

LATIN AMERICAN PROGRAM

THE WILSON CENTER



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION BUILDING WASHINGTON, D.C.

WORKING PAPERS

Number 162

INDIAN CLASS AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN
PREREVOLUTIONARY GUATEMALA

Carol A. Smith
Fellow

Number 162

INDIAN CLASS AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN
PREREVOLUTIONARY GUATEMALA

Carol A. Smith
Fellow

This paper was prepared in December 1983 for public presentation as a colloquium paper on January 9, 1984 under the auspices of the Latin American Program of the Wilson Center, Washington, D.C.

Copyright © 1984 by Carol A. Smith

ABSTRACT

Indian Class and Class Consciousness in Prerevolutionary Guatemala

When asked who were their oppressors, what is their class position, what is the nature of stratification in their society, Guatemalan Indians will invariably point to the structural polarity between ethnic groups--Indians and ladinos--rather than to any other division that the outside analyst might see or want to impose. If further pressed about particulars, relations of an Indian worker to a wealthy Indian artisan or landholder, or about a neighboring community of ladino smallholders whose economic conditions of existence seem indistinguishable from those of the Indian community, the Indian speaker will doggedly maintain that ethnicity overrides class, that the oppressors are ladinos not capitalists, that the wealthy Indian is still a member of a community while the poor ladino is not. This essay seeks to explain why Guatemalan Indians think the way they do about social relations. To do so, it will have to deal with the material and objective conditions of Indians and ladinos as well as the historical and subjective meaning of these social and cultural categories. Since the objective and subjective categories do not coincide, issues of ideology and class consciousness are central to any such explanation.

That Indians are major participants in the revolutionary struggle taking place at this moment in Guatemala gives special importance to these issues. Guatemalans of all political persuasions considered Indians unlikely candidates for any kind of political struggle until the late 1970s, when Indian political action belied this assessment. Was the widespread assumption of Indian political passivity without foundation? Had a radical change taken place in the material circumstances or in the class consciousness of Guatemalan Indians in recent years? Is this basically an ethnic conflict--the "race war" that Guatemalan ladinos have long feared? If so, what is the meaning and likely outcome of a revolution based on ethnic rather than class consciousness of oppression? If not, what changed Indian consciousness so that they now understand their oppression in class terms? These questions dominate discussions of the Guatemalan revolution on both the left and right: the "Indian" question has become the central issue guiding both revolutionary and counterrevolutionary theory and practice. What I will add to the discussion is an assessment of Indian consciousness of themselves as an oppressed group--their beliefs and feelings about ethnicity, community, class, and political strategy--in the late 1970s, in the period immediately preceding the onset of the revolutionary conclusions about the conditions leading to Indian participation in the revolution, but I wish to emphasize that the information is taken from the prerevolutionary period.

INDIAN CLASS AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS
IN PREREVOLUTIONARY GUATEMALA

"All the difficult questions are about the development of a prerevolutionary or potential revolutionary or briefly revolutionary into a sustained revolutionary class, and the same difficult questions necessarily arise about prerevolutionary ideas" [Raymond Williams 1977:67].

Carol A. Smith
Fellow

The "Objective" Class Position
of Guatemalan Indians

No Guatemalan, or student of Guatemala, will be surprised by my assertion that Indians believe themselves to be oppressed as "a class" in Guatemala. But, whether Guatemalan or scholar, they do so under the mistaken impression that Indians do constitute "a class" in objective terms.¹ Anthropologists routinely put all Indians in the class position of peasants. Robert Redfield (1956) and Sol Tax (1953) began this tradition, but anthropologists continue to consider Indian peasants without embarrassment to the present day (Dow 1980, Warren 1978, Hawkins 1978), though with a certain amount of self-acknowledged confusion. Since anthropologists had little concept of a social formation in which there are class relations, they tried to identify the economic position of a single group of people. In the case of Guatemala the people of concern (mostly Indians) were rural, they almost all farmed small plots of land, their social relations took place mostly within a single community that appeared relatively homogeneous, and the people had virtually no national-level political power. (About 75 percent of the people in western Guatemala fit this definition; most of these people also consider themselves Indians.) For anthropologists, these characteristics have been the defining features of peasants. Much debate existed about which of these characteristics was the essential one for defining a peasantry. But since Guatemalan Indians seemed to have most of them, no one doubted that they were peasants.

In 1966, Eric Wolf helped clarify the definition of peasants for anthropology by trying to define them in class terms. Peasants, he pointed out, were rural cultivators who produced a fund of rent for economic superiors (Wolf 1966:10). This relational definition of peasantry, which advanced anthropological treatment of peasants considerably, became the accepted definition for peasants in anthropology. Yet anthropologists continued to describe Guatemalan Indians as peasants, even though most Indians fitted this definition poorly, if at all. As I have documented elsewhere, a good many Indians cannot be considered rural; less than half can be considered cultivators in occupational farmers (most farm, but they

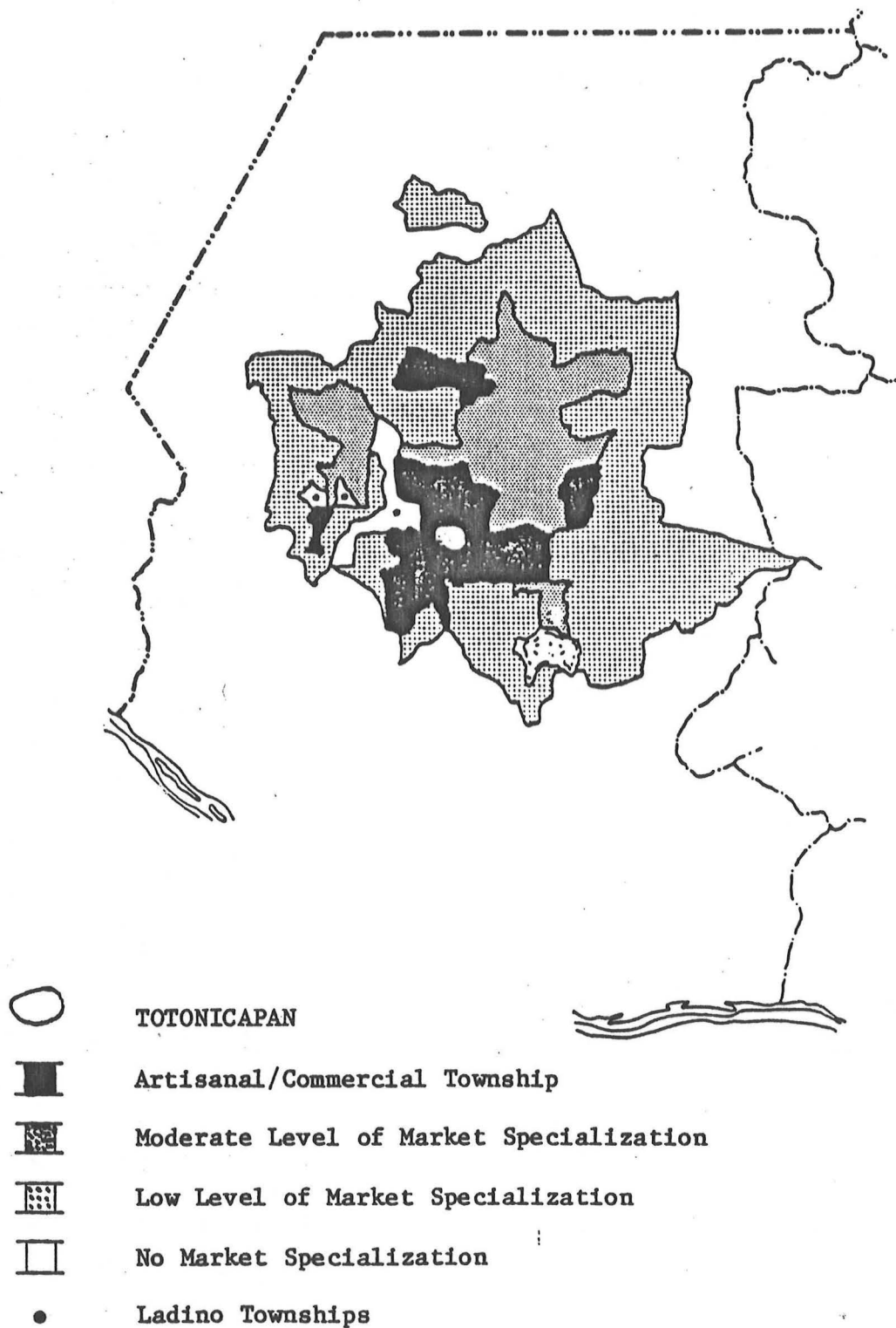
get the bulk of their incomes from other work), virtually none produce a fund of rent in any traditional sense (or in any of the ways defined by Wolf), and this has been true for the entire period in which anthropologists have worked in Guatemala (Smith 1978).

Unlike North American anthropologists, Guatemalan scholars define class on a national rather than a localized basis, and thus their arguments center on the nature of the social formation in question. Most Guatemalan scholars, for example, agree that Guatemala is a dependent or "colonial" social formation--a form of peripheral capitalism--which provides the analytic foundation for their class analyses (e.g., Martinez Pelaez 1971, Guzman and Herbert 1970, Flores Alvarado 1971, Torres Rivas 1969, 1981). Indians are considered the most exploited group within this formation, their exploitation explained in the terms of dependency theory: surplus value is transferred from Indians through ladinos to international capitalists through unequal exchange and mechanisms of monopoly control. Much of the analysis of exploitation is abstract, if not doctrinaire, and few have documented the precise mechanism at work and how they affect local class structure.² Flores (1971) and Torres (1981), who emphasize production over exchange, are more explicit than others. They emphasize that Indians constitute the bulk of the seasonal workforce on plantations and on these grounds replace the class category of peasant with that of semiproletariat. They note that Indians require wage income in order to subsist on their tiny plots of land and they suggest that Indians exist basically as reserve labor for the coffee, cotton, and sugar plantations that dominate the national economy of Guatemala. They still consider Indians a single objective class (a rural proletariat or semiproletariat), but they point out that non-Indians also belong to that class. For them the major question is not what class Guatemalan Indians belong to, but whether they now recognize that they share the same class position with others who are not Indians.³

It would seem a simple enough task to investigate the actual class position or positions of Indian empirically. I hoped to shed some light on the issue by carrying out a regional field study of rural class relations in the late 1970s.⁴ As the case study presented below indicates, however, neither the issue nor the investigation was at all simple. But I was able to establish that nothing resembling a peasantry exists in Guatemala at present and that only some rural Indians (far from a majority) could be considered a rural proletariat (see Smith 1984a, 1984b, 1984c). Most married adult men engaged in many different forms of production: but the occupations that predominated were those of petty commodity production and commerce, some in agricultural commodities but even more in nonagricultural commodities. The most unusual phenomenon I uncovered was the degree of differentiation within the region by rather than within community on the matter of wage work on plantations.⁵ The central highland communities (in the departments of Totonicapan, Quezaltenango, Chimaltenango) sent relatively few people to work on plantations seasonally, whereas many communities in the peripheral areas (Huehuetenango, Northern Quiché and northern San Marcos) sent most of the adult labor force for three to six months to the lowland plantations (see Map 1). This regional pattern of differentiation has no simple explanation. The labor-exporting areas are further rather than closer to the plantations. Both areas are equally landshort (labor-exporting communities actually had more land per capita

MAP Nº 1.

MARKET SPECIALIZATION IN WESTERN GUATEMALA



than artisanal communities). And a study of household budgets showed household dependence on purchased commodities to be equally high in both core and peripheral parts of the region.

