out of reach of colonial authorities they were free to mourn their loses and free of the burdens of the encomienda or repartimiento. Their fleeing temporarily freed them as well from the pressures and surveillance of a Church eager for their souls. In response to lost access to infidel Indians, missionaries, especially the Dominicans working in the highlands, petitioned the Spanish Court for the right to forcibly gather the fugitive Indians, enlist them in the labor of building new homes and a church for the foundation of towns in which these gathered Indians would then be forced to live. The Crown granted the missionaries this right and in 1543 ratified the law known as reducción or congregación.

This particular system of forced labor and resettlement of Indians around a centralized church was blueprinted by the Dominican Fray Bartolomé de las Casas. He advocated this plan to Charles V, the King of Spain, as an alternative way of controlling natives of the Americas. He argued that to convert them was better than to kill them.

In the abstract this plan may have been a humane attempt to protect Indians; the actual outcome of the system of reducción, however, was quite the obverse of Dominican intention. Native families, already devastated by disease and battle, seeking refuge in the land, were forced to resettle in regions in which they were totally unfamiliar. High in the mountains they had chosen their displacement in
exchange for some possible autonomy. Under Dominican resettlement they were forced to live with native groups from different areas centered on a Christian church and European way of life that was more violent and alienating then the reclusivity they had chosen in flight.

In addition, colonists immediately moved into the region of these newly built towns and quickly won the right from the Crown to extract tribute and labor from the newly gathered Indians. With the law of reducción the Dominicans in their paternalistic attempt to gather and protect Indians simply had gathered them to once again become easy prey. In defense of their project of forced resettlement the Dominicans wrote to Charles V of Spain,

...now they can have, and do have churches, ornaments, and the other requirements of divine worship, they can more readily be instructed not only in matters that concern our Holy Faith but also in proper human conduct. No Christian will consider the multifold advantages of re-settling to be a bad thing. They may only say that it was carried out against the will of the Indians, in answer to which we say that there is no sick person who does not find the taste of medicine unpleasant, that one prefers, ordinarily, the taste of that which harms us. Were we to require the will and consent of all subjects, especially ones such as these, neither we nor our predecessors would have accomplished anything.8

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8 Archive of the Indies, Sevilla, Guatemala, 168, Tomás de Cárdenas and Juan de Torres to King Charles V, 6 December, 1555. The English translation that I quote is from an unpublished paper by G.W. Lovell’s in which he discusses at length the differences in perspective on the law of reducción between the Dominicans and Franciscans, "Matters That Concern Our Holy Faith’: The polemics of Native Resettlement in Sixteenth-Century Guatemala."
"Were we to require the will and consent of all subjects, especially ones such as these, neither we nor our predecessors would have accomplished anything." There is some shadow of a guilty conscience in the tone and posture of this letter to the King. Between the lines one can see a trace of Indian bodies, of forced removals and burnt homes. Indians under the laws of encomienda, repartimiento and reducción were to the colonists and in actuality to the Church alike "people such as these," associated as sick in need of the "unpleasant" "medicine" of colonial rule. Ironically those Indians who had survived massive epidemics were considered "sick" with the very fact of their racial difference. By 1555 a total of ninety-five towns had been founded in the highlands, by 1660 there were over 330. Rather than protecting Indians from secular laws and economic burdens the law of reducción constituted a third element and cornerstone in the early colonial apparatus of surveillance and subjugation of Indians.

III. Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz 1768-1770

Two hundred and fifty years after Enciso wrote El Requerimiento, Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz travelled through the highlands of Guatemala to assess the spiritual life of Parish priests and their Indian parishioners. He documented his observations through written accounts of the
physical environment, numbers of people, and the local status of the Holy Sacraments and civic law. Along with these descriptions he sketched maps of each geographic region, locating and numbering the specific towns he visited (figures 2, 3, 4). These loosely sketched maps were done on paper with water color and ink. At the conclusion of his spiritual and natural history of highland Guatemala he describes the three towns of Nebaj, Cotzal and Chajul far to the north in the difficult terrain of the central Cuchamatanes mountains.⁹

To reach this northern region he takes off on foot from Sacapulus with his Indian guides who insist that he be carried in a chair through the difficult mountain terrain. He describes himself as being very reluctant to be carried as if he did not want to impose on his Indian guides. The roads proved much to difficult for a mule to holds its footing, so up the narrow pass to Nebaj he is carried by Indians who often fall to their knees deep in the mud unable to help one another. His description of the three towns begins with a brief demographics: Nebaj 769 people, Cotzal 980 people, and Chajul 1160 people. The language of the Indians of the region is Ixil and with the cold and often rainy weather one can hear the wind whistle through the humble structures. The Indians produce corn and beans in

⁹Archbishop Pedro Cortés y Larraz, Archive of the Indies, Sevilla, Guatemala 948.
great abundance, yet no one can bring these goods out of the area due to the heavy weight and arduous transport. To the Church Indians of the area are required to pay "el derecho de premicia", literally the right of the first harvest paid out in corn for the hearing of mass and the holy Sacraments.

When the Archbishop arrives the local Dominican priest assigned to the area is conspicuously absent. He has relegated his office to unordained individuals of the town who report that the priest is often absent for up to a year at a time. According to the Indians the priest goes to a convent in the more habitable town of Santa Cruz del Quiché south of Sacapulus. The Archbishop requests the intervention of the Dominican Archdiocese of the region, Father Miguel y San Juan, to bring the priest back to his remote parish to be interviewed.

From here the Archbishop recounts his discussion with the priest, learning something of the reason for his absence. The priest recounts how few of the parishioners attend mass, that many come inebriated and that a great many more have fled into the mountains to avoid religious and civic obligations. These fugitive Indians (Indios fugitivos) in the mountains have selected their own leaders and have reverted to their earlier ways of idolatry. Babies die unbaptized and adults die without the holy Sacraments. Few revere either the church or the local Indian mayor selected by the Crown. In disputes of justice
there are not men wise enough to discern the truth in most matters and there is great reluctance to carry out sentences to their full extent for fear of general Indian uprisings. In reflecting upon his observations and the stories of the priest, Archbishop Cortés y Larraz laments that there is not an able priest in each of the three towns of Nebaj, Cotzal and Chajul and is doubtful that any improvements in religious or civic matters can be made in the region.

His map of the Nebaj region is similar to his other maps such as the one of the area of Lake Atitlán (figures 2,3). For each map he demarcates a topographical area that he can drawn onto a 13 X 9 inch sheet of paper. Onto the rectangular sheet, oriented horizontally as one would a landscape sketch, he draws an additional internal rectangle for the placement of his image. At the upper edge of the drawn rectangle, in bold print, he writes the name of the "Curato" or specific area of care for the souls of Indians. In the area of Lake Atitlán he names over twenty different towns and gives approximate locations for the infamous volcanos of the region (figure 3). Each town is indicated by a break in the heavy foliage and hills where at least one church is sketched with several surrounding structures. In the area of Nebaj, however, there are only the three towns of Nebaj, Cotzal and Chajul situated amongst rivers, high peaked mountains and vast uncharted areas of land (figure 2).

Each map the Archbishop draws corresponds to his own
hand written descriptions of the area depicted. His penmanship is small and delicate, in character not unlike the small lines he uses to render buildings and winding rivers (figure 4). From the bottom edge to the top he tilts the landscape up, slightly foreshortened with the use of an overall even atmospheric perspective. He draws each map as if seen from an omniscient view from above, a bird's eye view or God's view perhaps. For the Archbishop, 18th century Guatemala was a series of fragments that he sought to contain on paper. He draws on paper even the unknown areas, such as the uncharted lands above Nebaj where the fugitive Indians were said to live outside the reach of a colonial rule which had been in place for over two centuries.

In his written and visual observations a certain poetics both drive and link words to images and both to the land and Indian subjects of the Crown. The Archbishop was not alone in this desire to observe and survey the spiritual and civic life of Indians and the natural history of their surroundings. In 1517, the jurist Enciso began his response to the Indian world through writing. First he wrote El Requerimiento, admonishing Indians to recognize and follow Papal authority and Spanish law. Once in the Americas he retreated from the realm of the spiritual and political to describe fauna and flora, waterways and natural elements of this New World. Indians seem to disappear for him and what took their place was the natural resources of a foreign land.
Fluctuating between a desire to control Indian life and the economic profit to be gained from Indian labor and resources the Catholic church of the 18th century systematically attempted to reassert its presence and control over Indian beliefs and interpretation of Christian doctrine. Beyond the interests of the church the Archbishop’s will to name places and locate Indians on a relative scale of governability and productivity reverberate with the specific drive of the early industrial era of which he was apart. His observations included details about commercial life and fertile land, concerns that would significantly increase through the 18th century and into the present.
CHAPTER THREE

CAPITAL ACCUMULATION AND THE CIRCULATION OF IMAGES

I. Coffee Production Under Barrios

There is in every social formation a particular branch of production which determines the position and importance of all the others, and the relations obtaining in this branch accordingly determine the relations of all other branches as well. It is as though light of a particular hue were cast upon everything, tingeing all other colors and modifying the specific gravity of everything found in it.¹

- Karl Marx

In the last quarter of the 19th century in Guatemala the "particular branch of production," that affected everything, in Marx's sense, was the production of coffee. Coffee production changed the color and gravity of things and relations in Guatemala. Its production was the vehicle that brought large demands for Indian labor, it brought enormous capital profit for wealthy landowners and with that profit allowed for the full formation of a state that could and did wield a power over Indians more extensive than any previous form of government. Coffee literally laid the ground for what would become a series of 20th century regimes of military violence and aggressive exploitation of Indians.

Each century since the 16th century had philosophies of labor, race and, progress that filtered or mutated into

Guatemala from Europe. In the mid-18th century the Spanish crown attempted to increase taxes and tribute and to change the nature of landownership to allow for more private property and land development. These were known as the Bourbon reforms fueled by European theories of progress and idealism. These idealist reforms continued to protect Indians' right to own land and allowed them to continue supporting themselves through subsistence milpa farming of rice and beans. In this period Indians could successfully use the legal system of the colony to secure what land they were able to obtain after the initial years of conquest and resettlement. In 1739 the Indians of Santa Catarina Pinula could work with an official government land surveyor, known as a agrimensores, to protect their allotments from non-Indian encroachment. A map was drawn, a decision was made, and in this instance, Indian land was protected (figure 5).

With the national independence in 1821, and the first constitution in 1824 another wave of idealistic theories and reforms were written in an attempt to Europeanize the small Latin American country and elevate the Indian to the status of fruitful farmer equal and part of a prosperous utopian vision of growth and development. As the early years of the nation progressed, taxation increased along with a series of land laws that raised suspicion and hostility toward what was perceived as an encroaching government. In 1821 a law was enacted to require all land owners, including Indians,
to obtain official written titles to their property. By and large the law was ignored with no serious repercussions. When the government tried to intervene more forcefully with their hypothetical reforms towards progress they were met with great suspicion and resistance. By 1837 Indians and non-Indians banded with Rafael Carrera to successfully revolt and over turn the new national government. With a different set of ideals the Carrera government actually harkened back to an earlier paternalistic view of the Indian as one in need of special government protection. His 1839 constitution clearly demonstrates this mixture of protective enlightenment ideology:

Although nature has given all men equal rights, their condition in society is not the same....To establish and maintain social equilibrium, the laws must protect the weak against the strong...Thus, the Indian being in this [weak] group, the laws must protect them and better their education, to avoid their being defrauded of what belongs to them in common or as individuals, and so that they will not be molested in the usages and customs learned from their ancestors.

"What belongs to them in common or as individuals," was an unmistakable reference to communal and individual Indian landholdings. The further reference to and respect for Indian usages and customs set Carrera apart from previous governing official in Guatemala since the conquest.

Carrera's presidency, which lasted from 1839 until his death in 1865, was something of a hybrid period of pre-capitalist growth. In the first decades after independence cochineal was the most lucrative national export. Cochineal
was a dye stuff produced by insects that fed on the nopal plant. Cochineal farms were relatively small and increasingly owned by Indians themselves. In 1840 cochineal was exported at a gross national profit of $500,000, by 1854 it grossed $1,757,300.² In the mid-50’s, however, a less expensive, easy to produce synthetic aniline form of cochineal became available, crashing the export market and leaving Guatemala with no substantive product for export.

This unexpected and significant decrease in national export coupled with increasing dissatisfaction from progress-minded entrepreneurs and landowners helped fuel the Liberal overthrow of the Conservative government that continued four years after Carrera’s death. Justo Rufino Barrios, a landowner from the San Marcos region of the country, was the ultimate victor of this overthrow of government. He would run the country for twelve years from 1873-1885. His government instituted the second wave of 19th century economic and agrarian reforms that would bring Guatemala into the international capital market and it did so on the backs of Indians with force, coercion and corruption that still to this day affects the daily lives of all who live in Guatemala.

Barrios represented a small powerful entrepreneurial elite of Guatemala that latched onto coffee as the next

export commodity that could revolutionize the country's economy. His government did all that was possible to support national and international investment into coffee. He made national and Indian communally held land selectively available to developers, and established the first agrarian bank in 1874 that would give loans at little or no interests for the formation of plantations. Given his distrust and disdain for Indians in general he went so far as to try to lure workers from the United States and when that did not succeed he implemented laws and supported practices of debt peonage that forced Indian men and woman throughout Guatemala to become coffee plantation laborers.

His attempts at land appropriation from Indian communities was not entirely systematic; it was, however, successful in freeing up enough arable land to make coffee an extremely successful crop for export. In 1885, at the end of his regime as president, Guatemala produced over fifty one million pounds of coffee, bringing a gross national profit of $4,636,503 for that year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quantity in lbs</th>
<th>Price per lb.</th>
<th>Gross Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>11,322,900</td>
<td>$.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>20,534,600</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>51,516,700</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{3}\text{This chart is adapted from David McCreery's, "Coffee and Class: The Structure of Development in Liberal Guatemala," Hispanic American Review, 56, 3 (August 1976), 458.}\)
The profit from coffee sales primarily went to the small elite of national and international land owners. The accumulated capital also went into transforming the Guatemala government into a the substantial shape of state that could protect its goals and interests through a newly trained and aggressive military mostly made up of Ladinos. Profits from coffee exports allowed the government to increase internal war spending by five times and tripled government spending in general.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Government Spending</th>
<th>War Expenses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1870</td>
<td>$113,736</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$67,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>$303,167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$307</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If and when Indians might attempt resistance to changes brought on by the transformation of the economy, uprisings that were successful with Carrera were quickly and brutally repressed by Barrios. It was at this time that Indians would be subject to state sponsored executions that would become increasingly more common into and through the 20th century. In September of 1884 a group of Indian officials in the highland town of Cantel who attempted to protect individual Indian landholdings from being appropriated for commercial use were shot, execution style, by federal troops.4

In 1877 Barrios reissued a demand for all owned lands to be officially titled. The repercussions for not adhering to this demand could lead to the loss of individual and communal holdings. In Indian towns such as Santiago Atitlán, which bordered on the fertile lands of the southwest coast, vast portions of communal land were appropriated by the Barrios government and sold to coffee plantation owners. Many of the Indians of Santiago and neighboring towns of Lake Atitlán and Quetzaltenango valley no longer had land enough to produce food sufficient for the full year self support of themselves and their families. Working as wage laborers for the production of coffee was their only recourse. Indian men and women began to migrate for 3 or 4 months of the year to the coffee plantations and return to their villages to live on their own small landholdings for the remainder of the year. These wage laborers lost significant portions of their land and of their autonomy. They were unwillingly separated from their families and forced to work as an alienated proletariat in awful conditions. On the plantations they were paid the very least that was possible. Migrant work on the coffee plantations offered Indians no financial gain over their previous lifestyles and only created a severe decrease in the quality of their life.

