DEBT SERVITUDE IN RURAL GUATEMALA, 1876-1936*

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Recent revisionist studies have called into question the role and importance in turn-of-the-century Latin America of debt servitude, long a staple horror of travelers' accounts, novels, and histories. Of the once fearsome "debt slavery" we are now told "most of the new research is concerted in its rejection of debt as a controlling feature of labor."[1] Whatever the evidence from other areas, and most of the new work has focused on Peru and north and central Mexico, this is plainly not true for Mesoamerica. Debt peonage flourished in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Chiapas, Yucatan and Guatemala,[2] a consequence of rapidly expanding demand for raw materials in the industrial North Atlantic states.[3] For the planters of Guatemala, debt servitude proved a stable and effective means to mobilize large numbers of workers at relatively low cost. The state cooperated actively with landowners to force the majority of the indigenous rural population into one of the most stringent and enduring systems of legal debt servitude in modern Latin America. Far from passive under this pressure, the Indians put up a stiff and often effective resistance which severely limited the extent to which employers and the state could exploit them. This study, based in large part on the testimony of the workers themselves, whose views are notably absent from most of the revisionist efforts, will examine the genesis, operation and eventual demise[4] of indebted labor on the coffee fincas (estates) of western Guatemala.

Guatemala, with the other Spanish American republics, inherited from Spain a variety of measures for binding and coercing labor. Initially these were of little importance as the country lacked any crop or industry requiring large numbers of workers. Foreign competition crippled indigo in the last years of the colony, and cochineal, though it had expanded beyond simple family production by the 1840s, continued to have very modest land and labor requirements; as late as 1849 the total area under production for the red dye was estimated at not more than thirty four caballerias (one caballería = approximately 111 acres).[5] When commercial availability of snythetic substitutes in the late 1850s undercut the market for natural dyestuffs, many Guatemalan planters followed the example of their Costa Rican counterparts and entered coffee production. By 1871 coffee amounted to one half of the value of Guatemala's exports. In that year a Liberal revolution, led by coffee planters from the western departments frustrated by the central government's failure to provide them needed infrastructure and services, toppled the Conservative "Dictatorship of Thirty Years" and launched Guatemala's Liberal Reforma. Backed by the full weight of the state, production and exports boomed: coffee exports increased from 14,111,300 pounds during 1871-74 to 32,431,200 pounds during 1880-84; by the 1895-99 period, coffee exports totalled over 76 million pounds.[6]

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Nevertheless, problems remained. A scarcity of capital plagued growers, as did inadequate roads and port facilities. Equally vexing were chronic labor shortages. As the area under cultivation grew, finqueros (landowners) complained unceasingly of a lack of available workers.[7] The Liberal state, committed to free enterprise but not laissez-faire, responded by intervening in the labor supply to help generate adequate numbers of workers at low cost and under conditions favorable to the export producers.

The state and private entrepreneurs periodically floated schemes to import "white" immigrants or Asian contract labor, but the obvious (and the only immediately available) source of large numbers of agricultural workers for Guatemala was the rural Indian population. A dense concentration of Indians lived in the western highlands, adjacent to the main coffee growing areas of the piedmont, or boca costa.[8] Initially, they showed little enthusiasm for work on the fincas. To the planters this was evidence of the inditos' natural laziness, a result of racial inferiority and a lack of civilized needs.

> The indian is a pariah, stretched out in his hammock and drunk on chica, his natural beverage. His house is a pig sty, with a ragged wife and six or more naked children beneath a ceiling grimy with the smoke of a fire which burns night and day in the middle of the floor. . .Yet, in this state the Indian is happy and desires nothing more.[9]

The Indian viewed the matter somewhat differently. In the early years of the coffee boom most still had very limited cash requirements.[10] For those who did not need or want additional money income, labor on a coffee plantation was not an attractive option. Past experience provided a well-justified fear of the health hazards of the cost. More fundamentally, the Indian remained economically and culturally tightly integrated into his highland community, bound by the demands of subsistence agriculture and by social and ritual commitments. A few of these communities already had begun to suffer the effect of a growing population on an economic base weakened by land loss and soil erosion,[11] but most continued to eke out a relatively independent existence by combining subsistence agriculture with petty commodity production and small-scale commerce.

The problem for the state and for the planters was how to extract needed labor from the Indian population without in the process destroying the existing highland socio-economic formation. To do the latter would be self-defeating, as coffee required large amounts of labor for only a few months a year during the harvest. In order to be certain that a sufficient number of workers would be available when needed, however, the planters either had to provide them subsistence year round--essentially the system in Cuba before 1960--or make certain that enough of the highland economic and social structures survived intact to support the laborer when not needed on the fincas.[12] The possibility of an on-going supply of extremely cheap labor for the export producers existed if conditions could be created whereby the "natural economy"[13] of the highlands continued to reproduce itself while at the same time making workers available to the plantations. The fact that in Guatemala the peak period of demand for labor for coffee coincided roughly with the slack season in highland corn cultivation facilitated the extraction of

temporary workers. Under such a system, the export economy paid, and that at a low price, only for labor it actually used and not for off-season maintenance or for the reproduction and training of new workers; the cost of such "indirect wages" and "social security functions"[14] was shifted to the highland economy. Whether work in the two sectors resulted in a net gain for the individual or his community depended on the balance of money earned at the fincas against the costs to his health and to the economic, social and ritual condition of his family and village.

Rural Guatemalan communities did not suffer the sweeping land confiscations characteristic of some late nineteenth century Liberal regimes.[15] There existed much lightly used or unoccupied land available for coffee cultivation, and, as well, the ability of the highland villages to continue to function as labor reserves depended on access to agricultural land. Jefes políticos (departmental governors) were enjoined by law to make certain that the municipalities in their jurisdictions had sufficient ejidos (common lands) for their needs "depending on the size of the village;" not uncommonly the state intervened directly to protect or enlarge community land.[16] More generally, though, Liberal policy encouraged private property at the expense of communal possession because "the Indians take little advantage of their land and are accustomed to leave the great part of it uncultivated."[17] Laws, for example, made it easy for renters of municipal land to buy this and encouraged ladinos (individuals of European or Guatemalan national culture) and "progressive" Indians to title terrenos baldios (public land). Sometimes declared baldios were areas which Indian villages might have claimed and even worked for hundreds of years but which now fell outside the area the state deemed necessary or desirable for the community or to which the village could not produce a valid title. Outsiders moved in, acquiring land in the piedmont or interior valleys which highland residents traditionally had made use of to supplement their "cold" country ejidos. This severely reduced the community's subsistence base.[18] In some cases large coffee operations on the coast bought or otherwise gained control of land in the highland communities themselves. These areas, usually referred to as fincas de mozos, the new owners rented out in small plots to the original inhabitants or to in-migrants in return for seasonal labor on the lowland plantations. The fincas Helvetia and El Peru, for example, held this type of estate in the municipality of San Juan Ixcoy, Huehuetenango.[19] Communities which had survivied the colonial and early national periods with only limited losses found their situation increasingly constrained in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Caught in a vise of rising population[20] and declining resources,[21] some managed to shift to cottage industries and petty trade, but most had to search elsewhere for additional income and turned, as intended, to finca labor.

To mobilize the rural population for labor on the plantations, the Liberals turned to extra-economic coercion, reviving and extending systems of forced wage labor neglected during decades of economic somnolence. In November, 1876 President Justo Rufino Barrios directed the jefes políticos to grant drafts of workers to export agriculturalists as needed.

