Beyond coffee plantations: coffee production, emerging economic and social spaces, and the Q'eqchi' Maya in Senahú, Guatemala

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Beyond Coffee Plantations: Coffee Production, Emerging Economic and Social Spaces, and the Q'eqchi' Maya in Senahú, Guatemala

by

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A Dissertation

Submitted to the University at Albany, State University of New York

In Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

College of Arts and Sciences

Department of Anthropology

2012
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Acknowledgements

I want to express my gratitude to my family for supporting and accompanying me on this journey. In particular, I acknowledge and thank my mother and father for all of their support during times of joy and success, as well as times of defeat and frustration. I could not have accomplished the completion of this research and subsequent dissertation without the emotional support of each and every member of my family; including those I consider adopted family in Guatemala City and throughout various expanses of the rural countryside. I was, and am, extremely fortunate to have been guided and taught by the four individuals on my dissertation committee (Walter Little, Jennifer Burrell, Jim Collins, and Lee Bickmore) as they inspired research agendas, challenged my understanding, and encouraged me to be forthright and bold in my research and subsequent writings. Many more individuals on faculty were instrumental in shaping this dissertation as I crossed colonial to post-colonial boundaries; through times of civil war in Guatemala to the post-war era and from cultural to sociolinguistic anthropology. Thanks to Robert Carmack, Louise Burkhart, and Aaron Broadwell for their influence and discussions on all things Mesoamerica and Mayan languages. I would like to acknowledge and thank the Fulbright Program for funding the bulk of this research and for allowing students the opportunity to expand their knowledge and become ambassadors through cultural sharing and learning. Finally, this research could not have come about without the generosity of Robert and Louise DeCormier and family for providing a research grant in honor of their late son, Christopher.

Ut re ajwi’ aawe at inlooy Reggie raarookat chaq inb’aan jun sut junrub’el choxa: Toje’q xaq aawe xb’aan naq yalaq b’ar onaawochb’eeni ut maajun wa’ onaat’eq’taana maajun wa’ oatpo’ sa’ inb’eena. K’aj’o nakatink’ a’uxla k’a’jo nakatinra chi ru li k’utana junjunq sa’ xk’ab’a laarahom koloaq’axtesi we hulajhulaj chi ru laayu’am. Toxatwil toxatintaw wi’ chik yalaq b’ar yooqat chi anilak sa’ a’ k’utana a’an.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines various aspects of economic and social consequences associated with the history of coffee production in the rural municipality of Senahú, a province located in the central Guatemalan province of Alta Verapaz that is home to one of the four major Mayan language groups in Guatemala; the Q’eqchi’ Maya. In particular, the investigation is concerned with how German and other Anglo-European entrepreneurs initiated large-scale coffee production in the late 19th century and the social and economic disparities that arose with the early successes of large-scale coffee production. This examination also presents how the collective society in Senahú became dangerously dependent on coffee production and the long-term consequences and economic calamity that ensued during and after the global coffee crisis of the late 1990s and early 2000s decimated a large portion of the municipality’s production efforts. This includes analysis of how the coffee crisis contributed to an increase in social deterioration among Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers in Senahú and their individual and collective responses employed by Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers who were displaced from their homes on large-scale coffee-plantations. Even though coffee values rebounded in the mid-2000s and are now at an all-time high (2012) the result of the coffee crisis proved too large an obstacle to overcome for a number of large-scale coffee plantations and even more small-scale coffee cooperatives throughout the municipality. At present, mountains and gullies that were once littered with coffee trees lay desolate and bare and the Q’eqchi’ populace that relied on the yearly crops in large number were forced to leave their lands as they adapt to their current hardships in hope of economic and social stability in the years ahead.
Introduction

Research Site: San Antonio Senahú. Alta Verapaz, Guatemala

Senahú is a rural coffee-producing community located in the Central-Eastern region of Guatemala; recognized as an autonomous municipal entity in government records with its accompanying patron saint as San Antonio Senahú. The municipal center sits at approximately 3400 feet above sea level near the departmental border of Alta Verapaz. Senahú neighbors the lowland Polochic Valley and the coastal province, Izabal, to the East. According to the 2002 Guatemalan National Census, approximately 60,000 residents live in Senahú, 99% of which are members of the Q’eqchi’ Mayan language group (2002 Guatemalan Census Data). The Q’eqchi’ language group continues to grow away from its traditional temperate homeland in the lush cloud covered forests in Alta
Verapaz towards tropical climates in the Northern and Eastern regions of Guatemala and the Southern regions of Mexico and Belize. Although the language group continues to grow, this does not necessarily equate to general increase of legally procured land acquisition, as some have suggested (Adams 2001; Grandia 2012). Rather, many Q’eqchi’ Maya communities, particularly in Eastern Guatemala, continue their struggle to obtain land titles to arable fields on which they depend as subsistence agriculturalists. In many cases, continual displacement is forcing the Q’eqchi’ to go on the move as individual families and organized groups search for a place to settle (See also Kahn 2006 and Grandia 2012).

One of the most troubling questions that I wanted to address at the time that I began to conduct this research about coffee production in Senahú involves examining a deep rooted ambivalence towards coffee as a viable export crop. After all, as this dissertation will show, economic crises have negatively impacted coffee prices many times over the past 75 years. Why did the most recent wave of falling coffee prices deliver the fatal blow to a large area of coffee production in Senahú, especially after coffee prices recovered to an all-time high in value? In previous years I had generally sought to understand this issue merely as an economic problem that highlights social constructs and denies Q’eqchi’ laborers fair inclusion to produce and sell the commodity. I realized that the issue involves much more than this; it also involves a general ambivalence towards coffee as a viable export commodity. Coffee production carries an entirely greater set of cultural connotations that prove to negatively impact the way that a majority of Senahútecos view the crop. I had to address this issue and see coffee as more than a
means by which people make a living and focus on the underlying constructs that shaped
the research community and a large portion of its inhabitants for more than a century.

Since 1999, Senahú’s coffee production began to decrease due to a steady decline of
the commodity’s value on the international market. Since 2003, three of Senahú’s four
largest coffee plantations have ceased production entirely, displacing thousands of
laborers from their homes on plantation plots and denying them access to sufficient
arable land to cultivate traditional subsistence crops. Although international market
values for coffee are historically volatile, the latest wave of decline in coffee value
resulted in the termination of coffee production for more than half of the municipality’s
large-estate producers and community cooperatives. Cessation of coffee production is not
merely a period of rest and recovery; rather, for numerous plantations in Senahú it is the
final result of years of harsh market fluctuations.

Displaced laborers from plantations have been forced to establish new economic
strategies and social networks (see Goldín 2003, Fischer & Benson 2006 and C.R. Hale
2006 for comparable examples) in order to maintain livelihood in Senahú. Although
laborers on the existing large-scale plantation in Senahú maintain their employment and
access to arable land, they express uncertainty about the effects that decreased coffee
market value might have on their livelihoods and the possibility that they too might find
themselves displaced from their current lands.

From its inception as an independent nation state in 1821, Guatemalan legislators
encouraged foreign capital from Europe and the United States (McCreery 1994) to bolster
the staggering economy of the new nation. Many Q’eqchi’ Maya from the neighboring
municipalities of Carchá and Cahabón came to bolster the population in Senahú as laborers in the growing number of large estates that were established by foreign entrepreneurs supplied readily available capital to begin coffee production in the Verapaz region of Guatemala. Although a number of European and North American families played a pivotal role in the process of establishing coffee as a major export crop in Guatemala, in particular, German capital and political influence in the late 19th century pushed the doors wide open for a subsequent influx of foreign inversion and influence (Cambranes 1977; Wagner 1991).

Although Guatemala’s economic policies encouraged and fostered foreign agricultural participation in some of its most rural areas, Wagner (1991) demonstrates that Mayan language speakers were not overtly encouraged to assimilate to the languages and cultures maintained by German and other Anglo-European plantation owners. Cultural and linguistic abstention by Maya populations stems from their collective desire to maintain cultural and ethnic distinctions between administrators and laborers that worked on their lands. Sociolinguistic distinctions are part of the social fabric of Senahú, distinctions which persist in the present day and continue to define juxtaposed Maya/non-Maya identities and ideologies throughout the municipality and neighboring regions.

Cambranes (1977, 1985), McCreery (1994, 1995), and Grandin (2000, 2004, 2006) demonstrate how Guatemala’s forced labor laws and liberal movement towards a project of national development during the mid to late 19th century aided the advancement of coffee production and marked the impetus of mass Indigenous migrations to Senahú. Grandia (2012) shows how the same labor policies provided inspiration for many of the same bands of migrants to move further East in an elongated period of travel in search of
land and relief from Spanish governance; leading a large number of those who were at risk of being forced into conscripted labor to eventually move East and ultimately North into the Petén lowlands. Since the inception of large-scale coffee production in the Alta Verapaz region, Q’eqchi’ Maya inhabitants have been subject to national and regional government labor laws that directly facilitated domination of one subaltern part of the populace by foreign hegemons who had access to foreign credit and capital, thus positioning themselves to take advantage of Guatemala’s liberal commercialization movement at the end of the 19th century.

In 1869, a group of German coffee producers organized to petition the Guatemalan government to grant municipal status to Senahú, a lush region overlooking the Polochic Valley with the primary objective of producing coffee. With the Polochic River providing a reliable thoroughfare to transport cereza (fruit from the coffee plant) and pergamino (de-husked coffee bean) to Puerto Santo Tómas on the Gulf of Honduras and an in-situ labor force of Q’eqchi’ Mayas to draw from, the municipality began to prosper economically. Presently, Senahú’s labor force consists primarily of Q’eqchi’ Mayan language speakers who have lived on plantation lands since coffee production began in Senahú in the late 19th century.

Of the remaining large-scale coffee plantations, only a handful (Sepacuité and Se’pana’u in particular) rely on seasonal migratory laborers from peripheral regions of the municipality and the neighboring province of El Quiché. Whereas many coffee producers in the Western highlands of Guatemala have relied on migratory labor from Indigenous provinces during the annual harvest, Senahú has followed a model that secures the labor pool for each plantation by allocating land to in-situ laborers who
permanently inhabit plantation lands throughout the year. Currently, laborers on the larger coffee plantations in Senahú express their fear that their status of secure employment on plantations is dwindling, even though they continue to produce a large volume of coffee, a sentiment that has prompted many laborers to support and participate in community mobilization efforts.

As plantations began to default on bank notes and cease production in the late 1990s and early 2000s displaced laborers struggled to organize and settle in areas on the periphery of the closed plantations, opting to settle in a number of shantytowns near the municipal center. Having lost a large percentage of arable land when their employers ceased coffee production, displaced plantation laborers currently struggle to secure weekly employment contracts with the department of municipal services or as day laborers. Previous research that I conducted in 2008 revealed that a relatively small number of laborers from Senahú (four men) have migrated to the United States to find employment, however, seasonal migratory labor in neighboring provinces (Izabal and El Petén in particular) is a short-term solution for a limited number of bilingual Q’eqchi’/Spanish speakers whose language proficiency allows them to traverse municipal boundaries in search of employment.

The primary aim of this research involved examining ways that Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers and their families in Senahú respond to processes associated with global market transitions in economically underdeveloped regions (Smith 1978, 1984, 1988). Roseberry et al. (1995) and Paige (1997) discuss the various social consequences associated with coffee production in Latin America since the 19th century and demonstrate that the rise of coffee production in Central America was often accompanied by acts of confrontation
over forced labor laws, land title disputes for both individual holders and communal ejidos (parceled land), and social mobilization. Coffee cultivation continues to impact Latin American countries that continue to rely on export agriculture and commodities produced in the rural agrizone in the decades following democratization of Central American States, including their inclusion and participation in NAFTA and CAFTA-DR, respectively.

It is not surprising in the least that coffee production continues to negatively impact the socioeconomic standing of rural farmers who depend on its success to maintain steady employment. In 2003, The International Coffee Organization (ICO) addressed the “coffee crisis” through a summation of current trends in coffee production in developing nations. The study offers an overview of how the international coffee crisis impacts the United Nations millennium development goals to reduce extreme poverty in coffee-producing countries.³ The study outlines examines social, economic, and environmental impacts of the coffee crisis in 14 separate coffee-producing countries in Latin America, Africa, and Asia. Although the coffee crisis damaged all of Central America’s coffee-producing sectors significantly, Guatemala, as well as notable Caribbean nation producers, was not separately examined in detail in this particular study.⁴

This research draws on theoretical claims proposed by Scott (1976, 1985) in order to explain the socioeconomic realities that continue to negatively impact efforts to establish a new order of locally-maintained agrarian reform in Senahú. Because poverty has increased in Senahú since coffee production ceased on many of the large-scale plantations, cooperatives, and small-holder growers, this research proposes to examine specific areas of concern that have inspired social mobilization efforts to take root. Scott
explains that violence, or a lack thereof, demonstrates tactics and strategies that peasants employ to maintain their means of subsistence and minimize potential risks to their livelihoods. Including displaced laborers and employed plantation laborers in the sample pool allowed me to measure and analyze participation in community mobilization groups and to determine levels of economic concern and social disaffection. Scott’s analysis of social confrontation predicts that displaced laborers are more likely to risk involvement in social causes out of necessity whereas plantation laborers will not take unnecessary risks in order to maintain employment and access to arable land; an aspect that this examination discusses at length.

Scott (1976) also demonstrates that uncertainties and risks associated with subsistence commodities contribute to various forms of rebellion, resistance, and social strategies employed by marginalized laborers at a local level. His analysis suggests that violence occurs in various realms in peasant communities impacted by sudden declines in agricultural production. However, according to Scott, economic decline of agricultural commodity exports does not provide sufficient reason to explain why rural producers engage in social mobilization efforts to openly resist a hegemonic counterpart. Rather, Scott asserts that perceived threats to subsistence strategies are the most important factors that attract marginalized agriculturalists to overtly resist the status quo.

Certain periods of economic decline occurred in the international coffee market in 1989 and 1999, resulting in considerable economic uncertainty in Senahú. In the years following the latest coffee crisis, Senahú experienced a significant economic shift as two centrally located plantations ceased coffee production. In 2000, Finca Trece Aguas displaced approximately three hundred laborer families when its owner sold the lands to a
hydroelectric management company. In another centrally located plantation, Se’amay Plantation continues in a liminal state in which former laborers are experiencing negative consequences resulting in displacement from their homes on the plantation’s land, which fell into bank default in 2002, decreased access to arable land on which they depended for subsistence for generations, and a move into shared living spaces on a small portion of land outside of the former plantation production facility. These shifts away from coffee production created economic and environmental problems for former plantation laborers which I will address in later sections of this research.

Seasonal harvests tend to spark an increased number of violent occurrences in Senahú (October-January). Although peak harvest implies that more seasonal labor is available to displaced workers, Senahú's large-estate coffee producers maintain their labor force throughout the calendar year, negating the need to hire large numbers of displaced laborers. As more currency circulates among producers, buyers and distributors, roadside hijackings and residential burglary became more common as plantations required less work from in-situ laborers and lack of employment created an economically unstable environment. This trend is supported by Tilly's (2003) discussion of opportunism and violence in which groups forcibly extract goods from prosperous groups and is an important aspect of the research to determine if localized violence corresponds to geographic location and harvest season.

Social disaffection and deteriorating social environments have been thoroughly documented in Maya communities throughout Guatemala as political conflict and external economic and political pressures have long contributed to perceived and experienced community violence and increased acts of rebellion and crime (Wolf 1969;
Carmack et al. 1988; Falla 1994; Carmack 1995; Green 1999; Warman 2000; Grandin 2000, Sanford 2003; 2004; Manz 1988, 2004; Little et al. 2009). External pressures associated with economic hardship often produce increased rates of social unrest and violence. As Green (1999) and Grandin (2000, 2004) show, exposure to violence is often experienced and expressed in different ways and types of violence will vary depending on time and place. Scheper-Hughes & Burgois (2004) argue that violence is understood not only in the physical harm that it produces, but also as part of a social and cultural dynamic through which power and meaning are manifest; an aspect that contributes to collective and individual emotional disaffection.

This research builds on these points to examine the social and physical assaults resulting from economic uncertainty, agricultural shifts, and emerging social mobilization efforts in Senahú that seek to combat specific problems wrought by the collapse of Senahú’s coffee economy. In contrast to existing ethnographic accounts of state-sponsored violence against Maya populations in Guatemala, this research investigates how economic uncertainty contributes to how Mayas experience socioeconomic disturbance at the community level. Of particular concern is an examination of how displaced Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers experience and understand how global pressures impact their economic livelihoods and how their perceptions of those processes impacts their lives.

This research also investigates current external economic and social pressures of global market volatility that contribute to localized social deterioration affecting a language group who depended on steady plantation and/or cooperative coffee production to ensure that they would have access to arable lands on which to cultivate various
traditional subsistence crops. The processes that negated coffee as a cash crop for Senahú laborers contribute to an emergent cultural movement that strives to reverse effects of colonial agriculture practices (Thomas 1994; Osterhammel 1997) by collectively procure abandoned plantation lands for subsistence needs. In order to analyze emergent social and economic strategies, I observed community gatherings and tracked certain key groups to measure their respective levels of participation and involvement in community-based mobilization efforts.

Localized responses to the coffee crisis provide a base of analyses of ongoing processes resulting in socioeconomic reorganization among Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers in Senahú and demonstrate how groups are able to adapt to economic collapse of a primary export commodity. Said (1993) and Watanabe (2001) note that culture is procedural; driven by processes that are realized over the course of numerous years of interaction and experiences between and among groups and individuals. Examining social mobilization allowed me as a researcher to measure responses from individuals and groups who are engaged in processes that demonstrate how culture is lived, discussed in local discourse, and experienced.

Edelman (1992) discusses how plantation systems involved in large-scale cattle raising contributed to the formation of the rural middle-class in Costa Rica and Central America since the 19th century. Similarly, examining the coffee industry in Senahú demonstrates how foreign capital and labor policies regarding rural laborers contribute to processes that formed and maintained ethnic and class division in Guatemala (Cambranes 1977, 1885; Handy 1994, 2004; McCreery 1994, 1995). I examined emerging responses to the international coffee crisis that Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers employ as strategies to
remove legacies of post-colonial labor practices of large-scale agricultural production. I also observed emergent ideas by which Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú sought upward social mobility through activism and collective development. Edelman (1999) shows how this type of community involvement often takes shape in rural settings and is used in response to external economic pressures. His analysis of the 1980s economic collapse in Costa Rica demonstrates two critical aspects of my research objective as I began fieldwork. The first is the analysis of global pressures on rural laborers and alternative responses to poverty. The other aspect that Edelman addresses concerns social movements and community participation in national, regional and community development. Similar documentation of social movements among Mayas in Guatemala demonstrates how geography and regional leadership contribute to Maya responses to economic and social problems (Fischer et. al 1996; Warren 1998; Little 2004; Montejo 2005). This research contributes to important debates in anthropology concerning rural community activism as a response to global economic pressures. The research also demonstrates that community activism, and at times the lack thereof, requires us as anthropologists to re-examine the broad strokes by which we paint the portrait of Maya activism (Nash 2001).

Since the colonial era, including more than three decades of civil war, Mayas in Guatemala have been exposed to countless acts of violence and terror at the hands of the Guatemalan military (Carmack et al.1988; Falla 1994; Green 1999; Manz 1988, 2004; Grandin 2004). These resources address the devastating effects of militarized violence against Mayas in Guatemala. Grandin’s (2004) account of the 1978 massacre of Maya farmers continues to resonate with the Q’eqchi’ populace in Senahú; a number of whom proudly claim that they participated in the land disputes in the face of ladino land barons
and collective riot that preceded the bloody encounter. Even as they lament the result of that day, they note that community solidarity is necessary in times when land and subsistence are threatened.

Current economic hardships continue to threaten modes of production, a fact that directly inhibits local agriculturalists of their means of subsistence. The hardships also directly shape local responses in which inhabitants of Senahú are actively engaged. This study examines social organization efforts of displaced labors in Senahú who participate in risky efforts to secure abandoned plantation lands and form new agricultural cooperatives. Striffler’s (2002) discussion on capitalist transformations on large-estate banana plantations in Ecuador examines the emergence of disparate classes in the wake of the United Fruit Company abandoned banana production in rural Ecuador. His model of agrarian restructuring in Ecuador suggests that displaced laborers are more likely to mobilize collective community efforts than laborers with secure employment on plantations. In a similar sense, this research shows that widening class stratification is emerging amidst alliances that have been formed through geographic, kinship, and religious affiliation.

In order to understand the risks associated with responses to economic deterioration and social disaffection, the research addresses causality and history of labor on coffee plantations in Senahú. It is not unlikely that economic deterioration in a community will ignite numerous responses; including violence, political action, and social mobilization efforts. This research demonstrates the importance of examining localized efforts to combat social ills that result from external pressures of a globally connected economy. The historical base of this research provides the social fabric that is required to
understand the agrarian roots of Senahú, as well as the geographic framework of its neighboring municipalities in the Polochic mountain valley region, in the appropriate context. This type of investigation how socioeconomic realities have been historically linked to emerging class structures through sociopolitical mobilization in Senahú, both in the colonial era and after its inception as a municipal seat. This documentation shows that the current socioeconomic climate provides yet another chapter in a continually emergent struggle for access to power, land, and control of agro-exports.

Extensive anthropological analysis has been documented among K’iche’ and Kaqchikel Mayas in Western Guatemala and their economic and social strategies (Smith 1978, 1984, 1990; Carmack 1995; Fischer, 2001, 2006; Little 2004; Fischer & Benson, 2006). In contrast, although Q’eqchi’ Mayas have directly participated in dynamic economic and social spheres in Guatemala since the colonial period, they have received considerably less attention from anthropologists who study social and economic realities of Mayas throughout Guatemala. Whereas Wilson’s (1995) examination focused on Q’eqchi’ Mayas in urban centers surrounding Cobán, Senahú provides a dynamic setting that is representative of Q’eqchi’ Mayas who continue to feel the effects of large-scale plantation economics (Edelman 1992).

Whereas much of the existing research in Guatemala and other coffee-producing and agriculturally-based economies in Latin America (Edelman 1992; Roseberry et al. 1995; Paige 1997; Peloso 1999; Striffler 2002) highlights seasonal migration labor and class disparity on agribusiness plantations, Senahú’s Q’eqchi’ residents reside in-situ on the plantation. Their living spaces and economic opportunities depended on the success of
the yearly output of coffee that allowed them to maintain their livelihoods, allotted plots of land, and more importantly, their homes.

This original research examines various historical aspects of economic and social consequences associated with labor policies in Guatemala in order to explore recent economic shifts in Senahú that began with the decline of coffee prices in the global market. Beginning in 2001, declining coffee prices forced local and regional economies away from large-scale coffee plantation production towards various new means of subsistence and economic production. This dissertation examines various aspects associated with continued economic and social pressures that the shift away from coffee-based export economy has exerted upon Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers in Senahú. In most cases, laborers who relied upon steady work as part of the established plantation workforce and who had access to arable lands on the plantations to cultivate maize and beans have been negatively affected by the economic upheaval that was caused by a decline in coffee production in Senahú. Furthermore, the demise of the coffee plantations and a lack of alternative economic prospects in Senahú continue to shape the ethnic spaces, social discourses, and political tensions between Q’eqchi’ and ladino residents.

This dissertation emerged as a response to research conducted by Paige (1997), who demonstrates critical aspects between coffee production and the rise of democratic nation-states in Central America. Paige suggests that Central America was divided ideologically in the South with democratic models of smallholder coffee production occurred in Costa Rica, while the North was defined by authoritarian governments that supported an environment for large-holder plantation economies to produce vast amounts of coffee in Guatemala and El Salvador. Paige readily admits in the preface to his study
of coffee in Central American States that his hypothesis of agrarian revolution in Guatemala failed to happen. He submits that although the Guatemalan government was ruthlessly authoritarian in its dealings with rural peasants, the country’s large Indigenous population posed a separate set of circumstances that merit separate analyses from its neighboring Central American counterparts (1997: 6-7).

Although this examination is based in a geographic location that produced untold amounts of green coffee over the past century and a half, as a researcher I am considerably less concerned with varying modes of coffee production than with focusing my examination on the reality confronting Senahú at present as it relates to processes that led to the decline in coffee production and the calamity that ensued. That reality is based in disaffection associated with coffee production and a general ambivalence towards venturing to produce the commodity that shaped socioeconomic disparities in the region. I discuss this point in greater detail in chapter five in my examination of labor communities affected by cessation of coffee production on defunct plantations.

This research also examines processes by which initial waves of landed coffee elites created unbalanced socioethnic and economic divisions between Q’eqchi’ Maya and ladino inhabitants in Senahú that are maintained in the contemporary social order. In order to understand the current state of ethnicity and economy in Senahú, I engage historical discourses of Indigenous labor laws to show how social constructs of Senahú were formed in the late 19th century and how coffee production in Senahú relates to contemporary ethnic and class divisions. The research presents analysis that explains critical social implications of coffee-producing communities in Central America and how Senahú’s current political economy is emerging as a reaction to shifting power structures.
I examine the role that coffee economics play in the lives of Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú, contrasting the research site with similar Q’eqchi’-inhabited coffee-producing regions of Alta Verapaz.

Senahú is currently a community in a state of emerging ideas and developmental undertakings that encourage social participation as a means by which the community attempts to maintain a semblance of traditional subsistence agriculture on the periphery of the municipality while the sociopolitical core of Senahú strives to “modernize” the economy with the help of education and technology. In Senahú, social participation does not guarantee social inclusion, neither does it eradicate centuries of deep-rooted social norms that have worked to maintain a separate and unequal boundary between Maya and ladino inhabitants.

Methodology

I employed a mixed-bag of methodological tools over the course of my fieldwork, relying heavily on face to face interviews and strategically-based participant observation during community gatherings to structure my research plan. The formal fieldwork for this research began with a pilot study, during which time I relied almost exclusively on municipal archival analysis; as well as accessing records at the Central American General Archives in Guatemala City and informal interviews. I spent four months researching the history of Senahú since its inception as a nationally recognized and autonomous municipal entity.

Interviews, including formal and informal interviews, questionnaires, attitudinal surveys, crime victimization surveys, and free list exercises allowed me to collect data in
an informal setting. I relied on first-person accounts to collect empirical data related to sensitive topics pertaining to occurrences of violent acts, the increase of roadside hijacking that target regional and local travelers and various merchants and vendors along the regional thoroughfare. These accounts opened the doors to learn more about some of the major topics concerning social deterioration in Senahú; including occurrences of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and residential burglaries. I also relied on these relationships to discuss a number of organized communal efforts to procure and allocate recently abandoned plantation lands to displaced laborers. I conducted anonymous crime victimization and attitudinal surveys that allowed consultants to relate their experiences that otherwise are ignored in community discussion and that otherwise go unreported to the limited police force that exists in Senahú.

The information that I gathered in the structured interview process provided a base for subsequent in-depth semi-structured and open ended interviews that gave me more intimate insight into consultant responses. The core of these interviews elicited consultant perceptions regarding a wide array of topics that were prevalent in the open public discourse, including: Community security and the role of government and police in combating crime and violence; community access to abandoned plantation land and agrarian reform; relations between the local government and plantation owners; future economic development in Senahú.

Language use links social and economic production as groups sanction and legitimize cultural norms by authorizing language use in communities dependent on time, place, and context and appropriate sanctioned practices through various community discourses. Language interpretation proved a valuable methodological resource in my examinations
of how language affects economic and social disaffection. I used discourse analysis in examining each speech event, including religious gatherings, municipal administration events, political speech events, and individual narratives to examine language ideologies in Senahú to determine how different forms of language use, including multilingualism, contribute to inclusion or exclusion of various social and economic networks and how consultants express their thoughts on various forms of social and economic disaffection.

I engaged in limited activity with focus groups; which were not necessarily part of my intended methodology I practiced participant observation amidst a certain group in Senahú. These unorganized focus groups usually occurred within the scope of a group discussion, during which I was asked to comment, but not direct. Although these instantaneous and unorganized focus groups yielded some interesting perspectives about social ills in Senahú, as a researcher, I felt, and still feel, that the groups were driven and dominated by one or two individuals who held sway over the discussion of other would-be participants. Instead, I used the discussions as a basis for individual follow-up interviews in a setting where those who did not feel comfortable expressing their opinions in a group setting could open up about their experiences.

At its core, this research is the product of long-term participant observation and empirical data collection over the course of several seasons in the field in Senahú and other Q’eqchi’-inhabited coffee-producing regions of Alta Verapaz. This work is the result of those “official” field experiences as a graduate student from 2006-2011. During this time I analyzed social development efforts within the community that focused on combating various forms of economic and social disaffection. Prolonged participant observation at the research site allowed me to track various social movements that
engaged in attempts to adapt to the emerging changes that global economic conditions exert at the provincial and municipal level of agrarian life. The fieldwork for this dissertation was carried out in part with the aid and financial assistance from a FLAS scholarship (2006) provided by The Center for Latin American and Iberian Studies at Vanderbilt University, the Institute of Mesoamerican Studies at The University at Albany, SUNY (2008) as recipient of the Christopher DeCormier Memorial Scholarship, and a Fulbright IIE Fellowship (2010-2011). I began to spend significant time in Senahú as an undergraduate student at the University of Utah, participating in various humanitarian projects and student documentary projects during spring and winter vacations spanning a period of three years from 2000-2003.

**Chapter Summaries**

In Chapters one and two I examine the agro-economic roots that shaped gaping disparities associated with class and ethnic spatialization between Maya and ladino factions who cohabitate the municipality. I present the historical processes associated with coffee commodities in Senahú and examine the contemporary impact on the lives of the Q’eqchi’ Maya and the power structures related to the historical process of coffee production in the late 19\(^{th}\) century. These structures are linked to contemporary mechanisms that maintain continued divisions of power and are related to coffee and Senahú’s emergence as a community that can no longer depend on export monoculture. Chapter two integrates historical analysis and contemporary perceptions of Anglo-European entrepreneurs who flocked to produce coffee in Senahú in the late 19\(^{th}\) and early 20\(^{th}\) centuries. Examination of the processes that contribute to Senahú’s current economic volatility provides a basis that shows how economic factors contribute multiple
manifestations of disparities and pressures that contribute to the socioeconomic and class related problems in the community and municipality as a whole.

In Chapter three I examine political shifts and government and military involvement in Senahú’s coffee-producing communities following Guatemala’s agrarian reform and land expropriation during the October Revolution of the 1940s. The chapter touches on key processes that led to plantation lands changing ownership as foreign coffee oligarchies relinquished large areas of their lands to newly formed community based cooperatives and elite ladinos through a process of re-nationalization from foreign plantation owners who held land in the most profitable coffee producing regions of Senahú.

Chapter four examines plantation culture from an owner’s perspective, highlighting the stark contrast between owner and laborer, analysis of how finqueros romanticize the “glorious past” of coffee production and the subsequent fall of coffee empires in Senahú. I also discuss the cooperative model as it was established in various rural communities throughout Senahú at the height of military violence in Guatemala. Chapter four also analyzes displaced coffee laborers and their individual and collective understanding of the economic atmosphere that led to the fall of numerous plantations and cooperatives on which they depended for employment and subsistence security. Along with an external global analysis of economic pressures, I examine internal pressures related to administration and ownership which led to the inability for coffee to continue as a viable commodity crop. I also examine why, in light of a recent ascent for coffee prices on the international market, Senahútecos do not have the desire or the capabilities to begin coffee production anew.
In Chapter five I examine continuing consequences related to the cessation of coffee production in Senahú and increased social disaffection amidst laborers who have limited employment opportunities due to unemployment and displacement. I examine displaced laborer families and the strategies that they use to maintain a presence in the emerging economic atmosphere and their options to continue subsistence agriculture on a decreased area of arable land. I also examine various factions within the displaced communities and their efforts to mobilize communal land acquisition projects, the alliances that they make in a race to purchase the most desirable land on the defunct plantations, and their interactions with national and international finance agencies in an attempt to access monetary support. This chapter also addresses opportunities afforded to Senahú’s displaced coffee laborers who are willing and able to migrate to new lands in Guatemala in order to obtain employment.

Chapter six examines the role of language in contemporary Senahú in social, political, and economic contexts. Senahú, like many hamlets in Guatemala, considers itself a multilingual community, a place that realizes the importance that language plays in various sociopolitical spheres on a daily basis. Language use encapsulates a wider range of social parameters that Senahútecos instinctively reconcile to negotiate life in the political, social, and economic center of power in this multilingual municipality. I examine how language traverses modes of communication to encapsulate realms of power and submission in everyday community life.

In Chapter seven I examine the role of the United States trade agreement known as the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) and how its stated goal of economic inclusion and free trade for all have failed to bolster Senahú’s
Q’eqchi’ populace. These realities are juxtaposed with the increased wealth discrepancy in Senahú as the rich continue to accumulate wealth and the poor continue their struggle for relevant social and economic spaces and tangible benefits of Guatemala’s growing economy. This chapter also discusses the discrepancy in the distribution of wealth and growing poverty as a primary factor of issues pertaining to delinquency and violence. I also discuss social discourses about local perceptions concerning narcotics trafficking and increased alcohol abuse among the urban populace and how the community attempts to curtail what they describe as “rotted town” (*q’ajenaq tenamit*), which I gloss as social ills. For a period of two months during my fieldwork, the Guatemalan government declared a state siege on narcotics traffickers in Alta Verapaz and sent troops to monitor Senahú over a short period of time (two days) based on a tip that one of the local coffee and cardamom purchasers was involved in running drugs for a drug cartel in Cobán. Furthermore, military personnel, stationed two hours away in Santa Catalina La Tinta, made numerous unannounced visits to Senahú in an attempt to uncover narcotics transportation networks in the extremely rural landscape. I discuss how local perceptions towards narcotics patrol groups contributes to the overall sense of security in Senahú and how a desensitization of such activities is involved in the overall feeling of social and economic stagnancy. This discussion also includes addressing how Q’eqchi’ and ladino populations in Senahú attempt to combat social disaffection and immediate concerns about poverty and everyday occurrences of injustice and community violence.

Chapter eight addresses contrasts between current land acquisition projects in Senahú with other large-scale agricultural businesses in the immediate region; including land disputes in a neighboring municipality in Alta Verapaz and growing concerns with
privatized security forces and excessive agro-corporate violence in Panzós Municipality. This chapter addresses the current realities facing rural organizations that promote human rights in Maya communities in Guatemala. In particular, the chapter addresses increased apathy among Senahú’s displaced laborer communities towards Q’eqchi’-speaking squatters from adjacent municipalities, their lack of support for such communities, and how both factions respond to encroaching business ventures, including agribusinesses and mineral exploration. I also examine how migration and maintaining presence in Senahú clash as displaced laborers from Se’amay Plantation search for economic opportunity in various regions and industries throughout Guatemala and how that shift changes the perspectives of historical spaces in which Q’eqchi’ laborers were once accustomed.

I offer my overall observations in a concluding chapter that examines whether or not Senahú will continue to develop as an agro-dependent economy into the future. I also examine changes in infrastructure in Senahú, as well as surrounding municipalities in the Polochic mountain valley and Alta Verapaz, that will directly affect the role of export agriculture in the municipality. I conclude the study by examining local perceptions of security; focusing in particular on physical security in relation to increased rumors of drug trafficking in the region and increased levels of hijackings on local thoroughfares. This examination brings into question the role of the state as Guatemala returns, in many respects, to a society that experiences state and military influence in their communities with the election of the former general, Otto Molina Pérez.
Notes on Regional Q’eqchi’ Mayan Variations of Senahú

I am an adamant supporter of Mayan language maintenance in the communities where scholars live and conduct research. I have had the great fortune to conduct fieldwork in three separate Mayan language regions of Guatemala (Q’eqchi’, K’iche’, and Kaqchikel) and maintain that language proficiency aids scholars to understand the linguistic nuances associated with culture. As a fluent Q’eqchi’ Mayan speaker, my understanding of the communities in which I have worked and the rapport that resulted from that understanding allowed me to advance my research goals in order to understand the geographical and historical context of agribusiness and coffee production in Senahú, including how foreign-driven export commodities and agribusiness affect local Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers.

