

Fall 2008

## "Hard Working, Orderly Little Women": Mayan Vendors and marketplace Struggles in Early Twentieth - Century Guatemala

David Carey

*University of Southern Maine*, [dcarey@usm.maine.edu](mailto:dcarey@usm.maine.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/history>



Part of the [Latin American History Commons](#), [Political History Commons](#), [Social History Commons](#), and the [Women's History Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Carey, Jr., David. "Hard Working, Orderly Little Women': Mayan Vendors and Marketplace Struggles in Early-Twentieth-Century Guatemala." *Ethnohistory* 55, no. 4 (2008): 579-607.

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in History by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu](mailto:jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu).

# “Hard Working, Orderly Little Women”: Mayan Vendors and Marketplace Struggles in Early-Twentieth-Century Guatemala

---

David Carey Jr., *University of Southern Maine*

**Abstract.** During the first half of the twentieth century, Guatemala was dominated by two of Latin America’s most repressive regimes: first that of Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898–1920) and then that of General Jorge Ubico (1931–44). Though the marketplace was one venue through which these dictators sought to impose their modernization programs of progress and order, criminal records abound with Mayan women disobeying market regulations and more generally disrupting the peace. Beyond putting the women’s livelihoods at stake, these conflicts were also struggles over ethnic, gender, and state power. As such, marketplaces were critical both to elite efforts to mold the economy, society, and politics to their ideals and to Mayan efforts to carve out spaces of autonomy. At the same time, some Mayan women used the very institutions and laws that criminalized vendors’ behavior to press for their own rights. Even though the state’s structures were based on patriarchal and racist notions of authority, they offered Mayan women considerable space to contest male, ladino, and elite power.

When a *regidor* (magistrate) caught Isabel Bajxac “monopolizing” fruit and other wholesale provisions in the San Martín Jilotepeque (henceforth San Martín) plaza early on 11 February 1935, the middle-aged illiterate Mayan vendor claimed she was unaware of the law restricting such sales to the afternoon.<sup>1</sup> A few months later when the *regidor* arrested Bajxac for the same crime, he noted, “Bajxac has extensive knowledge [of the prohibition] as she has been punished repeated times now for the same reason.” In her defense, Bajxac told the court that she engaged in these acts because she was “very poor.”<sup>2</sup> Evidently, the judge had little sympathy; his sentence of five days in jail commutable by a ten-cent fine only compounded her poverty.<sup>3</sup>

Though Bajxac confessed to selling the goods, she never admitted to committing a crime. The first time she claimed ignorance and the second time poverty. She was not brazenly flouting the law but rather simply trying to survive. In turn, the magistrate and judge failed to see how the state's attempt to impose order condemned her (and other vendors) to destitution. Cases such as these reveal the ambiguities and ambivalences in subalterns' efforts to understand, evaluate, and respond to asymmetrical relations of power. On one hand, Maya recognized the authority of judges and, to a lesser extent, market inspectors and at times welcomed, even invited, their interventions. On the other hand, vendors were quick to confront these officials when they thought their actions or the laws were unjust. As such, the state was both a powerful protectorate and a menacing nuisance that needed to be redirected or reshaped. As Bajxac's testimony intimates, people were not necessarily proud of their resistance (or collaboration). Bajxac was choosing between feeding her family and breaking the law.

As one of the few public spaces where Mayan women held sway in a nation controlled primarily by ladino (non-indigenous) men, marketplaces were contested terrains shot through with complex power relations. If the criminal record is any indication, clashes with state officials—magistrates, market inspectors, sanitation officers, judges, police—were some of the most important relations Mayan marketers experienced. The confrontations that emerge in the criminal record between vendors and authorities demonstrate that highland markets (and especially their female vendors) were critical both to ladino liberals' efforts to mold the economy, society, and politics to their ideals, and to Mayan efforts to carve out spaces of autonomy and power within the narrow confines of early-twentieth-century Guatemalan politics and economics. Though due in part to residents' poverty, the failure of officials to normalize the state's will in these locales points to the strength of Mayan social and economic systems and, of course, the resilience of the people who retained them.

Because their actions did not fit into the state's definition of social order and material progress, Mayan vendors such as Bajxac who failed to adhere to government regulations aimed at inculcating market principles threatened the foundation upon which liberal leaders in Guatemala were trying to build a modern nation. The struggle over who controlled highland markets (those who participated in them or the state) demonstrates that material cultures were part of "everyday forms of state formation."<sup>4</sup> Like postrevolutionary Mexican elites, Guatemalan leaders considered the "Indian Problem" one of the greatest obstacles to national development. Unlike Mexico, however, which sought to co-opt and integrate indigenous peoples (see both Lewis and Fallaw, this issue), the Guatemalan national-

ist project ostracized and repressed Maya. With its racist, authoritarian, and exclusionary political environment, Guatemala was more akin to Peru. Despite these political and social barriers, Maya of highland Guatemala enjoyed control over an integrated rural marketing system—an economic advantage their counterparts in the Yucatan and Chiapas did not have. As ethnographies demonstrate, these markets continued to be important avenues for Mayan economic autonomy and upward mobility.<sup>5</sup> Partly for this reason, they became battlegrounds for the Guatemalan state's neocolonialist ambitions.

Marketplaces both enabled and subjugated participants; vendors could enrich themselves as long as they played by the state's rules. Those who violated these laws (wittingly or not) risked forfeiting their wealth and freedom. By revealing how subalterns and authorities advanced their claims and agendas in shifting fields of power, the criminal record also elucidates the clash between the state's ideologies, goals, and policies, on one hand, and local alternative practices and worldviews on the other. Though courts and marketplaces were both a means through which the state asserted its power *and* venues for Maya to contest that power, some vendors like Bajxac became defendants not because they were defying state authority but merely because the economic, social, and political realities of their lives compelled them to act in ways that contravened the state's laws. Vendors' public positions provided them a certain degree of influence and authority, but also made them targets of the state's attempts to reinscribe its power at the local level. At the same time, since local officials were not always or necessarily allied with the state, and often Maya simply sought to dishonor or resist them, many disputes were local in nature.

Throughout the first half of the twentieth century, dictatorships prevailed in Guatemala, yet poor Mayan women, who were among the lowest orders in the country's hierarchy of power, often refused to succumb to the will of these regimes or the local power structures that operated under them. If we accept Michel Foucault's assertion that power normalizes and disciplines a populace, then perhaps these women's acts disclose a weak state hiding behind a ferocious façade. Indeed, often dictatorial rule masked institutional weakness.<sup>6</sup> In one of Latin America's most brutal dictatorships of the twentieth century, Guatemalan president Manuel Estrada Cabrera (1898–1920) sacrificed liberty and justice for order and progress. Through an extensive network of spies, draconian police force, and *mandamientos* (forced labor drafts), Estrada Cabrera effectively curtailed individual freedoms. Those suspected of undermining or challenging his rule were punished harshly. At the same time, he cultivated loyalists through personal favors such as pardoning criminals and making exceptions to government

policies. In short, to project an image of modernization, Estrada Cabrera used any means to prevent social unrest while at the same time he obscured such national shortcomings as poverty, illiteracy, and racism.<sup>7</sup> A decade of democratic freedoms (and a brief economic boom) followed before another dictator, General Jorge Ubico, assumed control of the country (1931–44), and though Maya often held him in a more favorable light, his reign too was totalitarian.

Gender and ethnicity mediated how people experienced liberal rule in Guatemala (1871–1944) and Latin America. Throughout Latin America, liberal leaders, who oftentimes expanded programs established by their conservative predecessors, stimulated agricultural export economies by expropriating communal lands and enforcing compulsory labor mechanisms. As a result, many subsistence farmers were drawn into the cash economy. In addition, with its legislation, secularization of society, land privatization, expanding bureaucracy, and patriarchal nationalism, the liberal state enhanced male privilege and increased inequalities between men and women.<sup>8</sup> When women operated in such public positions as midwives, market vendors, and prostitutes, the state attempted to regulate their activities to further liberal conceptions of social control and national development.<sup>9</sup> Since highland markets were one of the few areas where the Guatemalan state could directly affect indigenous women, its attempts to enforce gendered morality and domestic stability were particularly intense there. According to ladino authorities, women disrupted order and so should be controlled, and Maya hindered progress and so should assimilate.<sup>10</sup> In the same way Yucatecan elites believed henequen haciendas would “civilize” indigenous “barbarians” (see Eiss, this issue), Guatemalan elites sought to modernize Maya by transforming highland markets. To advance capitalism and extend its vision of progress and order, the liberal state sought to impose both market principles and ladino norms in the marketplace. Female vendors, whether intentionally or not, effectively frustrated these efforts. In effect, highland marketplaces were transformed into theaters of class, gender, and ethnic struggle. Perhaps more than any other public space, highland marketplaces experienced the clash between the state’s efforts to impose ladino nationalism and Mayan (and other subalterns’) efforts to imbue the economy, society, and ultimately the nation with their own worldviews and *modus operandi*.