> If the government were to leave the agriculturalists to their own resources and without the most effective possible cooperation of the government, their efforts to develop enterprises would fail due to the negligence and propensity to deception of the Indians.[22]

This system had its origins in colonial repartimientos.[23] With the decadence of commercial agriculture in the early nineteenth century, however, and amid the confusion and violence of the first decades of independence there had been little demand for large numbers of laborers, and the drafts, by that period more generally called mandamientos, fell into disuse. Abolished in 1812 and again in 1820 by liberal Spanish reformers, forced wage labor was revived by Guatemala's Liberals in 1829 and then done away with in 1837 in response to rising popular resistance to the regime. The Conservatives reinstated mandamientos during the 1840s, but before mid-century they found only very occasional use.[24] Growers of the only major cash crop, cochineal, recruited the small number of workers they needed from among local ladinos and Indians with wage advances and casual debt servitude. This situation began to change rapidly, with the expansion of coffee production in the 1850s and 1860s.

A mandamiento in late nineteenth century Guatemala began with a "superior order." The president, a minister, or a jefe notified municipal authorities that they were required to supply a given number of laborers at a set wage and for a specified amount of time, usually fifteen or thirty days depending on travel conditions, to a certain job or finca. With accelerating labor demands from the coffee sector, villages, particularly those unfortunate enough to be near the main communication routes between the highlands and the boca costa, found themselves subjected to repeated orders at decreasing intervals. This disrupted the local economy and community life; individuals often returned from one mandamiento exhausted and sick with fever to find another order waiting, leaving them no time for their milpas (subsistence plots).[25] Barrios also updated the vagrancy law, providing fines or terms of imprisonment for those without a useful occupation.[26] In terms of actually generating large numbers of workers for export agriculture, however, the chief utility of mandamientos and vagrancy statutes lay in their role as instruments of coercion, as inducements to the rural population to contract individual debt-labor obligations. In contrast to what some investigators have found for other areas of Latin America, debt servitude in Liberal Guatemala was not a casual or informal affair but a fully legal system mandated, regulated, and enforced by the state for the creation and manipulation of a rural labor force. Moreover, the laws went beyond simply sanctioning peonage arrangements to put direct pressure on the indigenous population to force its members into work contracts on "fincas of coffee, sugar cane, cacao and large-scale banana plantations."[27] Only such contracts gave protection from mandamiento drafts and harassment under the vagrancy law. The state took upon itself much of the cost and difficulties of converting highland Indians into seasonal wage laborers, and debt servitude quickly emerged as the principal means of recruitment and control of this work force.

Though modified and interpreted by dozens of circulars and solutions, two general laws regulated indebted labor in Guatemala between 1877 and 1934. In April, 1877, President Barrios issued Decree 177, the nation's first comprehensive rural labor code.[28] This decree detailed the duties, rights, and responsibilities of the patron (employer), the colono (resident worker), and the temporalista or jornalero (temporary or day laborer). It guaranteed the enforceability of debt contracts for personal labor, and articles 31-37 confirmed and amplified the mandamiento circular of the previous year. The law provided for unindebted as well as bound temporalistas, but as demand for labor and, hence, mandamientos grew, the pressure on individuals not already in debt mounted to intolerable levels,

prompting most to seek refuge in the more predictable exactions of private debt contracts. Government requirements for road construction labor and for service in the military, from which only the patron had the ready cash to buy exemptions, reinforced the effects of mandamientos. Under such conditions, there was little inducement to avoid debt.

Drawing on a decade and a half of experience, the government in 1893-94 rewrote the law for rural workers. President Jose Maria Reyna Barrios, in the fall of 1893, abolished mandamientos "to emancipate the Indian from his present condition."[29] He followed this in May, 1894, with Decree 243, a new general agricultural labor law which, in any event, made mandamientos superfluous to forcing Indians into debt.[30] Article 32 of the law gave them a clear choice:

> Article 32[31]- Exempted from military service and zapadores are:
> 1. Temporary workers older than eighteen who owe more than thirty pesos debt, can prove this with a contract, and are regularly working this obligation off on coffee fincas, sugarcane, cacao, and large-scale banana plantations.
> 2. Colonos of the above age who owe more than fifteen pesos and are complying with their contracts.
> 3. Indians who pay an exemption of fifteen pesos a year.
> 4. Indians who have sufficient property to pay real estate taxes.
> 5. Indians who know how to read and write and are abandoning their traditional dress.
> 6. Indians who can show a contract proving that they are committed to work at least three months a year on a coffee finca, sugarcane, cacao, or a large-scale banana plantation.

When the Legislative Assembly debated this article, planter representatives sought to raise the price an individual had to pay to be exempted and reduce the amount of debt needed to qualify under the first two subsections. Failing this in the face of the "moral opposition"[32] of a few of the deputies, they secured much the same result, at least in terms of debts, by having a sixth option added to the original five. The government did away with the zapadores in 1883 but the previous year it surreptitiously had reintroduced mandamientos.[33] Although with the collapse of the dictatorship of Manuel Estrada Cabrera in 1920 these forced labor drafts finally ended, the political turmoil of the 1920s meant that military recruiting--"the hunting of men"[34]--increased, causing problems for mozos and their employers alike. From the 1870s to the early 1930s Guatemala's Indian population faced the choices of debt servitude to an export finca, mandamientos, military service, or flight. A not inconsiderable number, though clearly fewer than worried planters imagined, chose the latter, becoming itinerant merchants or escaping across the border into Chiapas or Belize. Most, however, remained unwilling to make such a radical break with their family and community and instead sought out contracts as temporalistas.

Labor contractors, called habilitadores because of the habilitación[35] (cash advance) they gave, worked the highland villages principally in July-August, when corn was scarce and expensive, and during

the fiestas associated with the local saint's day. Employers, but not mozos, distinguished two kinds of habilitadores. The habilitador-agent represented one or a group of fincas, advancing the owners' money to indebt workers and signing them to contracts.[36] He then rounded these individuals up and sent them off to the coast as needed for seasonal labor. An agent's profit came from a monthly salary as well as commissions owners paid on each jornal (day's labor) completed by one of his recruits. If, however, one of these ran away or failed to do his assigned tasks, the habilitador had to capture and return him, find a substitute or compensate the finquero for the loss. In competition with the habilitador-agent, especially after the turn of the century, was the much reviled "'tratista" (from contratista = contractor) who used his own money, or sometimes that of an unsuspecting owner, to speculate in labor.[37] The 'tratista got the Indian into debt with loans or credit at his store, then forced or deceived him into signing a work contract and sold this to the highest bidder. While a 'tratista, in the 1920s for example, might charge the landowner $25 or $30 pesos a jornal, the mozo would be lucky to have $6 or $8 credited against what he owed. If the system exploited both laborers and employers, the former had no power to alter it and the latter, with ripe fruit falling from the trees, had no time to argue.