Q’eqchi’ Mayan is spoken in both highland and lowland Maya communities in Guatemala, Belize, and parts of Mexico. Aside from regional dialectical variations related to area-specific greetings, accent, and phonology, Q’eqchi’ Mayan is an SVO language that is structurally grounded by lexicon, grammar, and syntax. Q’eqchi’ orthography employs a 33-letter alphabet, revised in the 1990s as part of the greater ALMG (Academy of Mayan Languages of Guatemala) language project which sought to standardize orthographies for each of Guatemala’s 21 Mayan languages (See Table B). Recent Guatemala Census Data suggest that there are approximately one million Q’eqchi’ speakers, with roughly 80,000 Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers in the research site represented in this dissertation.

There are a couple of notable differences in pronunciation and verb morphology of spoken Q’eqchi’ Mayan in Senahú. The first instance occurs when ergative and
absolutive verbs are conjugated in the past tense. Standardized Q’eqchi’ universally recognizes two separate past tense time markers. <k> is recognized as a past tense marker, signifying that an event has occurred in the distant past.

Example of absolutive:

K-in-aatina-k

Distant:past-I: absolutive-speak-absolutive

I spoke (long ago).

Example of ergative:

Ki-w-aatina laa-yuwa’

Distant:past-I:ergative-speak to your-father

I spoke to your father (long ago).

Similar to its two sister languages, K’iche’ and Kaqchikel Mayan, Q’eqchi’ employs <x> as a past tense marker, expresses the idea of a completed action. In contrast to <k> the <x> marker expresses an action that may have occurred recently.

Example of absolutive:

X-in-aatina-k

Recent:past-I:absolutive-speak-absolutive

I spoke (recently).

Example of ergative:

X-w-aatina laa-yuwa’

Recent:past-I:ergative-speak to your-father

I spoke to your father (recently).
A third tense marker is widely used and understood in Senahú and its neighboring communities in the Eastern dialect region that defines the Polochic mountain valley. <O> as a recent past tense marker is used interchangeably with <x>.

Example of absolutive:

O-n-aatina-k

Recent :past-I:absolutive-speak-absolutive

I spoke (recently).

Example of ergative:

O-w-aatina laa-yuwa’

Recent:past-I:ergative-speak to your-father

I spoke to your father (recently).

The second occurrence of dialectical variation occurs in the pronunciation of the letter <y> and is dependent on its location in a word. In the Eastern region, including Senahú <y> is pronounced as a palatal semivowel when it is non-word-initial and as a simple occlusive consonant when it appears at the beginning of a word. In Western Q’eqchi’ speaking regions (Cobán, Carchá, and Chisek), the <y> is always pronounced as a simple occlusive consonant regardless of its location in the word. See explanation below as a guide on Q’eqchi’ pronunciation.
**Q’eqchi’ Mayan Orthography**

a, aa, a’, b’, ch, ch’, e, ee, e’, h, i , ii, i’, j, k, k’, l, m, n, o, oo, o’, p, p’, q, q’, r, s, t’, tz, tz’, u, uu, u, w, x, y (apostrophe represents glottalization except after <b’> where it represents implosion).

**Pronunciation:**

All are similar to the Spanish equivalent with the following exceptions: vowels written as geninates (e.g. aa, ee, etc.); b’ is implosive; j is a fortis voiceless velar fricative; q and q’ represent the voiceless uvular stop; <tz> sounds like the <ts> in English “sits” and “bits”; x sounds like English “sh” as in “shadow” (IPA [ʃ]); <w> has two pronunciations dependent on its location. Word-initially it is pronounced [kw] otherwise it remains silent. Ex. Wa = kwa = tortilla or any maize-based food. This also varies and is somewhat dependent on regional variation. In Lanquin <wa> (tortilla) is pronounced [wa] instead of [kwa]; <y> differs regionally as well and is dependent on position in the word. If word-initial it is pronounced as [tya] otherwise it is a palatal glide. Ex. Yaal = [tyaal] = true. K’ayink = [k’ayink] = to sell with the diphthong where <y> is a glide. However, in the regions nearest to Cobán and Carchá, the embedded <y> is pronounced as [tya]. Ex. K’ayink = [katyink] = to sell where <y> is voiced.

All Q’eqchi’ lexicon in this document are italicized and glossed in English and all Spanish lexicon appear in normal font with English gloss.
Figure 1: Language Dispersion in Guatemala.
Figure 1A: Senahú’s location within Guatemala.
Figure 1B: Mayan Language Family

Figure 1C: Senahú in relation to neighboring municipalities.
Figure 1D: Overhead Vista of Central Senahú.
Figure 1E: Communities of Senahú Municipality.
Chapter 1

Economic and Social Structures: Historical Processes of Agrarian Labor in the Polochic Mountain Valley Region

This chapter addresses particular labor policies and economic modes of production in rural Guatemala in a historical and contemporary context. By way of this examination, I engage the research with analysis that shows some of the crucial developments in Guatemalan labor policy to argue that certain social, political, and economic structures in Guatemala are, in part, cyclical in their manifestations towards Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers. One of the main goals of this research is to show the results of such processes. Since the colonial era, labor policies in Guatemala have provided a base by which I will link sociopolitical and economic action and reaction in my research community located in Senahú, Guatemala, and its Indigenous inhabitants; the Q’eqchi’ Maya.

I discuss various aspects of coffee and other commodity production throughout the dissertation, contrasting a similar, yet ideologically incompatible notion of production and cultivation. At the outset, I want to differentiate the two descriptions, both of which result in harvesting fruits of the land through a determined set of agricultural traditions. These traditions differ when contemplating the end goal of these agricultural traditions, especially when discussing export commodities and subsistence agricultural practices and its relationship to land tenure, market inclusion, and economic consolidation. I refer to production in this study to refer to a system of economically driven agricultural practices that produce a crop and/or commodity that is harvested with the express intent of entering those goods into regional, national, and international markets. These crops are rarely, if
ever, circulated in local markets and consumed by the local populace. Coffee is the number one commodity/crop that is produced for market export; the crop that has garnered the most attention from scholars examining export agriculture in Guatemala and Central America. Cardamom, a spice berry that is primarily exported to the Middle-East region of the globe, is an additional export crop which is produced throughout Guatemala and has accompanied coffee as an export crop; maintaining popularity in Senahú over the years even as prices remain relatively low compared to other non-traditional commodities.

Fischer & Benson (2006) describe the difficulties associated with integrating a non-traditional crop into traditional Maya gastronomical culture. In their examination of broccoli production in Tecpán, Guatemala, the authors describe how incorporating that particular non-traditional export crop into their diet is necessary when crops do not meet certain standards required in order to sell their goods to regional and international buyers. The result of overproduction of agricultural goods or failing to meet quality control standards, such as freshness, quality, and organic certification, forces the local grower communities to consume the very product that they had set out to sell to outside markets. The existence of commodity producers that are excluded from the consumer market is central to Luxemburg’s thesis (1951) on the importance of available traditional communal populations that make up local consumer markets that co-exist within a capitalist system. This point is echoed by Nash (2001) as she examines historical processes and modern globalization in Chiapas, Mexico.

Locally produced coffee is available at a number of beneficiaries in Senahú but is only consumed by a small number of Senahútecos who have sufficient disposable
income. Even in such cases that locally produced coffee is available to local and regional markets, the process of de-husking, processing, roasting and grinding the beans is outsourced to a factory in Guatemala City. The finished product is then returned to Senahú in limited quantities and sold to a small number of ladino families and small comedores (local eateries). Unlike coffee, cardamom is produced exclusively for export and is not consumed as a flavor enhancer or as a spice in Senahú. On rare occasions, such as festivals celebrating the day of the dead or the festival of San Antonio, a few of the wealthiest families in Senahú will offer a cup of Turkish coffee, spiked with cardamom essence that they have procured in Guatemala City or Cobán. The local populace regards cardamom strictly as an export crop, not as a crop that they incorporate into the traditional Maya diet. Pine tree farms, which are visible in many areas throughout the municipality, also fall under this category of crop production.

I use the term crop cultivation in this piece to refer to traditional and non-traditional subsistence crops. These are items that are cultivated, harvested, and purchased in local regional and national markets by Maya and non-Maya alike. Although some of these crops are produced in large quantities, such as maize and beans, they are exclusively consumed locally and are not produced and processed for export. I will discuss crop production in further detail in Chapter four as part of my examination of widespread ambivalence towards large-scale coffee production.

**Land and Labor**

Since Guatemalan independence (1821), an emerging class of national assembly liberals actively sought and encouraged new forms of economic growth. Export agriculture
appeared a viable solution, allowing commodities to be produced and managed by landed elites who had access to foreign capital from Europe and the United States (Cambranes 1977). Landed elites and wealthy ladinos in Guatemala City lobbied for generous tax and land tenure benefits from the government, promoting their cause on the back of an existing cheap Maya labor force to begin producing coffee trees in rural areas of San Marcos, the Western piedmont, and the Verapaz in the 1860s (Wagner 1991). Although the Verapaz region was populated with a large amount of Q’eqchi’ Maya, the majority lived North and Northeast of Senahú, where a more sparsely populated region of in-situ land possessing Q’eqchi’ Maya subsisted on maize agriculture. Primarily living in and around the mountains of Senahú, the Q’eqchi’ witnessed an incursion of growing Indigenous families who migrated, either by force or by necessity, from neighboring municipalities in Carchá and Cahabón. These factions came to cohabitate Senahú with the newly landed elite, initiating a process of large-scale export monoculture and setting the wheels of social and economic stratification into motion. Although Q’eqchi’ laborers were a driving force behind coffee production and economic growth in the municipality, they did share in the newly borne coffee boom and certainly did not receive fair monetary compensation, nor fair access to land entitlement, social standing, and economic security in exchange for their role in producing the lucrative export commodity.

In her doctoral dissertation, Grandia (2006) notes that ancient and contemporary Q’eqchi’ Maya cosmology acts as an explanatory model by which the cyclical nature of migratory patterns is understood by Mayas in Northern Guatemala. Wilson (1995) uses the concept of adaptive strategies to paint a broad picture of how Q’eqchi’ communities conceptualize a non-idealist, yet functional life. Although these concepts of time and
space, including life cycles, resonate with many of my own consultants in prior research pertaining to spiritual entities and religious traditions, my intention is to examine specific hegemonic processes that formed tangible entities through colonial labor policies and Indigenous laborers. This chapter explores how the evolution of labor policies created and promoted a business friendly environment which facilitated the rise of agribusiness. In doing so, export agricultural proliferation created a mirage of economic security to the Indigenous populace and created a perpetual cycle of servitude, shaping and maintaining contemporary social and economic injustice and uncertainty in Senahú. Although a number of scholars have documented similar patterns in Guatemala and Central America from the time of Spanish contact and the progression of democracy and contemporary labor policies (Smith. R 1946; Wolf 1957; Floyd 1961; Adams 1970; King 1974; Cambranes 1977, 1985, 2004; Edelman 1992), this research expands in scope to cover contemporary effects of such policies in Guatemalan coffee plantations.

**The Polochic Region of Alta Verapaz in the Colonial Era**

The political environment in during the colonial era instigated processes that shaped land and labor policy, division of labor, and wealth distribution in the Polochic region of Alta Verapaz in ways that continue to persist. The town center of Senahú municipality, located atop the mountains bordering the Polochic Valley to the South and Carchá and Cahabón to the Northwest, maintains significant ethnic and class divisions that were spawned from 18th and 19th labor policies in New Spain. The formation of Senahú as a municipal entity, like many towns in the region, can trace its inception to the emergence of agricultural production. Growing needs for agricultural production was headed by colonial Spaniards who benefited from generous land grants and labor policies in the Western Guatemalan
highlands to aid in garnering economic growth through national and international export commodities. Not only did this promulgation of early agribusiness promote exploitation of Indigenous labor, it also encouraged Spaniards and various landed elites from North America and Europe to appropriate communally-held Indigenous land throughout the country in the pursuit of producing lucrative cash crops. Although Adams (2001) correctly asserts that the Indigenous Q’eqchi’ surrounding the immediate area of Cobán were not as negatively affected by encomiendas (land grants), she incorrectly assumes that this is the case in all regions in the Verapaz. In actuality, land in the Polochic region at the Southeastern border of the Verapaz was readily available via land grants to foreign individuals and families who dared to tame the hot, humid, mosquito-friendly, disease-infested land North and West of Lake Izabal. Spaniards, Germans, and Englishmen alike each tried their respective hands at taming the land with varying rates of success before deciding to seek a more pleasant climate in the Western piedmont.

Overlooking the Senahú market, municipal building, and plaza, the facade of the Catholic cathedral offers a mural displaying an elaborate scene depicting a series of events to show how contact between Q’eqchi’-speaking Maya of Alta Verapaz and non-Maya Christians resulted in a peaceful and non-contentious existence. The first quadrant of the mural depicts an Indigenous Maya man in headdress, kneeling before a maize tree\textsuperscript{10} and large stelae, communing with nature as he offers sacrifice in reverence. The second quadrant depicts a Spanish friar\textsuperscript{11} who offers a cross and the “word of Christ” to the Maya man, now seated with an obsidian weapon at the ready (See Figure 2 below) serving as a constant reminder that the Q’eqchi’ are indebted to the Spanish for bringing salvation and civility to their rural lands. Similar depictions of colonial heritage are also
depicted in venues within the municipal building and old coffee storehouses turned comedores (cafeterias) and cantinas (small bars) in town that people often frequent. Many Q’eqchi’ who reside in Senahú use laughter and sarcasm to express doubt of such peaceful beginnings to early cohabitation of their lands, displaying Scott’s notion of the open transcript (1990) as a response to such depictions as a means as an expression of non-violent everyday resistance to a heritage that emerged through struggle over land and labor.

Wolf’s analysis of Closed Corporate Peasant Communities (1957) examines the relationship between economic organization within rural communities and the nation of which they were a part. He argues that the existence of corporate community types stemmed from social upheaval, noting that “the closed corporate peasant configuration in Mesoamerica is a creature of Spanish conquest” (Wolf 1957: 153). Wolf’s purpose is to offer a cross-cultural examination between peasant communities and address similarities
in how small Indigenous communities formed and maintain issues such as land tenure and other collective rights of inhabitants of a closed community. Many anthropologists have questioned whether or not Wolf’s analysis of a closed corporate community is still relevant in Maya communities that are further propelled into webs of regional, national, and international influence. Recognizing the value of examining his earlier work, Wolf also re-engaged in this discussion nearly three decades later (1986) in order to document the evolution of his ideology. Like many communities, villages, towns, and cities in developing nations, Maya communities in Guatemala are participants in global flows that impact cultural, economic, and political realities under which the live.

Adams (2001) addresses the validity of Wolf’s thesis on the closed corporate peasant communities as a separate and autonomous entity to analyze how one Q’eqchi’ Maya community reconciles and negotiates its relationship with outside entities, in particular, the Guatemalan state and foreign Evangelical movements in Alta Verapaz. This chapter shows that in the late colonial era, as well as in subsequent years, the idea of closed corporate community is both prevalent and inconsequential at the same time. Geographically positioned around a centralized urban core, Senahú’s peripheral communities vary in their aspirations for an idealized version of the closed corporate community and their desire to advance their respective positions as participants in regional, national, and international economies.

Like other scholars who question the corporate community model, Smith (1978) suggests that Guatemalan researchers should consider expanding their views to focus on how dependency theory has been used within the Guatemalan context, thus, allowing that context to expand in the ways that researchers apply their understanding when analyzing
economic and class disparities. By addressing this question in an historical and contemporary perspective, the research generates links between colonial labor laws and social processes that aided in the emergence of a “modern” Guatemala, its current economic policies, and the emergence, and re-emergence, of colonial models in contemporary settings.

Contrasting Wolf’s assertions, Smith argues that dependency theory must be analyzed contrapuntally with the dynamics of underdevelopment. McCreery (1994) notes that dependence is engrained into the national history of Guatemala, from occupying Indigenous lands to laws requiring forced labor, the inability to sustain land reform for the peasant, and indentured servitude whereby the Q’eqchi’ Mayas have been beholden to external influences for land and shelter since the time of Spanish contact in the 16th century.

Furthermore, rather than suggesting that dependency theory is relevant only as it pertains to the relationship between core and periphery, Smith urges anthropologists in Guatemala to examine “capitalism from the sub-periphery – where its effects are felt as fully as elsewhere” (Smith 1978: 577). She points out that coffee markets in Guatemala have had a unique role in economic development – or under-development- in rural areas of the country. In her analyses of dependency theory she comments that entrance into the global coffee market allowed for new opportunities to extend capitalism where prior export crops had not. Smith presents the dichotomy of Guatemala’s dependence on coffee exports as opposed to prior and less successful export crops, allowing for new modes of production on one hand, yet spawning patterns of underdevelopment for the labor communities that are involved in production.
What the data do show is that a relatively stable engagement in the world market for coffee allowed several capitalistic modes of production to evolve in Guatemala. These modes had been lacking in earlier years when Guatemala also engaged fully in the world capitalist market with other export crops but never gained sufficient income from them to make the reorganization of its previous modes of production worthwhile. They also show that the development of capitalistic modes of production in Guatemala brought about the underdevelopment of major sectors of its economy (as is often the case in many developing capitalist economies) whereas pre-capitalistic modes of production that were export dependent did not (Smith 1978: 574).

In order to examine the patterns of economic activity among agriculturalists in rural Guatemala, it is imperative to investigate interactions between regional agrarian policy and the division of labor pertaining to Maya communities in the colonial period. Although the colonial period in Alta Verapaz officially registered in 1539 (King 1974), I will focus on decades leading to the end of Spanish governance in 1821 and the resulting emergence of capitalism and large-scale plantation agriculture and the emergence of a coffee economy.

By analyzing historical processes associated with coffee commodities in the Senahú, I examines the impact on the lives of the Q’eqchi’ Maya and the power structures related to the inception of coffee plantations in Alta Verapaz in the late 19th century and the mechanisms that maintain continued divisions of power as they relate to coffee and Senahú’s dependence on export monoculture (McCreery 1994).
Although Pedro de Alvarado made first contact with Indigenous peoples of Guatemala in March, 1524, King (1974) notes that the region now known as Alta Verapaz, Tetzulutlan (land of war) did not experience military contact until 1529 and was not conquered until the late 1530s. “First military contact was made in 1529 but brought little success in the subjugation of the Quiche, Kekchi, and Pokomam” (King 1974, 19). This was due in part to the rugged and rural geography of the region and the ability of many Indigenous peoples to simply flee Spaniard-occupied territories for the open lands to the Northern regions of Carchá and the Eastern regions of the Polochic.

Grandin (2004) documents early colonial and later European migrations into the Eastern parts of the Polochic region as early as 1600, when Spaniards began to inhabit the valley and exploit the waterways that led to Lake Izabal and the newly established ports on the Gulf of Honduras. According to Grandin (2004: 140), Spaniards settled the short-lived colony of Nueva Sevilla in the 17th century. Two centuries later, the British established New Liverpool, a colony that also struggled to survive in the early colonial period. These colonies wanted to use the Polochic River as a thoroughfare to connect Lake Izabal to the Atlantic ports.

During the later years of colonialism, the Polochic region was home to continual emergent forms of export agriculture, including long-term indigo and cochineal production (Cambranes 1985). From the Western end of the Polochic Valley in San Miguel Tucurú to the banks of the Cahabón River on the Eastern border of Alta Verapaz and into the department of Izabal, export commodity production of coffee at elevated altitudes, rice and sugar cane production along the central valley floor, and large-scale banana production at the valley’s Eastern wetlands contributed to the economic and
cultural landscape that continues to impact tens of thousands of the region’s Indigenous population (King 1974; Feldman 1988). Of these products, it is coffee that has dominated the economic and demographic landscape of the region, luring European capital from foreign entities situated in Guatemala. The influx of capital for coffee production created the need for a labor force in the Polochic region was satisfied by way of Guatemala’s agrarian forced labor laws that brought thousands of Q’eqchi’ peasants from the department seat in Cobán and neighboring Carchá to the Polochic mountain valley. The incursion of migrant and forced laborers created a need to establish localized municipal governments to administer. Although Senahú was administered as a municipality since 1869, the true power brokers in the local government belonged to the finqueros, the plantation owners who I discuss in detail in Chapter three.

The region is scattered with towns lining the Northern foothills of the valley floor. The town centers are inhabited almost entirely by ladino families while the outskirts on the foothills and in the fields are home to Q’eqchi’ Maya hamlets. While these two factions seemingly live alongside one another, attend the same markets, churches, and municipalities, there has been a long history of segregation within the communities and unspoken rules based on ethnic boundaries. The reality of everyday life in these municipalities reflects palpable dissention and distrust that contribute to a volatile, and sometimes combustible, living space.

Feldman (1988) provides early census data in Alta Verapaz and the Western boundaries of the Polochic Valley to show how Poqomchi’ and Q’eqchi’ speaking communities began to flourish throughout the decades of contact with Spanish colonizers and Dominican friars such as Francisco Marroquin and Bartolomé de las Casas. The data
show that beginning in 1544 (Feldman 1988: 3), collected tax estimates the entire regional population to fluctuate between twelve to fourteen thousand individuals. Today, municipalities of the Polochic include Tamahú, San Miguel Tucurú, La Tinta, Panzós, Senahú, and El Estor. Nearby are the municipalities of Lanquin and Cahabón on the North side of Senahú (see Table A below). The Q’eqchi’ population of 298,392 accounts for 88.3 % of the total population, a number that jumps to 97 % of the entire populace when Tamahú is excluded (Tamahú’s majority Indigenous group speaks Poqomchi’ Mayan).\textsuperscript{13}

The documentation of demographic shifts shows how labor policies shaped and populated the greater part of the mountains and valleys of the Polochic region. Q’eqchi’ populations did not exclusively inhabit the Polochic Valley region until coffee production entered the national discussion of export commodities. Rather, Q’eqchi’ populations inhabited the areas nearer Cahabón and the mountains near the municipal plaza of contemporary Senahú. The name is derived from a reed (na’uq) that is Indigenous to the mountain region, cultivated for its spumous quality and used for soap. The founding of Chamiquin and its neighboring towns marks the foundation of an historically diverse economic environment where Q’eqchi’ speaking migrants populated lands away from neighboring towns by means of migration and forced labor laws. “Chamiquín is the last of the colonial towns of Guatemala to be settled, coming into existence only at the end of that era of nearly three hundred years. Yet its formation is most significant for what it tells us about demographic change throughout that long period” (Feldman 1988: 3).

The rich soil in the Polochic Valley allow for a variety of fruits, vegetables, and plants to thrive in the tropical climate, encouraging the establishment of new
municipalities that would base their economic prospects on the production of agricultural goods. For the new inhabitants of the Polochic, this land provided diverse options to grow crops for regional and international markets; including citrus, rice, beans, bananas, sugarcane, and other agricultural products. These products provided a significant economic impact to the region and the Q’eqchi’ communities that were established therein. Although these products flourished in the Polochic Valley region, a limited number of colonists and Spanish landowners benefitted by exploiting Indigenous labor as they filled their storehouses and pockets and increased their power and influence. Since the beginning of municipal expansion in the 18th century, land has found its way into the hands of landed elites, foreign entrepreneurs, and ladinos, all of whom have controlled large agribusiness holdings.

Cambranes (1985) links labor policies and the role of agriculture to the colonial era of the 16th century, during which time “Spaniards showed a particular interest in Guatemalan products” (1985: 22). Agricultural products that drew the most attention from Spaniards included cacao, indigo, textiles, cotton, and sugar cane (Smith 1959; McCreery 1994; King 1974; and Grandin 2000, 2004). Each of these scholars notes that because Spanish colonists did not find a plethora of precious metals in Guatemala and many of the neighboring lands in Central America, the commodity market would come to rely on production of agricultural goods.

“When the Spanish conquerors failed to find the mineral wealth they had anticipated, those who did not drift off to more promising frontiers also came to depend on agriculture, not primarily as producers but by the extortion from the Indigenous population of commodities as cacao and cotton for resale and export, and by taxes and
rent” (McCreery 1994:17). These commodities were produced by Maya laborers who were divided into communities of specialized labor whereby they would do one job within their division. The commodities were then exported and traded throughout Mexico, Central America, and Spain. This model served as the primary mode of production through the colonial period and well after Guatemala was granted independence by the Spanish crown in 1821.

Table A: The Polochic Region by Municipality:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Q’eqchi’ Population</th>
<th>% of Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tamahú</td>
<td>12,317</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>San Miguel Tucurú</td>
<td>27,631</td>
<td>90.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Tinta</td>
<td>25,820</td>
<td>95.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panzós</td>
<td>43,808</td>
<td>97.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senahú</td>
<td>53,522</td>
<td>99.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Estor</td>
<td>38,707</td>
<td>99.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahabón</td>
<td>42,228</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanquin</td>
<td>16,210</td>
<td>99.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Q’eqchi’ Population in the Polochic Region: The data supplies demographics of the immediate region and was gathered from the 2002 Guatemalan Census Data. Tamahú’s majority Indigenous populace pertains to the Poqomchi’ language group. Although most would consider Cahabón and Lanquin to pertain to regions outside of the Polochic, I include the two municipalities in this chart because of their geographic proximity to Senahú and the shared thoroughfares, market exchange, language, and ancestral lineages.
Early Export Crops and Labor Policies in Alta Verapaz

King (1974), Cambranes (1985) Feldman (1988) and McCreery (1994) are just a few of the Guatemalan specialists who have documented pre-colonial and colonial agricultural production in Guatemala and the trade that spanned throughout the colonial “Kingdom of Coatemala”. This New World Kingdom under Spanish rule spanned from Chiapas and parts of the Yucatan in Mexico in the North, to Panama in the South (Carmack 1995). But as Floyd (1961) and Smith (1946) show, Guatemala was engaged in trade with more Northern regions of New Spain in Mexico City and Europe. In what is now the department of Alta Verapaz, cacao, maize, beans, and indigo were all known commodities that were traded within the existing framework of early colonial Indigenous markets. Feldman also notes that in early colonial times, many residents of Alta Verapaz were forced to migrate into neighboring regions in order to seek goods that would translate into tax payments to ladino landholders. “Highland Indians were sent into the lowlands in order to gather sarsaparilla root for the Spanish governor. Cahabón, Tucurú, Tamahú, san Cristobal, and Cobán were among those townships that were required to contribute Indians for this task . . . the Alta Verapaz was the center and source of a trade in quetzal feathers that reached to the valley of Mexico and lasted as late as mid-seventeenth century” (Feldman 1988: 4).

In his account of the later establishment of Chamiquin in the Polochic Valley, Friar Aguilar contends that agricultural, and thus potential economic relief through desired land possession in the valley drew migrants from the established towns of Cobán and Carchá. “Not a few of the very poor Indians of the towns of Cobán, San Pedro [Carchá], San Juan [Chamelco] . . . who come looking for a place to settle. Also, it is the tomb of
those who search for cotton, chile, suyacals and for those unable to pay their taxes or other debts and so go from their towns to the distant forests of the Polochic and its surroundings” (Aguilar 1822, 51).

Smith (1959) and Floyd (1961) describe the economic environment of late colonial Guatemala from 1750-1800 that was dominated by rural agricultural production and indigo exports. Smith notes that indigo, a natural dye extracted from the xiquilite plant, was already well established as a traded commodity among the Mayas during the pre-colonial era. It was not until the 19th century, however, that indigo was graded and categorized into three distinct classifications, dependent on its quality, for marketing and export purposes to New Spain in the North and various European markets. Early commercial production and export of indigo would eventually provide a foundation for later ventures involving agriculture commodities that were facilitated by government strategies that sought to take advantage of what wealthy land owners deemed as an abundant existing labor force made up of Indigenous Maya subsistence agriculturalists. This process of land acquisition and human labor exploitation exacerbated existing discrepancies between small family-based production and the larger plantation estates.

In 1782, exporters estimated that approximately two thirds of indigo production was produced by harvesters who extracted amounts ranging anywhere from six to one hundred pounds per year. By comparison, large holding producers were extracting thousands of pounds of raw product to produce market-ready dye on hundreds of acres of land. Considerably smaller family held ventures also contributed to indigo exports. Growers used available family resources to provide the labor that was required to make indigo production worthwhile. It was often necessary for a family to align itself with
likeminded neighbors who sought to produce xiquilite and operate indigo vats. Whereas large-scale producers depended upon slaves, wage labor, tenants, or sharecroppers, a minimally successful family-run operation could maintain relative autonomy over its production and spend the majority of their free time tending to their own subsistence strategies (Smith 1959: 186).

The decades leading up to the 19\textsuperscript{th} century (1750-1800) ushered in a new era that witnessed Spanish colonies emerging along the Northern banks of the Polochic Valley and created land and water thoroughfares to transport goods that increased commerce and distribution of commodities from nearby storehouses on the shores of Lake Izabal to the coastal towns of Guatemala. These newly established ports succeeded where Nueva Sevilla and New Liverpool had failed in preceding attempts to establish colonies during the 1600s and functioned as active transfer points where indigo was produced, distributed, and traded. To meet the demands of labor, the governing body of Guatemala, the Audiencia Nacional (National Assembly) instigated a plan by which “a series of laws were promulgated which aspired to create direct commerce for the ‘interior provinces’” (Floyd 1961: 95). The producers in this sub-periphery of the Guatemalan economy consisted of families who had either migrated from Cobán, or were coerced by policies that engaged in the practice of low wage labor and debt servitude. This policy was known throughout Guatemala and other regions of New Spain as repartimientos. McCreery states that this practice was not new in the 18th century, rather the repartimientos stemmed from labor policies implemented during the previous attempts to organize and profit from agricultural production in the early colonial period.
“Most of the Indians in 18th- and early 19th century Guatemala who engaged in wage labor outside of their community did so as a result of repartimientos or, as they came increasingly to be called after 1800, mandamientos. Similar forms of coerced labor that might be labeled proto-repartimientos existed in 16th century Guatemala, however, a royal cedula of 1601 formally erected the system of labor repartimientos in the Captaincy General, and a 1609 decree regulated its operation” (McCreery, 1994: 93).

Due to the high rate at which Indigenous laborers contracted work-related illnesses while producing and transporting indigo, labor policies from the national audiencia of governing elites in Guatemala City aimed to outlaw Indigenous participation in the production of the commodity. However, many colonists paid little to no attention to policies regarding Indigenous labor when those policies resulted in a lack of bodies to produce their commodities. Whether the policies were stipulated by the Spanish crown or the government’s audiencia, colonists found ways to subvert labor laws that intended to protect Indigenous laborers.

In 1812, the repartimientos labor policy was put to an end by the Spanish court systems. The abolishment of the policy received support from the newly established consulate of commerce in Guatemala City (Smith 1946). McCreery notes that the consulate had arduously argued that the common good of agricultural production for the Indians was at stake because forced labor policies that were draining their time and energy.

“As Regards the extraction of Indians from villages for the haciendas done under the name of mandamientos, this inevitably damages the agriculture of the Indians themselves. They have
their own fields to mind and when they are taken for the haciendas is precisely when they need to be tending and harvesting their own plantings” (McCreery 1994: 111).

The following decades brought further economic instability to the Guatemalan audiencia as indigo production in other Central American territories proved a more viable option for merchants. On top of this, Honduras was able to bypass many of the older laws that prohibited Indians from laboring in the production of indigo, opting instead to employ slave labor to increase profits of Honduran elites while limiting wage expenditures. Facing its own political issues at home, Spain granted Guatemala its independence as a Republic in 1821, a move that further separated and identified nation states in the now defunct New Spain along lines of export commodity production. A new ruling sector of liberal government officials began to look to capitalism and the incursion of foreign investments to diversify agricultural production in the new nation and alleviate its economic problems.

**German Enterprise and the Rise of Coffee Plantations**

As the dawn of national independence broke in 1821 Guatemala’s audiencia began to look to other commodities to bolster an otherwise fledgling economy in the midst of economic upheaval after losing one of its most dependable agricultural crops to neighboring regions. With newly established borders in place, Guatemala began to supplant indigo production with cochineal, another natural dye found in Guatemala. Newly established national boundaries in Central America now separated production and access of cochineal, allowing for virtually exclusive production of the commodity on a local scale within Guatemala’s borders.
Whereas El Salvador and Honduras were able to usurp much of the indigo market in Central America, amongst the newly formed Central American nations, cochineal was only cultivated and processed in Guatemala. McCreery notes that by filling the void that indigo left with cochineal production, Guatemala was able to again produce a valuable commodity without having to change any of the existing infrastructures necessary for production.

“Cochineal fit easily into the existing economic and transport structures of Guatemala . . . The processed dye had even higher value to weight ratio than did indigo. This allowed profitable transport to the Northern ports of Guatemala’s notoriously poor roads. Cochineal tended to reinforce Guatemala’s existing commercial, capital, and transport structures” (McCreery 1994: 114).

Indigo and cochineal production continued as the main sources of export commodities in the years of post-independence. However, as Cambranes (1985) points out, cochineal was produced in geographically specific regions that were dissimilar to the climate of much of Alta Verapaz. At the same time that Guatemala’s economics were focused on cochineal production in the municipalities of Jalapa and Atitlan, Alta Verapaz witnessed the inception of a non-traditional experimental commodity; the coffee tree. The prospects of successful coffee production in the 19th century offered a more attractive commodity that was in greater demand in the global marketplace. In order to meet the demands of production for the new crop, national economic ideology and government intervention would need to strengthen its influence in previously underdeveloped regions of Alta Verapaz. Once again, this shift created an economic atmosphere that provided foreign nationalists advantageous economic environments that strengthened their hold on
the rural populace and their arable lands. Labor policies in the late 18th century turned individuals and families into a workforce of in-situ plantation laborers who were obligated to render service to coffee plantations in return for shelter and access to arable land within plantation boundaries.

In response to shifting labor laws that would coerce local populations to work on the emerging coffee plantations, many Q’eqchi’ residents of Alta Verapaz simply fled the areas and their employers to seek new lands in the Eastern parts of the province, thus causing a lack of Indigenous labor to plantations in Senahú. In the neighboring province of Izabal, the Political Chief wrote to the Ministry of the Interior in Guatemala City to complain about the growing number of Q’eqchi’ migrants from the Northern regions of Alta Verapaz and the connection to a shortage of laborers and the reasons for which harsh implementations of banned policies were being enforced.

“Because of the need to protect the coffee industry in Senahú, I found that Indians from this village and from Lanquin were being sent in groups, upon request, and on a weekly basis, for this purpose. It is true, your Excellency, that, in support of agriculture and commerce, the general population of these villages are being forced to work, but without these efforts, agriculture and commerce, the source of wealth in this Republic, would suffer and this would produce unemployment which would be detrimental to the interests of the private sector and the public treasury” (Cambranes 1985: 187).

The preceding correspondence between political entities of the economic core and periphery shows that even though laws were provided to protect Indigenous communities from harsh labor laws, commerce and production of agricultural commodities allowed for many landowners and government officials to look past these infractions for the good of
the Republic, its economy, and to teach Mayas the value of work. Furthermore, colonists were supported in this endeavor by Catholic clergy who felt a moral responsibility to assimilate Mayas by allowing them to learn Spanish ideals of production and consumption of goods. Indeed, the colonists believed that the native population of Guatemala did not understand what their best interests were. “The predominant, if not openly asserted, opinion was that the Indian resisted ‘Spanish’ values because he was not quite human, or, at least was so backward that he could not understand his own best interest” (McCreery 1994: 86).

The emergent coffee elites and the money generated from its production would thrust Guatemala’s economy onto the global stage of supplying a desired commodity to industrialized nations in Europe and North America. Cambranes’s (1985) historical documentation of Guatemala’s coffee economy provides in-depth analysis of agriculture and legislative processes that shaped Guatemala’s most lucrative and enduring export commodity during the 19th and 20th centuries. He shows that during the latter years of the 19th century, more than three quarters of Guatemala’s economy was dependent on agricultural production and export.

