

Pluralizing Ethnography

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Introduction

Emergent Anthropologies and Pluricultural Ethnography in Two Postcolonial Nations

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In October 2000, the School of American Research sponsored an advanced seminar, “Culture Theory and Cross-Cultural Comparison: Maya Culture and History in a Multicultural World,” to assess the contrasting historical circumstances and emerging cultural futures of Maya peoples in Mexico and Guatemala. The seminar brought together five anthropologists working in Mexico (two in the Yucatán peninsula and three in Chiapas), four in highland Guatemala, and a non-Mesoamericanist discussant. Research interests ranged from Maya languages, literatures, and religion to economics, politics, and history, all pursued through long-term fieldwork spanning the past five decades.

The title of the seminar reflected the three overlapping interests the conveners had in originally proposing it. Fischer wanted to explore new modes of cultural representation in a global world (Fischer 2001, Fischer and Hendrickson 2002). Critiques of ethnographic writing as overly insular and homogenizing (to say nothing of politically self-serving of imperial and scholarly authority) had challenged how anthropologists write about culture, to the point that many questioned

using the term at all. Did the problem, however, lie with the term or with the continuing need to improve nonessentialist writing about emergent, open-ended, pluralistic cultures in continual interaction with—yet differentiation from—one another (see Marcus and Fischer 1986)? With groups themselves increasingly claiming the authenticity of enduring multicultural existence, how were anthropologists to write about them if even raising their often strategic use of cultural essentialism abetted those who would politically dismiss their claims as inauthentic precisely for not being “timelessly traditional” but “invented” or “constructed” (Warren 1992, 1998; Fischer 1993, 1999)?

In turn, Watanabe hoped that the seminar could compare historical and institutional linkages between global forces and contrasting local places (see Watanabe 2000a, 2001). Anthropologists committed to such historical and translocal understandings had looked to the nation state as a useful “middle ground” between the local and the global (Adams 1970:4–5, 10–11) and to the historically variable transformations wrought by global capitalism (Wolf 1997). Little comparison, however, had taken place laterally across adjacent states to assess how contrasting national contexts might shape the impact and articulation of global markets, state rule, and cultural differentiation. If world system approaches too readily portrayed a unitary global “core” inexorably homogenizing cultural microcosms and dependent states into a single subjugated “periphery” (Wolf 1997:23) and bottom-up ethnography struggled to interpret “blindly interdependent” macrosystems that extended beyond Raymond Williams’s “knowable communities” (Marcus and Fischer 1986:90, 91–92), could cross-national comparisons help ground top-down versus bottom-up representations in ethnographies of interconnection that would relativize core and periphery, hegemony and resistance, without losing them in effervescent, free-flowing ethnoscaapes (see Wolf 1997; Appadurai 1991)?

Concerns with comparison therefore led back to questions of cultural representation, and both converged in our mutual aim to bring together scholars working with Maya in the Yucatán peninsula and the highlands of Chiapas and Guatemala (fig. 1.1). We defined this focus geographically and historically instead of ethnologically and thus did not seek to include all Maya everywhere (see Tax, ed. 1952; Vogt 1964).¹ Geographically, our chosen region included contrasting high-

land and lowland ecologies, as well as national histories, and a predominant indigenous population that spoke related Maya languages (Bricker, this volume, Chapter 3) and shared broadly similar world-views (Watanabe 1983; Carlsen and Prechtel 1991) and patterns of subsistence, settlement, and social organization (Vogt 1964, 1994b). Historically, these Maya had also similarly experienced Spanish conquest, Catholic evangelization, and colonial resettlement in the sixteenth century, Spanish imperial rule until the early nineteenth century, and depredations on their lands and labor from commercial plantation agriculture in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The cumulative effects of comparable heritage and history, although neither static nor uniform, provided common ground for evaluating Maya participation and identity in the divergent national and transnational histories of Mexico and Guatemala after independence from Spain in 1821.

In addition to geographical proximity and historical similarities crosscut by national and ecological differences, another reason for focusing on this region lay in the emergence on either side of the border of Maya cultural activism in the form of the Maya movement in Guatemala from the 1980s onward (Warren 1992, 1998; Watanabe 1995b; Fischer and Brown 1996; Fischer 2001) and the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, beginning in 1994 (Gossen 1994; Nash 1995, 1997, 2001; Harvey 1998; Womack 1999). In ways unimaginable in either country even ten years ago, Maya have become prominent political actors in national and international arenas routinely challenging government policy makers and foreign scholars alike. As both national citizens and indigenous peoples, Maya cultural activists now demand self-representation (in the sense of portrayal, as well as political voice) regarding their own cultures, histories, and identities. Indeed, we took inspiration for our approach to Maya cultures from these activists who counter political challenges to Maya cultural authenticity by invoking Maya languages and cosmologies, memory and experience, practices and values, not as timeless survivals from their ancestors but as living proof of a long history of creative cultural resilience in the spirit of those ancestors.

We asked participants to prepare their seminar papers by writing from their strengths but with these concerns in mind. Predictably, no

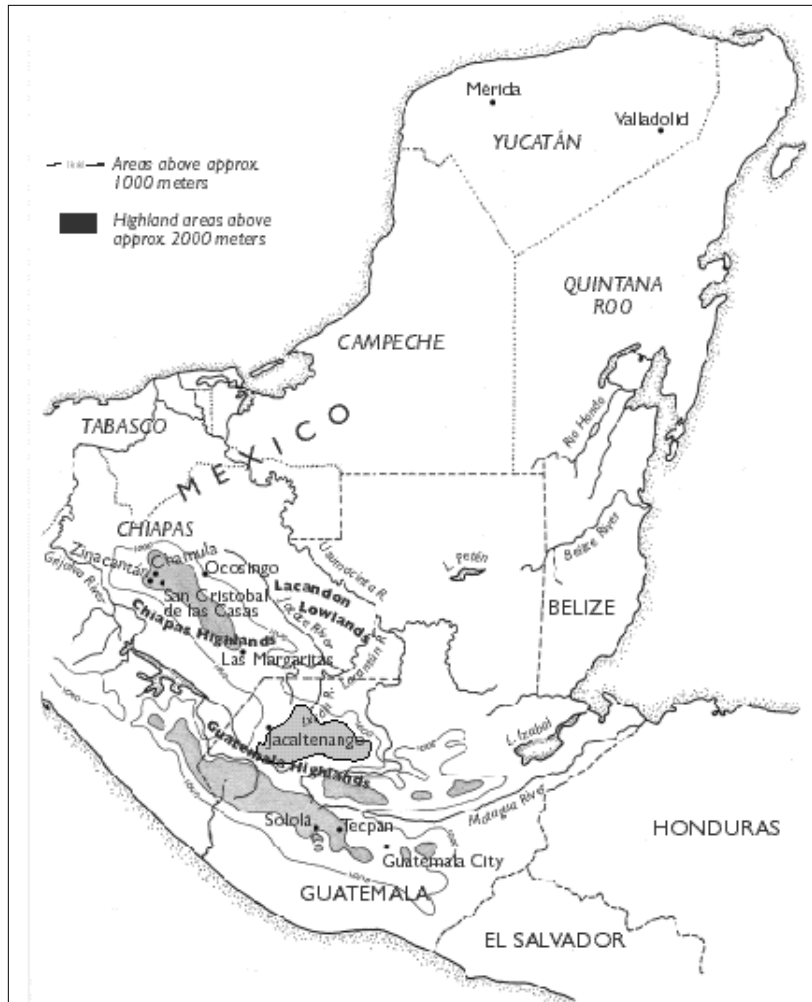


Figure 1.1
Yucatán, Chiapas, Guatemala, and Belize.