The loss of communal or individual Indian land was only one element that forced Indians into coffee production. The
other more pervasive form of coercion was debt peonage. Agents connected to different plantations would travel through the Indian villages of the highlands of Guatemala offering Indian men small loans of money. These loans were intended to entrap Indian families into a vicious circle of debt whereby their only means of repayment was to work on the coffee plantations. When this method was not successful in providing enough Indian labor to maintain the growing plantations of coffee Barrios actually required a certain percentage of Indian men from each village to be available as coffee laborers.

Local Indian and Ladino officials were often bribed to become brokers for coffee labor. They would often become collaborators helping to entrap their own people thereby corroding the trust and very infrastructure of local Indian politics and life. Another means by which local Indian villages were affronted was the bolstering of local militia, at that time made up of mostly Ladinos. These militia were distinct from the military. They acted as day to day enforcers of legal changes initiated by the Barrios government. The functions and power of the militia increased Ladino surveillance over Indians and further widened the gap between Ladinos and Indians in general.

In the name of progress, through the avaricious advance of coffee and capital accumulation, Barrios negated and reversed the ideologies of equality advanced by Carrera and
the early governments after national independence. Barrios’ intentions and policies impoverished Indian communities and corroded Indian-Ladino relations in the hopes of aligning Laderos with the entrepreneurial elites who could then use them as part of the infrastructure of the government in its drive to militarize the country for the implementation of economic change.

II. Eadweard Muybridge’s Photographs of Labor and Natural Resources in Central America

It was at the very moment of these devastating changes to Indian life that Eadweard Muybridge, the British photographer of sequential movement, came to Guatemala. He came on the one hand to flee the fallout of a murder trial and on the other hand to promote his career by displaying the lucrative business of coffee in the little known central America country.

In 1872 Leland Stanford, the wealthy horse farm owner and Governor of California had sent for Eadweard Muybridge to prove photographically that the galloping horse actually left the ground with all four legs. Contrary to Stanford, most horse enthusiasts and philologists still believed that some part of one of the four legs was always in contact with the ground even during the swiftest movement of four legged animals. At the time of Stanford’s prestigious invitation, Muybridge was working in English amusement parks and street
fair settings selling glimpses of sequential images that when seen in quick succession simulated movement. It was his growing reputation with this work that attracted Stanford. Ambitious -- and not really that young -- Muybridge agreed to move to San Francisco and set up a sort of experiment with cameras placed at regular distances from one another set off sequentially as the horse moved across the track.

In the midst of his experiments for Stanford, on October 17th, 1874, Muybridge murdered his wife's lover Henry Larkyns with a gun. Though he was acquitted for this crime, due to the then just cause of adultery, his employer Stanford temporarily distanced himself from the scandal, causing Muybridge substantial financial and professional problems. In hopes of restoring his reputation Muybridge turned to the concerns of venture capital in Central America. As must have been news throughout the Western World, the Panama Canal had just been completed and the small countries of the Latin American Isthmus, especially Costa Rica and Guatemala, were quickly becoming places of high profit export of coffee and other raw materials.

In his early attempts to chart the gallop of horses, Muybridge was perfecting his sequential method of representing motion, that is, the change of bodies in space over time. In the newly formed agricultural economies of Central America he would apply this method to chart the
transformation of land and the human body for purposes of capital profit. Muybridge had hoped that the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, both for its tourist and commercial interests, would eventually support his endeavor in these lands of lucrative development. Fueling his hopes, Muybridge very well knew that the Pan America railroad, running from the United States through Mexico and Central America, had just been completed, leaving the steam ship companies in need of lures, such as advertising and photographic profiles, to compete for customers in this time of increased trade and travel into Latin America.5

Though there is no text that accompanies Muybridge’s compilation of images of Guatemala, his selection and arrangement of them constitute a narrative with a particular story to be told of Guatemala’s abundant natural resources and the inroads of the modern industry for the production

5Upon his return from Central America in 1876 Muybridge made five bound copies selected from 200 views and 124 stereoviews. He titled his compilation "The Pacific Coast of Central America and Mexico: The Isthmus of Panama and Guatemala: And the Cultivation and Shipment of Coffee" (figure 6). He sent one copy of his images to the Steamship Company and the remaining four to people in San Francisco who had helped in his murder trial. At the left of one particular edition Muybridge endorsed the book "from his most sincere friend and grateful client," to H.E. Johnston, one of the lawyers who helped with his acquittal. Possibly due to the still negative effect of this trial or for other reasons not entirely evident the Steamship Company never invested in Muybridge’s photographs. In the great San Francisco fire all the negatives burned, and to this day four of the five copies that Muybridge bound himself are all that exist, two of them in the department of special collections at Stanford University.

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and export of coffee. In his selection he includes the
National Bank and the city prison of Guatemala City, both
institutions newly formed by Barrios (figures 7, 8). Both
structures are shot from a slightly lowered perspective to
add weight to their appearance. The image of the bank is
taken at an oblique diagonal, the picture frame cropped in
such a way that the building goes on indefinitely beyond the
scope of our vision increasing its posture as expansive,
formally intact and authoritative. Two men sit at the
opening of the grand portal while one casually appears to
walk about. Similarly, with the prison Muybridge focuses
our attention on the castled corner of the building giving
us an elongated view of the prison expanse to the left and
leaving to our imagination the infinite extent of the
structure to the right. In each doorway to the left, a
figure in black and white holds the entrance; further down a
row of uniformed men stand at what appears to be the main
entrance.

From Muybridge's own remarks concerning his six months
in Guatemala we know he had a formal welcome from the
Barrios Government that considered his project an advantage

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6A portion of Muybridge's photographs from this series
has been published by E. Bradford Burns, Eadweard Muybridge
In Guatemala, 18875: The Photographer as Social Recorder
(Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986). With his
compilation of images Burns has written a brief text giving
context to the historical moment in which Muybridge was
photographing.

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to their global export aspirations. Upon his own account he was offered cooperation by state authorities and access to places difficult of entry. He photographed what he wanted and he photographed his chosen subjects, whether animate or inanimate, in the way he wanted to suit the narrative effect he desired.

In the broad stokes of these photographs the appearance of anything accidental is simply that, a calculated appearance. For instance take one pastoral scene of a seated traveller, a tourist perhaps, facing the lake of Atitlán with the volcano in the distance and local peasant leaning on a staff holding a small horse (figure 9). The visitor is formally placed between two trees on the rock while the Indian peasant appears in an instant immobile and as tame as the animal he tends. Muybridge composes the scene to convey the wonders of the country as accessible to the traveler, the surroundings and inhabitants are there for his pleasure.

Each additional scene of fecund nature is accompanied with a parallel image of nature socialized. One image of falling water in an expanse of abundant foliage is followed by a similar image with a modern bridge and road that can lead in and out demonstrating the presence of the modern and access of mobility to this rich terrain (figure 10,11). In

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the wild, as yet untamed, landscape Muybridge fills the entire frame from top to bottom and left to right with tangled leaves and vines; this is pure nature with no history, no beginning or end. In the following image he gives the viewer a horizon, a man made road that parallels and impacts with the will of capital.

Muybridge’s project in Guatemala was only partly to display the appeal of the country for travel and general investment. The main purpose of his stay, however, was to record an image of the vastly growing coffee industry of the country that the Pacific Steamship company depended on as an investment and export commodity. William Nelson, a company executive, owned one of the largest of these coffee plantations called Las Nubes, on the Pacific coast of the country. It was there that Muybridge would most extensively experiment with creating a portrait of development.

He begins atop a hill looking over the finca Las Nubes with his camera angled down onto the coffee trees that spread out over the land as far as one can see (figure 12). Poised in the left foreground are two Indian men with wooden slats on their backs ready to enter the plantation. Three men in western clothing appear next to them discussing some form of business. For an instant no one moves, allowing Muybridge this opportunity to hold an image of corporate functioning at the edge of the plantation. At the end of his series of plantation images he goes to the port town of
Champerico where, with a moon lit sky, he portrays bundles of coffee being taken out to a large steamship in the distance itself presumably headed for northern markets (figures 13,14).

Once into the plantation we leave the business men behind; the only trace of them remains in the distinct mark of mass production carried out by Indian men and woman. Before images of production Muybridge gives a series of images of Indian women at leisure, attempting to present a view of Indian life and traditions as ongoing and parallel to the demands of production. In one photograph a group of Indian women at Las Nubes are shown bathing in running water that appears as a mist or cloud from the timed exposure (figure 15). Like sequential photographs in his 1887 Animals in Motion, where a bird is depicted in stills that represent different stages of flight, the Indian women seem to each be in a different state of washing (figure 16). One lowers her hand to reach for water, another beginnings to pour water over her head completing the others initial action, and so on. In the Guatemalan landscape, at least here, there is no grid or logical contiguous movement as we have with the bird in flight; there is, however, a similar approach to bodies in space and time. Like the bird, the Indian women are objects of observation, held by the camera's image to be looked at later as a resource of nature, a resource for labor or sexual pleasure.
In another image from Las Nubes Muybridge photographs Indian women at leisure, that is not working in the fields, this time of women preparing tortillas, weaving and transporting water (figure 17). As with the women bathers, here Muybridge seeks to present a daily scene, casual and spontaneous. The composition of the photograph, the careful placement of each woman, however, belies a formal and narrative intention. The vertical slats of the wooden structure introduce a grid of sorts that would become a hallmark of Muybridge's approach to rendering and rationalizing human and animal activity. Each woman at work is separated and connected by the this convenient choice of backdrop of vertical lines. At the left a woman stands with a clay pot of water on her head as still as possible, though slightly blurred from the minute movements necessary for balance; next to her is another woman posed with a large pestle and mortar grinding corn into meal for tortillas. Next is a woman spinning thread, later to be used for weaving, then a woman working on a pelt, and finally a woman slung into a loom attached to the structure weaving. Above them is the thatched roof of the house that further reinforces the composition as a contained balanced image of traditional work. To the right, only slightly in view, is the lush foliage at the edge of the plantation. These images of plantation women washing or weaving is a side interest for Muybridge, an attempt to depict Indian life in
harmony with the focus of his photographic essay, that of the labor to produce coffee for lucrative export.

Within the plantation, along the road, into the thick of coffee trees Muybridge comes across a group of coffee workers gathering beans (figure 18). He stops, sets up his camera and begins to arrange what he has come upon. Ladders for picking coffee line the road side. An Indian man is asked to stand in mid-walk holding a ladder while bare-breasted women hold their pose ascending other ladders or balancing flat baskets of coffee on their heads. Some of the women appear to be young adults while others, especially the two women to the left appear to be just teenagers, twelve or thirteen perhaps. The Indian men are dressed minimally in loin clothes expect for one in the distance at center who appears to be some kind of foreman. Though each worker is in the midst of some form of activity, their poses are somewhat wooden, like the ladders which Muybridge uses as a grid that visually supports his composition. Muybridge returns to this motif in an photograph where Indian women and children stand beside or behind a series of ladders with woven baskets set upon them (figure 19). In his composition of images of coffee production Muybridge vacillates between the sheer beauty of raw material: lush foliage, water, Indian bodies, and a compression of this material into a rational, stable resource. Ladders as grids, bodies in sequence suite this dual need within the realm of
photographic representation. Such images document the desire to maintain control over that which is at once foreign and necessary for the advance of capital. The medium of photography, that can so well compose reality, was the logical instrument available to hold such foreign elements and project them into a credible mold eliminating the dangerous elements of variability. Yet, the Indians in these photographs as noticeable stilled. They are asked to pose, be subservient to the image making process as they are required to follow the rules of the plantation. There is nothing intentional in these images of their inner life. All we have is the trace of what has been composed through the image of their bodies.

Muybridge’s photographs of Indians at leisure and Indians at work on the coffee plantations depict a surface reality that appears productive and calm. Like trees and bridges Indian men and women appear to be useful objects within the mechanisms of capital production and accumulation. His brief quotations of quotidian life are as wooden as the stilled images of workers. The harsh realities that were actually lived by Indian men and women as they were forced into labor on the plantations is left out, to be expressed in other visual forms by Indians themselves.
III. Stories of an Image Named San Simon

Since the late 19th century and into the present there is particular image created by Indians that stands out as an artifact of national independence and the arrival of international capital. This is the image of San Simon. He originated in the highlands of Guatemala around the turn of the 20th century, yet his cult has spread throughout the country from Port Barrios in the south west to the Mexican border in the north east. With recent refugees and immigrants his cult has spread internationally, with one of his largest and most active shrines in Los Angeles, California. Unlike most saints, his genealogy cannot be traced to the early conquest or colonial periods. Rather, the image of San Simon grew out of the Indian imagination, shocked by the events surrounding the formation of the state and the late 19th century Barrios land reforms when Guatemala became immersed in international trade.

San Simon of Guatemala is not the New Testament Apostle Saint Simon even though attributes of the Christian Apostle appear intermittently with his image or in his stories. The figure which this image depicts is considered by all sectors of Guatemalan society to be the Santo Indígena; but, strangely he is most often, and conspicuously dressed as a Ladino (Ladino meaning of assumed Spanish and not Indian decent). In one popular pamphlet he is described as

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marginal, and compared to the Indian peasants of the
country, identified in the pamphlets as being kept out of
places in which he should be acknowledged. He is violently
kept out of churches; and, in full form San Simon can only
be found in his own separate spaces. In almost all of these
stories he appeared one day about a hundred years ago to
help the poor with problems that they would not ordinarily
bring to other saints, problems involving maleficios (evil
spells), money, vengeance and envy.

In San Andrés Itzapa they speak of San Simon as a good
and wealthy Ladino landowner who lived at the end of the
19th century. He gave money and food to poor peasants
(campesinos Indígenas) and when he died he became revered in
the form of a carved image called San Simon. The church in
San Andrés Itzapa, as in other places, did not recognize or
acknowledge his miraculous powers so the people built a
separate chapel to house and protect his image. In markets
where religious images, talismans, healing herbs and weaving
designs are sold, Xeroxed reproductions of this particular
San Simon from Itzapa appear among images of Christ and the
panoply of other saints (figure 20). In 1972, however, this
carved figure, from which all widely known mass produced
images of San Simon are made, was inadvertently burnt down
by people praying with candles, incense and alcohol. A
local sculptor, named Benjamin Flores Rangel, carved a new
image of San Simon of Itzapa, which today is more carefully
guarded in his chapel (figure 51). But the Xerox of the old, now burnt image, Xeroxed so many times, has begun to take on a life of its own, and people begin to refer to it as a photograph of that historical Ladino who was wealthy and good to campesinos. The dark areas of the inarticulate Xerox become the trace of gazing eyes and a sense of air between his hands. With mechanical reproduction, the referent, that is the supposed historical figure of San Simon, does not fall further away, but strangely becomes more real and life-like. We have seen this particular effect before with the images of Christ from the market place. The life-likeness of the Xerox comes as much from the unexpected effect of mass reproduction as it comes from the projected desires of a populace in need of an image which can reflect the social sphere of tangled identities and the traps particular to commerce.