Coffee production entered into the economic plan in order to diversify Guatemala’s agricultural export commodities and bring foreign capital into the nation’s economy. In order to encourage landowners to diversify their crops, Guatemalan legislators began to grant tax-exempt status to those who were able to succeed in supplying the international market with products that provided more market value. At this time, coffee gained an increased market value in Europe and provided landowners an opportunity to exploit rural lands while expanding the agricultural diversity of the Guatemalan nation.
Cambranes describes the rise of coffee production in Guatemala as a double-edged sword for Guatemala’s peasantry. He shows how the advent of plantation life and the introduction of foreign capital in the beginning of coffee production and other agribusinesses worked in concert to exploit Indigenous laborers while creating social and economic disparity.

“The appearance of the agricultural entrepreneur on the economic and political scene marked a new era of suffering in the history of Guatemalan peasantry. The urban and rural bourgeoisie, strongly supported by foreign capital and entrepreneurs, plundered property belonging to the natives, and exploited labour force in order to meet the demands of a plantation economy. The plunder of both land and labour constituted the base of capital development from the middle of the 19th century” (Cambranes 1985: 49).

Paige (1997) also discusses attempts to outline coffee’s place in political structures throughout coffee-producing nations in Central America. He does this by conducting a cross-cultural documentation focused on El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica. Although Guatemala is often mentioned as a comparative economic system, Paige maintains the focus of his work on the three aforementioned countries. Throughout Central America we see how production of coffee and other agricultural products is directly related to historical models throughout Central American territories. Understanding the historical background of labor and agricultural production shows how political climates throughout the periods of the late 19th century gradually emerged. Furthermore, understanding the processes associated with agrarian laborers gives insight into the unrest that ensued throughout the 1980s in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala, respectively.
Analysis of neighboring coffee-producing nations and their economic policies during the 19th and 20th centuries shows that the rise of elite coffee families in Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and El Salvador provides a clearer understanding of the formation of classes and the means and modes of commodity production. Each case mirrors the Guatemalan context, showing how coffee elites gained their power over land holdings and labor forces, what their political and economic motivations were, and the means by which they maintained that power over land, production, processing, and exporting. In each case, those who were in control of land and commodity production used their economic power to manipulate government policy in regards to their businesses and how this process led to reforms in political ideology, action by the masses, and eventual democratization in Central America. Paige asserts that the growing coffee export economy directly impacts socioeconomic divisions between “privileged elite and impoverished rural masses that exploded in revolution twice in this century.” (1997: 13)

Senahú coffee plantations were established in large part by German immigrants who came to Guatemala in hope of gaining riches by exploiting Indigenous labor. From San Miguel Tucurú to Senahú, the architecture of finca homes and production facilities emit thoughts of European decor complete with elaborate awnings, shingling, and leisure patios. Today, the fading grandeur of the buildings still represents a dichotomy between those who are born of the region, “Eb’ aj ral ch’och’” (children of the land), and those who came to prosper from the land and its inhabitants “Kaxlan winq” (Castilian man/foreigner).15

Germans who moved into the region developed a basic thoroughfare consisting of dirt roads through the rugged mountain terrain and introduced technological methods to
process harvested coffee beans that are still utilized in some areas of the region today. Grandin (2004) explains that German plantation owners manipulated and habitually used laws and methods that were not understood by Q’eqchi’ communities to usurp the land in great quantities through uncontested public auction; thus negating any opposition from organized communities and increasing landholdings and influence throughout the blossoming agricultural zones throughout Guatemala. Mirroring the exploits described by McCreery, Grandin gives an example of how large numbers of Q’eqchi’ laborers felt about a communal contract “offered” to them by the employers; “In 1903 a group of Q’eqchi’ Mayas complained that ‘it is well known that they make these contracts . . . without the obligados being present. We don’t even know Spanish . . . They force these books on us that are only used to throw us into jail for fraud. They write in them as they like and sign the contract for us’” (Grandin 2004: 26).

Cambranes (1977) writes that as early as 1803 and the years leading up to national independence, the impact of German capital marked the emergence of German imperialism in Guatemala. This push for foreign capital began with liberal economic ideologies among ladino merchants who at that time toiled on the periphery of the move towards national independence with their eyes on establishing economic superiority in Guatemala.

“As independence was carried out in the Central American territories, the Creole merchants trusted that with the escape of some of the Spanish traders, the possibility of entering in a direct relationship with English, French, and North American commercial hosts, and the political power-grab they would be permitted to take under control the new economy of the state” (Cambranes 1977: 4).
Foreign demand for coffee resulted in a series of new laws that were passed by conservative members of the national assembly, initiating forced labor policies for rural Mayas beginning in 1830. In reality, the “new” laws were not new at all. Rather, the laws represented the reappearance of colonial policies that were set in place to maximize labor in the most cost efficient manner possible. Along with foreign demand that increased the necessity for coffee production, foreign capital began to shift agricultural production in Maya communities from subsistence and small scale cash crops to massive agribusiness ventures that required large numbers of laborers. The large quantity of laborers were provided by the conservative government by way of mandamientos, a form of labor recruitment that allowed foreign landowners to pay extremely low wages to laborers in order to increase the returns on their investment (Cambranes 1985: 99). By the late 1860s, coffee proved an increasingly prosperous venture as exports soared from 15,350 pesos in 1860, to 415,878 pesos just seven years later (Cambranes 1985: 107).

Cambranes notes that the success of coffee as an export commodity granted foreign landowners more leverage on the government to instill further forced labor policies on rural Mayas. Although Great Britain and the United States began to establish agribusiness ventures in Guatemala and in Alta Verapaz province, (Grandin 2004) German investors gained a stronghold in the production of coffee and began to establish plantations in the mountains of Tucurú, Senahú, and Carchá. However, more than establishing economic ties to coffee commodities in Guatemala there is written documentation of the German political movement and the desire to establish imperial control over Guatemala and the rest of Central America. In 1872, the German Imperial Minister received a note that expressed the desire to “to establish in Central America a German resident ministry, ‘or
at least a diplomat with a career as Consulate General, in case there union is converted into reality, a place where a central regime is installed”’ (Cambranes 1977: 31).

In 1876 Germany began to establish more intimate political relations with the Guatemalan government as it appointed the Bismarck Werner von Bergen as chief diplomat in Guatemala. Von Bergen’s initial responsibility was to negotiate an accord that would allow German investors to conduct business with the benefit of low taxes, the ability to transport their goods with autonomy, and more importantly to the Germans, to re-establish forced labor laws that would allow them to employ conscription and quota based labor policies of the colonial past that would afford them access to Indigenous labor.

In the same year that he was appointed as chief diplomat in Guatemala, von Bergen presented his treaty of commerce to Guatemalan authorities, who, according to him, held reservations about allowing Germans such economic autonomy and power. “After some weeks, the diplomat was able to deliver his treaty . . . which was met with a lot of worry and distrust: ‘they feared that the strong wanted to hang a noose around the neck of the weak’, von Bergen quipped (Cambranes 1977: 44). In October of the same year, von Bergen negotiated the treaty with the Guatemalan Ministry of the Exterior, thus opening the way for the incursion of German capital, infrastructure, and influence.

As the demand for coffee production increased, so too did the need for land. With the aid of government legislation, foreign landowners had been involved in overtaking rural communal lands in the name of the national export economy. By 1879, municipalities throughout Guatemala were reporting that foreign landowners had successfully
transformed rural Mayas from participants in communal agricultural production to forced laborers on “progressive” plantations (Cambranes 1985: 310).

McCreery (1994) describes another way by which the foreign families acquired land from Indigenous owners; “In the 1880s labor recruiters fanned out through the Western highlands looking for workers and selling alcohol and cheap goods. These activities tied Indians to local ladinos in a web of credit usually guaranteed by land, the only Indian asset, apart from labor itself, of interest to ladinos” (1994: 262-263).

Cambranes’ historical accounts of coffee economics in Guatemala provide two important points for any historical analysis of agrarian communities in Guatemala during the pivotal period of establishing an independent nation. The first point is that government policies, legislation, and attitudes towards Guatemala’s Indigenous population were directly related to colonial processes that divided Mayas into regions of limited economic prosperity. As the colonial era came to a close, Spanish elites employed models of government that were familiar to them and used those tactics to exploit the Indigenous population and the rural poor.

The second point of interest from Cambranes’s documentations rests in post-colonial modes of economic advancement and the introduction of German capital in the newly formed Republic. Because Guatemala’s economy directly relied on regional and foreign markets, government legislation and agricultural policies responded to market demand and, through its various labor policies, assisted in establishing a set of economic cores and sub-cores in rural, semi-rural, and urban provinces throughout the country. Guatemala’s landowners were encouraged to expand the types of agricultural products
for export. As an export commodity, coffee was, on one hand, a boon to the economy of a newly independent nation. On the other hand, coffee production created more pronounced levels of social stratification among Mayas on the periphery of the economy, Spaniards, Germans, and other landed elites who further benefited from exploiting the rural poor.

**Current Shifts**

In his study of ethnic relations and neoliberal reforms in Guatemala, Hale (2006) notes that the Guatemalan government attempted to disassociate the nation from an ideology of Indigenous assimilation, moving towards a national identity that accepted a multicultural and multilingual heritage. The umbrella term known as neoliberalism stresses that all Guatemalan citizens, be they elite or poor, ladino or Maya, has the right and opportunity to participate in open markets (Hale, 2006: 34-35) and reap the rewards that capitalism provides.

However, neoliberalism assumes that all people are equal, a concept that the historical record has not shown up to and including present circumstances. When observing and analyzing labor and land policies of Guatemala’s colonial and post-colonial heritage, there exists little evidence to convince rural Indigenous communities, particularly in outlying municipalities and hamlets of Alta Verapaz, that inclusion in neoliberal reforms is available to those who subsist on the peripheries and sub-peripheries of Guatemala’s urban centers; a point that I discuss in detail in chapter 7. Indeed, Senahú’s economic downfall shows that economic exclusion is exacerbated in the current economy because
the poor have little to no access to obtaining ownership of land on the abandoned plantation; a point that I present in greater detail in chapter 6.

Although neoliberal ideology has made headway in some realms of identity politics and Maya efflorescence in more urban settings (Hawkins et al. 2005; Fischer & Benson 2006; Hale 2006), Senahú is geographically situated in a region that diminishes its ability to access national and international urban markets that would allow them to fully engage in neoliberal driven ideology. This problem is further exacerbated by the fact that the majority of Senahútecos do not hold legal titles to the arable lands; therefore, they are unable to dictate whether or not they would use the lands for subsistence agriculture or to produce export commodities. Furthermore, a lack of infrastructure to aid educational opportunities and market access demonstrates the lack of government attention and help that exists in many areas in Alta Verapaz, and in particular, in Senahú.

Another persistent issue in Senahú and the Polochic region involves accessing outside markets by paving the principal thoroughfare that traverses the valley floor. This plan also calls for the government to pave the road from the valley floor up the mountain to Senahú and neighboring coffee producing plantations and would create a significantly more convenient route from urban centers in Carchá and Cobán. Unlike the maligned construction project that is currently under way to connect the Northern provinces in Guatemala from West to East (Transversal del Norte), the Polochic region’s municipalities, along with their inhabitants, crave a semblance of government infrastructure and modernity that would allow them fast and unobstructed access to jobs and markets in Puerto Barrios and Rio Dulce on the gulf coast of Honduras.
Many residents of Senahú and neighboring municipalities are confident that a paved highway would allow the Q’eqchi’ to take advantage of market opportunities that they associate with transit routes such as employment and/or ownership of small restaurants or shops where they could sell fruits and handicrafts. For many people who live in the Polochic region, the possibility of development and infrastructure would produce a beneficial atmosphere for industry and employment that outweighs any foreseen consequences related to industrialization by outside influences. I will discuss the paradox that currently exists between Q’eqchi’ communities in Senahú and the greater Polochic region regarding new waves of agribusiness and mineral extraction in chapter 8 as part of an in-depth analysis of economic development and ethnic factions.

Senahú is ever changing demographically, politically, and economically. This account contributes to the existing literature of economic and social dichotomies in the regions of Maya Guatemala where Q’eqchi’ Mayas have received considerably less attention than their K’iche’ and Kaqchikel neighbors. The research offers a contemporary view of an emergent community in Alta Verapaz – only time will tell if emergence is a successful endeavor – and its responses to the fallout stemming from the latest wave of economic uncertainty and shift away from a historically established export commodity.

**Conclusions to Chapter 1**

This chapter provides a brief historical account of the Polochic region, offering a basis on which to examine how contemporary Q’eqchi Maya inhabitants of Senahú negotiate social space, discourse, and power structures in contrast to their ladino neighbors in a post-coffee market economy. In particular, although many Q’eqchi’ families have left the
municipality in search of work, greater numbers have decided to take action to fill certain voids that ladinos, many of whom have also left Senahú, have relinquished. These voids include positions in municipal government, teaching posts in primary and basic education and positions of municipal and community leadership. Such advancements in the social sphere mirror Paige’s description of power shifts between elites and rural poor following the Great Depression. As coffee production has declined, I will examine whether or not social opportunities for Q’eqchi’ Mayas have increased, providing emergent spaces in which to undertake Maya-driven processes of social and economic development by means of political mobilization and realms of social discourses that emerge outwards from “hidden transcripts” (Scott 1990) towards more outward manifestations of Q’eqchi’ power and space.

Despite local efforts to mobilize and motivate community action, these spaces are still linked to social constructs of the past and glaring realities associated with ethnic cohabitation in space and place between Q’eqchi’ Mayas and ladinos. Social tensions continue between Mayas and ladinos in Senahú through manifestations that are potentially volatile. The volatility of social and economic tensions was never more apparent than in March, 2001 when a mob of Q’eqchi’ men lynched a ladino Judge in his office, located in the municipal justice building.

Although violence and confrontation are part of the larger social discourse in Senahú, other socially constructed elements are contributing to positive social action and participation. While visiting Senahú in August, 2007, I became increasingly aware of emerging social processes that are linked to language maintenance and education discourse. At present there are more opportunities for Maya youth to maintain cultural
and linguistic heritage by participating in multilingual schools that emphasize taking pride in Maya spirituality and cultural preservation through knowledge and use of Q’eqchi’ language. The discourse that surrounds education for Mayas and by Mayas follows a pattern that emphasizes Mayan language as prestigious (Warren 1998), and Q’eqchi’ speakers as “a son/daughter of the land” (“junaq ral ch’och’”). Bourdieu (1991) suggests that the recognition of dominant social spheres often involves legitimizing and authenticating language as a means of acquiring cultural capital. I also suggest that language maintenance in Senahú encourages speakers to recognize that language can be, and is, a source of cultural value and pride.

As in many other Maya communities in Guatemala, official, or prestigious language acts as a marker of belonging to a community, social status, and knowledge. As such, language discourse is integrated into many aspects of economic and cultural production as Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú associate performative language discourse with their place in the community. This particular point is presented in the following chapter as part of a larger examination of special markers and ethnic boundaries in Senahú.

This chapter shows that there is a colonial heritage that has dominated the economic and social constructions of Guatemala’s rural Indigenous population. In some instances, that domination still exists and is maintained within modes emerging strategies where Mayas and ladinos often compete for space within a community. However, due to certain economic strains in Senahú’s coffee economy, we see an emerging social and economic sphere in which Q’eqchi’ Mayas are forced to actively seek new forms of strategies in order to survive.
Participation in emerging agricultural enterprise, however, is problematic for Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú. Because they were historically beholden to the plantation owners, they fight an uphill battle to purchase plots of land on which to cultivate and produce goods, including venturing into small-holder organic coffee production. In contrast to Bacon’s (2005) analysis of small-scale production in Nicaragua, Guatemala’s coffee economy is still largely based on large-scale plantation models. Furthermore, even though various plantations on Senahú have halted coffee production, the land titles remain in the hands of entities who are yet unknown to residents.

All inhabitants of Senahú, wealthy and poor, ladino and Maya alike, were affected by the economic shift away from coffee production. I have spent several years observing the effects of this shift as coffee plantations have been abandoned, sold, and re-allocated as Guatemalan government property. This dissertation offers an examination of how shifting economic opportunities and past class structures that existed under the rule of coffee elites clash, creating a space to reconstruct and reform established ways of life through social change. This examination of one coffee-producing community provides a model for comparative analysis that contrast emerging economic and social strategies in rural populations throughout Guatemala and wherever marginalized groups are engaged in struggle to acquire equal social and economic opportunity. If, however, Guatemala’s current labor policies and economic development strategies continue to subvert Maya inclusion into these social processes, the examination will serve to show this struggle in the particular socioeconomic shift in Senahú relate to the larger discourse of rural Maya social strategies to combat the inequity of neoliberal ideology economic strategies in Guatemala.
Chapter 2

Senahú’s Plantations: Foreign Land Occupation and Agriculture in the 20th Century

“It’s a shame that it happens, but it is the reality. It is known that when these plantations were under German control, they tripled the actual harvests. But it is impossible to find the data in exact form.

Mario Enrique de la Cruz Torres
Guatemalan Author: Born and Raised in Senahú.

A belief persists in contemporary Senahú attributing social and economic progression to external entities; in particular to Anglo-European entrepreneurs that oversaw coffee production over vast territories of the municipality at the turn of the 20th century. Germans, in particular, are widely credited for engineering the principal thoroughfare that connects Senahú to the Polochic Valley located 15 kilometers below the mountainous pass. They are also credited for building the railroad that transported coffee from neighboring municipalities in Tamahú and Tucurú to the Polochic River banks in Panzós where steam boats would carry coffee and other export commodities eastward to the Port of Santo Tomás, then off to destinations in Europe and North America. Qaawa”17 Mako, a man whose green hued eyes denote his partial German ancestry gleamed with joy when I told him that I had located his lineage in the municipal archives. Mako and I spoke over a cup of coffee about the importance of acknowledging his grandfather, Alfred Tillmans, a German national who was officially inscribed in the municipal registry in 1927 at the age of 27. “He was a great man, a wise man who helped his family. He was amongst the first group that built our town.”
Although Senahú is a municipality in one of the most rural peripheries in Guatemala, its residents are well accustomed to living alongside men and women of Anglo-European and Anglo-American descent. By way of social examination, Senahútecos do not find it strange that an American anthropologist would choose to live amidst them in an attempt to understand their history and observe the everyday activities that are commonplace to their lives. Although the municipality consists of traditional characteristics and hamlets described by Redfield and Tax (1952) in which the Maya family is defined by dress, subsistence praxis, kin alliances, and household economy, an examination of Senahú must also take into account the variety of early foreign inhabitants that created power structures and shaped social, political, and economic landscapes in the municipality. Under the auspices of this examination I show that instead of presenting a stagnate “Indian Society”, Senahú has always been involved in processes driven by external characters with disparate motives that formed and maintain a historically multiethnic locale.

The community has seen countless foreigners live amidst its urban center and rural hamlets since the births of the eldest and most revered denizens. Diverse persons ranging from Evangelical Christian and Mormon missionaries to European and North American businessmen; whether an early 20th century explorer named Robert Burkitt, a man driven to learn Mayan languages and to collect ancient Maya artifacts for the Museum Library at the University of Pennsylvania, or the 21st century vagabond from Texas who traverses the unfriendly terrain to take in Senahú’s scenic beauty, Senahútecos are innately aware that their home is a poly-cultural destination for eb’ li kaxlan wing (foreigners). As an anthropologist who has lived in three distinct linguistic communities throughout rural
Guatemala, I have yet to encounter a municipality that receives outsiders, especially tall, blonde outsiders, with such a sense of normality.

This chapter examines Senahú in the formative years of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century as Anglo-foreigners sought to establish a capitalist system through export coffee and other agricultural commodity production in rural Alta Verapaz. The discussion will address further aspects of Senahú’s multiethnic heritage in a manner that examines social stratification that goes beyond Maya/ladino relations. I present perceptions about ethnicity and class, akin to Qaawa’ Mako’s, that account for Anglo-European, ladino, and Maya existence in Senahú and how ethnicity plays a role in establishing and maintaining cultural, linguistic, and economic dominance and the key players in that period who subsequently defined socioeconomic spaces and culturally accepted norms in rural and urban Senahú.

**The “Golden Era” of Plantations in Senahú**

I use the term plantation liberally in this dissertation to refer to localized large-scale agricultural commodity production estates. The terminology reflects its Spanish equivalent, finca, and rejects the notion that the particular areas of coffee production in Senahú under consideration in this research should be characterized as a farm, nor as its Spanish equivalent, hacienda. I use the term hacienda to characterize a collective family owned endeavor dedicated to horticulture and the care, use, and sale (ganado) of animals for the purpose of subsistence and regional market exchange. A hacienda may or may not include beasts of burden to aid in this endeavor and although is generally owned and operated by a family with elevated economic status, the hacienda is not dependent on
labor exploitation to ensure its existence. In contrast, the term finca, as I describe it, is a self-contained agricultural estate that is organized primarily based on labor and land resource exploitation for the purpose of capital gains. More important than providing a checklist that might qualify a given space as plantation or farm are the varying perceptions based on experience and localized fields of cultural knowledge that associate these two terms as one which is dependent on exploitative practices whereas the other is not.

Edelman (1992) addresses the difference between hacienda (farm) and plantation (finca) in cattle farms in Costa Rica by examining an expected processual model in which commodity accumulation begets processes that promote transition from farm to plantation. This model suggests that greater land area and increased capital should modernize and transform smallholding farms into large-scale commodity producers in a manner that reflects and evolution to a large scale commodity venture by way of advanced means and modes of production. Edelman recognizes the difference between farm and plantation, not only in size, but also in examining economic benefits that denote transition from non-productive to highly productive. Edelman notes that while this evolutionary model should dictate such a transition from small to large agricultural production, the model does not take into account tangible variables ranging from ecological pressures to cultural resistance in the face of risky agricultural ventures.

My definition of farm and field is obsolete and matters only inasmuch as it serves my purpose in describing observations from my own field of understanding. As an anthropologist, I am more concerned with the fields of knowledge that Senahútecos from diverse backgrounds attribute to plantations (fincas) and farms (haciendas). In this sense,
understanding how people of Senahú differentiate between farm and plantation was an important factor in gaining in-depth understanding of how the plantation as an entity acts to define the spaces that the wealthy minority shares with the poor majority on a daily basis. At the core of this discussion is an inquiry concerned with hegemonic and subaltern spaces in contemporary Senahú and how these spaces were formed and maintained under the auspices of plantation systems with formal and defined power structures. I contend that these power structures persist in present day Senahú as accepted cultural norms that assure socioeconomic disparity between ladino elites and marginalized Q’eqchi’ factions.

In 1877 liberal reformist and Guatemalan president Justo Rufino Barrios, instigated Decree 170, the Census Redemption that ultimately privatized vacant and non-vacant high yield arable lands to jumpstart export agricultural production. The liberalist reforms sought to minimize Catholic influence in communally held peripheral lands and opened the door to foreign entrepreneurs to accumulate landholdings. “The change in land tenancy and in its entitlement and ownership, that the liberals initiated in 1877, made it so that the old system of cooperative land ownership was transformed in accordance to the principles of economic liberalism (Cambranes 2004: 202). Finqueros were emboldened to acquire vast amounts of land, having assurance that the decree would secure laborers to carry out the necessary work of clearing, cleaning, and maintaining lands on which commodity exports would emerge. Soon afterwards, the Verapaz region became home to Anglo-Europeans who prospected and divided up fertile lands amongst themselves and enriched their families by paying laborers with limited access to arable plots for maize agriculture and small payments of sugar, salt, and b’oj liquor\textsuperscript{18}. The decree set forth a
process that would form and define landholdings and municipal boundaries throughout Guatemala and set Indigenous labor forces to work in a feudal system under which they had little chance to prosper in the new economic environment of the country.

“Things have changed. Things are different than the past if we think about coffee production on the old fincas. Perhaps you might call the years of the Champney family the golden years in Senahú.” Pancho Tení Caal pondered the past in a melancholy manner during a cold November day in 2008. He had invited me to participate in observing traditions held on the Day of the Dead by cleaning his grandmother’s tomb in the cemetery in at Sepacuité; the long-standing jewel among the grand old fincas of Senahú’s past. Pancho is a local Senahú businessman in his mid-fifties, a former mayor, and descendent of plantation administrators at Sepacuité. We sat in the old plantation house, the main house at Sepacuité, and discussed coffee plantation lifestyle that existed there and on countless other large-scale coffee producing areas in the municipality at the turn of the 20th century. Pancho exclaimed: “On this day, more than any other as we give respect to our beloved ancestors we feel strengthened to talk about those who came before us; the men who built our community with gratitude and remembrance.”

Pancho is amongst the small percentage of native Senahútecos who maintain large interests in commercial and land holdings throughout the municipality. Reared by Q’eqchi’ father and mother, Pancho comes from a comparatively small family consisting of six living siblings, all of whom hold positions of relative prominence in Senahú’s urban center as teachers, catechists, and municipal administrators. More than any other in his family, Pancho traverses assumed Maya/ladino spaces by the manner in which he speaks, dresses, acts, and thinks. He is quick to romanticize past plantation systems that
depended on harsh labor policies and indentured servitude and to criticize contemporary Q’eqchi’ for not having “the intelligence nor the courage” to obtain the same level of education, economic capital, and strategic abilities that he has obtained during his life.

According to present day laborers at Sepacuito plantation, a more modest “original home” at Sepacuito was built circa 1900. There is photo documentation to support this approximate date in municipal records and corresponding data documenting American explorer Robert Burkitt’s linguistic endeavors amidst the Q’eqchi’ and his time as a guest at Sepacuito and its owners, a duo of New England entrepreneurs named Kensett Champney, and an English family by the name of Owen. The more elaborate home that we visited was built years later when the Champney cousins managed to expand their landholdings and increase their export production. Perched atop a hill overlooking the production grounds, the home is void of furniture, save a few very old chairs and fading portraits, and is in a state of slow deterioration, the tri-tiered structure offers a glimpse into the lavish lifestyle of its past owners, who like many of their Anglo-European

Figure 3: Main House on Sepacuito Plantation.
contemporaries in Senahú and coffee producing regions throughout Guatemala, created lavish and luxurious structures that rivaled homes in Europe and the United States (See Table B in Extended Tables Appendix for a detailed description of Sepacuité plantation by sub-district)\textsuperscript{21}.

A limited minority consisting of Senahú’s wealthy elite consider Sepacuité’s main house a destination that offers a tangible embodiment of a “golden era” of the past. During our visit, Pancho instructed our small group (a trio of Cuban resident doctors, me, and Pancho’s kin) in the history of the Champney family, pointing out that Kensett’s cousin, Walter Champney, is buried only a few yards from his grandmother’s tomb. Currently under the ownership of land baron Carlos Bracamontes Morales, Sepacuité is not unlike other defunct plantations throughout Senahú occupying symbolic spaces that manifest the deep present day abyss that exists between self-labeled progressive thinking ladinos with Q’eqchi’ families who lack economic means to obtain the luxurious lifestyles of the *eb’ li kaxlan winq*; foreign emigrants who assumed control over Indigenous territories as “proprietors of the land” (*eb’ aj eechal re li ch’och’*)\textsuperscript{22} whose unsolicited dominion over agriculture affected thousands of Q’eqchi’ families.

Sepacuité, more than any other plantation in Senahú, embodied the lavish lifestyle romanticized today by descendants of foreign plantation owners. At some unspecified time in the early century, Kensett and Walter Champney acquired the entire plantation from the Owen family. Kensett Champney Brooks was born in North Conway New Hampshire, the son of New England artist Benjamin Crackbone Champney and Rebecca Brooks. Along with his cousin Walter, Kensett acquired land through kinship alliances, marrying Q’eqchi’ women and tactically increasing their landholdings spanning parts of
three municipalities from low lying areas to produce cacao and cane sugar, to high altitude coffee fields. The Champney boys spared no expense to satisfy their comforts. Whereas the vast majority of contemporary Senahú residents do not own a home equipped with indoor plumbing, the Champney house at Sepacuité offered numerous comfort items, including large bathrooms equipped with marble toilets and bidets, a ballroom, and a large kitchen that would accommodate a large service crew.

Figure 4: High altitude coffee at Sepacuité.

Kensett Champney reportedly purchased a dozen pianos and a dozen sewing machines as gifts for his daughters, content on providing each individual with her own model.23 In actuality, Kensett’s progeny include eleven daughters and one son, Benjamín Champney Choc. The daughters are listed from eldest to youngest: Martina Champney Choc, Carolina Champney Choc, Clara Champney Choc, Lucia Champney Choc, Maria Champney Choc, Alicia Champney Choc, Irene Champney Choc, Elena Champney Choc, Luna Champney Choc, Nerry Champney Choc, and Emma Carlotta Champney Choc. Although some of my elder consultants recollect that there may have been a
twelfth daughter, it is unclear, some of them stating that one daughter did not survive past adolescence.

Despite vast amounts of economic capital and land interests, the Champney cousins lived on the periphery of Senahú’s elites, maintaining a more hermitic lifestyle than the small number of ladino elites in the urban municipality. In one occasion, it is told, Kensett’s wife, Catalina Choc Champney, was refused entrance into the local cinema in Senahú. Incensed at the discrimination that his Indigenous wife experienced in the town, Kensett reportedly bypassed the local cinema by arranging to have distributors deliver all films to his ballroom at Sepacuité so that his family and guests could enjoy the films before they made the rounds in Senahú. Kensett and Walter were delicately ostracized by the ladino populace in Senahú because they married Q’eqchi’ women, essentially ignoring cultural norms related to legitimate sexual relations with Indigenous populace of the opposite sex. Indeed, ladinos and Anglo-Europeans alike were involved in many scandalous, yet accepted affairs with Indigenous mistresses, but the Champney’s tactical design to obtain land through marriage to Indigenous women and to openly allow their progeny to carry their mothers’ surname defied acceptable behavioral norms for men pertaining to an elite and powerful class of foreign landowners. Pancho Tení discussed overt relationships between Anglo-European men and Indigenous Q’eqchi’ women in discrete fashion, seemingly engaged in teaching me a thing or two about how to comport myself in their community, “Look here, everybody knows that those finqueros had a lot of children with our Indigenous women. Most of the people here don’t even know that they carry German blood, but you look at all of the green eyes you see in the communities and the fincas. Some of those men hid their relationships with Indigenous
women and some didn’t hide a thing. We are a multicultural community, but everyone understands that there are consequences associated with explicit relations with Indigenous women that can affect a person if he is not careful.”

Although far from a haven to downtrodden Q’eqchi’ Mayas seeking rights and justice for the mistreatment they suffered, the Champney house at Sepacuité flaunted Anglo-Indigenous kin that served to isolate the house to a certain extent from ladino power brokers in Senahú. On May 5th of 1906, Kensett Champney solicited advocacy from the United States office of foreign relations to openly complain about repeated offenses by which his plantation laborers were unlawfully drafted to labor on the government’s Northern railroad project. Kensett’s letter informs the office that four days prior to his solicitation, Mayor de la Cruz of Senahú sent a warrant to the Champneys informing them of their intentions to draft men to work on the railroad. Kensett Champney writes;

“We wired you on the 14th of April that men of ours were seized in Senahú the day before and put in jail to be sent to the railway. . . The men were locked up for several days before being marched to the railway, and we wired you on the chance of there being time to get an order back to loose [sic] them . . . We inclose [sic] you a warrant that came from Senahú dated the 1st of May, and signed by the alcalde de la Cruz. This warrant, you will see, does not stop at demanding men from us for the railway, but authorizes the bearer to trespass and seize the men wherever they may be in our land” (Letter from Kensett Champney: May 5th, 1906).

Rubén de la Cruz, the great grandson of Mayor de la Cruz who executed the orders to draft plantation laborers, expressed that although the Champneys and other foreign entrepreneurs were in-situ economic kingpins of Senahú in the early 20th century, they were never truly accepted as part of the cultural fabric of the municipality. “The
foreigners didn’t have a lot of trouble from people back then. They lived on their plantations away from central Senahú. My family has a long history as mayors in this municipality; my great grandfather was the mayor, my father was the mayor. We always knew that even though those men controlled a lot of money, we [lados] controlled the politics because we are the sons of Senahú. They always understood that they were not a significant part of our cultural patrimony. Look, I admire them because they were smart with managing large quantities of money. But there are only a small number of families that have dedicated themselves over the years to constructing our town.” Rubén continued to point to examples that seemed to back up his point. “There are no memorials, no schools, no gymnasiums, etc. that honor the names of the early foreigners.”

Much like Rubén, Senahútecos are often respectful of early Anglo-Europeans but are careful to point out that the growth of the municipality and its persistent social structures are largely based on continuous efforts by Senahú’s ladino families that have worked to maintain “our paradise in the mountains; our lovely Senahú.” Mario Enrique de la Cruz Torres, relation of Rubén de la Cruz and author of Monografía del Municipio de Senahú is profoundly recognized as the voice who presented his small Senahú town to Guatemalan readers by publishing a short monograph and a collection of folkloric tales entitled Rub’elpek (beneath the stone). De la Cruz Torres is often cited by Senahú’s ladino populace, pointing to his monograph as the authority on all things historical in the municipality. De la Cruz Torres presents a history that characterizes ethnic relations in Senahú as defined by what a particular group contributes to the quality of life. De la Cruz Torres unwittingly describes existing ethnic hierarchy as he discusses waves of
immigration, describing Anglo-European entrepreneurs as individuals primarily focused on export agriculture. He presents the Q’eqchi’ as a migrant group of land invaders and vagrant exiles from Carchá passing through Senahú on their journey to find more fertile lands in the Polochic Valley below. “In actuality [1982], Senahú has witnessed an invasion step by step for one or two years by indigenes that emigrate from cold lands to the Polochic Valley in search of better land for maize cultivation.”

De la Cruz Torres further denotes a marked difference in ladino and Q’eqchi’ inhabitants of Senahú by contrasting their purpose in Senahú, based on his assumptions and propaganda. His analysis misguidedly categorizes ethnic factions through class separation and defines ethnic power constructs in Senahú from the earliest days. “The principal reason of Indigenous emigration is the search for prodigious lands for maize cultivation.” Contrasting the wave of Indigenous emigration to Senahú, de la Cruz Torres writes that ladinos from Salama, Baja Verapaz arrived to administer political offices of great importance. Now . . . the ladinos that arrived to supply quality to the municipality of Senahú, were those that served the office of secretary. Here arrived Salamatecos like the Mansilla [family], de la Cruz [family], López [family], Morales [family], Juárez [family], Monzón [family], Paredes [family].” De la Cruz Torres’ analysis provides symbiotic functionality for each ethnic faction’s role in the cultural fabric of Senahú. Whereas foreign entrepreneurs maintained a high level of economic capital by way of export production, as a class born in Guatemala, ladinos maintained higher degrees of political and cultural capital, entrusted with forming and managing the rural landscape at the bequest of political powers situated in Guatemala City, Salama, and Cobán. In regards to community formation, the Q’eqchi’ populace simply inhabited temporal spaces defined
by servitude to the plantations. Like so many of the urban elites in contemporary Senahú, de la Cruz Torres opines that the Indigenous populace inhabits a space that is only valuable as far as they fulfill a field that supports their own constructs of sociopolitical hierarchy by supplying cheap labor for agricultural export commodities.

British entrepreneurs present in Senahú contributed to the foreign community of landed elites owning and operating coffee plantations in Senahú. Among this group were Alfred Wrench of Minster, England, Reginald William O’Donnell and wife Theresa O’Donnell of Gales, England, Archibald Young and George Koester and wife Mariel Scott Koester of London, England. Robert Hempstead, whose father was an English merchant and venture capitalist, was grandson of Heinrich R. Dieseldorff. Roberto held tracts of land and was involved in various agricultural and construction ventures in Panzós. Roberto managed to divide his time between the urban markets of Cobán and the agricultural fields of the rural Polochic Valley. Archibald Young, agricultural entrepreneur pertained to Arcual plantation in Carchá and was not often present in Senahú, appearing only to register in the municipality in the file of foreign residents. Reginald O’Donnell and wife Theresa owned and operated the coffee plantation at El Volcán, a large estate bordering Cahabón and Carchá municipalities. Alfred Wrench accompanied the O’Donnell family as plantation administrator at El Volcán.