Table 1, based on my regional survey, gives some indications of the major income sources in core and peripheral communities and also gives one measure of the significant degree to which Guatemalan Indians depend upon nonagricultural activities for income. Aggregation of the data, however, disguises the degree to which communities emphasize one form of production over another. It also hides the fact that virtually every household has members engaged in different forms of production. Most Indian households in the region own and farm some land, but very few households depend mainly on their land for income. In addition, many households have some members who could be considered wage workers, others (mainly the elderly) who could be considered peasants, and yet others who could be considered petty capitalists (employers of wage labor). Empirical investigations of "peasants" in the present era have often turned up data of this sort. The usual interpretation given of it is that traditional peasantries are presently in transformation, old precapitalist class relations slowly dissolving as capitalist relations of production are established. This interpretation may be correct in the long run, but it gives us little guidance on how to describe and analyze rural class relations in the present. It also assumes what must be demonstrated--that the rural economy is moving in a predictable and linear pattern of transformation, replicating the transformation process of classic capitalism.⁶

The "objective" class position of Guatemala's Indians is clearly far from simple or uniform. This makes the insistence of Guatemala specialists that Guatemala's Indians have a single objective class position all the more striking--especially given the abundance of careful and detailed ethnographic investigation in Guatemala. It also makes the beliefs of Guatemalan Indians about their class position--that they are oppressed as Indians rather than as peasants or workers--more problematic. I will argue that students of Guatemala have accepted the notion that Indians constitute a single objective class because the Indians they have studied convinced them that it was true. Indians have been convincing on this point not only because of their verbal insistence, but because of the way they conduct their economic and political lives. In the case study that follows I will attempt to demonstrate what I mean by this. First, however, let me briefly describe the way in which ethnic relations in Guatemala have been described in the literature and how scholars have interpreted the relation between ethnicity and class. Once again it is helpful to describe a North American and Latin American position.⁷

What is distinctive about the North American position on ethnicity is that it emphasizes the cultural reality upon which it rests: that Indians can be distinguished from ladinos only by culture, not race. Little is explicitly stated about the relationship of ethnicity to class, though a position on class definitely exists. Richard N. Adams (1959, 1970) provides the clearest statement of the general position. He states categorically that while non-Indians (ladinos) divide into several classes, Indians fall into a single marginal class (Adams 1970:425-426). His implicit assumption is that to the extent that an individual or community defines itself as Indian, it falls outside of the mainstream class divisions of

Table 1

PERCENTAGE DISTRIBUTION OF RURAL OCCUPATIONS IN GUATEMALA:
 INDIAN MALES, ALL PRIMARY OCCUPATIONS
 (based on stratified, random sample)*

No. of Individuals	Core Communities N = 1341	Peripheral Communities N = 1556	All Communities N = 4150
Agriculture			
subsistence	9.4	10.7	13.0
local wage	7.8 18.5%	13.0 37.9%	11.4 32.5%
plantation-wage	1.3	14.2	8.1
Commerce	20.7	14.1	16.8
Manufacturing			
crafts	5.4	7.9	7.0
artisanry	25.1 53.8%	15.7 35.6%	18.8 41.1%
crafts wage	.7	.9	.9
artisanry	22.6	11.1	14.4
Construction			
building	4.1	8.8	6.1
building-wage	1.5	3.5	2.8
Other			
services	.5	.1	.5
government	.7	-	.3

*These data are based on my 1977-1978 survey of rural occupations in the western highlands of Guatemala in which I covered a representative 131 rural hamlets. My procedures for obtaining this information are described in note 25.

Guatemalan society. Thus Indian identity constitutes a cultural remnant of the past, and though that culture has readapted to present conditions, it cannot be explained in the same terms used to explain the rest of Guatemalan society. Adams argues that as Indians are drawn into mainstream Guatemalan society through economic pressures they give up their traditional culture to "become" non-Indians--they "ladinoize." The evidence that supports his position is the pattern of ethnic change in Guatemala, whereby Indians have historically given up certain of the special cultural features that define them as Indians.⁸ The evidence that undermines the argument is that large numbers of people who are fully part of the Guatemalan national economy remain self-identified Indians. The Indian role in Guatemala's economy, moreover, has been much more important, and for a much longer period of time, than most people have realized (see Smith 1984b, 1984c).

Latin Americans, unlike North Americans, pay more attention to the racist basis of ethnic distinctions in Guatemala and to the subjective elements in the definition of ethnic groups. Thus many of them have attacked Adams' view of the ladinoization process. In most other respects, however, the Latin American interpretation of the relationship between class and ethnicity is not all that different from Adams'. I will use the work of Rudolfo Stavenhagen (1970, 1975) here to delineate the Latin American position.⁹ Stavenhagen makes an analytical distinction between "colonial" and "class" relations, both of which have shaped the identities of and relations between Indians and non-Indians in Guatemala. Colonial relations define Indians generically, independent of specific variation in their actual positions in production. Such relations are characterized by "ethnic discrimination, political dependence, social inferiority, residential segregation, economic subjection and juridical incapacity" (1970:269). These relations have their origin in the colonial period, when the Guatemalan economy required cheap sources of labor for labor-intensive agriculture. Colonial relations minimized Indian acculturation (the ladinoization process) and perpetuated ladino dominance in economic, political, social, and religious arenas. During the colonial period, Stavenhagen maintains, ethnic and class relations were closely parallel. In the modern (postcolonial) period, according to Stavenhagen, class and ethnic relations have diverged because of the slowness and unevenness of the transition process, characteristic of peripheral social formations where capitalist forms of production exploit noncapitalist forms of production.¹⁰ Ultimately, however, class relations push for the integration and acculturation of Indians into the broader society. Thus as Indians are increasingly drawn into the national economy as proletarianized workers on large plantations and as consumers of market commodities, most can be expected to take on non-Indian cultural traits in the short run and all can be expected to give up their ethnic identity altogether in the long run. Racism may remain, however, as an aid to the superexploitation of Guatemala's workers, whether those workers retain a distinct (Indian) culture or not.¹¹

In sum, most students of Guatemala agree that Indians have a single objective class position, one that is shared by many non-Indians. In the past they have disagreed about whether Indians were peasants or semiproletarians and about the racist premises of Indian exploitation. Today, in the context of an "Indian" revolution, the discussion centers on a

different question--that of Indian class consciousness. Whether or not one believes that ethnicity rests on "real" cultural differences, perceived cultural differences, race, or racism, most scholars believe that ethnicity "mystifies" the real nature of class relations in Guatemala. All of the scholarly discussion, past and present, assumes that there is no contemporary material grounding for Guatemalan beliefs and behaviors, whether Indian or ladino, as regards ethnicity. It assumes that the present cultural differences between Indians and ladinos constitute no more than remnants of a colonial past that lives on with only the irrationality of "culture" to sustain it. This position, like all of those attributing a "false" consciousness to a group or class of individuals, poses serious theoretical difficulties for Marxist scholarship. By severing belief or ideology from its material context, it forces one into one of two untenable positions: that no relationship exists between the material and the ideological aspects of class relationships; or that material life dominates ideology, not in the lived material reality of the present, but at some future moment when (for reasons never made clear) people come to their senses. For this reason, I will take a different approach to these questions altogether. In the following section I briefly outline my theoretical position and the intellectual discourse in which it is situated.¹²

The Theoretical Problem: Objective and Subjective Elements of Class Relations

Few Marxists concerned with the problem of class consciousness now assume that potential class consciousness--the potential defined by position in the process of production--will always be actualized through political struggle. More would agree with Lukacs that "[several] different possible relations [exist] between the objective economic totality, the imputed class consciousness [derived from a given position in the process of production], and the real, psychological thoughts of men about their lives" (Lukacs 1968:51). But while it is agreed that material circumstances are not enough to actualize "real" classes through class struggle, Marxists have yet to elaborate the theoretical and practical implications of this conclusion. For the case at hand, the class position of Guatemalan Indians, it gives us little guidance on how to deal with the fact that Indians, an ethnic category, consider themselves a class, have actualized their beliefs in revolutionary struggle, in which they have insisted upon revolutionary goals specific to their ethnic identity, yet do not form an economic class as defined by their "position in the process of production."

Few theoretical guideposts exist to deal with this issue. But those Marxists concerned with the subjective element of class formation and action remind us to consider its relational as well as its historically determined character. E. P. Thompson (1963), for example, in trying to explain how the English-working class made itself in the eighteenth century, constantly refers to the oppositional structure responsible for class formation, defining this oppositional structure in political rather than in economic terms (i.e., in terms of counterrevolution). He is not entirely clear about the nature of and reasons behind the oppositional situation, taking it as a given in his analysis and concentrating on the formation of one class rather than upon the formation of a particular

class relationship. But his basic contention is clear. Because class is a relationship, formed in political struggle, not a "thing," it has no specific economic basis. My analysis builds upon this particular argument in Thompson, in that I will argue that Guatemalan Indian class consciousness was forged in political struggles and that these struggles created a particular economic basis or foundation for Guatemalan class relations. I, too, will concentrate on the formation of one particular class in a relational context, but I will try to give some information about the way in which Indian class formation affected the other classes in Guatemala.

I reject another element in Thompson's analysis, specifically that suggesting that English-working class formation rested upon preexisting communal traditions, norms, or culture (see Craig Calhoun 1982).¹³ Many who have attempted to deal with the political actions of peasants make a parallel argument (see Hobsbawm 1959, Wolf 1969, Scott 1976, 1977). They suggest that when the "traditions" of peasants, whether economic, social, or political, have been threatened by the changes imposed upon them in the modern world, peasants have become a potent revolutionary force. In the modern world, it is asserted, peasant traditions thus become especially politically volatile. What peasants fight for is to regain a world lost --a world that may never have existed in fact but only in group memory. The difficulty with this position is that it assumes an unchanging peasant tradition. In the case at hand, that of Guatemala, I will show that Indians have struggled in various ways at various times to defend their "traditions," but that what they struggle to defend is not an unchanging or intrinsically counterhegemonic tradition. Not only has the "objective" class position of Indians changed in Guatemala over time, but so has their subjective interpretation of it. We cannot understand what any particular struggle is about, in fact, without understanding its relational context: not only the aims of "peasants" or Indians, but the aims of those against whom they are struggling. Both sides in the struggle will utilize an interpretation of history to defend their position in an ongoing struggle, but that interpretation will change as the terms and relation of struggle change.

In this study, then, I assume that the traditions and culture of Guatemalan Indians were formed through political struggle, not that their political struggles rest upon some elements in their traditions or culture. My basic contention here is that the cultural and social basis of class action resides in a dialectical interplay between peoples' perceptions of that basis and the political struggles that such perceptions engender. To deal with cultural elements in class analysis, therefore, one must consider the historical creation of culture and tradition rather than treating culture and tradition as elements of culture and tradition rather than treating culture and tradition as elements already given to the situation: people continually create their cultural traditions in relation to others, just as they make themselves as a class in relation to others. It follows that one must begin with class struggle in any treatment of class, whether its objective material fundament or its subjective cultural expression. Only in this way can one understand the relation between the objective and subjective, the material and cultural, as social practices become social processes in historical movement. As Pierre Bourdieu (1977) has suggested, the social and political relationships that are defined as

crucial and the outcomes of particular political struggles will not be infinitely varied, but neither will they be simple mechanical reproductions of their initial conditions. They will be "the product of history ..., and hence history, in accordance with the schemes engendered by history" (1977:82).¹⁴

My point of departure on the question of class and class consciousness among Indians in Guatemala, then, is to begin with the question of how concrete social relations are defined in particular situations, without assuming the presence or absence of any particular material basis for these relations. I will show that economically defined classes of Indians, encapsulated within other, more politically relevant, Indian groupings did not act so as to maximize their material interest in the period I examined, but that certain types of Indian groups did base their political action upon a historically conditioned perception of the most salient of their several contradictory class positions and upon their perception of the politically possible. On these grounds I will argue that it is possible to speak of an Indian class in political terms even before the present revolutionary struggle, in which Indians have taken an active role, become evident in 1979.

The more controversial stand I take on this question is that political struggles and classes in Guatemala have been defined by an ideology of class, based on a local discourse and a particular historical experience, as much as by material conditions in either the economic or the political realms. An Indian "class" does not now exist nor has it ever existed by any existing abstract definition of social or economic class. But a longstanding subjective reality in Guatemala--for both Indians and non-Indians--has been that Indians do form a class, whether that class is considered peasant, proletariat, or an oppressed racial category, and this belief has shaped real and material political struggles. In so doing, it has created a class of Indian political actors.

The data presented here derives from information I collected as an anthropological investigator of the entire region of western Guatemala, which includes the coastal plantation lowlands. Much of the information I report here, however, comes from a single Indian community, Totonicapan, in which I lived for a total of four and a half years between 1968 and 1978. I concentrate on this single community because my analysis rests heavily upon knowledge of the personal lives and histories of friends who lived there. Given the complexity of the issues I must address, I ground my analysis in particular concrete problems. Why do the artisans of Totonicapan not take on apprentices and workers from other communities in the region who could be hired for wages much lower than those prevailing in Totonicapan? What kind of groups in Totonicapan engage in what kinds of political struggle? And what provides unity to those people of Totonicapan who come together in struggle?

Totonicapan is an especially interesting case for two reasons. First, it is far from a "traditional" Indian community in either cultural features or material conditions. For these reasons some have considered Totonicapan a "ladinoizing" community (Adams 19xx), though Totonicapeños themselves are quite militantly Indian in self-identification. To the extent that Totonicapan retains a distinct conception of itself as Indian without any

of the traditional (or obvious material) bases for such, the Totonicapan case helps explain the complex link between material conditions and cultural belief that creates an ethnic boundary in Guatemala. Second, while strongly Indian in self-identification and famous in Guatemala for confrontational political tactics and a history of serious rebellion against the state, Totonicapan has played little active role in the present revolutionary struggle which is so clearly identified with Indians. Since the evidence presented below suggests that Totonicapan Indians do not lack a sense of their oppression as Indians within Guatemala--that they may even hold this belief more strongly than most Indians do--the Totonicapan case helps explain the complex link between political belief and political action.