singular consensus emerged from the seminar, but our discussions returned repeatedly to how we could capture Maya cultural distinctiveness yet diversity without imputing exclusive traits or static continuities or overplaying agentive or hegemonic interests and expediences. Many of our papers converged on a kind of “pluricultural ethnography” that, as June Nash does most explicitly in Chapter 6, focuses on internal and

external “borderlands” for the disjunctures, as well as confluences, they reveal in the continual recombination of older and newer, local and global cultural forms by people who still see meaning—and power—in collective self-differentiation and autonomy premised on mutual inclusion rather than on timeless or essential difference. We call this approach “pluricultural” because it pays close attention to connections across boundaries of differentiation—ethnicity, class, gender, geography, nations—that might otherwise conjure up different cultures. Yet, it remains “ethnographic” insofar as it derives from the specificity and open-ended complexity of face-to-face interactions and understandings, however extended across space and time.

Like Richard Fox’s (1991a) “nearly new culture history,” this kind of pluralistic ethnography relativizes cultures historically by having to address how their distinctiveness accumulates or erodes over time. Consequently, Gary Gossen writes in Chapter 5 of “encyclopedic moments” and Christine Kray in Chapter 4 of “convergences” as developments in time that transcend the local grounding most typical of ethnography through multiple, intersecting, translocal circles of actors, interests, understandings, and power (see Marcus 1995). Like an older tradition of ethnology in US anthropology that traced the diffusion and adherence of discrete culture traits, this approach views cultures as more accumulative and distributive (Rodseth 1998) than integrative. Unlike that older ethnology, however, it takes cultures as historically motivated and meaningfully lived rather than as configurationally coherent or diffusive. This, in turn, means that our study of cultures must become ever more grounded in area studies of history and practices in the places (however multi-sited) where we work, not just theoretically driven or globally derived.

In further relativizing this work, Kay Warren and Jan Rus reminded us during the seminar that although we often cast our cultural formulations backwards in time to validate them in terms of origins and continuity, people themselves most often live their cultures forward in time, from self-evident presents to hoped-for (or foreboding) futures.² This suggests that pluricultural ethnography should view its culture history not as a teleology of the inalterable past becoming an inevitable and already known present but as a contingent recollecting of past collective experience that conventionalizes the present into possible

futures. Methodologically, this pluralizing of ethnography across borderlands and time may help forestall what Warren called “death by abstraction” in culture theory by grounding it in immediate occurrences, encounters, and memories. It may also compel us to write “leaky texts,” as Kray put it, not out of theoretically contrived equivocation but to acknowledge explicitly the complexity and incompleteness of our ethnographies in time.

A focus on Maya in Mexico and Guatemala might thus still “work in the present” in Richard Fox’s (1991b) sense of engaging the world without slipping back into the old self-congratulatory sense of “ourselves as artisan workers, as independent craftsmen” of ethnography, which much experimental writing leaves unchallenged. In Santa Fe, we were fortunate to have Fox as our non-Mayanist discussant, and he further challenged us about “working in the present” with three deceptively simple but difficult questions: Where are you coming from? Where are you now? Where are you going? We use his questions to frame the answers the chapters in this volume give to our own queries about comparison and representation in Maya cultures, histories, and identities.

THE PAST

In asking the question, where are you coming from? Fox had in mind the “precursory anthropologies” (Limón 1991) that Mesoamericanists still have to answer to (or for). During the seminar, Kay Warren cautioned that if we forget that our precursors wrote in dialogue with their own predecessors, we risk misreading their work as single-minded (if not simple-minded) overstatements rather than as exchanges in only partially overheard conversations. We also risk having others (if not “history”) misread us in similar fashion if we fail to specify in our own writings the precursory anthropologies against which we imagine ourselves responding. The difficulty here, besides that of infinite regression, lies in the diversity and complexity of our predecessors (see H. Lewis 1998) and in the ways we choose to imagine them in light of our own present.

Professional Mayanist anthropologists from the United States first arrived in Mexico and Guatemala mostly between the world wars. With notable exceptions (see Redfield and Villa Rojas 1934; Villa Rojas

1945), the early anthropology of Yucatán focused on archaeology and ethnohistory (Sullivan 1989; Restall 1997), and despite a promising start in the 1940s, both US and Mexican ethnography in Chiapas would only begin in earnest during the mid-1950s (see Tax 1944; Pozas 1959; Guiteras-Holmes 1961; Vogt 1994a). In highland Guatemala, ethnographies began with Maya communities, but they seldom concerned only communities, much less a timeless Maya culture.

For all his concern with “little communities” and “folk cultures” in Yucatán and highland Guatemala, Robert Redfield (1941, 1953, 1955) remained as interested in general evolutionary transformations from “primitive” and “folk” to “urban” societies as he was in Maya culture. Ethnographically, Sol Tax (1937, 1941), Redfield’s student and colleague, first defined the relevant locus of study in the highlands of Guatemala as the Maya *municipio*, a territorial jurisdiction centered on a *cabecera* (head town) and its outlying hamlets. He did not, however, conceive of the municipio as a cultural isolate. Instead, for him, Maya municipios represented self-identified, mutually differentiated units that varied within larger regional patterns.

Early Mayanists in Guatemala also clearly appreciated the long history that separated contemporary Maya from their pre-Hispanic ancestors, as Oliver La Farge (1940) outlined in his classic paper on the “sequence of cultures” in Maya ethnology. Similarly, Ruth Bunzel (1952:v) described her research in Chichicastenango in the early 1930s as an inquiry into long-term cultural change and integration involving the “sudden impact of an alien culture followed by a period of reorganization and synthesis.” Reflecting her prior work with Ruth Benedict at Zuni pueblo in the US Southwest, she saw Maya culture not as some crystallized, determinant whole but as a patterned milieu of cultural forms that shaped, but never simply determined, the behavior of the distinct individuals born into it (Bunzel 1952:xv–xx; see also Benedict 1934, esp. ch 8).

Working under Bunzel’s direction, Charles Wagley (1941, 1949, 1983) couched his 1937 fieldwork in Santiago Chimaltenango in the typical ethnographic categories of the day—economics, life cycle, religion, sociopolitical organization, annual round. Nonetheless, he also carefully noted individual variation and difference, just as he linked local land tenure and social stratification historically to Guatemala’s

plantation economy and changing national land laws. Rather than essentialize Chimalteco culture, he personalized and historicized it. In turn, Morris Siegel (1941) analyzed the racism that subordinated Maya to Ladinos (Spanish-speaking, self-identified, non-Maya Guatemalans), despite the cultural rather than physical differences between them (see Brintnall 1979a).