The George Koester family, which owned and operated Se’amay Plantation beginning in the first decade of the 20th century, held the distinction of longest tenured family of British descent in Senahú. Se’amay Plantation is located less than two miles from Senahú’s urban area and covered approximately 18,000 acres of land dedicated to coffee, sugar cane, cardamom, and cacao production. The two story home at the entrance
of the plantation is equally impressive as the main house located at Sepacuité, serving as a functional home to its most recent owner, Benjamín Ponce, until the plantation fell into bankruptcy in 2002 and the administration’s debts resulted in bank foreclosure. Coffee dominated the landscape that served as the entrance road all through the upward journey from the valley floor to the mountains of Senahú. With an estimated peak altitude of 3,400 feet above sea level, coffee production was less profitable in the low lying plantation and required more maintenance, including planting and cleaning shade trees that protected the coffee trees from the heat. Although not as vast in size as Sepacuité plantation, Se’amay’s coffee trees were not centrally located; rather, they were dispersed along the rolling hills and gullies, making administration a more difficult task to ensure that efficient labor quotas were met on a daily basis.

The Koester family seemingly maintained a more positive relationship with municipal leaders than the Champney family at Sepacuité. Because Se’amay was situated closer to the ladino populace residing in Senahú than the other large estates, The Koester family was more actively engaged in municipal affairs and community development. Whereas the Champney family was often ostracized as hermitic and overly demonstrative with their wealth, consultants informed me that the George, and in later years his son, George Denis Scott Koester, were viewed as valued members of the burgeoning community. In discussing some of the attributes that seemingly endeared the Koester family to the ladino elite, one gentleman in particular contrasted George Koester to the Champney cousins, Kensett and Walter by raising issues pertaining to trust, appearance, and purpose, including the issue of plantation owner relations with Indigenous women. Lico, a local merchant whose family has resided in Senahú since the 1930s, explained a common view
in the following way; “The difference, as I understand it, is that don George Koester understood his place as a foreigner and the Champneys did not. Don George was married to an English woman, an elegant woman. In contrast, people thought that the don Kensett only desired to marry an Indian woman so that he could secure more land. Nobody really knew what they were all doing up there. But the Koesters were closer to the center of town and everybody saw them almost day by day.” Other consultants speaking independently agree that the Koester’s proximity and seemingly overt dealings with the community garnered them more respect and trust amidst ladino families than their Anglo-European contemporaries who resided on secluded plantations.

![Figure 5: Monument to George Denis Scott Koester in Senahú’s Central Plaza. George D.S. was the son of Se’amay Plantation founder George Koester.](image)

However, as businessmen, evidence suggests that whether centrally located or in seclusion, foreign plantation owner treatment of Indigenous families was equally cruel
and followed very strict rules of adherence. Numerous narratives dedicated to documenting Indigenous laborers on sugar, cotton, and coffee plantations in colonial and post-colonial eras examine administrative tactics to bind Mayas as conscripted laborers by advancing cash, liquor, and domestic goods so that they could fulfill obligations to the Catholic cofradías to which they pertained as charged servants for religious festivals. Like many of his contemporaries, George Koester employed payment practices that negated the national monetary system. In place of money, laborers were paid with small amounts of goods at the plantation warehouse. Coffee, liquor, salt, and sugar were allotted to families based on accumulated workdays in the coffee fields. Plantations also paid laborers using a system of coins that were specific to the respective plantation that were only recognized at that plantation’s general store.

Ermelindo Cuz was born and raised on Se’amay Plantation, working as a coffee picker in the autumn months alongside his parents and ten siblings. An astute man, Ermelindo pointed out the dire economic state of laborers who could ill afford to lose work obligations due to sickness because doing so would initiate a string of events akin to falling in a hole and not being able to dig one’s self out. “The only blessing we had was our maize. But it was hard, very hard in those days. If you did not fulfill your work picking coffee or cleaning the fields, you could lose portions of the maize fields to someone else. You could acquire the fields again, but only after you fulfilled more obligations to the plantation. It was hard. And there was the problem of acquiring more land if you had a big family or if you wanted to sell excess crops in the market. They would offer to sell a manzana (See Extended Table B) of land if you were known by the
administrators, but we could not save any money to buy new land. Our payment was salt and coffee.”

Ermilindo’s discussion emphasizes that the nature of residing on a coffee plantation under foreign control was analogous to being trapped. As a laborer, a family had limited opportunity to direct its own path in life, having to choose between uncertainty associated with migrating to outlying lands or remaining to labor where arable land was available for subsistence agriculture. In either case, freedom and desire to choose disparate paths to social and economic advancement were severely limited. Ermelindo also discussed the notion that his father, who he noted as a respected and honorable man in the community, never thought of leaving Se’amay Plantation because it would require relocating too many people in the family; further emphasizing how laborers were bound to their respective places of employment. “How could my father transport my mother and eleven sons and daughters to a place where we did not have any security?” He rhetorically asked with a wry laugh. “Think about it also that there were many more of our kin in our household when my brothers began to look for their wives.”

Germans in Senahú

Although Senahú municipality was initially divided into numerous sub-districts that were dedicated to agricultural exports, five large-scale coffee plantations dominated the entire rural landscape, forming small pockets of labor communities that exchanged workdays for access to arable fields on which to practice subsistence agriculture. In the greater Alta Verapaz region, 45 German families possessed approximately 100 properties dedicated to coffee production in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Wagner 1991). In Senahú, two
German-owned plantations occupied more than half of municipal land: Friedrich Gerlach owned and operated plantations at Se’ritk’iche’ and Sillap, each of which rivaled the size of the Owen/Champney venture at Sepacui’té; the Fickert-Forst brothers owned and operated the plantation at Oxlaju Ha’ (13 Aguas), a lower altitude coffee plantation located at approximately 3,000 feet above sea level, stretched south-eastward from Senahú. Four smaller plantations were operated by German families in the eastern-most borders of Senahú neighboring the province of Izabal. Richard Sapper operated a portion of land annexed by Erwin P. Dieseldorff at Secux plantation. Richard Sapper and family owned and operated Mayagua and Ch’ulak, also lower in altitude and comparatively less productive because of its stubborn red soil, a clay-like soil that serves as namesake for the present day region, Ch’ulak, which means to stain (See Table C).

Although plantations owned and operated by German families were more prominent in areas situated Northwest of the Polochic region, overall German influence was on display throughout the region as German investors funded and established infrastructure and engineering projects to facilitate access to Eastern ports from Southeastern borders of Alta Verapaz and coffee producing centers around Cobán. Cambranes (1977) notes that coffee production was just one of many ventures in which Germans were involved as they increased their efforts to establish influential and economic imperialism in Guatemala. “As independence was carried out in the Central American territories, the Creole [German] merchants trusted that with the escape of some of the Spanish traders, the possibility of entering in a direct relationship with English, French, and North American commercial hosts, and the political power-grab they would be permitted to take under control the new economy of the state” (Cambranes 1977: 4).
Over the span of three decades, German investments in the Polochic region provided capital to finance thoroughfares over tumultuous terrain and waterways and connected coffee plantations throughout the region. This endeavor to modernize infrastructure in the Polochic region included a two-part construction project that would link coffee plantations in Tucurú to international exporters in Livingston (Wagner 1991) by way of rail and river transportation systems. The company Ferro-Carril Verapaz y Transportes del Norte was funded by German investors and headed by Wilhelm A. Dieseldorff, nephew of German entrepreneur and land baron, Heinrich Rudolf Dieseldorff. Remnants of the railroad can still be seen along the Southern banks of the Polochic River. Beginning operation in the 1890s, the Ferro-Carril ushered in a wave of entrepreneurial ventures on the Northern foothills of the Polochic Valley as dispersed hamlet populations began to inhabit towns bustling commodity trading outposts and transport centers. German investments also provided capital that established telegraph lines and an array of lodging and eatery establishments industry catering to exporters and vendors traversing the valley and mountains in search of pergamino (green coffee beans).

Although considerably less celebrated than steam engine rail and river transportation systems in terms of improving infrastructure in the Polochic region, German engineers undertook demolition and construction projects to build roads that connected coffee plantations located in the Northern mountain range to one another and to the main thoroughfare along the Polochic Valley floor at Sta. Catalina La Tinta, Telemán (located in Panzós municipality), and Cahabóncito (by way of Ch’ulak). With the exception of Senahú’s recent cement highway construction project –discussed in Chapter 5-, these
roads remain the main transportation arteries connecting rural hamlets to urban centers and allow movement of people, goods, and ideas.

Wagner (1991), McCreery (1994) and Cambranes (1977, 1985) provide illustrious works that provides an historical basis of how German’s grew in economic and social stature throughout Guatemala in the 19th and 20th centuries. Their work provides a more complete account of the inner workings of German desires to establish an imperial economic reign over rural colonies in Guatemala’s rich agricultural regions. Whereas these authors present a lineal discussion of historical events and the history of German entrepreneurs and their role in developing export commodity systems in rural Guatemala, they do not directly discuss the consequences, whether positive or negative, on the Indigenous rural populace. Wagner, a Guatemalan of German descent, champions the economic and social contributions of Germans landed elite while Cambranes, a native Guatemalan historian, writes about the Germans as foreign imperialists. Even though Germans have been less involved in directly influencing rural communities since their expulsion in 1943, their presence is still a topic of debate in the communities which served as their hosts. Direct German influence in Senahú, although still manifest by a small number of living progeny, exists primarily as a conduit to a different age in which Senahú was defined by binary spaces consisting of patrón (boss) and moos29 (servant). Living descendants from early 20th century plantation families no longer dominate agricultural life in Senahú as many moved away to pursue business ventures or professional careers in Guatemala City and Cobán. Four Senahú residents were detained and deported to the Alien Detention Station in Kennedy, Texas as part of a larger effort that deported 141 German nationals in January 1943 after being accused of participating
or associating with participants of the Nazi party in Guatemala: Arturo Martín Fleck Coordenes of Finca Trece Aguas; Alfredo Carlos Hageman Daetz of Senahú; Karl Hussman Schweiger of Senahú; Werner Pfister of Finca Actelá in Senahú.

There is a history that demonstrates a lack of trust between Guatemalan government entities and rural communities throughout rural Guatemala. What is unique from my vantage point as an anthropologist who has studied and worked amidst three distinct language groups throughout the country is that Senahútecos, more than other communities that I have encountered, collectively equate a time period that is defined by indentured servitude to a “golden age” of their community’s history. On numerous occasions, consultants were quick to point out the fact that early Anglo-Europeans were more involved in building infrastructure and economy than the Guatemalan government. Senahútecos maintain this way of thinking today, attributing small measures of socioeconomic advancement to foreign organizations, be they religious affiliations or globally led NGOs that have been consistently active in Senahú’s rural hamlets and cooperative communities. Government, on the other hand, is generally viewed with extreme caution and as a body intent on failing to commit health, educational, and economic support to rural Maya communities. Q’eqchi’ Senahútecos put more trust and reliance in external resources to build their communities than internal municipal and national government resources. Readers who are familiar with rural Maya communities no doubt will say that this mindset is indicative of larger concerns in contemporary Guatemala about government’s level of sincerity to uplift and provide economic and social development for communities inhabited by marginalized language groups residing in the rural periphery; and they are correct.
Restall (1997) and Grandin (2000, 2004) explain that Guatemala’s Indigenous populace has long preferred to put their trust in external entities to confront localized problems, especially in terms of dealing with landowners to appeal their causes. In describing massacres divided by over a century in Q’eqchi’ communities located in San Pedro Carchá and Panzós, Grandin describes collective Maya gatherings in the rural periphery to voice displeasure concerning land disputes and abuses by a hegemonic class:

“Suffering the accumulated abuses of provincial elites, Indians appeal to faraway sovereigns. Upon word that the king or the president has ruled on their behalf, men and women gather in the plaza brandishing unspecified ‘papers’ believed to sanction their cause to demand the application of distant dictates” (Grandin 2004: 2).

Grandin’s example precedes a discussion about how violence between state-supported entities often concludes in violent encounters between laborers and military bodies that protect elite land owners and local administrators. In contemporary Senahú, foreign grant agencies, NGOs and religious organizations fill spaces once inhabited by magistrates and kings by providing infrastructural, health, and educational services that the Guatemalan government has failed to produce.

The relatively small populations that remain as in-situ descendants of the Anglo-European operated plantation era continue to wield significant economic clout by way of land ownership in urban and rural regions in the municipality. The Wohlers family, owners of Chipemech plantation, maintains a presence in Senahú procuring and processing cardamom, an economic endeavor that is growing in popularity amongst cooperatives in the municipality. The family recently sold a large portion of land in Semoch, a previously uninhabited portion of land Northwest of the urban center, to
accommodate the construction of a large housing colony that opened in June, 2011. The colony was built to house displaced families as a result of a massive landslide that tore through Senahú’s urban neighborhoods in September, 2005. Edmundo Haase, descendent of August Haase, was mayor of Senahú on two separate occasions and owns interests in urban and rural lands in Senahú. Edmundo, an affable gentleman considers himself a Senahúteco first and foremost, and German in name only. “Everybody in our town knows that my ancestors are German and that my name is unique in this part of the country. But the truth is that I am a Senahúteco in spirit and soul. With a lot of pride I say that I helped construct this municipality and have spent blood and tears to make it what it is today. I have never been to Germany. I live here and I will die here, a Senahúteco.”

**Local Perceptions**

Opinions about Anglo-European impacts on Senahú and the greater Polochic region vary, often dependent on socioeconomic status and age. Ladinos and Maya alike tend to revere the infrastructural and technological advancement that improved the region’s thoroughfares and transport systems. Stating that Q’eqchi’ Maya revere German ingenuity of the past does not, however, equate to admiration for the overall impact that Germans and other Anglo-Europeans had on rural communities in Senahú. Although I did not have any predisposed or defined expectations on how consultants would discuss this issue, I was struck by the ladino/Maya construct of early plantation owners and the divergence of their opinions. Surprisingly, Q’eqchi’ families whose lives were detrimentally affected by Anglo-European plantation owners express very little resentment for being coerced to labor long hours under horrendous conditions. They do not denounce the fact that, as children, they were pulled out of classes to pick coffee for
two months’ time; nor do they cry foul at the lack of elemental infrastructural development to serve health and educational problems. Rather, consultants routinely expressed ambivalent acceptance during interviews about the old plantation systems with a phrase that is commonly used to denote the inability to change the situation; “Maak’a’ xjalenkil.” The phrase is often used as a response to a question or to a statement of fact that Q’eqchi’ Mayas find disagreeable to expectations for their respective causes. *Maak’a’ xjalenkil* means, “there’s no changing it.”

For ladinos in Senahú, there exists a more acrimonious collection of opinions about foreign entrepreneurs and their contributions to Senahú as a municipal entity and community. Ladino consultants were quick to associate Anglo-European foreigners with imperialists who enriched themselves by exploiting Guatemalan soil and usurping their patrimony. Cesar, a thoughtful and bright man in his forties, explained to me that he feels that the current ladino entrepreneurs and community leaders now inhabit rightful positions of economic and cultural powers by filling the vacated seats previously occupied by Anglo-European figures. “It’s strange to think of foreigners walking around our Senahú, in charge of land that belongs to our nation. They brought a lot of development to Senahú, but in the end, they were only visitors. We remain the sons and daughters of Senahú. We . . . are Guatemalans.” This statement expresses age old perceptions about non-Guatemalan plantation owners and operators that continue today. As was the case related to alleged acts of discrimination against the wife of the powerful plantation baron, Kensett Champney, Anglo-Europeans were never fully embraced by ladino power brokers in Senahú because they did not inherently abide by implicit societal
norms that divided and maintained ethnic boundaries between Indigenous Q’eqchi’ and ladino.

Q’eqchi’ farmers and plantation laborers consistently express that their primary concern in life concerns access to land and their ability to cultivate subsistence crops. To this end, community elders discussed how even under despicable labor and social conditions during decades that were defined by plantation owner wealth, their cultivating prospects were more secure and they didn’t have some of the problems that they endure now such as diminished access to land to cultivate. This sentiment supports Scott’s (1976) assessment that agrarian conflict or even extreme displeasure rarely results as from distrust in the power structure or disparity of wealth and status in a community. Rather, plantation owners in Guatemala were able to appease the labor force in the early years of coffee production by way of securing land on which displaced or migrant laborers had access to cultivate crops. Jorge Choc, who was obligated as a youngster to help his family reach work quotas on 13 Aguas plantation discussed his family’s precarious situation. “We were not able to choose where we could go and where we would live. My father, he came to Senahú from Carchá as a young man. He chose his wife here and we all labored picking coffee, cleaning the coffee fields. Our life was difficult, but our reward was our fields. We were a smaller town in those days and every laborer had more land than today.” Jorge reminded me that his sons did not cultivate maize, and that he was saddened by that fact that they no longer maintained an appreciation for maize agriculture and equated value only with economic gains. “They work in the town and each has a job and a home, they each have a family. But they do not
have knowledge about the revered maize –Li loq’ laj ixim- they buy some maize in the market but it is expensive and inferior to maize that we harvested with our hands.”

Jorge mentioned that consistent access to arable land was a reward, and the main reason that his family was able to endure the hardships that they encountered as plantation laborers. Later on, I would discuss my time in Nahualá with K’iche’ speakers and show him photographs of the family who had hosted me during prior research. Jorge remarked that he knew how to say a few words in K’iche’ Mayan, evidence of which impressed me and his grandchildren. As we discussed K’iche’ words, he returned to the topic of land rewards. And why laboring on a plantation allowed his father to secure land for yearly cultivations. Contrasting his family’s situation on the plantation with those of migrant K’iche’ Mayan speakers who arrived from neighboring provinces every September to labor in the vast coffee fields, Jorge noted that his family was blessed because they had a more secure outlook than the migrant laborers. “They [migrant laborers] endured a lot of pain and difficulty. They would walk for one month, maybe more months, to arrive at 13 Aguas to work. When they arrived they did not have a home. Each and every one of those laborers slept in a small room at the plantation. They would work for two or three months and go back to their lands. I don’t know if they were owners of the maize fields in their towns but my father always said we were blessed before them because we had a home where we worked and cultivated our sacred white maize, our sacred yellow maize.”

Scholars who have examined Q’eqchi’ culture inevitably mention the pantheon of gods known as Tzuultaq’ a³⁰ that envelop the Alta Verapaz region as spiritual protectors, overseers, and benefactors. Wilson (1995) refers to the supernatural entities as mountain
spirits, arguing that Q’eqchi’ communities invoke these entities as a way of constructing identity through a means of symbiotic processes to aid them in “making and remaking community” in the face of longitudinal and recent change. Whereas Wilson and Adams (2001) conducted research with Q’eqchi’ communities in Cobán and San Juan Chamelco respectively (the heart of what many consider the prestigious pre-colonial kingdom of the Q’eqchi’ language group in Alta Verapaz), Grandia (2012) and Kahn (2006) contribute to this topic in their research with Q’eqchi’ communities in the Northern lowlands of Guatemala and the Eastern coastal regions respectively. Grandia observes that there is not any measurable way to determine a collective consensus regarding the 13 entities and that identifying places and names associated with the Tzuultaq’ a pantheon seems to vary based on region and community.

Having studied and engaged with K’iche’, Kaqchikel, and Q’eqchi’ daykeepers from distinct philosophical and cosmological traditions, I present the Tzuultaq’ a as earth lords, akin to K’iche’ cosmology that includes Nawal Siwan (Spirit of Gulley) Nawal Juyub’ (Spirit of Mountain) Uk’ux Ulew (Heart of Earth) and Uk’ux Kaj (Heart of Sky). Tzuul is a hill or mountain whereas taq’a means below, plane, or valley. Tzuultaq’ a encompasses terrestrial environs that provide sacred maize, the life giving element that continues to sustain Maya agriculturalists in Senahú and beyond. Wilson’s observations concerning identity maintenance in Q’eqchi’ communities help to explain the malleability of these earth lords as migrant communities found themselves in new territories under the control of foreign entrepreneurs as a way to adapt and moderate a precious value system. Infusion of the Tzuultaq’ a into their new lands incorporated the sacred relationship between humans and earth and aided in recreating and maintaining cosmological ties to
the lands that they left behind surrounding Cobán and Carchá. Tzuultaq’a exist under distinct names wherever Q’eqchi’ communities are found and often differ from neighboring regions; many times taking the names of the plantations that they overlook (temporally and cosmologically). Knowledge of earth lords in detail continues to lessen in urban and rural regions of Senahú due to the high rate of Evangelical churches that openly reject the entities as wayward symbols of traditions and value systems bound to the past. However, Catholics, Mormons, Baptists, and Nazarenes all maintain a base appreciation by acknowledging the Tzuultaq’a as they plant and harvest the sacred maize each year. Ensuring a fruitful harvest moves beyond cultural and linguistic identity perceptions into the realm of material culture and political economy to satisfy base dietary necessities to survive. As Ermelindo and Jorge point out, risk of losing access to arable land is the worst possible option amongst few others.

Listening to Jorge and many other consultants explain their motives for laboring on foreign-owned plantations, I sought to examine Bourdieu’s (1998) arguments opposing ontological complicity in determining relations between ethnically disparate agents. Bourdieu questions whether economic factors are the driving force behind cultural agents and the fields that they inhabit. His arguments are especially instructive in examining cultural production in Senahú during the early 20th century, and an important mode of analysis in my examination of how those early years contributed to contemporary spaces that contrast cultural and politico-economic capital amidst Senahú’s inhabitants. Bourdieu questions scholarly assumptions that he says act to inaccurately define particular end results; in particular, economic goals of a given space and time; an historical formative time in Senahú. He rejects assumptions that include explicit end
results to cultural practice, negating my observations pertaining to explicit foreign ventures to benefit monetarily through agricultural exports during the formative years of Senahú; years of actions which defined spaces and social constructs persistent today. Because Senahú is a place where multiple factions from distinct backgrounds converged to form a shared space, this examination requires multilineal analysis of the history of the game pertaining to each of the three dominant and distinct ethnic factions during the municipality’s formative years. This formative process created contemporary fields of analysis pertaining to how disparate agents interact based on “practical induction based on previous experience” (Bourdieu 1998: 80).

Through examination of Anglo-European, ladino, and Q’eqchi’ factions, I encountered instances that contrast what Bourdieu argues, suggesting that particular agents were indeed consciously motivated by reasons in their efforts to establish fields conducive to their end goals. It is appropriate to consider exact goals in a manner that contributes to the overall understanding of a given society and to reduce individual understanding where applicable. However, arguing this point does not usefully explain all three factions of early 20th century Senahú, a fact that decries separate analysis of each ethnic group in a manner that does not reduce the importance of the “relationship of infraconcious an infralinguistic complicity” (Bourdieu 1998: 79) in determining the existence and maintenance of conscious desires of three disparate subgroups and how these are interwoven to create the field on which the game is played. In this sense I find it very appropriate to look at community formation through the lens of material empiricism. At the dawn of Anglo entrepreneurship, colonialism had already established cultural and
economic fields that were established to benefit certain members of society while negating any kind of incentive or opportunity to the rural agrarian populace.

Decree 170, instigated in 1871 and further broadened and ratified in 1879 as a way to ensure German descendants retained certain economic rights through prior gains, was backed by Guatemala’s liberal movement to incorporate foreign investment and large scale agricultural commodity production introduced an economic environment that embraced existing social structures that maintained feudalistic constructs in the countryside. Anglo Europeans, although prevalent in their business dealings throughout Guatemala, established profitable business ventures by diversifying their holdings and using monetary capital to meet the end goal of economic profit. Although Cambranes (1977) suggests that imperialism was the long term goal of German immigrants the record suggests less sinister intentions that were based in acquiring land for the sole means of profiting from exports commodities and ensuring that related ventures would allow them to make the most amount of money in the most modern and comfortable manner available. For the most part, Anglo-Europeans maintained separate and sometimes hermitic lives apart from ladino and Indigenous populations in Senahú, preferring to persuade political systems to benefit their end goals if they were able to do so, and openly denouncing those same individuals when they were unable to find an equally beneficial accord.

Ladino Senahúticos in the first decades of the 20th century emphasized their position of authority as native-born Guatemalan citizens who represented the sovereign interests of their homeland. On regional and national levels, rural ladinos who resided in positions of power exercised that power in a manner that allowed them to establish, control, and
maintain a manner of living in land that was considered wasteland and to make it their own. In this sense, ladinos were most advantageously situated to prosper in acquiring cultural capital that could be used to persuade foreign inhabitants to make economic alliances with them by virtue of their positions as government administrators. Today, ladino families in the earliest decades of Senahú’s existence as a formally recognized municipality are revered as cultural icons that created a paradise in the mountains out of “wasteland” for future generations to enjoy. The end goal to the ladino populace was to establish cultural and political dominance in Senahú by embracing foreign entrepreneurs and a growing Indigenous labor force, each of whom provided them the necessary functions to prosper in cultural and economic capital and to engage themselves in the ongoing process of nation building in the wake of a sovereign and autonomous Guatemala.

While suffering disadvantages in the game of procuring cultural and economic capital, Senahú’s in-situ and migrant Q’eqchi’ populace during the late 19th century and first half of the 20th century inhabited fields within the burgeoning community and relegated to positions of decreased influence as agents of political and economic production. Descendants of plantation laborers in Senahú, including a limited number of identifiable fourth generation labor descendants, continue to struggle with the fields in which they are engaged as agents in search of the smallest advances in their social status and upward economic mobility. For early plantation laborers, an increase in cultural capital was achieved mainly by securing access to arable land on which to cultivate subsistence crops, thus ensuring a harvest requisite for survival. Few laborers were willing to uproot their families without assurance of acquiring land on which to subsist.
The migration process from Senahú’s plantations to lower valley locations in the Polochic region happened over a period of decades, not in masse, as de la Cruz (1982) suggests. More often than not, obligations to large numbers of children and extended family limited options to seek free employment and access to arable land in other places. Q’eqchi’ laborers who remained as laborers on plantations decided that surviving on abysmally low wages (if any were accrued) and decreased socioeconomic stature were more desirable than facing risks associated with uprooting hearth and home because they had some assurance that they had access to arable land and a kinship and social networks on which to rely.

**Conclusions to Chapter 2**

This chapter presents a basis upon which to understand how Senahú was established in the late 19th and first decades of the 20th century. I present three distinct ethnic factions who inhabited the emerging municipality; including Anglo-Europeans, Q’eqchi’ Mayas, and ladinos as agents who established subsequent cultural fields that are still prevalent today. I address economic, political, and cultural attributes that are associated with these factions that came to characterize the respective social spaces of these agents and the impacts of excluding Q’eqchi’ Mayas of opportunities to participate as autonomous citizens with equal rights to acquire and maintain land, political offices, and upward socioeconomic mobility. The historical tone of this chapter sets the stage for an examination of subsequent decades and the persistent struggles of Q’eqchi’ laborers to reverse their fortunes as peons in a feudalistic economic system; a struggle that I continue to examine in the following chapter about the nationalization of plantation lands and the rise of coffee cooperatives in many of the rural areas of the municipality.
Readers may feel that some of the consultant comments that I cite in this chapter attempt to trivialize and minimize decades of egregious injustices wrought upon thousands of Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers, farmers, and families in Senahú and other rural regions of Guatemala where marginalized language groups were collectively forced to labor in the name of foreign interests. In actuality, what I present in these pages reflects a large pool of consultant perceptions concerning a turbulent past that was ruled by the plantation systems in their midst. As disconcerting as some may view their commentary, the responses are often indicative of individuals who were raised with limited options; often choosing to struggle in order to maintain the options that allowed them to maintain cultural values and a semblance of economic and subsistence security. Consultants who pertain to Senahú’s elite wealthy and rural poor alike collectively view German and Anglo-European presence in Senahú with mixed feelings. In part, they are far removed from that particular place and time and openly consider multiple perspectives about early plantation life, tending to dismiss the inherent negative consequences of what is otherwise defined by binary relationships between foreign export capitalists and Indigenous labor forces. What does remain is a collective idea associated with those foreign entities, who they were, and what they were doing in the rugged, rural regions of Guatemala Moreover, there exists a collective idea of the consequences of a shared reality that is based on persistent consequences of mass land ownership by a limited number of landed elites amongst a marginalized Indigenous majority.
Chapter 3

Agrarian Reform, Nationalized Coffee Production, and the Rise of the Military State

At the conclusion of World War I, Germans began to migrate to Guatemala in greater numbers hoping to find economic inclusion that was not readily available to them in their homelands. A well-established German presence in Guatemala, including lending institutions and private capital, encouraged German immigrants to work as administrative officials or field strong-arms on rural coffee plantations in Central American nations that witnessed a top-heavy economic boon to those who had established monetary and political networks in urban and rural regions throughout Guatemala. Over the next two decades, German influence as coffee producers and exporters grew exponentially in Alta Verapaz as they established strongholds in agricultural production and investment in transport infrastructure, regional thoroughfares, hospitality industry, and land tenure. Senahú experienced this emigration with the arrival of German immigrant families who bought and administered the majority of annexed plantations throughout the municipality. The plantations that the landed Germans operated and controlled were smaller in area and monetary value than the larger, more prolific plantations that were owned and operated by the Champney and Koester families, respectively. Although the annexed plantations were divided in ownership between greater numbers of families and generally smaller in scale in economic and political influence, the smaller German-owned plantations played a key role in shaping future models of agricultural production and economic resources as they were later sold to wealthy ladino families and investors who were related through marriage to previous German owners. As the decades passed, large and small plantations
changed ownership, merged, or were contracted to maximize production value and ensure that the wealthiest of the landed elite would manage the most productive parcels of land. Plantations that were located on less productive land in the low-lying areas of the municipality were often dissolved, sold, or converted to community cooperatives.

The discussion of how plantations were expropriated, nationalized, and turned into cooperatives requires an examination of the processes associated with the political ideologies that inspired the October Revolution and the decade during which attempts were made to reform Guatemala’s government and to expropriate vast areas of arable land from foreign and national elites and the subsequent allocation of those lands to Indigenous and non-Indigenous agriculturalists living in the nation’s periphery. This chapter will also examine the rise of nationalized plantation communities in rural Senahú in the years that followed waves of German expulsion from Guatemala during World War II. This examination includes a discussion of increased ladino migration and commerce in the Polochic Valley and subsequent decades of dispute over land tenure with Maya agriculturalists living in the region as the military prowess of the centralized government instigated civil war against the marginalized communities in rural agriculture producing regions.

**Land Reform and Economic Inclusion of the Rural Populace**

During a visit to Ch’ulak cooperative in June of 2006, I arrived late one evening to sad news and a large gathering of friends in the community who were preparing the *yolek* (wake) of Rosalinda Maaz Caal. Rosalinda, who was 86 years old at the time of her death, was matriarch of the family that allowed me to stay in their home during various
visits in the years preceding her passing. Rosalinda, her husband Ronaldo, and multitudes of her extended kin and progeny endured my incessant inquiries about life in the community, the Q’eqchi’ language, religion, planting and harvesting, the finer points of preparing the perfect tortilla, and folklore associated with Tzuultaq’á; the mountain valley lords that were said to inhabit the numerous caves and gullies surrounding the community. We buried Rosalinda the following day in the cemetery beside the road that led to the broken down European style chalet that once housed foreign coffee elites.

I returned back to the U.S. a few months later and decided to go back through old notebooks that I kept during a visit to Rosalinda’s home in December, 2002. Having already lived a long life at the age of 82, Rosalinda and I talked about her parents and the circumstances that led them away from their maternal land in Tanchi’, a small community East of San Pedro Carchá. As an undergraduate student and aspiring anthropologist at the time I found myself trying to put into practice the lessons I had learned in my methods course concerning interviews. I quickly conceded that Rosalinda was driving the interview, and in doing so, she dispelled a number of misconceptions concerning early generations of coffee laborers. Although it is true that a majority of the laborers who migrated to Senahú from neighboring regions of Alta Verapaz by sheer force, many also came to seek land on which to subsist and to maintain kinship ties with other members who decided to leave the upper regions of the Verapaz because they did not have sufficient access to land in their existing communities. She described how her father, the penultimate son in his family, did not feel that he had enough land to support his new family and chose to migrate in order to earn a plot of land in Se’pamak, a small annex Sepacuité plantation. Speaking of recent hardships in 2002 and a significant drop
in coffee prices that the cooperative was offered for their harvest, Rosalinda spoke of her father facing hardship and making a tough decision to find work and land with the plantation. “We are hurting they say. Is this true as they say it is or perhaps is it not? It was my father who endured hardship all at once because of his family. He fought with his mother and father because they offered him only a small bit of land when he married. So you will see that there was not a lot of land there in the place of his birth. As such, my father came forth to find his work he came forth to pick his bit of coffee. He also came forth to find his little field (maize field). He’s buried there you will see, near the field. It is true that we were poor but my father worked in whichever way that was necessary so that there would not be any problems in his family like he endured with his mother and father.”

National and municipal archives describe the sociopolitical and economic environments when nascent municipalities in the Polochic Valley began to emerge and demonstrate a persistent pattern through which economic relations and demographic spatialization of the Indigenous Maya who inhabit the region are constructed. Foreign socioeconomic and political influence and its subsequent impact on agribusiness in the Polochic region marked the beginning of newly established communities and demographic shifts that were marked by large numbers of labor-enforced migrations of Q’eqchi’ Maya families to Senahú from neighboring hamlets surrounding Cobán; in particular, the populations surrounding San Pedro Carchá, Lanquin, and Cahabón. Municipal archives from those first decades that Senahú became a nationally recognized government entity also proved to be an invaluable resource during the preliminary phase of research in contributing to how I conceived historical processes associated with social
and economic organization throughout the municipality. The archives provide insight into the organization in Senahú and the processes of establishing emergent sociopolitical and economic hierarchies that included landed elites, municipal administrators consisting of ladinos from Baja Verapaz (Salama), and an Indigenous labor force working on the various coffee plantations. Further insight came from consultant interviews from the elder generation, including Rosalinda, numbering more than a dozen male and female elders that represented a diversified geographic cross-section of hamlets and the urban town center of Senahú. This group of individuals generously discussed their respective family histories in impressive detail that speaks to the quality of their collective memory. They spoke of hamlets and villages in which their parents and grandparents lived prior to the forced migrations that altered their lives and relegated them to lives toiling as laborers for the coffee elite of Senahú. For more than a decade conducting intermittent and long-term field work, I discussed personal and collective memories of ancestral lands (xch’och’eb’ qaxe’toonil) with revered community elders; many of whom addressed a collective hope for the Maya and the political atmosphere during the second half of the 19th century when foreign coffee elites began to cede much of the lesser desired parcels of land to small communities.

On one particular occasion in 2002 Rosalinda spoke with me of the days when she was still a small girl, not yet the age of ten (‘yoquin chaq chi b’eeek tana’ b’eleeb’ chihab’ – I was perhaps arriving at nine years of age), when her parents decided to seek employment and subsistence opportunities at Se’pamak (approximately 1930). The Champneys and other landed elites had already established coffee and sugar producing operations in Sepacuité, Chirixk’itzak, Se’pamak, and Ch’ulak when Rosalinda and her
family arrived. She spoke of those first days on the plantation and of her father giving her and her two siblings (one older sister and one younger brother) important instructions about working in the coffee fields as a family in order to receive permission to plant maize on a hillside plot between Chirixk’itzak and Se’pamak. “That was a small maize field (k’al).” Rosalinda recalled. “The field was full of large stones and the soil was not good soil. It was not black soil. Rather, it was red mixed with black, the kind that is found in Se’okok [a neighboring community]; like clay. But my mother and father worked hard and our field grew slowly because we stayed away from problems, we stayed invisible before the owner and the rest of the workers. We did our job, do you understand?”