To carry on the day to day work of the finca, owners also sought to recruit, usually from among temporalistas they knew, permanent resident workers, called colonos or rancheros depending upon the area. Each colono family received a plot of land for subsistence--cash cropping was normally forbidden--as well as wages for days worked and, depending on local custom, other benefits such as rations, or access to medical care or a school.[38] The resident worker signed on for a maximum of four years but could not leave the plantation even at the end of this period if he remained in debt. In fact, once fixed on the finca few colonos managed to escape unless expelled by the patron or administrator. While the owners of small estates without land to spare for workers sometimes complained that the larger plantations "monopolized" labor, few employers were able to secure control of the number of permanent laborers they felt they needed.[39] This was because the status of colono was not attractive to most highland Indians: "They have kept us as slaves in a manner most miserable."[40] To live full-time on an estate severely curtailed participation in the life of their traditional communities and cultures and left the Indians absolutely dependent on the whim of the owner who could deprive them not only of paid employment but of subsistence as well. If a few rancheros found upward mobility into supervisory or semi-skilled jobs on the plantations, most remained simple field mozos paid and treated no better than seasonal workers. Unless an individual had lost all access to land in or near his highland community, and this was rare before at least the 1930s, and could not develop alternate means of livelihood in artisan handicrafts or trade, he had little incentive to become a colono. Indeed, forcible conversion from temporary worker to colono was a form of punishment for recalcitrant workers.[41]

The law required that each worker have a contract and a libreta (pay book) which recorded his obligations and the current balance of his debt. These were supposed to protect both parties from fraud, but as most Indians were illiterate-- "we keep our books in our heads"[42]--and many had an imperfect command of Spanish, such safeguards were not always effective. For this reason, the law also provided that contracts should be ratified orally, with a translator if necessary, before a judge or

justice of the peace, but many such officials remained notoriously open to bribes or coercion,[43] and others passed their days too drunk even to follow the proceedings. A temporalista contract normally obligated a mozo to go to the finca on a specified date, or when called, and to work until he paid off what he owed or until the administrator gave him written permission to leave. An employer thus could keep a laborer on indefinitely by neglecting to balance his accounts or by refusing him a licencia (ticket of leave). Workers who thought that they had paid out sometimes got back their libretas with money and a new debt noted; less subtle owners did not bother with the money.[44] If an individual failed to appear when due or allowed his debt to grow too large, he might, under many contracts, find his status changed from seasonal worker to colono and be forced to remain on the estate.

Habilitadores and employers competed ferociously among themselves for labor. Although newspapers commonly took the position that Guatemala had plenty of workers and that the real problems were poor organization and inefficient use of labor,[45] owners and agents saw recruitment as a "zero sum game"[46] and devoted much energy, time and money to seducing away their neighbors' mozos. Often, they simply advanced money to workers already in debt to another patron.[47] While, in theory, to sign a contract a laborer had to exhibit the cancelled account and libreta from his last employer, he could always claim never to have worked before on a finca or to have lost his documents. Rarely was an employer too inquisitive. If called to account, the administrator or habilitador alleged deception by the worker, while the Indian protested that he had been too drunk at the time to be held responsible.[48] So long as the various patrones' demands for labor came at different times, multiple obligations did not necessarily lead to difficulties. If a conflict did arise which could not be settled amicably, the first or original employer had precedence and the subsequent ones lost what they had advanced. The mozo went to jail and then back to the original finca to work off what he owed.[49] To evade the law and their competitors, finqueros hid fugitive workers in remote areas of the estate, sent them to other properties or provided them with false documents in new names.[50] Indians for their part, sometimes ran up debts with as many as half a dozen fincas and then fled to other areas of the country or across the border.[51] The result of all this was endemic guerrilla warfare in the countryside over the "ownership" of workers. The records of the jefes politicos abound with complaints, accusations, and soon-to-be-broken agreements;[52] in an extreme example of this sort of conflict, the fincas California and El Ferrol disputed for almost a decade priority in contracting a hundred temporalistas from Aguacatan.[53] Owners constantly reproached their agents for failing to protect the finca's interests: "You have let them take away many workers to which La Candelaria has a right and allowed them to deceive the workers as well as the employers . . .You ought to defend them at all cost and not let them be bothered."[54] Yet, because each finquero expected to gain at the expense of his neighbors, they rejected serious measures to put an end to illegal practices "as the French machine guns of the Marne repelled the tenacious Germans."[55]

In the scramble for labor, contractors and employers bought and sold workers. This took the form either of the sale of jornales by freelance 'tratistas already noted, essentially the rental of workers, or the more definitive transfer from one owner to another of the rights to the debt and, therefore, the labor, of one or a group of mozos. While workers thought of themselves as belonging to a given estate, in fact they owed

labor to whomever owned their debt, as the colonos of Barcena found out when the patron shifted them to Los Cerritos, an "extraordinarily fatal place" where many soon fell ill.[56] Because of the demand for labor, debts changed hands at premiums of two or three times face value, and even proven troublemakers could find fincas ready to bid for them.[57] Opportunities sometimes arose to purchase debts when a finca was forced out of business, as, for example, after the 1902 eruption of the volcano Santa Maria.[58] Decree 657 issued in 1906 officially put an end to this "sale and exchange"[59] of workers, but the trade went on in only slightly more subtle forms.[59] The transfer of debts and jornales continued to be legal if the mozos involved agreed, and, given the illiteracy of most rural workers, this was easy to arrange. As well, debts constituted part of the assets of a working plantation and passed to the new owner when the property was sold.

Local government officials played contradictory roles in traffic in labor. Owners regularly complained that village officials sided with the Indians in disputes, shielding them from the legitimate demands of the habilitadores and employers.[60] Officials were fined and even jailed for failing to turn over members of the community. At the same time, there is much evidence that local authorities themselves commonly became deeply, and illegally, involved in labor contracting, either directly or through close relatives.[61] Others extorted bribes from finca agents to help round up reluctant or fugitive mozos. Local officials sold exemptions from mandamiento drafts and road duty, and local military commanders rounded up men purportedly for military service or zapadores but, in fact, to extort money for their freedom; one local commandant reportedly adopted this course whenever his mounting debts threatened to get out of control![62] Jefes políticos engaged in similar activities, albeit on a grander scale and usually in connection with the sale of mandamiento orders.[63]

The real income of agricultural workers in this period is difficult to calculate accurately. Part of it they received, or were supposed to receive, in money. Labor contracts normally stipulated either a specified or a "customary" wage per day or tarea (task). This varied widely depending on the finca, on when the worker originally had been contracted, and on what he did.[64] In general, the gold value of agricultural wages declined from the 1870s until the second decade of the twentieth century, when the earthquakes of 1917-18 and the threatened breakdown of social control following the collapse of Manuel Estrada Cabrera's government temporarily pushed up the price of labor; wages stabilized during the 1920s and then declined again in the early years of the Depression.[65] Converted into real terms, wages showed a similar tendency to decline with only modest recovery in the late teens and early 1920s. Expressed in terms of corn at current prices, the daily wage was about 7.5 lbs in the 1870s and 1880s, rose to 10 lbs. in the 1890s, then plunged to 2.5-4.5 lbs. during 1900-1917. By 1921 it had risen slightly, to 5.5 lbs.[66] Money wages remained, in any event, largely nominal, as mozos rarely saw them. Instead, from time to time they received habilitaciónes. By custom, if not law, and regardless of what he might already owe, a worker expected to be given money each time he left his community for the coast and before important local holidays. Such habilitaciones had less to do with an individual's putative wage or debt than with what the competition was offering. To be refused a generous payment at the time of the village fiesta titular or for a family emergency almost guaranteed that the Indian would seek a new patron.