The Economic Bases of Class Differentiation in Totonicapan

What I will describe here in the next few pages is an artisanal economy that was fully commodified as of about 1880, one that had utilized local wage labor for at least four generations. It was clearly not a peasant economy, nor had it been one for centuries; but it was an economy that lacked a proletariat. This in itself is a theoretical problem. Economic activity in Totonicapan and other artisanal communities of the western highlands met all the conditions that Lenin thought would inevitably "enrich the few, while ruining the masses," i.e., that would create permanent class differentiation among peasants (Lenin 1955). All means of production in artisanal communities were commodities (land and capital equipment were freely bought and sold). Producers sold most of their goods and purchased most of their raw materials in an open market. Individuals were free to accumulate capital and no direct communal or cultural barriers existed to prevent accumulation. In addition, rural artisans in western Guatemala faced powerful competitive pressure: they held no protected monopolies and had to compete in a perfectly open market--causing many of them to fail as enterprises. The distribution of assets in artisanal communities, moreover, was quite unequal. Individuals in artisanal communities rarely lacked assets altogether--almost every household owned some land and the tools needed for artisanal production. Thus no fully proletarianized household existed. But labor power had become a commodity in the region. And Lenin argued that the very conditions described here, a fully commoditized, competitive market economy, would engender the process that would create a mass proletariat, completely devoid of means of production. My study showed that these conditions had not done so over at least a one-hundred year period. To explain why this was so, let me describe the specific organization of production in Totonicapan, one of these artisanal communities.¹⁵ As will become apparent later on, analysis of a community of artisans is necessary to explain rural class relations in western Guatemala because Indian communities constructed their economic lives within communities and as communities.

As mentioned above, Totonicapan was an unusual Indian community, but most of what I describe here applied to other artisanal townships in the core area of the western highlands in 1978.¹⁶ It was especially large: more than 50,000 lived dispersed in the 40 traditional cantones (hamlets) of the township. It was especially urban: the town center of the municipality, with a population of about 6,000, headed the much larger territory

of the department of Totonicapan.¹⁷ Because department capitals such as this one carried out most of the state's administrative work in the region, the town of Totonicapan housed a fair number of ladino bureaucrats and petty officials who lacked roots in the area. Yet the township of Totonicapan had proportionately fewer ladinos in its territory than most Guatemalan townships, all of the rural and most of the urban populace being Indian.¹⁸ Unlike many Indian communities, however, Totonicapan was relatively wealthy: few people worked seasonally on the lowland plantations and the incomes of many rural Indians in this township rivalled those of the professional, bureaucratic elite (mostly urban ladinos) of the region. Totonicapan also boasted a highly specialized occupational profile: virtually no Totonicapeños earned their living exclusively from farming.

Totonicapan's wealth did not derive from plentiful resources, but from artisanal production and sale.¹⁹ All Indians in Totonicapan owned some land, but precious little; few families eked out more than three months of staples from what they had.²⁰ The difference between large and small landowners in the community was vast on a relative scale (from ten acres to less than one-tenth of an acre), but small on an absolute scale. No Totonicapan Indian was a major landowner, few Indians lacked supplementary sources of income, and virtually all Indians, even those with very small or very large plots of land, worked their own land as well as hired labor during peak agricultural seasons. Income and class differentiation, to the extent that they existed in Totonicapan, rested upon position in non-agricultural activities, mainly artisanry and commerce.²¹

Totonicapan held no artisanal specialty exclusively, unless one counts the production of highly decorated boxes, nor did it specialize heavily in any one product, though this was the tradition of the past. Totonicapan once specialized in carpentry and commerce, but in 1978 it was the premier producer of woven cloth and ready-made clothing in the western highlands: it was also a major producer of simple furniture, leather goods, and pottery. The cloth and clothing were new specialties, developed in this century as Indians began producing many of the artisanal goods once monopolized by ladinos.²² Other rural and urban workers (ladinos as well as Indians), rather than tourists, consumed most of Totonicapan's output. More than half of the Indian women in Guatemala wore some article of clothing produced in Totonicapan and a goodly number depended on Totonicapan producers for most of their clothing. Indian men began dressing in the standard campesino garb produced by tailors in or around Totonicapan around 1950.

Nearly 42 percent of male household heads in Totonicapan produced artisanal goods as their primary occupation in 1978 (see Table 2). Most other households counted at least one artisan among their members. In addition, almost 25 percent of male household heads were long-distance traders in the region, most of them sellers of Totonicapan specialties. Dependence on sources of income outside of farming was common in the core area of the western highlands, but Totonicapan's degree of specialization was still striking. The pattern was established in Totonicapan and several other Indian townships long ago, observable in the first occupational census of the area.²³ The artisanal townships tended also to be long-distance trade centers and to be located between the larger towns of western Guatemala (see Smith 1975).

Table 2
OCCUPATIONS IN RURAL, INDIAN TOTONICAPAN, 1977
(male heads of households)*

N = 7125

		Percent	Average Age
Agriculture, proprietor ^a		10.4%	56.8
Agriculture, worker ^b	24.4%	14.0	32.0
Artisanal Production, ^c proprietor		27.4	43.5
Artisanal Production, worker	41.8%	14.4	25.3
Simple Crafts ^c		4.8	44.4
Construction		5.0	28.3
Commerce ^d		23.8	42.5
Government Employment		.4	34.6

*This is a very rough summation and does not constitute final figures.

^aThe vast majority of these households have one or more family workers outside of agriculture.

^bThis includes plantation workers (who are less than 4% of total).

^cArtisanal production, in my definition, depends upon purchased raw material in significant quantity; simple crafts production utilizes "free" raw materials.

^dApproximately 8 percent are in local commerce, 15 percent in long-distance trade.

Most of the artisans of Totonicapan sold their own goods in the regional marketplaces or to local merchants on a consignment basis (bank-rolling the merchant rather than vice versa). Virtually no artisan used credit to obtain either capital or raw materials. Thus, merchants, whether local or urban, held little economic power over Totonicapan artisans. The wealthiest people in Totonicapan were not merchants, but rather merchant-artisans--people who both produced and sold. Those who were simple merchants had medium to low incomes in comparison to others in the township, and ran a greater risk of losing their small capital than did artisans. Totonicapan artisans who did not sell their own goods depended almost exclusively on Totonicapan merchants for distributing

their products. Individuals in Totonicapan moved rather frequently from occupations in commerce to occupations in production.

Households in Totonicapan purchased most of what they consumed. A few families produced enough staple grains for the year, but these were the richer families and they also purchased many food items. Income differentials in Totonicapan were significant. Some households had annual incomes in excess of \$20,000 (U.S.) per year, while others had annual incomes of about \$300 per year. Annual household incomes averaged about \$600 to \$800. One can interpret these income figures, however, only in the context of a household's work history and the point in the life cycle one found the household. Let me do this from the perspective of the production process. To simplify, I consider only artisanal-commercial households (the vast majority). There were few households in Totonicapan that did not partake in the artisanal cycle, since farmers and agricultural laborers (the only other significant categories) usually had some experience in artisanry or commerce at some point in their occupational careers.

Most artisans used only family labor in their enterprises. Less than 10 percent of the households (8.4 percent) hired artisanal labor on a regular basis, but since some artisans hired many workers, many more households had one or more individuals in them working for wages in enterprises that were not their own. The use of wage labor in artisanal production has existed in Totonicapan for at least four generations. Yet the status of wage worker was seen as an impermanent one, in that workers were expected to establish their own enterprises soon after marriage. And, in fact, wage workers were typically young men (very few young women) who had not established households of their own (86 percent). Their households of origin operated their own enterprises (often in different branches of production) with other family members. Thus if we ignore for the moment those few households that obtained the bulk of their incomes from local or plantation farm labor, we find very few households in Totonicapan that could be considered proletarian households. One could, of course, find individuals who fit the standard definition of a proletariat. But given that production was organized on a household basis in Totonicapan, and that propertyless individuals usually belonged to households with property, it distorts economic reality to talk of individual position in production.

One could also find a fair number of individuals who appeared to be petty "capitalists" in Totonicapan, in that they hired wage labor regularly in order to produce commodities for sale in a market with the aim of enlarging their enterprises. In studying the budgets of several of the largest petty capitalists, however, I found that they extracted little in the way of surplus value from their workers (see Table 3). The wages of artisanal workers virtually matched the profits earned by the household enterprise. The enterprise, of course, earned far more than the individual worker. But enterprise earnings invariably resulted from the labor of several family members, in addition to workers and apprentices. And if one divides the profit among all nonwage workers--giving an equal share to each household member who is part of the enterprise--it was about the same as the wage of a journeyman worker.²⁴ The enterprise did extract surplus value from its apprentices as well as its family members: apprentices cost nothing more but a small food ration (and a certain amount of

Table 3

PRODUCTION DATA, 15 WEAVERS, TOTONICAPAN, 1978
(Costs and prices taken from last turnover period)

Case No.	Turnover Period (T)	T per year	Fixed Capital	No. of Wage Workers	No. of Family Workers	No. of Unpaid Apprent.	Days wge-lb T	Days All-lb T
1.	30	8	689	4	5	-	80	178
2.	33	8	1065	6	5	-	130	204
3.	30	10	491	8	2	2	160	235
4.	30	7	1151	10	6	2	200	323
5.	30	8	1317	10	2	3	200	293
6.	30	8	1369	10	5	2	200	351
7.	60	5	855	8	4	2	288	439
8.	36	10	1127	8	5	3	168	308
9.	15	16	762	-	3	-	-	31
10.	30	8	592	5	5	-	100	172
11.	20	15	440	4	3	1	60	112
12.	22	15	528	8	3	2	120	180
13.	15	20	328	4	2	1	40	65
14.	20	15	375	2	2	2	20	82
15.	30	10	557	10	2	2	200	270

Case No.	Cost of Materials	Cost of Wages	Other Costs	Gross Inc./T	Net Inc./T	Net Inc./Year	Net Inc./Day
1.	346	378	22	1047	300	2400	10.00
2.	400	300	150	1125	275	2200	8.33
3.	240	480	150	1090	220	2200	7.33
4.	884	600	150	1964	330	2310	11.00
5.	429	600	30	1400	341	2728	11.36
6.	810	600	-	1800	390	3120	13.00
7.	806	864	70	1930	494	2964	8.23
8.	910	640	275	2560	735	7350	22.08
9.	250	-	20	400	130	2080	8.70

Table 3 (Continued)

Case No.	Cost of Materials	Cost of Wages	Other Costs	Gross Inc./T	Net Inc./T	Net Inc./Year	Net Inc./Day
10.	350	300	200	1080	230	1840	7.66
11.	180	180	5	500	135	2025	6.75
12.	360	240	-	800	200	3000	9.10
13.	190	100	-	330	40	800	2.66
14.	272	72	28	645	273	4095	13.65
15.	684	600	200	1784	300	3000	10.00

Case No.	Average Labor-Day Productivity	Average Wage of Worker	Average Wage of Family w.	Average Wage of family + apprent.
1.	3.80	2.70	3.06	3.06
2.	2.82	2.30	3.71	3.71
3.	2.98	3.00	6.28	2.93
4.	2.88	3.00	3.97	2.68
5.	3.21	3.00	10.33	3.66
6.	2.82	3.00	4.29	2.58
7.	3.09	3.00	5.42	3.27
8.	4.46	3.80	9.54	5.25
9.	4.19	--	4.19	4.19
10.	3.08	3.00	3.19	3.19
11.	2.81	3.00	3.70	2.60
12.	2.44	2.50	6.66	3.33
13.	2.15	2.50	2.66	1.60
14.	4.16	3.60	6.35	4.33
15.	3.33	3.00	10.00	4.28
Averages	3.21	2.96	5.55	3.45

lost production time), but actually produced quite a lot of value after a short period of learning. Apprentices worked for two to three years without pay and then typically continued working for wages several years more with the person under whom they apprenticed.

Since workers rarely headed independent households, their wages became part of the total income of another family enterprise. Most households expected their wage earning members to save a large portion of their incomes for the purpose of setting up their own households and artisanal enterprises. Depending upon how heavily a family subsidized them, workers could become independent in two to five years. Virtually all wage workers became enterprise owners after several years of work. And virtually all enterprise owners began their operations with capital earned as wage workers. I base these generalizations upon several hundred life histories and also upon the age distribution of apprentices, employees, independents, and employers of wage labor in Totonicapan. In weaving, the average age of these types of workers was, respectively, 17, 26, 33, and 37.

Artisans needed little capital to begin their own enterprises. An enterprise could be established with as little as \$200 (U.S.) and no more than \$500. This compares to an annual average wage for an artisanal worker of about \$600. Thus, in the system of artisanal production in Totonicapan, the taking on of apprentices almost always created workers whose earnings power was high enough that they could become competitive with artisanal producers in a few years--especially if subsidized by their households of origin, as almost all were. Most artisans were aware of this cycle and few sought apprentices in order to enlarge their enterprises. On the other hand, few refused to take on a local young man as apprentice if asked.²⁵ Though most apprentices and some workers were technically exploited by this system, none that I talked to felt exploited by it. They often pointed out to me that they not only learned their skills when working without pay, but also learned the ropes of the business and made the contacts necessary for selling their products at a later stage of their careers.