With this first of many stories, already multi-faceted itself, we only begin to cross a threshold where images and historical figures intertwine. The figure of San Simon is like a mirror that reflects all that is placed on it and in front of it, ranging from a wooden carved indigenous mask to the uniforms of the military or dress of a Ladino business man. He is like money, something that can be exchanged for practically anything. He literally has an entire repertoire of clothing that his keepers change according to paid requests from his supplicants. On one day he may appear in
a certain business man's black suit, either brought by a
business man of Guatemala City seeking protection, or
brought by someone wanting to evoke the figure of business
on which to place a curse (figure 21). On his lap on that
particular day someone has also paid to have their towel
placed on his lap and someone else has arranged for their
woven tapestry to be placed behind him. On another day
within the same month he wears a light colored suit with a
towel of the Virgin of Guatalupe placed behind him all
arranged for a different set of supplicants (figure 22). He
has been seen in women's clothing, and one image which you
can buy at his altar in Itzapa is an image of him in high
ranking military attire (figure 23).

San Simon is irreverent towards history -- anxious and
hungry, like the market-place, to represent and consume any
identity or any past that has value in the present. As a
Santo Indigena he can also be a kind of scapegoat that is
suppose to represent all that is savage and superstitious in
the imagined figure of the unconverted Indian. He is
accessible to the people from the city and to tourists as a
strange modern deity. His extraordinary visibility offers
an image and a way to brush off the profundity and efficacy
of rural beliefs about healing with images, while at the
same time, San Simon can work like a smoke screen to
mesmerize and sometimes seduce the visitor, keeping them
locked in his gaze with the reflection of their own desires.

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The San Simon of Itzapal is only, in part, thought to be the image of a wealthy Ladino. Beyond, or in some ways part of his ability to evoke scandal or to mirror the elements of commerce, San Simon is often considered synonymous and connected to Judas Iscariot, the one who sold Christ for thirty pieces of silver (Mat. 27:3). Simultaneous to this story, in the minds of many Indians, San Simon was also at one time the actual effigy of Judas. The story that some Indians tell from Itzapal is that one year during Good Friday the effigy of Judas was hung out in front the church. There was nothing particularly strange in this, since all over Guatemala effigies of Judas are hung in this manner during Holy Week, usually with an inscription condemning him as the traitor of Christ, or an inscription in which he confesses his own betrayal. In many places, including Itzapal, while he hangs there in front of the church, people come up to him to ask for favors, especially favors concerning commerce. At the end of the day the Judas effigy is taken down, beaten and burned.

One year, however, there was such a large crowd around Judas, asking him for favors concerning their land and lack of money, that they decided not to beat or burn him. Instead they ran off with him, away from the church and hide him in the back of someone's home. Over time people called him Simon Judas, Hermano Simon and eventually San Simon.
With wear and age the original effigy of the unburnt Judas fell apart, so that by the time it was replaced by a more durable wooden figure he was known as San Simon. At the time of his transfer into a wooden sculpture the Indians of Itzapa built him a chapel. It is this very wooden figure that we have mentioned before, from the Good Ladino story, whose image is mass produced as San Simon (figure 20). It is also this figure which devotees ironically burnt down, as if the original repression of the burning of Judas had its return in the form of this accidental fire.

The oration to San Simon, mass produced and available throughout Guatemala, reads:

Oh! powerful San Simon, I a humble creature disregarded by everyone, come to prostrate myself before you because your spirit helps me in all my acts and in every danger in which it is necessary.

If it is love, you will deter the man that I want, if it is commerce, I will never fall because your spirit will not allow sorcerers to have more power than you, if it is an enemy, it is you who will conquer, if occult enemies appear they will go as soon as I call out your name. Oh! powerful Simon, I offer you your cigar, your tortillas, your alcohol and your candles if you remove from me every danger that I may encounter; like debts I cannot pay at this time. I beg you to defeat the judge and win him to my side, for through your name may all be forgotten, and I beg you in the name of the one who you sold for thirty pieces of silver which were given to the most needy people.

Therefore I beg you to grant me the milagros that I pray for. Oh! JUDAS SIMON, I call you brother, in every moment because you are in the land, in the mountains, lowlands, forests, cities, countryside, towns and houses.

Here San Simon, Judas Simon is the historical Judas who betrayed Christ. In the Gospel according to Saint Matthew, after Christ is taken, Judas "cast down the pieces of silver
in the temple and departed to hang himself (Matt.27:5)." The Priests, however knew they could not keep the "blood money" so they took counsel, "and bought with them (the silver pieces) the potter's field in which to bury strangers (Matt.27:7)." The Guatemalan oration and the Gospel have each in their own time crystallized out of the minds of people through divine inspiration or through the need for divine protection in matters of commerce or the market place where the exchange of human life often occurs.

According to the pamphlet, Judas sold Christ so that he, Judas would have the power to intercede for the poor in matters of economy. There is a strange logic in this, which persistently recurs. Popular publications and the shrine of San Simon at Itzapa are just one place where such strands of thought intertwine. In the wake of violent changes to Indian life, brought on by the advances of the Ladino businessman as the large landowner and capitalist, it is here in effigy that the landowning Ladino reappears through the Indian imagination. As a diminutive effigy of the landowner San Simon twists in between the murkiness of commerce and maleficios to heal the wounds brought on by the figure he mirrors. Judas the betrayer becomes the savior. Inside the aesthetics of transformation that takes place in the figure of this effigy are elements of inversion and irony wielded within the discourse brought on by the arrival of capital into Guatemala.
In the cofradia of San Andrés in San Andrés Xecul, in the Quetzaltenango valley, there is another figure revered as San Simon (figure 24). This San Simon also has the shiny white polychromed face of San Simon in Itzapa. He wears the traditional dark suit with a silver tipped cane, has a cigarette in a pipe held in his mouth, wears sunglasses and a Texan hat, all attributes associated with a Ladino of wealth. The guardian of the place, when asked, tells a story of how a good Ladino who owned a lot of local land is this figure now worshiped as San Simon. But in the same moment he tells how this is Judas who God needed to betray Christ so he could be sacrificed to save all people. His emphasis was on how God needed Judas to realize the full effect of the Passion. This Indian guardian of the image of San Simon in his town spoke fluidly and philosophically; in his job as caretaker he had thoroughly thought about these things and felt comfortable telling one divergent and incongruous story after another.

In a story by Borges called Three Versions of Judas, a fictitious theologian, considered insane by his colleagues contends that,

Judas’s betrayal was not accidental; it was a preordained fact which has its mysterious place in the economy of redemption.8

Borges' scholar goes on to reason that in such an economy,

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"Judas in some way reflects Jesus." That is, in betraying Christ Judas sacrificed himself to hell and saved the world. At the end of many circumlocutions the scholar infamously concludes that when God made himself into a man to save the world it was not through Jesus, instead; "He was Judas."

The minds which imagine and materialize into images or a text such interpretations of Judas go against the grain of standard assumptions. They go beyond the surface and logic of Christian theology into a mystical everyday or esoteric realm to crack open the mythologies of their time, rearranging and transforming doctrine to suit the present. Through the image of San Simon the doctrine of Economic Law also suffers a change and transformation. The wealthy Ladino, almost always the oppressor of the poor Indian, becomes their benefactor or saint, just as the betrayer becomes the savior. This refracted and twisted semblance, arrayed through San Simon, is precisely where he derives his power. It is not simply an inversion or masquerade, but a shattering of logic and the obvious. Through the fissures and discordance of such a shattering the image of San Simon accumulates and contains tensions and ironies which suit pleas for money and the envy and vengeance that money can produce. The efficacy of the image of San Simon is not in its ability to reflect things the way they really are, but rather to scramble them, to take in hypocrisy and incomprehensibility as a way to heal the effects of such
contingencies.9

As an image to pray to and ask favors from San Simon appears in at least five places in the highlands other than San Andrés Itzapal and San Andrés Xecul. In Nahualá, Zunil, San Jorge, San Lucas de la Laguna and in Santiago Atitlán he resides in the cofradia of Santa Cruz, usually placed next to multiple images of the crucified or entombed Christ. In each of these towns, except Santiago Atitlán, he is conspicuously dressed as a Ladino, in a full suit, often with dark sunglasses, surrounded by candles and the sent of alcohol and cigars. In Santiago Atitlán, however, he is dressed as an Indian (figure 25). He wears the hand woven and embroidered pants of a man from Santiago and instead of the glossy painted faces of other San Simons he has a dark wooden mask for a face. His body is built up with a conglomerate of materials. Old cloth wrapped around corn husks constitute the mass of his torso which is then fitted with boots that peer out from his woven pants. Over his woven clothing there are numerous scarfs tucked under his mask. They are gifts from pilgrims who come from throughout the highlands. Towels, like the ones placed on the lap of

San Simon in Itzapa cover his back, and they too are gifts from supplicants. On his masked face sits a large Texan hat that is also adorned with different pieces of cloth. Gifts of cloth that have accumulated over the years are kept in large wooden boxes against the walls of the small dark room.

There are many different wooden masks which have served for the face of this San Simon. Most of them originate, as most things and stories regarding San Simon, from the turn of the century. In 1950 two of the masks were confiscated by a group of Catholic priests who unsuccessfully attempted to stamp out what they saw as idolatrous worship to this figure. One of these confiscated masks was found in 1952 by an anthropologist M. Michael Mendelson, who was allowed to keep the mask upon the condition that he give it to the Musée de l’Homme in Paris where it is today.\textsuperscript{10}

Shamans and Indians who come to this image call him San Simon, especially in orations, but he is usually known as Maximon. The Indians of Santiago consider him to be the first manifestation of the image, related to all the others as the original. Contrary to the stories told in Itzapa or San Andrés Xecul there is no story told of a Good Ladino. According to the healers and devotes in Santiago Maximon can help with illnesses of love, envy and vengeance. Like all

\textsuperscript{10}E. For his discussion of this finding and interpretations of Maximon se M. Michael Mendelson, "The King, The Traitor, and The Cross: An Interpretation of a Highland Maya Religious Conflict," Diogenes, Number 21, Spring, 1958 pp.1-10.
the other images in this strange sequence of San Simons he is also considered to be or be related to Judas. He is taken out during Holy week and placed in front of the Church as other Judas figures are throughout the highlands.

The name Maximon may be a variation on San Simon or a conflation of the saint name with the Indian deity called Mam. Mam or the Mames, as pluralized in Spanish today, form governed the native agricultural cycle. According to Mendelson these Mames would travel like wind and clouds until they came into caves to copulate with their female counterparts to produce rain that would in turn make the land bear fruit. This story of the Mames linked to Maximon seems to parallel or replace the absent figure of the Good Ladino Landowner. In all stories and manifestations of San Simon or Maximon, the basic components echo one another. There is no way to determine which is the original story. All that is evident is that issues of land, of mercurial identity and overturning and twisting line up to give this figure its power and efficacy for highland Indians. He is a conglomeration of all that circulates on and beneath the surface of land and love and commerce.

On one level people appeal to San Simon much in the same way that appeal to other saints. They come with food, candles and alcohol to lay a table of sorts that is an

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offering and the initiation of a dialogue with San Simon. At his altar in Itzapa people commission plaques that thank him for his favors, plaques that are similar to offerings wherever saints are revered (figure 26). The pitch of reverence to him, however, reaches a kind of frenzy. The hundreds of candles lit for him leaves such an enormous residue of smoke that people can literally reach out to him by placing their hand on the wall of his chamber, leaving a trace of themselves (figure 27).

His range of access is much broader than other saints. Traditional white candles are used to call him, yet so are red, yellow, green, blue, and black candles, each color indicating a specific power he is thought to hold. Red candles are for favors of love and yellow for protection, black is against enemies and envy and rose is for health. With the appropriate formula of gifts, color of candles, amount of alcohol and the use of cigars one can lift an evil spell or cast one, protect a child or gain luck in business. Some of these formulas are written on the back of his oration; many more are popularly known (figure 20). For desperate situations, however, when an address to San Simon needs to be handled delicately, an expert is sought out and paid for.

Throughout Guatemala there are certain people who are perceived as closer to San Simon. Something in their personality or inclination gives them an affinity to him.
Often these people are shamans or town healers, in other areas they are out and out called brujas (witches in Spanish). These healers can intervene for you in your supplications. They speak directly to him, they tell you what candles to light, how much money to leave and most importantly they can do what is called reading the cigar. Wherever San Simon is he is always surrounded by some substance that when lit leaves an ash, usually a cigar. Like a candle the cigar transforms when lit, but here the smoke travel through the body and leaves the ash as a trace. How the smoke goes comes out, the path it takes, how the ashes fall all are incidents to be interpreted. And when it is your small piece of land that is in question or your lover or your enemy those that are closest to San Simon know best how to read each detail. Sessions in conversation with him are like back room deals worked out with cigars and alcohol. His cult is a kind of poker game and the stakes resound with all that began with the coming of statehood and capital into the far reaches of Guatemala.
CHAPTER FOUR

TRAUMA AND ITS RECURRENT IMAGES

I. Money

On the one quetzal bill, newly designed and first printed as currency in the early 1980's, the Guatemalan state constructs an image of itself which belies something of a pathology in its psychological structure (figure 28). Ancient Indians are represented and valorized in multiple forms as a voluptuous woman, stern warrior and a schematized pyramid, while a Ladino general ultimately presides over this fragmented state iconography. Contemporary Indians are conspicuously absent.

On the left side of the bill is an image of a bare-breasted ancient Indian woman holding out a pot with a bundle on her back. This female figure appears to be a composite of many female Maya deities, primarily the Moon Goddess. In the Dresden Codex, Almanac 35 the Moon Goddess sits with legs folded and her forearm extended for support (figure 29).¹ She is bare from the waist up with a prominent breast exposed next to her arm. All her features

are strong, almost aggressive in their heavy detail. From the Chilam Balam we learn that the Moon Goddess was an extremely mercurial deity, voracious in her sexual appetites and effective in knowing and determining the destiny of humans. She is associated with disease, child birth, plant growth, and in the early colonial period, with the Virgin Mary herself.

On the quetzal bill all of her aggressiveness and strong attributes are replaced by a curvaceous submissive availability. Here her breasts and hips are provocatively exaggerated and she holds out her pot as if to offer it and herself across the bill of money to the 1920’s military General Jose Maria Orellana whose portrait is prominent to the right of her. Orellana’s profile comes out in relief against the schematic form of a Maya pyramid. The visual arrangement of elements constructs a hierarchy in which the General is the dominant beneficiary of the power and beauty of a feminized ancient Maya world. In this visual construct Orellana presides over ancient history as well as the value of money.

To the left of the bare-breasted Indian woman, however, is the watermark of the bill, the face of Tecun Uman the famous last Quiché hero who was treacherously defeated in the 16th century by the conquistador Pedro Alvarado (figure 30). The watermark literally validates the money, makes it worth something: yet, unless you hold it up to light the
mark is invisible, acting like the unconscious of the bill, haunting the visible relations, like the return of the repressed, always present at each question of value.

In this iconography of the state, something of the power relations of Guatemala in the 1980’s is signified. When we look closely and imagine this money in circulation, we know that its value comes from the wealth of the land and the predominance of Indian labor, yet rarely in the form of money ever distributed back to the laboring Indian. The paradox of this money and its circulation are evidence of a twisted, pervasive logic that makes the image of an ancient Indian its nationalist root and issue of value, while at the same time denigrates and discounts the contemporary Indian. Feminized or made invisible the ancient Indian is tame, acceptable and included in national iconography. Contemporary Indians of the 1980’s, however, were excluded from this imagery and from state identity itself. The contemporary Indian is relegated as a being to be manipulated, exploited and demeaned.