Administrators systematically manipulated workers' accounts. Black humor of the time had it that the patron balanced the mozo's libreta in the following manner: "Ten pesos I'm giving you, ten pesos I'm writing in your book and ten pesos you owe makes a total debt of thirty pesos." If such slight of tongue did not often deceive the Indian, there usually was little he could do. As a result, however, debts quickly became almost entirely artificial. While employers complained that debt peonage forced them to invest huge sums of money in their work force,[68] money for which they had to pay the banks 12 to 18 percent interest, they failed to point out as well that by routinely undercounting the jornales credited against what the laborer owed, they made certain that he returned to the finca many times the value of his debt without being able to free himself of it. This more than compensated for any short-term advantage workers might gain through multiple habilitaciónes. Turning debts into accounting fiction also gave managers flexibility to deal with changing conditions. When demand for labor was high and supply short, as, for example in the early 1900s, owners paid some money or goods but refused to reduce what the workers owed.[69] With the onset of the Great Depression, on the other hand, many fincas would only credit debts, paying no cash wages and little habilitacion.[70] On those rare occasions when an individual ended the season with a balance due him and could prove it with his tarea card or daily tokens, he nevertheless was unlikely to be paid. As one habilitador put it: "If it happens that there is something owing the mozo, I never pay it in cash."[71] The best a worker could hope for, and this might require the intervention of the jefe político, was a note certifying him free of debt.

In addition to irregular habilitaciónes or wages in cash, a worker while on the finca received free, or sometimes might purchase at special low prices, corn and other foodstuffs. This could be an important benefit in an economy in which food costs typically fluctuated sharply during the year and between different areas of the country.[72] Dependent for corn on undercapitalized and increasingly labor-starved small producers, consumers faced unpredictable shifts in the market from year to year.[73] Prices aside, the amount and quality of food and the conditions under which the workers received it often were quite different even on neighboring estates. When the owner provided rations at no cost, a more or less standard amount was two pounds of corn a day for a male laborer and less for women and children, or twenty-five pounds a week for a family if all the members worked.[74] If the patron sold the workers corn, his price could vary from a nominal few cents a pound to the current market cost. Few of Guatemala's indebted laborers did as well as the Mexican agricultural workers studied by Harry Cross.[75] Two other points of comparison with Mexico are worth noting: colonos normally did not receive more or better food than temporalistas, and the company store had little role in Guatemala either as a source of profit for finca owners or as an instrument of control. The ready availability of local markets and traveling merchants, together with the fact that temporary workers spent only a few months a year in the lowlands, undercut any finca store monopoly. Both colonos and temporalistas also enjoyed sources of subsistence independent of wages and rations. Resident workers had their small pieces of land on which to raise food; seasonal workers, of course, spent much of the year and grew most of their food in the highlands. The total income of a family or community depended on the sum of cash earned in wages and habilitaciónes, rations, the product of subsistence agriculture, and, in some cases, profits from petty industry or trading,

both themselves increasingly dependent on the expanded markets available because of money from the fincas.

Not surprisingly, workers and employers frequently came into conflict over conditions, wages and contracts. These disputes fell to the jefe político to resolve.[76] The commonest cause of disagreement was whether a mozo had been fairly credited for the work he had, or claimed to have, done. This almost always was the result of the owner's purposeful confusion of "day" and "task." In theory, and in most contracts, a day and a task were taken to entail approximately the same amount of labor and were rewarded as such. Workers complained, however, that administrators regularly set unfair tareas, so that to earn a "day's" wage they might have to labor for two or three days.[77] The best known example of this was the use of an oversized box to measure the task for the coffee harvest, a practice the Indians fought by stuffing rocks and twigs into their pick. Variations in the amount of land assigned for a tarea of cleaning and weeding led to similar difficulties: "He measures the tasks with his arms and he is a very large man!"[78]

Health conditions on the lowland estates were a constant and serious concern of the seasonal workers. Many, as one lamented, "gave the flower of their youth"[79] only to end up crippled or blind and still in debt. For those accustomed to the highlands, the heat, humidity and insects of the coast caused acute discomfort. Worse, these conditions, together with frequent rains and the inadequate shelter provided temporary workers, aggravated problems caused by intestinal parasites and the upper respiratory infections common among the rural population. Even in the cooler areas of the coffee piedmont, malaria, "river blindness" and dysentery were endemic; small pox remained a constant horror.[80] Poor quality or contaminated food and water contributed to health problems. Administrators sometimes cut rations as punishment for real or imagined malingering and told complaining mozos "to eat the excrement of [their] own bodies."[81]

When Guatemala's adherence to the Washington Convention of 1923 threatened to curtail the use of corporal punishment for rural workers, habilitadores, owners, and administrators warned that this would make it impossible for them to control the agricultural labor force.[82] Labor contractors as a matter of course imprisoned mozos, threatened to burn their crops and houses, and delivered them to the fincas bound and with a military guard, for which the unfortunate workers had to pay.[83] Administrators and the fincas' auxillary officials beat recalcitrant or complaining workers, put them in stocks for days at a time or threw them into the finca jail.[84] However, while sadism and gratuitous brutality were not unheard of, neither were they the stuff of everyday life on the coffee plantations. Racism cast the Indian as an inferior being possessed of different sensibilities and requiring different treatment from that given to "civilized" individuals, but systematic cruelty "made no economic sense"[85] and, above all, fincas existed to show a profit. For every psychotic administrator who chained mozos in an underground dungeon or shot them randomly in a drunken fury, there were dozens who used the finca lock-up simply as a place to hold overnight a drunken worker caught beating his wife "too much."[86] It was a harsh but not remarkably vicious system and not of the same quality as the lumber camps operating on the Chiapas-Guatemala border[87] or the turpentine camps in the southern United States in this period. The ready possibility of escape, either across the border or merely to the next finca, put limits on the extent to which the workers had to tolerate extraordinary abuse.

Women and children had special problems. While women occasionally contracted on their own or with their minor children to work the harvest or to sort coffee,[88] most became involved in wage labor because of the debts of their husbands or fathers. Each worker, according to the law, was to have his or her own contract, but by custom a man's family came to be included in his libreta. If for some reason the man failed to fulfill his obligations, the habilitador sought to force the wife or children, or, for that matter, any relative on whom he could get his hands, to work off what was owed.[89] Alternatively, he might jail the family to put pressure on the man.[90] Most Indians understood that such actions were illegal, but they had little recourse if local authorities cooperated with the habilitadores. While the law specifically ruled out the inheritance of debts for personal labor, a wife or child might have no choice but take up the debt of a male relative. Workers guaranteed labor contracts with their personal possessions, land if they had it, leaving their heirs the alternatives of losing this meager inheritance or agreeing to attempt to work off the debt.[91] Husbands accepted money for the promised future labor of their wives, and fathers took advances in the name of minor children; the first the unfortunate wife or child might know of this was when the caporal arrived at the door to take them to the finca.[92] Women suffered the particular problem of sexual harassment. Administrators, owners and labor recruiters used promises and threats in attempts to secure sexual favors. One fugitive caporal sought for theft, a newspaper noted in passing, was a notorious seducer of female labor.[93] Apparently so long as he restricted himself to such activities his employer was not unduly concerned. Women in other instances fought off would-be Lotharios, or outraged fathers, brothers, and husbands killed them.[94]