Larger enterprises, those with five or more workers and one or two apprentices, failed with great regularity. This is not surprising, considering the dependence of Totonicapan enterprises on external business conditions as well as on stringent internal requirements. To succeed, a large enterprise needed a large family workforce in addition to hired workers, it needed an active and astute enterprise director (usually the household head) to buy and sell, and it needed a very regular clientele in order to employ its workers continuously. Of the several hundred enterprises on which I have a history, most that failed did not disappear as enterprises or disperse into wage-working individuals, but merely contracted to a family level, perhaps later to expand again. On the other hand, large enterprises never lasted more than a single generation; a widow or widower sometimes maintained an operation, but the second generation did not. Disintegration of the enterprise occurred for various reasons: all sons and daughters inherited their parents' wealth equally, mortuary practices squandered much of the accumulated capital, and business activities were usually interrupted for at least a year after the death of the head. These practices, in the face of intense competitive pressure, placed serious limits on the accumulation process in artisanal

production. Most artisans hoped to head a large operation some day, but relatively few succeeded; none who did succeed, however, created a business dynasty.

No generalized wage level existed in western Guatemala in 1978. The wages set by the plantations for seasonal labor served as a general barometer to be sure. But each highland community established its own wage in relation to the plantation wage (in most cases for agricultural labor) and that "community wage" tended to regulate wage levels in all branches of production in the community. In Totonicapan, for example, agricultural workers (mostly the very young or the very old) earned about \$3 per day in 1978, slightly less than artisanal workers who earned about \$3.50 per day in all branches of production. Totonicapan wages were very high, not just for a highland Indian community, but for any place in western Guatemala. They were higher than what a plantation worker earned, who had higher costs of living, and they were about twice the level prevailing in most Indian communities, even ones bordering Totonicapan. There were also nearly as high as the profits earned by employers.

In sum, both historical and contemporary evidence suggest that while economic "classes" had existed in a technical or formal sense among Totonicapan artisans for at least four generations, permanent class differentiation had not taken place. I have analyzed this phenomenon elsewhere (Smith 1984a), arguing that the relatively high level of wages in artisanal production maintained the steady circulation of apprentices and workers into the ranks of employers in each generation. In that essay, I tried to account for Totonicapan's high wage rate in regional, national, and international contexts.

In this essay I ask a different question. Why did the petty capitalists in this community not try to obtain cheaper wage labor for their enterprises from other Indian communities? If the employers in Totonicapan had hired cheaper labor, they might have been able to capitalize their enterprises to the point that workers could not easily establish the competitive enterprises which kept local wages high and local profits low. At the very least they would have made larger profits, and I have no reason to believe that the petty capitalists of Totonicapan, who were engaged in a fully commoditized form of production, were disinterested in higher profit levels. Yet at no time had employers in Totonicapan taken on artisanal workers from other communities, whether from near or far, whether Indian or ladino, whether of similar or dissimilar Indian culture.²⁶

Lack of available outside labor cannot explain the phenomenon. Indians in Guatemala were not unwilling to leave their communities to find work. After all, nearly one-quarter of the adult males in the highlands sought work on the lowland plantations seasonally and a significant number migrated permanently each year. Most Indians in the region, moreover, would have preferred artisanal work in Totonicapan for the same if not lower wages than they could earn on plantations (since plantation work is especially arduous, unhealthy, and promises no future independence). Because artisans in Totonicapan frequently visited the more impoverished communities in the region to sell their products, they did

not lack the knowledge or opportunity needed to find cheap labor for their enterprises. Many merchant-artisans of Totonicapan, in fact, had very close ties to people in the communities they visited. Yet to my knowledge, no artisans in Totonicapan recruited workers from outside their own community.

Quite clearly, then, something other than economic conditions in Totonicapan and the region acted as a brake on class differentiation within Totonicapan and other artisanal communities. Economic conditions were more than propitious. Cheap labor, "free" of property and "free" to move, not only existed in the region, but existed as a "real" proletariat for the plantation and urban economies. Indian employers in Totonicapan and elsewhere knew about this labor and also knew that high local wages ate up most of their profits. And Indian workers receiving relatively high wages had neither the economic nor the political leverage to prevent employers in their communities from bringing in cheaper workers. Since these economic conditions had existed in the region for a fairly long period, why did they not have the expected effect? Tradition? Cultural inertia? That is what the data suggest as answers. It is also the answer commonly given by those scholars who recognize the disparities between economic conditions and human responses. But this view, just like the view which insists that class differentiation is taking place in Indian communities of the western highlands because conditions call for it, opposes material forces to nonmaterial forces rather than seeking to explain their mutual interaction. In seeking a more dialectical explanation for this phenomenon, I must consider how Guatemalan Indians have actively shaped the material circumstances given to them. Let me begin with what they told me.

When I asked artisans in Totonicapan why they did not recruit cheaper labor from other places, they did not give me a very satisfactory answer. Or perhaps they did, but the answer requires interpretation. It was the standard refrain heard by anthropologists: we just do not do things that way here--it is not our custom. A typical, if slightly more elaborate, response was the following:

Well, they are different from us (tienen otra costumbre). And not having a family here, where would they live? How could they farm? Without kin (pariente), perhaps they would not behave properly (portarse bien). The kids (patojos) here are intelligent, hardworking, respectful, they don't give us any trouble. (Pause) It's just that people from other parts are different from us, they have other customs.

To my surprise, no one said that in bringing outsiders to Totonicapan artisans might lose some of their trade or craft secrets. Few artisans with whom I talked, in fact, ever discussed the problem of creating competitors through training workers. When prodded on the point, they would usually shrug and say, "You're right, but what can we do?" (Pues, si, pero que podemos hacer?) And when explaining why they did not recruit workers from other communities, few people mentioned any specific problem that might arise: that outside workers might marry their women, try to settle in the community, buy up some of their scarce land, take

jobs away from their own youths. They only pointed to a "general" problem: that people from other communities, whether Indian or not, would not "fit" into the Totonicapan community--"tienen otra costumbre."

Real capitalists, of course, rarely worry about whether or not cheap workers will fit into a community. They may worry about whether or not outside workers will stir up trouble in the workplace and they may not consider it worthwhile to bring in cheaper workers whose higher turnover rates would cause them uncertainty or lost production time. But these did not appear to be the worries of the employers I queried, who in other contexts were quite articulate about worker problems (the high local turnover rate, the high wages, the lack of "diligence" among the youths of today). The problem they saw was the destruction of their community as a unified political front against the outside world, this unity based on the specific ethnic identity of Indians in Totonicapan and their "costumbres." Let me elaborate Totonicapan views on this, after briefly describing some of the social and political conditions within the community.

The Political Bases for Community Life in Totonicapan

The community of Totonicapan was not a "moral" community in the sense often depicted in the literature of peasants. Internal divisions and conflicts were as pervasive and powerful as a Samuel Polkins (1979) would expect. The size of the community (more than 50,000 Indians), its internal territorial divisions (the 49 cantones), and the mediation of the marketplace in most material exchanges among community members all militated against the density and multiplicity of personal ties that Craig Calhoun (1982) thinks essential to the making of a moral community. No antimarket or anticapitalist "counterhegemony" existed in this peasant tradition, a fact that contradicts James Scott's (1977) claim about its generality within peasant traditions. For one thing, most Totonicapan "peasants" were market oriented rather than subsistence oriented, and had been so for many generations.²⁷ Everyone saw inequality of wealth and local position as part of the natural order of things. No employers felt morally compelled to pay a "just" wage--they paid only the prevailing rate, determined by the scarcity of local labor. Most people in Totonicapan, moreover, hoped to outrank other community members in wealth and power through successful expansion of their business enterprise. But while I do not want to depict this community as one that retained a peasant moral tradition, I nonetheless want to depict it as one that held a sense of community strong enough to prevent individual employers in the community from maximizing their own economic interests at the expense of community solidarity. Because the feeling of community solidarity that existed in Totonicapan rested upon distinction from and opposition to others conceived as exploiters, and because it actually suppressed the formation of internal economic classes, moreover, I want to claim that it reflected a certain kind of class consciousness--a class consciousness based on something more than simple or individual material interest.

I use the term class consciousness here, rather than some other term, in order to suggest that the unity of Totonicapan--in its opposition to outsiders--stemmed from its unity of opposition to an external

structure of "class" domination. That is, overriding the many divisions of the community based on rank, age, religion, and even local material circumstances, was a very powerful concern to preserve a community that would struggle as a unity against the class differentiation Totoncapenos saw as most salient to their lives: that between the Indian "peasants" (of their community) and the outsider and, in their view, totally exploitative structure of ladino domination. This concern was felt as much by the richest Indian employers of the community, who rivalled the ladino regional elite in wealth if not political power, as by the poorest worker in the community. Nor was this an entirely false sense of classness for such individuals, in my view, for they were as vulnerable to the ladino structure of domination (what was, in fact, the Guatemalan state) as anyone in the community. While it was clearly a complex and contradictory form of class consciousness, it was one based on certain objective features of class structure in western Guatemala. Like all forms of class consciousness, however, it required its agents to emphasize certain elements and ignore others in their complex and contradictory lives--that is, it required social construction. And because it required social construction, it was not a simple given of the objective features of class structure in western Guatemala.

Having stated my basic premise, I must now back up and attempt to define some of my terms, using insofar as possible the political discourse on class, community, and culture that existed in Totonicapan. In particular I will try to show how Indians of Totonicapan conceived the external "structure of domination"; and thus show why local community rather than a wider ethnicity was the vehicle of class struggle at the time of my study.

I use the term ladino structure of domination, by which I mean the institutions and structure of the Guatemalan state, because the Indians of Totonicapan were quite careful to distinguish between personal and institutional features of domination. Rural Indians would often describe the few local ladinos as outsiders, as nasty and "uncivil" people. But they did not fear or define them as class enemies. Let me illustrate this contention with a conversation I had with a friend (a wealthy Indian artisan of Totonicapan) about the local ladino mayor (alcalde), who destroyed the central part of Totonicapan in order to "modernize" it.²⁸ In the course of our conversation, my friend made several important distinctions:

Don Chepe (the mayor) is not really a bad sort (mala gente); he is not too smart, but then he doesn't understand our customs. He mistreats poor but not all Indians (los naturales) here. (So why did you elect him?, I ask.) We elected him because we wanted our road fixed. If Don Chus (an Indian candidate for office) had been elected, he couldn't have done it. (The assumption was that only a ladino could manipulate the state apparatus for the benefit of the community.) Besides, it really doesn't matter who is mayor. Everyone in politics is out for himself. (Here the speaker made a hand gesture indicating bribe.) And why not? Nothing changes. The political system can't help us here. (Why not? I ask.) Because it is only of/for the ladinos. (Porque es solo de los ladinos.) It's like this everywhere in

Guatemala... (But if Indians held political power, I protest, the system would not just be for ladinos.) No, we Indians could never hold real political power in Guatemala. We can protest, we can struggle, but we can't change things. (But you could get rid of Don Chepe, I suggest.) Yes, but Don Chepe is not the problem, we will have to put someone just like him in his place. The problem is Guatemala.

I had conversations of this sort with many Indians in Totonicapan and found that most people made the kind of distinctions this person did: that particular local ladinos were not the "bad guys" (*mala gente*); that only local ladinos could manipulate the state bureaucracy; that the political system worked to favor ladinos; and that this situation--ladino political domination--was general in Guatemala. In other words, most Totonicapan Indians believed that it was a whole structure of political domination that oppressed them, rather than a particular local clique of ladinos.

The economic ramifications of this structure were frequently pointed out to me in conversations about the problems faced by Indian traders. Almost every trader or artisan with whom I talked had at least one story about how he had lost some (or all) of his capital through extortions exacted by officials, police, or ladino merchants outside of Totonicapan. When this happened outside the community, the Indian trader or artisan felt quite helpless to do anything about it--rarely would one take such a case to court. When it happened within the community (and such cases were uncommon), the victim was much more likely to find some form of redress. Several people observed that the system worked precisely in that way. ("Our" ladinos take from them, and 'their' ladinos take from us.") In fact, however, the system only worked that way for rich Indians. The Totonicapan bureaucrats and police, recruited mainly from outside the township, "took" from anyone who was poor or politically vulnerable, and most such people were local Indians. But the local artisans, who felt completely vulnerable to economic extortion or dangerous political caprice outside this community, did feel a certain safety within it.

The feeling held by most Totonicapan Indians that the community protected some of their interests was not without foundation. In the four years I lived in Totonicapan, they did rid themselves of the "bad" mayor, rebuilt the town park as they wanted it, successfully resisted higher commercial taxes twice, and forced ladino officials to admit Indian girls wearing native dress into the local secondary school (after fairly prolonged struggle that included violence). Totonicapan Indians recognized that their control within the community was tenuous, limited, and required them to follow certain informal rules (like electing ladino officials). But at the same time, they recognized that solidarity action within the community--on important occasions, anyway--could be effective. And thus they saw that solidarity of community was worth protecting.