By championing ladino nationalism, the state was identifying its own ethnicity. Despite its exclusionary rhetoric, Maya were willing to engage with the state. Yet vendors who faced down market inspectors were not necessarily defying capitalism or nationalism because they knew where these experiments were headed;<sup>11</sup> often they simply were trying to maxi-

mize their profits. Though the state's programs and policies shaped the possibilities and constraints of its citizens,<sup>12</sup> even the most marginalized subjects could limit (or expand) state power and reshape state ethnicity.

### **Highland Markets and State Formation: The Economics of Gender and Ethnicity**

Throughout the pre-Hispanic, colonial, and postindependence eras, markets facilitated the exchange of agricultural products, foodstuffs, textiles, pottery, firewood, clothing, medicine, and the like in Mesoamerica. Most goods came from the region surrounding the market, but long-distance merchants also offered products from other areas. Particularly in indigenous communities, these markets had long been the domain of women. And since markets provided residents with most of their dietary staples, female vendors dominated one of the most crucial institutions of highland life.<sup>13</sup> As mosaics of distinct economic systems, markets were neither timeless, autonomous, nor homogenous.

During the colonial era, indigenous communities were connected to the economy largely through paying taxes and fulfilling labor demands. While highland villages enjoyed considerable autonomy during the Hapsburg dynasty (1516–1700), by the mid-eighteenth century the Bourbons (1701–1833) were increasingly intervening in community life and attempting to draw indigenous people into the colonial economy. In 1747, for example, the Bourbons converted native tribute from in-kind to cash. Yet despite the partial commodification of land and labor by 1760, subsistence agriculture and petty commodity production remained prevalent in Mayan communities. As part of their effort to force indigenous people into the cash economy, in the 1780s the Bourbons increased taxes. In Guatemala, these reforms enjoyed little success. By the early 1800s, Maya openly defied colonial agents and tax collectors. Their resistance was motivated partly by perceptions that the state was violating notions of reciprocity and the right to subsistence that were the pillars of a Mayan moral economy.<sup>14</sup> Because both the Guatemalan state and the Catholic Church were relatively weak after Central America's independence (in 1823), most Mayan communities enjoyed considerable autonomy until the last third of the nineteenth century.<sup>15</sup> During Guatemala's early nationhood, Mayan communities regulated their markets without much state intervention.

Most indigenous communities relied on subsistence agriculture for their livelihood but not to the exclusion of other relations of production. For example, through the various services they provided and demanded, such as processing raw materials into finished goods and providing credit

to clients, female vendors helped to connect subsistence and commercial economies. These hybrid highland economies became more complex as the nineteenth century wore on and the era of relative self-determination for Mayan communities diminished. To force Maya into the agricultural export economy, liberal leaders who came to power in the 1871 revolt continued the policies of their conservative predecessors aimed at disrupting Mayan livelihoods and relations of production by instituting coerced labor mechanisms and land privatization schemes.<sup>16</sup> Yet since the initial focus was on providing seasonal laborers for coffee plantations, it was not until the turn of the century that the state earnestly attempted to impose capitalist relations of production and exchange in Mayan marketplaces.

For reasons that emanated from the top down as well as from the bottom up, the transition to capitalism never became a thoroughgoing market revolution. Even though by the 1930s Mayan men and women were migrating to the coast for wage labor on coffee *fincas* (large landed estates), and most Maya had made the transition to private property, these actions were not motivated by a commitment to capitalism but rather were responses to population pressure, locusts and drought, decreasing harvest yields, and threats from ladino and Mayan land speculators. By laboring and living on the coast only a few months a year, these workers avoided becoming fully proletarianized. In turn, neither the state nor economic elites fully embraced capitalism. Market forces seldom regulated acquisitions of land or the movement of labor. Instead of allowing the market to determine land values and exchanges, the state privatized land to transfer communal holdings to agricultural export entrepreneurs at cheap prices. Similarly, coffee planters relied on the state's forced labor mechanisms to supply field hands. Large landowners preferred to use seasonal laborers as opposed to full-time employees because that compelled workers to reproduce the labor force through their subsistence economy, thereby saving the planters the expense of supporting a workforce year-round.<sup>17</sup> By attempting to control rather than eradicate Mayan marketplaces, the state further promoted a hybrid economy. The syncretic and adulterated nature of economic forms in Guatemala did little to bridge the "profound cultural differences [that] arose" between subsistence and capitalist modes of production.<sup>18</sup> Yet because it was packaged with liberal leaders' efforts to homogenize the nation, the market culture represented more than just an economic imposition.

In an effort to establish a more united nation, liberal party governments denigrated Mayan ethnic distinctions. Following independence, the Guatemalan state and ladino elites tried to create a nation that would identify with its European influences and circumscribe its Mayan heritage. By the late nineteenth century two competing national possibilities emerged:

autochthonous Maya and hispanicized ladinos. According to many ladino leaders and intellectuals, Maya were poor, dirty, ignorant, and susceptible to disease by their very nature, and therefore could only be regenerated through *ladinoization* (becoming ladino).<sup>19</sup>

In response to systematic discrimination and exclusion, most Maya maintained an autonomous ethnic ideological system. Anthropologist Carol Smith terms this approach *anti-assimilationist* because “traditional Maya neither accepted nor rejected their position in the national race and class hierarchy: They operated by a different set of principles.”<sup>20</sup> This alternative conceptual framework threatened the ladino nationalist project, though not in the same way Mayan adherence to cultural differentiation challenged Mexico’s national imaginary. Since the Guatemalan experiment rejected the notion of *mestizaje* (race mixing), the nation did not celebrate contemporary aspects of indigenous ethnicity the way Mexico did.<sup>21</sup> When highland Maya resisted acculturation, only ladinos were welcomed as national citizens. In contrast to ladino constructions of nation and ethnicity, some Maya viewed nationalism, economic development, and indigenous culture as interdependent.<sup>22</sup> As Walter Little suggests (this issue), Maya who participated in Ubico’s National Fair had a sense of how their ethnicity contributed to economic development by attracting tourists. In turn, Mayan notions of the complementarity of nationalism and indigeneity are evident in oral histories in which Kaqchikel (the third largest Mayan linguistic group in Guatemala) define the nation as indigenous and in court records where Maya identify themselves as *Guatemalteco* and *indígena*.<sup>23</sup> To cite another example, from the late 1920s to the mid-1940s, San Juan Comalapa (henceforth Comalapa) authorities—Maya and ladino alike—secured labor for public works projects by appealing to Kaqchikel denizens’ sense of patriotism and emphasizing the local and national economy’s need for such infrastructure.<sup>24</sup> Kaqchikel laborers who voluntarily responded to this call acted on the potential symbiosis of nationalism, ethnicity, and development.

By the early twentieth century, the complex power relations in highland markets made it difficult, if not impossible, for state officials to control and shape these sites as they intended. Yet paradoxically, despite the abundance of female vendors’ infractions in the criminal record, neither national nor municipal authorities explicitly recognized local markets or female vendors as important contributors to the economy. Members of a commission in charge of introducing electricity to San Martín in 1935, for example, informed government officials that they would have to charge a household tax to raise the funds necessary for the project, claiming: “It is known that the commerce in this village is purely local and without any sig-



nificance."<sup>25</sup> A mural on the cemetery walls of Comalapa created in 2002 by local artists, teachers, community leaders, and students also reflects this invisibility. While the sixty-seven panels depict central aspects of the community's past, and women are shown weaving, processing cotton, performing ceremonies, and the like, female vendors or even images of the market are notably absent.

In a further reflection of the obscurity of female vendors, seldom did state scribes or journalists refer to women's financial skills, resources, or contributions. Certainly Guatemalan women's economic opportunities suffered in a society that privileged men's access to employment, education, and wealth, but these privileges may have blinded men to women's economic ingenuity, success, and significance, which in turn fanned perceptions of their vulnerability. In a 1931 article in *La Gaceta*, Professor A. del Vecchio warned that females were most at risk during times of economic depression:

We have observed that the situation of the woman gets worse each day, because of the absolute ignorance of order and economics. . . .

The secret of many women who manage their homes without great sums of money, is in knowing how to handle the bills. . . .

Many women have the very bad system of acquiring all their articles through credit, spending in this manner twice the amount of the price, creating the illusion that everything is moving along marvelously without realizing that when it comes time to pay the bills, there is no money available.

I do not think it is impossible to teach girls in the schools and in the homes how to organize the daily costs of the house so that when they come of age, they will know how to sustain themselves and contribute to the prosperity of *the businesses of their husbands* and the well being of their children. . . .