If the power of the state made it impossible for Indians to avoid in any systematic way going to the fincas, they nevertheless recognized the dependence of the coffee economy on their labor and the possibility, therefore, of bargaining. Centuries of European domination had given Guatemala's indigenous population a sophisticated awareness of how structures of exploitation operated. The result was a low-level but persistent struggle over not so much the existence of forced wage labor and debt servitude, which the Indians largely accepted as unfair but inevitable, but the day to day operation of the system. It followed that complaints and demands of the workers tended to be very concrete, e.g., higher wages and more liberal habilitaciónes, smaller tareas, removal of a particularly abusive supervisor or permission to leave the finca. Because the state used force to repress anything that even vaguely resembled a strike--"give them a month in prison at hard labor"[95]--rural workers had to develop other tactics for pressuring owners. One was the petition. With the help of the local quisache (a lawyer without a degree), they addressed lengthy and repeated appeals to local officials, to the jefe político, to various government ministries and to the president. Delegations spent months in Guatemala City pressing their claim. If the petition failed to achieve the desired result, or, as frequently happened, the administrator sought to punish them for complaining, the next step was likely to be flight. This took several forms. Truly desperate or amibitious individuals crossed into Mexico or Belize seeking not only relief from past debts or abuses, but also, as Guatemala's currency collapsed in the first decades of the twentieth century, wages in silver.[96] More commonly, workers individually or in groups fled the finca to return to their home community. Because, of course, this would be the first place the habilitador looked, such a move clearly was meant less as

a genuine attempt at escape than as the opening gambit in a bargaining process, understood as such by all parties involved. The mozos fugos, once back in their community, renewed appeals to the jefe and the president, detailing again and, if possible, in yet more lurid detail, their sufferings and begging for protection. Jefes políticos sought where possible to resolve these conflicts by conciliation, pressing compromise on both the workers and the employer. Experience showed this to be much more effective than unadorned threats or force. The usual outcome of these rather ritualized pieces was the concession to the complainants of a few cents wage increase or a small reduction in tareas together with an order that without fail they return to the finca to fulfill their obligations.

The most feared, if least common, response of the Indians to the pressures of debt servitude was violence. Guatemala's rural workers faced a situation not unlike that of black slaves in the antebellum southern United States in which, with institutionalized violence firmly in the hands of the state, open defiance or rebellion simply invited destruction. When violence did surface, its most common form, and that least threatening to the system, was a spontaneous reaction to the abuses of an immediate supervisor. When the German manager of finca Luarca reproached a work gang for pulling down and sometimes breaking the branches of coffee bushes instead of using the ladders provided, they "conspired in their barbarous dialect" and took up their machetes and chased him out of the field.[97] Newspapers during the 1920s worried about "Bolchevikismo rural" and reported "uprisings" on south coast estates, but these rarely amounted to more than a meeting or two and the familiar list of grievances.[98] In the highland villages, labor violence almost always resulted from habilitadores attempting to force resisting workers down to the fincas. This typically involved no more than a few threats or a scuffle, but it could turn bloody: on the night of July 17, 1898, the Indian inhabitants of San Juan Ixcoy murdered the local habilitador of Helvetia and then, in an effort to hide their crime, slaughtered all but one of the remaining thirty odd ladinos in town.[99] More commonly, a continuous process of negotiation and renegotiation characterized labor mobilization and control, and, while the immediate balance of power favored the planters, they by no means always had their way. The extent to which the workers regularly managed to push their debts to ten or twenty times or more the amount required to bind them confirms this.[100] If the struggle was uneven, it was nevertheless a struggle, and it would be incorrect and unfair to view it as less.

Taking advantage of one of the few periods of relative press freedom in the history of Guatemala, editors, finqueros, and intellectuals during the 1920s debated at length the whole problem of brazos (laborers).[101] Employers complained of the parasitism of agents and 'tratistas, of the cost of carrying mozos' debts, and of the disruptive effects on labor supply of military recruiting and road service. When they thought more deeply, many doubted the efficiency of a system in which men labored to pay off what they had already spent rather than what they might earn. If a mozo had no hope of escaping debt or chance to improve his condition, what incentive had he to work? While the consensus seemed to be that free labor would be more efficient and profitable, there remained the problem, as the planter saw it, that the Indians perversely persisted in confusing free labor with the right not to work. To resolve this problem the finqueros proposed that labor be made free but obligatory. This also had the advantage of eliminating the need for advances. Legislators, the new

Ministry of Agriculture, and various local agricultural associations proposed a number of revisions in the rural labor law during the 1920s.[102] However, the return of prosperity in the second half of the decade sapped the will, never very strong in Guatemala, to break with routine, and nothing happened.

It took an unprecedented crisis to force change. In the early years of the Great Depression world coffee prices fell fifty percent or more.[103] Finqueros responded by cutting wages or only crediting the worker's debt. While, coming as these did after the agitation of the 1920's, such measures provoked widespread unrest in the countryside, continued population growth and the collapse of economic alternatives left the Indians little room to bargain. Many could find no work when they sought it.[104] Owners increasingly took the view that their problem was now less one of absolute numbers than of mobilization and control free of the exactions of the 'tratista and of the need to tie up in wage advances capital which they did not have. Change came when dictator General Jorge Ubico issued two laws in April of 1934. Decree 1995 set in motion the abolition of debts for personal labor.[105] It forbade owners and habilitadores to give new advances to their workers and allowed them two years in which to make their indebted mozos work off what they already owed. At the end of this period all remaining debts would be cancelled. In effect, at the cost of what were in large part merely paper debts, export producers received two years of free labor. Ubico followed Decree 1995 with a new law which changed the definition of vagrancy. Any individual, Indian or ladino, not practicing a recognized profession or having a business or adequate income, or not cultivating a stipulated, and relatively large, amount of land now had to work, according to his condition, 100 or 150 days a year at agricultural labor.[106] Labor had become "free" and obligatory. Habilitación continued but only on a yearly basis and for a specified number of jornales. If these laws reduced slightly the number of Indians required to go to work on the fincas[107] and added a few poor ladinos, with a growing rural population a modest drop in the numbers of those subject to forced wage labor seemed less important to the employers than the anticipated lower unit cost.

The long-term impact on Guatemala's indigenous population of Liberal systems of coerced wage labor proved extensive and damaging. Most immediately obvious were the problems of disease and land loss.[108] Dangerous and unhealthy working conditions on the estates together with long distance migration of large numbers of highland residents--by the 1880s at least one hundred thousand went each year to the coast[109]--aggravated the always precarious health conditions of the highland communities and spread disease: "Always we have illness and this season alone 12 of our companions have died [as a result of going to the coffee fincas]."[110] Village members had less and less time or energy to maintain and reproduce community social and ideological structures or even to meet their basic subsistence needs. Their position was further undercut by the decline in access to land, the results of erosion, the titling of community land by outsiders, and population pressure. The reasons for the rapid population increases common to much of late nineteenth century Latin America remain unclear, but in the case of Guatemala this growth, which outpaced even the effects of disease, may be attributable in part to the growth of the plantation sector itself. An alternate source of subsistence income raised the carrying capacity of the highland communities, rendering them increasingly dependent on the fincas. Together with illness migrants also brought new ideas and tastes from the

coast, and a few, either through labor or, more commonly, through commerce among the laborers, managed to accumulate small surpluses, the disposition of which tended to aggravate social differentiation within the communities and contribute to the breakdown of corporate self-protective structures. The specific outcome of the interaction of these various factors varied widely from village to village and family to family, but the general result was a crippling decapitalization of the peasant sector. By the early years of the twentieth century food shortages were becoming chronic in the western areas of Guatemala.[111] Debt servitude to the export economy cost Guatemala's Indians land and the time and health to exploit effectively the resources over which they managed to retain control.