Bringing politics into the picture thus seems to solve the apparent contradiction between culture (community "tradition") and economic interest. It suggests that there is no basic contradiction because community solidarity had an economic payoff. All Indians of Totonicapan could

expect a greater material return by defining themselves as relatively homogenous peasants pitted against the ladino state (rather than fragmenting along lines of individual interest) because the close link between economy and politics in Guatemala forced a collective and political response from Indians. Thus Indians struggled through communities to preserve their long-term or common economic interest (as a "class") rather than short-term, individual interests (as incipient "classes").²⁹ The problem with this conclusion, however, is that it does not explain why Indians would struggle to preserve that which formed the basis of their oppression in Guatemala--the ethnic identity embedded in their community solidarity. (Remember that all Totonicapan Indians claimed that community solidarity rested upon retention of Indian "customs.") Had the Indians of Totonicapan chosen to pursue their individual interests (by, for example, hiring outside labor), thus dissolving community boundaries, internal homogeneity, and the very basis of Indian ethnicity, they would face little of the oppression as individuals they suffered as a community of Indians.

To deal adequately with these questions, therefore, requires further deconstruction of the meaning of community and ethnicity in Guatemala. Ethnicity in Totonicapan and other Indian communities involves more than the Indian-ladino distinction; it also encompasses cultural differences among Indian communities. Besides being implicated deep in political struggle in the western highlands, ethnicity plays a major role in local or community theories or ideologies of class. Embedded in the meaning of ethnicity and community, then, are most of the problematic concepts with which I am attempting to deal here: class, culture, and politics. Ethnicity defines concrete groups engaged in real material struggles today. Yet the definitional boundaries of ethnicity are based on myth and ideology, historically rooted but given new meaning by the everyday experiences of real people in each generation. It follows that we must understand the subjective meaning Guatemalans attach to ethnicity and class before we can understand any objective "facts" about Guatemala that involve ethnically defined groups or classes. As a first step, let us examine the social boundaries in which the meanings take on a material reality for Guatemalan Indians--the community or township.

In the prerevolutionary period Indians in each township felt their sense of opposition in isolation from other Indian townships. Various scholars have asserted that the isolation of each township--and thus the division of general Indian ethnicity into local community ethnicity, with each township claiming its own special identity--resulted from the competition of townships with each other for scarce resources, especially for land (Tax 1937, Falla 1971). Intense competition between townships existed, to be sure, but my work in Totonicapan showed that hamlet-level competition over resources was even more intense than township competition and yet this did not destroy the township basis of ethnic identity. Others have argued that with the demise of the townshipwide political-religious cargo system, township-specific ethnic identity would disappear.³⁰ But the evidence at hand seems to refute that view. Many townships in western Guatemala have not had a cargo system for more than 50 years (e.g., Totonicapan), yet community identity remains strong. Other places still retain a cargo system (e.g., San Miguel Ixtahuacan [W. Smith 1976]),

but no longer have a sense of themselves as a specific unified group. The important element in cargo systems is that community identity stems from political organization and struggle on a community basis, something the cargo systems usually promoted. But the cargo system was just one possible way of organizing for struggle, not a necessary way, nor a sufficient way.

I do not have enough information to claim that each township felt itself opposed to the "general structure of ladino domination" (as opposed to local ladinos) in the way that Indians in Totonicapan did. Nor can I claim that most Indian townships felt little sense of opposition to or competition with other Indian townships. But in Totonicapan, which I can vouch for, the feeling about other townships was much more complicated than that. The Indians of Totonicapan felt little kinship with other Indians, even neighboring groups of those sharing the same language, but they did not feel opposed to them. And while the Indians of Totonicapan had a strong sense of identification with their hamlets (where a basis for community solidarity obviously existed in kinship, close relationships, marriage, and even remnants of community property), their active social and political allegiance was to the township--an entity whose boundaries had been drawn arbitrarily by the Spanish colonial authorities and an entity which had never provided a sociological basis for community solidarity except through political struggle.

Let me try to give a fuller sense of the Totonicapan view of community from another conversation I had with a Totonicapan Indian, an independent artisan from a rural hamlet bordering Santa Cruz Quiche and far from the urban center (and marketplace) of Totonicapan. The part of the conversation I quote took place after a long discussion about the reasons for founding a new marketplace in the hamlet. I had just asked whether the hamlet might eventually petition to become an independent township (with its own cabildo), now that it had its own marketplace.³¹ His response was:

"No, we still belong to Totonicapan, our political life resides in the cabildo of Totonicapan. (By cabildo, the speaker is referring to the traditional assembly of Indian elders.) (What political life, I ask.) Well, if something happens to one of us traders, we take it to the cabildo in Totonicapan; that is where we settle our important political matters. (Why not create your own cabildo or take it to Santa Cruz [which was closer], I ask.) In Santa Cruz they have other issues (problemas); their elders (principales) do things differently, they couldn't protect us. And if we built our own cabildo, it would not have the strength of the cabildo in Totonicapan. Totonicapan is the home of Atanasio Tzul (a nineteenth-century Indian revolutionary leader from Totonicapan, well known to virtually everyone in Totonicapan, but little known elsewhere); and in Totonicapan the Ladinos do not bother us too much (no nos molestan tanto). Besides, we have the same customs as the others in Totonicapan. (It strikes me, I remark, that your customs are not all that different from the people in Santo Tomas [a neighboring hamlet of Santa Cruz].) That is not true. Those people are quite

unlike us. It is true that they speak Quiche, but we Indians (naturales) are not all the same. Each people (raza) had its own traditions, its own way of doing things. In Santo Tomas, the people are more humble (humildes) than we are, they do not have our sense of pride. The people of Santo Tomas are Indians too and also mistreated by ladinos. But they do not defend themselves (defenderse) the way we do. We will always remain Totonicapeños.

I cannot pretend that this conversation was a typical one. This person's view of the situation was unusually pointed, political, and eloquent, one of the reasons I wrote it down later that day. But in conversations around this same topic with Indians who were not so articulate, much the same thing was communicated: that Totonicapan identity was based on political unity; that other Indians shared similar political-economic circumstances, but faced them differently; that Totonicapan's ethnic identity or "culture" was rooted in a history of oppositional tactics and means rather than in particular visible traditions, such as language, ways of dressing, religious beliefs. Another way to put it is that within their community--a community historically forced upon them by outside political manipulation--Totonicapan Indians shared a language of political discourse which they had helped to shape through hundreds of years of struggle with state (ladino) authorities.

I must admit that it is difficult to describe those traditions upon which Indian solidarity rested in Totonicapan, other than a general sense of opposition. Indians would frequently refer to their special "customs," but few such customs were general. Not only was Totonicapan very large so that dense ties of kinship, marriage, and even work relations located in each of the 48 hamlets rather than within the township, but major political and religious differences divided the community. The traditional political-religious cargo system that had once involved all important Indian males in annual townshipwide offices, had disintegrated in the 1920s, and with it went more shared religious belief. Dozens of competing Protestant sects operated in the township, involving more than one-quarter of the Indian population. Catholics were divided among nonpracticing traditionalists, practicing traditionalists, and Acción Católica. These religious differences were strongly felt and often divided families. All Indians spoke the Mayan language, Quiche, but most also spoke Spanish, and some were trying to teach only Spanish to their children. All adult Indian women wore traditional dress, but men had long given up Indian clothing and some young girls dressed like ladinos. More subtle uniformities may have existed in Totonicapan--how Indians addressed one another, how decisions were made in all-Indian groups, how Indian workers and owners related to each other. But my general impression was that while there were many things that most Totonicapan Indians did and believed, there were very few things that all Totonicapan Indians did and believed.³²

Whatever it was based upon, the content of Totonicapan Indian identity was not fixed in "tradition." It was something renewed in each generation and created dialectically in opposition to the ladino world. I believe that virtually all tradition could disappear in Totonicapan and yet the feeling or consciousness of local Indian identity would remain. Let me hasten to add that few Indians of Totonicapan would have agreed

with me. They were convinced that their "costumbres" played a role in their protection against the outside world. And that belief created a reality of action when it came to recruiting outside workers. In other words, rich Totonicapan artisans did not employ cheaper outside workers, even though to do so would have benefitted them considerably, because they thought it would have "diluted" their cultural traditions. They believed, like others did, that the unity of their tradition protected them against the outside world--i.e., they held an ideology about the bases needed for unified political struggle. I use the term ideology here not to suggest that Indian perception or consciousness of the bases of their unity was false, but rather to suggest that they selected only one part of their material world for emphasis.

Let me phrase the problem in more concrete terms. On the one hand, there were two objective class positions held by all Totonicapan Indians: their position in relation to means of production (whether as worker, owner, or employer), in which all Indians were self-defined workers, but a great many Indians were also owners and even employers; and their position in relation to political power and the state, in which all Indians were defined by the state as politically subordinate and without certain rights, regardless of their economic class position and regardless of community membership. On the other hand, Indians defined only one of their two kinds of class positions in collective action of any sort, that of being politically subordinate or "Indian," and they did so only as members of a particular community. That is, Totonicapan Indians focused upon their Totonicapan identity, rather than upon their general Indian identity or upon their general worker, owner, or employer identity. What is interesting about this selection of identity for political and economic action is that the condition of being Indian was not particular to Totonicapan, but a more general experience, whereas the condition of being an employer or worker was a specifically Totonicapan experience--because the community itself had so defined it.

The point I wish to emphasize here is that the ideology held about the meaning of community in most Indian communities did more than reflect the economic conditions and class structure of Indian communities. It actively maintained certain economic conditions (competition, small scale of production) and a particular class structure (relatively homogeneous) within Indian communities. At the same time, however, changing economic conditions in the region were not without material effect on Indian communities. Transformation wrought by the plantation economy--loss of Indian resources, commodification of the Indian economy, growing Indian dependence on cash income, and so forth--did foster "real" as opposed to "formal" class differentiation among Indians. But rather than stratifying classes within communities, these forces stratified communities within the region. Some communities, like Totonicapan, were made up of relatively undifferentiated artisans; other were made up of relatively undifferentiated farmers; and yet others were made up of relatively undifferentiated seasonal workers. Those Indian peasants completely dispossessed of property--i.e., fully proletarianized--were simply lost to Indian communities through migration to non-Indian parts of the region. Thus community ideology not only preserved relatively homogeneous Indian communities, but it also made the labor that was "freed" from those communities available to non-Indian employers.

We must conclude that while Indian communities could not transcend the economic pressures exerted by the wider national economy, they were not simple objects of those pressures. While they had to react to changing material circumstances, they could react in ways of their own choosing and in ways that included concerns for aspects of their lives that were not strictly material. And while subjected to rather simple and particular economic forces, they did not have to come up with any particular or simple response. The cultural conception of community remained a force in Indian economic choice, even though the retention of community had no apparent economic underpinnings. We must now ask what made this cultural conception so powerful--powerful enough to suppress individual economic interest. In other words, we must ask why preservation of community "tradition" was important to Indians in economic circumstances that can in no way be considered traditional. Totonicapan's history of political experience, briefly sketched below, provides a basis for answering this question; it shows how Totonicapeños constructed a political culture, one that changed as social and political conditions changed, in their struggles with others who held different interests. It also helps explain Totonicapan's present political posture in Guatemala's "Indian" revolution--a posture that is different from that of many other Indian communities in the region, but one that we cannot assume will remain static or fixed.

The Historical Construction of Revolutionary Consciousness³³

Ralph Woodward, like many other historians of Guatemala, notes that "throughout the colonial era recurring Indian revolts consumed Spanish energies and resources" (1976:33). Guatemala seemed to have had more than its share of trouble with the native population. The conquest of Guatemala was a long and bloody process. By 1700, after a native population loss of at least 90 percent (Carmack, Early, and Lutz 1980), Guatemalan Indians accepted Spanish authority in principle, but after that date they were quite unwilling to allow the Spanish authorities to impose additional or new burdens. And at least forty major rebellions took place after 1700 (Martinez 1973), most of them over issues of state versus local power. The rebellions of the colonial period, rather than decreasing in number as the Spanish institutions were firmly grounded in the region, increased over time as native communities recovered population and reacted to Spanish authority by building their own institutions for struggle. Except for the most serious rebellion of all, which began in Totonicapan and spread to several other townships, all of the rebellions involved single townships against local authorities. A majority of rebellions took place in the more commercialized townships, like Totonicapan, and most concerned issues of commercial, political, or religious freedom, rather than economic oppression per se.