Early Guatemalan ethnography even had its experimental practitioners. In prefacing research he had done in the early 1930s, Pulitzer Prize-winning novelist and Maya ethnographer Oliver La Farge (1947:v-vi) wrote, "There will be found [in this book] a good deal of subjective, even opinionated, writing. This is present partly because the author is an amateur scientist and an ardent professional in writing. It is present even more because the writer believes that ethnology is an inexact science, inseparable from subjective, qualitative observations. The opinions and biases of the observer, therefore, are essential data which should be frankly presented. The colorless objectivity affected by many ethnologists is a deception and a suppression of data." In a similar vein, artist and writer Maud Oakes (1951) placed herself squarely in her ethnography of Mam Maya religion in Todos Santos in the mid-1940s. She qualified what individuals told her with when they said it to her and how her relationship with them stood at the time. Like La Farge, she made no bones about her preference for and commitment to her Maya rather than Ladino neighbors, although this never stopped her from judging their individual character, reliability, or personal loyalty to her.

These precursory writings readily belie typecasting as timeless, insular, or essentialist ethnographies, but two important differences still distinguish them from present approaches. First, given current symbolic definitions of culture, we write today as a matter of course for or against cultures in the plural as loosely integrated, fuzzily bounded contexts that neo-Marxian and postmodern sensibilities further relativize with global dependencies, politics of representation, and transnational flows of individuals and imaginaries. Although this in many ways recalls an older ethnological approach to culture as a diffusional thing of "shreds and patches" (see Lowie 1920:441), Robert Lowie (1937:258) could still conclude his 1937 *History of Ethnological Theory* on a strong empiricist note: "Ethnology, we repeat, is not merely the

science of cultures but of culture—of every fragment of the universe pertaining to the social heritage of all human groups.” This conception of culture as universally singular yet historically plural focused on specific distributions of discrete material and behavioral traits or on their degree of integration into particular configurations or patterns, not on symbols and (contested) meanings. Closure applied not to cultures as locally bounded or timeless wholes but rather to culture as an autonomous level of analysis involving processes of coherence and change in acquired traits across “all humanity at all periods and in all places” (Lowie 1937:236).³

Clearly, not all ethnographers approved of such an approach, as La Farge’s protest against “colorless objectivity” attests. Lowie (1937:275–276) cites Elsie Clews Parsons, Bronislaw Malinowski, Margaret Mead, and Ruth Benedict as also objecting to the impersonal, if not dehumanized, accounts that resulted. In response, Lowie (1937:4–6, 274) defended the empirical investigation of culture traits because it facilitated the collection and comparison of ethnographic “facts” on which he felt ethnological theory most reliably advanced. Whether humanist or empiricist, however, this anthropology did indeed abstract cultural processes from political economy and the dictates of power, even within contexts obviously wrought by conquest, colonialism, and forced acculturation (Wolf 1997, 1999). Although this selectivity reads today like insular cultural essentialism, we must remain suspicious of any reading that so neatly imputes what we as heirs of the pluralistic, configurational side of this precursory anthropology most want to rehabilitate in our own.

Second, US anthropologists who went to Guatemala and Mexico in the 1920s and 1930s were among the first to conduct ethnographic research outside the United States (Wolf 1964:7). As such, they confronted living indigenous cultures in multiethnic societies with an anthropology that had largely developed to elicit and analyze the “memory culture” of Native Americans on or off US reservations. Although this is not the place to decry all the other complicities and silences here, the memory work of “salvage ethnography” certainly encouraged a notion of culture as idealized distributions or constellations of traits at once removed from the everyday politics of meaning and difference yet obviously subject to change and history. Given the

new challenges of researching a majority but subordinated Maya population, it is interesting that early Guatemalanists such as La Farge and Bunzel had worked first among living Native American communities in the US Southwest.

In conceptualizing this new ethnographic situation, Bunzel (1952:v) self-consciously distanced her study of Chichicastenango from those of “‘pure’ or reconstructed [memory] cultures” that she said too often proved static and misleadingly stable. She also rejected diffusionist approaches of mapping atomized cultural traits. What remained, given an abiding concern with processes of continuity or change in constellations of cultural traits, was the study of acculturation as the replacement and reintegration of traits in one cultural configuration with those from another, most often a dominant one. At the same time, Bunzel showed Benedict’s humanistic influence in her concern for the cultural insider’s view of such accommodations (Bunzel 1952:viii). More prosaically, the move to situate research within communities may have also resulted from the practical considerations of conducting fieldwork within living cultures (see Rubinstein 1991).

The turn toward community studies in Guatemala thus presumed neither bounded cultural isolates nor timeless cultural essentialism but grew out of a concern for culture change and adjustment. Such changes, however, insofar as they remained cultural, lay in the movement and modification of material and behavioral traits within and between existing cultural configurations, not in the hybridizations or pastiches of purposive individuals that we today would implicate in struggles over meaning and representation across differences of power.

Given the ever-present peril of reading the past by the present, the answer to Fox’s question, where are you coming from? must go beyond simply imagining precursory anthropologies based on recent theoretical turns in anthropology. As Rus argues in Chapter 7, it also involves specific historical developments in Mexico and Guatemala that have shaped the practice of US anthropology there. In particular, we see the changing influences on US anthropologists of a vital national anthropology in Mexico, and in Guatemala, the long shadow of US political intervention in 1954.

State Nationalism, *Indigenismo*, and Mexican Anthropology

In Mexico, the Revolution of 1910–1917 brought to power a regime faced with contending rural and urban constituencies, fragmented and crosscut by regional interests and rivalries (see Knight 1986; Joseph and Nugent 1994; Katz 1998). To the north loomed the United States, ever ready to intervene to protect its investments or to quash unrest along its southern border. Postrevolutionary Mexico sought to counter these national and international insecurities by strengthening Mexican nationalism. The state perceived as its greatest obstacle to national integration the “Indian problem,” or what Guillermo Bonfil Batalla (1996) called *México profundo*—the deep, enduring attachments that Indians, as well as the “de-Indianized” rural and urban poor, retained to their land as both metonymic heritage and literal resource, in opposition to the imported modernities of the “imaginary Mexico” of national state and society.

Although efforts to incorporate Indians into Mexican national society had begun immediately after independence in 1821, culminating in Benito Juárez’s liberal constitution of 1857, it was under the administration of Porfirio Díaz (1876–1910) that “the Porfirian model of development...required the dispossession of peasant communities (many of them Indian) and the creation of a reliable labor force, urban and rural” (Knight 1990:79). If the revolution had mobilized and radicalized the dispossessed against the Porfiriato, especially with promises of land, the postrevolutionary state now had to disarm them into becoming Mexicans. Anthropology became central to this endeavor. Under the leadership of Manuel Gamio, one of Franz Boas’s early students at Columbia University, Mexican archaeologists began excavating and reconstructing the great sites of pre-Hispanic Mexican civilizations, while ethnographers studied living Indian communities for ways to bring national culture to them through what Gamio called “nationalistic integral education” (Heath 1972:84; Hewitt de Alcántara 1984:8–13; Bonfil Batalla 1996:115–120).