These girls that now grow up coming from financial conflicts in the home, without finding any remedy, later will look for the easiest means to free themselves from these pains, compromising their reputation. But if there is a hand that guides them toward a good path and shows them that even in well organized poverty they can find satisfaction and joy, they will become hard-working, orderly little women.<sup>26</sup>

Del Vecchio's comments reflect the liberal state's concern that women could undermine national order and progress. If girls did not learn to manage their indigence, they would become lazy, unruly, and perhaps even use sex to escape squalor. In advocating paternalistic guidance and celebrating (well-organized) poverty, del Vecchio heralded a liberal vision of national

development and social control based on gender and class hierarchies of material power.<sup>27</sup> Interestingly, Kaqchikel elders too expressed concerns about girls becoming lazy. But in contrast to del Vecchio, they believed school was the problem, not the solution. Kaqchikel parents denied girls a formal education on the basis that it only would make them indolent.<sup>28</sup> While Kaqchikel elders' concerns were influenced partly by girls' indispensable labor in highland communities, the state seemed more concerned about indolent females' moral integrity than the potential loss of their labor. As one manifestation of the state's reluctance to recognize the importance of female labor, *corvée* labor legislation generally targeted male workers. For example, when the Ubico regime issued its 1934 vagrancy law aimed in part at ensuring laborers for the state and large landowners, it only applied to men. Ironically, women performed much of the agricultural labor on coffee *fincas* and other farms, but the state was blind to (or refused to recognize) their contributions.<sup>29</sup>

Guatemalan liberals' notions of gender tended to discount women's economic value. Although he lauded some women's financial acumen, del Vecchio marked a sharp gender distinction by attributing entrepreneurship to males. For many observers and officials, local highland markets were an extension of the household economy and therefore less significant economically. In contrast, partly because males dominated long-distance trade (though not to the exclusion of women), writers often conjured up romantic images of their profession. In a 1943 paean entitled "Our Powerful and Hard Working Native Race," the anonymous author exalts Mayan men for facilitating trade (even while emphasizing their subordination):

Satisfied with their labor and always smiling before the difficult and daily fatigue of work, these aboriginal merchants [shown in a photograph] take a break in the middle of the beatific peace of the road. Hard working men of iron, bronzed by the luminous radiance of our tropical sun, they have honor for their guide, smiles for their balsam, and work for their religion. Anointed by the satisfaction that their productive activity creates, these contracted traffickers cross exalted paths in interminable excursions, transporting their original and curious products from one part of the country to the other, while the jungle seems to shelter them with an affectionate subjectivism that scatters about in whispers and joy.<sup>30</sup>

In juxtaposition to social constructions of gender, such as del Vecchio's, that portrayed women as inclined toward indolence, disorder, and immorality, these Mayan male merchants were laborious and honest by nature.

This celebration of itinerant male merchants stands in sharp contrast

to the invisibility of female vendors in local markets. But it also obscures Mayan female merchants who traveled beyond their communities to sell their wares—evidence of which appears in oral histories, criminal records, ethnographies, and travel accounts.<sup>31</sup> Of course, a number of factors explain why many women were enjoined from long-distance trading. For instance, their roles as child bearers and rearers as well as the daily demand for their family labor often compelled them to stay close to home. Conversely, since men generally farmed, they could travel during lulls in the agricultural cycle. Nonetheless women devised ways to expand their mobility and sell their goods in other towns.<sup>32</sup> For their part, authorities were wary of women who traded outside their communities, such as the fifty-five-year-old merchant from Santa Catarina Milpas whose “prolonged presence” and “suspicious discussions with a girl” attracted the attention of the Patzicía police in 1948.<sup>33</sup> According to liberal intellectuals and leaders, men were the drivers of the economy and as such their diligence should be held up as part of the nation’s pride. In contrast, while women could support male endeavors, their own economic activity was negligent. Worse still, because they were vulnerable and weak, women needed to be nurtured or controlled since they held the potential to fall into ruin, thereby disrupting national progress and social order.

### **Struggles over Gender, Ethnicity, and Economics in Highland Markets**

During the first half of the twentieth century, the Guatemalan government embarked on a program to move vendors from public plazas to enclosed buildings. Though the street clearance campaign was motivated partly by sanitary and visual ideals of cleanliness and civility, this policy was also an attempt to counteract the influence and control of Mayan women, who largely determined the *modus operandi* of public plazas on market days. Some municipal councils, such as Comalapa’s, endorsed the national government’s plan. But support did not necessarily mean action. In January 1944, fifteen years after the Comalapa municipal council’s endorsement, the community had yet to build a market even though local leaders considered it one of the town’s most urgent public works projects.<sup>34</sup> By the 1940s towns throughout the western highlands had enclosed markets, but even in these communities, and especially in Mayan towns, public plazas remained the business place of most vendors.<sup>35</sup> Although some Maya recognized the benefits of market buildings, most female vendors refused to work in them, claiming that being enclosed in a building marginalized their sales.<sup>36</sup> Photo-



Figure 1. Mercado de Tecpán, ca. 1925. Mayan women comprised the majority in this outdoor market. Anonymous. Colección Fototeca Guatemala, Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica (Cirma)

graphs from the first half of the twentieth century of Mayan women selling in public plazas illustrate this project's limited success.<sup>37</sup>

The control and use of public space was an expression of power. By spreading their goods on the street, vendors were not merely claiming the ground they occupied, they were also helping to create an environment where the marginalized could move about freely with a sense of propriety.<sup>38</sup> In an indication of how valuable such spaces were, at times merchants physically removed shoppers and bystanders who crowded their vending area.<sup>39</sup>

Because they were greatly outnumbered in most highland towns, including those in this study—Patzicía, San Martín, Comalapa, San José Poaquil (henceforth Poaquil), Patzún, San Antonio, Aguas Calientes, and Tecpán—ladinos needed to criminalize Mayan activities in the plazas and streets to establish control over these public spaces. For example, local ladino officials frequently arrested Kaqchikel for “dirtying the streets.”<sup>40</sup> Many ladinos associated Maya with street life and generally considered the street, with its exposure to dust and air, to be contaminated, dirty, and backward—words they often used to describe Maya and their dwell-

ings. Indeed, a number of ladino medical professionals were convinced that Maya were susceptible to and propagators of disease because they lacked hygiene.<sup>41</sup> In ladino officials' worldviews, market buildings would facilitate a more sterile and organized environment and thus contribute to public health, national progress, and social stability. It also would help them to reinscribe their power in these public settings. For local ladino officials working in Mayan towns, projecting power, control, and respect was crucial for performing their duties. At the same time, they needed to be responsive to Mayan demands and perceptions of just relations. Even though rural judges, market inspectors, and fee collectors were generally ladinos whose power partly emanated from the state, to a certain extent they still had to appease their Mayan charges, who ultimately granted authorities local legitimacy. If communities deemed local officials' actions and decisions to be unjust or punitive, revolts could ensue.<sup>42</sup>

Keeping the marketplace clean and orderly was a central concern for local authorities. But it was not just women's prevalence in markets that gave these crimes a gendered component. Even when authorities extended these codes to the streets, seldom were men written up for sanitation violations.<sup>43</sup> Associating females with domestic labor, officials expected women to keep public spaces clean. When identifying these offenders, authorities almost invariably described them as *amas de casa* (ladies or mistresses of the house). Evidently, women who were arrested for soiling streets and markets, such as the repeat offender Manuela Calel Chitic, were comfortable disregarding cleanliness as part of their socially constructed identities.<sup>44</sup> Some simply could not be bothered with such details, nor did they appreciate authorities' critiques of them. An incident that occurred on 2 September 1935 between Catarina Estrada, a forty-year-old ladina, and a San Martín market inspector is emblematic of these confrontations:

Yesterday, during market hours, Mrs. Catarina Estrada was busy expending *arroz en leche*, without any concern for the cleanliness of the stall's dishes; the cups as well as the wash-stand in which she washed them were extremely dirty. For this reason, the person in charge of sanitation vigilance, José Contreras, called her attention to this particular [problem]. And Estrada, instead of respecting the instructions of Mr. Contreras, verbally abused him.<sup>45</sup>

Naturally, the state's concern about sanitation emanated from public health. While some vendors and individuals resisted or ignored these encroachments, Mayan and ladino customers often welcomed them. In October 1944, Emilia Ajquejay Bac was so disgusted with her *chorizos* (sausages) that she took the butcher to court. She testified:

With complete confidence I took them [the chorizos] home and prepared them for lunch, with the rest of my family members and common-law husband, grilled with a *chirmol* of chile with onion and salt, but no tomatoes or *miltomates*. Immediately after [eating them,] I had an uncomfortable feeling of cold leaving from my heart and the rest of my body, [and] burning in my eyes, and headaches to the extent that I could not see. And that was how everyone else was, with stomach pains and burning lips. For that reason, I immediately presumed it was the effects of the chorizos.<sup>46</sup>

To strengthen her case, she added that she had not fed any chorizos to her five year-old daughter (because she was sick with parasites) and “nothing happened to her.” Ajquejay’s son, Vicente, also testified to the family’s sudden symptoms and noted that his mother was going to throw away the chorizos because they smelled so bad, but his father told her not to because “selling bad meat in the plaza was prohibited.” The latter believed the state’s public health system to be so efficacious that even though the meat appeared rotten, he could not conceive that it was. To his mind, state control as it manifested itself through public health regulations did not infringe upon citizens; on the contrary, it protected them. Whether the judge’s opinion was informed by a similar sense of confidence in the public health system or his suspicion of the plaintiffs, who, he observed, showed “symptoms of intoxication” but otherwise appeared to be in good health, is unclear, but he too doubted the chorizos were spoiled.