The years that followed later expulsion of German elites and national political change marked a period of hope for Indigenous Mayas and rural ladinos to progress in their struggle towards economic and social inclusion as landowners and participants in the social fabric by taking collective ownership of lands on which they might adequately subsist and work as part of functioning cooperatives. Rosalinda’s words express a small portion of this hope that if an individual or a family stays out of trouble and in good favor in the eyes of bosses and community, rewards will come. When political shifts indicated larger inclusion of the rural poor in the nation’s socioeconomic fabric, communities sought to create autonomous spaces in which they would dictate the direction of their livelihood and leave the days of laboring to provide financial gains for the coffee elites under whom they were forcibly given to labor. Any positive outlook that the rural populace espoused in long term participation in an emerging national landscape during Guatemala’s land reforms at the end of World War II were short lived when ladinos began to fill the vacuum of social and economic power by occupying the majority of the
most productive agricultural plots left behind by Germans who were deported from Guatemala or socially ostracized in business and political circles throughout the country.

Cambranes (2004) observes that ladino elites were supportive of the initiative to deport German coffee oligarchs by way of more concrete and meaningful political and economic alliances with the United States. In strengthening this alliance, ladino elites would fill the void left by German-owned lands, including readily available infrastructures that would allow new ladino land owners to keep the money flowing inward. Conversely, if the conservative elites were to lose political battles in the subsequent election, their claim to take over German lands would be disrupted by liberal advances to include the rural poor; thus threatening their social and economic superiority in the country. “The agrarian bourgeoisie supported the United States’ initiative in the interest of taking power of the valuable German plantations, which by 1939 now occupied one third of the best arable lands in the country” (Cambranes 2004: 245).

The 1944 Guatemalan elections ushered in a decade of political and economic change for the rural populace of the country. Just as ladino elites had feared, the election of Juan José Arévalo ushered in a new era during which “the liberal dictatorship initiates the crisis of the bourgeoisie order in Guatemala that was established by the plantation owners” (Cambranes 2004: 245). However, a majority of geographically established rural Maya laborers remained because of their dependence on arable land on which they had spent years harvesting subsistence crops; to abandon the plots meant abandoning any rights and guarantees associated with expropriated plantations and any valid claim to plots of arable land should the pendulum of power swing back to foreign coffee oligarchies. Smaller plantations which had been abandoned were often absorbed by larger
operations that would buy goods for prices below market value. Marlon, a man in his late 80s at the time of our conversation in 2001 explains how political changes impacted his young family on the small Ch’ulak plantation in 1944. “We stayed here when the old owners left. Everything that was ours was here. Our maize fields were here. Our family remained here. Our church was here. It’s purely true that we still had to pick coffee. However, we stayed not to pick coffee; we stayed to work our fields. Let’s say we had left, understand? Where then would we have found a new place and new fields?”

Marlon’s explanation describes common sentiments of many Q’eqchi’ laborers at that time in regards to weighing the risks against the benefits associated with emerging opportunities for social and economic inclusion in the countryside. Remaining tethered to a plantation system did not offer an ideal situation for an individual to obtain land entitlement outright because land expropriation was still years away from full implementation. In Marlon’s case the security of maintaining his family’s small plot of land while continuing to work on what became an annexed plantation outweighed the risk of abandoning that land for something unknown. Marlon admittedly joked that if he had been ten years younger, he may have felt the desire to take the risk, noting that the political situation changed again very quickly some years later. “Ab’anan kinxuwak tana.’” – “But then, perhaps I was scared.” His face as he shared his memory expressed a small sense of regret. He said that he did not regret what he may have gained in the way of opportunity or financial security, rather, regret perhaps for not having taken the chance when he felt he could.

Cambranes’s detailed accounts of the legislative process in Guatemala from the late 19th century until the middle of the 20th century describe how Guatemala underwent
significant political, economic and agrarian shifts that lead to further political and economic shifts in the second half of the 20th century; including revolution, a period of short lived land reforms, and the collapse of a democratically elected socialist president as the result of clandestine U.S. military operations. This upheaval ushered in a period that witnessed more than three decades of civil unrest and violence throughout the nation that systematically sought to eliminate Indigenous Maya communities by way of government-sponsored attacks.

Handy (1994) documents an historical period spanning a decade during the 20th century that focuses on Guatemala’s internal policies towards land reform. The emphasis of reforms in the middle of the 20th century emphasizes government-driven policies aimed to benefit rural populations, more specifically, to benefit agriculturalists on the periphery. The October revolution addressed internal conflict and pressure between nation, its government leaders, and the rural poor from 1944-1954. During this decade, shifting social and labor issues dominated the lives of numerous peasant organizations, government advisory committees, and realities of the rural poor. One major struggle during the October Revolution involved expropriating foreign held lands and advancing agrarian reforms to benefit Indigenous agriculturalists who dominated the rural regions of Guatemala, regions that were barely accessible to anyone who did not own heavy trucks or machinery to instill basic infrastructural amenities. The fundamental concern of the revolution was to expropriate rural communal lands in order to start an agricultural shift that attempted to offer peasants a more inclusive role in the national economy. Proposed by President Jacobo Árbenz Guzman in 1952, the agrarian reform sought to curtail the influence of wealthy landed elites and foreign-operated plantations in the countryside.
One of the most ambitious goals of the proposed agrarian reform was to integrate Maya and ladino peasants in the production of export commodities and to develop “the capitalist peasant economy and the capitalist agricultural economy in general” (Handy 1994: 90).

A majority of the conflicts during the implementation of land expropriation involved peasants and former plantation laborers presenting themselves as leaders of organized community organizations who were dedicated to a common cause. In the initial stages of land reform, many communities of Maya agriculturalists and former plantation laborers did not wish to participate in agricultural cooperatives, electing instead to struggle for their own piece of land on which to subsist; a point that runs contrary to Marlon’s explanation in the pages above. The inability of the Guatemalan government to understand the social and economic realities in the country’s periphery assisted in the long-term failure of the agrarian reform during the October Revolution, prompting many Maya agriculturalists to re-examine the cooperative model as a way to maintain stability within the community rather than to take the rough road that independent family farming promised. At the heart of the government’s miscalculations during this process were issues concerning class and ethnicity and the vital role that each played in shaping individual and collective perceptions of reality of emerging agrarian reform.

“Land in Guatemala was distributed in a dramatically inequitable fashion . . . the most obvious inequity was between Indians and ladinos; Indian farm operators averaged less than 4.5 manzanas each, while ladinos averaged close to 35 . . . significant differences in the amount of land controlled by Indians and ladinos throughout the country helped to determine the way they would react to the reforms of the revolution” (Handy 1994: 127).
The process of government reforms that were aimed at integrating the vast amount of peasants into the national economy gained strength shortly after its implementation in 1953. Not only did the national economy benefit from more inclusive modes of production, the expropriation of lands in the countryside aided in the creation of agricultural cooperatives, while at the same time affording the middle-size farms to continue their participation in export agriculture. Similarly to the cases in El Salvador and Costa Rica, this model provided rural Guatemalans a greater opportunity to participate in semi-autonomous small-scale agricultural production. However, implementations of land expropriation laws were understood in disparate ways in the rural areas of Guatemala as Mayas and ladino peasants began to occupy lands which were not selected for expropriation. By 1954, just over one year after implementation of the expropriation act, Árbenz lost his presidency in a military coup backed by the United States and its Central Intelligence Agency. Thus ended the short-lived implementation of integrating the rural poor into an inclusionary national economy that promoted participation from all classes and all ethnicities and hope for millions of disenfranchised Guatemalans living in the countryside.

Although Árbenz and his administration intended to rectify the perverse gap in the country’s distribution of wealth and landholdings in the countryside, agrarian reforms failed to present a clear solution to the multitude of interests, foreign and domestic, entrenched in the Guatemalan economy. Handy clearly decides to neglect external pressures from foreign governments, in particular the role that the United States played in the collapse of the revolutionary period of 1944-1954. Instead, he argues that the
revolution failed from within, and by doing so, paved the way for foreign interests and ladino elites to re-establish the old plantation models.

Senahú’s most lucrative plantation owners were less affected by land expropriation than the densely populated and more readily accessible Indigenous regions located closer to Guatemala City as information was more readily disseminated to the populace and rural community organization was more practiced and widely accepted as a form to obtain rights to land tenure. By the time land expropriation began in earnest in the Polochic region, Árbenz had been replaced and foreign interests took primary control of agricultural export and labor policies in the rural regions of the nation. However, the expulsion of a number of German families from the Polochic region during the late 1940s created an opportunity for Indigenous groups to undertake operations in many of the smaller coffee plantations which were located on less desirable lands that yielded less profitable crops; many of those lands were deemed less desirable by the larger plantation owners because the soil was too rocky or of poor quality. Still other lands were rejected by plantation owners because of distance or because the altitude was either too high (cold) or too low (hot) to produce profitable harvests. Under these circumstances, communities that inhabited lands in which the foreign owners were expelled from Guatemala or had joined more lucrative family plantations elsewhere were able to form cooperatives.

**Emergence of the Military State, Nationalized Plantations, and Ladino Finqueros**

As the decade-long revolution drew to an end, the nation’s social, economic, and political power became more centralized in Guatemala City. Emboldened by the political and military backing of the United States, plantation owners who had been relieved of their
lands during expropriation exercised their power once again to establish control over the rural populace and the lands that they inhabited. The reestablished control of foreign elites soon changed thereafter as military generals gained power in the government and sought to empower export production and military mite in a coordinated effort that would initiate more than three decades of state-instigated violence against all factions and entities that strove to promote social and economic equality for the rural peasantry and urban professional alike. On the heels of the successful revolution in Cuba, Guatemala witnessed a number of attempted government uprisings by military generals while the rural populace considered possible strategies to conduct a prolonged anti-imperialist struggle to maintain the gains that they had achieved during the October Revolution during the previous decade.

In 1963 the Guatemalan military took another step in reforming the national economic and political power structure to their benefit while squelching any momentum that rural Maya and ladinos in the countryside had hoped would carry over from the previous decade when they deposed Miguel Ydigoras Fuentes, who had been in power since 1958. In doing so, the military seized the opportunity to reestablish alliances with the pre-existing agricultural oligarchies to maintain presence and authority in the rural regions while limiting the amount of power and influence that they would have in government matters. This alliance, which was more ultimatum than strategy, was born of necessity as the military desired to dictate policy while establishing and maintaining influence and power in their emerging nationalist identity. This allowed the government to control their patrimony by way of military force in a manner which would allow
foreign inclusion on their own terms wherever possible as they established their vision of their own patrimonial Guatemala.

The existing Guatemalan and foreign bourgeoisie conceded to the military’s terms in order to keep their operations running. To reject the military’s offer would mean that the foreign barons would risk losing all control and financial interest in the businesses which they had established over the decades and be expelled from the country or lose all rights and privileges to conduct future business in Guatemala. The military guaranteed security to the foreign elites against potential future uprisings from the rural populace and the right to continue to grow their business in exchange for a shared portion of each of their profits that would be turned over to the state.

“This was the first time in the modern history of Guatemala that the plantation owners saw themselves obligated to accept to share control of the state apparatus with a lobby of uniformed upstarts. What Torres–Rivas has called: the marriage between military figures and entrepreneurs by way of government control, was in fact, a marriage by force, accepted with disgust by the bourgeoisie, in the face of the possibility that social agitation that had destabilized the government of Ydígoras would come to turn into a popular insurrection, capable of thrashing the order that the oligarchy had established (Cambranes 2004: 262).

This is yet one of many examples that demonstrate the impact of imperialism; whether it stems from local, national, or international influence or whether imperialism is based on economic, social, or political objectives. All forms of imperialism have been at odds with Maya rights since the time of contact with Europeans and it continues to shape the lives of Q’eqchi’ communities throughout the Polochic and its communities;
including collectively held desires to autonomously produce and cultivate agricultural goods based on their own desires and means. Since the colonial era and during decades of civil war, Mayas in Guatemala have been exposed to countless acts of violence and terror, both physical and mental. These acts began with the arrival of European invaders who acted in the name of god and gold; culminating on the international stage by way of state-ordered military force (Carmack et.al 1988; Falla 1994; Green 1999; Manz 1988, 2004; Grandin 2004). The fact that the military allied itself with the landed elite escalated an insurgent ideology in rural Guatemala. This was particularly true in municipalities where Mayan language speakers make up the majority (if not the whole) of the agricultural labor pool dedicated to producing export commodities for the nation and the landed elite. In essence, the Maya populace witnessed an increase in social, cultural, and economic oppression in Senahú by way of the newly consummated military alliance with foreign plantation owners.

Instead of extinguishing Indigenous uprisings in the countryside during the years that followed the military-entrepreneur alliance, the Guatemalan government's increased military presence instigated further and direct hegemonic rule by establishing military bases located in the rural periphery that was home to the agricultural lands that produced export commodities and to communities that had hoped to emerge from the October Revolution as equal participants in Guatemalan society. Rather than taking part as equal participants in emerging national identity, these communities continued to be an afterthought to the military-entrepreneurial elite. After toiling for centuries as culturally and economically marginalized groups that were valued primarily for the lands on which they lived and the sweat from their labor to profit the minority elite, the rural peasantry
began their struggle anew. Plantation owner concerns regarding the potential of any sustained uprisings by Maya agriculturalists that lived on plantation communities were also assuaged as military bases provided available security (including armaments that the communities would not be able to equal) and maintained the rule of law as established by the military-entrepreneur alliance. Plantation owners found themselves in a precarious position whereby giving in to military coercion would lessen their political and economic power in Guatemala while allowing them to maintain wealth (albeit decreased) and cultural capital among the ladino bourgeoisie and the military. Concerning the matter that agricultural elites faced, Cambranes (2004) notes that, “the bourgeoisie realized that it was obligated to satisfy the political ambitions and the thirst for wealth of the high officers of the Army and of corrupt politicians and raiders of national wealth and public funds.”

In communities where plantations became nationalized, the military government infused a greater ladino presence in the Polochic region to fill vacancies left by deported German plantation owners by selling coffee and agricultural plantation land to the emerging ladino bourgeoisie at favorable market prices (See Table D in Appendix for a breakdown of plantation organization/administration for post-October Revolution Senahú plantations). Fidel Augusto Ponce González, present day proprietor of El Porvenir, Jolomijix and Miralvalle coffee plantations, two Texaco gas stations, and two combination hotel-restaurants in Senahú and Telemán (Panzós Municipality), was one of two sons whose life would benefit from the military’s objective of installing a ladino hierarchy in the agricultural zones in order to replace Anglo-Europeans as coffee producers and to re-establish external sociopolitical and economic control over export
commodities. This objective proved not only to create an economic infrastructure by which ladino elites would acquire and maintain a larger portion of the national wealth; they were also well positioned to replace foreign elites in the cultural and political hierarchies that the Germans and Anglo-Europeans established over more than a century prior to the October Revolution and the ensuing military alliance with foreign and ladino entrepreneurs.

Fidel and I spoke often during my field work (see Chapters 4 and 6) about his family’s role in the community and the region during its rise to great political and economic influence during the decades since the October Revolution and present day realities that faced Senahú as a fledgling coffee producing region. He recounted how his father, Augusto Ponce Antillón arrived to Senahú as a teenager from Cobán and began his journey to success as an administrator at Se’ritk’iche’ Plantation and later as an employee at the general store owned by the Dieseldorff family (Augusto eventually purchased the store in 1918 from the Dieseldorff family). Augusto saved enough money to purchase Jolomijix and Semuk Plantations in Telemán and El Estor, respectively, and was well positioned financially and in his business acumen and knowledge of the coffee business to take his place of power as a new generation of coffee oligarchies and land moguls arose in Senahú in the latter part of the 1950s when land became readily available. Fidel recounted a journey that he took with his older brother, Alberto, during a break in the school year in 1958 during which they traveled to visit Alberto’s girlfriend in Cahabón. Fidel vividly painted a picture of the ladino finqueros community that existed in post revolution Guatemala and the difficulties and trials associated with travel to the surrounding plantation communities and municipal centers in the immediate region. He
describes himself and his brother “like mountain men of the old North American West, entering the town, basking in the admiration of the people for the elegance of our horses’ trot.” Fidel continued to talk of various plantation families and administrators whom they encountered on their long journey. He stressed the importance of the finquero community in Senahú during that time as he recounted how the two young travelers were aided by these networks; receiving sustenance and shelter from the elements; as well as a few strong pulls on any available liquor to sustain them on their long journey. Fidel often painted a picture of a utopian coffee plantation society through his description of adventurers on horseback (and in “father’s Land Rover”) when situations became too difficult to manage.

Although the principal export crop has consisted mainly of coffee, ladinos who inhabited plantation lands also began to focus efforts on cattle that were raised for local and regional consumption. They also continued to harvest sugar cane in the lower lying regions of the municipality and maintained a tradition of mild crop diversification to satisfy the immediate markets in Senahú and the Polochic mountain valley region. The two principal plantations in Senahú, Se’amay and Sepacuité, were still owned and administered by George Denis Scott Koester\(^3\) (Englishman) and the Champney family (American) during the post-revolution shift. The two plantations were revered as the most powerful centers of coffee production in the municipality but were joined in progression by numerous ladino families who were assuming roles as finqueros in a majority of the smaller plantations and annexed lands. Their presence and position on the plantations as finqueros was important to the military junta in Guatemala City as they continued to meet the demand to supply exports to pad the national coffers. Perhaps more important to the
government, as well as to the Guatemalan bourgeoisie, resided in the reality that Guatemalans were exerting themselves in the positions of cultural and economic authority that were once occupied by Anglo-European communities throughout the rural agrizones. In essence, cultural, economic, and political capital all increased exponentially among the emerging ladino oligarchy as they asserted their place as leaders in a new undertaking of nation building for bourgeois Guatemalans, and by bourgeois Guatemalans.

By occupying newly available positions of power as bastions of industry throughout the country’s agrizones, the cultural bourgeoisie of the rural sector arose in part because of established social systems that divided ethnic classes by language and culture; further perpetuating the myth of modern, industrial, and progressive (ladino) and primitive, lazy, and superstitious (Q’eqchi’ Maya). In his discussion on the economy of symbolic goods, Bourdieu (1993) analyzes cultural production through the lens of economies and what he describes as the “disavowal of the ‘economy’” to show how authors (as influential producers of goods) commodities and markets create fields in which symbolic capital is accumulated and perpetuated. Bourdieu argues that producing profit for the sake of profits may indeed act as a secondary benefit of business and that by establishing the field of symbolic capital the author creates a model by which economic capital follows. Although Bourdieu is using art dealers and publishers to make his case, the logic maintains that any producer of economy and culture may fit the model that he is discussing:

“Alongside the pursuit of ‘economic’ profit, which treats the cultural goods business as a business like any other, and not the most profitable, ‘economically’ speaking . . . there is also
room for the accumulation of symbolic capital. ‘Symbolic capital’ is to be understood as economic or political capital that is disavowed, misrecognized, hence legitimate, a ‘credit’ which, under certain conditions, and always in the longer run, guarantee ‘economic’ profits. . . The disavowal [dénégation] is neither a real negation of the ‘economic’ interest which always haunts the most ‘disinterested’ practices, nor a simple ‘dissimulation’ of the mercenary aspects of the practice, as even the most attentive observers have supposed. The disavowed economic enterprise of art dealers or publishers, ‘cultural bankers’ in whom art and business meet in practice – which predisposes them for the role of scapegoat – cannot succeed, even in ‘economic’ terms, unless it is guided by a practical mastery of the laws of the functioning of the field in which cultural goods are produced and circulate, i.e. by an entirely improbable, an in any case rarely achieved, combination of the realism implying minor concessions to ‘economic’ necessities that are disavowed but not denied and the conviction which excludes them” (Bourdieu 1993: 75-76).

This aspect of cultural production is readily visible in cases where profits are not necessarily readily gained through business alone. The ancillary function of the field is to promote cultural capital and establish a hierarchy of power that emerges as the result of the economic field. In Bourdieu’s example, symbolic capital and economic benefit are not mutually exclusive factors in a given society; rather, the accumulation of economic profit and social power work in harmony to produce dual modes of cultural (primary) and economic (secondary) domination of one class over another. In place tangible commodities such as art, literature, or even coffee; which provides the backdrop of this entire undertaking. I assert that the business of cultural production in rural Guatemala was, and continues to be, the foremost concern of the emergent Guatemalan bourgeoisie. By inhabiting the economic and social voids left by German plantation owners,
communities of ladino finqueros were positioned to import, produce, and maintain fields of symbolic capital via military and bourgeois mandates of “Guatemalan culture” in the rural countryside.

Symbolic goods that result from rural ladino finqueros hierarchies achieve portions of three goals held by the military during the thirty-six year Guatemalan civil war; to continue the processes of assimilation that began with European contact and Christianization of Maya language groups; establish a class of ladino hegemons and a class of rural subalterns; annihilation of Indigenous communities by way of force, including language, religious traditions and ethos, cultural customs, and life. These examples perhaps come across as extreme cases concerning social and economic power structures in Guatemala that divide a nation and its citizenry. In fact, whether by gradual undertaking or by rapid force instigated by General Efraín Ríos Montt’s mandate to initiate a scorched earth approach via Plan Sofia, the validity of these extreme examples is discussed below in an examination of post-revolution political movements by rural Mayas and lados in an attempt to once again achieve political, cultural, and economic equality in the countryside; in particular, the coffee producing lands of the Polochic agrizone. Conversely, the Guatemalan case provides a remarkable example in understanding the full scope of colonization and resistance that has dominated the Western hemisphere since the time of European contact and invasion 520 years ago. Despite centuries of dedicated efforts by Christian denominations and waves of foreign incursions into new world nations, Indigenous Guatemalans continue to adapt to continual change in the sociopolitical structures in their midst. The fact that more than half of Guatemala’s population consists of “secondary” language groups, and that these
language groups participate in all realms of religious beliefs, agricultural subsistence and production, manufacturing, commerce, policy, economy, government (local and national), and education is in itself a significant victory over the ideologies and policies that would attempt to oppress and even destroy.

**Political Activism in Senahú: 1954-1996**

Before I started conducting “official” anthropological research in the Polochic region I lived in various communities (on coffee cooperatives and in municipal centers) as a humanitarian worker. I lived in Cahabóncito, a small agricultural community on the banks of the Cahabón River that separates the border between Alta Verapaz and Izabal provinces, when an agreement was signed by the Guatemalan government and the insurgent coalition known as the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity – Unidad Revolucionaria Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG) - on December 29th, 1996. The agreement for a firm and lasting peace was a work in progress that proceeded at a painstakingly slow pace over a period of 36 years during which Indigenous communities and marginalized ladinos sought equality and inclusion in the area that encompasses “political, military, legislative, social, economic, agrarian, cultural, and ethnic issues, and bound them into a comprehensive nationwide agenda for peace” (United Nations Guatemalan Peace Accords 1998; 1). Cahabóncito pertains to the municipality of Panzós, which had been intimately involved in Indigenous rights marches in Guatemala City during the 1970s and 1980s that demanded peasant rights and even called for the establishment of a Q’eqchi’ nation that would stand as an independent entity autonomous of Guatemalan law and procedures.
Senahú, particularly communities seeking autonomy and the ability to form agricultural cooperatives in the 1970s, participated in great numbers in various social action movements. A number of communities in Senahú were rumored in the 1990s to be bases inhabited by clandestine guerilla opposition and actively engaged in violent conflict with military units stationed in the greater Polochic region. Among the most active organizations were CUC – Comité de Unidad Campesina (Committee for Peasant Unity), an organization led by community leaders and Catholic priests which began its struggle in 1978 to help secure and maintain land rights for agriculturalists and workers in the countryside; including ladino and Maya communities that were engaged in rural development efforts for the entire peasantry, educational development in rural areas, and increased human and civil rights equality for the rural populace.

As mentioned above, the 1963 alliance between Guatemala’s military and agricultural oligarchies was instigated to combat community-based social movements that sought to continue fighting for quality and socioeconomic inclusion that began during decade-long revolution form 1944-1954. Qaawa’ Gilberto Choc, now retired from his long-held position as cooperative administrator during the 1980s in Senahú, spoke with me about the years when national interests were coming into his community from all directions. He stressed that the community was moved to organize in order to maintain the land on which they depended for subsistence and cash crops.

“Those were truly frightful days for us. Not yet were we organized as a cooperative until years later. The municipality was still in charge of the plantation in those days and we searched for ideas so that we could purchase the plantation and organize our little cooperative. However, each time we organized we faced more difficulty. Foreign men came
from Guatemala and talked to us about a lot of new ideas. They talked about using the water below [the valley river he references is the Cahabón River] to create electricity. They also talked about planting bushes in place of the coffee because they said it has great value. However, our older men talked about the importance of our honored maize (li qalol `aj ixim).

I participated in organizing ideas and works for our community. After a lot of hard days we formed our little cooperative by giving our hearts and our ideas. “Years later, the foreign men came with power and worked the water down below.”

Grandin’s (2004) historical account of the political environment in the Polochic region during the country’s civil war culminates by uncovering the events that led to a bloody massacre in front of the Panzós central plaza that surrounds the municipal administration building. Although Panzós municipality is separate from Senahú, they are situated side by side geographically and share many of the same struggles in acquiring land rights and social and economic inclusion. Generally speaking exogamy is not particularly prevalent between the two areas but their proximity and socialization through market and political struggles often brings the two municipalities together or drives them apart (See Chapter 8 in relation to boundaries of loyalty). The Panzós massacre occurred on March 29th, 1978 when farmers throughout the municipality and neighboring areas gathered to protest the growing influence of ladino land barons. The peasantry argued that land barons, including the aforementioned Fidel Ponce, were encroaching further into individually and collectively held lands in order to expand production of their lucrative agribusiness (rice fields, cane fields, and livestock pastures).

Recollections from that day remain in the collective minds of hundreds of peasants who were affected by the outcome of the massacre. This collective memory consistently
places a large group of Indigenous protesters at the doors of the municipal administration building. Enraged by the pending displacement that many faced, many protesters brought machetes and large sticks as they prepared to defend their rights and their bodies from potential physical harm. Military forces, on site to protect the interests of ladino and Anglo-European land barons opened fire on the populace from the roofs overlooking the town square, scattering the survivors from the place of protest. Older generations vary in their accounts of how many people were gunned down during this atrocity and number anywhere from 30-70 individuals; including men, women, and children. The victims were buried en masse, thrown unceremoniously into a common area inhabiting the Panzós cemetery without distinction as family members were denied the opportunity to bury them of their own accord.

The Community of United Peasants (CUC) organized large protests in Guatemala City in the aftermath to show solidarity with Panzós and all peasant communities who remained at the mercy of the military-backed land barons throughout the nation. Small coffee farming communities in Senahú took notice of the violence decided to retreat into their communities in order to organize clandestinely. Gilberto spoke of how this event impacted subsequent action by community leaders to organize their efforts to obtain land title for their cooperative. “Xuwajel ru li kik’uklman” lamented a visually shaken Gilberto. “What happened was frightful. Each one of our hamlet went to church and prayed for the people that died. My brother Miguel talked at the church and told everyone that we better watch ourselves because these problems come all of a sudden if we don’t see the signs.” Gilberto spoke of continued organization and the event as a moment that bound the community together in protecting each other. He stated that the reason they
were finally able to secure funds to form the cooperative a few years later was because the government felt pressure from peasant organizations in Guatemala to relieve tensions in the Polochic region in the aftermath of the Panzós massacre. Although there may exist some amount of truth in his statement, the cooperative in Gilberto’s community was formed as a result of a combination of factors;\(^{42}\) including, lack of foreign or ladino interest in the land and an agreement to allow the government to build a hydroelectric facility (as mentioned above) in the immediate area to manage the hydroelectric plant’s dam on the Cahabón River.

Nineteen and a half years after the massacre (1997), President Álvaro Arzú arrived in Panzós by helicopter in an attempt to reconcile with families who lost their sons and daughters, their mothers and fathers during the violent encounter with military forces. I lived in Panzós during this time and spoke with members of the Q’eqchi’ and ladino community about the killings in 1978 and the government’s undertaking that year to exhume the victims’ bodies and excavate the site with a team of forensic anthropologists in order to return the bodies to their families (See Figure 7 below). Today, even thirty-three years after the infamous massacre, social and economic hardships continue to threaten means labor and subsistence, dictating local responses in which inhabitants of Senahú are actively engaged.\(^{43}\) Grandin’s account documents Fidel Ponce’s alleged role in the peasant riot as an instigator who stood to gain considerable control over arable land by using one portion of the peasant populace to divide the others (Grandin 2004:163). Ponce remains a polarizing figure in issues pertaining to land and commerce in Senahú and the greater Polochic region and plays a significant role in powerful political and business alliances with other ladino-owned agricultural and commerce interests and
refuses to discuss any allegations that he or any of his kin were involved in the event. Along with his presence in Senahú, Fidel maintains a strong presence in Telemán (township of Panzós municipality) through his ownership and trade of considerable land parcels that he acquired in no small amount during the military alliance with the bourgeois entrepreneurs coinciding with 36 years of conflict in Guatemala’s rural countryside.

**Conclusions to Chapter 3**

Large-scale coffee production in Central America often receives credit –and blame- for creating a new liberalism that allowed non-traditional agro-exports to emerge through a process of increased foreign investments and systematically occupying lands that native Mayas inhabited. Others have suggested that coffee, particularly as an export commodity, was the driving force behind an emerging hegemony, dominated by the elites at the expense of the rural masses (Roseberry 1995; Gudmundson 1995; McCreery 1995; Paige 1997). The goal of the elites was to loosen restrictions on labor, land, and markets, thus, intending to maintain economic and political control over the countries. After the Great Depression, the amount of political and economic domination began to subside. Central American nations witnessed a global decline in the demand for coffee, a decline that greatly reduced the power of the coffee elites directly after this period. In contrast to the volatility of the aftermath of years of economic depression after World War II, the response to increase production of coffee exports challenged the coffee elites and established coffee and agricultural oligarchs.
Aided by political and military interference from the United States, the decades following the October Revolution perpetuated plantation-based industry that reinforced class divisions and maintained social and political order under the direction of a new group of ladino finqueros at the helm. Paige (1997) contends that coffee production and an incessant struggle to control land and agricultural commodity production played a significant role in the civil wars that raged in El Salvador and Guatemala, and Nicaragua as the rural poor struggled to maintain any sense of genuine inclusion and participation in a national economy. Such exclusions likely reinforced ethnic, geographic, and class divisions in Guatemala, stunting any hope for a shared national identity. The civil war in Guatemala and the greater Central American area were not merely manifestations of a larger problem between world superpowers who were actively engaged in Cold War
politics. Rather, these civil wars were derived from the social and economic structures of the region and shaped by export commodities and the oligarchies and military dictatorships that worked both independently and in concert. Coffee and power in Guatemala, along with the political institutions that were in place in the 1980s, existed because of persistent colonial influences and dynastic elites that continued to sway monetary influence and political power over coffee production (Paige 1997; Grandin 2004).

Although Guatemala, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and El Salvador all share common geographic features, colonial heritage, and shared history with agricultural export commodities, all represented contrasting political ideologies during the crises of the 1980s. This is due, in part to contrasting political ideologies of the coffee elite and oligarchical strongholds in these each respective country and the labor forces that existed to produce export commodities. Of these countries, Guatemala’s unique ethnic diversity and connection to geographic spaces and peoples wrought a level of fear of uprisings in the rural countryside in the face of oligarchical interests, as well as for the military regimes that took power for good in 1963. Following exportations of foreign coffee elites, Guatemala’s military grew in power and sought to suppress perceived threats from the rural populace when if they attempted to organize and maintain the gains that they had won in the ten years that they found increased inclusion in political, social, and economic facets an emerging Guatemalan state that sought inclusion and equality for the total populace. Conflicts between the state and the populace was further complicated in part because of the complex realities (Paige 1997) that separated the Indigenous citizenry who were divided geographically, linguistically, and ideologically across the country.
As the government and the plantation elites merged in an attempt to maintain power in the countryside, smaller and/or less productive plantations were nationalized and set under the control of the centralized government ministry of agriculture. The alliance between the national military and entrepreneurs sought to insert ladino families in positions of power in the rural periphery. This process established new ladino oligarchies that seized the mantles of cultural, political, and economic superiority. These new interests clashed with growing peasant movements in the country during the 1970s and 1980s; ending in instances of mass bloodshed and further disaffection by Q’eqchi’ Maya communities in Senahú and in neighboring municipalities. Nationalized plantations were often left to survive and produce commodity crops under the administrations of larger foreign-owned operations or administered by committees within the communities themselves; this was accomplished by employing existing infrastructure and labor pools to continue coffee production and maintaining those labor pools by providing arable lands and a small portion of land on which laborers and their families lived. The following chapter examines how these nationalized plantations were the foundation for present day cooperative models on which so many Q’eqchi’ families live and work in Senahú. This discussion includes the processes associated with emerging protests in Senahú and the Polochic region and volatile relations with government and ladino land barons who continued to encroach on cooperative lands in search of new ventures upon which to economically prosper.
Chapter 4

Taking Ownership: Agricultural Cooperative Communities

“You might say we are cursed with bad soil. It is not good for cultivating maize. But it is our soil and we work the land in the manner which was given to us by our fathers. The truth is that coffee died here years back, we already know that. However, we still cultivate a little bit of coffee and work the land with all of our hearts because if we don’t produce something, we will lose the land and our honored maize.”

Qaawa’ Vinicio Pop: Administrative Head of Ch’ulak Cooperative.

From 1970-1974, Army Colonel Carlos Manuel Arana Osorio led the nation’s military government that continued economic alliances and social oppression of previous administrations. During the seven years following inception of the implemented military-entrepreneur alliance a number of Senahú coffee plantations that were previously owned by German families fell into the category of nationalized plantations. Perceived administrative disorder contributed to a lack of interest to maintain a concerted effort and the plantations languished in its quality of coffee crops and other non-traditional export commodity crops that would have otherwise contributed to the nation’s coffers. The lack of interest from new foreign or ladino owners in some of the smaller, lower-elevation plantations concerned the government because of lost financial opportunities on what they feared would become wasteland. However, these lands were already inhabited by thousands of Q’eqchi’ Maya families; a fact that the military government used to its advantage in order to maintain commodity production and to appear progressive in
Indigenous relations in one of the nation’s important rural agrizones. In 1974, Under Osorio’s command, the government relinquished control of four stagnant nationalized coffee plantations to their respective communities in rural Senahú. Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Aktela’, Ch’ulak, Se’ritk’iche’, and Se’marak were actively engaged in the post-October Revolution years in collective efforts to control and manage the nationalized plantations; an achievement that was realized on conditional terms that they would continue to produce export crops for the government in exchange for control of the land and all non-export subsistence agriculture.

Approximately 85% of Senahú’s residents inhabit outlying hamlets that boast agricultural cooperative models as a means of maintaining local and regional ties with language, culture, communal cultivation networks (sewing and harvesting), and modes of economic interchange. These modes often vary in terms of the types of crops that community based cooperatives cultivate and remain dependent on the variety of geographic environments in which they exist. This chapter examines community-based agricultural cooperative models; including the perceived benefits and consequences associated with working and subsisting through collective efforts on cooperatives and the risk/benefit association in comparison to their counterparts embedded in plantation communities. Examining each respective social and economic model provides insight on how inhabitants and participants of each model perceive cultural capital and economic status within the greater scope of the municipality’s social fabric. This juxtaposition with externally-owned (Anglo-European and ladino) plantations highlights how coffee and other non-traditional agriculture is produced and distributed in regional, national, and global markets. Participation in this process contributes to how cooperative workers and
the families who cultivate the crops experience their own individual and collective involvement with external markets, language groups, and economic strategies. Furthermore, examination of the cooperative model in Senahú, including its beginnings as organized semi-autonomous entities during the 1980s, provides a longitudinal view of the model’s adaptability in the current free-trade economic atmosphere and challenges associated with moving away from producing one non-traditional crop (coffee) in favor of another. This also sheds light on the economic viability of cooperatives in the current economic environment and the risks and benefits, both financial and cultural, associated with autonomous agricultural commodity production.