To explain the fractiousness of Guatemala's Indians in the late colonial period, we must consider several of the initiating conditions in the colony. Guatemala's colonial institutions were distinctive in two respects. First, Guatemala held the imperial seat (its administrative territory included all of Central America) of an economic backwater that attracted few Spaniards. The economic and political conditions of the colony were such that Spaniards either settled in the imperial seat

(Guatemala City), which was distant from the western highlands where most Indians lived, or they settled as far away from imperial power as they could get (Costa Rica, Nicaragua). Very few Spaniards settled in the western highlands. Second, Guatemala never developed a mining economy or an export economy of any significance. In consequence, it did not develop haciendas to feed the export zones, nor did it develop a local economic elite standing between the Crown and the Indians. It had only the Spaniards of Guatemala City and a few lonely priests and bureaucrats out in the countryside—who spent as little time out in the "savage" boon-docks as they could.

On the Indian side of things we find at the beginning of the colonial period small competing kingdoms, supporting a nonproducing elite in the western highland of Guatemala (Carmack 1981), and simpler forms of social organizations elsewhere in Central America. Carmack (1979, 1981) documents that many preconquest institutions survived the conquest in western Guatemala but not elsewhere. Local elites were used by the Spaniards to administer the region, localized kindreds (*parcialidades*) maintained their hold on communal property (a tradition of common kinship survives today in many hamlets, especially in larger townships), and the population remained scattered over the countryside, resisting Spanish attempts to congregate them into towns and villages. Cargo systems (see note 30) emerged at the township level to regulate local Indian civil and religious governance. And the township became the functioning political organization for Indians because that unit was the one recognized in the Spanish administrative hierarchy. The organization of township governance cannot be credited to preexisting institutions of either Spaniards or Indians, it resulted from their mutual political interaction.³⁴

The Indian communities of Guatemala took on many of their special characteristics—in particular their very political character and their strong sense of ethnic over class identity—because they developed in response to a much more centralized state apparatus than typical of other parts of Latin America. And because there were few large landed enterprises in western Guatemala until the late nineteenth century, Guatemalan Indian communities developed a different kind of defensive posture than those typical of the Indian communities of Mexico or Peru.³⁵ They were less socially isolated, more internally heterogeneous, relatively well off in economic terms, and contained a significant amount of internal social differentiation even in the colonial period. The peasants within them also produced a significant period of nonagricultural commodities even in the colonial period.

In the late colonial period Spaniards and mestizos moved out of the city into eastern Guatemala, where few Indians lived (MacLeod 1973). This phenomenon is in itself interesting—why did these settlers, looking for the riches that Guatemala never delivered to them, not to move to the western highlands with its plentiful exploitable labor supply, the most valuable resource of the era? The evidence suggests that they did not because the Indians of the western highlands were so difficult to control (see Smith 1984c). We see here how peasant resistance shaped a particular and significant political outcome. Much of subsequent Guatemalan history has been affected by the division of the country into Indian western Guatemala and ladino eastern Guatemala. It has also been

affected by the absence of a regional ladino elite in western Guatemala, one holding power based on local rather than state-granted resources. Spaniards were reluctant to settle in the western highlands, not because it had nothing to offer them but because the cost of obtaining it was so high. Even today, the only ladinos presently living in the western highlands of Guatemala (with minor exceptions) are state bureaucrats, professionals, or commercial middlemen holding monopolies protected by the state. It is no accident, then, that western Guatemalan Indian townships have a well developed political stance that conflates the Guatemalan state with Guatemalan ladinos.

Guatemalan Indians never "won" in their colonial revolts, if one defines a win by the taking of state power; but they did win a great deal of political and economic autonomy through their continued resistance and revolts. Accounts from the colonial period indicate that state authorities hesitated to exact more than the standard tribute for the Crown from the Indian townships of the western highlands. The Spanish clergy was quite lax in imposing standard Catholicism (Cortez y Larraz 19xx), through fear of revolt. As late as 1890 the postcolonial state authorities were afraid to undertake a census in the department of Totonicapan. The western highlands certainly did not appear an attractive place for ladino settlement, "abundant Indian labor" notwithstanding. Thus we see that the conditions of political struggle in Guatemala were determined as much by Indian political practices as by national or international factors.

A major Totonicapan revolt in 1820 closed out the colonial era and ushered in a 20-year period of chaos and struggle which many at the time described as a "race" war (Ingersoll 1972).³⁶ Changing and contradictory policies by the Spanish Crown, who first abolished the Indian tributes (along with other onerous burdens of previous administrations) and then reinstated them, created the initiating circumstances of the revolt. Most Indians in the department of Totonicapan were convinced that local officials were responsible for the reversal (Carmack 1979). The rebellion consisted of throwing out the Spanish governor of Totonicapan (who feared for his life), insulting and threatening the native authorities who had been in office during the reversal, establishing their own taxing system (at about the same level as that levied by the Crown), installing new officials, and "crowning" a Quiche king (Atanasio Tzul), whose mythic qualities still live in Totonicapan memory. Indians in Totonicapan made contact with the central authorities to plead their case (they also made contact with Mexican authorities) and tried to obtain support in their revolt from many neighboring townships. They managed to get support from most of the Indian townships in the department of Totonicapan. Armed Spanish authorities quashed the revolt quickly, but the authorities never did manage to collect tribute in the area again. So once again it is not entirely clear who "won" in this struggle. The revolt was serious enough that it certainly established Totonicapan's reputation as an especially bellicose place in a region whose Indians were generally known as rebellious ones.

The wars of independence followed shortly after the Totonicapan rebellion and continued for two decades. Like the wars of independence in the rest of Latin America, the two main factions were Spanish loyalists

(priests, bureaucrats, privileged commercial middlemen) on one side, and the less privileged non-Indian classes, criollos, on the other. The loyalists or conservatives wanted to retain state-controlled economic institutions of the colonial period, based on tribute and commercial monopolies. The opposition, liberals, wanted free trade, private property, civil liberties, national integration (of the Indians among others), and capitalism. Unlike the wars of independence in most of Latin America, Indians and other peasants (from the eastern region) became major political actors in the struggle.³⁷ What is more they gained major concessions at the end of the struggle when a peasant mestizo, Rafael Carrera, took power for the next 20 years.³⁸ This peasant caudillo preserved the Church, kept the Indians from "citizenship" and national judicial reform, allowed the persistence of communal properties, and yet granted considerable commercial freedom to peasants (Miceli 1973).³⁹ The Indians in the department of Totonicapan were especially strong supporters of Carrera, during the decade of warfare before he came to power as well as during his rule (Carmack 1979). Always more involved in commerce than many other Indian townships for reasons of location, these Indians demanded commercial freedom more than other townships did and with greater belligerence and thus came to dominate the regional commercial and artisanal economy of western Guatemala even at this early period, the point at which we see emerging the patterned differentiation of Indian economies (see Smith 1975). All Indians emerged from the "conservative" interlude of Carrera's governance more commercialized than ever before. They also emerged from this period seriously differentiated, both by township and within townships.

The divisions that developed among and within Indian townships during the Carrera years may have proved their undoing in the Barrios years when the lowland plantation economy was established (beginning about 1875). The rebelliousness of Guatemala's Indians, however, also made Barrios very careful in the way in which he proceeded against Indian interests (McCreery 1976). Unlike his liberal predecessors who tried but failed to accomplish what Barrios did--establish capitalist agriculture in Guatemala--Barrios moved against Indian communities selectively, offering concessions even as he put into place laws that eventually robbed much Indian land and forced much Indian labor for the development of the plantation economy. He took special care not to interfere with Indian "tradition" and local political autonomy. In fact, Barrios was quite astute at using local Indian leaders to fulfill his aims. He gained support from them in part because he scrupulously applied the letter (if not the spirit) of the new laws to Indians and ladinos alike (Carmack 1979).

The Barrios reforms provided a firm foundation for larger scale coffee production for export, which dominated Guatemala's national economy by the close of the nineteenth century. But the export economy did not develop into a "freely functioning" capitalist form of production, as its liberal promoters had envisioned. For 50 years labor had to be delivered to plantations by the state through various forced labor systems. Neither Barrios nor his successors succeeded in dispossessing Indians of their means to make an independent livelihood, though they certainly tried to do so. Thus Indians did not become the free and mobile labor force needed for capitalist development. The backward and technologically retrograde nature of Guatemala's plantation economy, still in evidence

today, together with the very small and conservative oligarchy who came to control the plantation economy through state support, resulted not from capitalism's evil will but from the difficulty capitalism had in conquering Guatemalan Indian property and labor (Smith 1984c).

Many Guatemala specialists remark upon the quiescence of Indian communities during the plantation heyday (1871-1944) when Indians were economically exploited more heavily than ever before. I think the best way of interpreting this period is to realize that Indian struggles took a new form, more economic and less political. They did so because the opposition they faced had also changed, becoming more economic and less political. Local level histories of the sort written by Davis (1970), Carmack (1979), and Falla (1980) show that significant economic struggles continued during this period. Barrios sent a flood of ladino settlers into Indian townships for the explicit purpose of alienating Indian lands and "civilizing" the savages. In most Indian communities resistance to this flood took place through migration, sabotage, and court battles (Davis 1970). In other communities, especially in the more commercialized areas, Indians tried to escape plantation labor drafts by exercising their new commercial freedoms. Totonicapeños, for example, took over production of many artisanal specialties (especially weaving and tailoring) once monopolized by urban ladinos in this period. Other communities took over other artisanal specialties. In 1920 rural Indians dominated commerce in the regional marketing system and were the main artisans of the region. (Before the Barrios reforms, both artisanry and commerce had been monopolized by ladinos.) Increasing numbers of Indians moved from their rural hamlets to their township centers as they took over the even larger commercial enterprises and the transport system of the towns (see Smith 1975). As the economic situation for ladinos began to deteriorate in the western highlands, many of them left for other parts of Guatemala. The fifty or so ladino families who settled in Totonicapan's rural hamlets during the Barrios invasions, for example, either left the western highlands altogether (mostly for the capital city), or married into the Indian populace and were gradually absorbed as Indians.

By mid-twentieth century, Guatemalan Indians had so successfully taken over traditional ladino commercial monopolies that ladinos were almost as scarce in the western highlands as they had been in the colonial period. Indians still made up the bulk of the plantation labor force, but the commodification engendered by wage work did not destroy Indian institutions, identity, or ability to turn many national-level institutions to their own interests--it merely changed the way they would have to do it. The pattern of change gives ample evidence that Guatemalan Indians did not simply want to retain prior traditions unchanged. Many of the revolts of the late colonial period were by Indians wanting greater commercial freedoms rather than protection from market forces. And in the postcolonial period Indians embraced these freedoms eagerly to fashion entirely new economic and political stances. In the process Indians lost many earlier traditions such as colonial clothing styles, colonial cargo systems, uniformity of traditional religion, and emphasis on agricultural self-sufficiency, replacing them with knowledge of Spanish, literacy, varied diet and clothing styles, dependence on the market, and use of local wage labor. But the tradition of being Indian and in opposition to non-Indians remained.

Guatemala's Indian peasantry died with the plantation economy, but peasants did not all or even mostly become a free proletariat. "Petty production and trade rather than capitalist agriculture took up most of the slack given by the declining self-sufficiency of the peasantry. Labor was 'free' to find employment anywhere, legally, but most free labor went into small-scale domestic production; plantations continued to rely on the state to obtain labor" (Smith 1984c). The economic sabotage of plantation needs by new forms of Indian resistance to proletarianization maintained the avenues of political struggle in Guatemala between Indian communities and the Guatemalan (ladino) state. Indians did not struggle with capitalism as a class, because they had prevented "real" capitalism, which requires dispossessed labor, from developing in Guatemala. They struggled with the Guatemalan state (which continued to intervene between Indian communities and plantations) as isolated communities because countless political battles waged well beyond the colonial period had established that arena and those terms for struggle.

Indians participated little in the next major political battle in Guatemala (1944-54), mainly because the battle was between two factions of capitalism (Jonas 1972, Wasserstrom 1975) neither of which had much to offer Indians. Partly because Indians participated little in this conflict (also because of their apparent quietude during the early part of the twentieth century) Indians gained the reputation in Guatemala of being politically inert and passive, their goals conservative, if anything. Non-Indian reformists and later revolutionaries, therefore, did little to encourage Indian participation in their own political struggles. Indians did not become major participants in national politics until the late 1970s. Between 1944 and 1978 they continued quietly to create an independent position for themselves in the national economy, undermining the goals of Guatemala's ruling elite--to make Guatemala into a flourishing form of dependent capitalism. The rulers did make Guatemala dependent enough, in both economic and political terms, but because they continued to face the problem of insufficient free labor, the economy did not flourish, nor did it become a classic form of capitalism, one based upon free wage labor.