In truth, local officials’ vigilance of perishables, particularly meat, was motivated as much by financial as public health concerns; licenses generated income for municipalities. Earlier that same year, when one San Martín magistrate discovered that Sofia Tay had lard, chorizos, chicharron, and other pork products in her home, he arrested her for butchering a pig without obtaining a license or paying the corresponding tax. Tay explained that she could not have fulfilled the municipal requirements because her actions were not premeditated; the pig had drowned, so she had to cut it up immediately. Her appeal failed to impress the judge, who sentenced her to thirty days in prison.<sup>47</sup> One wonders what other factors might have contributed to Tay’s predicament. Though female butchers were not uncommon, Mayan ones were. As oral histories attest (see below), ladino butchers guarded their professions with a fervor that at times turned violent. For their part, most licensed butchers kept their records up to date with the municipality.<sup>48</sup> But they were not the only vendors who had to comply with local public health mandates. In 1935, a thirty-year-old Mayan woman named Feliza Armira was arrested for “selling groceries without her correspond-



Figure 2. Kaqchikeles de San Juan Sacatepequez, ca. 1910. Mayan vendors spread out on the street to sell their goods. Photography by Alberto Valdeavellano. Colección Fototeca Guatemala, Cirma, Antigua, Guatemala

ing medical certificate.”<sup>49</sup> Documentation of those who failed to abide by these regulations, as well as evidence of those who felt confident the system was protecting their health, demonstrate that Maya both resented and welcomed government regulations.

The state’s intervention went beyond interactions in the marketplace to the way space and vendors were organized within it. The Estrada Cabrera and Ubico regimes attempted to reorganize the market based on goods instead of people. Traditionally, vendors sat with their linguistic, ethnic, and community group, but government officials sought to relocate them according to the products they sold. Since communities tended to specialize in certain goods, some traveling merchants could sit together without violating the state’s organizational schema as evidenced in Felix McBryde’s map of the Quetzaltenango market in 1936. But many vendors resisted the proposed changes because they infringed upon their businesses and world-views.<sup>50</sup> In August of 1944, for example, Maximiliana Chonay “was in jail because she did not want to position herself in the place that corresponded to her in the market.”<sup>51</sup> Much like her contemporaries who had undermined authorities’ efforts to reclaim public plazas and streets, Chonay was disrupting the state’s attempt to impose capitalist order.

Disagreements over modalities of production and exchange litter the

criminal record. And since the offenders were largely Mayan females and the authorities were almost invariably ladino males, these interactions provide a window into gender and ethnic relations. State authorities and police regularly arrested female vendors for *abuso mercantil* (commercial abuse) and for establishing a “monopoly” on such goods as eggs, chickens, sugar, plants, maize, and beans. To cite one example, on 5 January 1925, in the San Martín plaza, authorities arrested two illiterate Kaqchikel *molenderas* (corn millers) aged sixteen and fourteen “for monopolizing . . . articles of first necessity.” The two girls confessed to their crime without raising “any objection in their favor.”<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, the documents do not elaborate on what constituted *abuso mercantil* or how women established monopolies, though in 1933 San Martín authorities explained that they persecuted “monopolizers” because monopolies caused shortages in the market.<sup>53</sup>

The frequency with which female vendors appear in the criminal record indicates that authorities were concerned about women’s control in the marketplace. Barely three weeks after prosecuting the two teenage vendors mentioned above, San Martín officials arrested ten women for monopolizing their goods in the marketplace.<sup>54</sup> Though their ages ranged widely (from fourteen to seventy), most vendors arrested for these crimes were illiterate, Maya, and female. And since most towns had only one major market day each week, most marketers had other occupations. Many were *molenderas*. Their responses to being arrested ranged from confessions to declarations of innocence and the many shades of ambivalence and ambiguity in between. In contrast to the two teenage girls, another Mayan *molendera* Felipa Luisa denied monopolizing chickens in Patzicía; she insisted she was selling them at a fair price.<sup>55</sup> That some women simply accepted their fate but did not change their practices (as evidenced by subsequent arrests) while others sought to convince authorities of the legality of their actions hints at the diverse ways women claimed authority and contested power. Few accepted that they were breaking the law by selling their goods.

At times, vendors were unaware of the state’s mandates or unable to act in accordance with them, as Isabel Bajxac’s violations revealed. Conversely, in some instances vendors welcomed the state’s intervention. As arrests of outspoken vendors attest, authorities were quick to quell unrest in the market and its environs. Since keeping the peace was good for business, at times vendors appreciated these efforts, as was the case on 29 September 1943 when a fight broke out causing a “great commotion” in Patzicía’s central plaza on market day and police quickly arrested the offending parties. Later that same day, the police whisked away a disgruntled military conscript whose yelling “disturbed [public] order” in the central plaza.<sup>56</sup>



Even though vendors and authorities had different notions of what constituted order, merchants and consumers appreciated the state's efforts to curtail theft.<sup>57</sup> The National Police reminded merchants of omnipresent threats when, for example, it warned them to beware of a "*pandilla de rateros* [party of thieves] of both sexes that in the full light of day carry out robberies."<sup>58</sup> As Isabel Racanac learned in 1935 when she was caught stealing, the *juez del mercado* (market judge or administrator) was constantly on the lookout for rateros.<sup>59</sup> In contrast, those who sold outside the marketplace did so at their own peril. One woman who eschewed the protection of the marketplace by attempting to sell her goods in a cantina, had her *kapadura* (blocks of sugar) stolen by the cantina owner.<sup>60</sup>

In addition to their efforts to extirpate monopolies and guard public health, officials regulated economic exchanges. Since rural vendors used at least four systems of weights and measures (the English, the colonial Spanish, the metric, and the indigenous), authorities sought to standardize as well as police such interactions.<sup>61</sup> On 19 April 1925, three illiterate indigenous molenderas were arrested in the San Martín market for using the inexact method of weighing their goods with a rock.<sup>62</sup> Unlike these three women who all confessed, many accused of such crimes pled innocent, partly because in addition to being jailed or fined, they stood to lose their products and reputations. From her Patzicía prison cell, Vicenta Pata insisted that she did not intend to "defraud the public;" she was unaware that her scale was inaccurate.<sup>63</sup> Some vendors preempted these investigations by registering with the municipality. Though they had to update their licenses periodically, a number of women continued to return for official approval of their weights.<sup>64</sup> Although prices generally were controlled by the haggling that took place between vendors and customers (which at times led to confrontations that landed the parties in court), one female elder from Comalapa recalls, "A long time ago, if women charged too much money in the market, they went to jail."<sup>65</sup> The prodigious number of marketplace violations is an indication that the state was increasingly inserting itself into local economic relations. That police arrested eighteen-year-old Faustina Gonzalez Sazo from Santa Lucía Utatlán for violating a brown sugar ordinance in 1935 and Francisca Meneses of Patzicía for violating a gas sale ordinance in 1943 speaks to the specificity of the state's regulations.<sup>66</sup> Such confrontations demonstrate the hybrid nature of highland marketplaces, where distinct economic and social relations of production, exchange, and circulation intersected.

In many ways, these crimes reveal how the change from one market culture to another transforms a local economy and society. Some vendors sought to maintain or adapt earlier modalities of production and exchange

in the face of a new disempowering system. By imposing new regulations on vendors, the state was not merely enforcing the transformation of indigenous markets in abstract economic terms but rather encroaching upon cultural traits by establishing ladino logic, worldviews, and behavior as normative in the structure and functioning of those markets. These crimes may have been manifestations of different factors including resistance, poverty, honest mistakes, “the ultimate dream of domination: to have the dominated exploit each other,” or simply everyday behavior.<sup>67</sup> Though historian Cindy Forster has noted that participation in an underground economy was a form of working-class resistance,<sup>68</sup> it is also worth noting that often it was a survival strategy. Defendants such as Isabel Bajxac and the numerous Maya arrested for selling *aguardiente* (moonshine) who claimed they did so to feed their families speak to this phenomenon.