Maya Plantation communities and cooperative communities provide base level examination via intricately engrained hierarchical structures and divisions of class, labor, and wealth. This chapter focuses on cooperative communities as a byproduct of colonization and an ongoing suppressive mechanism that excludes rural Maya communities from equal participation in Guatemala’s social, political, and economic arenas. Comparative analysis of plantation-based communities and organized agricultural cooperatives leads to an examination of Wolf’s classic discussion (1957) and re-examination (1987) concerning closed corporate peasant communities as they pertain to agribusiness and community cooperatives in rural Maya communities in Senahú. In most cases, these cooperative communities do not adhere to the majority of characteristics that Wolf describes in his analysis of community formation, particularly in regards to how those characteristics compare with consideration to the collective purpose of the cooperative. Wolf’s analysis is important to the argument that I make concerning cooperatives that wish to minimize financial risk following a calamitous period of
economic upheaval during which their land and livelihoods were threatened by external circumstances. I discuss how the “closed” nature of the corporate community is neither feasible nor an accurate description to explain how cooperatives maintain community from within using only analysis of the material culture and environment. Rather, as Little (2004) points out, this discussion is better suited when formulating a means of analysis rather than a tangible place. My description of these cooperative communities demonstrates that although contemporary Maya agricultural cooperatives are not entirely physically or ideologically enclosed, they are indeed extremely limited in determining community maintenance and reproduction. I also deviate from Wolf’s initial analysis to show that cooperatives are indeed focused on making a profit for their enterprise based on a necessity to maintain lands that they use for subsistence agriculture and the desire to develop their communities by way of modernizing infrastructure and providing better opportunities for their families and their progeny (See also Goldín 2003 and Fischer & Benson 2006). I also discuss religious shifts in these three cooperatives and the Evangelization of Maya communities in the second half of the 20th century as a primary factor in opening the “closed” society to a broader base of influence and imported ideas and desires that were attainable by way of external exchange and infusion. If the closed corporate peasant community is the “creature of the Spanish conquest”, as Wolf asserts, then the modern day cooperative may be seen as next of kin in a continuing line of colonial systems that perpetuate inequality under the guise of collective cultural and economic autonomy. In the pages below I discuss how the idea of the cooperative as an autonomous model for rural Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú functions in the face of modern
day economic and social realities; including the shared financial and labor burdens that they must shoulder in order to maintain their land and subsistence systems.

As I examine present day characteristics of cooperatives as a corporate peasant community as semi-closed entities it is important to note that these communities have a long history in interaction and engagement in broad social and economic functions with coffee brokers and religious groups from neighboring communities. I do not argue that those who oppose the corporate peasant society model in rural Maya communities as incomplete and overly broad are mistaken. I do argue, rather, for an examination of the corporate model in direct comparison to the plantation systems through the lens of the community cooperative. In doing this, the examination yields empirical evidence to show how and why the localized model remains desirable and relevant to many rural Mayas throughout Senahú. These particular cases do not discount analysis and critique of the closed corporate model in terms of community formation (Adams 1991). Current cooperative models in Senahú promote cultural and economic maintenance from within to allow outward flow of agricultural commodities to benefit member families. By incorporating this model, cooperatives promote a level of economic and cultural sanctuary and smaller localized community based models that decrease the amount of external influence and pressures; thus minimizing risk to individuals, kinship groups, neighbors, and the community as a whole. This chapter also discusses how coexistence of export capitalist and communal models, both functioning in a given space in Senahú, function multilineally while offering negative and positive consequences to each of the respective economies.
Semi-Closed Corporate Communities

Early Guatemalan ethnographers working throughout the highland communities sought to clarify misconceptions concerning linguistic and geographic boundaries that were often used as a basis by which to categorize and define associations of specific language groups, kinship, political systems, and religious affiliations in early 20th century Maya communities. Tax (1937) expressed his frustrations with the general categorization given to Mayan language speakers that forced them into a specific group based solely on their language. Tax determined that linguistic distinction did not go far enough to determine whether a community was associated with a central tribal system (which he calls ethnic units) and that tangible cultural distinctions are manifest between communities who share the same language. Tax asks us to consider whether or not language was the sole factor in determining cultural affiliation. Tax voices his doubts in the following passage:

“Should ‘Quiché Indians’ be used to mean simply ‘those who speak Quiché dialects’ and ‘Cakchiquel’ those who speak Cakchiquel dialects, there would be no confusion. But in many cases the terms so used appear to refer to cultural and tribal groups, and one is left to infer that the Quiché, for example, are an ethnic entity with one definable culture and a political and social organization comparable with that of, say, the Iroquois. Thus has more than one writer called the Indians of Chichicastenango ‘the noble family of the Quichés,’ and the contribution of at least one ethnologist (Schultze-Jena) is almost nullified because he assumed that Quiché culture is enough of a unit to allow him to use data from both Chichicastenango and Momostenango without distinguishing their sources” (Tax 1937: 423-424)
Tax explains in the following passages that the geographic distinctions between communities is more valuable to determine ethnic units (shared cultural systems) than language; Tax exclaims that geographic boundaries encased by the municipalities (municipios) act as a primary factor in community and cultural organization and maintenance. Furthermore, he states that “The people of Guatemala live in municipios which are territorial administrative divisions commonly recognized in all governmental matters, but which are also – as it happens – the basic ethnic divisions and cultural groups into which the country is divided” (Tax 1937: 425). I would suggest that although Tax’s explanation is correct, the connection runs deeper to the community level that are located in the rural hamlets and villages that makes up the greater municipal entity. To illustrate this point, I am often reminded of the common response to the question “where are you from?” that Mayan language speakers provide irrespective of their language group46, municipality, traditional dress, local custom, religion, or wealth. “Laa’in aj Yalihux.” “In aj Xkakixkan.” “Rin aj Patzún.” “I am of Yalihux”, “I am of Xekakixkan”, “I am of Patzún.” It is quite rare to receive a response pertaining to country (Guatemala) or province (Alta Verapaz, Sololá, Chimaltenango). Responses that refer to specific centers for which the municipality is named refer to an inhabitant of the immediate town center and not to the hamlets and cantons which make up the greater municipal body. Rather, the responses solidify an ideological and geographic connection to specific collective spaces that transcend municipality and run to the most immediate level of the community within specifically defined municipal administrative systems. Community is the most elemental and tangible observable entity to produce empirically qualitative levels of cultural and linguistic production and maintenance. To this end I chose to examine
communities as they exist, in-situ, as distinct cooperative and agricultural plantation social structures that include administrative, sociolinguistic, religious, and economic sub-structures that make up the greater whole.

Wolf asserts the importance of community bonds by presenting Maya communities as functioning closed corporate entities that promote cultural unity with restricted boundaries through a commonality of landholding and distribution of goods. He asserts his model by way of cross-cultural comparative analysis of distinct communities in Mesoamerica and Java and proposes that the sole purpose of the closed corporate society is to maintain shared holdings and to shut out external influences from joining their organized unit:

“They are similar in that they maintain a body of rights to possessions, such as land. They are similar because both put pressures on members to redistribute surpluses at their command, preferably in the operation of a religious system, and induce them to content themselves with the rewards of shared poverty’. They are similar in that they strive to prevent outsiders from becoming members of their community and in that they place limits on availability of members to communicate with the larger society. That is to say, in both areas they are corporate organizations, maintaining a perpetuity of rights and membership; and they are closed corporations, because they limit these privileges to insiders and discourage close participation of members in the social relations of the larger society” (Wolf 2001: 148).

Wolf’s examination presents the closed corporate model as applicable only to communities that maintain a level of autonomy from outside economic and political entities. Wolf states that “the peasantry ---forced to work on colonist enterprises--- did not become converted into a permanent labor force. Part time laborers continued to draw
the larger share of their subsistence from their own efforts on the land. From the point of view of the entrepreneurial sector, the peasant sector remained primarily a labor reserve in which labor could maintain itself at no cost to the enterprise” (Wolf 2001: 154). Although his analysis is very much directed towards examining part time migratory laborers, this same analysis is applicable to the in-situ labor forces that inhabited the early plantation enterprises in Senahú. Wolf denotes the importance of land in the equation as providing sufficient incentive to potential laborers that would come to make up the labor pool, and in the case of Senahú, the plantation communities and agricultural cooperatives. For Q’eqchi’ laborers in Senahú, access to arable land was conditionally based on work rendered to the coffee-producing enterprises. Similarly, the cooperative model offers an exchange for property (access to land) for contributions to the cooperative enterprise. The cooperative essentially occupies the space otherwise inhabited by an owner and serves a similar function in producing commodities that promotes economic viability, allocates land to member families, and maintains productive continuity by way of a common cause.

Turner (1966) developed a model on which he defined the functions and means of community that stressed the ultimate outcome of unity by way of shared experience that he termed *communitas*. Esposito (2009) expands on Turner’s understanding of *communitas* by deconstructing its etymology in conjunction to its relation to the public sphere (*publica*). Where Turner supports the idea of a positive shared relationship between community members, Esposito derives his notion of *communitas* by looking at a collectively shared impairment, not as a point of shared contentment, as Wolf (2001)
suggests, but as a shared duty. In qualifying his interpretation of *communitas* Esposito asks the following:

“What is this ‘thing’ that the members of the community have in common, and is it really ‘something’ positive? Is it a good; is it wealth? Interest perhaps? Dictionaries provide us with a clear answer. Despite their warning that we aren’t dealing with a certified meaning, they do tell us that the ancient and presumably originary meaning of *communis* had to be ‘he who shares an office [*carica*], a burden [*carico*], a task [*incarico*].’ From here it emerges that *communitas* is the totality of persons united not by a ‘property’ but precisely by an obligation or a debt” (Esposito 2009: 6).

Esposito explains further that the contrasting term *immunitas* relieves an individual of participation in the shared burden borne by members of the community by way of immunity. Whether by way of shared experience through positive communal action (Turner) or by bounded burden (Esposito), the community remains the central point for anthropological study as a way by which we arrive at the relational core of culture, language, kinship, economy, and ethos. Nash (2001) discusses the importance of rediscovering community studies as a way of introducing her work on shared systems and visions of Mayas living in Chiapas, Mexico. The community that she examines is actively engaged in a search for their rightful place in emerging globalized social and economic networks. Nash contributes to this discussion of community studies and asserts her view of the importance of studying the community as a base of acquired knowledge by stating that she “considers the community as habitus in which Mayans cultivate practices in beliefs that reproduce their cultures” (2001: 31). In effect, Nash is cultivating a theoretical perspective that seeks to explain cultural and ideological production and
maintenance (Nash calls it reproduction) by way of and at the nexus of community that inhabits geographic, temporal, and ideological space. Each of these examples supports the idea of the importance of community studies and how community impacts individual and collective action and response.

**Beyond the “Grand Past” of Anglo-European Land Barons**

“In truth it really is a shame to see the state that the Polochic region these days. It is a dangerous place. When I have guests here in the hotel who ask about how to get there to visit the hot springs or to travel out to the lake (Lake Izabal) I just advise them not to go. It pains me to say that because it was such a wonderful place. My family was very involved in developing the railroad and steamboat along the river. They were the architects of the transportation systems throughout the Polochic. I do not travel there anymore. The whole place is lawless and corrupt. You have spent years visiting so you know that there has not been any progress in those towns. It is hard to imagine any significant progress for those people in the last 50 years. The business is not the same, the passion to succeed does not exist, and the people who run these places now are mostly small cooperatives without any sense or idea about how to succeed in the coffee business. It will never be like it was because the people in charge are not reinvesting in their communities. The cooperatives don’t deal well with purchasers and that is to their detriment. I know many ladinos, some in the Polochic and in Senahú. They are not invested either. To them it is a position that commands respect in the smaller towns, but nobody is making too much money because of coffee, that’s the way it has been since the revolution (1944).”
I transcribed these words from an interview with Patricia Hempstead, a self-described vestige of the old society of Anglo-European grandiosity and industrialism, at her hotel in Cobán, Alta Verapaz. Patricia is the great granddaughter of Heinrich Rudolf Dieseldorff, who was patriarch of the most widely recognized and enduring of the German families associated with coffee’s rise as an agricultural export commodity in Cobán. Known for her frank ways of speaking (whether to her hotel employees or to her guests), Patricia often lamented that, in her view, the Polochic region had become the lost and forgotten region of Guatemala. She often spoke to me with pride about Robert Hempstead, her grandfather, and his work in the Polochic region as an industrialist and builder and noted many times his contributions to infrastructure and the business culture that took part during the first half of the 20th century. Patricia proudly serves the Dieseldorff family coffee in her hotel while noting that all of the progress in economy and culture during that era in Guatemala came about directly or indirectly as a result of the coffee boom. Conversely, although Guatemala and the Polochic region are still actively producing coffee, Patricia perceives the industry as stagnant and backwards as a result of the lack of “true visionaries and dreamers like my great grandfather and my grandfather and uncles.” Patricia considers her family’s part in the coffee industry as a means by which Guatemala prospered economically by virtue of creating an industrial society that wrought about modernity through technological and infrastructural advancement. She views her family’s involvement as the “product of the day” that allowed families who were invested in agricultural production to accumulate wealth and to build society as they saw fit. Unfortunately, this philosophy was limited in scope and did not account for the betterment of society as a whole while egregiously neglecting
social, educational, and economic development for the rural Q’eqchi’ Maya communities who would bear the heavy physical burden required to accumulate wealth for the established coffee and industrial elites.

Whereas Patricia is far removed from any involvement in the coffee producing sector in Alta Verapaz, Fidel Ponce, known regionally as don Fidel, proudly boasts that his coffee production spans three generations in and around Senahú. Upon our introduction in 2008, I discussed my interests as an anthropologist with Fidel and expressed my desire to examine some of the social and economic impacts that coffee production has had on Q’eqchi’ Maya communities in historical and contemporary contexts. As expected when we began our initial discussion, he excitedly left the room for a moment and returned with a large coffee table book full of early 20th century photographs of German coffee plantation homes and their inhabitants. The barons and their guests were always dressed to the hilt and enjoying the comforts of modernity while they enjoyed elaborate social events in their grand chalets. Like Patricia, Fidel spoke of the great contributions that early coffee elites had achieved and how they had brought “a little bit of the European lifestyle to the most inaccessible regions of our beautiful Guatemala.” However, unlike Patricia, Fidel is a modern day coffee elite who stays involved in the business because he considers his position as a coffee producer a patrimonial duty rather than a means by which he may pursue further amounts of wealth.

Subsequent encounters with Fidel, whether formal or informal, were productive in increasing my understanding as an outside researcher as to how the coffee industry engages in contemporary labor issues and how he, as an experienced finquero, views the volatility of the changing market for his commodity. Discussions with Fidel also aided
my understanding by virtue of him being an individual whose involvement in the business spans the majority of his life. He was also helpful in explaining how he perceives the state of small-scale coffee producers and the increase of cooperative coffee producers and independent coffee merchants since the 1980s. Fidel continued to speak with me in a very cordial, yet guarded manner, probing my interests further as he tried to figure out whether or not I had some kind of motive for making so many inquiries about his present role and duties as owner of multiple coffee plantations in and about Senahú. He surprised me with his forthright commentary on a particular Saturday afternoon as we discussed agriculture and coffee as a means of accumulating wealth and sociopolitical power. In response to my inquiry about how plantations were enduring the recent hardships associated with the sharp decline of coffee market values during the prior decade, Fidel responded in a passionate manner: “All of this [motioning to his surroundings in the hotel where we often met] is not about making money. We make money and we lose money with what we produce. This has to do with family. It began with my father, my brother and I have invested years in the business with successes and failures. My son is now very involved in all aspects of the business. We are three generations of finqueros who accept our birthright and maintain our way of life by making good use of this land. We have responsibilities to our workers, you see?”

Fidel reiterated time and again that he does not make a good deal of money by producing and selling coffee and that his base of distribution is very small. In fact, Fidel’s particular coffee is produced, processed, and distributed in Guatemala because his plantations produce low-altitude coffee; meaning that it is reserved mainly for consumption by a less demanding consumer. He maintains, in fact, that a very small
portion of his higher altitude crops are exported because international consumers have become extremely demanding in recent years concerning the quality of the coffee and their willingness to pay higher prices for fair trade and/or organically certified beans (See Roseberry 1996; Fisher 2007; Lyon 2007, 2012; chapter 7 of this dissertation). Fidel maintains that he cares about his employees, and that his diversified business background and wise management allows him to keep his coffee business afloat through lean years.

Besides profiting from coffee production, Fidel’s sense of heritage, social standing, and business acumen allow him and his immediate family to continue the legacy that was passed on to him by his father, Augusto Ponce Antillón. Fidel is a believer in producing a specific culture around his interests that promotes “la vida Guatemalteca” (the Guatemalan life), a lifestyle that celebrates adventure, festivities with music and dance, hard work, elevated culture and education, and appreciation of family and friends. Fidel admits that “la vida Guatemalteca” is not shared by one and all and that the good life he associates with this view is limited in participation to those who belong to a privileged class of people. He readily proclaims that, in his mind upbringing, education, and trust with the community and employees play significant roles in making his operation a success. He believes that coffee plantations have and always be run successfully if the right man is in charge. Noting his sense of loyalty, responsibility, and entitlement, he stated in an animated manner the following statement: “Did you not notice what happened to the people at Se’amay when the plantation fell into bankruptcy [2002]? They are suddenly fucked unless somebody decides that they want to take advantage of the land to start producing coffee anew there. Now we see that nobody is interested and the land is held in part by local groups. On top of that, the land was abandoned for so many
years that the [coffee] plants which remain are rotted and dying or have disappeared altogether. You see where fields once produced coffee; our Indian neighbors have planted maize and cut the shade trees for firewood. Now employment options do not exist in Se’amay and the people there are divided over who will have access to the land. Bad management leads to bad circumstances and the workers pay the price in the end.”

Patricia and Fidel both tell two different stories that each concludes in a similar manner; coffee barons are now largely absent from life in the greater agrizones in comparison with decades of the recent past. One result of the actions in 1963 that deposed Ydígoras Fuentes was that Anglo-European entrepreneurs maintained less power over their socioeconomic stature in agribusiness and were coerced to share a larger share of their profits with the state. This resulted in persuading many of the old plantation owners to relinquish their roles as captains of coffee production while allowing an emerging ladino class to assume those roles. In cases where little interest or sufficient financial capital existed to manage existing plantations in lower yielding lands, the military-entrepreneur alliance simply nationalized the operations and allowed municipal administrations to oversee production. Nationalizing plantations allowed the municipality of Senahú to reap a portion of the profits of coffee commerce and maintained existing labor pools to produce the commodity. The absence of a defined owner family on nationalized plantations created an atmosphere in which communities formed ideas about taking collective ownership in their cash crops. The only items missing from allowing complete immersion into forming community-owned agricultural cooperatives were finances and authorization from the military government.
The countryside had undergone significant changes since the 1940s as established German elite families were deported and ostracized, the October Revolution attempted large-scale land expropriation to the rural poor to strengthen and promote mass inclusion in an idealized Guatemalan society, and subsequent military control was established; thus ushering in 36 years of conflict and social, economic, and ethnic strife. Anglo-Europeans like Patricia Hempstead in Cobán and the Koesters and Champneys in Senahú saw their profit margins dwindle from what they had come to expect during previous decades. Their ability to wield the same amount of power over economy and society also decreased under the military-entrepreneur alliance that was established in 1963. The seismic shift from the establishment that existed in Guatemala at the political level in Guatemala City and in the rural agrizones during the late part of the 19th century and early to mid-20th century gave pause to the Anglo-European populace in the country. Many of those who were 2nd and early 3rd generation landowners, the majority of which were born and raised in Guatemala, began to concede to these continual shifts and opted out of large-scale agricultural production and turned their attention to what Patricia described as “more stable and reliable businesses.”

Decades after the military-entrepreneur alliance became the established form of governance in Guatemala, the country experienced an increase in Protestant and Evangelical influence and growth in the rural regions of the nation. Although this movement was not new (the 1950s ushered in an era of missionary programs in Indigenous communities), non-Catholic congregations began to flourish in the midst of the October Revolution and continued to gain momentum in subsequent decades during the civil war (Stoll 1988). Mayas throughout the countryside were aligning themselves
with Baptist congregations, The Church of the Nazarene, Mormonism, Seventh Day Adventists, and a multitude of sects that promoted new interpretations of Christianity. By the late 1970s non-Catholic churches in the Polochic region multiplied in great numbers in Senahú and added another aspect to community as Mayas in the most rural areas began an unprecedented interchange of religious and social ideology with external sources. The exchange increased as congregations from neighboring regions built up their social networks regionally, nationally, and internationally. Senahú’s rural cooperative communities were soon at the nexus of Protestant programs that encouraged participation in the free market and the value of pursuing financial success.

During the late 1970s and early 1980s, the military state encouraged rural agricultural communities in Senahú to obtain financing as a collective entity in cases where no viable buyers of defunct or abandoned coffee plantations existed. The government sought to continue production on these lands; fearing that a lack of administration and ownership would relegate otherwise fertile fields to wasteland. Mexico had attempted similar rural peasant integration in the agricultural sector in previous decades (See Edelman 1980) through the “Green Movement” as a way to produce foodstuff for the nation’s growing populace. This opportunity, along with growing socioreligious networks, provided a window of opportunity for Q’eqchi’ Maya communities to take collective ownership of the goods that they had already been producing for foreign elites; allowing them increased inclusion into expanded socioeconomic realms.

Another contributing factor in how coffee was produced, processed, and distributed coincided with the rise of ladino finqueros in Senahú during military governance was the evolution of the nation’s coffee regulating body; The National Association of Coffee
Anacafé’s increased role in redistribution and management of coffee-producing lands continued to centralize the national coffee trade. Along with selling and redistributing arable lands to well-positioned buyers Anacafé instigated a process to nationalize less desirable plantations and set up localized administrations through municipal administrative systems. This undertaking proved a success in part because the necessary infrastructure was readily accessible to produce and process coffee crops, including the processing plant which housed spaces and machinery to separate the seed from the fruit’s flesh and to wash and dry the bean before sending the “oro” off to roasting houses around the country. More important to this operation is the fact that a labor pool had already been established through the decades as they remained tethered to plantation lands by
virtue of a continued desire to use the land for subsistence purposes by virtue of the social fabric of many of these communities that were established long before the movement towards redistribution and nationalization. Long-established relationships of kinship and religious cargo systems played a critical role in ensuring that the labor pool remained by opting to trade work on the plantation for access to arable land while choosing to decline the arrangement would mean loss land on which to live and subsist and having to leave the community for another. Years after the fact, Rosalinda shared her feelings of managing the cost-benefit relationship between remaining as part of a subjugated community and the risks associated with leaving the community and forging a new path of unknown destination and outcome. “Just why would we leave our land?” Rosalinda asked me in response to my question concerning the reasons that she and her family opted to remain as part of the nationalized plantation’s labor force. “I followed my father here as a young girl and I honor him and his life by remaining here. We started our little family here. God has blessed us with food day by day. We have endured many difficulties; however, we are not alone. Life is hard here, but we know where we will find our assistance.”

Wolf (2001) asserts that a significant reason for the efficacy of the corporate model is found in the structure of the administrative system, also known as a cargo system. The cargo system is well-established religious hierarchy that Maya communities adopted when they joined the Catholic Church (See also Wilson 1995). The system is maintained by community members that rise to different ranks based on service rendered to the confraternities of the local patron saint. Members of the confraternities serve a predetermined number of years in offices and are charged with collecting and managing
funds for the yearly festival in honor of the saint. The fact that the same organizational model remains in for cooperative administrators that I examine in Senahú is a corporate model that came to replace religiously affiliated hierarchies in instances where Protestant congregations are prevalent. This was described in detail to me when a group of Ch’ulak elders described the initial administrative ideology when they formally organized in 1974. According to Qaawa’ Samuel Pop and his brother-in-law, Qaawa’ Horacio Caal, the organizing committee of which they were part decided to adopt the Catholic-based hierarchical confraternity model for the cooperative in large part because the community had recently lost its priest. Horacio explains; “We organized ourselves in the community using what we had. We saw that the tools for coffee were there in the fields, in the buildings there below [referencing the plantation house and administrative building]. We also needed people to head the organization. Because of that, we used the confraternity system from the beginning. Qaawa’ Miguel was the head at first and he had his helpers. After he gave his service Qaawa’ Carlos stepped in and worked in Miguel’s place. And that is how it works. That is how we organized under Father Ignacio. And that is how we organized our little cooperative.”

The cooperative model and its organization show how the people made it their own and sustained viability by adapting to new circumstances by adopting proven organizational models of community maintenance. The glaring difference, as they later pointed out, was that their organization was faced with economic burdens to the financial institution that loaned them money in order to organize and incorporate the cooperative; thereby allowing the community to take ownership, complete with the associated risks and benefits. Qaawa’ Samuel expressed his pride in taking part in the original
organization and collective ownership of the cooperative and the value of calling the land “ours now” (qe chik). “It is not of some foreign man. We stepped in that place and it was ours from that time until this day. Not mine, not his [pointing to Horacio]. Ours collectively (qe sa’ komonil).”

“We Are Obligated to Watch out for Ourselves”: Risks to the Cooperative Model

During an otherwise ordinary afternoon in January of 2002 I sat in my house while snow fell outside when I received a long distance phone call from the owner of a hardware store in Panzós, Guatemala. The owner, Jaime León, relayed a message from Reginaldo Maaz, a dear friend and a member of the governing council of the Ch’ulak cooperative. Located approximately 40 minutes Northeast in the mountains overlooking Panzós and the Polochic Valley, Ronaldo sent a hand written note to Jaime asking him to contact me and have me call him the following day in the morning (Panzós offered a handful of privately owned landline telephones in 2002 that customers used on a pay to talk basis).51 Ch’ulak cooperative happened to be facing dire financial circumstances and the stark reality that current losses in coffee profits for the cooperative put the community at risk of losing their land. He explained that coffee prices were very low and that the community was in danger of losing its land to the bank because they could not afford to make regularly scheduled payments that were otherwise covered by selling the year’s coffee harvest. Little did I know on that day that cooperatives throughout the municipality, as well as a number of large-scale coffee plantations in Senahú, were experiencing similar troubles because of falling global coffee values that resulted from an inundation of the commodity on the international market. At that moment, Reginaldo expressed his gratitude that his eldest daughter Dalila had married a man who worked on
an established coffee plantation. Thus I began to question how cooperative members perceive their own risks as commodity producers in comparison to their contemporaries who lived and labored on plantations under ladino and foreign owners.

In hamlets and communities throughout Senahú men and women who live and work on plantations and cooperatives very often self-identify as a laborer (aj k’anjel), servant (moos – derived from the Spanish mozo), or cultivator/agriculturalist (aj awinel). Each of these terms qualifies the individual as pertaining to certain educational background and socioeconomic stature within the community. These terms also identify his or her occupation, whether as a seasonal or in-situ laborer or as a cultivator who is dedicated to working the land which they inhabit. Whereas laborer (aj k’anjel) and servant (moos) both identify an individual’s occupation as a cultivator, the terms suggest that the individual is beholden to a specific parcel of land that is owned and operated by a family or an individual from outside of the local community. The terms are also used for individuals who work as day laborers for the municipality or for a family, either ladino or Maya, that holds significantly more social and economic capital in the community. Comparatively, the term cultivator, or agriculturalist (aj awinel) indicates that an individual maintains more liberty to choose how to manage one’s own land and the crops which come forth from the land. These terms serve as sociolinguistic indicators that differentiate cultivator from laborer. Although plantation and cooperative occupations are similar in terms of the modes of production, the two models are ideologically disparate in many ways when examining the underlying factors associated with means of production, the ability to choose when and how to cultivate the land, and the cultural capital
attributed or withheld from individuals whose livelihoods and environment are equivalent in many other aspects of life.

Qaawa’ Neko, a man in his late fifties, and his family of seven were displaced from their home on the defunct Se’amay Plantation in 2002. Neko describes the subtle difference between these three terms. “The truth of the situation is that all of us, our people, we are all aj awinel (cultivators) because we all plant maize, we all harvest maize. However, many of us were aj moos (servants) there at Se’amay, we were aj k’anjel chi rub’el aj eechal re (workers beneath the owner). If we did not work for the plantation, we were not allowed to harvest our little maize fields52. “But true cultivators” (“eb’ aj awinel chi yaal”) don’t answer to an owner. They answer before god and before their family and community.” Qaawa’ Neko’s description of a true cultivator provides insight into perceptions that differentiate individuals as indentured an employee who must answer to authority figures and an autonomous agriculturalist. Neko’s statement promotes the idea that cooperative members enjoy a greater level of satisfaction and self-esteem in comparison to those who are engraigned in working plantation communities.

I began writing notes and holding formal and informal interviews with members of the Ch’ulak and Se’pamak cooperatives beginning in March of 2001 while on spring break as an undergraduate student. I traveled to Guatemala to take part in that year’s maize planting activities and the subsequent feasts of steamed tamales (poch), steamed tamales filled with beans (xep) tortillas (xorbi’l), and the devilishly spicy and morbidly greasy turkey stew known as kaqik. Over the course of one week I planted maize with members
of the Ch’ulak and Se’pamak cooperatives with an amateur film maker (and friend) later turned archaeologist. I was interested in learning more about their form of agricultural cooperation pertaining to sewing vast areas of land with maize. We learned about community alliances in the plantation and cooperative communities and the aid that community members lend to one another and their system of reciprocal labor. They explained that in times of need, participants in each party may count on one another for aid in securing food and that their sewing schedules allocate a day for each patriarchal member of a given household to sew their yearly crop and feast. This is done on a rotating basis and the days are treated with respect and reverence for the family, the honored maize, extended kin, and friends that make up the working alliance. This journey allowed me to view this particular cooperative in the manner which was demonstrated by its members. They explained that from the first days of its inception as a semi-autonomous entity to the present day; the cooperative is a community in which member families take pride in looking for opportunities to aid one another; “We watch after each
other each and every one day by day. They are the same problems that we endure upon the earth, did you see?” (“Naqil qib’ chiqib’ il qib’ hulajhulaj. Juntaq’et eb’ li ch’a’ajkilal naqak’uy sa’ xb’een li ruuchich’och’, ma xawil?”). The years working alongside cooperative and plantation members in their homes, fields, and schools allowed me to establish meaningful relationships with those who would become key consultants in later research projects. I was naturally inquisitive throughout the years and asked far more questions than they desired I am certain. Qaawa’ B’ex Rax of Se’ritk’iche’ once joked with the members of his maize sewing party that I was asking so many questions so that I might rise in stature to become Aj eechal re li kapé⁵³ (master of coffee); a title I assured them I did not seek.

The emerging generation of cooperative administrators described how producing non-traditional crops within the bounds of the community allows the membership to take control of production and distribution from within while limiting the influence of external entities such as brokers and distributors. Present day cooperative administrators reason that they will need to continue to evolve and diversify their agricultural commodities in order to maintain their lands. In contrast to the collective reasoning of first generation cooperative, the present generation seeks limited inclusion and self-sufficiency through defining external market relationships wherever possible. The initial cooperative philosophy during the 1970s and early 1980s included organizing the community and seeking greater access and inclusion to local, regional, national, and global consumer markets; thus promoting increased inclusion into the national social fabric by way of external market relationships and socioeconomic development in their lands. They had hoped that rural development would bring improvements in roads and infrastructure to
their communities, better education for their children, increased socialization with neighboring communities (particularly social events with likeminded religious congregations), and economic networks in which their commodities might succeed. Consultants who directly took part in cooperative formation in the late 70s and early 80s are now between 50-70 years of age, and recounted their desire in those years to establish economic and cultural independence from Anglo-Europeans and ladinos for whom they and their preceding kin had labored during previous decades. Whether collective ideology is based on mechanisms of inclusion, exclusion, or protection from external ills, the cooperative model in Senahú persists as the most prevalent shared model of community maintenance for Q’eqchi’ Maya agriculturalists. Examination of cooperative models provide further representations concerning the community not a closed isolated groups after initial formation; rather, cooperative communities are indeed dynamic and malleable in their strategies, rejecting specific typologies. Whether they are integrated in global flows or strictly producers for local consumption, contemporary agricultural cooperatives continue to adapt in order to meet their respective needs by way of redistributing parcels of land to accommodate a larger membership, diversifying crops and commodity production, and collaborating with outside rural cooperatives and agriculturalists to educate the membership about organic crop maintenance to increase yield and quality and strategic marketing to maximize their selling price to small-scale distributors.

Maya agriculturalists continue their roles as commodity producers and are definitively incorporated in the networks of global flow and international commodity production. Academic debate and discussion has a long tradition in its examination of external market demand as a major driving force behind urban and rural economies in
Guatemala. The preceding chapters provide examples of how Q’eqchi’ Maya and the Polochic region contribute this discussion about national and international trade in colonial Guatemala. Post-colonial Q’eqchi’ communities became further involved in international trade as agricultural laborers through coercion and forced labor policies and emerged for a short time in the mid-20th century as small-scale producers that made their commodities available for distributors that exported their goods to international markets. As the 1980s dawned, Q’eqchi’ cooperatives began to form as communities that once inhabited large-scale Anglo-European plantations organized their means and pooled their labor within existing infrastructure to grow, prepare, and distribute coffee to outside markets. Along with Indigenous language groups throughout Guatemala, the Q’eqchi’ have a long history of market participation at each level of production. Mayas have worked in a multitude of positions; in the kitchens and as laborers in coffee, cane, and cotton fields on large-scale plantations to administrators and owners of small-scale producing organizations and every imaginable position in between. It seems the tendance du jour to examine how the contemporary Maya are “adjusting” to these new fields in which they are thrust into a global network of social and economic shifts when in reality they were part of these networks since the time of contact with European invaders. As Hernández Castillo & Nigh (1998) aptly remind us, “The Mam and other Indian groups in this region have been part of a global economy for many centuries. The history of the Soconusco provides evidence that the present globalization phenomenon is only a recent step in a long process that acquires new characteristics with technological change” (1998: 137). Hernández Castillo & Nigh are discussing a Mam coffee growers in Chiapas, Mexico, a region that was entrenched in its own riot (Zapatista Movement) at the time of
their proclamation and include Indigenous communities in the surrounding regions that make up Mesoamerica that were only two years removed from cessation of 36 years of civil war in Guatemala. Their point should be given proper support and context for those who take part in the debate about what globalization means today.

Determining that community cooperatives maintain a level of autonomy in comparison to their counterparts on plantation lands is something that plantation laborers and cooperative members share alike. The idea of community-driven ownership in place of a foreign owner (*kaxlan wing*) is a shared perception among Q'eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú that expresses admiration for cooperative communities. However, the level and reach of that autonomy remains in doubt as cooperatives are beholden to financial agencies, the market upon which they rely to sell their commodity crops, and the expectation of a successful yearly harvest. Cooperative members maintain a sense of cultural capital in relation to the power that they hold over allocating subsistence lands through membership. What remains is supportive of Esposito’s interpretation of communitas and the shared burden as a unifying force that is manifest through a figurative and literal debt that must be paid in order for the community to find cultural and economic harmony.

**Conclusions to Chapter 4**

I kept in contact with Reginaldo in the months following his phone call concerning the danger in which the Ch’ulak cooperative found itself. The cooperative survived that scare thanks in large part to the fact that they derived a small portion of income from tangerine and pineapple harvests. The fact that the cooperative had a diversified crop system in
place convinced the bank in Guatemala City to grant them leniency and the promise that
the community would continue to pursue an economic model based on regional and
national markets and to strengthen their distribution networks. At present, Ch’ulak
continues to engage in small amounts of coffee sales that are entirely contingent upon the
remaining producing coffee trees. They are not currently pursuing further maintenance of
the trees, nor are they preparing new trees for future crops. The broken down and
abandoned plantation house remains a remnant of the Anglo-European presence in the
most rural of communities but offers little more than a structure that children use for
target practice to increase their proficiency with homemade sling-shots and as a common
area for occasional community gatherings.