Eventually known as *indigenismo* (indigenism), this program sought “to select and conserve those values most useful to the Indian in his role as a national citizen and to exterminate those prejudicial to his full incorporation in the larger society” (Heath 1972:86). Initial efforts to improve literacy and education soon led to community and

regional programs of nutrition, health, agriculture, and commercial development. As early as 1916, Gamio had defined Mexican anthropology's abiding concern with socioeconomic development and public policy: "It is axiomatic that anthropology in its truest, broadest sense be the knowledge basic to the conduct of good government, since through it the government comes to know the populace that is the basic means by which it governs and for whom it governs. Through anthropology, the mental and physical nature of man and peoples are characterized and the appropriate means for providing them normal evolutionary development deduced" (Gamio 1916:23; see also Krotz 1991:186–187).⁴

Although clearly assimilationist, Mexican anthropologists nonetheless opposed the eradication of Indian cultures that others advocated (Hewitt de Alcántara 1984:13; see also Hernández Castillo 2001a:21–33). Steeped in Boasian cultural relativism (Bonfil Batalla 1996:115–116) and advised by Redfield, Tax, and others in the 1930s and 1940s, Mexican anthropologists such as Alfonso Caso, Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, Julio de la Fuente, Ricardo Pozas, and Alfonso Villa Rojas "held as a first consideration the respect of native cultures and the introduction of new habits only after community members had themselves expressed their felt needs and could take part in the plans for change" (Heath 1972:111). Ironically, advocates of more direct Indian assimilation, such as Minister of Education José Vasconcelos in the 1920s, criticized *indigenistas* for copying North American models of Indian reservations and schools. Vasconcelos favored instead a uniform curriculum for all Mexican school children that would "incorporate" Indians "directly" into national society through teaching the universal, humanistic values and "moral authority of the classics" (Heath 1972:87). Indeed, whether assimilationist or pluralist, accepting or critical of the power structures that divided Indian and non-Indian Mexico, both national and foreign anthropologists tended to see Indian acculturation as inevitable, if not always ideal (Hewitt de Alcántara 1984:14–19, 27–29, 50–57).

Within this context, Christine Kray addresses in Chapter 4 the politics of Protestant Bible translation in Mexico and Guatemala in the 1930s, as well as the founding of the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). Although most Mesoamericanists today assume that SIL mis-

sionaries translate the Bible into native languages the better to convert native cultures from within, Kray points out that no necessary relationship exists between translation and evangelization, especially because such painstaking linguistic work often comes at the expense of proselytizing. Instead, this “convergence” resulted from a fortuitous meeting of fundamentalist and nonfundamentalist Protestant missionaries in Guatemala in 1921 and from an equally chance encounter between Mexican Undersecretary of Education Moisés Sáenz and missionary Bible translator William Cameron Townsend in Panajachel, Guatemala, in 1931. Kray explores the ensuing alliance of convenience between the populist regime of Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–1940) and foreign Protestant missionaries that eventually led to the SIL. She shows how their collusion resulted from Cárdenas’s indigenista policies of cultural integration and bilingual education (Heath 1972:106) and how it eventually begat the fundamentalist Maya of Yucatán today.

Beginning in the 1960s, Gamio’s indigenista successors, among them Alfonso Caso and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán, came under increasingly bitter attack for their assimilationist, developmentalist programs for Indians. In 1963, Mexican political sociologist Pablo González Casanova likened indigenismo to “internal colonialism” because acculturated ex-Indians still remained poor, powerless, and exploited by local and regional elites; as such, anthropologists needed “to study systematically the problems of exploitation and politics” (quoted in Heath 1972:156). In the same year, anthropologist Rodolfo Stavenhagen published his essay “Classes, Colonialism, and Acculturation” (translated into English in 1968), in which he argued that outward changes in Maya culture alone did little to change the dual system of stratification in places such as Chiapas and Guatemala that consisted of “class” relations between landed or commercial elites and Indian workers, and “colonial” relations between Indians and Ladinos as antagonistic ethnic groups that had originated in caste distinctions between Spanish conquerors and conquered Maya. Rather than presume a benevolent national society within which assimilated Indians would eventually prosper, critics of indigenismo came to see, instead, domineering power structures that would always marginalize and exploit poor Indian workers (Hewitt de Alcántara 1984:104–116).

Radicalized by the Cuban Revolution, dependency theory, cri-

tiques of imperialism, and “the bloody repression of the Mexican student movement on the eve of the 1968 Olympic Games,” many Mexican anthropologists turned to Marxist studies of peasant production, class stratification, and state power to make sense of their experiences in the countryside (Krotz 1991:184–185). Others explored nonassimilationist Indian policies predicated on the greater authenticity—and autonomy—of Indian communities and cultures (Bonfil Batalla 1996). Still, despite the heated polemics between indigenistas and their critics during the 1970s, Mexican anthropology remained state-centered in three senses: first, it continued to concern Mexico almost exclusively; second, much of its research support and institutional structure came from the state and remained centered in the capital; and third, it retained its abiding commitment to public policy, as often to challenge rather than “mechanically reflect the interests of the state” (Krotz 1991:186–187).

In Chapter 7, Jan Rus situates the Harvard Chiapas Project within this polarized field of Mexican anthropology and Indian policy. Directed by Evon Z. Vogt and funded as such from 1957 to 1976, the Chiapas Project represented one of the most sustained, intensive, and productive ethnographic studies conducted anywhere (Gossen and Bricker 1989; Vogt 1994a).⁵ Rus argues that its focus on the inner workings of Tzotzil Maya communities suited without necessarily serving Mexican indigenista politics and policies regarding isolated Indian communities while also prompting anti-indigenistas to dismiss it (and by extension, much of “American” anthropology) as, at best, anachronistic salvage ethnography. Ironically, Vogt had originally envisioned the Chiapas Project as a long-term, comparative study of Maya cultural change (Vogt 1994a:82–88). Postwar developments in functionalist analysis (Cancian 1965), Lévi-Straussian structuralism (Vogt and Vogt 1970), symbolic anthropology (Bricker 1973; Gossen 1974), and ecological anthropology (Collier 1975), as well as Vogt’s (1976) own interest in Maya ritual and religion, turned the project more toward cultural continuities instead of culture change, mainly within rather than between communities (Vogt 1969, 1994a).

Increasingly distanced in Mexico from both indigenista acculturation programs and Marxist critiques, the Chiapas Project also found itself beset from within by the revisionist self-criticism in US anthro-

pology of the late 1960s and 1970s (see Vogt 1994a:353–357; Rus and Wasserstrom 1980; Wasserstrom 1983). Inspired by global decolonialization, the US civil rights movement, and protests against the war in Vietnam, reformers advocated a more activist, personally accountable, historically relevant US anthropology focused on the iniquitous legacies of racism, colonialism, and imperialism (Hymes 1969; Asad 1973).

Estranged along crosscutting national and generational lines, these multiple anthropologies disparaged each other with caricatures of “timeless Maya Indians” or “exploited peasant proletarians,” even as Chiapas of the 1970s underwent rapid and decisive change (see Collier 1989; Collier with Lowery Quaratiello 1994; Cancian 1992; Harvey 1998; Womack 1999; Nash 2001). Rus shows in Chapter 7 how Maya responses to deepening economic crisis eventually led Mexican and foreign anthropologists to recognize the importance of both culture and political economy, even as indigenous voices and organizations emerged to speak for themselves (Benjamin 2000; Nash 2001). Nonetheless, it would take the Zapatista rebellion in 1994 for the rest of the world to realize how irrevocably Maya in Chiapas had changed and yet still remained Maya. The Zapatistas made moot whether culture or class, continuities or transformations, fine-grained local ethnography or world system approaches were most important. Instead, the question for Maya and scholars alike became how to integrate these false antimonies into workable courses of action, an issue this volume seeks to address.