II. The Military

In the twentieth century, two hundred years after Archbishop Cortés y Larraz surveilled the highland towns of Guatemala, the relations between government authority and Indian subjects had fundamentally changed. Roads and
economic infrastructures infiltrated even the furthest regions of Chajul and Cotzal, linking them and their Indian inhabitants to the needs and drives of international commercial markets. With the brief exception of the Arbenz government of the 1950’s, the interests and agendas of foreign and national plantation landowners presided and were protected by an increasingly large military. In 1950 Arbenz won the presidency on a platform of social reform and land distribution favoring the unrepresented and oppressed Indians of the country. In 1954 the United States, under Eisenhower, supported the assassination of Arbenz, which halted any possibility for social change and brought military rule to Guatemala for the next thirty years. In the 1960’s a group of former generals, intellectuals and Indian leaders supportive of Arbenz went into to the mountains to form the first resistance army of Guatemala, called from that moment on the infamous Guerrilla. Over the next thirty years the Guerrilla was never really as large or formidable as the national military that would be formed in hyperbolic numbers.²

In this post-Arbenz period, to further subject Indians into labor on the coffee and cotton plantations and to suppress Indians resistant to aggressive abduction of their

land, military bases were placed throughout the highlands including ones in Sacapulas and Cotzal. From the 1960’s onward the military was no longer made up of mostly Ladino men. Indian men and boys in villages were forcibly rounded up twice a year to serve at least 1 1/2 years, mostly as foot soldiers. Once they completed the minimum time, if they did not remain in the army, they were required to serve as Civic Patrol scouts a certain number of days a year. As members of the Civic Patrol they were armed and posted in their own towns to guard against insurgency and to report any suspicious activities. In the 1980’s, between forced recruits and mandatory Civic Patrol, Indian men constituted over 60% of the armed forces of Guatemala. When Indian men were enlisted they were given standard crew cuts and military uniforms. In this attire they were no longer identified as Indians; they could no longer wear the heterogeneous clothing specific to their regions: instead they became interchangeable pieces of a military apparatus whose sole purpose was to keep Indians in a state of abjection and to protect commercial access to land and labor. Once conscripted the individual freedom and person of Indian men were violated, and in this state they were forced to terrorize their own people.

During the 1980’s the simple sentence written by hundreds of journalists and historians, "the military is killing the Indian population of Guatemala", was fraught
with the deepest of contradictions, for the foot soldiers of
Guatemala were mostly Indians themselves. What these
soldiers witnessed in their own acts of violence, what they
were forced to believe about Indians, all remained with them
after their years of service when they attempted to re-enter
their communities. Indian families were literally torn
between the violence of serving the military and the
violence of being "disappeared," maimed or killed by it.

Between March 23rd and August 6th of 1982, under the
military rule of General Efran Rios Montt, there were
nineteen different massacres of Indians in rural villages by
the military. On March 23rd in the towns of Parraxtut, El
Pajarito and Pichiquil in the highlands departments of
Quiché and Huehuetenango more than five hundred Indians were
killed. Between March 30th and April 2nd in the Quiché town
of Chinique over an hundred Indians were killed. In June in
the Alta Verapaz town of Chise one hundred and sixty entire
Indian families were killed.3

Under these circumstances who was the enemy and what
was being killed became increasingly more difficult to
comprehend and grasp. Rarely were the victims actual armed
Guerrillas: mostly they were Indians from highland villages,
or social organizers from the city massacred as a display of

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3 An extensive list of massacres in Guatemala in 1982 is
given in, Riccardo Falla's "The Massacre at the Rural Estate
of San Francisco - July, 1982," Cultural Survival Quarterly,
volume 7, Spring 1893, number 1, p.43.
force against the very notion of subversion embodied in the idea or image of the Indian. When it was massive killing in the mountains, such as those listed above, Indians were faced with one another in a form of horrific self destruction. The effects of such a sadistic orchestration of violence leaves its trace in conspicuously desperate and excessive strategies. The military’s mode of destroying and killing was aimed at killing something beyond the grave and something beyond death. It was a form of violence that was meant to keep Indians suspended in the work of trauma and mourning.

On July 12th, 1982 at 11:00am, six hundred foot soldiers, mostly Indian recruits, came into the town of San Francisco in the northern department of Huehuetenango. When they first arrived they demanded that the town Indians give them two head of cattle. They invited the people of the town to join them in a feast. No one acquiesced so the soldiers ate on their own. The colonel in charge then ordered all the men of the town to gather in the Court House and all the women and children were gathered in the church. Shortly after this the soldiers went into the church, just a few meters from the courthouse and began to senselessly kill the women and children. A few of the Indian women were singled out and taken to private homes near by to be raped and then killed. The men sequestered in the court house could hear and see fragments of the massacre and desecration
of their families. Not a single woman or child survived this massacre.

The soldiers, exhausted from the effort of killing and raping, butchered the first of the two cows, ate until they were revived and then began to kill the men in the courthouse. They began with older men and then proceeded to shoot the rest. Tried of killing them one at a time the soldiers through hand grenades into to the court house attempting to kill all those that remained. A few men, however, hid themselves beneath the carnage of their neighbors and were latter able to escape through a window in the court house as the soldiers butchered and ate the second cow. Covered in blood and deeply traumatized these few men walked for days across the border into Mexico into the town of Tziscao, Chiapas, where they were given shelter and safety. It is from these few surviving witnesses that we have detailed testimony of the massacre. Over three hundred Indians were killed that day in San Francisco.

"We were inside the courthouse watching. All of us were there. I have to tell you what I saw, it does not matter anymore. Everything was death, already. The people were dying, dying. I was trapped like a fish in a net..."

"Finally they brought out the last child, he was a little one, maybe two or three years old. They stabbed him and cut out his stomach."

"They killed us like animals."

"They killed three old men with a blunt machete like you kill a sheep."
"All for nothing. The soldiers did not say, 'This is your crime, and here is the proof.' Nobody had done anything. Who knows why this happened? They did not accuse anyone of any crimes. They just killed them, that was all."

"What shock I was in. Like a dunce. Nothing was clear, not even who I was. I was not sad, I was not thinking about anything. I had not eaten, I had no clothes. Nothing."\textsuperscript{5}

The testimonies contain an imperative to see and retell what has been seen. At the same time there is the presence of a void or nothingness in response to what they have witnessed. Violence has been choreographed and performed. People have been made into objects of a spectacle and the witnesses reveal the state of trauma in which they are left as survivors. This search for metaphors to convey reality, "they killed us like animals," or the stuttered speech at the edge of something unspeakable, "I was sad, I was not thinking about anything, I had not eaten, I had no clothes, Nothing," present a state of mind in search of bridges back from senseless desecration.

The Indian town of San Francisco was part of a large Ladino owned cattle farm. Guerilla from the mountains between there and nearby Mexico were known to steal cattle from the farm for their sustenance. This may have provoked

\textsuperscript{5} These are quotations from over seventy pages of testimony published in, \textit{Voices of the Survivors: The Massacre at Finca San Francisco}. Cambridge, MA: Cultural Survival Inc., 1983.
the massacre; however, it does not explain it. The military could have hampered this traffic in beef without brutally and obscenely massacring the entire Indian inhabitants of the town. There were to be no witnesses to this event. All that was suppose to remain was the debris of massacre, no subjective account was suppose to survive. The display of force was to be totalizing, thereby adding to the mythic powers of the military as they wanted to see themselves and as they wanted to be seen. These soldiers were meant to feel the power of destroying life with impunity, with no repercussions or conscience. It was an exercise to create an image of the soldier for himself and an image of the soldier out into the rural countryside for Indians to fear.

III. The Public Mutilation of Petrocinio Menchú Tum

Contrary to the San Francisco massacre, many ritualized killings of Indians in the mountains were distinctly meant to be witnessed. Staged events of ritualized violence against Indian projected and circulated an image of the "soldier" and the "Indian". On such event took place up above the town of Chajul on September 9th, 1979 when a sixteen year-old Indian boy named Petrocinio Menchú Tum was kidnapped and tortured by soldiers. He was from an Indian family that lived in the region. They were particularly
vocal and active in resistance to aggressive seizures of Indian land and military brutality towards Indians. His sister Rigoberta Menchú escaped persecution, and as a refugee in Europe wrote her testimony.\(^5\) In her book she describes the conditions of her life and that of her family during the 1970's and 80's. Her mother, father, and brother were each killed by the military; two of her younger siblings died of starvation and pesticide poisoning on the plantations in the south. Towards the end of her book she describes the torture and public execution of her brother, Petrocinio. He was abducted with twenty other Indians, all of whom were tortured and later displayed and publicly burnt in the town of Chajul on September 24th, 1979.

When the soldiers first abucted him they beat him and cut parts of his body. Then they shaved his head, flayed part of the skin off his skull, tied and bound his testicle, and cut portions from the soles of his feet. "When they had done with him, he didn’t look like a person anymore... he couldn’t see anymore, they’d even put stones into his eyes, my brother's eyes."\(^6\) He, along with twenty other Indians, tortured in equally sadistic ways, were brought into the

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\(^6\)Ibid., p. 172.
center of town in Chajul. Each of them had their tongues cut off or slit. The soldiers forcibly gathered Indians from the surrounding towns to witness the public display of these Indians prisoners they labelled as subversives. The military captain then made a speech regarding the dangers of resistance of any kind, and according to Menchú he "gave a panoramic description of all the power they had, "the power of the Guatemalan military." 7 After this speech, in the midst of crying and traumatized witnesses, the soldiers poured gasoline over the bound and tortured bodies of the twenty Indian prisoners and burnt them to death in the town square.

Throughout the late seventies and eighties under the military rule of Lucas Garcia and then Ríos Montt such brutal acts against Indians were a constant phenomenon. In these acts of public cruelty there is a certain circulation of images. I recount them not solely to expose individual acts of violence but to reveal more clearly the workings of a society sick with misrepresentations and sick with the trauma of witnessing. Menchú writes, "the thing is that the government put about this image of us, of our family, as if we were monsters, as if we were some kind of foreigners, aliens." 8 Through visual and aural

7Ibid., 178.

8Ibid., 172.
representations Indians were made into something abstract, reduced to the level of refuse, an image of a people degraded and in need of being more than just killed. They were literally covered in refuse, left with open wounds to fester so that Indians would become, through acts of state terror, the image of filth that had been projected upon them.

As a maid working for a Ladino family in Guatemala City Rigoberta describes her own state of being physically abject, that is literally dirty from long hours of travel with no possibility of washing. 9 When her father comes to visit at her job he too is filthy from long hours of travel with no shelter or food, so filthy that the woman of the house refuses to allow him to enter their premises. The condition of filth that they are in, however, is an involuntary state of abject poverty and blocked access to the wealth that the Ladino woman of the city has in abundance. Her wealth and the wealth of the country is accumulated from Indian labor, yet it is the Indian which must be kept in a category below that of animals.

When the military brutally tortured Petrocinio and massacred him with a group of Indians in the town square of Chajul it was impart to instill an image into the minds of all that witnessed such utter cruelty. It is an obscene

9Ibid., Chapter XIV.

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cruelty that seeps into the mind over time and interrupts dreams, and sleep and waking thoughts. All this is done in the attempt to institute a fear or paralysis of movement and thought, to keep the Indian population from being able to respond to the circumstances of their lives.

The meaning of these brutal acts does not make sense. The cruelty of the punishment of Indians in front of Indians who know the innocence of their own people goes beyond comprehensible signification, and perhaps that is its intention. Bypassing all reason, these acts themselves come from and invade the unconscious registers of those who perpetrate and those who witness. A spell of sorts is cast, a punishment is luridly visualized, but what or who the enemy really is left vague or left out, leaving a conspicuous void into which the very bodies of Indians are emptied. There is an aesthetic here at work, not a beautiful one, but none the less a set of forms, performed and visualized. It can be the place for the historian of images to register and begin to decipher the workings of such ephemeral though extremely powerful visual phenomena.

The specific form of Petrocinio’s body after he had been mutilated, the performance of the collective burning of him along with twenty other Indians in the center of town, Rigoberta’s own image of her abject state and that of her father -- these are all visual effects that imprint on the minds of subjects on both sides of the formation.
Such images shape not only notions of reality but reality itself so much so that something equivalent to the breaking of a spell is needed to reverse the assumptions, prejudices and self depreciation that comes in their wake.

V. A Felled Forest and a Full Church - San Mateo Ixtatán

At one of the highest peaks of the Cuchematanes mountains, just before Guatemala turns into Mexico, is the town of San Mateo Ixtatán. Almost all the inhabitants are Indians, except for a cluster of Ladino merchants and a Texan priest. Because it is so remote and close to a potentially subversive border the military would systematically ravage through this area, not far from the town of San Francisco where so many Indians were massacred. Young, mostly Indian soldiers, are brought in to intimidate and sometimes kill Indians of San Mateo leaving their bodies in fragments along the roadside.

Related to this display of abused Indian bodies is the selective decimation of the landscape. In the mountain landscape below the town of San Mateo Ixtatán, there was a very dense rain forest, which allowed the Guerrilla to occasionally ambush convoys of the military in the area. In 1987, to avoid ambush, soldiers were ordered to cut down trees within a hundred meters of the road and with random
cutting to thin the entire forest within eyesight (figure, 31,32). In the wake of this maneuver soldiers left the trees cut down helter skelter. For miles all one could see were trees fallen at odd angles on top of each other, left to rot. Indians of the area, who depend on wood for cooking and heat in this cold mountain region, were too frightened to gather or use this fallen wood so brutally cut and chaotically spawned. It was a cemetery of trees, like unburied bodies; a constant visual reminder of a random and excessive violence. The sight of these fallen trees constituted another form of visual terror, which fills you with a relentless sense of waste and death.

In the town of San Mateo Ixtatán, surrounded by fallen trees, you could very rarely see any Indian men. They were the ones most vulnerable to accusations and torture by the travelling soldiers on their way to the main base in the region in Barillas. The entire town, for most of the three days that I was there, was deserted of any people. In the church, however, there were often seven or eight Indian women talking and lighting candles at disparate places on the church floor (figure 33). These Indian woman transformed the church with their presence to the point that even the Texan priest could not discern elements of Christianity in their reverence to what on the surface appeared to be Christian icons.

Most of the Indian woman faced forward, sitting in pews
or kneeling on the floor. When I first came into the church I could hear them and then saw them dressed in the hand woven cloth particular to San Mateo. Above their heads, up at the coffers of the church, was similar cloth made into streamers placed at intervals towards the altar. When I turned back towards the door I noticed a large cross leaning up against the back church wall with a series of candles placed at its base (figure 34). I had never seen such a large cross in a church, and certainly never seen one placed in a back corner. I sat and listened to the women pray and then noticed that four other Indian women had arrived and were sitting by the large wooden cross at the back wall (figure 35). When I came to ask their permission to photograph they laughed, not seeming to understand my Spanish, or Spanish at all, but nodded their heads in acquiescence to my camera (figure 36). For the next hour I sat with them and listened. They were doing a kind of visual and aural work impervious to my presence.

Sitting towards the altar or back towards the large cross they spoke for long periods of time, not just in the prescribed language of prayers but in a form of conversation. Shut out of almost all social, political and economic discourse, the abundance of their language here was particularly noticeable. Here is where they speak and visualize something of their reality.

To enclose their altars filled with saints, the Virgin
and Christ, they use brightly painted boxes covered with large sheets of plastic instead of glass (figure 37). The icons inside the boxes are simply shrouded. Behind the plastic the icons appear as if under water (figure 38). Even close up we see them from a distance. The expanse of time between body and object, between where you are and what you are looking at, has the harrowing effect of an ongoing story. There is something happening - a spectacle without closure. Through the random objects of the market and imported saints and plastic covers, these Indian women were working out something of the incomprehensibility of their surroundings. What had become random and violent on the outside of the church, was here on the inside reconsidered, revisited.