At the same time, Mayan vendors were not always surreptitiously trying to evade the state’s mandates; often they confronted local officials directly. Court and police records from 1900 to 1944 abound with Mayan women disobeying market regulations and more generally disrupting the peace by fighting, drinking, and yelling. These documents reveal, in the words of E. P. Thompson, “working women’s lack of deference and their contestation of authority.”<sup>69</sup> José María Juárez, the juez del mercado in the highland town of Patzicía in the early 1940s, arrested a number of women for *maltrato de palabra* (verbal abuse) and even a few for hitting him. Since Mayan women comprised the vast majority of participants in highland markets, they had considerable influence in them. Ladinos, men, and government officials could not take for granted the privileged positions they generally enjoyed in broader Guatemalan society. Poor Mayan women who openly threatened and abused ladino male officials challenged hierarchies of power based on gender, ethnic, class, and state-subaltern relations. Simply put, ladino males were among the most privileged of the nation’s citizens while Mayan women were among its most marginalized. Furthermore, men, not women, were supposed to be aggressive and outspoken in public. But these female vendors often were brusque, bold, independent, and tough. As protagonists who initiated aggressive actions against ladino officials, these Mayan women were breaking with normative constructions of gender and ethnicity. Though diverging from these conventions may not have been motivated by an attempt to radically alter patriarchy, racist relations, state hegemony, or capitalist modes of production, it certainly affected perceptions of women and Maya for all who witnessed them.

In another reflection of state-subaltern negotiations, these interactions provide a window onto perceptions of social status. When Mayan vendors publicly insulted Juárez, in effect they attacked his social position.

To defend it, Juarez took them to court, where judges reinstated his status by punishing the women. The frequency with which Juarez and other market inspectors brought such offenses to the court's attention indicates that Mayan women did not confer the same social status upon these officials that they and the judges did. Such divergent assessments of who deserved respect and obedience suggest that these vendors operated by a different set of principles, which in turn underscores the state's failure to unite citizens around its national imaginary.

As the domain of women, the marketplace emboldened their confidence. Even today, like domestic labor, selling is considered essentially female in nature in much of Latin America.<sup>70</sup> In his study of Panajachel in the 1930s, anthropologist Sol Tax found that the few males who sold in the local market were subject to criticism and ridicule.<sup>71</sup> Perhaps the twenty-year-old Enrique Pichiya was responding to such ridicule when he slapped a twenty-eight-year-old Mayan female customer.<sup>72</sup> Such confrontations with men and local officials notwithstanding, the market afforded the chance for camaraderie in a largely female world. In the central highlands, a shared Mayan cultural category (as opposed to identifying as Ladina) and socio-economic background and even similar occupations further fomented female familiarity. Even though a sense of Mayan ethnicity is difficult to discern from the documents, at the very least, by identifying (or being identified as) *indígena*, Kaqchikel vendors acknowledged a mutual condition and thus shared ethnic position in Guatemala. Yet women's solidarity should not be overstated. A number of women appeared before the court for *maltrato de palabra* against other women. Some denounced female counterparts for physical abuse.<sup>73</sup> At times, violence in the market was related to racism. Ix'ajpu', a seventy-seven-year-old Kaqchikel woman from Patzún recalls, "If you were in the market where they sell cheap goods, *senora*'i' went also and they would hit you because they were Ladinas."<sup>74</sup> To be sure, the high incidence of female crimes in markets as compared to other public spaces reflects women's significant numbers and the state's vigilance there; but it also indicates women's ease and freedom there.

The marketplace was one of the few places where women became politicized. Reflecting on his boyhood, Victor Perera remembers Mayan market women as "a vocal and militant faction in the affairs of Guatemala City."<sup>75</sup> In some cases relations were so inverted that in effect market administrators served vendors. As one ethnographer noted, local administrations were careful not to antagonize politically powerful marketers.<sup>76</sup> Since women were denied access to such community organizations as the *municipalidad indígena* (indigenous municipality) and *cofradías* (religious confraternities), they had few structures through which they could advo-

cate for themselves. Their public presence and stake in the market encouraged them to be outspoken and confront authorities.

### Oral History Reflections on the State and Market Relations

Just as court records both inform and distort historical interpretations (partly because they are laden with asymmetrical power relations), so too are oral histories imperfect sources. Yet reading (and listening to) them as critically as one does archival documents enriches our understanding of how Maya experienced and conceived of economic, political, and social relations. Though in radically different ways, contemporary Mayan oral histories are as much prone to idealization as are liberal ladino conceptions of, say, the market, gender, and ethnicity. For many Kaqchikel, their views on the history of markets are embedded within their memories of the state and ethnic relations in general. The perception that the state undermined working-class Maya's efforts to improve their plight pervades Kaqchikel historical narratives. "The government in the past did not help the poor; [it] just created problems [for them]," recalls an eighty-two-year-old Kaqchikel woman from Comalapa.<sup>77</sup> A counterpart from Poaquil concurs, "The government does not help us; Ubico enslaved people."<sup>78</sup> But it was not just that the state obstructed rural working Maya's livelihoods; it exploited them to enrich officials. One sixty-eight-year-old woman from Poaquil argues, "The government is selling out Guatemala. We, the poor, are the ones who pay. And the president eats well."<sup>79</sup> Often in their assessment of the state's interests and loyalties, Kaqchikel informants conflate class and ethnicity, in large part because most of the government representatives and beneficiaries were ladinos. "The president only helps *kaxlan* [Spaniards or ladinos] not *qawinäq* [our people]," notes one twenty-six-year-old Kaqchikel accountant. At the same time, Kaqchikel raconteurs do not necessarily equate ladinos with the state; rather they distinguish the various ways by which the state seeks to reinforce and extend its authority in community life.<sup>80</sup>

Of course, Kaqchikel perceptions of the state are more complex and nuanced than a simple condemnation of it. Like Emilia Ajquejay Bac and other Mayan plaintiffs who took their cases to court, some Kaqchikel welcomed the state's presence. "Thankfully there is a government because that brings respect. If there was no government, we would kill each other," observes one fifty-five-year-old campesina from Comalapa.<sup>81</sup> The perception that the government brings respect reflects some Maya's confidence that state regulators were encouraging honest, safe, and healthy transactions in the marketplace. A number of Mayan elders believed that Ubico

“introduced ‘order’ in the plaza when he constructed market buildings and ensured that they were clean, just, and peaceful.”<sup>82</sup> Yet even in recognizing the state’s authority, Maya maintained some leverage with the state. A Mam teacher from Todos Santos Cuchumatán notes, “My grandfather concluded that we needed a strong arm, a strong hand. . . . We do not want to be slaves, but we want authority.”<sup>83</sup> As evidenced in court testimonies and oral histories, alternative worldviews and practices alongside ladino influences and the need for a sense of security from the state were at the heart of Mayan ambivalence toward state intervention.

Examples of the preservation of alternative perspectives that clash with dominant ideology are found in oral narratives that exalt relations of production based on sharing as opposed to competition. “Maya work well together, but the government did not like it and tried to stop it. The Maya see it as being stronger and can get more done as a group than as an individual,” notes Ix’ey, an elder from San Antonio Aguas Calientes.<sup>84</sup> Ix’ey’s comment sheds light on why Maya resisted attempts to separate them in the marketplace: the focus was on the individual (and commodity) not the community. A forty-four-year-old weaver from Tecpán asserts, “The lives of our ancestors were tranquil a long time ago. There was more respect. People worked *pa kuch* [collectively]—everyone helped each other.”<sup>85</sup> The *kuchb’al*, or mutual aid fund or society, was (and is) common in Kaqchikel communities where people would pool their resources to achieve their goals. Though the concept has a rich history, the institutions themselves were not necessarily long lasting; some would disband after a short time. And certainly not everyone participated in or even agreed with the ideology of the *kuchb’al*. As idealizations of communal economic and social regimes, these narratives capture important relationships even while they obscure others such as those based on competition and market principles. In articulating the relationship between ethnicity and class in Guatemala, one forty-seven-year-old midwife and *ajq’ij* (daykeeper) from Poaquil is more overtly political: “Maya [*qawinäq*] are more naturally Socialists. . . . Anti-communism was anti-poor because only the poor share life.”<sup>86</sup> Though some residents held perspectives on economic and personal relations that contravened capitalism, such as the validity of communal practices, most also engaged in market exchange.<sup>87</sup> Highland communities and marketplaces were conjunctions of distinct economic and social forms. Pitting idealized versions of Mayan communal values against ladino liberal ones oversimplifies the hybridity of highland realities, but it also allows interlocutors to laud their own worldviews and distinguish them from influences they consider iniquitous.