The recurrent theme of passing on ownership of land and export agricultural
production persists through the cooperative model in various communities in rural
Senahú. Indeed these communities represent decades, even centuries of processes that has
witnessed the land change from owner to owner and from municipality to community.
The model remains as a model by which an organized community attempts to maintain
landholding and agricultural cultivation and production semi-autonomously within a
specified area through extended kinship alliances. My discussion of cooperatives
juxtaposes the realities that Senahú faces in terms of financial autonomy and the ability to
preserve community and culture without maintaining an open relationship with outsiders.
Cooperatives do enjoy the power to maintain membership and manage their limited
resources to a small number of families but must persist in their shared burden of
producing the crops that are necessary to pay financial institutions. Cooperatives offer
rural communities an opportunity to maintain available means and modes of production
that allow them increased control over risk-associated ventures. Cooperative models also allow a community to work as a collective unit to maintain balance between production and cultivation on land that is theirs in common.

The cooperative model, acting as a creature of the “creature of conquest” (Wolf 2001), evolved in affluence in Senahú as part of the more broad and changing political atmosphere in Guatemala shifted. The nation shifted its power from an atmosphere under domination of the Catholic Church to a liberalized economy that was dominated by foreign interests; in particular, German capital and industry in the country’s agrizones. After the military seized power over the country in 1963, the number of nationalized plantations grew alongside the emerging influence of the ladino finquero. Nationalized plantations in Senahú were administered by the municipality in most cases, perpetuating the pre-existing economic model that allowed Indigenous Q’eqchi’ Maya to access arable land for subsistence purposes in exchange for labor on the plantations. This model set the stage for cooperatives to organize during the 1980s as collectively autonomous entities that remained engaged in export commodity production until they were unable to sustain the financial downfalls of lost profits when the coffee market was inundated in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The following chapter examines life beyond the coffee fields in Senahú and the emerging social alliances that will shape the future of displaced plantation laborers and agricultural cooperatives alike. This examination takes place within the narratives of coffee cooperatives and a fallen coffee plantation in Senahú engaged in attempts to restructure the local agrarian model and describes why these respective cooperatives decided, or were forced, to cease coffee production in favor of what they view as less financially volatile non-traditional crops. I also examine how these
communities are increasingly focused on regional and national markets to distribute their commodities as they adapt to attempt financial and cultural maintenance and a semblance of autonomy from within.
Chapter 5

A Decade of Uncertainty: Moving Away from Coffee Production

“We are hurting here. These days are extremely difficult. Nobody knows what we are going to receive in the coming years; it is very unclear. It seems the days will be very difficult. Yes, big difficulties are coming to our town; nothing is certain for us.”


An undergraduate student in 2001, I had spent the last two days of my spring break in the Hotel Recreo overlooking the park in Senahú’s municipal plaza. A friend and I were in Guatemala documenting and participating in local maize planting parties in two of Senahú’s rural cooperative communities. We wrapped up a long day of video interviews on Se’amay Plantation and had just arrived at the Po’ou home overlooking the town’s primary school when we heard multiple gunshots in the hill directly across from us. Benjamín Po’ou, a Guatemala field coordinator at the time for CHOICE Humanitarian, explained to us that a group of men were searching for a kidnapper (aj chaponel) who was released from municipal custody days before in connection to an alleged assault of a young girl. The series of events that ensued concluded the subsequent morning with a significant community uprising that claimed the life of the Municipal Judge, Hugo Martínez on Monday March 12th, 2001.

In an article published three years after the incident, Handy (2004) uses newspaper articles about the event to suggest that the incident was a well-coordinated and planned
attack that was instigated by a call to arms by various local radio station hosts and a responsive group effort of vigilante male mercenaries in the community. As a witness to the events that took place I am certain that initial attempt to capture the perpetrator, Pedro Cacao, was indeed a coordinated effort as the small group of armed men chasing the perpetrator with flashlights on a hillside path morphed into hundreds as onlookers and participants congregated in the town square. However, the municipal judge’s death was not part of the plan to capture Pedro Cacao, nor was it a separate organized attack of unbridled violence; rather, the events unfolded over a period of nearly three hours of growing confusion and anger at the perpetrator’s escape during which collectively shared emotions of a volatile nature were manifest through a night-long confrontation between a growing mob and the man most closely associated with Pedro Cacao’s freedom from further legal penalty; resulting in a municipal judge lying lifeless and prostrate on in his office floor.

As I listened to Qaawa’ Blas the following morning, I first assumed that he spoke of difficulty ahead because of the riot that just occurred and the prospects of divine retribution for the violence committed. In actuality, Blas was speaking about a growing fear and uncertainty in his community at Rub’eltem and that his place of employment, Se’amay Plantation, was facing a financial crisis that threatened his livelihood and the future of his family. Blas continued to speak about more grave effects that he foresaw as a result of the pending financial difficulties on Se’amay Plantation that would eventually threaten the plot of land on which he resided and on which he relied for access to arable land. His lamentations evolved to a broad and emotional expression of his own perceptions of the violence that just occurred in town that linked anger, fear, and envy.
with growing concerns in Senahú; the same dreaded emotions that he believed causes disharmony and pain for the entire community. The following excerpt contains Blas’s full interpretation of the prior night’s events and the connection that he makes to the overall events leading up to the community riot:

“We are hurting here. These days are extremely difficult. Nobody knows what we are going to receive in the coming years; it is very unclear. It seems the days will be very difficult. Yes, big difficulties are coming to our town; nothing is certain for us. Exactly what more will we see happen in each of our villages in the days ahead? Exactly what will we endure? Only god knows it. There is a division in our town and big problems with the laborers there in Se’amay [Se’amay Plantation]. We endure our poverty together just like we endure our pain together. Many people in our little town are scared and we endure difficulties together you will see. Where exactly we will go in a year or in two years is not known; well it is truly unclear. Two years we endured work without complete pay and because of this we, the laborers, know that there are big difficulties in the days to come. You noticed today Qaawa’ Kanche 54 that our people are fearful; our people’s anger rises quickly and our hearts are not pleasant.”

Blas and I continued our discussion for more than an hour as he spoke in greater detail about the issues which caused him so much emotional discomfort. He spoke at length about the previous two coffee harvests (1998, 1999, and 2000) as particularly difficult on Senahú’s coffee producing communities both large and small. As a lay leader in his religious congregation during those years, Blas was extraordinarily well positioned to speak on the matter not only in regards to his own place of employment as an administrator on Se’amay Plantation, he was also in close contact with small congregations in the coffee cooperative hamlets of San Francisco, Se’ritk’iche’, Se’marak, and Chijolom. In essence, his interview served as a detailed preview of the
same fears and worries facing Reginaldo at the coffee cooperative at Ch’ulak during the following year (See Chapter 4).

![Figure 8](image.jpg)

**Figure 8:** A 2010 photograph of the Remains of the Municipal Justice of the Peace Courthouse and the site of the March 2001 riot that claimed the life of Hugo Martínez.

It is not my intention to frame Senahú as a dangerous and lawless outpost in the rural agrizone based on one violent occurrence that took place more than a decade ago. Nor is it my intention to point to the violence that occurred during that night and morning as a moment that defines Senahú and its people. Rather, the moment continues to influence the community and stands as a significant temporal marker that is part of ongoing social and economic disaffection throughout the region in the postwar coffee agrizones of Senahú and the greater Polochic mountain valley region. The following pages include discussions on various expressions—both hidden and public—of social disaffection and its various causes in Senahú. This discussion includes a longitudinal analysis of the aggregate
economic and social hardships that continue to affect the social spaces that Q’eqchi’ Maya agriculturalists and laborers inhabit since the beginning of the new millennium. Instead of presenting a simple cause and effect analysis that links a specific event to continuing social disaffection, this chapter analyzes the web of activity before and after the initial global coffee crisis. This examination includes building on the historical framework of the previous chapters to show how dependence on organized and large-scale monoculture commodity detrimentally impacted Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú. I will conclude the chapter by examining the reasons why coffee production continues to languish in Senahú even though prices rebounded over the last eight harvest years with record values surpassing U.S. 314 cents per pound for mild Arabica in April of 2011 (See Table F in Appendix for value statistics by month and year).55

Years of cultural, economic, linguistic examination and participant observation instilled in me the realization that Senahú, a place that I always regarded as a paradise of lush green mountains inhabited by generous, humble, and hardworking people, was in fact a place like so many others that suffered enormous discrepancies of wealth, opportunity, and social equality. The fact remains that occurrences of community uprisings, riots, public displays of punishment, or lynchings (linchamientos) in rural and urban Guatemala are part of a growing national conversation about the nation’s judicial system in the post-war era and its legitimacy and ability to adjudicate multiparty conflicts in a fair and non-biased manner befitting the ideal of justice. I distinctly recall my first encounter in 1997 with what has pejoratively been labeled in Guatemalan news accounts as Maya Justice (Justicia Maya) while living in a village 15 kilometers East of Carchá. My home was robbed on a Sunday morning on that occasion; the thief captured in short
order afterwards when he was found hiding in the cardamom fields surrounding the house. Word of the theft spread throughout the village like wildfire and within ten minutes 30 men arrived at the scene demanding answers from the accused man while threatening to burn him alive if they were not satisfied with his responses. Three years later I was riding in the back of a Toyota pick-up truck in Poptún (The Petén Province) with four men carrying shotguns and pistols. I was a hitch-hiker on that afternoon and while grateful for the jalón (ride), I couldn’t ignore the fact that they were intently looking into trees and down pathways seeking something. I couldn’t resist asking the men what they were looking for that day when one of the men explained their activities. “We are searching for an assassin who is in hiding.” When I asked them if the police were helping them in their search a second man joined in with a loud chuckle and said, “The damn police don’t do a thing for us, nothing at all. Look, when the police grab an assassin they put him in jail and he walks out three days later. Better that we grab him, put him deep in the ground, and ensure that he doesn’t come out; he walks away never again.” They did not find the man that day.

The first encounter was in a Q’eqchi’ Maya community devoid of any ladino inhabitants; the second occurred in a town of ladinos. Collective violence is a national problem that involves urban and rural ladinos as well as rural Maya communities and must be addressed as a response to deep-rooted national social problems instead of as a media-fueled portrayal of “Maya life” and of “Maya Justice” that attempts to culturally define contemporary Maya communities as sensationally violent and ignorant in matters concerning the rule of law. In his study of vigilante justice, Handy (2004) reminds us that in order to examine community uprisings we must first understand the environment in
which these communities exist. “The linchamientos cannot be understood without appreciating this sense of desperation.” Along with the Senahú riot in March of 2001, these experiences moved me to examine underlying factors of the growing desperation in Senahú in the years that preceded and followed. This examination included the harsh realities of poverty and desperation in Guatemala’s rural countryside and the most recent observable impacts of more than 36 years of overt physical and psychological displays of violence through torture, massacre, and disappearances; as well as more recent economic fears that permeated the entirety of Senahú Municipality. The impacts were felt most recently in Senahú beginning in 1998 as the global coffee crisis diminished the economic sustainability of the commodity on plantations and cooperatives alike; processually shifting the social, economic, geographic, cultural, and ethnic dynamics of the municipality.

Fidel’s comment on growing factions and of subsistence squatters in the previous chapter describes a divided populace that is engaged in uprooting coffee trees, cutting shade trees for firewood, and planting maize in the fields that for so many years gave forth abundant coffee crops. These factions consist of small communities of displaced laborers from Se’amay Plantation that are engaged in practices that continue to cause contention and animosity among families who previously inhabited land as cluster communities on the plantation’s vast land (See Figure 10 below). Displaced laborers from defunct coffee plantations currently contend with each other for access to plots of land on which to harvest maize and other subsistence crops. The majority of coffee cooperatives in Senahú have long since moved on from producing coffee and are actively engaged in incorporating new crops and agricultural commodities into their economic
models. The following pages examine Se’amay Plantation’s fall as a coffee-producing entity and the impacts on its labor communities during the aftermath; including an examination of resulting Q’eqchi’ Maya factions and how they negotiate their new economic realities during an extended period of unemployment and how they have come to re-establish and re-examine community.

“T’ant’o” (Fallen): Se’amay Plantation

Word began to spread around Senahú coffee-producing communities in 2001 that the massive decline in coffee values during the previous two harvests was due to the growth of coffee producers in Vietnam and that country’s emergence as a high-quantity exporter resulting in inundation of the commodity in the global market of large amounts of “cheap coffee”. In actuality, the primary cause of inundation on the market was due, in part, by mass expansion of coffee production efforts in Vietnam and Brazil, a fact that caused supply to far outweigh global demand of coffee consumers in the late 1990s. According to the International Coffee Organization, which regulates and documents world trade of coffee commodities, unroasted green coffee values dropped from its average of nearly U.S. 180 cents per pound at its apex in June of 1997 to approximately U.S. 50 cents per pound in July of 2002. The following except from a 2002 ICO examines the crisis as it pertains to Guatemalan laborers and the unemployment directly associated with large-scale production on plantations and cooperatives rather than small-scale cash crop producers:

“Where farmers depend largely on coffee for income, including food purchase and where indebtedness has been incurred, farmers are either more heavily in debt or have been forced to abandon their farms or switch to alternative crops. Options for the latter may be reduced
and may include proscribed drugs like coca. In Vietnam, there are reports of farmers selling their possessions to satisfy debt collectors. In Guatemala, for the 2001/02 crop, the harvest labour force has been reduced from 500,000 to 250,000. In Colombia, coca plantations can now be found in coffee areas. Coffee farmers from Mexico have died trying to enter the USA illegally after abandoning their farms, and indebted coffee growers have been committing suicide in India. In general the situation stimulates emigration to cities and to industrialised countries” (Osorio 2002).

The preceding statement shows the dire situation in developing nations where export trade income depends heavily on coffee values and some of the immediate problems associated with the global crisis. Although the crisis negatively impacted all coffee-producing nations, developing nations where coffee exports represent a larger percentage of overall export trade suffered the greatest amount of economic upheaval and unemployment –shrinking the harvest labor force by half in Guatemala from 500,000 to 250,000- as a result of the global coffee crisis. Of the 20 coffee-producing counties in Table D (below), Guatemala ranks 3rd among Central American producers (Belize and Panama are not listed) in terms of percentage of total exports dependent on coffee at 12%. Of these neighboring countries, Costa Rica (3%) and El Salvador (9%) rely less on coffee exports as part of their total export shares while Honduras (20%) and Nicaragua (17%) receive a greater percentage of total export from coffee commodities in their global trade figures. Among the shared attributes of the countries listed at or near the top in table D is the fact that the countries that rely on coffee exports as a larger percentage of total exports are traditionally less likely to diversify crops on coffee producing lands and are thus in greater danger of financial calamity and collapse in years that their crop is negatively impacted by economic volatility in global markets. In such cases that coffee
exports (or any agricultural market for that matter) are so dramatically affected, it is not surprising that the negative reverberation impacts large and small producers alike and their immediate environment during subsequent years of recovery.

Figure 9: Budding maize stocks on Se’amay Plantation where coffee trees once dominated the landscape. The shade trees (those that are still standing) are still visible in this picture.

Although declining coffee values due to the global crisis plays a major role shaping Senahú’s long-term economic ills, it is not sufficient to explain why some coffee producing communities –whether plantations or community cooperatives- were so traumatically impacted socially and economically whereas other producing communities weathered the storms of economic uncertainty; emerging with the ability to forge ahead by adapting to new conditions and realities. In order to evaluate the severity of how the crisis affected employment, subsistence, and society in Senahú, it is helpful to examine Se’amay Plantation as a particular case study and how its fall compares to other hardships.
on neighboring coffee producing communities. This requires analysis of the plantation structure in order to understand why its lands and communities of Q’eqchi’ laborers continue to experience divisions even ten years after their initial displacement – partial displacement in some cases and full displacement in many more- as plantation lands and resources were surrendered to a financial institution.

Table D: Average share of coffee exports in total export earnings 1997-2010.

In actuality, severe financial losses in Senahú’s coffee-producing communities began a year in advance of the global coffee crisis. In her examination of hardships that smallholder Honduran coffee farmers experienced, Tucker (2013) points out that the global coffee crisis began in earnest with the arrival of Hurricane Mitch in 1998. During the latter part of October and early November of 1998, Hurricane Mitch made its way through the Gulf of Honduras, producing heavy rainfall and severe winds in Nicaragua, Honduras, and Eastern Guatemala. Mitch’s destructive path included widespread soil and crop damage in the neighboring province of Izabal where banana plantations account for
a majority of the region’s export crops. Coffee harvesting in Senahú’s communities began shortly before in 1998 when Mitch made landfall in Izabal and was impacted directly as the tail end of the storm continued westward into the municipal borders. The impact of the storm was devastating to a number of cooperatives and plantations as thousands of coffee trees were destroyed by wind, rain, and mudslides. Hurricane Mitch provided an ecological disaster to coffee harvests in 1998 and ushered in a six year period of consistent drops in harvest income and losses in the local coffee economy. The following year (1999) marked the beginning of widespread reassessment of land usage and agricultural production for export in the municipality.

Along with coffee cooperatives that inhabited the Eastern lands in the municipality, Se’amay Plantation, located a few kilometers south of the municipal center, sustained heavy damage from Hurricane Mitch. Previously owned by George Denis Scott Koester, Se’amay Plantation was one of the first grand estates in the Polochic region; boasting continuous operation since the 1920s under the direction of the Koester family beginning with the plantation’s founder, George Koester. Se’amay maintained agricultural landholdings consisting of approximately 18,000 acres committed to producing coffee in the higher elevations (between 3,000 - 3,600 feet above sea level) and livestock, tobacco, and maize in the lowland regions extending south towards Telemán. Benjamín Ponce, Augusto Ponce Antillon’s son and the brother of Fidel Ponce, purchased the plantation in 1989 from the George Koester Company and further solidified the Ponce family’s position as the region’s most recognized coffee moguls and the largest agricultural oligarchy in the post-October Revolution era in The Polochic region.
Benjamin attempted to instill safeguards against the volatile global coffee market when his administration began by focusing additional land and resources to cardamom as a secondary crop to diversify the plantation’s commodity export strategies. Benjamin was an off-site owner who lived a lavish lifestyle akin to the plantation owners of the early 20th century; impressing his friends and associates in Guatemala City and Cobán by flying them out to Senahú on a Cessna airplane to spend the weekends on his “rural retreat”. By the time Hurricane Mitch wreaked its havoc on the region, risky business ventures and bad investments put his operations in dire straits as he faced losing the plantation; a reality that ensued after four profitless harvests (1998-2001) and the onset of the global coffee crisis. Because of a lack of potential buyers who were willing to enter into the coffee business or expand their established coffee ventures in the economic environment during those years, Se’amay Plantation fell into foreclosure and exposed its laborers to impending unemployment and displacement.

More than two hundred Se’amay laborer families were physically displaced from their homes as a result of the plantation’s rapid descent into bankruptcy. The bank that seized land ownership stipulated that all families that were not living in the immediate vicinity of the processing area would no longer be permitted to live within the plantation’s boundaries. This group consisted of the poorest laborer families that occupied the lands south of the processing house and those who were entirely dependent on the plantation for access to arable land for subsistence. A smaller group of laborers consisting of approximately one hundred families were left unemployed but not affected by the eviction order because they lived on land just outside of the plantation boundaries near the North end of the processing plant. By August of 2003 the community of
Se’amay laborers consisted of fractured relationships rooted in displacement of some families while others were not forced to leave their homes behind. The following perspectives, provided by the head of a displaced family and the head of a non-displaced family, offer differing views of how they were impacted by the plantation’s fall:

**Displaced Laborer:** “It is not pleasant, no. It is very hard to endure you will see because we see those people every day. Maybe my wife goes to the market and my kids go to school. There my wife will see a woman who did not endure the hardship that we ourselves endured and my kids go to school and they will notice that other kids did not endure the hardships that we ourselves endured when we lost our little work on the plantation. Anywhere we go we will see them and we are now in different lives. We have to watch ourselves that we don’t feel envy (kaqal) and that is what I remind my family. Envy does not help us and it is strong and seeks to carry one away into darkness. It was not like that before. The same fears did not exist for us. For many years we were all in the same life each and every one of us laborers but now it is extremely hurtful that we endured losing our homes and many did not. It is true that we all lost our work, but we endured losing our homes, and that is what pains my heart” (Qaawa’ Cesar Tiul Pop 2011).

**Non-Displaced Laborer:** “Listen you will take notice that everybody is enduring difficulties because there is no more coffee here and there is no more work. Where will our little money come from now? We, each and every one, are living in pain because the plantation fell when we did not think it would happen. I see Qaawa’ ------ at church every week and it hurts my heart because of what he received when the plantation fell. We have a saying in our language and that is that we are all just living in our poverty day by day and we only endure our little poverty in the name of god. It is god that watches us and blesses us. Well I know that now there are problems with the families that were uprooted but they are now in a new place and
we are still neighbors. I think they will have difficulties in the days ahead as will each of us that were blessed by god and stayed in our homes. I fear that some of our people rise in their envy and that is hurtful too. We lost our places and money also, perhaps you don’t notice?” (Qaawa’ Alberto Caal 2011).

A palpable sense of danger exists for displaced and non-displaced Se’amay laborers alike based on envy and jealousy. Both of the preceding statements mentioned perceived envy held by displaced laborers and the dangers that it can potentially bring to the overall good of the community. The displaced laborer perceives envy (kaqal) as something that will put his family at further risk in life and warns his family to reject the feeling at all costs. The non-displaced laborer feared that envy on the part of displaced families would negatively affect him and his family and sought to maintain harmony in the community in order to avoid further problems. Both parties recognize the pain and struggle associated with losing employment on the plantation and the lack of economic opportunities for all of the impacted laborers. However, both parties also recognize, in distinctively separate interviews I will add, that in the light of hardship, all must be on guard in order to further shield away further divisiveness and difficulty that might arise as a result. In light of the differences that displaced and non-displaced Se’amay families experience there is one glaring reality that they share; the lack of land ownership.

Perhaps the most distinctive difference that I observe between Q’eqchi’ coffee laborers in Senahú and other Maya language groups throughout Guatemala among whom I worked in past projects is the disparity between land ownership among Maya agriculturalists in their respective communities, and indeed the entire coffee agrizone in which I conduct research. Although factions arose due to eviction for some yet not for
others, plantation laborers all shared in the impending danger of losing access to arable lands on which to subsist. Whereas community cooperatives maintain communal autonomy over their shared lands through collective labor and resource management, plantation laborers, including those impacted by Se’amay’s fall, were never permitted to obtain title over any parcel(s) of land belonging to the plantation. Opportunity to purchase land is also severely limited based on low wages (see Table E below) over the previous decades and lack of full-time employment. Miguel Cuz Chub’ presented me with a rhetorical question in 2009 when I asked him what it would require for him to buy the plot of land on which his thatch-roofed home is located. Miguel responded:

“No exact how exactly will I ever save enough money to buy my little land that I become owner and not use it as borrowed land? I was in a good position; elevated was my place on the plantation in the years of the 90s. I worked in the processing house there as an organizer. I organized the laborers to clean the fields and to seek the coffee during harvest. I earned 25 Quetzals per day [approximately U.S. $3.50 during the late 1990s]. Is that perhaps enough? We are many in our little home you will see. My wife watches over five children you noticed. Let me tell you the truth of this knowledge here that we the laborers only are permitted to receive pay for a few months in each year. There is not any way to save money. We are permitted our little fields and that is what we have” (Qaawa’ Miguel Cuz Chub’ 2009).

Miguel stressed the impact of limited wage labor on plantations, even in a relatively high position, that binds laborer and family to the plantation and denies any type of upward economic mobility through hard work and saving. Citing the difficulty of the plantation laborer’s situation Miguel offered the following attempt at humorous catharsis:

“Jot’b’ilo, ab’anana saasa li qach’ool” (We are screwed, but our hearts are pleasant).
Miguel pointed out that pay was not always certain as in the final years of the struggling plantation. The workers were dependent on the plantation in order to maintain their right to access maize fields and said that all parties recognized that any type of riot would render their work fruitless if they were disallowed from arable lands that they required to feed their families each season. He also stressed the importance of the plantation as an institution that continues to provide land for subsistence and the hope from all members of the Se’amay community that they will find new use on the land under collective agency, maintenance, and ownership. However, the obstacle in achieving these goals is not foreign plantation owners, the military state, or any other external entity on the horizon. Rather, the obstacle is binding the factions that have grown and persisted within the community since the cessation of coffee production at Se’amay.

<table>
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<th>Low</th>
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<th>Rate in U.S. Dollars</th>
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Table E: Average plantation laborer works 100 days per year by rule of restriction and necessity.

Q’eqchi’ Factions and the Struggle for Land on Se’amay

To accommodate the hundreds of displaced labor families, Senahú’s communities began to organize efforts to provide collective consensus on where to house the evictees for the short and long term. The result was to provide land at the foot of the mountains surrounding the central plaza and an uninhabited area near the plantation boundaries near
the municipal soccer stadium. Shortly prior to the beginning of evictions from the plantation by order of the landholding bank, the municipality ordered construction of La Colonia-1 and La Colonia-2, a pair of housing projects consisting of three to four paved streets full of two-room cinderblock homes stacked extremely close in proximity. The homes were allocated in two phases to displaced families upon their completion; habitation, one consultant noted, closely reflected clustering of religious congregations

Figure 10: Abandoned processing area at Se’amay Plantation in 2008. Plantation home appears in the background.

with the vast majority of cinderblock homes going to local members of the Church of the Nazarene. Along with the large Nazarene congregation, Catholics and Mormons make up the three most populated religious bodies in Senahú and represent more than 98% of the displaced families under consideration here.56

The Colonia communities are located at the southern entrance of Senahú proper and extend towards the upper area of central Senahú near the primary school. The houses are designed like many in rural communities of Guatemala that experience a slow shift away
from subsistence agriculture towards more urbanized neighborhoods in support of families of limited means. This can be a shocking change in environment and living conditions as neighbor families once held a degree of separation are now living in houses with barely two yards of separation with limited space and privacy. The move away from the fields also indicates a shift away from the proximity of subsistence agriculture and exposure to a life that is less desirable to the agriculturalist that is forced to leave home and field. A separate community named Se’amaycito (little Se’amay) was established in support of displaced families directly Northeast of Se’amay Plantation shortly after evictions began. Although Se’amaycito is home to families of various religious congregations, it is evident that the Mormon portion of the displaced population is entirely clustered in this development. In comparison to the cinderblock structures with cement floors and laminated roofing built at Las Colonias (1 & 2), Se’amaycito is further removed from central Senahú and is comprised in large part of wood and bamboo structures with thatched roofs and matted earth floors at the time of its founding in late 2002 and early 2003. Las Colonias offers a minimum level of potable water, indoor plumbing, and electricity while Se’amaycito is devoid of any of these conveniences until recent efforts provided some relief in the way of potable water (discussed in Conclusion).

A couple of shared attributes that are present in these two displaced communities merit attention, as well as the disparities that separates them to ascertain how they came to cluster and how their evolving social structures impact central Senahú’s Maya populace. To begin with, both communities are located in proximity to their respective religious structures –geographically and ideologically by congregational clustering- that offer previously established and immediate support through their respective religious
networks (local and regional), kinship alliances, and a shared sense of communal struggle. However, disparities, both tangible and perceived, persist in defining the displaced laborer families and the opportunities that they attempt to access since they were so drastically separated from their previous spaces on the plantation.

Even though Se’amaycito is located only a short distance from central Senahú and Las Colonias, the communities there are still considered as landless, poor, and uneducated in comparison to their counterparts in central Senahú. This is due in part to the home environment and the makeup of the structures in which the respective displaced factions now inhabit that I described above. Furthermore, the municipality took great measures at the time of the displacements to provide the new housing project with conveniences and opportunities that Se’amaycito did not receive. Each community views the negative and positive circumstances in which they were thrust within the greater scope of their religious and kinship networks, which are one in the same from an extended point of view more often than not, with appreciation and security. Qaawa’ Manuel Coc Tiul, an elder of La Colonia 2 housing development, expressed his point of view during a maize harvesting party in October of 2010:

“Look then; this is how you will take notice. On the day that we were uprooted from our home that was a sad day; yes extremely sad. My father cried because he built his home there little by little. But, you can’t change it and we decided to come here to begin our lives anew with our common church members. ‘Listen.’ they said, ‘we are now close to the leaders [Nazarene Church hierarchy] and the brothers and sisters will take care of us as they are required by god in his greatness.’ So this made my heart happy and I consoled my father’s heart with telling him that we were in a good place and I consoled his heart with telling him
that his grandchildren will have learning in the new school better than the learning of our old place. We were sad then, after all. But our hearts were consoled by the god over all of us and by his children in our communal place in the church” (Qaawa’ Manuel Coc Tiul 2010).

Though preferential treatment is widely discussed by way of rumor, none of the religious affiliations or their congregations openly discuss the circumstances that placed the two communities in their present spaces. They speak only of the connections and geographic proximity to their religious meeting houses as the primary factor as to why they “chose” to live at Las Colonias or in Se’amaycito when they were evicted from the plantation. However, longitudinal examination over a period of nine seasons in the field provide prevalent empirical evidence in the form of increased wealth and additions to their domiciles, industry for and by the communities from within, and social stature as townspeople to show that Las Colonias is in a stable situation. This does not suggest that the community is not affected by some of the same detriments that their counterparts at Se’amaycito endure on a daily basis. Both communities are still very concerned with crime, poverty, health risks, and financial security. However, Las Colonias continues to make strides in an upward direction through access to education, employment in town, and a step up to something better because of their proximity to central Senahú and the acquired social capital in comparison to those who inhabit Se’amaycito.

Aside from living arrangements, perhaps the most pressing concern that weighed on displaced families in the months before eviction was how they would continue to access arable land in the face of land displacement. In many cases, they prepared for the worst possible circumstance involving complete displacement and being denied access to arable land for subsistence crops. Indeed, many feared that they would have to leave the only
land that they had ever known in search of employment in the Petén, Cobán, or Guatemala City; a perilous prospect for many laborers who did not boast minimal educational backgrounds, employment networks, and Spanish language proficiency. Although a number of families opted to seek employment and land elsewhere, most notably the Petén (See Grandia 2012 for migrant Q’eqchi’ communities), the vast majority sought to endure what they hoped would be an interval of bad economic times and maintain their availability to work when a new owner took Benjamín Ponce’s place as owner of Se’amay Plantation. Even as a decade has passed since the fall of Se’amay Plantation, the majority of displaced laborers continue to wait and remain in economic liminality without immediate opportunity to obtain work or title to abandoned lands.

To the relief of the laborers and their families, Benjamín Ponce secured an agreement with the bank that took legal possession of the land to allow access to arable lands for displaced laborers to continue subsistence agriculture. Unfortunately for the families, their access was decreased significantly (by half in many instances) and provided limited relief from their anxieties. Of the fifty displaced families that I surveyed, the median of approved accessible land is 7½ hectares (approximately ¾ of an acre) with no area larger than 1.7 acres (1 manzana) and no less than ¼ of an acre (4 cuerdas). Land was allocated based on seniority on the plantation and employment status (administrative offices versus field laborer) rather than on necessity and family size; a reality that dictates decreased maize production for all displaced employees. Qaawa’ Armando, a plantation laborer for more than 20 years expressed his hardship in 2008 when we spoke of the year’s harvest. “Listen, the harvest was good but it was not sufficient for my household. There are eight of us here you will see, yes, we are eight here with my mother and father and I have only
12 k’aam (12 cuerdas or approximately ¾ acre). The truth of it is that it is hard for us because I am required by my life to feed my family and there is not enough of our maize. We are helped by our neighbors and we have our little sustenance. Only god knows how we endure the difficulties that find us on our path.”

The lack of access to arable land divides communities that have been engaged in a five-year struggle to obtain financing to purchase sections of the abandoned plantation land. Aside from the fact that many displaced laborers do not have widespread networks to access employment opportunities, there is a persistent and collective hope that they will be able to divide the land amongst their communities for continued and increased subsistence and to harvest and sell less risky foodstuff such as tomatoes, avocados, and green beans to local and regional vendors. The process continues for Se’amaycito as they find obstacles from within the group of displaced plantation laborers because of strong disaccord from within the communities in deciding which direction they would steer a potential cooperative and how they would manage the lands and its crops if the day of communal ownership becomes a reality.

By 2008, two factions of Q’eqchi’ agriculturalists had emerged from within the larger contingent of displaced families as a result of disagreements concerning organization and leadership efforts to secure funds needed to purchase approximately four thousand acres of Se’amay Plantation land. The first group consisted of agriculturally-minded individuals that sought to create a cooperative that hopes to produce the aforementioned crops for local and regional consumption while increasing the overall size and quality of land for subsistence agriculture. More than any other reason, the group of agriculturalists sought subsistence and financial security through communal land ownership and control
over their own destiny through strategic community organization. Qaawa’ Blas Cuz was among of the central leadership of this faction of agriculturalists and spoke with energy and excitement at the prospect of forming a small cooperative and the desire to utilize the land to care and provide for the community; thus giving the former plantation laborers newfound freedom over their social organization and economic decisions:

“This here, this is what we want. We want to work this land together, each and every one of us. We are the people who understand what the land gives. We are asking to work not all of the land at Se’amay; rather it is only a small piece that we seek to plant. So there is not a problem you will see. I understand that there is a lot of land and now we are two separate groups seeking our place. The truth of it is that we don’t find any problem in working one portion of the land here while the rest of the people seek to work the other portion there. There should not be any problems as I understand these things.”

A more exclusive organized faction emerged against the agriculturalist faction that sought to maintain and manage the land for themselves through subsistence farming and small-scale cash crop production. The opposing faction desired to promote tourism and hospitality as a potential economic boon for the plantation community and the municipality in general. This group views recent regional eco-tourism in Panzós as a model by which they can promote the plantation house as an historical destination where tourists can live the plantation lifestyle and learn about Senahú’s coffee culture and tour caves and waterfalls nearby. The project was headed by Oscar Elias Tení, a local coffee and cardamom merchant who wields significant local political influence. We spoke over dinner in November of 2009 at his uncle’s hotel-restaurant about his plans to turn Senahú into the region’s premier eco-tourist destination. Backed by the local Catholic priest and
municipal administrators, Oscar Elias spoke of modernizing Senahú through improved infrastructural amenities to accommodate national, regional, and international tourists. He pointed to projects in neighboring municipalities to widen and pave the main thoroughfare, including linking Senahú to this corridor by paving the road up to Senahú, as the reason for his excitement. He exclaimed how this new road system would supply rapid, safe, and reliable accessibility for travelers through the national highway system from Rio Dulce to the East, Cobán to the West, and the Petén to the North.

“We have great possibilities here. Look at the beauty all around. These mountains are full of caves and waterfalls. The vision I have is to make Senahú a destination just as Semuk [Semuk Champé] and Raxha’ [a water park located in Panzós]. The problems we have right now are problems that we can fix. Our first problem is the road down in the valley. How many years do we hear that the roads will be paved? For too many years we have endured landslides because of the rains and cresting rivers that wash away the road for too many days. So people can’t get here from other parts of the country. We also carry the fame of being a dangerous place in Guatemala. Well then, we are certain that many of our security problems are due to our dangerous roads. You see already that the road from Rio Dulce to El Estor is almost complete and we already have our road widened and cemented in some places. The people here understand that we must move into the future. Too many years we suffer in this beautiful place. Yet people have not come to experience our lovely Senahú because of our failing infrastructure and now that is changing” (Oscar Elias Tení 2009).

Although these factions were not necessarily in direct competition for the same portions of land, their ideologies are fundamentally disparate. Agriculturalists sought to establish economic security by way of land ownership on the abandoned plantation lands and to ensure a long-term presence and community self-governance from within a
cooperative system that is designed to benefit and protect more than 150 families who were displaced and left unemployed. Their model promotes self-reliance and maintaining a small cash crop to accompany the more important subsistence crops that they require for survival. Oscar Elias and his faction promotes what he describes as “modern thinking” and economic restructuring of the local economy that is reliant on external factors such as security, road maintenance, and the hope that tourists will have the desire to visit the ecological sites that Senahú offers.