Revolution, Counterrevolution, and Maya Cultural Activism

A similar situation but different dynamics existed across the border in Guatemala. Unlike Mexico, Guatemala never had its mass twentieth-century revolution to inspire (or necessitate) a nationalist project of Indian assimilation. Indeed, whether in power struggles between liberals and conservatives in the nineteenth century (Woodward 1993; McCreery 1988, 1990:108–109) or in agrarian and political reforms, then guerrilla insurgency in the twentieth century (Adams 1990; Handy 1989; Richards 1985; Smith 1992:3), Ladinos brutally overreacted to any Maya unrest as the race war they long feared. Although farther from the United States than Mexico, Guatemala also proved no

less vulnerable to US influence through the octopus-like hold the United Fruit Company acquired on its economy after 1900 (Dosal 1993).

Only during a brief “ten years of spring” between the fall of dictator Jorge Ubico in 1944 and US intervention against the reformist regime of Jacobo Árbenz in 1954 did Guatemala attempt to treat Maya as citizens. The government enfranchised Maya voters; instituted political parties, peasant leagues, and agrarian reform committees in Maya communities; and reinstated direct election of local officials (Handy 1994). Political control in many municipios reverted to Maya authorities who replaced the Ladino *intendentes* Ubico had appointed. Factional party politics and electoral contention, however, displaced customary age-graded community service in local civil-religious offices, seen by many anthropologists as the core of Maya social structure and identity (Adams 1972; Ebel 1972). Ironically, these institutional changes would survive the post-1954 counterrevolutionary reversals of land, labor, and social reforms, but increasing political repression and economic marginalization, as well as generational turnover in Maya community leaders, would in many ways relocalize them.

Thus, unlike in Mexico, where “integration” of rural society occurred after the 1920s under the increasingly monolithic, co-optative rule of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) (see Rus 1994; Watanabe, this volume, Chapter 2), political reforms in Guatemala after 1944 opened up Maya communities institutionally, but the counterrevolutionary regime installed by US intervention in 1954 sought to close them down again, repressing wider political participation and economic diversification. To quell any lingering unrest in the countryside, the government enlisted the Guatemalan Catholic Church to help combat godless communism and social revolution. Foreign Catholic missionaries arrived in rural Guatemala, where the Church had long languished, to bring nonrevolutionary social and spiritual change (Calder 1970).

By the 1970s, missionary concerns for the welfare of their poor, largely Maya parishes and the pronouncements of the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965) had inspired mission-sponsored community development programs, especially agricultural and credit cooperatives, health clinics, and schools. Like the abortive political reforms of the

1944–1954 revolution, these changes created strife within Maya communities between catechists and traditionalists (Warren 1989; Falla 1978b; Brintnall 1979b; see also Mendelson 1965). Here again, however, institutional changes remained localized, often funded from missionaries' home parishes in the United States and elsewhere. They thus tended not to co-opt Maya reformers into wider national networks of political patronage, as occurred in postrevolutionary Mexico under the PRI (see Watanabe, this volume, Chapter 2). Nonetheless, such local development and economic diversification did absorb Maya labor in ways increasingly at odds with the Guatemalan state and coffee plantation oligarchy (Smith 1984, 1990c; Davis 1988).

These revolutionary, counterrevolutionary, and community development programs shaped in essential ways anthropological work in Guatemala from the 1950s onward. Postwar concerns in US anthropology with acculturation and modernization found expression in Richard Adams's (1956) model of "ladinization" by which "traditional Indians" moved progressively toward integration into Ladino national society, a linear formulation that Adams (1994) has since disavowed. Ongoing changes within Maya communities yet their continuing ethnic self-identification and political and economic marginalization led many US ethnographers to shift their study of Guatemalan Maya cultures from constellations of traits that endured or eroded to strategic expressions of Maya identity (Colby and van den Berghe 1969; Warren 1989; Brintnall 1979b; Watanabe 1992; Wilson 1995). Notable exceptions to the local focus of such studies were Adams's (1970) *Crucifixion by Power*, a pioneering ethnography of state power in Guatemala, and Carol Smith's (1975, 1977, 1978) work on the regional political economy of western Guatemala (see Smith 1990c).

As in Mexico, Marxist social scientists and historians in Guatemala derided the attention in US anthropology to culture instead of class (Guzmán-Böckler and Herbert 1970; Flores Alvarado 1973; Martínez Peláez 1970; see also Adams 1994:527–529). Among US anthropologists, too, anti-imperialist and anti-Vietnam War sentiments intensified disavowals of their country's deep complicity in Guatemala's militarized national security state (Warren 1998:ix–x), and primers such as the North American Congress on Latin America's reader on Guatemala (Jonas and Tobis 1974) became de rigueur for anyone begin-

ning work in the country. As political repression waxed and waned in the 1960s and 1970s, then exploded into state terror and counterinsurgency warfare in the 1980s, anthropologists came to write increasingly in solidarity with the oppressed (Montejo 1987; Carmack 1988; Manz 1988; Smith 1990c; Jonas 1991; Falla 1994; Wilson 1995).

Whereas ethnographies of Maya identity had remained centered on local communities, writings on the war more globally opposed Maya resistance to state domination. When open warfare abated in the mid-1980s, a pan-Maya movement led by university-educated and professional Maya emerged to seek *reivindicación*—recognition, as well as restitution—of Maya as both Guatemalan citizens and indigenous peoples with rights to their own languages and cultures (Cojtí Cuxil 1991, 1995; Sam Colop 1991; Raxche' 1992; see also Warren 1992, 1998; Bastos and Camus 1993, 1995; Watanabe 1995b; Fischer and Brown 1996). These Maya cultural activists fit the images of neither rural Maya communitarians nor peasant revolutionaries—nor leftist martyrs—but their origins extended back well before the war (Falla 1978a; Arias 1990; Fischer 2001).

Like the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Maya in Guatemala now reject images of inveterate traditionalists, proletarianized peasants, repressed revolutionaries, or modernizing Indians. Instead, they act as increasingly savvy global citizens who use their worldly knowledge and networks to demand rights of full citizenship and cultural self-determination, if not outright autonomy. Pan-Maya involvement in the UN-brokered peace process in Guatemala and Zapatista participation in the demise of single-party rule in Mexico define the 1990s as a watershed in prevailing conditions of anthropological work in Mesoamerica. These developments in no small part motivated our proposal for the seminar and figured in all the papers, and especially in our discussions. As such, these complexly intertwined intellectual and political histories demarcate “where we are coming from” and define the present in which we must now work.

THE PRESENT

Anthropologists north and south, past and present, have long debated the nature and relevance of Maya cultures in Mexico and Guatemala. Now, however, Maya cultural activists themselves partici-

pate in these debates and pointedly caution against scholarly excesses. During the seminar, Víctor Montejo reminded us that ethnographers never simply create the cultures they write, and in seeking to expose the arbitrary grounding of Western anthropological science, the self-reflective literary turn in anthropology can just as easily undermine subordinate positions as hegemonic ones (Fischer 1999:474–477). In their search for an authentically Maya culture unbowed by colonial Hispanic Catholic rule, Maya cultural activists on both sides of the border turn to Maya languages, cosmology, and ritual, not as timeless traditions from the past but as living proof of the enduring power of what their ancestors said, thought, and did. They also draw on existing forms of social organization and authority to cultivate ever-wider political fields.