V. Tortured Saints of San Juan Cotzal

In the town of Cotzal in the northern highlands of Guatemala, the people tell a story about the images of saints in their church, how one day in the mid-1980’s a group of soldiers from the local base came in to hunt subversives. They couldn't find any, so in frustration they began to randomly kill members of the town. Abruptly the soldiers stopped their killing of Indians and with no warning went into the church and there smashed altars and cut wooden limbs off the bodies of images of saints and

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Christ and Mary.

After the soldiers left, the Indians of the town gathered the images and placed them like refugees up against the wall, some with missing limbs exposed and others just standing there looking out over the pews (figure 39). Other broken saints were placed back up by the main altar and covered with bits of old cloth wrapped around their broken bodies (figure 40, 41). The shattered or cracked panes of glass for altar boxes were left as they were and saints with tattered limbs returned to them (figure 42,43). It was all still that way in 1988 when I visited there some three years after the violence.

What might have been repaired was left as it was. Indians of the town have not wanted to erase the marks of violence, and in away it is precisely this arrangement of fragments which gives the images efficacy to heal something of what has been inflicted upon them. Danger looms in this church and is made present – not as a spectacle, but as a place where Indians of Cotzal come to negotiate the lose or terror which is placed inside them. Here Indians have chosen images and chosen a form in which to arrange as way to contain memories and to tell a story. In looking at and writing about such visual forms we can begin to listen.
CHAPTER FIVE

ELEMENTS OF INDIAN AESTHETICS AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

I. The Ubiquity of Saints

It was after I visited the churches of San Mateo and Cotzal that I became aware of how Indians in highland Guatemala used Christian icons, particularly images of saints to do a kind of history of their own. They seemed to be recording something of their reality and responding to the violence against them and their land through the use of such images. The strategies of fragmentation that the military used to stun and terrorize Indians were unmistakably reflected in the aesthetics of fragmentation that Indians use in their altars as a way to live with, or at times, to heal the wounds of such violence and dispersal. Throughout my travels in the highlands, especially deep in the mountains, on both sides of terror and healing, I kept seeing, sometimes in frantic and immediate ways this need to tear things apart and leave them or arrange them that way.

This aesthetic is particularly noticeable around saints who are considered to be most powerful in granting favors. In many highland churches there is at least one image of a saint which amasses milagros and bits of paper or images as ex-votos. The milagros themselves are fragments of the
body: legs, arms, eyes and hearts. But it is the arrangement of all these scattered images around the image of the saint which becomes most noticeable. To confront the suffering and inexplicable horror of disappearance and dismemberment, social or physical dislocation, highland Indians repeatedly make and go to altars that are constituted by things left in fragments. These altars allow them to visually and literally enter their pain with the potential to heal. Indians arrange their altars at home in much the same manner. The constant aesthetic element is the syncopated arrangement of disparate objects and images, animated by candles and the decay of flowers.

Saint worship through icons, relics, and stories pre-dates both capital and Christianity as they respectively have solidified over the years. The cult of the saints grew out of 4th century European popular beliefs in the realm of the most intimate and immediate needs of people’s lives.¹ This practice of imaging saints and praying to them for favors or relief from oppressive thoughts and calamities was not instituted from above, but rather originated with lay people in need of intercessors. In the 4th century an heiress to fortunes was as likely as a destitute traveller

to enter the catacombs to pray by the side of a buried saint. Institutional approval and appropriation of the saint figure came after this initial popular bond had formed. With saints in Guatemala there is a similar structure between people and institutions. Indians have, and continue to forge very intimate and personal bonds with saints, bonds that the institutions of the Church and state seek to appropriate or destroy. From the very beginning representations of saints constituted a place where people came to negotiate the often invisible calamities of life, such as the omnipresence of death, illness, or loss. In the hands of Indians this cult of saints was and still is a fertile terrain for projection and transmutation.

In his book the *Cult of Saints* Peter Brown observes that the very mutilation involved in the history of saints, either through their martyrdom or the dismemberment of their bodies in the making of relics, is part of their healing power. He notices that the saints who were described to the populace at public *Passions* as having died particularly brutal deaths are the ones people go to heal themselves. At one point he refers to the publicly displayed, tortured body of Saint Eulalia as, "symbolic of the triumph of the martyr over disintegration." Their bodies are dismembered but their souls remain intact. And, in each fragment of the saint, in the form of a relic or in an image of their martyred selves, the integrity of the soul of the saint is
thought to reside unharmed. One, therefore, simultaneously sees in the fragment, both mutilation and integrity. For Brown, the public descriptions of "Eulalia's prolonged suffering had given merciful form to processes by which shattering pain could be resolved and the body regain a stability and an untouched purity." In the 5th century the very places where saints were brutally martyred would often become the place were people came to heal their own wounded bodies.

II. The Seduction of Saint Images and the Baroque

In the first years of Spanish settlement, priests, soldiers and profit-seeking colonists carried saint images or relics into Guatemala. They brought them as a comfort to themselves and used them as tools to convert the surviving Indians. Unlike other tools used to convert Indians, saint images had a certain magnetism. They were most often presented as humans martyred, made sacred, and reconstituted in image form. Such a profile for saints must have been like a mirrored self-image to Indians. The saints and the stories of their martyrdom echoed something of what they had been witnessing in their own deaths since the coming of the Spaniards.

Each church that Indians were conscripted to build was given a saint name, which would then become part of the name
of the newly formed town. For instance in 1523, under the law of reducción, the Dominicans indentured Indians of the area to build the church and centrally cluster their homes around it to form the town of Santo Tomás Sacapulas. The area had previously been known to Indians as Sacapulas and the Dominicans simply added the name of their most revered saint, Thomas Aquinas, to indicate its new status as a "town" under Spanish Catholic rule. Indians were given drawn plans to construct colonial churches and carve and paint altarpieces or retablos that were placed along the walls and in the apse of churches. The production of these prototypical Renaissance and Baroque altarpieces provided the Spanish settlers with a familiar place of worship; they also served to enlist the "infidel" Indian into a particular program of religiosity. The seductiveness and ubiquity of the Baroque could only bring Indians to the surface of Catholic icons and doctrine it could not, however, control their interpretation of such things.²

Jose Antonio Maravall describes the Baroque as it reinforced the call addressed to the spectator or listening public, and opened up a channel in their attention for the penetration of a doctrine or feeling of amazement, suspension, or stupor that would facilitate the public's

captivation.³

Such captivation helped maintain and support Catholicism in an increasingly Protestant Europe or non-Christian world, and served the purposes of a transforming Spanish economy. In specific, the Baroque retablo was enlisted to teach the liturgy to those who could not read. Of the retablo Maravall writes that it

continued to be cultivated in the sixteenth century and underwent an expansion in the seventeenth; in this phase, however, instead of anecdotal elements that were figuratively represented to be "read," the aspects of grandioseness predominated (the dynamism of the lines, the reflections of gold, the dramatics of the gestures and so forth). On the one hand, not only did the Church make use of these resources, but they were also utilized in civil society by politicians and others who strove to attract a mass to their ideological positions, implying such a quantitative change that it presupposed a transformation in the very nature of the method.⁴

In Spain this "transformation in the very nature of the method" refers to the extravagant emotionalism of the Baroque as well as to its expansion as a rhetorical strategy within secular realms. In the bizarre and unexpected encounters with Indians and natives of all the colonial territories, the Baroque style proved malleable in its ability to be reproduced and attractive to the most diverse minds, native or otherwise, of the 17th century.

From the very beginning, however, certain of these

³Ibid., p.252.

⁴Ibid., p.254.
Baroque altars and areas within or just outside the church were re-arranged or taken apart by the very same Indians who had been conscripted to construct them. Such early missionaries as Bishop Landa in the Yucatan or Bartolomé de las Casas noted in their journals how, after the completion of church construction and the placement of saints in their altars, certain unexpected objects would appear in the saint niches and certain unusual modes of prayer would be performed.⁵

II. History and the Image of a Saint
Santo Tomás Sacapulas

Inside the rural church of Santo Tomás Sacapulas Indians arrange images and objects up against the walls in groups (figure 44). A young boy is about to read the date off an old bell for the local keeper of the church empty and quiet in the day (figure 45). The keeper's curiosity about the inscription and the boy's ability to accommodate point to a shift in the relations between Indians, the colonial past and writing. Unlike the generation before him and

certainly that of the elders of the town this boy and many other rural children have been taught to read. He and his contemporaries' ability to read, regardless of how perfunctory, is having its effect on the relationships among Indians, images and international realities. On the edge of selective literacy, the identity of saints is set in motion, yet once again they remain central as objects to be interacted with and interpreted.

In Sacapulas hardly anyone would know who Saint Thomas was. In the line-up of other saints in their church they could match Saint Thomas to his name but in terms of official hagiography they would not know his deeds or difference from the archangel to his right or from Saint Peter in the glass case to his left (figure 44). All they would know is that saints in general were martyred. For the people of Sacapulas, Saint Thomas is their Saint Thomas and his history has become what they have woven with their own stories and associations. The canonical history of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the long tomes that one could read about him, is no longer an active part of the iconography of Saint Thomas in this village. Meaning has shifted away from any written source to personal and collective Indian experience. To undertake such history work as seeking out the minute details of the life of Saint Thomas or naming the type of arches and vaults of his new home in the highlands would contribute to our knowledge of early colonial artifacts, yet
such information would only divert us from seeing what Indians have made of such artifacts. To follow the evidence of what resides in that relationship between Indians and images or Indians and saints one needs to approach through a different kind of knowing.

As I left Sacapulas, travelling north to the highland town of Nebaj, I could see its colonial church on the highest plateau barely visible in the morning clouds with the homes of Indians gathered around the church’s formal presence (figure 46). Landscape and weather here dip down into human relations. From day to night the structured church and form of the mountains desolidify -- and in such an ambiance, Indians inhabit the colonial space of the church. It is through what is barely visible that I have a chance to re-evolve the exchange of meaning that takes place here. Each element of land and air, Indians, images and architecture will have its place in this history that I write.

IV. Signifiers Vacated and Fragmented
San Juan Atitan

In the western highland town of San Juan Atitan, on the other side of the Cuchumatán mountains, you can see in the church’s high altar a trace of collective decisions made by Indians as they weed through the materiality of the church and marketplace to focus upon images of saints (figure 47).
Not one hand in one decade or even in one century has arranged these items to fit a prescribed formula. Each addition came from incidental and individual needs, formed along a communal understanding and participation in the sacred. At the center of the main altar woven hair ribbons worn by women of the area are draped over and around a silver and glass staff traditionally meant to hold a sanctified host within the circular form of the glass. This element of the liturgy is known as a eucharistial, and in its own way it is an image of the sacrifice and redemption offered by the sacrifice of Christ. In this particular eucharistial, though standard in shape, size and grandeur the host is missing; that is, the suspended potential signifier of the body of Christ; yet around and beneath the eucharistial are numerous objects that seem to take its place.

As with so many saint altars made by Indians of Guatemala this altar is made of fragments, seeming non-sequiturs of diverse origin. Beneath the eucharistial is a small niche with a faded polychrome image of Saint John. In front of him to the left and right are two plastic figurines of the Virgin Mary. The Mary on the left is the Virgin of Misericordia, the one who benevolently includes all in her embrace. On the right, Mary is shown as the Virgin of Holy Prayer. Between the Marys and in front of Saint John are a few coins left as an offering. The faded green and pink of
Saint John and his lamb are amplified and echoed in the saturated green of the altar and the peeling orange paper above. Dying bougainvilleas frame the niche and themselves echo the faint pink and white plastic flowers behind the altar box glass. Once again in another incarnation foliage appears in this altar on the open door of the niche. This bit of paper with imprinted leaves and flowers, left over from something else, slightly burnt from candles, worn from age and its own fragileness, repeats and confounds the constant motif of nature, from plastic to real to printed forms. Degrees of repetition around the single motif of nature, or the similar though slightly variant images of Mary, constitute an aesthetic we will see over and over again throughout the highlands. The empty eucharistial, with its potential to display a central fetish of Catholic ideology, is here foregone and replaced with multiple highlights, syncopated similar forms and color.

V. A Montage and Multiplication of Sings: Concepción Sololá

In the very isolated highland town of Concepción Sololá, four hundred years after the arrival of the Spaniards and their Christianity, Indians still actively lay hands on the colonial church placed at the center of their town. A parish priest from the larger town of Sololá comes
into Concepción occasionally to say mass or offer rites for
the dead. Most of the time, however, the Indians of
Concepción perform their own rites independent of any
official Christian hierarchy or observation. They
diligently clean and repair the colonial church and hand-
carved wooden altars. Most of the altars and niches are
filled with polychromed saints (figure 48), yet others are
equally maintained as barren frames whose saint images have
long been missing (figure 49).

In one delicately arranged altar, Saint Dominic stands
in the center with a bible in one hand and ceremonial rattle
in the other (figure 48). The rattle is used by Indians in
processions of saints down the streets or in different
dances on feast days. Saint Dominic is dressed in brocaded
ecclesiastical robes while Mary to his right and Joseph to
his left are dressed in Indian cloth. The woven cloth they
have placed on Saints Mary and Joseph is the same cloth both
men and women weave for themselves and wear in Concepción.
Similarly, in Santa Catarina Zunil Indian women take the
cloth they weave for themselves and place it on their saints
(figure 50). In the cloth they weave a mark of where they
are from, their specific geographic location within
Guatemala. Distinctions in weaving patterns and colors
change from town to town; they change significantly enough
so that you can distinguish a woman from Zunil from another
woman who might live in the adjacent town. On the saint
this woven cloth, which contains multiple elements of cultural identity, becomes part of a composite image, a montage of cultures in which issues of difference and domination converge. What or who is being converted here becomes a question in the present. Imagine an Indian woman looking into the white face of this saint who is draped in cloth that is of the same weaving as her own. There is no simple equation of mirroring or mimesis. What is being made present is the space between histories. Through this montage of sculpted saint and woven cloth Indians evoke the unresolved incongruities of their post-colonial world as a way to enter or rather encounter the contingencies of such a world.

To the right of the altar of Saint Dominic and ten or fifteen feet towards the apse is a series of stone tiles placed on the church floor perpendicular to the high altar (figure 51). There are twenty tiles made up of two rows of ten. In front of the tiles and along the right hand side are loose flower petals and over the entire surface you can see the debris of candles and stains from poured alcohol.

The tiles are steps that lead beyond the visible. They are like the candle itself which begins with wax and a wick. When lit the candle extends to fire, then smoke, until eventually all material moves along a path to the invisible. The candle begins as mass, then it disappears, apparently consuming itself. Similarly, the tiles are the step-by-step
material initiation into somewhere else which is entered through prayer and the sacrifice of materials. The transferring of materials into the invisible marks a pathway from this world to another. Indians of Concepción enter the church and come to the these tiles first. They lay down their flowers, drink and pour alcohol around them and begin to talk. They talk as if to someone or thing they know. They start slowly with a prescribed set of initial prayers in Spanish that may include fragments of the Our Father or Hail Mary intermixed with an address in their native language. A connection is made and they go further into the specifics of why they have come, usually pertaining to daily needs about land or loved ones. Here the conversation becomes very personal, sometimes extremely emotional. From the tiles they then move on to other areas of the church where they make other contacts through disparate objects and images.