Throughout the recent period (1944-1978), Totonicapan continued to struggle as a community for specific and limited goals: access to more and higher-level schools, better roads, greater say over local governance and commercial legislation, entrance of their youths into positions once reserved for ladinos. A rather typical struggle of this period was that which took place over admitting Indian girls wearing native dress into the local secondary school in the mid-1970s. Several decades before, ladino school officials admitted Indian boys, who no longer wore distinctive Indian dress, under the assumption that this would draw Indians into national culture, a goal held nationally ever since the Barrios period.⁴⁰ To admit Indian girls in native dress seemed contradictory to everyone but Indians, assimilationists as well as local ladino chauvinists. Indians saw it as a means to gain access to national power (in the professions and education) without abandoning their basis of local power--their strong sense of community-specific ethnic identity. It took Totonicapan Indians three years of struggle, in which they had to gain support from Indian elders throughout the township (many did not approve of Indian girls in secondary schools but came to support the issue when it took on

strong overtones of ethnic conflict), and a certain amount of bloodshed to win this fight. But once organized, the Indians of Totonicapan won the fight, just as they had won so many before. Their very success in these struggles prevented Indians of Totonicapan from considering any other form of struggle.

Indian communities in areas that had been less commodified in the early part of the twentieth century responded to greater commercial freedom (and the general economic boom of the 1950s and 1960s) in less coherent fashion. Most of these communities had been more adversely affected by the Barrios policies, many continuing to hold ladinos in them as well as diverse Indian groups (Davis 1970). Since these communities had been truly neglected in the late colonial period and early independence periods, unlike Totonicapan, they had developed less capacity for political resistance. But as they were drawn into the national economy, most of them moved in the direction pioneered by places like Totonicapan. Increasing numbers of people became petty merchants, artisans, and commercial farmers--even plantation labor recruiters. Encouraged by missionaries and development projects (brought into the western highlands as part of the general effort at incorporating Indians into the national economy) in the 1960s and early 1970s, Indians in these communities joined cooperatives and colonization projects, began using chemical fertilizer, and took interest in local political affairs including organizations for plantation laborers. By the late 1970s, the traditional labor exporting Indian communities were exporting significantly less labor to plantations (Smith 1984c). Those who continued to work on plantations, moreover, joined organizations calling for higher wages. Plantation wages doubled in 1977 after one labor organization, which unified seasonal and permanent plantation workers for the first time in Guatemalan history, called a major strike.

These various "quiet" developments brought Indian communities and the Guatemalan state into full conflict once again in the late 1970s. But the present military regimes in Guatemala, unlike Barrios' regime (the last one to come into direct conflict with Indians), reacted with neither caution nor selectivity to what they saw as the political danger posed by greater Indian participation in national organizations of protest and the economic difficulties occasioned by the lesser availability of Indian labor for Guatemalan capitalist development (Davis and Hodson 1982). (They may have done so because they believed in the new myth of the politically passive Indian, unlike Barrios who lived through the Indian rebellions of the nineteenth century.) And in taking general counterrevolutionary measures against all possible forms of peasant resistance, the present Guatemalan state has created a revolutionary situation. The areas targetted for military control have mainly been in the peripheral areas that have traditionally exported labor to plantations. I believe these areas have been targetted for two reasons. First, guerrilla organizations had worked more openly in these areas, possibly under the mistaken impression that more proletarianized Indians would have a greater consciousness of their oppression and thus be more likely to join the revolutionary struggle. And second, the political stances taken in these peripheral areas were new (unlike those of Totonicapan) and in the context of continued need for Indian labor or plantations must have seemed more threatening to the Guatemalan state.

Because the present Guatemalan state has acted against all Indians as a class in recent years, they have created a possibility that never existed before: unifying all Indians as a class in revolutionary struggle. At this point they have unified mainly the Indian communities which they have attacked. The State did not attack communities on the basis of their prior revolutionary consciousness but merely on the suspicion of it as indicated by new political and economic stances. To this point the military governments have neglected Totonicapan in their massive and brutal campaign against Indians. For this reason Totonicapan has played little active role in the present struggle. But this is not for lack of political or class consciousness. As late as 1983 the Indians of Totonicapan united in protest against the state-levied value-added tax--and forced local authorities to lower it. They have also refused to participate in the state-imposed civil patrols except on their own terms. The Indians of Totonicapan have not actively joined the present revolutionary struggle at this point only because they have found their own forms of protest less dangerous and more successful.

When my study ended in 1978, most Indians in western Guatemala perceived only one possible form of political action as a group or class: that of struggling within their communities (i.e., as a community) against an outside structure of domination (which they saw as ladino) by which means they could ameliorate some of the oppression they experienced in their lives. As indicated above, Indians of Guatemala had been quite successful in this form of struggle for centuries. The Indians of Totonicapan had been especially so: they brought to a head the independence movement against the Spanish Crown in 1820 which helped topple the Crown, even though it did not rid them of the state. They gave crucial support to Carrera, which resulted in their ability to resist the Barrios reforms economically. They had always been in the forefront of breaking down imposed barriers to Indian participation in national economic life: they obtained elementary schools long before other Indian communities did; they sent their sons and later their daughters to secondary schools before it was accepted practice; they traveled and traded widely, learning artisanal skills once monopolized by ladinos, buying trucks, accumulating capital, and employing workers before most other Indians did. And they had more political clout within their community than did the vast majority of Indians in the western highlands. So even though their struggle was a defensive one, with no possible chance of becoming a struggle of liberation, it was a struggle in which limited victories were possible--as long as the community exerted strong and undivided pressure against the state authorities.

Nor should we despise this form of struggle. What this struggle created was pressure against internal class formation that would have led to greater rather than lesser division among Indians, a generalized sense of cultural oppression and class resentment that could later be tapped, and communities capable of carrying out another, potentially more liberating, kind of struggle in the present. Most Amerindians lost in this phase of the struggle at some time over the last 400 years, but the Guatemalan Indians of the western highlands, no doubt because of their very parochialism, are now able to put up a resistance to cultural as well as economic and political oppression that is virtually unprecedented in American Indian history. That this particular self-defined peasantry did not

constitute itself as a class for itself, therefore, does not mean that it did not engage in class conflict and class alignments in daily lives. It means only that without a change in objective conditions, a change in subjective perceptions, or a change in political experience--perhaps all three--this peasantry had little chance of uniting in struggle with people living in similar political-economic conditions. Today we witness the result of these changes. It remains to be seen whether this new form of struggle will succeed.

Conclusions: The Conditions of Revolutionary Struggle

Recent years have seen many attempts at general theoretical treatments of peasant revolutions (e.g., Wolf 1969, Scott 1976, Popkin 1979, Paige 1975, Migdal 1974, Scoopol 1979). Essays in a recent work (Weller and Guggenheim 1983), which review those theories in general terms and in relation to particular classes, find fault with virtually all of them. Commodification or involvement in the modern world system does not necessarily lead to peasant revolt (argued by Wolf, Scott, and Migdal). Certainly economic immiseration is a poor predictor of peasant revolutionary potential (which is Scott's contention). Peasants often rebel without security of tangible results (despite Popkin's thesis to the contrary). Sharecroppers and tenants on large commercial enterprises are no more revolutionary than other peasants--if anything proletarianized peasants are less revolutionary than others (which contradicts Paige's review).

Scoopol's thesis emerges more unscathed than others. She contends that peasants are always potential revolutionaries, always dissatisfied with their oppressed conditions of life, but what brings them actively into the political arena is the possibility of winning. This possibility is given to them by the combination of appropriate revolutionary leadership together with weakness in the counterrevolutionary forces. She accounts for the rash of twentieth century peasant revolutions with the observation that traditional agrarian states holding peasants are more vulnerable when trying to build a modern state apparatus because the process of transformation disturbs traditional systems of social control before new ones are yet in place. It is notable that of all the general theories put forward, Scoopol's is the only one to look at the issue of revolution in relational terms--to point out that we must consider not only the condition of peasants but also the condition of their adversaries.⁴¹ In that sense, then, just like Wolf's definition of the peasantry or Thompson's treatment of class formation, it makes an important contribution to our understanding of the issues.

Two problems remain in Scoopol's thesis, however, as well as with the others noted above. All assume an unchanging, backward-looking peasantry. Tactical space for the possibility of revolution is presumed to be given by weakness in the state (sometimes by geography), not to have been socially created by a particular and changing relationship between peasants and state. Most also assume that peasants and the state are in struggle only when dead bodies result from the struggle. In other words, the analysis of struggle is confined to periods of violence; all assume that peasants have lost when they do not take over state-level institutions (which of course is always the case in the strict sense and which

is partly responsible for our view of the "passive" and backward-looking peasantry). In essence, then, none take into account that the conditions of the relationship in revolutionary, potentially revolutionary or briefly revolutionary situations are as much given by ongoing peasant political practices as by the practices of others. Quite clearly we cannot ignore the agency of the nation state or the international arena in which it operates in any analysis of revolution. But we should not ignore the agency of peasants either.

Examination of Guatemala's social and political history shows that Indians ("real" peasants in the colonial period, self-defined peasants later) helped create the stances and adaptations of their adversaries as much as their adversaries created Indian stances and adaptations. Sometimes they did this in violent struggles, sometimes in other forms of struggle. But in both situations, they have actively shaped the social conditions of struggle. During the colonial period they fashioned a number of tools of political conflicts which remain those of today. They defined their political realm as the community and they assisted the process in Guatemala whereby the state rather than regional elites became the adversary. For this reason the conflicts in Guatemala have always had an ethnic rather than strictly class character. After the plantation economy changed the political and economic circumstances of Indians, Indian communities developed new forms of resistance, more economic than political in character. In the process they played an active role in determining the special character of Guatemala's export economy, an economy that remains backward and undeveloped to this day. Indian resistance during the plantation period also helps explain the strong role of the state in Guatemala's economy and the inability of local or regional elites to ameliorate the power of the state in Guatemala. The tactical space for the present revolutionary struggle was not given by geography or by any weakness in the state, but was forged over a long period of time as Indians drove agents of the state out of their homeland and created a viable economy that kept many Indians from falling into the extreme dependency of full proletarianization. Now that a violent revolutionary struggle is underway, we should not be surprised that Indians have become major participants. Nor should we be surprised that Indians have insisted upon their own revolutionary goals, which were not originally those of their non-Indian companions. Just as Indians are now shaping revolutionary goals and strategy, we can expect to see them playing an important role in determining the political and social outcomes of revolution. We must also expect ethnic conflict to remain an important part of Guatemala's history for a long time to come. But as I have argued throughout this essay, the future is not indelibly written in history and the conditions of and for political struggle will change. What we learn from history about the future is only that struggle is a necessary part of the process of change.

REFERENCES

¹Revolutions often point out how faulty our social analyses are, especially our understanding of class. Sidney Mintz (1974) shows that only after the Cuban revolution, when scholars began to discuss where, when, and why it happened, did it begin to dawn on them that the class in Cuba known widely as the "peasantry" did not exist. In the case of Guatemala, unfortunately, too little attention has been paid to actual class relations in rural areas, even as many attempt to theorize the nature of Indian classness and class consciousness (see the various publications on the Indian question by the EGP).

²Guzman and Herbert (1970) provide more explicit detail about the mechanisms of internal exploitation than others, describing in particular ladino monopoly control over resources and exchange in western Guatemala. They pay special attention to the unequal distribution of land and the great disparity between Indian per capita ownership of land as opposed to ladino per capita ownership of land. They show on the basis of the very inadequate 1950 agricultural and land census that Indians do indeed own very small plots of land and that all large holdings are owned by ladinos paying less attention to what Martinez (1971) prefers to emphasize: the existence of many landpoor and landless ladinos in Guatemala as well. Unlike most others, Guzman and Herbert concede that there is some differentiation among Indians, but they contend that it is limited by ladino dominance of the economy and that the basic class relation in Guatemala is that between Indians and ladinos.

³See recent editions of *Polemica*, a journal published in Costa Rica by Guatemalans concerned to document the nature of and reasons behind the revolutionary struggle in Guatemala. The degree of consensus on class relations in Guatemala displayed in this journal is indeed impressive, especially given that a careful examination of the arguments shows little agreement to exist among those rare cases where any kind of class analysis is put forward.

⁴Between 1976 and 1978 I spent approximately two and one-half years carrying out a systematic survey of occupation, production, and class relations in western Guatemala. I included 131 rural hamlets and 12 "urban" areas, mostly Indian, selecting places for study by several criteria, among them representativeness within a pattern of regional diversity (established by my earlier market work) and the existence of prior anthropological work on or near the hamlet (for further details, see Smith 1984a). I collected information on most households within each hamlet (as well as hamlet-level data), concentrating on occupation, income, and time allocation to different forms of work for all working members of the household.

⁵A study of three Indian communities in the Department of San Marcos undertaken by W. Smith (1976) gives independent documentation of this pattern.

REFERENCES

⁶Alain de Janvry (1981) describes this recent literature on rural class relations, paying special attention to Latin America. He also represents the view that the complexity of local class relations results from the process of transformation from precapitalist to capitalist relations of production, criticizing dependency theorists who have considered Latin America to have been capitalist from the sixteenth century. Many more studies and analyses of this kind can be found in recent issues of the Journal of Peasant Studies.