In spite of the planters' persistent complaints about the lack of workers, it is clear that Liberal policies proved extraordinarily successful in mobilizing cheap labor for export production. Not only did the state enforce debt servitude, it forced a majority of the rural population into labor debts. The effectiveness, at least from the point of view of the planters, of this system is suggested by its very stability; the operation of debt servitude for agricultural labor remained virtually unchanged from the 1870s to the early 1930s while Guatemala enjoyed rising production with lower labor costs than any of her neighbors.[112] Years of pervasive coercion also laid the groundwork for the shift to capitalist free labor after 1945. State-enforced debt peonage, aided by Liberal land policies, broke the independence of the highland communities, instilling in the population the habits and discipline of wage labor and creating new needs which could only be satisfied with money earned on the fincas.[113] In the long run, though, degeneration of the highland socioeconomic formation, a result of soil exhaustion together with, paradoxically, both overpopulation and labor shortages in critical periods of the highland agricultural cycle as more and more families spent more of the year on the coast in search of work, undermined the subsistence economy as a producer and reproducer of seasonal labor, leading to a growing "proletarianization"[114] of the rural population and increased permanent out-migration. From the 1870s to the Depression, when rising population and falling coffee prices led the state to abandon the system, debt servitude underwrote the profitability of the chief export, impoverished the rural population and contributed to the preconditions for present-day violence.

NOTES

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[1]Arnold J. Bauer, "Rural Workers in Spanish America: Problems of Peonage and Oppression," Hispanic American Historical Review (HAHR), 59 (Feb.1979): 62. Bauer summarizes research on debt sevitude up to the date of publication; more recent work includes Peter Blanchard, "The Recruitment of Workers in the Peruvian Sierra at the turn of the Century: The Enganche System," Inter-American Economic Affairs, 33(Winter 1979): 63-83 and Michael J. Gonzales, "Capitalist Agriculture and Labour Contracting in Northern Peru, 1880-1905," Journal of Latin American Studies, 12 (Nov. 1980): 291-314.

[2]On Chiapas and Yucatan, see Frederich Katz, "Labor Conditions on Haciendas in Porfirian Mexico: Some Trends and Tendencies," HAHR, 54 (Feb. 1974): 1-47 and Frederich Katz, ed., La servidumbre agraria en Mexico en la epoca porfiriana (Mexico, 1976). A summary of labor systems in Guatemala is available in Chester Lloyd Jones, Guatemala, Past and Present (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966, orig. pub. 1940), ch. 10-12.

[3]For the same reason, some colonial areas of Africa experienced a similar expansion of systems of forced wage labor in this period: Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons, ed., The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), and G. Arrighi, "Labour Supplies in Historical Perspective: A Study of the Proletarianization of the African Peasantry in Rhodesia," The Journal of Developmental Studies, 6(April 1970): 185-223.

[4]Labor conditions in the Alta Verapaz, the other major coffee producing area of Guatemala, while basically similar to those of the Occidente had enough differences to require separate treatment for which space is not available here. Development of export agriculture in this area did deny to planters of the Pacific piedmont access to the only large concentration of rural population suitable for field labor outside the western highlands: Guillermo Nanez, "Erwin Dieseldorff, German Entrepreneur in the Alta Varapaz of Guatemala, 1889-1937," (Ph.D. Diss., Tulane University, 1970).

[5]John Baily, Central America (London, 1850), p. 47.

[6]Jones, Guatemala, p. 210; El Guatemalteco (Guatemala), 4 August 1883, p. 3.

[7]David McCreery, Desarrollo economico y politica nacional: el Ministerio de Fomento de Guatemala, 1871-1885 (Guatemala, 1981), chap. 1.

[8]On Guatemala's Pacific slope the intermediate area, or piedmont, of one thousand to three thousand feet is called the boca costa, while the broad

coastal plain is the costa grande; to go down to either is to "go to the coast."

[9]El Diario de Centro América (Guatemala), 19 April 1892, p. 2.

[10]Carol Smith argues persuasively that monetarization and growth in demand for cash in the economy of Guatemala's "peasant periphery" was a result rather than a cause of the supply of labor to the export fincas: Carol Smith, "Beyond Dependence Theory: National and Regional Patterns of Underdevelopment in Guatemala," American Ethnologist, 5 (March 1978): 574-617.

[11]Julio C. Cambranes draws on German travelers' accounts and consular reports in Desarrollo económico y social de Guatemala, 1868-1885 (Guatemala, 1975), p. 10ff. to describe the growing conflicts among highland villages over land and resources.

[12]These ideas are based on Claude Meillassoux, "La explotación de la comunidad doméstica: el imperialismo como modo de reproducción de mano de obra barata," in Mujeres, graneros y capitales: economia doméstica y capitalismo (Mexico, 1977) and two articles by Harold Wolpe, "The Theory of Internal Colonialism: the South African Case," in Beyond the Sociology of Development (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975), I. Oxaal, T. Barnet and D. Booth, eds., and "Capitalism and Cheap Labour-power in South Africa: from Segregation to Apartheid," Economy and Society, 1 (Nov. 1972): 425-56. Useful too is Harriet Friedman, "Household Production and the National Economy: Concepts for the Analysis of Agrarian Formations," Journal of Peasant Studies, 7(Jan. 1980): 158-83.

[13]Barbara Bradby, "The Destruction of the Natural Economy" Economy and Society, 4 (May 1975): 127-61. See also the "Introduction" and essays by Ian Rutledge and Henri Favre in Kenneth Duncan and Ian Rutledge, eds., Land and Labor in Latin America (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

[14]Meillassoux, "La explotación de la comunidad doméstica," p. 145.

[15]The rural population of Guatemala's neighbor El Salvador suffered much more abrupt and thorough-going land loss in this period: William H. Durham, Scarcity and Survival in Central America (Stanford: Stanford Univ. Press, 1977), p. 42.

[16]Recopilación de las leyes agrarias (Guatemala, 1890), p. 95; For examples of the state granting land to municipalities, which in some cases was divided into small private plots but in others was titled in the name of the municipality as a whole or in the names of the principales and used communally, see Memoria de Gobernación i Justica (Guatemala, 1886), anexo 5, and J.C. Mendez Montenegro, "444 anos de legislacion agraria," Revista de la Faculdad de Ciencias Juridicas y Sociales, epoca VI" 9-12 (Enero-diciembre, 1960), 260, 273ff., 281ff., 291ff. and various similar omnibus bills granting land to individuals and communities; for intervention to preserve community ejidos see "San Juan Ixcoy, ejidos," Huehuetenango, Paquete 30, #7, Seccion de Tierras, AGCA (Archivo General de Centro America) (NB: This document is currently in the archive of the Registro de Propriedad Inmueble, Guatemala City.)

[17]Recopilación, I, p. 227.

[18]Shelton Davis, "Land of Our Ancestors," (Ph.D. Diss. Harvard University), chap. 2.

[19]B119.21.00, leg. (legajo) 47750, reg. (registro) 99, AGCA (Archivo General de Centro America). A note on sources: Under the labor law of 1877 and 1893/4, the jefes politicos rather than the regular court system heard disputes between agricultural laborers and their employers. Often the jefes handled these in-voce, but for complicated or serious cases they received petitions and took written testimony. The records of thousands of these conflicts survive in the AGCA. However, for only one department, Huehuetenango, are they even partially organized, with a signatura, B119.21.0.0, legajo numbers and a registration number for each case. In the records of the other departments all of the correspondence received by the jefe is bound together in random order in unnumbered legajos. None of this material is catalogued.

[20]Dirección General de Estadística (Guatemala), Censo general-1892 (Guatemala, 1894), Censo general de la República-1921 (Guatemala, 1926) and Sexto censo de la población-1950 (Guatemala, 1957). The censuses of 1880 and 1940 are too inaccurate to be used to calculate changes in highland population.