This is not a simple opiate, this Indian drive to expend a significant portion of vital resources on adorning saints or bringing materials to the church. No strong arm or centralized church is looking over or profiting from Indians paying out part of their resources to perform these acts. In the motions of prayer - the preparation, long walk and final communion - the church is transformed, and the self is saturated in a momentary dialogue with power and compassion. The saint image and the structure of the church
are linked to a past and still continuous line of domination. Prayer to such objects, and inside such structures, is an act of interlocking with forces that are often ineffable, and constant as the rising and setting sun. Saints, churches, woven cloth, and crucifixes contain different meanings and forces that Indians arrange and configure into a performance of speaking or exorcism of longing. Such acts of power are exercised precisely through the material leftovers of colonial and post-colonial history.

The sacristy is another place in the church of Concepción where Indians come to objects of the colonial past for mystical exchanges. Old silver plated panels from a Baroque altarpiece are placed up against the wall and in front of these panels are tiles like the ones laid out in the center of the church (figure 52). The Indian church-keeper said that half of the silver paneling had been stolen and probably sold in the market. That is why, he said, they place the panel in the sacristy for safety.

The people of Concepción come back here to pray at the sight of the entire panel, both its silver plated and bare wood components. Hundreds of silver plated panels from the Baroque period remain in the Guatemalan highlands, yet this is one of the few paneled structures that has been singled out for prayer by Indians. Had it always been one of the selected objects deemed worthy of address and
transformation? At what point did it become an intermediary in these encounters between the living and the historical past or mystical realms? And what is being prayed to, the image of a saint plated in silver at the right, or is it the exposed piece of wood marked by the weight of history and an ineffable will towards transformation? This is one place where the texture of Indian belief reveals itself, that is in its signification of an unexpected attachment to objects full of historical, physical and mystical elements. Each element comprises an intertwined and translucent layer that can be read through another.

In the apse of the church in Concepción the pitch of such an aesthetic pushes to the edge of the material world. Here, through repetition and syncopation of form, Indians take material to the threshold of sensation. At first, if you look down the center of the church to the apse, editing out the side walls, it seems simple and serene: it could be a church in a rural town in Spain (figure 53). The twenty stone tiles where Indians of the town perform specific rites present only a slight fissure in the overall familiarity. Yet, when you pass the last pilasters before the apse, with a sense of shock you see over thirty different life-size crucifixes leaning up against the wall (figures 54,55,56). The high altar, traditionally set to envelop the spectator in a singular contemplation of the host, is flooded with images of Christ. Indians here disrupt the imported
hierarchy of stressed authority, replacing it with syncopated, subtle multiplicity. Each sculpted figure is a Christ that, when looked at closely, is slightly different from the next. One’s head is more severely tilted or arms extended longer; the other looks down and is shorter. With no single source of eminence, spirituality and hierarchy are fragmented and dispersed. Spirituality is visualized as a cacophony of sacrifices and miracles through which the multiple sculpted figures of Christ evoke the passion. This is not a sequential movement common in retablos or fresco cycles of the conception, birth, and death of Christ -- an identifiable narrative. This conscious repetition of the image of the crucified Christ places the passion in motion, evoking the moment of the death of Christ over and over again as if he had not died yet, as if the moment kept repeating itself out of the past into the present.

Amidst and through material brought in by Spanish invaders and subsequently by international commerce, Indians of the highlands rearrange the artifacts of authoritarian rule, redetermining their miraculous qualities in unpredictable arrangements and places, taking apart hierarchy like removing a veil and replacing it at will, and in this movement making a place for themselves to intervene in history’s course.

These altars are not just a visual arrangement of things; they are a conceptual space that is both full of
history and available for the present moment. Such arrangements are posed at the edge of the present, ready for supplication. An Indian of Concepción will walk five kilometers from the outskirts to the center of town with flowers and candles and alcohol to ask a question or make a plea beyond the realm of any other possible communication. Throughout this church and throughout the highlands there are many places full of various possibilities for this kind of encounter. In the church of Concepción with each few steps you feel as if you are hitting warm places in a cool body of water. There are visual signs that appear to the outsider as ciphers of belief, not a centralized religion, but rather a local one both particular and idiosyncratic.

For the Indian of Concepción there may actually be a pantheon of deities that solidify around historical incidents or objects, but I remain at a distance from things, cut short in my perceptions by more than the barriers of language, of what I can ask and what they can say: it is a matter of profounder difference than that. I can only tell you so much; draw a map and show you where I have stopped in the midst of evidence of other people’s lives. Along the way I know that my perception of these places is different from that of the Indians of Concepción. My writing and their making, my living and their living meet only briefly, and in that brief encounter there are shards of something real, of me and of them.
VI. Cloth as a Form of Local Memory
Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán

In the New World, after 1492, pre-conquest Indian religion and Catholicism did not remain the same or run simultaneously and intact. In the minds and hand of Indians, both beliefs and the uses of images went through a constant sea change, leaving nothing exactly as it was before. Questions may arise: were Indians converted to Christianity when they were forced to build and attend churches in towns mapped out by colonial strategists? Or, was Christian mysticism conveyed in the form of images entirely negated by Indian interpretation? Neither question, however, can lead us to an understanding of what highland Guatemalan Indians do in their multiple arrangements of objects and icons.

Indian belief and Christianity are both irrevocably changed by contact with one another. This contact did not and does not fit an abstract paradigm such as two steel masses colliding and remaining autonomous. What happened between the Indians of Guatemala and the Spaniards was more haphazard - a collision in which people, things and beliefs were fragmented and either willfully or involuntarily fused together. From the debris of such incessant collisions and fragmentation Indians collect objects and elements of disparate cultural origin. With this material they make their altars into a place where they can interpret and negotiate the contingencies and possibilities of their lives.

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In Concepción Sololá Indians flood the apse with multiple images of Christ. With such stressed repetition they transform the meaning of Christ. They take hold of power in his image and make it into something that can help them in the present. In this repetitious form Christ does not become a preconceived pre-Columbian deity, nor however does he remain the Christian Christ. He becomes another form altogether, appropriate or useful to the needs of a post-Columbian, post-colonial people.

In the church of Santa Catarina Ixtahuacán, just north west of Lake Atitlán, Indians carve out spaces for themselves through a similar yet different form of interpretation of Christian icons (figures 57,58,59). Here they interpose into the imported Christian meanings of icons and images with their own woven cloth as a transforming element. They use cloth as a material containing information, laying it on objects as a way to engage and activate different worlds of visual meaning.

In an essay on the uses of cloth as a form of historical representation, Annette Weiner writes that this historical representation comes through the relation of cloth to the human body. Fundamentally cloth is the living extension of bones. It is alive in the physical, thermodynamic sense of energy storage in the process of deterioration.\(^6\)

\(^{6}\)Annette Weiner, "Why Cloth: Reflections on the Meaning of Cloth as Object of Exchange," unpublished paper given in symposium no. 93 Cloth and the Organization of Human Experience, held at Troutbeck, Amenia, New York, September
When she states that "cloth is the living extension of bones," she means this in two senses. First, that bones were probably the earliest form of objects to be used as mediums of exchange. Bones were used as a form of currency and as artifacts of the human body which would outlast a particular individual to be used by a community to store and release information over generations. They could be carved on, painted or marked in other ways to convey meanings. Bones also had the added weight of being of the living after death, thus emotive of and participating in the power of death within the human imagination. After bones and shells and objects of that like, cloth was the next medium to take on such potential for meaning.

Indians of Santa Catarina make a tightly woven white cotton marked with red bands of zigzag forms and geometric lions, birds and other animals. They use this cloth to wrap the large crucifix just to the left of the front door of their church, next to the confessional (figure 59). The same kind of weaving is used for tzutes which are a kind of cloth that men and women wrap over their heads (figure 60). On their heads this cloth is a sign of place, its design specific to their particular town. It is also a sign of reverence. To wear the tzute is to become reverent and contiguous with all that it contains. The woven rows of cotton are thought of as the fields of corn and beans for

sustenance, and the animal forms are often called Los Santos: the saints. That these animal forms woven into cloth are called saints, just as the wooden icons of Saint Dominic or Saint Thomas are called saints, points to an extension of meaning, created within cloth, beyond our western category of sainthood.

Walter Morris, a contemporary scholar of weaving, has spent many years in Mexico speaking to Indian women about the cloth they make. He relates how the saints are part of the imagery that Indian women weave today and that saints often appear in these women's dreams to guide them on what and how to weave. For Morris the saints stand in for a pre-Columbian network of spiritual or mystical authorities about weaving. For instance, the post-conquest saint stands in for the pre-Columbian toad, a powerful figure that can traverse the earthly and supernatural territories.  

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change, meaning that can move in multiple directions.

So much is at stake for an Indian woman weaver, when the saints come to her in her sleep. They guide her in the mechanical function of weaving and in the more analytic act of interpretation of reality itself. From toads to saints and back there is an alchemy of thought which determines such transformations, and how have these transformations come to take place in and around woven cloth. Indian weavers such as the woman who wove the tzute wrapped around the crucifix in Santa Catarina have gone through cultural and personal changes that leave their mark where cloth either physically or conceptually meets that ubiquitous category: the saint.

History happens on many levels. It is not a binary matter of conscious or unconscious, rational or irrational interpretation. In the highlands of Guatemala the memory of woman weavers in regard to cloth demonstrates that cloth, wood, paper, metal, even the ephemeral substance of candle wax, have complex trajectories in the thoughts of Indians. The origin or use of any of these materials entails multiple potential meanings, multiple meanings for Indians and multiple meanings for those of us who come to travel in these regions.

For the Indians of Santa Catarina the saints are joined by animal forms. Each form with its multiple meanings is hand woven into the cloth and cloth itself is for them a
correlate for land. The weft and warp interact to give shape much in the way that ploughed lines become fertile group the growing of corn and beans. In this way weaving patterns are simultaneously specific makers of specific geographical locations as well as echoes of the omnipresence of the issue of land. To take such cloth and place it on an enormous cross at the front of a church, not in the apse but at the side of the entrance, is yet another of the many indications that Indians of the highlands enter the space of the church and lay hands on its icons in the process of carving out something palpable and living for themselves.

In the back corner of the church, towards the apse, there is another crucified Christ (figure 61). This Christ is not wrapped in cloth; he is isolated in a corner tangential to a large fault in the wall. It is a fault brought on by the violent earthquake of February, 1976. Though canonical in appearance, this image exists in dialogue with the others, not as a pure form of Christianity but as an object poised and ready for pleas and projections, encounters of words which are not unlike cloth itself.

VII. Rocks and Indian Historiography
Santiago Atitlán

In the highland town of Santiago Atitlán, which is on the far side of the large lake of Atitlán, there is a particular home open to the people of the town. It is
called the *cofradía de San Martín*. A *cofradía*, which comes from the English equivalent word confraternity, is a private home whose owner has been chosen as the *alcalde* or head of the house of a particular saint. Most Indian highland towns have special saints other than the one their town is named after, and these special saints, like San Martín, are kept by the chosen alcalde in a cofradía. The alcalde lives in his home with the saint during the period of his tenure, when his home becomes quasi-public so that almost anyone who wants to pray at the altar of this saint can enter.

In this *cofradía* of San Martín so many objects have accumulated in the entourage that one can hardly distinguish Saint Martín among the other objects. Actually, the most noticeable objects are three medium-sized rocks, dressed in cloth and hats with only the slightest of facial features (figure 62). The Indians of this home, and most of the Indians of Santiago, believe that, among other things, there are historical figures inside the rocks, and they pray to them in a similar way that they pray to saints in churches. The line-up of candles is not done in such an orderly fashion as with saints, and the Indians who pray here carry on and drink much more of the alcohol than they pour on the ground. The Indians who come here are very physical and playful with these rocks, much more than they are with the saints in their church.

Each of these three rocks has a name which is the name
of an historical figure who appeared in Central America either figuratively or physically in the 16th century. The rock on the far left is called La Malinche. She was the famous Indian woman who assisted Cortes in the initial Aztec surrender of 1521. The rock on the right, under the straw hat, is called Judas Iscariot, the betrayer of Christ; the larger one in the middle is Pedro Alvarado, the Spanish conquistador of Guatemala. As a group they refer to complex figures of the past, specifically from the time of the brutal entry of Spaniards into the territory and lives of Indians. And it is to each of them that many Indians of the town go to ask favors or plead for help. There is an ironic humor at play here and a surprising attention to this category of the betrayer. La Malinche and Judas represent figures who are often seen by Indians as both betrayers and heros.\(^8\) Pedro Alvarado, however, is an unequivocally hated figure of the brutal aggressor against Indians of Guatemala. Not only did he lead Spanish soldiers into Guatemala but he is actually better known for having tricked Tecun Uman, the Quiché Indian warrior who represented the Indians' last hope at resisting domination. In Guatemalan folklore Alvarado dominated through trickery and deceit.

The presence of these three figures, solidified into


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rock, is like a large wound that has not healed. People of the town come here to expose and enter a vortex or web of relations in which they still find themselves. Something began with the entrance of these names into these places, something which persists. A vague gesturing of form and a name is enough to set relations in motion again, to break not the chain but the silence of betrayal.

Ephemeral relations of power and treachery, whose effects are felt while the mechanisms remain invisible, are evoked in this altar of rocks. Again, it is here that people come to ask for favors and to heal themselves. They cohabit with a form of history constantly evoked through the arrangement of objects in the present. These altars are left off balance, full of innuendo and gaps, so that the aesthetics of fragmentation, as it allows for memories or ephemeral social relations to emerge, becomes part of the religious efficacy and healing power of altars.

Through written documents from the time of Cortes' entry into Mexico we can reconstruct the story of La Malinche.⁹ We know she was a Nahuatl speaking Indian who was sold as a servant to Maya-speaking Indians and then given as a gift to the Spanish on one of their early

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⁹One of the most extensive accounts of the relationship between La Malinche and Cortez is recorded by their contemporary, Bernal Díaz del Castillo in his *Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España*, 2 Vol. (Mexico: Porrúa, 1955).
expeditions. When she came into Cortes’ hands he already had found Jerónimo de Aguilar. Aguilar was a Spanish soldier who arrived in the Americas with an earlier expedition. He had lived with and learned the language of the same Maya-speaking Indians who had bought La Malinche. When all three of these personages met at the same time in Veracruz, Mexico, when Motecuhzoma was still reigning, Aguilar, who knew both Spanish and Maya, could help Cortes communicate with La Malinche, who knew both Nahuatl and Maya. From that moment on La Malinche could speak to Aguilar in Maya and he to Cortes in Spanish and through this route pass her insights onto Cortez with great accuracy. As they moved closer to Mexico City and the eventual fall of the Aztecs, La Malinche could interpret Aztec myths and fears to Cortez, information which he used to compensate for his relatively small number of troops.

All of this is a digression for now, for Indians of Guatemala who named this rock would know very little, if anything, directly of this history. The name La Malinche would vaguely pertain to the female Indian who collaborated with the Spanish at the time of the conquest. She is in their minds a calcified artifact that contains meaning — meaning that pertained to the role of an Indian woman many years ago. Something of her specific history resides in that rock and adds to its weight and power yet this discursive history is not there as a consciously detailed or
debated knowledge. Like a book about la Malinche, but very different from a book, this rock called La Malinche is a kind of history; it contains the past not to be known; it is to be touched, carried and spoken to. Like so many objects in these homes or church altars these rocks contain something outside of knowing; they are the material artifacts of a post-colonial Indian reality, poised on the edge of sensation and belief.