Like most historical narratives, Kaqchikel oral histories both obscure

and highlight aspects of their past. For example, the absence of almost any mention of Mayan female vendors' crimes stands in stark contrast to ladino butchers' horrendous reputations. One Mayan ethnohistorian whose great aunt was a vendor in the Patzicía market in the mid-twentieth century was shocked to learn that Mayan women were accused of monopolizing goods. He was convinced only *ladinas* did that.<sup>88</sup> Along the same lines, Mayan raconteurs offer historical accounts of ladino butchers who threatened and even killed Maya who dared to open up meat markets. The sixty-three-year-old vendor from Comalapa, B'eleje' Imox, notes, "It was the same in the market. Only *ladinos* [*mo's*] would sell. They did not let Maya [*qawinääq*] because they did not want Maya to succeed. That is what they did in the market."<sup>89</sup> Even while archival evidence and oral histories belie B'eleje' Imox's assertion that *ladinos* dominated highland markets, these founts confirm *ladinos*' sway in the meat industry. Ethnographies also offer evidence of butchers' power.<sup>90</sup> Yet whereas Kaqchikel oral narratives decry *ladinos* (particularly butchers) who sought to establish monopolies, criminal records indicate that when authorities arrested vendors for these crimes, the violators tended to be Maya not ladino.

Kaqchikel informants' selective memories contrast perceptions of unscrupulous *ladinos* who abused Maya and the state's systems with depictions of skeptical Maya who sought to maintain their own worldviews and play by the state's rules. In turn, the predominance of Mayan (female) vendors in criminal records is partly a product of Guatemalan structures designed to exploit Maya and privilege ladino elites. Both sources represent idealizations and thus distortions of the past, but they also speak to a history of ladino and state discrimination against Maya. Though Kaqchikel oral histories contain little explicit discourse around the struggles and prosecutions of indigenous women, they emphasize that markets were theaters of conflict with *ladinos* and the state.

Kaqchikel oral histories that preserve narratives about ethnic and state relations even while obscuring vendors' clashes with authorities shed light on how we might read the array of market episodes in the criminal record. Even though their motivations—to defy authorities, survive, turn a profit—are difficult to discern, through their diverse actions and tactics, Mayan women (whether deliberately or not) effectively arrested or disrupted state efforts to transform marketplaces in the ways intended. Of course, markets were transformed. Prior to the state's interventions, Mayan marketplaces were complex indigenous institutions that had their own normative practices and moral economies within which Mayan women played a significant role. The shift from the end of the nineteenth century onward altered these conditions, though not so much as a market revolution, according to

abstract economic norms. Instead, liberal economic reforms were experienced, via the state's intervention, as an attempt to remake the market as ladino rather than Maya, as controlled by males rather than by females, and as regulated by the state rather than by local communities. As such, confrontations in the marketplace were simultaneously class, gender, and ethnic struggles in which some protagonists strove to maintain or adapt earlier modalities of production and exchange in the face of the disempowering imposition of a different logic. Viewed in light of nineteenth- and twentieth-century policies designed to promote commercial coffee production through land divestiture and labor extraction, the attempt to alter highland markets can be seen as a continuation of the state's assaults on Mayan communities and economies. Even as Mayan female vendors frustrated the state's attempt to change and control highland markets, the state's interventions (and Mayan resistance) transformed these markets.

## Conclusion

Although poor Mayan women were perhaps the least able to control the circumstances of their lives in Guatemala, they were not powerless. Some used the courts to their advantage; others were in court because of their belligerence toward authorities. But often women's contact with the state was inadvertent; they were going about their daily activities when something they did (or failed to do) attracted the attention of an official. Even though their accusers were ladino male representatives of the state, women's actions and reactions were not inevitably intended to challenge racism, patriarchy, or hegemonic power. For instance, Mayan women cited for sanitation violations were not necessarily rejecting social constructions of women's domestic responsibilities, the state's efforts to improve public health, or ladinos' attempts to exact their labor. In many cases, they were simply preoccupied with other tasks—ones that did not correspond to the priorities of municipal authorities.

At the same time, the ambivalence toward the state that emerges in both the criminal record and oral histories intimates a sophisticated understanding of its ideologies and forms. Women were aware that the state could both prey upon and protect them. Regardless of their intentions, through their public presence and interactions with local officials, female vendors were attenuating the effects of the market culture and ladino acculturation on Mayan economies and communities. Depending on their goals, women engaged some aspects of dominant discourse and mechanisms and ignored or rejected others. By welcoming, accommodating, ignoring, or resisting the state, Mayan women were conveying different messages. When Isabel

Bajxac first ignored (or claimed ignorance of) and then refused to abide by the municipal law regarding the hour of wholesale, she was informing local officials that the law undermined her ability to support herself and her family. The public act of selling her wares prior to the stipulated hour challenged the state's authority and power at the local level.<sup>91</sup> Similarly, vendors who were arrested repeatedly for monopolizing goods, *abuso mercantil*, or sanitation violations let the state know, even in their silence, that the enforcement of its legislation jeopardized their livelihoods and was generally regarded as a nuisance. At the same time, by using the very institutions that criminalized vendors' activities to press for their own rights, other women such as Emilia Ajquejay Bac invited the state into their lives. Their actions and testimony urged the state to be more interventionist. Such acts were not necessarily complicitous; on the contrary, often subalterns retained their oppositional agency by invoking aspects of the dominant culture.<sup>92</sup> This ambivalence and ambiguity about the state's role in communities did not emanate from confusion on behalf of local denizens, but rather from a nuanced comprehension of the complex, complicated, and contested process of hegemonic-subaltern relations. These varied reactions also point to Maya's sundry strategies for achieving their goals.

In some ways, Mayan women's ambivalence toward the state mirrored the state's ambivalence toward them. The state perceived women to be both weak and formidable. By portraying women as vulnerable and susceptible to corruption, liberal leaders and intellectuals vested women with a certain degree of power since these same characteristics made them a threat to national progress and social order. The very social constructions that constrained women's life possibilities also identified females as a force that had to be contained. Even though officials largely downplayed (or ignored) women's economic contributions and emphasized (even celebrated) men's entrepreneurship and labor, the number of Mayan female vendors who appear in the criminal record indicates that ladino authorities perceived Mayan women as a threat to capitalist principles and Hispanic homogenization. If their activities were significant enough to warrant efforts to stamp out transgressions, then they must have had an impact on the economy and society. As economic and cultural brokers, female vendors exerted considerable influence (if at times unwittingly) on their Mayan communities and the Guatemalan state.

To be sure, ethnic relations in Guatemala reflected a broader trend in Latin America where national elites simultaneously incorporated and marginalized locally diverse, ethnically distinct indigenous peoples in the march toward capitalism, modernization, and nationalism.<sup>93</sup> The aforementioned 1943 paean of long-distance merchants reflects this tendency



by holding up these Mayan men as symbols of national diligence, on the one hand, and depicting them as (technology averse) beasts of burden who will never become full citizens, on the other. But as the struggles in these marketplaces illustrate, this hegemonic process also had a gendered (and class) component. Guatemalan postcolonial elites sought to limit women's possibilities and to channel women's contributions into a patriarchal vision of nation building. The increasing state regulation of the economy led in turn to greater interventions in the realm of public morality.<sup>24</sup> Even though these interventions were based on patriarchal notions of authority, they also offered women considerable space to contest male, ladino, and elite power. Such negotiations revealed the state's polysemic ethnic, gender, and class identities.

## Notes

I am grateful to Adam Tuchinsky, Ben Fallaw, Walter Little, the anonymous reviewers of *Ethnohistory*, and especially Paul Eiss for their critical comments on earlier versions of this article. The audience at the New England Council of Latin American Studies 2005 annual conference where I first presented this research also offered helpful suggestions. I am indebted to Ixkawoq (my oral history research assistant), the staff at the Archivo General de Centro América in Guatemala City, and the municipal officials at the Archivo Municipal de Patzicía and Archivo Municipal de San Juan Comalapa for their efforts and insights. A grant and fall 2006 sabbatical from the University of Southern Maine provided the resources and time to research and write this article.

- 1 Archivo General de Centro América (hereafter AGCA), Jefe Político, Chimaltenango (hereafter JP-C), 1935, leg. 79, "Libro de Sentencias Economicas [hereafter LSE], febrero 1935," 11 February 1935.
- 2 AGCA, JP-C, 1935, leg. 79, "LSE, abril 1935," 8 July 1935.
- 3 In the 1930s, the average wage for day laborers was ten cents a day.
- 4 Gilbert Joseph and Daniel Nugent, eds., *Everyday Forms of State Formation: Revolution and the Negotiation of Rule in Modern Mexico* (Durham, NC, 1994).
- 5 Alan Knight, "Racism, Revolution, and *Indigenismo*: Mexico, 1910-1940," in *The Idea of Race in Latin America*, ed. Richard Graham (Austin, TX, 1990), 71-113; John M. Watanabe and Edward Fischer, "Introduction: Emergent Anthropologies and Pluricultural Ethnography in Two Postcolonial Nations," in *Pluralizing Ethnography: Comparison and Representation in Maya Cultures, Histories, and Identities*, ed. John M. Watanabe and Edward F. Fischer (Santa Fe, NM/Oxford, 2004), 13, 25; John Watanabe, "Culture History in National Contexts: Nineteenth-Century Maya under Mexican and Guatemalan Rule," in *Pluralizing Ethnography*, 42, 60; Oliver LaFarge II and Douglas Byers, *The Year Bearer's People* (New Orleans, 1931); Carol Smith, "Beyond Dependency Theory: National and Regional Patterns of Underdevelopment in Guatemala," *American Ethnologist* 5 (1978): 574-617; Carol Smith, "Examining Stratification Systems through Peasant Marketing Arrangements: An Application of Some