[21]William G. Lovell, "Land and Settlement in the Guatemalan Highlands (1500-1821)," (Ph.D. Diss., University of Alberta, 1980), chap. 7 and Thomas Veblen, "The Ecological, Cultural and Historical Basis of Forest Preservation in Totonicapan, Guatemala," (Ph.D. Diss., University of California-Berkeley, 1975), chap. 7.

[22]Recopilación,I, p. 457.

[23]Lesley Byrd Simpson, Studies in the Administration of the Indians in New Spain: III. The Repartimiento System of Native Labor in New Spain and Guatemala (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1938).

[24]Shirley Lucas McAfee, "A Study of Agricultural Labor in Guatemala, 1821-1871," (M.A. Thesis Tulane University, 1955), chaps. II and III.

[25]Comisionado Político San Antonio Aguas Calientes to Jefe Político (J.P.) Sacatepéquez, 23 June 1883, Papers of the Jefe Politico, Department of Sacetepéquez, 1883, AGCA; B119.21.0.0, leg. 47743, reg. 179, AGCA.

[26]Decree 222, 14 September 1878, Recopilación, II, pp. 201-06.

[27]Rosendo Méndez, ed., Leyes vigentes de agricultura (Guatemala, 1937), p. 206.

[28]Recopilación, II, pp. 69-85; This was based on a labor code drafted in 1870 by Liberal members of the Sociedad Económica but not passed into law by the Conservative regime: Sociedad Económica (Guatemala, 1 August 1870, p. 1, 30 September 1870, pp. 41-44, 15 October 1870, pp. 49-50, 15 November 1870, pp. 65-66, 30 November 1870, p. 75, 15 December 1870, pp. 81-82, 31 December 1870, pp. 89-90 and 19 February 1871, pp. 113-14.)

[29]Decree 471, October 23, 1893, Méndez, Leyes vigentes, pp. 208-209.

[30]President Reyna Barrios issued this first as Decree 486 late in 1893 (Diario de Centro América, 22 February 1894, p. 1; 23 February 1894, p. 1, and 24 February 1894, p. 1); the Legislative Assembly reissued it with minor modifications in the spring of 1894 as Decree 243: Méndez, Leyes vigentes, pp. 208-209.

[31]Zapadores were construction gangs organized under military discipline and used for public works: Recopilación, XII, pp. 355-56.

[32]Antonio Batres Jauregui, friend of Reyna Barrios and, with his book Los Indios (Guatemala, 1894), winner of an 1893 contest on how to "civilize" the Indian, led this opposition: La Asemblea Legislativa (Guatemala), 23 April 1894, pp. 156-65.

[33]El Guatemalteco, 10 October 1898, pp. 1-2; J.P. Chimaltenango to Ministerio de Fomento, 13 October 1897, B129.2.13, leg. 14864, AGCA and J.P. Solola to Ministerio de Fomento, 15 October 1897, B129.2.13, leg. 14865, AGCA.

[34]El Imparcial (Guatemala), 7 September 1925, p. 5.

[35]The term enganche, though used occasionally, was much less common in Guatemala than habilitación.

[36]El Imparcial, 21 November 1922, p. 3; B119.21.0.0, leg. 47733, reg. 30 and leg. 47782, reg. 6, AGCA.

[37]El Imparcial, 1 November 1923, p. 3; 24 November 1923, p. 3; and 6 February 1924, p. 3.

[38]For example, see contract between finca El Porvenir and 103 mozos, 26 February 1930, Papers of J.P. San Marcos, 1929-1930, AGCA.

[39]T.P. to J.P. San Marcos, September 13, 1909, Papers of J.P. San Marcos, 1910, AGCA, From available material it is not possible to determine any general ratio of permanent to temporary workers; evidence suggests, in fact, wide variations from year to year and between estates.

[40]Colonos of finca San Andres Osuna to J.P. Escuintla, 10 May 1920, Papers of J.P. Escuintla, 1920, AGCA.

[41]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47733, reg. #3, and leg. 47750, reg. #74, AGCA.

[42]M.P. to J.P. Sacatepéquez, 12 July 1899, Papers J.P. Sacatepéquez, 1889, AGCA.

[43]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47779, reg. 5, AGCA.

[44]B119.21.0.0, leg. 477, reg. 95 and 47773, reg. 85, AGCA. Habilitadores sometimes simply left the money in front of the mozo's house: B119.21.0.0, leg. 47743, reg. 148, AGCA.

[45]El Imparcial, 30 November 1933, p. 3; Diario de Centro América, 3 May 1919, p. 3.

[46]C.D. Scott, "Peasants, Proletarianization and Articulation of Modes of Production: The Case of Sugar Cane Cutters in Northern Peru, 1940-1969," Journal of Peasant Studies, 3 (April 1976): 333.

[47]R.S. to J.P. Sacatepéquez, 26 October 1899, Papers J.P. Sacatepéquez, 1900, AGCA; B119.21.0.0, leg. 47774, reg. 182 and leg. 47779, reg. 5 and reg. 6, AGCA. Very occasionally authorities fined employers for this: Alcalde Santa Barbara to J.P. Solola, 6 December 1879, Papers J.P. Solola, 1881, AGCA.

[48]Juzgado Municipal, Chicacao (Solola), leg. 22, reg. 26, AGCA; B119.21.0.0, leg. 47745, reg. 330, AGCA.

[49]"Libro de sentencias económica" (sewn together copies), January-December, 1932. J.P. San Marcos, Papers of J.P. San Marcos, 1933, AGCA.

[50]? to J.P. San Marcos, 12 January 1915, Papers J.P. San Marcos, 1915, AGCA; B119.21.0.0, leg. 47787, reg. 79, AGCA.

[51]V.G. to J.P. San Marcos, 3 March 1931, Papers J.P. San Marcos, 1931, AGCA; C.O. to J.P. San Marcos, 12 August 1931, Papers J.P. San Marcos, "administrativo," 1931, AGCA.

[52]"Libro de arreglos" (sewn together copies), J.P. San Marcos, January-December, 1935, Papers J.P. San Marcos, "Administrativo 16," 1935, AGCA.

[53]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47779, reg. 5, AGCA.

[54]B119.21,0.0, leg. 47782, reg. 6, AGCA.

[55]El Imparcial, 13 January 1923, p. 6.

[56]J.P. Amatitlán to Ministerio de Fomento, 25 January 1913, B129.2.13, leg. 14871, AGCA.

[57]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47760, reg. 392, AGCA.

[58]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47743, reg. 149, AGCA.

[59]Diario de Centro América, 20 February 1906, p. 1 and 9 March 1906, p. 1; B119.21.0.0, leg. 47774, reg. 157 and leg. 47780, reg. 3, AGCA.

[60]Cia Hamburguesa de Plantaciones to J.P. San Marcos, 22 February 1915, Papers J.P. San Marcos, 1915 and representative finca La Ilusion to J.P. San Marcos, 28 November 1934, Papers J.P. San Marcos, 1934, AGCA.

[61]El Imparcial, 16 August 1923, p. 3 and 25 February 1924, p. 6; residents of Concepción Tutuapa to J.P. San Marcos, 8 October and 17 December 1936, Papers J.P. San Marcos, "Administrativo 7," 1936, AGCA.

[62]El Imparcial, 17 April 1926, p. 1 and 13 July 1922, p. 2.