⁷My division of North American and Latin American scholars is somewhat arbitrary but not without foundation. Until very recently, anthropologists (e.g., Redfield 1956, Tax 1953, Adams 1956, M. Nash 1958, Harris 1964, Colby & van den Berghe 1969) held fairly uniform views about class and ethnicity in Guatemala. Most Guatemalan social scientists, many of whom were trained in North America (e.g., Rosales, Goubaud Carrera, etc.) shared these views. Since about 1970, younger anthropologists (e.g., Brintnall 1979, W. Smith 1976, Wasserstrom 1975) began to question the orthodox position on class and ethnicity. This challenge corresponds in time with the reversal in intellectual dominance in the field of Latin American studies--today anthropologists are more influenced than influencing of Guatemalan intellectuals. The intellectual history of this transformation has yet to be written.

⁸That the phenomenon of ethnic change exists in Guatemala is incontrovertible, whether or not one wants to call it ladinoization. Guatemala has had relatively few European migrants in this century, yet a century ago some 20 percent of the population was counted ladino in the national census, whereas today about half the Guatemalan population is so counted (see Colby and van den Berghe 1969:192). One of the difficulties here, however, is that census figures on ethnicity are notoriously unreliable (Early 1973) because what constitutes the ethnic bounday in Guatemala, and in whose eyes, is so problematic. Today many people who believed that it was only a matter of time before all Guatemalan Indians "became" ladinos concede that those apparently "ladinoized" Indians of Guatemala are still Indians and that much less change has taken place in Indian ethnic identity in recent years than anyone thought was likely twenty or thirty years ago (Adams, personal communication).

⁹I prefer to use the analysis provided by Stavenhagen, a Mexican, rather than those of Guatemalans, because it involves fewer issues. Guatemalan intellectuals (all of whom are ladinos) have argued about the meaning of Indian and ladino in Guatemala with vigor. They all accept that class and ethnicity are largely congruent in Guatemala, at least on the Indian side. The problem for them is the "class" consciousness of exploiters who are also exploited. The question is heavily freighted politically, because it has to do with which social group in Guatemala, Indian or ladino, represents the "real" national identity of Guatemala. The best known protagonists in the Guatemalan debate over ethnicity are Martinez (1971) on one side, and Guzman and Herbert (1970), on the other. Neither side questions that ethnicity is a vehicle for exploitation in Guatemala, nor does either hesitate to argue that the real blame for this form of exploitation rests squarely in the lap of international capital. But Martinez

REFERENCES

contends that the Indian is a "fictitious" entity, whereas Guzman and Herbert take the opposite position. Quite obviously the argument is over the nature and future of Guatemalan national identity more than it is over Guatemalan class or ethnic relations. Nonetheless, much in the way of political goals, not to mention political or revolutionary strategy, depend upon the position one takes in this debate.

¹⁰ I will not repeat my critique of this part of the dependency argument, which I have made many times before (Smith 1978, 1984, 1984c).

¹¹ What is notable about both scholarly views of ethnicity is that they are not that different from the ladino folk view, as the following description of ladino beliefs, based on Pansini (1976) illustrates. According to Pansini, those few families (less than 2 percent of the population), that constitute Guatemala's national elite, whose economic base is both agrarian and industrial, consider themselves "white" in both racial terms (lack of Indian "blood") and cultural terms (European rather than Mayan). These people tend to see all other Guatemalans as Indian, some more and some less mixed with European blood, some more and some less attached to Indian culture. Neither whites nor ladinos consider a ladino to be mestizo, or someone of mixed blood, he or she may be entirely Indian in blood. Most assume, however, that ladinos of wealth or power--i.e., people of middle level or higher level position in the bureaucracy, military, and economy--are mestizos. Such people also tend to define everyone of less power and wealth as Indian--either "real" Indians or "redressed" Indians (indios revestidos or Indians in ladino clothing). They also accept that people of higher status are likely to be less "Indian" than they are. The working classes of Guatemala divide about equally into self-defined ladinos (non-Indians) and self-defined Indians. Ladino workers and peasants, some of long ladino (cultural) lineage, make a major distinction between themselves and Indians, and most claim some "white" blood as well as Spanish or European culture. Racial beliefs, then, are basic to Guatemalan beliefs about ethnicity, anthropological views of the matter notwithstanding (cf. Brintnall 1979). That part of the belief system that anthropologists point to as being nonracist--the acceptance by virtually all Guatemalans of the existence and legitimacy of the ladinoization process--is simply part of the folk ideology about the nature of class mobility in Guatemala which bolsters the notion that nonladinoized Indians are socially, culturally, politically, and racially retrograde, and can be blamed for their own exploitation.

¹² I should note that one anthropologist who has worked in Guatemala, Kay Warren (1978), has attempted to deal with the meaning that Indians attach to their ethnicity and subordinate position. Like most symbolic anthropologists, however, she takes the material position of the group she investigates as given and as determined by external circumstances and then derives an interpretation from those givens. Ultimately, then, she provides information supporting Stavenhagen, as she acknowledged herself, which can be used to "explain" the false consciousness of Indians.

¹³ It is arguable whether or not Thompson really takes this position, but he is ambiguous enough that scholars cite him as holding this position.

REFERENCES

¹⁴I should note that my theoretical position has been as much influenced by Bourdieu as by Thompson and other social historians who reinterpret Marx on class and class consciousness.

¹⁵I gathered the data on Totonicapan artisans in the course of my regionwide field study of rural production in western Guatemala in 1976-78. In Totonicapan I carried out a complete occupational survey of all household heads and obtained fuller economic data (on all working members and their sources of income) on approximately 500 Totonicapan households. I also carried out intensive work history interviews with approximately 300 artisanal households in the township. I describe the study and the results more fully in Smith (1984a).

¹⁶I use the past tense in describing Totonicapan here to emphasize that I speak only of the prerevolutionary period, when I carried out fieldwork. Much that I describe here may not have changed, but much has.

¹⁷The name Totonicapan refers to the town (capital of the township and department), the township or municipality (which included the town and the 48 hamlets) and the department (which encompassed an additional seven townships, also predominantly Indian). Unless I specify otherwise, I refer in this paper to the township.

¹⁸Townships, the lowest level administrative unit in Guatemala, tend to be mostly Indian or mostly ladino. In 1950 more than half of the 315 townships in Guatemala were predominantly (more than 80 percent) Indian, most of them located in the western highlands (Whetten 1961). Totonicapan, which was 92.5 percent Indian, was thus not the most "Indian" township in Guatemala, but it was the most Indian township that was also a department capital.

¹⁹The community had more forest resources than most, but only because economic necessity imposed careful conservation of its forest resources early on (Veblen 1975).

²⁰Most land in Guatemala was privately titled in the late nineteenth century, though most Indian communities, including Totonicapan, retained a tradition of communal ownership of forest and grazing lands; most often, communal land of this sort was controlled by the hamlet rather than the township.

²¹This was true of most townships in the Department of Totonicapan and of many on the neighboring department of Quezaltenango (Smith 1975).

²²For a discussion of how Indians wrested control of artisanry from ladinos, see Smith (1975, 1978, 1984b).

²³The 1983 census, the first completed census of Guatemala, showed the township of Totonicapan to have 23 percent of its male population [then 95 percent Indian] engaged in farming, 26 percent engaged in commerce, and 37 percent engaged in some form of artisanal production [mainly weaving and carpentry].

REFERENCES

²⁴Of course, profits were not divided that way, they were controlled by the enterprise head who usually maintained a single budget for both household and enterprise. One could thus argue that enterprise heads often, though not always, exploited their own family members. Since the household is the unit of consumption as well as production, however, this makes little sense in class terms.

²⁵Few Totonicapeños apprenticed in their original household--they explained that it was difficult for a son to learn from his father--but many apprenticed with distant or ritual kin (about 55 percent counting all kinship categories). A large number of youths apprenticed in hamlets other than their own (48 percent). In all cases, the apprentice or his parents had some knowledge of the person from whom they solicited training, but that knowledge might have been fairly casual. Sometimes a formal agreement was made for training but such agreements were not legally binding, even by the informal standards that operated in Indian communities. Many apprentices gave up after a short period or switched over to another trainer or branch of production.

²⁶A very few hamlets in Totonicapan hired agricultural labor from neighboring townships, mainly because insufficient agricultural labor existed in Totonicapan. Agricultural workers worked on a day basis, however, and maintained themselves apart from the household that employed them, unlike artisanal workers, who usually ate and often slept in the households of their employers.

²⁷Sol Tax (1952), who did fieldwork in a highland Indian community in the 1930s, pointed out this characteristic of Guatemalan Indians long ago, as did Robert Redfield (1956).

²⁸The local Indians who used the park frequently for resting, for meeting friends and family, and for their children's recreation while marketing, were furious and clamored for the mayor's resignation. Ultimately, he did resign, to be replaced by another ladino mayor.

²⁹June Nash (1970) pointed out some time ago, that ladinoized Indians (in neighboring Chiapas, Mexico) typically held the marginal class identity of landless laborers, lived at the margins of ladino society and had no political representation. On these grounds she explains the lack of "payoff" to ladinoization for most Indians.

³⁰The cargo system, established in the colonial period, involved an annual rotation of quasi-official political and religious offices in a community, these offices rarely recognized by the central government. Most anthropologists who have worked in Guatemala (e.g., Wagley 1957, W. Smith 1976, Warren 1978, Brintnall 1979) agree with Eric Wolf (1959) that the system was one that granted local power mainly to elderly and traditional Indians. The traditional cargo system disintegrated in most Indian townships of Guatemala after 1944, when Guatemalan townships could for the first time elect their own officials.

REFERENCES

³¹This was not an unusual sequence of events in Western Guatemala, though in most cases hamlets petitioning for township status were trying to reconstitute a preexisting township entity.

³²That this is true throws into question Kay Warren's (1978) interpretation of how Guatemalan Indians construct their self-perception of identity.

³³Elsewhere I have developed these arguments in social-institutional terms [Smith 1984b] and in economic terms [Smith 1984c]. Here I will try to sketch the argument in political terms. As before, I will neglect the relations between national-level actors in Guatemala and international forces, not because I think they are unimportant but because I think we already know about that and need to take into account how local relations, neglected in most accounts, affected political outcomes.

³⁴The weak version of this thesis will not surprise many students of Indian Latin America, who have long emphasized the syncretic nature of colonial institutions. But I am arguing more than that the political institutions of the township combined Spanish and Indian political institutions; I see the township as a wholly novel institution forged in struggle and shaping the terms of struggle in Indian Latin America. For this reason, too, I wish to emphasize the distinctive features of Indian townships in Guatemala. Political and economic circumstances in Guatemala were such that township institutions were quite different from those that developed in Mexico and Peru.

³⁵It is interesting to note that the model of the closed corporate community provided by Wolf (1957, 1959), based mainly on the Mexican experience, has become so entrenched in Latin American historiography, that Guatemalan scholars have virtually invented nonexistent colonial haciendas for western Guatemala. Spanish settlers took possession of land in Guatemala during the colonial period, to be sure, but most of the land they took existed either in the immediate vicinity of Guatemala City or in the lucrative indigo-producing areas of eastern Guatemala and El Salvador. The Church had large holdings in western Guatemala, mostly located in the southern lowlands where a "real" plantation economy was later established, on which they produced a small amount of sugar. And labor was taken from the western highlands for various of these enterprises, first through slavery, later through the mandamiento system (temporary forced or slave labor); but the Indian economy of the western highlands did not adapt itself to the continuous labor demands of local haciendas.

³⁶The Totonicapan revolt has now been described by several investigators (Contreras 1952, Falla 1971, Martinez 1973, Carmack 1979, Bricker 1981) who have independently examined the archived sources. The first written account may be that of Carranza (1983), a local chronicler of Totonicapan. I base this brief account on all of these sources.

REFERENCES

³⁷ Some, in fact, consider this nineteenth-century struggle a classic peasant "revolution" (see Ingersoll 1972, Woodward 1976). And Contreras (1952) interprets the Totonicapan rebellion as the first fight for national independence. I think the situation was more complicated than either of these accounts suggest.

³⁸ Notably, Carrera's detractor always called him "the Indian." And Carrera's supporters spent much time compiling genealogies trying to prove that he was not "very" Indian.

³⁹ Standard histories of this period depict Carrera as a tool of conservative interest, especially of the Church. The more recent interpretation of his governance, however, recognizes that Carrera represented peasant and Indian interests more than those of any other group. Part of the reinterpretation is based on the recognition that Indians did not want the national citizenship offered by the liberal faction, a ploy that would undermine their special economic and political status in the country.

⁴⁰ A major item on the curriculum was the history of Guatemala written by Martinez Pelaez (1971), who taught them that Indian culture was spurious and its retention a sign of false consciousness.

⁴¹ I should note that Scocpol acknowledges the influence of Barrington Moore (1966) and Wolf (1969) on her thesis. It may not be accidental that Moore and Wolf try less to develop a general thesis than to account for some particular cases.