Pan-Mayanism in Mexico and Guatemala thus presumes neither immutable cultural survival nor inveterate ethnic resistance. Instead, we would argue that it expresses a historical consciousness (see Marcus and Fischer 1986:78, 95–107), however varied in motivation and expression, of five hundred years of cultural resilience—not just survival or resistance—that creatively informs the present as a collective historical experience. Part of this collective experience derives from Maya’s undeniable and inalienable endurance of conquest and colonialism. More immediately, for Maya in Guatemala, it means “the existential dilemmas faced during the heightened uncertainties and ambiguities of the counterinsurgency war” (Warren 1998:196). For Maya in Chiapas, Rus described how their euphoria at seeing Ladinos afraid of Indians during the initial Zapatista uprising “went across Chiapas like a sonic boom” of emotional self-recognition: Maya strangers passing in the street knowingly acknowledged their mutual condition—and new possibilities (see Gossen, this volume, Chapter 5). Such self-consciousness of the present as a collectively experienced historical (if not historic) moment becomes a powerful way for Maya to transcend their other differences in locale, language, learning, and livelihood (see Nash, this volume, Chapter 6).

If we take our cue from these Maya activists, the question of how we “work in the present” with Maya and Maya cultures must address this “historical consciousness” of past, present, and future, especially the continuity, history, and cultural differentiation it entails. During

the seminar, Fox cogently stated the problem with continuity: “The notion of cultural continuity is often missing a middle; what I mean is that when we talk about continuity, we often do not distinguish between a continuity that is based on purposeful re-creation in the present versus a continuity that is created by a descent in time...in either case, what we tend to do is be pleased with the continuity and not look at it as a product of constant creativity, be that creativity very recent or a creativity that goes on over long periods of time...continuity does not occur by chance or by a genealogical process but is constantly done, made by people.”

Victoria Bricker’s chapter on Maya language directly addresses these issues of continuity. In a very real sense, Maya languages epitomize both cultural continuity and discontinuity as a family of related but mutually unintelligible speech communities. Intelligible or not, Bricker rightly states that what Maya most unequivocally share (if not necessarily always speak these days) are their phylogenetically related languages. Her ensuing discussion of Yucatec Maya reveals the inextricable link between the “descent in time” and “purposeful re-creation” of cultural forms. On the one hand, Yucatec Maya becomes taken for granted through its largely unself-conscious acquisition and use by native speakers. On the other hand, it also constitutes an arena for conscious action and ideology. What comes to consciousness, however—whether language preservation or assimilation, Maya purity or shift to Spanish, Yucatec diffidence or Tzotzil affirmation of *b’ac’i k’op* (true speech)—depends on complex, often irretrievable histories. Bricker suggests that this history minimally involves Yucatec as the only Maya language spoken in the Yucatán peninsula, the long tradition there (as opposed to highland Guatemala and Chiapas) of literacy in Yucatec Maya among both Maya and non-Maya, and shifting state and regional educational policies. Although continuity clearly exists here, it by no means applies to some homogeneous or static whole uniformly known or experienced.

Gossen’s chapter on Chamula “discursive strategies” toward the state also deals with cultural continuity and discontinuity. He argues that yearly celebrations of Carnival express different voices that Chamula come literally to embody (if never completely or uniformly) through humor, satire, impersonation of ethnic others, and finally,

their triumphant self-reaffirmation in the fire walk that culminates the fiesta. As an arena of continuity, Gossen characterizes Carnival not as some cultural script frozen in time and endlessly, mechanically replayed, but as an “encyclopedic moment” that consists of a historically miscellaneous—but to Chamula, culturally recognizable—repertoire of acts, events, and utterances they put on each year. How self-consciously they play with these forms varies from year to year and from one Chamula to another (and some undoubtedly come only to have a good time), but the celebration provides them all the collective opportunity to single out and reflect upon images and associations that otherwise remain tacit or diffuse in everyday life. Continuity here depends on the limits of recognition—what minimally to Chamula makes Carnival “Carnival” each year—not on slavish reproduction. Such contingent associations and enactments inform other encyclopedic moments, such as the Zapatista procession to Mexico City in late February and March 2001 that Gossen notes began “not coincidentally” on the first day of Carnival.

If culture resides somewhere in these kinds of enacted continuities, history becomes increasingly central to cultural analysis. Such culture history, however, entails neither some autonomous process of trait diffusion or adhesion nor systemic acculturation, neo-Marxist structural transformations, or free-flowing hybridities. Instead, Rus spoke of “an accretion of historical experience” that conditions individuals to see—and act—in the world in particular ways that change at different rates. Kray, in turn, argued that what we call cultural is literally embodied in individual actions and interactions, interpreted through personal understandings built up over a lifetime, and inscribed with political import by circumstances as much as by intention. Culture, in this sense, inheres fleetingly in particular moments. To grasp it, we need to follow the flow of these moments in time.

This resonates with what Fox (2002) calls the study of historical transformation that, he argues, has long characterized US anthropology:

The study of historical transformation aims to understand the interplay of (historical) event and (cultural) structure that leads to variant outcomes. Rather than identifying gen-

eral laws, it hopes to illuminate historical processes. Rather than comparing traits, institutions, beliefs, or other cultural “facts,” it compares the divergent outcomes of similar historical processes. Historical transformation defines a comparative anthropology as the study of variation over time....

[Such a] comparative methodology that rests on the study of controlled comparisons, lifelines, and careers in time and on doing history backward commits to a fundamental historicity. It is phenomena rich, but eschews general laws. It makes comparisons, but only within historically determined lines of descent, some of which, however, like Wolf’s studies of the capitalist world system, are global in breadth. Its focus is on the study of historical process; specifically, the process of transformation by which core cultural practices and beliefs—what I have called sets of relationships—take variant forms as they move through time, diffuse to new locales and operate in new social contexts. (Fox 2002:167, 182)

This kind of inquiry into patterned but contingent continuities revealed by their “careers in time” can involve tracing out transnational religious and political convergences and their consequences; we have already noted that Kray does this in Chapter 4. Nash, in Chapter 6, delineates local histories of changing circumstances and translocal interconnections to compare how Maya in three regions of Chiapas came to participate (or not) in the Zapatista rebellion. She shows that when confronted with new places or situations, these Maya drew on familiar cultural ideas of “cellular” organization and consensual solidarity to reconceptualize, not just reproduce, notions of personal dignity, collective rights, and gender relations, then call for pluricultural autonomy. On the larger scale of national histories in Mexico and Guatemala, Watanabe’s comparison in Chapter 2 of regional and national political structures suggests how size and scale affect cultural continuities in the distribution of power and latitude of action from both above and below. This, in turn, plays directly into the historical differences we have already noted in relations between Maya communities and the Mexican and Guatemalan states, and the contrasting

nationalist but still largely neocolonialist projects these states have pursued.

Together, enacted continuities and historical contingencies as careers in time also enable us to acknowledge cultural differentiation without fear of essentialism. Again, as Fox observed during the seminar, “we can fall over ourselves so much in trying to avoid essentialism that we end up talking as if there are not these important and significant differences among ways of life or among peoples...and while we should be aware of internal differences in any such population, we can also run the risk of denying any difference...the important thing is to recognize that such differences come from different histories rather than that they are somehow floating around in some kind of ahistorical space.” Gupta and Ferguson (1992:19) likewise point to the pitfalls of radical anti-essentialism and note that postmodernity has not “created subjects who are free-floating monads, despite what is sometimes implied by those eager to celebrate the freedom and playfulness of the postmodern condition.”