[63]Diaro de Centro América, 29 January 1919, p. 2.

[64]Regardless of escalation of money wages due to inflation, a mozo worked off his debt at the wage current when he had contracted it.

[65]The wages were calculated from labor contracts, libretas, and newspapers and were converted into U.S. gold using the ratios in John Parke Young, Central American Currenty and Finance (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1925), p. 39; where the rate of conversion varied during the year, that most favorable to the laborers was used.

[66]See note 65 for sources.

[67]Diario de Centro America, 3 May 1919, p. 3.

[68]Juan A. Alvarado, Tratado de caficultura práctica (Guatemala, 1936), p. 470; Diario de Centro América, 20 September 1919, p. 5; B119.21.0.0, leg. 47793, reg. 30, AGCA.

[69]B119,21.0.0, leg. 47757, reg. 1, AGCA.

[70]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47790, reg. 86 and reg. 90 and leg. 47770, reg. 20, AGCA.

[71]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47772, reg. 61, AGCA.

[72]In 1922, for example, the corn price in San Marcos during the spring was almost double the price of Quetzaltenango, Huehuetenango, or Chimaltenango; by the fall the price remained low only in Huehuetenango. Memoria del Ministerio de Agricultura-1922 (Guatemala, 1923), p. 78.

[73]For an example of fluctuations in corn price, see yearly prices on Finca La Violeta in Alvarado, Tratado, p. 462.

[74]These figures come from contracts, petitions and interviews.

[75]Harry E. Cross's examination of the caloric content and nutritional value of food typically available to rural workers in nineteenth century Mexico applies as well to Guatemala: "Living Standards in Rural Nineteenth Century Mexico: Zacatecas, 1820-80, Journal of Latin American Studies, 10 (May 1978): 1-19.

[76]The jefe of Chimaltenango, for example, reported a quiet year in 1933 when he had only 241 such cases to resolve: Memoria. . . Agricultura-1933 (Guatemala, 1934), p. 618. The previous year the jefe of San Marcos sentenced a total of 110 mozos for labor-related offenses: "sentencias económicas," San Marcos, 1933, AGCA.

[77]J.P. Quezaltenango to Ministerio de Fomento, 14 August 1893, B129.2.13, leg. 14856, AGCA; B119.21.0.0, leg, 47743, reg. 156, AGCA.

[78]El Imparcial, 13 November 1922, p. 3 and 9 December 1922, p. 19; Inhabitants of Santiago Sacatepequez to J.P. Sacatepéquez, 27 April 1883, Papers J.P. Sacatepéquez, 1883, AGCA.

[79]A.M. to J.P. Solola, 1 May 1915, Papers J.P. Solola, 1915, AGCA.

[80]See the reports on public health from municipal authorities to the jefes of San Marcos and Escuintla, 1900-1930, in the papers of these departments.

[81]Inhabitants of Santiago Sacatepéquez to J.P. Sacatepéquez, 27 April 1883, Papers J.P. Sacatepequez, 1883, AGCA.

[82]El Imparcial, 18 November 1916, p. 3 and 15 May 1925, p. 1.

[83]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47733, reg. 22, leg. 47768, reg. 37, leg 47775, reg. 200, and leg. 47778, reg. 6, AGCA; El Imparcial 9 August 1922, p. 4.

[84]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47761, reg. 471 and leg. 47781, reg. 9, AGCA; G.P. to J.P. Sacatepéquez, 1 December 1889, Papers J.P. Sacatepéquez, 1889, AGCA; El Imparcial, 24 September 1924, p. 5.

[85]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47789, reg. 9, AGCA.

[86]B119.21.0.0, leg, 47763, reg. 110, AGCA; Diario de Centro América, 14 June 1919, p. 4; interview with retired finca manager, 16 January 1981, Guatemala City.

[87]El Imparcial, 5 April 1926, p. 1.

[88]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47735, reg. 35 and leg. 47775, reg. 201, AGCA; S.H. to J.P. San Marcos, 5 July 1907, Papers J.P. San Marcos, "administrativo," 1902-10, AGCA.

[89]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47767, reg. 46, leg. 47775, reg. 204, and leg. 47776, reg. 370, AGCA; F.S. to J.P. Sololá, 2 January 1906, Papers J.P. Sololá, 1906 and J.R. to J.P. Sololá, 21 July 1915, Papers J.P. Sololá, 1915, AGCA.

[90]V119.21.0.0, leg. 47775, reg. 237 and leg. 47782, reg. 2, AGCA.

[91]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47793, reg. 21 and leg. 47797, reg. 45, AGCA.

[92]B119.21.0.0, leg. 47762, reg. 3, leg. 47768, reg. 55 and leg. 47770, reg. 22, AGCA.

[93]El Imparcial, 6 December 1923, p. 4.

[94]P.G. to J.P. Sololá, 14 May 1916 and F.A. to J.P. Sololá, 16 September 1915, Papers J.P. Sololá, 1915, AGCA; El Imparcial, 3 February 1925, p. 1.

[95]J.P. San Marcos to Ministerio de Fomento, 30 September 1896, B129.2.13, leg. 14861, AGCA; Memoria. . . Agricultura-1931 (Guatemala, 1932), p. 225 and 1932, p. 529.

[96]J.P. San Marcos to Ministerio de Fomento, 13 November 1921, B129.2.13, leg. 14928, AGCA; El Imparcial, 14 October 1922, p. 7.

[97]Comandante Local San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta to J.P. San Marcos, 27 October 1915, Papers J.P. San Marcos, 1915, AGCA.

[98]El Imparcial 24 October 1923, p. 3 and 9 November 1925, p. 5.

[99]Archivo General de los Tribunales, Ramo Criminal, Sala 4a. de Apelaciones (Quezaltenango), ano 1899, leg. 3C. proceso 105, AGCA.

[100]By 1916, for example, with the jornal rate at $2-$3 pesos and the 1894 law still in effect, temporalista debts commonly ran $300 - $1500 pesos: B119.21.0.0, leg. 47774, AGCA.

[101]El Imparcial, 6 July 1922, p. 2; 7 July 1922, p. 1; 7 October 1922, p. 3; 30 November 1922, p. 3; 16 April 1924, p. 1 and 21 April 1924, p. 3.

[102]El Imparcial, 3 March 1923, p. 3 and 10 March 1928, pp. 5-6.

[103]Jones, Guatemala, p. 226.

[104]Memoria. . . Agricultura-1933, p. 552.

[105]Méndez, Leyes agrícolas, pp. 214-15.

[106]Méndez, Leyes agrícolas, pp. 244-47.

[107]See the comments on the law by the Indians of San Andres Semetabaj in Kay B. Warren's The Symbolism of Subordination (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1978), pp. 148-49.

[108]For more on this see David McCreery, "An Odious Feudalism: Mandamiento Labor and Commercial Agriculture in Guatemala, 1858-1920," Forthcoming in Latin American Perspectives.

[109]This is based on a labor input of fifteen Jornales per Quintal and an average of sixty jornales per worker.

[110]J.P. Amatitlán to Ministerio de Fomento, 25 January 1913, B129.2.13.

[111]Circular, Ministerio de Fomento, 12 December 1914, Papers of J.P. San Marcos, 1914, AGCA.

[112]El Imparcial, 28 May 1924, p. 5.

[113]Compare Colin Bundy's The Rise and Fall of the South African Peasantry (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979).

[114]Humberto Flores Alvarado, Proletarizacion del campesino de Guatemala (Quezaltenango, 1971).