To write about such Indian history-making, like the use of the three rocks of San Martin, which are "documented" in visual, oral, and unspoken media, is to tread a volatile line. Each time I come to an image, church or object such as the rock, La Malinche, I waiver between observing what I see and projecting what I can retrieve or remember from written history books. With the name La Malinche as a reference I can pull up a series of texts that tell me something of La Malinche. These written sources have a certain weight and authority that can displace or obscure Indian oral and visual histories. There are irreconcilable differences between the historical litany in my mind and the intricacies of an Indian mind shaped by other sources of memory and interpretation. My writing, therefore, is at times a history of images and Indians of Guatemala and at other times it is a place where I attempt to find the limits of my knowing, to pass over, at least by stark comparison, into ways that Indians mark and remember.
CHAPTER SIX
EXCHANGE VALUE AND AFTERLIFE OF IMAGES

I. The Market Place

In the market places of even the smallest town in the highlands of Guatemala Indians buy images of saints along with corn, rice, or beans. These images constitute another form of sustenance that is as significant as food. Saint images mass-produced in Taiwan or the urban centers of Colombia and Mexico are a small, though widespread, commodity market in the highlands.¹ Saint images first came to Guatemala in the form and spirit of the Baroque. In the early 20th century saints come in the form of mass-produced, often very small, kitsch reproductions. Like the Baroque, kitsch is a populist art form made to be disseminated, made to attract the many, and made to travel as far and wide as possible.

¹Many of these mass produced chromolithographs come from a series adapted in the 19th century for international distribution. Who or what group of entities were responsible for collecting and distributing this repertoire is a topic beyond the scope of this study. It would be extremely interesting to know, however, where and when this repertoire began and how it came to be mass produced in Taiwan, Columbia and Mexico. Some of the images imported into Guatemala are also made in Italy, but these tend to be more expensive and rare.
Food or commerce markets in the highlands have image stands where chromolithographs of saints, candles, seeds, and books for divining are sold (figure 63). For the equivalent of a quarter of a pound of corn you can buy a single 3"X 4" image of a saint. Also available are small cards the size of a postcard with multiple tiny images of saints (figure 64). The small cards have eighteen different saints reproduced on them. This is the most modest and affordable form of a saint image to be found in Guatemala. Each image will be cut out by the market vendor, then placed in a single frame to be sold at the cost of a piece of fruit.

In the market place, as in the colonial churches, Indians consider the multiple manifestations of Christ or the Virgin Mary as different saints along with all the other saints. On the everyday level Christ and Mary are no higher or different in status from the saints. And, beyond this, Christ and Mary have different manifestations that both extend and shatter their canonical meaning.

Mass-produced images are detached from the hand of any single maker, yet the way Indians use these images reinfuses them with a particular life that demonstratively separates out each replica from the next. Indian use of mass-produced Christian icons constitutes a crack in the surface of Catholic and capitalist order. The image as icon or as commodity is wrested from its traditional status and made

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into living matter available for divergent interpretations. Brought into their particular web of beliefs Indians transform these commodities into something unexchangeable and idiosyncratic to themselves. Against the grain of their multiple and frail material, these market images become containers or places of mediation for substantive matters of Indian life.

Sometimes the images in the markets are mass-produced beyond recognition. With one "Christ of Sorrows" the image is diffused in a way that the figure takes on a lifelike quality (figure 65). The uncanny effect of a photograph mass-produced so many times, and then Xeroxed, placed in a frame, and bordered with metallic green paper, opens the image to multiple meanings and compresses the past so definitively that it enters the present as something palpable. Because of rather than in spite of these mechanical manipulations the seated Christ appears closer in time and space.

The vendor of saints in the market is usually a Ladino, that is, a man who considers himself to be of predominantly Spanish rather than Indian descent. He usually is dressed in western clothing and has had a stand in a particular market for years. Like most merchants, he stocks what he thinks will sell. His clients are primarily Indians who travel to the market to sell their goods or buy what they cannot in their local markets. When I asked why he had so 114
heavily Xeroxed this particular image of Christ and not other images, he said the "Christ of Sorrows" was very much in demand and it was hard for him to get enough chromolithographs (factory-produced color images), so he took an image that he had and Xeroxed it many times. He says the Xerox image is now as likely to sell as the chromolithograph. In this matter the image-stand owner is using the mechanical devices available to him as a way to respond to the aesthetic standards of his Indian clients. These aesthetic standards of Indians refer both to what is depicted and to how it is rendered, that is, to Christ hunched over and dejected before the crucifixion, and Christ represented through the haze of multiple mass production.

II. Mass Production

In his essay the "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin boldly proclaimed that "even the most perfect reproduction of a work of art is lacking in one element: its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be." And this uniqueness, for Benjamin, was part of the aura of a work of art which would be lost or diminished in the process

of reproduction. Tangled in his notion of aura are issues of what he calls the "authenticity" and "historical testimony" of an object.

The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced...And what is really jeopardized when the historical testimony is affected is the authority of the object. One might subsume the eliminated element in the term "aura" and go on to say: that what withers in the age of mechanical reproduction is the aura of the work of art.\(^3\)

In exchange for the aura of an original, the mass produced work of art is more ubiquitous: it can meet the viewer "half way," so to speak. In multiple form, an image is transformed in terms of space and time; unlike the original it can be in different places simultaneously. Because of this Benjamin saw the mass-produced work of art as potentially closer to the public. By virtue of mass production the work of art had come down from the throne of authority of a singular original and become subject to the everyday and to everyman's interpretation. At the end of the essay Benjamin identifies the mass-produced work of art as the potential place where the masses can enact a radical critique of society. They can more easily lay hands on the image, bring it closer to them, and thereby instill multiple

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\(^3\)Ibid., p.221.
meanings never before possible when art existed as unique, irreplaceable, historical objects.

Though Benjamin begins this famous essay with an almost elegiac farewell to the aura, he seems tentative at how absolute a pronouncement he is making. For him, the aura, though withered, insistently reappears or lurks within photographs or even the very process of mechanical reproduction: "the aura emanates from the early photograph in the fleeting expression of a human face." Or when comparing the painter and cameraman to the magician and physician respectively, identifying the magician with auratic practices, Benjamin cuts away at his own polemic to say that the magician "is still hidden in the medical practitioner." The aura is value in a work of art which transcends human understanding and rational use. And for Benjamin, if you read between the lines, the aura, rather than being banished from the mechanically produced work of art, is relinquished to a more hidden or subliminal level, where it lurks within surfaces.

As Benjamin had predicted, mass production has brought hundreds of thousands of images into the hands of the masses: in our case disenfranchised Indians in highland Guatemala. With the "Christ of Sorrows," however, the

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5Ibid. p.233.
obscuring of form through mass production does not dislocate the image from its aura, but rather unleashes a different kind of aura in which Christ is here still in sorrow. The authority of the work, its historical specificity, has not been removed: it has simply been relocated. It has moved from the activity of the hand to the unexpected manipulation of machines. The historical specificity of the work of art has also shifted away from the origin of its maker to that of the viewer. What highland Indians do with these images becomes an active part of their iconographic and historical meaning. This is an image of the "Christ of Sorrows", Christ in reflection before his martyrdom, yet the meaning of the image has been performed beyond the bounds of that identifiable meaning. Meaning is performed in the sense that it is altered through mass production and use in the hands or homes of highland Indians.

In the contemporary highlands, the multiple reproduction of the "Christ of Sorrows" is similar to the repetition of the sculpted figure of Christ in the apse of Concepción (figures 65, 55). Multiple copies of a two dimensional image of Christ and the repetition of the wooden sculpted images of Christ are both examples of an Indian strategy to take hold of and transform imported objects. By multiplying the given canonical image of Christ Indians have actually changed the meaning of Christ and the relationship of Christ to his own image. These fragmented or blurred
images amount to an aesthetic which the Indians of the highlands register and protect. The value of such images is in their ability to evoke an action still undergoing change, still open for interpretation. These icons are both accessible and auratic. The further away Christ appears in sight the closer he appears in time. Christ has just been stripped of his clothing and placed in sorrow at the moment before the crucifixion. His trauma is present in the very shadows of his mass-produced depiction.

In another mass-produced image of Christ, this time a "Crucifixion," parts of his body move in and out of focus (figure 66). The result, this time not Xeroxed but photographed, is that of immediacy. At first these images may appear to be aberrations to be shelved or disregarded. For the Indians of the highlands, however, they are images appropriate to the work of memory set on re-opening the past as a way to intervene in the present. This is not simply an image of Christ on the cross: it is an image of him on the cross in the passing of the eleventh hour.

In the wake of the Spanish conquest or other brutal campaigns of violence, visual debris, disregarded or closed off by official histories, have within them a fragile link to unspeakable things. Neither the mass-produced "Christ of Sorrows" nor this blurred "Crucifixion" depend on fine focus or narrative for their status as documents. Their unspecificity in the realm of vision points to a specificity
in another realm where seeing with the eye is only
significant if it takes you beyond the knowable control of
events. Knowing is circumvented and replaced with ciphers.

Indians rearrange the story of Christ or the saints and
Mary not simply by starting from a different perspective.
They forgo narrative altogether in refusing a continuous
comprehensible story, and placing in its stead a repeated,
unrepressed, almost unseeable icon or set of images that
reverberate between and link the past to the present. These
images reside between Indians and events which appear as
ongoing. What is fragile and dangerous is not relegated to
the past or out of their reach.

III. Magic Books

Along with other kitsch and small carved or mass-
produced objects Indians will occasionally buy special books
in Spanish from the market image vendors. These books go by
such titles as Explicación de Los Sueños y Pesadillas
(Explanation of Dreams and Nightmares) (figure 67), and
Oráculo o Libro de Los Destinos, a completely enigmatic one
with a portrait of Napoleon on the cover - the title page
claims that this book is a reproduction of the very one that
Napoleon owned (figure 68,69). Certain Indian curanderos or
shamans buy these books and use them as part of their trade
helping other Indians in existential matters or matters of everyday life. Most of the healers do not know how to read Spanish and in that case the books are used like incense or candles held over the supplicant during an oration. The healers who can read do so erratically as if pulling cards at random out of a deck.

The imagery on the book covers follows the constructed stereotypes of witches and warlocks, images that proliferated in 16th and 17th century Europe during the Counter-Reformation. As Spanish conquistadors and settlers were traveling to the New World to settle or find natural resources, the Catholic church was desperately trying to win back its fold from Protestantism and hybrid popular religions that had splintered away from, or had never been attached to, the canonical teachings of the church.

In this Counter-Reformation fervor the Baroque aesthetic flourished. It flourished as a new Catholic art highly successful in drawing people into a more centralized, sensation-inspired contemplation of religious doctrine. Simultaneous with the excesses of the Baroque were the

6In Guatemala, professional Indian healers go by many names and serve in diverse ways. The healer that serves individuals for a modest fee is usually called a curandero, bruja or chimán. Sometimes these healers, who work with altars in homes or the landscape, are also calendar readers called ajk’ij translated literally as daykeeper. For an extensive analysis of the Indian daykeepers in Guatemala see Barbara Tedlock’s Time and the highland Maya (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1982).
elaborate and highly imaginative demonologies written and collected by the Catholic clergy as they sought to identify and eliminate witch cults in Europe and the New World. All Indian, and for that matter all African, religions were seen as Satan-inspired and, like the popular religions of Europe itself, were perceived as dangerous to the interest of the Catholic Church, the Holy Roman Empire, and all well-meaning civilized people.

The magic books found in markets in contemporary Guatemala, like so many objects and images that Indians use for healing, carry something of this Baroque history with them. It is a history constituted not so much by the written words in these books but in the history of their physical and conceptual travel through the early colonial period into the present. Stereotypical images of good and evil, recipes for interpreting dreams and the future, and representations of politically powerful figures all converge on the outside and inside of these divining books. They are filled with the elements of colonial history, mixed up, rearranged, and solidified in the form of a book used like a wand or deck of cards. Tinged with the history of the colonial past, these strange books attract Indians of the highlands. They function like a tool to bridge the

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inconceivable past to the present.

IV. Leonardo’s Last Supper
San Antonio Polopó

Along with books of witches’ flights and Napoleonic dreams, Indians buy better known canonical images from early modern Europe, such as Leonardo da Vinci’s Last Supper (figure 70). Contained within the Last Supper, both in the history of its 15th century making and the history of its circulation into 20th century Guatemala, are elements of scientific equations about space and light, movement and color, as well as elements of Christian and colonial history, Indian consumerism and epistemology. To tease out such elements can reveal how certain images from western culture contain and retain meanings which are like translucent layers, each read through one another, available and mutable at any time. In the homes of Indians such images are calcified, compact references to a specific history of foreign dominators.

Leonardo painted the Last Supper in the Milanese refectory of Santa Maria delle Grazie in the mid-1490s. He was preparing and painting the fresco during the same years that Columbus first arrived in San Domingo, an arrival that initiated the ongoing historical process of contact and domination between Europe and the Americas (figure 71). As is apparent from the fresco image and several preparatory
drawings, Leonardo was concerned with the movement and interconnections of geometric forms and the properties of visual and sound waves as they could be rationalized and transformed onto a two dimensional plane (figure 73). In the upper left section of his 1493 preparatory drawing is a loose sketch of figures; the ink lines interconnect and react as information about the Eucharist and the betrayal move like water through a vessel. On the upper right is a condensed study of figures, each registering the presence of his neighbor with a fluidity of action and reaction. Below these groupings, dominating the page, are geometric drawings, diagrams and equations that point to architectural projects and queries. Leonardo’s concerns as an artist mirrored and extended the boundaries of knowledge and what was knowable in a 15th-century Europe bound for explorations of the natural and commercial worlds.8

8 In addition to experimenting with geometric forms Leonardo altered the traditional technical composition of fresco painting by using an oil rather than a water preparation. Fresco, as a mural art was traditionally done with water based pigments on a wet lime plaster surface. This specific combination of materials are used to allow the pigment to directly and securely bond with the molecular structure of lime. When the water suspended pigments and surface of lime plaster dry the painted image and colors are chemically fixed, literally for centuries. Leonardo may have wanted in mural form some of the subtle shading and atmospheric effects which he had attained in the oil painting on canvas of the Mona Lisa. The result in fresco was disastrous. Within a few years the pigments suspended in oil were unable to bond with the wall fresco preparation and so the painted surface began to disintegrate. Over the last five hundred years the actual surface of the Last Supper has been retouched, repainted and restored with the
Fundamental to the composition and iconography of Leonardo’s Last Supper are questions of betrayal and the institution of the Eucharist, to which each apostle reacts differently. The human form is set into multiple dramatic actions from guilt to surprise to pondering. Has Christ announced that he will soon be betrayed, causing Judas to pull back? Or is the main action that of Christ gesturing to the bread and wine as his mystical incarnation after death?

Attracted both by irresolvable questions and its complexity of composition, many artists of the 16th and 17th centuries reworked or copied Leonardo’s Last Supper. Into the 20th century his image appears on bill-boards, commodities, beach towels, and mass-produced chromolithographs. Like Coca Cola or Marlboro cigarettes it is one of the most ubiquitous signs of an international circulation of western culture.⁹ Millions of copies of advanced technologies of each successive generation. Even today with x-ray, infra-red and MRI technologies the surface of the fresco appears faint and fragile as if still in danger of disappearing (figure 72). At present the Last Supper is under its most extensive restoration to date, funded by several different capital concerns and overseen by the Italian government. When the restoration is completed, the refectory will be transformed into a sparse, almost museum like space with a certain distance preserved between the spectator and this 450 year old fresco held in a faded suspension.

⁹For the most through consideration of 16th and 17th century copies of Leonardo’s Last Supper, see Leo Steinberg’s essay "Leonardo’s Last Supper," in The Art Quarterly, (vol.36 no. 4 [1973],pp.297-410). As part of the
Leonardo’s *Last Supper* have travelled to *botegas* and markets throughout the western and non-western world.