Bricker’s discussion of Yucatec Maya again provides a ready example. Mutual unintelligibility between languages marks undeniable difference, yet borrowing takes place even across unintelligibility and transforms the nature of that difference—as in the loss of Yucatec numerical classifiers that accompanies loss of Yucatec number words. In the case of language shift to Spanish, “borrowing” erases difference entirely. In commenting on Bricker’s paper during the seminar, however, Montejo asked, if a Spanish loan word becomes subject to Maya phonology, syntax, and semantics (as most do), when does it stop being Spanish in any but the most pedantic sense? Thus, despite porous cultural boundaries and individual diversity within those boundaries, a *there* still remains, even if it never stays the same.

In this regard, Chapters 8 and 9 by Montejo and Fischer, respectively, provide an instructive contrast in representing the *there* in Maya difference. At first glance, the two chapters appear contradictory: for Fischer, commoditization of land and globalization of production in Tecpán Guatemala express a Maya “cultural logic”; for Montejo, the same developments farther to the west in Jacaltenango anger local Maya ancestors. On the face of it, some might say that this difference reflects Tecpán’s location within the political-economic “core” of

Guatemala's western highlands whereas Jacaltenango occupies one of its "peripheries" (Smith 1978) or, more invidiously, that Fischer is a foreign anthropologist and Montejo is Jakalteq (but also a US-trained anthropologist). On reflection, however, the first is too reductive, the second too essentialist, and both miss another important point.

On the one hand, Fischer shows how Tecpanecos appropriate external market forces while retaining a clear sense of cultural identity through work in the fields that provisions their households with maize from ancestral lands. On the other hand, Montejo reverses these terms by treating commoditization of land and commercial coffee production as culturally problematic in a place where Jakalteq ancestors, the spirit of corn, and land as a means of reproduction, not just production, still abide. Neither vestigial nor abstract, these abiding presences demand accommodation, and they respond by finding new affiliations across old boundaries, in this case, in neighboring Maya communities.

Montejo's point remains well taken. Just because global political-economic developments often "happen first" historically by impinging on Maya communities from the outside, this hardly means that they must always theoretically "come first" or count most "in the last instance." Indeed, toward the end of the seminar, Bricker questioned "the illusion of discontinuity" we all so often presume in treating any cultural change in Maya communities as somehow inevitably and irrevocably decisive. Maya and conquistador at the moment of initial cultural conflagration may well have felt this way. Yet, nearly five hundred years later, Fischer just as much as Montejo points to enduring differences—or more precisely, continuing innovative differentiation—in Maya responses to globalization. These responses most often, but not exclusively, entail familiar (and familial) activities and attachments rooted in specific places associated with the ancestors who first settled there and made them productive (see Watanabe 1992; Carlsen 1997). Being in that place means living not exactly like those ancestors but (literally) in their spirit (Warren 1989:56–57, 67–73). The rugged terrain itself reinforces place as a socializing constraint where poor communications and transportation still make physical distance significant.

Place, in this sense, deeply informs the historical consciousness

Maya carry with them wherever they go. In reflecting on such places during the seminar, Rus observed, “All of us who spend time in native communities know that they exist; we know that there is a different feeling inside them. And the fights among us are about how to capture that.” Gossen added that what matters in Chamula is the sense of belonging and comfort people find in their own places. As the Zapatista leaflet he cites in Chapter 5 says, Chamula struggle to create “a place where we can be ourselves.” Montejo honed the political edge on this by relating such comfort directly to self-determination: “When you can represent yourself to others, then you are free.” As such, Maya culture becomes both the means to achieve such self-determination and the outcome of this freedom, once achieved, to be who they want in futures of their own making.

Bonfil Batalla (1996:137) notes that this same confluence of culture, politics, and power defines the enduring authenticity of his México profundo: “The presence of cultural elements of foreign origin does not in itself indicate weakness or loss of authenticity within Indian cultures. The problem does not consist of the proportion of ‘original’ traits as opposed to ‘foreign’ traits exhibited by a culture at any given moment. Rather, the question is who exercises control over those traits: those who participate in the culture, or the members of the dominant society. At the same time, it is necessary to determine whether the traits are organized around a cultural project that is one’s own, or whether it is foreign.”

If, at its most intimate, culture represents the mutual recognition and sense of belonging that known places, familiar practices, and remembered histories precipitate, for many Maya it now also represents cause for political action and legal claims. Perhaps for this reason Rus observed that despite where each of us began topically, many of us individually, and certainly the seminar collectively, ended up talking mostly about the politics of Maya cultures, identities, and histories. More than simply intellectual fashion, we did so because Maya themselves on both sides of the border do as they challenge the national imaginaries of their respective countries with the enduring presence—and value—of Maya cultural differentiation. It is to this wider field of national politics and pluricultural states that we now briefly turn.

THE FUTURE

In response to Fox's final query of "Where do you want to go?" we venture here no pronouncements about future directions in Maya or Mesoamerican studies. Instead, we reflect on one of the many tasks the advanced seminar left undone. In Santa Fe, we all felt that the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas and the Maya movement in Guatemala heralded a "historic moment" for Maya, anthropologists, and the nations of Mexico and Guatemala, but an explicit framing of this moment eluded us. Only when we as conveners turned to write our summary of the seminar did we begin to see a possible wider framing: in assessing the contrasting historical circumstances and emerging cultural futures of Maya in Mexico and Guatemala, the seminar had also spoken to what current Maya cultural activism might reveal about the postcolonial condition in Latin America.

If postcoloniality turns on the impossible but compelling task of recovering silenced and misrepresented others from falsely universalized, Eurocentric discourses of colonialism and nationalism in colonized places already infused with (if not fully constituted by) these discourses (Prakash 1994), Latin America provides the paradigmatic case. Not only did it become postcolonial in a literal sense long before parts of Asia and Africa were even fully colonialized, but its independence from Spain in the 1820s also coincided with the consolidation and colonial expansion of modern Euro-North American nations. Indeed, in his analysis of the rise of nations as "imagined communities," Benedict Anderson (1991) grants pride of place to Latin American "creole pioneers." Precisely because postcolonial struggles in Latin America began in a world still new to the idea of nationalism itself, they can serve importantly to remind us of the historically emergent nature of colonial and nationalist discourses—as well as postcolonial critiques.

What makes nineteenth-century Latin American elites postcolonial in today's terms lies in their identities as Creoles—New World-born "whites" deeply torn between their Hispanic and American heritages (see Florescano 1994; Martínez Peláez 1970). So-called conservatives sought to preserve the centralized political order and social privileges of colonial society, but with Creoles instead of peninsular Spaniards

now the masters of Indians, slaves, and mestizos. In contrast, Creole liberals favored ideas of equality and citizenship (and later, positivism and social Darwinism) from the North Atlantic world. Much like postcolonialists today, both parties challenged failing Eurocentric discourses of absolutism and mercantilism with newly emerging, politically contrary nationalist and capitalist ones. As in the American Revolution, however, the politics of privilege soon recast the new republics into reactionary formations against those nonwhite, nonpropertied, nonliterate, nonmale constituencies disenfranchised by metropolitan ideals (LaFeber 1993:19–24; Mallon 1995).