- Models from Economic Geography,” *Man*, n.s., 10 (1975): 95–122; Sol Tax, *Penny Capitalism: A Guatemalan Indian Economy* (Chicago, 1963 [1953]). For discussions of Peru’s racial binarism, see Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley, CA, 1995); and Marisol de la Cadena, *Indigenous Mestizos: The Politics of Race and Culture in Cuzco, Peru, 1919–1991* (Durham, NC, 2002).
- 6 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (New York, 1977), 26; Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York, 1980), 134–65; Eric C. Wolf and Edward C. Hansen, “Caudillo Politics: A Structural Analysis,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 9, no. 2 (1967): 168–79.
  - 7 Robert Carmack, “State and Community in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala: The Momostenango Case,” in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540–1988*, ed. Carol Smith (Austin, TX, 1990), 122; Ralph Lee Woodward Jr., *Central America: A Nation Divided* (Oxford, 1999), 166, 208; David McCreery, *Rural Guatemala: 1760–1940* (Stanford, CA, 1994), 290, 297; Jim Handy, *Gift of the Devil: A History of Guatemala*, (Boston, 1984), 57.
  - 8 Elizabeth Dore and Maxine Molyneux, eds., *Hidden Histories of Gender and the State in Latin America* (Durham, NC, 2000), esp. chaps. by Vaughn (194–214), Guy (172–93), and Dore (3–32); Elizabeth Dore, *Myths of Modernity: Peonage and Patriarchy in Nicaragua* (Durham, NC, 2006), 4–5.
  - 9 David McCreery, “‘This Life of Misery and Shame’: Female Prostitution in Guatemala City,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 18, no. 2 (November 1986): 334; David Carey Jr., *Engendering Mayan History: Kaqchikel Women as Conduits and Agents of the Past, 1875–1970* (New York, 2006), 43–52.
  - 10 AGCA, JP-C, 1925, leg. 68, “Sentencias Economicas en el Ramo Criminal” (hereafter SERC), I, II, 129; AGCA, JP-C, 1935, leg. 79, “LSE, febrero 1935,” II February 1935; *La Gaceta: Revista de policia y variedades* (hereafter *La Gaceta*), 1943, 28 March and 16 May; Liliana Goldin, “Organizing the World through the Market: A Symbolic Analysis of Markets and Exchange in the Western Highlands of Guatemala,” PhD diss., SUNY, Albany, 1985; McCreery, “‘This Life of Misery,’” 334; Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation* (Durham, NC, 2000), 91, 97–98, 127–28, 141–42; Carey, *Engendering Mayan History*, 153–54.
  - 11 Watanabe, “Culture History,” 55.
  - 12 Wolfgang Gabbert, “Social Categories, Ethnicity, and the State in Yucatán, Mexico,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 33 (2001): 464; Paul Brass, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (New Delhi, 1991), 272–74.
  - 13 Robert Carmack, *Rebels of Highland Guatemala: The Quiche-Mayas of Momostenango* (Norman, OK, 1995), 28; Michael Coe, *The Maya* (New York, 1999), 233; Tax, *Penny Capitalism*, 123–25; LaFarge and Byers, *Year Bearer’s People*, 59; Felix Webster McBryde, *Cultural and Historical Geography of Southwest Guatemala* (Westport, CT, 1971 [1947]), 124–25 (map 24); Sol Tax and Robert Hinshaw, “The Maya of the Midwestern Highlands,” in *Handbook of Middle American Indians*, vol. 7, *Ethnology*, ed. Evon Z. Vogt (Austin, TX, 1969), 84; John Sweatnam, “Women and Markets: A Problem in the Assessment of Sexual Inequality,” *Ethnology* 27, no. 4 (1988): 327–28; Goldin, “Organizing the World”; Martha Few, *Women Who Live Evil Lives: Gender, Religion, and the Politics of Power in Colonial Guatemala* (Austin, TX, 2002), 24.

- 14 McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 18–19, 323; J. Daniel Contreras, *Una rebelión en el partido de Totonicapán en 1820* (Guatemala City, 1968); Robert Patch Maya *Revolt and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century* (Armonk, NY, 2002).
- 15 David McCreery, “State Power, Indigenous Communities, and Land in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala, 1820–1920,” in *Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540–1988*, ed. Carol Smith (Austin, TX, 1990), 101; Ralph Lee Woodward Jr., *Rafael Carrera and the Emergence of the Republic of Guatemala, 1821–1871* (Athens, GA, 1993); Grandin, *Blood of Guatemala*, 82–109; Handy, *Gift of the Devil*, 36–53. In 1839, Guatemala declared its independence from the dissolving Central American federation.
- 16 Lowell Gudmundson and Héctor Lindo Fuentes, *Central America, 1821–1871: Liberalism before Liberal Reform* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 1995); Grandin, *Blood of Guatemala*, 111; McCreery, “State Power,” 107; and Carey, *Engendering Mayan History*, 63–68.
- 17 McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 327; David Carey Jr., “Empowered through Labor and Buttressing Their Communities: Mayan Women and Coastal Migration, 1875–1965,” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 86, no. 3 (August 2006): 501–34.
- 18 Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (Oxford, 1991), 5.
- 19 Jorge García Granados, *Evolución sociológica de Guatemala*[*Ensayo sobre el gobierno del Dr. Mariano Galvez*] (Guatemala City, 1927), 25; David Carey Jr., “Indigenismo and Guatemalan History in the Twentieth Century,” *Revista Interamericana de Bibliografía* 48, no. 2 (1998): 379–408; Grandin, *Blood of Guatemala*, 91, 97–98, 127–28, 141–42; Carol Smith, “Race-Class-Gender Ideology in Guatemala: Modern and Anti-Modern Forms,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (1995): 725.
- 20 Smith, “Race-Class-Gender,” 742.
- 21 Of course, dismissing racial fusion does not necessitate indigenous denigration. In the Andes, for example, some politicians and intellectuals adhered to a binary ethnic hierarchy and celebrated the civilized, pious, and diligent “authentic Indian.” See Brooke Larson, *Trials of Nation Making: Liberalism, Race, and Ethnicity in the Andes, 1810–1910* (Cambridge, 2004), esp. 66.
- 22 Carey, *Our Elders*, 259–65; Grandin, *Blood of Guatemala*, 6, 140. In contrast to most other liberal leaders, Ubico envisioned the potential symbiosis of Mayan ethnicity and economic development, particularly as a means of attracting international tourists to his Summer Fair. As a result, for him, Maya were part of Guatemalan national identity. See *Diario de Centro América*, 5 and 19 November 1936.
- 23 See, for example, AGCA, JP-C, 1944, leg. 88a, Emilia Ajquejay Bac contra Ramiro Rodríguez Albreuz, October 1944; and Carey, *Engendering Mayan History*, 157.
- 24 Archivo Municipal de San Juan Comalapa (hereafter AMC), “Municipalidad de San Juan Comalapa, Libro para actas de sesiones ordinarias y extraordinarias, comenzado el 23 de Julio de 1928 terminado el 1 de enero de 1930” (hereafter “Libro 1928–1930”), 5, 7, 17, 18, 25, and 28 September and 31 December 1928, 19 April, 15 July and 16 November 1929; AMC, “Libro para actas de sesiones ordinarias y extraordinarias, comenzando 13 de febrero 1942 terminado al 21 de julio 1945” (hereafter “Libro 1942–1945”), 13 August 1942, 67.