If we go to the highland town of San Antonio Polopo as one place where Leonardo’s *Last Supper* appears, we will find it in several homes as a chromolithograph used in personal altars (figures 74, 75). The narrative elements and perspectival construction of this 15th century image are contained within an Indian altar whose own aesthetic and way of telling a story is fundamentally different. Leonardo made the *Last Supper* as a mural size image, consuming the entire back wall of a refectory. When you walk into that room in Milan, you become part of the massive composition of the fresco. Due in part to Leonardo’s perspectival construction, there is a certain gravitational pull to the image. You look and feel compelled towards the center and move rhythmically with the eddying groups of figures who bring you ultimately, involuntarily back to the center. There may be an unanswerable question about narrative content within the image but there is no question of the presence of narrative. Conversely, within the overall composition of the Indian altar, the *Last Supper* exists as one of a series of heterogenous objects that are related yet remain separate

Substance of his analysis of Leonardo’s work Steinberg looks to copies by Rembrandt, Rubens, Raphael and others to see what they have retained or edited out in their replicas. For Steinberg, these edited copies constitute a series of interpretations of the work amongst which he locates his own reading.

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from one another.

In this Indian home the Last Supper appears in the center of the altar between sculpted images of San Antonio to the right and Christ of the Sacred Heart to the left. Above and below the image are multiple mass-produced images, as well as commodities like a flashlight and baby powder. Surrounding the entire altar are tinsel and flashing Christmas lights, which remain all year to indicate this place of objects as an active interactive place.

In the second home in San Antonio Polopó the Last Supper is also placed at the center of a personal altar of multiple images, mostly Christian icons framed here by white flowers and candles (figure 76,77). In both homes, the wall and altar table are covered with plastic checked tablecloth material demarcating this as a particular place within the dark windowless interior. In both homes the altars are the only areas of opulence. Almost everything else is stored in large wooden trunks and taken out when needed. Each day or several times a day for one reason or another someone in the house will kneel to address these mass-produced Christian icons and array of objects, which include Leonardo’s Last Supper. Like the Baroque saints and churches of the past, these new mass-produced objects are the more modern artifacts of the economically dominant culture to which Indians were and are subject. The reigning sector of contemporary society is no longer a European court or its
colonial apparatus; it is international capital concerns like the tobacco or fruit industries with access to the productive agriculture that is the basis of the Guatemalan export economy.

Though many men in San Antonio weave to augment their income, most are obliged to travel to the fertile lands of the coast to be wage earners for three or four months a year. It is from the world of these international concerns that most of the mass-produced objects on home altars originate. Forbidden to have land enough to support and feed themselves, Indian men are forced to become wage earners on corporate land. When they return home, to what land they have been able to retain - and they do value that land as a place of specificity beyond any national or other definition - they bring back these mass-produced images and use them as elements of their own religious belief or as conduits to healing. This is not to say that foreign elements have more power than indigenous elements; rather, that the consumption of these icons and objects within an Indian space, the constant handling of them within a temporarily safe private sphere of the home, allows for a different kind of encounter with forces of historical and contemporary life, different from encounters possible on the plantations. In the home altar a kind of alchemy or inversion takes place where the Indian becomes the master and arbitrator of the foreign.
Given their daily and incidental use, these home altars are like medicine cabinets. They are approached for everyday needs as a place for some form of healing. Like the baby powder and flashlight, though from a different period, the Last Supper is an imported foreign element, consumed by its owner, yet still unassimilated; it still retains its composition, its foreignness, and in some way it is that very resistance to translation that gives it power in the hands of its Indian owner. The visible fact that the image came from and was made in a world of perspectival constructions, geometric calculations and mimetic sophistication, in short some of the hallmark technologies of Western culture, is what is being collected and displayed. Through each of these store-bought images a recurrent encounter with the lines of social, economic and historical boundaries is made possible. It is as if Indians buy and arrange these images as a way to ask a question that has no other venue, no other safe place to be posed: the question of what has irrevocably happened in this encounter between cultures and how an individual within these circumstances can negotiate any possible interpretation or life. Flowers or reflective surfaces like tinsel render the life in these altars visible. What that life is and how it serves to heal wounds of the mind and body is a matter where metaphysics, social history and the physical properties of images converge.
V. A Particular Relation to Debris
Santa Catarina Nahualá

In the highland town of Santa Catarina Nahualá, just off the main highway across from Santa Catarina Ixtahuacan, is a particular home altar about three feet high made of mass-produced images of saints, small porcelain animals and other objects (figure 78). The arrangement is syncopated, layered with images from disparate chronologies and cultures, animated by candles and flowers, so that in the act of prayer one seems to enter the mesh of the market place, contending with mass-produced objects - making the assembly line images into specific carriers of meaning,- repositories of personal memories and beliefs. The two Indian women who made this altar renamed many of their saints and tell stories about each image as if it was a member of the family. They spoke about where each object came and what happened to it during the devastating earthquake of 1976. Along with bits and pieces of history these women store elements of their personal lives in within the images of the altar. They create a space for a kind of history-making that is simultaneously political, personal and interpretive.

Not separate from or unaware of the technological world around them, the Indian women in the small photograph place an image of themselves amidst mass-produced saints, bits of reflective paper, and candles, all spilling over the frame.
of the altar box. Below their photograph and to the left—between themselves and Christ—are two kitsch figurines from a traditional western wedding cake. The uncanny echo of the posing Indian women and the white wedding couple, each pair standing straight, jars one’s sense of place and difference. Next to these Indian women in the photograph, kitsch and mass produced-images are twisted out of context and made into emblems of contested meaning.

The wedding couple are modern western stereotypes of matrimony. Mass-produced and standing like ambassadors of consumerism and international capital, they become constituent elements through which Indians visually perform complex relations. In these images Indians store information not only of what the images depict but of what they have come to represent in the process of time. Iconography in this environment, where the meaning of an image is changed and reconstituted, is no more stable a phenomenon than the notion of value itself. By placing these objects next to the photograph of themselves, they visually enact a dialogue between cultures.

In such arrangements, highland Indians cluster and display images as a way to exorcise one history and perform another. Here thinking is halted, jolted out of its habits of continuity and familiarity. Through the visual composition of disparate objects Indians are able to disrupt the familiar attributes of the colonial and post-colonial
world, rearranging them to bring out and materialize complex relations in which they live. In their acts of arranging and praying at these altars they enter the conceptual realm of history, beyond the boundaries of where they have officially been permitted.

In its most traditional form the writing of history defines and closes a story, thereby making the past something stable. In these altars Indians arrange objects and images against the logic of closure. The wedding couple, photograph and saints, illuminated by candles are all elements capable of evoking aspects of the past and present. Here the laws of story-telling or a kind of history making are the laws of entry into the past, not a cover or explanation, but a figuration through images and objects of omnipresent and recurrent relations.

Exchange value is displaced from the objects of the altars and replaced with memories which anchor the images to the specific circumstances of people’s lives. Certain images fell during the earthquake, other images spoke out over a land dispute, and others have irrevocably become identified with missing people or the dead, who in their respective suspended lives or death hold sway with elements consistently associated with the land. This system of saint images and objects is an underground through which Indians of the highlands negotiate the past and sustain themselves.
V. Yellow Boxes and Books
Todos Santos

In Todos Santos the main cofradia house is made of mud and straw with white lime painted walls on the outside, not unlike the homes in which Indians live throughout the highlands. Off the main road of the town this particular house inconspicuously sits in a field of corn. Inside there are no images; there are simply two yellow boxes one with a small wooden cross (figure 79). Given its name Todos Santos, meaning all saints, this town has no particular patron saint. This may explain why the boxes are believed to contain the entire array of martyrs and favor givers. Inside the boxes are bundles of very old papers and texts (figures 80, 81). The Indians of Todos Santo who come to this place do not read these books; they are mostly older Indians who were migrant workers on the plantations and had no time or opportunity for schooling, they don’t read at all. They look at the worn books and form of the written word and know that they see the trace or mark of things past and present. The caretaker of the box, named Don Pasquale, told me that all the animals, land, and spirits of the living and the dead are in those books.

When I began to read the old Spanish it became clear these books and papers were some of the actual land documents particular to this town, generated over the past four hundred years. From book to book you could read the
various negotiations that had taken place over land, some hostile, some fortuitous to the town. There were disputes between neighbors, and forced transfers of land parcels to the State or encroaching land owners. There were titles of ownership and titles to communal land all mixed among one another and tied tight by a cord.

What mechanism or metabolic law in the memory of Indians makes land documents into all saints, all beings, all things and all time? When I told Don Pasquale that I thought the books were filled with land documents he told me, "of course they are." I am sure people have told him many things. But, he knows something I do not know. Something about land that is everything, something about the making of images out of history's debris.
CHAPTER SEVEN: POSTSCRIPT

I. On the Possibility of Change

This text was written after four years of travelling in Guatemala from 1986 through 1990. When I first arrived in the highlands they were still heavily patrolled and repression of Indians palpably visible, especially in the Ixil triangle towns of Chajul, Nebaj and Cotzal and in the northern region of Huehuetenango. The constant massacres of the early 1980's had ended, though mass killing and disappearances continued. Indian men and boys could still be seen chased into loweries for military service twice a year. Even when Vinico Cerezo was elected in November of 1985, as the first civilian President in three decades, the military still had its autonomy and control of the country. Over the past years, however, and with the 1996 election of Alvaro Arzú, there have been substantial negotiations between all sectors of Guatemalan society, including leaders of the resistance group the Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guerrillera (URNG), representatives of which have come down out of the mountains to negotiate change. In January of 1994 the United Nations began mediating changes in Guatemala. They moderate binding negotiations and have sent over four hundred peacekeeping officials who travel the
country to assess compliance and success of agreed upon changes in regards the rights of Indians\textsuperscript{1}. Since 1984 five separate packs have been signed. Most recently it has been agreed that the military will reduce its numbers and spending by one-third by the year 1999. Civic Patrol is no longer mandatory for Indian men. Issues as looming and complicated as the redistribution of land and access to representation without persecution are now being discussed. Rigoberta Menchú has been and continues to be an arbitrator in these negotiations.\textsuperscript{2}

If the changes proposed come to pass it will be the first time since the arrival of the Spanish that Indians of Guatemala will actually have some commensurate access to land and self-representation that they choose for themselves. It is never wise to be to overly optimistic at the out set of such vast changes, however, some spell has been broken, the illusion of hordes of communists in the mountains, the misrepresentation and defiling of Indians as less than human appears to be giving way. The importance, and place, and configuration, of images for Indians will


certainly change if these social and economic changes come
to pass. Thousands of Indians will still die each year from
old age, from earthquakes or illness, murders of envy or
passion, as we all are subject to, and in those
circumstances of simply being human, images of saints can do
and be what they have been for centuries, a medium through
which to converse regarding the contingencies of life.
Certainly highland Indians will continue to have their
particular way of visually and conceptually working with
such images as they have in the past. Without the daily
threat of violence, without the severe and endemic poverty
and hunger, forced labor, and forced conscription, the daily
oppression of fear may subside. And, in this changed
environment the affects of years of trauma may finally have
a chance to further unfold and possibly heal. I begin to
imagine, tentatively, the place that images or saints will
take in the minds of Indians when they are free.
APPENDIX

El Requerimiento Written by Martin Fernández Enciso, 1512

I.

On the part of the very high and powerful and very Catholic defender of the church, the great King Don Fernando, King of Spain of Jerusalem and of the Indias, Islands and Tierra Firma, and his daughter Dona Juana, Queen of Castile and Leon, subduers of the barbarous nations, we their servants notify and make known to you, as best we can, that the Lord our God, living and eternal, created the heavens and the earth, and one man and one woman, of whom you and we, and all people of the world, were and are and will forever be descendants. But, on account of the multitude of humanity which has grown from this man and woman in the five thousand years since the world was created, it was necessary that certain people should go one way and some another, and that they should be divided into many kingdoms and provinces, for in one alone they could not be sustained.

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1This is my translation of the Spanish publication of the "El Requerimiento" in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, Historia General y Natural de Las Indias. Ed. Juan Perez de Tudela Bueso, Madrid: Biblioteca de Autores Españoles, 1959, Vol. 119, pp. 227-232. Oviedo was a contemporary of Enciso and actually used the Requerimiento in battle with the conquistador Pedrarias in the mid-16th century.
II.

Of all these nations God our Lord gave charge to one man, called St. Peter, that he should be lord and superior of all people in the world, that all should obey him, and that he should be the head of the whole human race, wherever people should live, under whatever law, sect, or belief; and God gave St. Peter the world for his kingdom and jurisdiction.

III.

And God commanded him to place his seat in Rome, as the spot most fitting to rule the world from; but also he permitted him to have his seat in any other part of the world, and to judge and govern all Christians, Moors, Jews, Gentiles, and all other sects.

IV.

This man was called Pope, as if to say Admirable Great Father and Governor of all.

V.

Those who lived in that time obeyed St. Peter, and took him for Lord, King, and superior of the universe, and all the Popes who have come after him have been obeyed in the same way, and so has it been continued even till now, and will continue till the end of the world.

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VI.

One of these Pontiffs, who succeeded St. Peter as lord of the world in the dignity and seat which I have before mentioned, made donation of these Islands and Terra-firma to the aforesaid King and Queen and to their successors, our lords, with all that there are in these territories, as is contained in certain writings which you can see if you wish. And so by virtue of this donation their highnesses are Kings and Lords of these Islands and land of Terra-firma; and indeed all those to whom this has been notified, almost all of them have received and served their highnesses, as Lords and Kings, in the way that subjects ought to do, with good will, without any resistance, immediately, without delay, when they were informed of the aforesaid facts. And also they received and obeyed the priests whom their highnesses sent to preach to them and to teach them our Holy faith; and all these, of their own free will, without any reward or condition, have become Christians, and are so, and their highnesses have joyfully and beneficently received them, and also have commanded them to be treated as their subjects and vassals; and you too are held and obliged to do the same.
VII.

Wherefore, as best we can, we ask and require that you take the time that shall be necessary to understand and deliberate upon it, and that you acknowledge the Church as the ruler and superior of the whole world, and that you acknowledge the high priest called Pope, and in his name the King and Queen our lords, as superiors, and Kings of these Islands and this Terra-firma by virtue of the said donation, and that you consent and accept religious fathers to declare and preach to you the foresaid.

VIII.

If you do so you will do well, and if you oblige yourselves to the will of their highnesses, we in their name shall receive you in all love and charity, and shall leave you your wives, and your children, and your lands free without servitude, that you may do with them and with yourselves freely that which you like and think best, and they shall not compel you to turn Christians, unless you yourselves, when informed of the truth, should wish to be converted to our holy Catholic faith, as almost all the inhabitants of the rest of the islands have done; and, besides this, their highnesses will award you many privileges and exemptions and will grant you many benefits.
IX.

But if you do not do this, and maliciously delay in it, I certify to you that, with the help of God, we will powerfully enter into your country, and make war against you in all ways and manners that we can, and will subject you to the yoke and obedience of the Church and of their highnesses; we will take you, and your wives and children, and will make slaves of them, and will sell and dispose of them as their highnesses may command; and we will take away your goods, and will do you all the harm and damage that we can, as to vassals who do not obey, and refuse to receive their lord, and resist and contradict him. And we protest that the deaths and losses which will accrue from this are your fault, and not that of their highnesses, or ours, nor of these cavaliers who come with us. And that we have said this to you, and made these requirements, we request the notary here present to give testimony in writing, and we ask the rest who are present that they should be witnesses of this Requerimiento.
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