In a world full of colonialized subjects, enchatteléd slaves, propertyless men, and suffrageless women, nineteenth-century Latin America ultimately succumbed to neocolonialism abroad and internal colonialism at home. This does not mean, however, that Creole elites abdicated their role as subjects in their own history or had no choice but to collude with an already established, inevitably triumphant West. Their protracted, internecine struggles through the middle years of the nineteenth century strove to rework the aftereffects of four hundred years of Spanish Catholic colonialism within a still-emerging global capitalist order. They remained no less postcolonial for recourse to progressive liberal discourses (the revolutionary politics of their day)—or for failing to escape dependency on the West.

Postcoloniality today also means laying bare the ways colonial and nationalist discourses have represented, and in the process silenced, subaltern others (Spivak 1988). This, too, applies to Latin America where, in addition to their internecine struggles, national elites have waged an often unfinished conquest of incorporation against locally diverse, ethnically distinct native populations, even as they have selectively appropriated indigenous traditions to distinguish and disguise their own nationalist designs. In response, Maya and other indigenous peoples have long struggled to retain a conditional autonomy for their communities and now call for new multicultural, if not plurinational, societies no longer predicated on Euro–North Americanized Creole privilege and power.

In this sense, the public debates that Maya activism has provoked in both Mexico and Guatemala over rights of citizenship and national identity may, in fact, mark the beginning of more truly postcolonial

dialogues in these countries. In challenging the legacy of Creole nationalism, Maya have taken advantage of a changing international order that has accorded them new political discourses and opportunities: growing concerns with human rights beginning in the 1970s reflected renewed efforts to implement the United Nations' declaration of universal human rights from the late 1940s; debt crisis and neoliberal reforms beginning in the 1980s precipitated political decentralization (not to be mistaken for democratization) in the wake of economic privatization and market deregulation; and after the hemispheric mobilization of especially indigenous activists against the Columbian Quincentenary of 1992, and the Nobel Peace prize awarded to Maya activist Rigoberta Menchú that same year, international, and especially nongovernmental, organizations increasingly recognized indigenous rights as human rights—and valid political causes.

Thus, in good postcolonial fashion, Maya activists have borrowed opportunistically from national and international “rights discourses”—human, indigenous, and civil—as well as from foreign scholarship (Fischer 1993; Warren 1998). They also employ in their call for recognition as both citizens and indigenous peoples a discourse of the nation, but they use it to denounce state and civil abuses. Unlike leftist revolutionaries before them, they accept state-centered conventions of citizenship and the rule of law. In the wake of civil war and ongoing repression, the Maya movement in Guatemala pursues more circumspect demands for cultural self-determination and social equality, whereas the Zapatista Army of National Liberation in Chiapas calls more militantly for political, economic, and social reforms.

Given how politically fraught and historically unfinished these issues of Maya culture, history, and identity remain, our task as scholars becomes all the more exacting. For this reason, perhaps, as much as for any deeply felt scholarly differences, the advanced seminar arrived at no singular conclusions. We did, however, speak explicitly to the contingent interplay between our own precursory anthropologies and the comparative histories of Mexico and Guatemala, to the ever-emergent yet historically rooted nature of Maya identity as historical consciousness, and to the political consequences of claims to Maya cultures for pluralistic, postcolonial nations.

We have arranged the chapters accordingly. The first three chap-

ters address regional and historical comparisons: in Chapter 2, Watanabe compares Maya-state relations in postindependence Mexico and Guatemala; in Chapter 3, Bricker addresses language policies in Mexico and Maya attitudes toward their languages in Chiapas and Yucatán; in Chapter 4, Kray links indigenous-language Bible translation by Protestant missionaries to postrevolutionary politics in Mexico and missionization in Guatemala. The next three chapters examine Maya identity and historical consciousness in Chiapas: in Chapter 5, Gossen provides a historical and cultural framing of Maya discourses toward the state; in Chapter 6, Nash compares political developments in Chiapas and highland Guatemala to explain Maya autonomy movements; in Chapter 7, Rus recounts an intellectual history of anthropological research in an ever-changing Chiapas. Turning to Guatemala, Chapter 8 by Montejo and Chapter 9 by Fischer contrast Maya consciousness in responding to globalization. The concluding commentary by Fox in Chapter 10 returns to discussions of postcoloniality and representations of cultural continuities.

Despite our gloss of “pluricultural ethnography” to characterize our collective endeavor, the resulting chapters in this book do not necessarily speak with a single voice—but then neither do Maya. In the end, if to some of us, invoking culture sounded too static, history too contingent, or power altogether too reductive, like Maya cultural activists, we agreed that we must work in the present to reconcile all three, recognizing the past in order to envision a future to which we all can mutually belong.

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Notes

1. We had initially sought to include work on Maya in Belize in the seminar, but eventually without success. Because we had already conceded coverage of Huastec Maya on Mexico's Gulf Coast and Maya in the Petén lowlands of northern Guatemala, we opted for deeper coverage of those regions where a majority Maya population with comparable colonial and postcolonial histories had persisted. In contrast, Maya in the central Petén did not succumb to Spanish incursions until 1697, but even long after that the region remained a refuge for Maya fleeing Spanish rule in Yucatán (Farriss 1984; Jones 1989). The Petén eventually entered into Spanish colonial history, but its small population, frontier isolation, and lack of commercial activity until demand for chicle stimulated an extractive (instead of plantation) economy after 1890 gave it a distinct social and ethnic character unlike the rest of Guatemala (Schwartz 1990). For Belize, Spanish incursions eventually established permanent settlement at Bacalar to the north by the 1540s, but efforts to resettle and missionize Maya further south later in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries never took hold as a permanent colony (Jones 1989). Despite Spanish depredations and British logging, especially from the late eighteenth century onward, Maya in Belize did not come under sustained colonial rule until after 1850, and that British not Spanish (Bolland 1987). In both regions, Maya today constitute a minority of the population (Schwartz 1990:213; Bolland 1986:44). Although these regions provide valuable historical contrasts with Maya in Mexico and highland Guatemala, we felt that they raised too many additional parameters to try to cover adequately in the seminar (see Watanabe, this volume, Chapter 2).

2. Kay Warren was unable to contribute the paper she presented in Santa Fe to this volume, but as her comments in this chapter demonstrate, she played a vital role in shaping our advanced seminar discussions. We regret that the absence of her chapter here so underplays her contribution to the success of the seminar.

3. See Geertz, 1973, for a critique of such "stratigraphic approaches" that also elaborates on the differences between trait-based and symbolic definitions of culture.

4. "Es axiomático que la Antropología en su verdadero, amplio concepto, debe ser el conocimiento básico para el desempeño del buen gobierno, ya que por medio de ella se conoce a la población que es la materia prima con que se gobierna y para quien se gobierna. Por medio de la Antropología se caracterizan la naturaleza abstracta y la física de los hombres y de los pueblos y se deducen los medios apropiados para facilitarles un desarrollo evolutivo normal."

John M. Watanabe and Edward F. Fischer

5. As testament to this productivity, three members of the seminar (Bricker, Gossen, and Rus) participated in the Chiapas Project, and Vogt supervised the Ph.D. dissertation of a fourth (Watanabe).

Excerpt from

Pluralizing Ethnography: Comparison and Representation in Maya Cultures, Histories, and Identities

Edited by John M. Watanabe and Edward F. Fischer

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