- 25 AGCA, JP-C, 1935, leg. 79, "Informe de comision encargada de formular el proyecto para la recaudación del impuesto de luz en la población, 10 de diciembre 1935." Similarly, for the nineteenth century, René Reeves found no documentation that spoke to the importance of women in local markets. See "Liberals, Conservatives, and Indigenous Peoples: The Subaltern Roots of National Politics in Nineteenth-Century Guatemala," PhD diss., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1999, 269.
- 26 A. del Vecchio, "La situación de la mujer se agrava," *La Gaceta*, 17 May 1931 (emphasis my own).
- 27 McCreery, "This Life of Misery," 334.
- 28 Carey, *Engendering Mayan History*, 197–98.
- 29 *Recopilación de las Leyes de la República de Guatemala* (Guatemala City), decree no. 1996, 53: 71–75; McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 316–17; Carey, "Empowered through Labor."
- 30 *La Gaceta*, 10 January 1943.
- 31 *La Gaceta*, 25 July 1943, 1339.
- 32 J. W. Boddam-Whetham, *Across Central America* (London, 1877), 44; LaFarge and Byers, *Year Bearer's People*, 59; Tax, *Penny Capitalism*, 125.
- 33 Archivo Municipal de Patzicía (hereafter AMP), paq. 237, "Menor María Magdalena Figueroa," 1948.
- 34 AMC, "Libro 1928–1930," 19 April 1929; AMC, "Libro 1942–1945," 11 January 1944; Liliana R. Goldín, "De plaza a mercado: La expresión de dos sistemas conceptuales en la organización de los mercados del occidente de Guatemala," *Anales de Antropología* 24 (1987): 246, 248, 257.
- 35 McBryde, *Cultural and Historical Geography*, 83; Goldín, "De plaza a Mercado"; Smith, "Beyond Dependency Theory"; Smith, "Examining Stratification Systems through Peasant Marketing Arrangements"; Edgar Esquit, personal communication.
- 36 Goldín, "De plaza a mercado," 249
- 37 See, for example, postcard of Patzicía market women ca. 1950 in possession of Edgar Esquit; Tax and Hinshaw, "The Maya," 85; LaFarge and Byers, *Year Bearer's People*, 32.
- 38 Sandra Lauderdale Graham, *House and Street: The Domestic World of Servants and Masters in Nineteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Austin, TX, 1992), 50; Few, *Women Who Live*, 41.
- 39 See, for example, AMP, paq. 107, "LSE 1943," 18 August 1943.
- 40 AMP, paq. 127, "LSE, 1935"; AMP, paq. 107, "LSE, 1945–47."
- 41 AGCA, JP-C, 1930, leg. 73, Jefe Político carta al alcalde de San Martín, 20 November 1930; AMC, "Libro 1928–1930," 11 February 1929; Carey, *Our Elders*, 125–27; Goldín, "De plaza a mercado," 244, 249–50, 257–58.
- 42 Carlos Aguirre and Ricardo D. Salvatore, "Introduction: Writing the History of Law, Crime, and Punishment in Latin America," in *Crime and Punishment in Latin America: Law and Society since Late Colonial Times*, ed. Ricardo D. Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre, and Gilbert Joseph (Durham, NC, 2001), 16, 31n45.
- 43 *Memoria de los trabajos realizados por la Guardia Civil de Guatemala durante el ano de 1945* (Guatemala City, 1949), 25–32; *La Gaceta*, 3 and 10 January, 28 February, 2 May, 13 June, 25 July 1943; AMP, paq. 127, "LSE 1935"; AMP, paq. 107, "LSE, 1945–47"; Goldín, "De plaza a mercado," 251.
- 44 *La Gaceta*, 19 September 1943.

- 45 AGCA, JP-C, 1935, leg. 79, "LSE, abril 1935," 2 September 1935.
- 46 AGCA, JP-C, 1944, leg. 88a, Emilia Ajquejay Bac contra Ramiro Rodriguez Alburez, October 1944.
- 47 AGCA, JP-C, 1944, leg. 88a, police report to *juez de paz*, 9 June 1944.
- 48 See for example, AGCA, JP-C, 1944, leg. 88a, Beatriz Batres, Obrador de mar-raneria, 6 June 1944; Sweatnam, "Women and Markets," 330.
- 49 AGCA, JP-C, 1935, leg. 79, "LSE, abril 1935," 21 April 1935.
- 50 Ruth Bunzel, *Chichicastenango: A Guatemalan Village* (Seattle, 1952), 74; Goldín, "De plaza a mercado," 247, 248, 259; McBryde, *Cultural and Historical Geography*, 124-25 (map 24).
- 51 AGCA, JP-C, 1944, leg. 88a, carta de señor juez de regidor de abastos, 10 August 1944.
- 52 AGCA, JP-C, 1925, leg. 68, "SERC," 1.
- 53 AGCA, JP-C, 1933, leg. 76, San Martín Jilotepeque Monografía 1933. In general, the state targeted local merchants, yet occasionally companies attracted officials' attention. When Ubico shut down the Compañía Sueca de Fosforos de Estocolmo, for example, he explained, "Monopolies are prohibited in our Constitution [Carta Fundamental]"; see Lic. José González Campo, "El General Jorge Ubico, un Dictador Progresista," *Estudios centro americanos* 17, no. 187 (noviembre 1963): 348-49. At the same time, his relationship with the United Fruit Company suggests exceptions to this rule were not uncommon; see Paul J. Dosal, *Doing Business with Dictators: A Political History of United Fruit in Guatemala, 1899-1944* (Wilmington, DE, 1993).
- 54 AGCA, JP-C, 1925, leg. 68, "SERC," 11.
- 55 AMP, paq. 127, "LSE, 1935."
- 56 AMP, paq. 107, "LSE, 1943," 29 de septiembre 1943.
- 57 See for example AMP, paq. 107, "LSE, 1943," and "LSE, 1945-1947."
- 58 *La Gaceta*, 23 October 1921, 11.
- 59 AMP, paq. 127, "LSE, 1935."
- 60 AMP, paq. 107, "LSE, 1945-1947."
- 61 McCreery, *Rural Guatemala*, 403n45.
- 62 AGCA, JP-C, 1925, leg. 68 (no. 76), "SERC," 19 April 1925.
- 63 AMP, paq. 127, "LSE, 1935."
- 64 AGCA, JP-C, 1944, leg. 88a, solicitud de matricula de las pesas de Isabel Camey Colon, 3 April 1944; Guillermina Escobar, 15 April 1944; and Clara p. de Valle, 22 January 1944.
- 65 Ixq'anil, 5 August 2005, Comalapa. Kaqchikel informants' names and my research assistant's name (Ixxawoq) are pseudonyms. All oral history interviews were done in Kaqchikel. Where Ixxawoq's name appears in parentheses in the citation, she conducted the interview; the author conducted all other interviews.
- 66 AMP, paq. 127, "LSE, 1935"; *La Gaceta*, 25 July 1943 (1339). Similarly, Felipa Pocop was arrested in Sololá for selling milk in bottles without a license; see *La Gaceta*, 2 February 1941.
- 67 James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New Haven, CT, 1985), 302 (quote); Gilbert M. Joseph "On the Trail of Latin American Bandits: A Reexamination of Peasant Resistance," *Latin American Research Review* 25, no. 3 (1990): 7-53.

- 68 Cindy Forster, *In the Time of Freedom: Campesino Workers in Guatemala's October Revolution* (Pittsburgh, 2001), 35.
- 69 E. P. Thompson, *Customs in Common: Studies in Traditional Popular Culture* (New York, 1991), 335.
- 70 LaFarge and Byers, *Year Bearer's People*, 59; Sweatnam, "Women and Markets," 327-28; Goldín, "Organizing the World."
- 71 Tax, *Penny Capitalism*, 123.
- 72 AMP, paq. 107, "LSE, 1943."
- 73 See, for example, AMP, paq. 107, "LSE, 1943."
- 74 Ix'ajpu', September 2001, Patzún (Ixkawoq).
- 75 Victor Perera, *Rites: A Guatemalan Boyhood* (San Francisco, 1994), 145.
- 76 Sweatnam, "Women and Markets," 328.
- 77 Ixb'alam, 17 December 1997, Xiquin Sanahi, Comalapa.
- 78 Ixb'atz', 10 March 1998, Poaquil.
- 79 Ixpo't, 17 November 1997, Poaquil.
- 80 David Carey Jr., "A Democracy Born in Violence: Mayan Reflections on the 1944 Patzicia Massacre and the State," paper presented at From a Springtime of Democracy to a Winter of Cold War: The 1954 Guatemalan Coup and Its Lasting Impact on U.S./Latin American Relations conference. University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, 11 April 2005.
- 81 Ixk'aj, 17 December 1997, Comalapa.
- 82 Goldín, "De plaza a mercado," 257.
- 83 Ixjo'q, 6 November 1997, Comalapa.
- 84 Ix'ey, 20 October 1997, San Antonio Aguas Calientes.
- 85 Ixmukane, 26 November 1997, Tecpán.
- 86 Ixkan, 29 March 1998, Poaquil.
- 87 Carey, *Our Elders*, 253.
- 88 Edgar Esquit, 22 August 2005, Patzicia.
- 89 B'eleje' Imox, 6 August 2005, Comalapa.
- 90 Sweatnam, "Women and Markets," 337.
- 91 AGCA, JP-C, 1935, leg. 79, "LSE, febrero 1935," 11 February, 8 July 1935; Few, *Women Who Live*, 35.
- 92 Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of the Self under Colonialism* (Dehli, 1983); Jean Comaroff, *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: The Culture and History of a South African People* (Chicago, 1985).
- 93 Larson, *Trials of Nation Making*, 15, 246; Watanabe and Fischer, "Introduction," 29.
- 94 David Carey Jr., "'Oficios de su raza y sexo' (Occupations Appropriate to Her Race and Sex): Mayan Women and Expanding Gender Identities in Early Twentieth-Century Guatemala," *Journal of Women's History* 20, no. 1 (2008): 114-48.