In spite of differing in their collective efforts to establish subsistence stability and economic opportunities, the efforts of these two factions illustrate a shared ideology that espouses alternative forms of economic development in Senahú that abandons the practice of large-scale coffee production. In actuality, the coffee sector rebounded during the mid-to late 2000s and reached record highs for per pound values of unroasted green coffee (discussed in more detail in Chapter 7). Because coffee production is historically viewed as an externally owned and operated venture that depended on the whims of global consumers, coffee commodities are viewed as a high risk venture for individuals and communities who are not able to withstand the ups and downs that external economic pressures afforded certain producers that have a diversified business models and sufficient financial capital to endure the roller coaster of the international market.

Fidel Ponce, proprietor of three coffee plantations in the immediate Senahú region, spoke about the necessity of economic reserves and commodity diversification in order to endure present day economic shifts in the global coffee marketplace. He validated his point by offering his analysis of Se’amay Plantation (once owned by his brother
Benjamín) and coffee cooperatives that ceased coffee production in the early part of the millennium:

“What happened after the crisis that affected so many people at Se’amay is very distinct from what happened in some of our rural cooperatives. They all struggled with the crisis, clearly. Se’amay had considerable debt before the crisis began and my brother decided to get out before he lost everything; to get out clean without passing more suffering in the future. So he lost money but he is fine. We were fortunate but we were also wise in our business decisions. Many years ago we opened the gasoline stations and that increases our security if the economy goes rotten. Because of that foresight we were able to endure a few years of low prices. The communities [cooperatives] do not have that established monetary security and so they are forced to re-evaluate and restructure their agriculture; but at least they maintained their land. The field laborers at Se’amay didn’t have the same choice as the people in the communities because when Benjamín decided to surrender, they were out” (Fidel Augusto Ponce 2009).

The fact that cooperatives and plantations alike now doubt the future of coffee production is not surprising when considering the upheaval that so many families endured, according to Fidel. For him, determining success is measured by results and shaped by “simple economics” and managing the means that people have at their disposal. Fidel would not concede that Q’eqchi’ Maya are at an extreme disadvantage in the coffee game by pointing to the years that the cooperative communities stayed involved in the market. He maintained his insistence that the playing field is level and that all agricultural commodity producers must take into account which financial requirements they must fulfill in order to maintain the land that they need to produce commodity crops and the inherent consequences when they are not able to meet financial
obligations and requirements of involvement in the open market. The point on which we found common ground is that choice and necessity are two very distinct factors in the region’s economic future moving forward. Benjamín, he stated, “chose to surrender” whereas the plantation laborers did not have that luxury. He equated their needs as needs born of a need for the plantation to succeed in order to maintain employment opportunities and access to arable land. Cooperatives, he agreed, had a reduced amount of choice in determining their fate but a choice nonetheless.

When I arrived in Senahú to begin one full year of fieldwork in August of 2010 Blas greeted me with discouraging news that he and his fellow agriculturalists received months earlier when they officially organized their cooperative structure and presented the model to acquire financing for a parcel of the abandoned Se’amay land. They had received good news from a bank in Cobán that assured them loan qualification to buy up to 5,000 acres of arable land that they could use to produce subsistence and cash crops. The bad news was that the interest rate on the loan was set at an incredibly high rate and they were strongly discouraged from taking the loan in order to avert future risks that might further hinder their ability to stabilize their growing community at Se’amaycito; growth that comes from increased family size over the past nine years and outside assistance from religious and humanitarian groups. By the end of my fieldwork the group was fractured once again and in search of a new path forward.

By contrast, Oscar Elias greeted me as the new owner of a significant portion (approximately 3,000 acres) of Se’amay Plantation and was readying his family for the move away from their two-story cinderblock home adjacent to Senahú’s main street to the grand space that George Koester built as the Plantation House so many decades
earlier. Oscar Elias never divulged how much money he procured to purchase the tracts of land but stated that the money was a land grant from a group of Israeli humanitarians in support of his hotel and eco-tourism proposal. Oscar Elias is currently joined by approximately seventy-five families who began to clear land to harvest avocados in the intermediate and high level altitudes and *Saqi Che*’ (White Tree or Palo Blanco) in the lower altitude areas during the latter part of 2010. The trees became widely recognized locally as a tree harvested for manufacturing furniture in Guatemala. As he settled into his space in one of Senahú’s landmark homes, Oscar Elias hoped that his newfound status as a community leader engaged in economic development would bolster his chances to achieve his local political ambitions. He entered in the 2011 mayoral elections and lost to the eventual winner, Mónica Priscila Milian Sagastume; the first female candidate to win the mayoral seat in Senahú history.

**Conclusions to Chapter 5**

The collapse of the coffee economy began in earnest with the ecological disasters resulting from Hurricane Mitch in 1998 as coffee trees were destroyed by the thousands from heavy rains, wind damage, and subsequent mudslides that affected crops and homes. The adverse effects of the storm were exacerbated in the following years as global coffee values reached all-time lows due to market inundation and coffee supply that exceeded demand by a large margin. This was caused by increased efforts to boost coffee production in large-scale estates in Brazil and Vietnam. The global coffee crisis impacted Senahú’s coffee producers, especially those that were dangerously dependent on the coffee commodities to maintain production and profits.
Se’amay Plantation provides insight into how Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers and their families were impacted by external global markets and how their history as plantation laborers made them even more vulnerable to negative consequences associated with market volatility. These negative impacts are still observable ten years after the plantation ceased operation and caused the displacement of hundreds of families that relied on the plantation for employment and access to arable land. The result of the large numbers of displaced families created an atmosphere where communities who were once bound by commonality in employment and community became divided and established new communities in Senahú and struggle to come to terms with their new social and economic spaces within the community. Although Se’amay provided the main case study to examine external global market impacts at the local level of commodity production, communities on plantations and cooperatives throughout Senahú also struggled to come to terms with their future and how to best utilize their land and resources to ensure subsistence strategies and geographic stability for their families. Although there still exist a number of large-scale coffee producers in Senahú, displaced Q’eqchi’ Maya factions hope to leave the commodity behind in order to establish a more secure economic model for their communities and base these hopes on localized markets instead of producing export commodities for global consumption.

This chapter began by examining a suffering municipality at a time when a community uprising claimed the life of a government official. The underlying problems were actually festering over a period of four harvests which resulted in the ultimate demise of coffee production in various sectors throughout the municipality. The event was one of many hardships during a decade-long struggle to maintain homes and fields in
a persistent polarized community as Q’eqchi’ Mayas search for a better way forward and attempts to secure stable employment and living arrangements. Over the period of the past decade, the municipal Justice of the Peace office that had been burned and damaged during the riot in 2001 remained in its place in the town square. The building came to symbolize the difficulties of the previous decade and the uncertainty of the municipality as it emerged from the long shadows of its own history as an ethnically divided community in the town and in the fields that were for so long bound by the commodity which they produced: coffee. During the year I conducted research under the Fulbright fellowship (2010-2011) the municipality quietly began reconstruction on the burned and damaged building. Its completion was not celebrated; when the building was opened to the current municipal judge, it was opened without fanfare or even official notice (Figure 12). The mayor at the time of the riot, Pancho Tení, told me days later that he hoped the reconstruction would mirror the reconstruction of the municipality as a whole and that they would, “god willing come out on the other side a stronger community bound in solidarity.”

Figure 11: Newly reconstructed Municipal Justice of the Peace building. Construction completed without fanfare in July, 2011; more than ten years after its destruction in the 2001 riot.
The following chapter examines role of language in Senahú and the realities associated with bilingual communities in a multilingual nation. Through language use I examine Senahú and its social, economic, and political spaces as this dissertation moves into analyzing social disparities, disaffection, and development efforts to combat what Senahútecos, ladino and Q’eqchi’ alike, describe as community illness. Language not only acts as a means by which people communicate in Senahú, it also acts as a socioeconomic marker and can either help or hinder individuals and social organizations in their attempts to acquire security and stability in their affairs. I examine Q’eqchi’ language through the lens of maintenance and social setting to show how Q’eqchi’ Mayan as a language is associated with employment strategies, cultural perceptions, “contaminated” speech through modernization versus culturally “authentic” speech, and cultural discourse through language use.
Chapter 6

Language and Social Space in Senahú

This chapter addresses language in Senahú as a multilingual and multiethnic community; including analysis of how Senahútecos negotiate language use in social, economic, religious, educational, and political spheres in the urban center and peripheral hamlets throughout the municipality. Discussions about linguistic plurality and contemporary Mayan languages in Guatemala evoke myriad sentiments expressing pride, power, envy, anger, and respect. Mayan language is such an important aspect of everyday life in Guatemala, that the right to linguistic expression, linguistic autonomy, and Mayan language education in the educational system were all included as part of the Guatemalan Peace Agreements that ended the 36-year civil war in 1996. The variety of responses are dependent on how discussants perceive persistence of the 21 contemporary Mayan language groups in Guatemala to maintain traditional ways of life through language use and a burgeoning movement to produce Mayan language resources through media and pedagogical materials.

The movement to standardize contemporary Mayan languages and disseminate materials throughout Guatemala is based in efforts by Maya political activists to gain increased social inclusion. In many cases, these linguistic communities are inhabited by people who are excluded from local and national leadership roles. Prominent linguistic organizations such as the Academy for Mayan Languages of Guatemala and the Francisco Marroquín Linguistics Project are working to bridge the gap of exclusion by educating rural speakers to adopt standardized orthographies, neologisms, and literature.
The goal of these language academies is to increase social capital in Maya communities through linguistic performance by taking ownership of their linguistic heritage by organizing and defining authorized language in each of the respective language groups.

Language use and discourse about language continue to maintain an important space in cultural inquiry in Maya language groups in historical and contemporary Mesoamerica. In particular, growing interest exists in study among Indigenous Mayan speakers in Guatemala concerning not only different language groups and their respective geographic regions, but also the interplay between sociopolitical movement, cultural and linguistic assimilation, education, and economic opportunity. Language discourse, language sharing, and language teaching have acted as tools of religious and political processes in Mesoamerica from the time of contact between Europeans and Indigenous peoples to the present. During the colonial era, Catholic clergy used language discourse and written language as a tool to communicate and assimilate native inhabitants into Christianity (Lockhart 1999; Restall 1997; Restall et al. 2005). Language also played an important role in forming class hierarchies among Indigenous populations amidst the emerging sociopolitical systems of Spanish rule.

A heritage of language and political economy, which has its roots in colonial processes, presently exists in many Mayan language communities and persists in linking contemporary class systems in Guatemala with these processes. Examining language through performance and discourse in Senahú addresses issues pertinent to language hierarchies by comparing the interplay of language in political and economic spheres within the language community and in comparative Mayan language groups throughout Guatemala.
During three months of base research for this dissertation, I focused my attention on some of the dynamics of cultural and economic value to local and regional responses to economic change. This included increased attention on how inhabitants of Senahú engage in open and hidden transcripts by way of language discourses associated with emergent economic and political change. This chapter focuses on particular prevalent attributes of language in contemporary language studies that are directly bound to my field research in Senahú: language spatialization in the town and surrounding coffee-plantations of Senahú (town vs. country), language and economics in Senahú, language and social mobilization in Senahú. This examination identifies aspects of language discourse that are directly associated with existing structures of power and class stratification in the community. This chapter discusses the grand part that language plays in Senahú and how language is intertwined in the greater cultural schema and historical examination of its post-colonial social construct since 1869. The chapter also focuses on more recent language strategies that a growing number of people are employing as a response to economic and political hardship.

Language discourse is a term that is used by linguistic anthropologists to analyze a wide scope of linguistic forms and functions and examines multiple linguistic attributes that contribute to cultural meaning, social relationships, language structure, power and language ideology, economy, and identity. Collins (2006) describes a three-tiered approach for understanding the interplay of the linguistic and social aspects of culture that I employ to describe language discourse in Senahú. The three aspects that he describes include: “Language form (system), language use (acts, events), and language evaluation (an ideological or reflexive aspect of social processes and communicative
Building on Collins’ three-tiered system of sociolinguistic evaluation, I include a fourth dimension which intends to analyze linguistic ideologies as they exist in collective agencies that I describe as the language domain (language use in collective ideological clusters). Language discourse, as I define it in these pages, refers to contrapuntal analyses of these four language aspects in order to present various linguistic characteristics in Senahú by examining the ways in which language contributes to the social and economic dynamics within Senahú municipality and the greater region of Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers in Guatemala.

In order to understand how these aspects are inter-related, I provide gathered field data that connect the values that Q’eqchi’ speakers give language in Senahú within the contexts of these aspects and the discursive acts in which individuals and groups in Senahú choose to engage and in what manner they engage through self-expression via these forms of language discourse. The following sections address various dynamics associated with language as form and language use by providing examples of how sociolinguistic capital is tied to linguistic competence and structural differences of phraseology and pronunciation in performance – in subsequent sections that address language and power, language spatialization, and language and economics-. The examples also address language ideology and language domains by examining certain contexts in which speakers manipulate language use in order to benefit their desired economic, social, or political goals – in subsequent sections that address language and economics and language and social mobilization-.

**Language as Power**
In this section I address language discourse as a means of social production and power in two specific ways. The first is to examine the legitimacy of linguistic and social inequalities in Senahú and to determine the levels of perceived linguistic/social competence. In doing so, I will show that language use and the ability and authority to speak in a certain manner will either advance or impede speakers in their standing within their community. Second, I will explore Blommaert’s (2005) concept of “voice” as a way to analyze the importance of language use as it relates to social and economic power in Senahú. Blommaert discusses how merely identifying voice as a means of power and status among speakers does not sufficiently provide the necessary tools to grasp an understanding of linguistic functions in a society. It is not enough to identify linguistic power among different language classes in Senahú and to categorize these classes into a fixed space with a specific function. Rather, the analysis must take into account the values by which voice is legitimized by a community as a tool that drives forms of politico-economic mobilization.

Wolf’s (2001) discussion of plantation and social class aids in contextualizing this analysis of power and language communities, particularly because Senahú is a municipality founded on the principles of plantation economy. Of the 85 communities listed among municipal records, 37 are categorized as plantations (fincas) while another 7 are identified as parceled lands that are reserved for future plantation expansion or to individuals or collective agencies such as cooperatives (see Table G in Appendix). In light of his analysis of “chains of control” among stratified classes among plantation systems, I will address whether or not language use acts as an important link in that chain.
as a way of maintaining identity and aids in social progression among Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers in Senahú.

Scott (1998) demonstrated that official language in government allows the state to maintain order and control over subordinate populations. More than other types of expression or performance, “A unique language represents a formidable obstacle to state knowledge, let alone colonization, control, manipulation, instruction, or propaganda” (1998: 72). Scott argues that by centralizing language within the rural classes, government is more apt to create and control unity based on principles of shared nationhood. By aligning and assimilating the population through language, Scott argues that governments are able to form a “hierarchy of cultures” (1998: 73), the apex of which is authenticated by a legitimized language.

Bourdieu (1991) makes a significant contribution to the discussion on legitimized and authorized language in respect to linguistic and cultural capital. Bourdieu aptly demonstrates that one of the most powerful aspects of language is not necessarily bound to what is being said, rather, who is authorized to speak. Bourdieu states the importance of authorized language and the speaker by stating, “In fact, the use of language, the manner as much as the substance of discourse, depends on the social position of the speaker, which governs the access he can have to the language of the institution, that is, to the official, orthodox, and legitimate speech” (1991: 109).

Scott and Bourdieu show that language use by those who legitimize and authorize language play a significant role in stratifying power, especially when examining speech communities with multiple language factions. They also demonstrate a form of language
governance that determines the acceptance of authorized language, sets forth the terms of power, and that authorization comes from an external source. Scott (1990) further illustrates that linguistic diversity within a given community provides the opportunity for cultural expression through language in situations where disparities of social and economic power exist. Scott examines language discourse by spatializing these expressions into areas of hidden and public transcripts as a means of analyzing power and class relations between multiethnic and multilingual communities. For Scott, the importance of language discourse exists not only in the actual expressions of a linguistic or ethnic community, but even more important, the spaces in which these expressions take place. By spatializing language discourse and performance, it is possible to analyze spaces of power within a community and to determine the purpose of linguistic expression. As in Scott’s analysis of public and hidden transcripts, language use in Senahú often appear as an act in a theater production, complete with specific discourse, roles, and desired outcomes that all play off of the space and audience of this linguistic production.

For many Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers in Senahú, living in a country where Spanish is considered the language of advanced education, power, and opportunity, language as a means of cultural discourse exists not only as an idea in theory; it is also widely manifest through practice. Opportunities to engage in lively discussions (productions) about language use often arise across community spaces such as the home (private or hidden discourse), schools, churches, coffee plantations, markets, and government offices (open or public discourse). Past and current scholarly debates have questioned the merits of Mayan languages in contemporary Guatemala. These languages are traditionally spoken
within certain geographical boundaries, a point that leads scholars to explore the role of contemporary Mayan languages in a country that offers increased socioeconomic opportunities to individuals who maintain a proficient knowledge of Spanish (Fischer 2001; Choi 2002, 2003; Goldín 2003; Little 2004).

A majority of my Q’eqchi’-speaking field consultants in Senahú engaged in conversations about language supported the idea discussed by Blommaert (2005), suggesting that each respective language maintains attributes that can be interpreted in positive and negative ways. In an attempt to synchronize aspects of power, legitimacy, and inequality in language use, Blommaert maintains that disparity in language use, or perceived performance, impacts social structures and community perception about language value and function. Noting that language use maintains power in shaping social perceptions, Blommaert denotes the interplay between language use and social inequality. “Part of linguistic inequality in any society – and consequently, part of much social inequality- depends on the inability of the speakers to accurately perform certain discourse functions on the basis of available and accessible resources” (Blommaert 2005: 71).

Not all people in a given society speak in ways that are readily accepted as educated, pure, authentic, and modern. Labov (1972) shows that language is often distributed among social classes within a language community, reflecting multiple levels of speech performance of individuals or groups. Taking this study to heart during initial stages of my fieldwork, I decided to concentrate on examining the fact that language factions not only existed between Spanish and Q’eqchi’ Mayan (the two languages that are spoken in Senahú); rather, I analyze dialectical disparities between Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers
scattered throughout the municipality. In-depth observation that is focused on dialectics, language use and linguistic stratification among Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers does not ignore documented evidence that social and economic power factions exist between Spanish and Mayan language speakers. Rather, it contributes to the issue by addressing these factions among like speakers, showing that knowledge of the Spanish language is a legitimate factor in discussing how and why certain Mayan language speakers have distinguished themselves from others who share their native language. This is particularly apparent when discussing topics related to contemporary language borrowing, code switching, and language shift.

Choi (2002) and Maxwell (2009) working with Maya communities have often examined power and class stratification in Guatemala within a Maya/ladino context. Countless monographs hint that within the larger linguistic framework in Guatemala, Mayan languages are considered less prestigious and desirable when compared to Spanish. Considerably less attention, however, has been given to the role of language dialects within Mayan languages and the role that it plays in molding community perceptions and social standing amongst Mayas. This section identifies language use as an important part of how Mayan language speakers perceive linguistic differences among speakers of the same language. The initial inquiry required observation to consider if and how native Q’eqchi’ speakers identify other native Q’eqchi’ speakers based on the ways that they speak.

Working with consultants and observing language use among Q’eqchi’ speakers in Senahú for the duration of my field research, I found that language distinctions exist that stratify native Q’eqchi’ speakers into linguistic communities based on geographic
location throughout the municipality. These distinctions are generally dependent on perceptions that identify regional dialects of Q’eqchi’ spoken in the provincial region, as well as the amount of language borrowing (from Spanish) that an individual may use in speech. These class distinctions are categorized into two specific types of language use, each of which corresponds to a time and space. These are: language corresponding to a developed town and modernity; pure language (Li tz’aqal aatinob’aal) corresponding to a rural setting and an historical past. It is also interesting to note that modern language, although considered an elevated social status marker, is considered by the majority as a contaminated form of the “pure” Q’eqchi’. Language distinctions and perceptions among Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers in Senahú link theories of legitimate and authorized language with its everyday practical use. These distinctions maintain that language is authorized from external sources that promote language prestige and modes of speaking that advance or stunt social stature. This process of externally authorized language manifests its effect on social stature through language use, a process that includes individual internalization of how language norms are perceived. Among Q’eqchi’ speakers in Senahú, these perceptions create social realities of class structure that are based in language use and demonstrate how this theory exists in practice.

Language also acts as a primary means by which people identify regional dialects and social stature. During most interactive conversations with consultants in Senahú, native speakers from various hamlets throughout the municipality demonstrated the use of linguistic markers that identified an individual speaker as a resident of the more modern urban center in Senahú (tenamit), or as someone who inhabits one of the rural hamlets and communities on the outskirts of the municipality (k’aleb’aal). During one
particularly animated conversation about the rise of neologisms in Mayan languages, one speaker remarked that his brother-in-law spoke a different kind of Q’eqchi’, a form of Q’eqchi’ that is devoid of Spanish loan words; language that is “spoken in the weeds” (*li nayeman sa’ pim*). When I inquired as to why he said that his brother-in-law spoke Q’eqchi’ from the “weeds” and how he distinguishes regional dialectical variation in Q’eqchi’ Mayan, he replied that people in rural areas use different words than those living in the urban center, they pronounce words more clearly, and that they don’t use as much Spanish loan words in their lexicon. The term weeds represents a view that some residents of Senahú hold concerning the municipality’s hamlets and fields where the language that people use is set apart from a more modern and educated way of speaking. This example provides a good analytical base to examine language form and language use. In response to my question concerning rural language, the consultant pointed to structural and phonological differences between developed and rural ways of speaking. The consultant denotes a marked difference in the way rural people speak and situates himself in contrast to those who he suggests speak an antiquated type of Q’eqchi’ Mayan.

The use of Spanish loan words and language borrowing is a critical marker in how speakers categorize Q’eqchi’ Mayan as either modern or pure language and act as a marker by which speakers identify a certain ideological language. It is also through the use of Spanish words, knowledge of Spanish grammar, and the ability to speak proficiently, that people perceive a level of social stature and education and sophistication. A man with whom I discussed multilingualism declared to me that certain conversations will dictate whether or not he speaks in Spanish or in Q’eqchi’. “I speak more in Spanish when I want to talk about things like the television or electronics. If I am
talking with my father about the fields or my family I will speak in our language (qaatinob’aal).” This particular statement demonstrates persistent ideologies related to language use that many self-defined educated and multilingual speakers in Senahú maintain. By evaluating a person or group based on their manner of speech, language ideologies manifest ideas that people have about speech, modernity and language, and events that correlates language to a style of living that separates languages into dominant and subordinate language categories. Q’eqchi’ and its regional variations maintain distinct language ideologies that are sanctioned and acceptable when speaking about agricultural production and other work performed in rural areas that contrast the consultant’s views on modern ways of speaking.

The Spanish language, colloquially known as Castellano to multilingual speakers and as kastiiy and kaxlan aatin to native Q’eqchi’ speakers, determines and distinguishes socioeconomic classes within the two major linguistic communities in Senahú. However, rather than contrasting native Spanish speakers with native Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers, this research examines Mayan language speakers in Senahú and how they view increased Spanish loan words and into their language. Multilingual proficiency, although generally admired in the community, is widely viewed as the main culprit in determining which factors contaminate otherwise pure Q’eqchi’ Mayan. One particular attitudinal survey indicated that more than 90% of rural and urban consultants expressed that Spanish loan words contaminate (nake’xtz’ajni li qaatinob’aal) an otherwise pure form of speaking. Furthermore, the participants expressed that “pure Q’eqchi’” is spoken more in the hamlets of the municipality.
“Linguistic purism” (Choi 2002) is a topic of language discourse that is prevalent among Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú. In her work with K’iche’ Mayan speakers in the Western highlands of Guatemala, Choi discusses how she observed numerous stereotypes that relegated speakers into different socioeconomic groups that are based largely on the level of linguistic purity with which they speak. In her transcripts, Choi notes that her informant “relates ‘Maya’ to the past, concluding that ‘modern’ Mayans are not ‘true Maya.’ . . . The idea behind this discourse is that ‘modernity’ contaminates -emphasis added- authentic Maya culture” (Choi 2002: 5). The idea of language authenticity relates to Blommaert’s greater discussion on voice and power in determining the type of language that people use in a given linguistic community. The question addresses the issue of linguistic authority and links language purity to culture though time and space.

Language borrowing is one of the primary ways by which rural speakers identify “contaminated” Q’eqchi’ Mayan. A particular conversation with a consultant touched on loan words and language borrowing. We discussed his deceased grandfather, Carlos, a man who was recognized as a community leader and venerated in the community for his wisdom during approximately 90 years of life in Senahú. I remarked how Carlos always used phrases that are rarely uttered in the contemporary Q’eqchi’ of Senahú. The consultant reacted by stating, “He spoke the pure Q’eqchi’ . . . his language was pure. He never said “porque” or “mas” . . . neither did he say “pero” because he spoke the pure Q’eqchi’. He used the pure words in our language. There are many places where the languages are joined together. It is ugly. That is how it is in Panzós and Telemán. In the valley they talk like that and they contaminate our language. In the mountains, however, we don’t join the words as much.”
This particular comment regarding language contamination by joining words offers an interesting view of language contamination in two nearby Q’eqchi’-speaking communities. Panzós and Telemán are two communities pertaining to the municipality of Panzós that consist of moderate urban centers with outlying hamlets situated approximately 20-30 kilometers below the mountains of Senahú in the Polochic Valley. As Choi documents, Mayan language speakers tend to note regional differences in speech and to group speakers of the same language according to geography and municipality. The way that “they” speak marks other regional dialects as different to those who speak in a way that is more comfortable and familiar to Senahú’s populace. By mixing Spanish loan words such as *porque*, *mas*, and *pero*, even though their Q’eqchi’ equivalents are available and understood, language becomes something that marks differences among linguistic communities that are otherwise similar in almost every aspect of the culture.

This point implies marked differences between speech performance in urban and rural settings, including linguistic markers that indicate time (grandfather’s language) as well as space (geographic). This discussion highlights the discussion of perceived social differences that exists between linguistic communities, including language as a socioeconomic marker and how language use acts as a categorizing factor within Q’eqchi’ Mayan speakers to contrast *tenamit* (town) and *k’aleb’aal* (fields/rural village), including collective consensus regarding perceived social statuses associated with such differences. One man asserted that when one speaks the way people speak in the fields, they are of a different time and place. Consider the following statement given by a school teacher when I asked him why he seemed to not understand a phrase that his cousin from
a hamlet of Senahú uttered to him; “He speaks like our grandfathers did in the maize fields; we speak a different type of Q’eqchi’ in Senahú.”

Not only does this comment place language purity in bounded historical context, it also demonstrates current views concerning Q’eqchi’ Mayan in neighboring regions and the “contamination” of language in such communities. It is plausible to interpret a link to the past as a way of recreating a place and time when Mayas maintained a greater deal of social control, and the idea that language and country were more “pure”. In his examination of Tolowa histories, Collins (1998) explores the idea of re-creating, or “inventing tradition” (Collins 1998: 134) as one possible response to foreign incursion into a previously claimed social space. For residents of Senahú, the “unification of language” (Bourdieu 1991) and maintaining language boundaries between “pure/ancestral” ways of speaking Q’eqchi’ and “contaminated/modern” speaking is one of the ways that discourse of Maya spatial identity is created and performed. Language use concerning ancestral knowledge and language purity, acts as another form of connecting to a “pure” past, and if so desired, re-creating a space and time in which a revered ancestor(s) maintained distinct characters of the pure Q’eqchi’ language.

**Language Spatialization**

Studying how Maya communities navigate life in multilingual communities is a prominent topic of anthropological investigations in Guatemala. A common thread in investigating multiethnic communities inevitable leads to addressing the language divide that exists in so many rural departments and municipalities throughout Guatemala. Hawkins (1984) and Watanabe (1992) explore some of the associations between Maya
and ladino factions that cohabitate communities in Mam speaking communities of San Pedro/San Marcos and Santiago Chimaltenango, Guatemala that represent ethnic and social disparities that are based in part on defining spaces of a foreign “other” in native Maya lands. For the inhabitants of Senahú and surrounding communities in the Polochic region, the idea of social and ethnic boundaries resonates through space, through language, and in response to the ever present other.

Bourdieu (1991) addresses social spaces in order to demonstrate the dynamic interplay between agents within a structured community. He argues that relationships based in relativity and interactions between agents define individuals and groups in opposition to others within a given communal space. Social spaces emerge as a result of the capital or value that an agent possesses relative of others, distributing individuals and groups into social classes within multi-dimensional spaces occupied by agents who possess certain positions within. Bourdieu states, “The Social field can be described as a multi-dimensional space of positions such that each position can be defined in terms of a multi-dimensional system of co-ordinates whose values correspond to the values of the different pertinent variables” (1991: 230-231).

Whereas Bourdieu examines the creation and distribution of class divisions and social fields, Scott (1990) examines the roles that various agents assume within social space by addressing various acts that are tacitly bound to certain areas within social spaces. Scott and Bourdieu both offer analyses that include the dynamic role of the individual, especially when juxtaposed to other actors within social fields of a shared community. In particular, Scott focuses on the spatial relationships between dominant and subaltern classes within shared communities and the dynamics associated with social behavior in
spaces that correspond to hidden and public arenas. Scott’s analysis suggests that certain spaces are a stage for cultural performance in which actors play roles corresponding to their social stature. He argues that private, or hidden, social spaces provide an alternate arena where dominant and subaltern roles differ from those found in public spaces. This relates to the idea of physical spaces as domains in which certain behavior may or may not garner acceptance because of potential consequences to the individual or group. It also speaks to psychological effects that associate spaces with safety and danger as behavior is commonly based on the environment in which actors are present. Scott demonstrates that the initial condition, or site, determines whether certain behavior is performed as public or hidden.

“The social sites of the hidden transcript are those locations in which the unspoken riposte, stifled anger, and bitten tongues created by relations of domination find a vehement, full-throated expression. It follows that the hidden transcript will be least inhibited when two conditions are fulfilled: first, when it is voiced in a sequestered social site where the control, surveillance, and repression of the dominant are least able to reach, and second, when this sequestered social milieu is composed entirely of close confidants who share similar experiences in domination” (Scott 1990: 120).

This section presents various social fields within Senahú in an historical context in order to understand various contemporary social spaces within agents and groups of the municipality and how these spaces are related to ethnolinguistic classes. As in any community that is comprised of diverse ethnic and linguistic backgrounds, Senahú is divided into spaces. These spaces are often based on variables that include kinship alliances, religious affiliation, occupation, and language – to mane just a few. Each of
these spaces contributes to a greater whole in the social domain and contributes to various social, economic, and linguistic sub-domains. Little (2004) confronted the issue of social spaces in his study of Antigua, Guatemala. His description of Antigua as a heterotopia includes examining the way in which people “live, work, and survive” in order to examine borderzones and spatialization of the research community. Little notes that through geographic city planning, the community is comprised of social spaces that are meant to contain various actors within community boundaries. However, the study shows that even though social spaces are constructed, residents and visitors of Antigua usually engage in traversing implicitly defined social boundaries.

In her examinations of Maya-ladino ideological constructs, Smith (1990) suggests that Maya conceptions of ladino others are not static, rather renewable. Based in Totonicapan, Guatemala, Smith demonstrates that for the Indigenous members of the community, awareness of a foreign other persisted and evolved for those who talked, worked, and dressed in manners that differed than their collective cultural construction. “Whatever is 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” (1990: 220).

The following examples denote a brief history of social and linguistic spaces in Senahú in order to provide a basis on which to relate further perceptions of how language is practiced in this particular multilingual/multiethnic community. This topic is of particular concern in many rural agricultural producers in the Polochic region as Q’eqchi’ Maya communities continue to engage in processes to redefine their social and economic spaces. These spaces are directly bound to the fall of large-scale coffee production in
centrally located plantations in Senahú and increased efforts by collective development groups that are attempting to restructure agricultural domains throughout the municipality. The attempt to restructure agricultural spaces in Senahú is invariably linked to an attempt to restructure and redefine the dynamics of historical social domains.

Since the inception of Senahú’s historically prominent coffee plantations, Q’eqchi’ Maya inhabitants have been subject to national and regional government policies that integrated economic relationships between various ethnolinguistic groups in a centralized area of coffee production. At present, the majority of Senahú’s residents are descendants of the multitudes of Q’eqchi’ Mayan emigrants from Carchá and Cahabón who maintain Q’eqchi’ Mayan as a primary, and often, sole language. Their predecessors came to inhabit Senahú alongside foreign entrepreneurs from Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States who supplied the monetary means by which coffee production was based. Of the foreign entities that inhabited Senahú during the infant stages of coffee production, municipal records show that an overwhelming majority of foreign families that migrated to Senahú in the early late 19th and early 20th centuries arrived from Germany (75%). The table below shows the numbers of foreign coffee finqueros and their corresponding nationalities as documented in the Civil Registry for Foreign Citizens (Registro de Ciudadanos Extranjeros de Senahú) 63.

Although Guatemala’s economic policies encouraged and fostered foreign agricultural production in some of its most rural areas, as Wagner (1991) shows, Mayan language speakers were not encouraged to assimilate to the languages and cultures maintained by German and other European plantation owners. Cultural and linguistic
abstention in the Maya populace stems from finqueros’ (past and current) desire to maintain distinctions between ethnic factions and socioeconomic classes working on the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Total #</th>
<th>% of Foreign Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German Nationals</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Nationals</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States Nationals</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swiss Nationals</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table F: Inscribed foreign nationals in Senahú in the early 20th century. See also Table C in Appendix for a detailed list.

plantations. This distinction was demonstrated in a conversation that I had with the aforementioned Fidel Ponce, a third generation coffee plantation owner and entrepreneur in Senahú, regarding German presence in the community. As we sat in the courtyard of his home surrounded by black and white photographs dating back to the late 19th century, we talked about his experiences as a young man in Senahú. A large structure that also serves as a hotel, comedor and store, Fidel’s recounted a romanticized version of his upbringing in a home that spans more than a century. Fidel noted that according to his father, in the early days of coffee production, the finqueros gathered in the courtyard to socialize with proper company and to discuss the progression of their product. Most notably, Fidel related that “this was a German home originally. Here was a place where
German was spoken.” In fact, the structure was established by the Dieseldorff family in the earliest days of coffee production in Senahú.

Based on Karl Sapper’s documentation of coffee quadrants in Alta Verapaz, as well as his detailed list of propriety in the region in 1897, The Gerlach, Knapp, and Fickert-Forst families headed thousands of acres of coffee producing land in Senahú. Kensett Champney, an entrepreneur from New Hampshire, acquired Sepacuité plantation in subsequent years, dividing up the majority of land in Senahú coffee production as a main export crop and subsidized that production with livestock, cardamom, sugar cane, and cacao on a scale that had not yet been seen so far East of Cobán where coffee oligarchs by the names of Sapper and Dieseldorff were already established.

Fidel’s statements connected to the history of the structure itself are associated with certain ideas of cultural and linguistic hierarchies and are indicative of the collective conscience of language, culture, and space in Senahú. This perspective includes the idea that space is inhabited by certain people, activities, and speech that ultimately define that space in society. Fidel’s statement is also indicative of the awareness in the community of class and linguistic distinctions. The location and space of Fidel’s iconic home is also an important aspect to consider when examining the formation and subsequent maintenance of social and linguistic distinctions in Senahú. Like many rural municipalities in Latin America, Senahú’s central plaza consists of a square open park and acts as the gathering point for important religious, political and economic functions. The location of the “coffee house” where Fidel resides inhabits a centrally located and ever-present place of power in the plaza, inhabiting shared spaces in the plaza with municipal administration offices, the Catholic cathedral, and the town’s only health clinic.
These particular spaces that inhabit the central plaza are public spaces for the most part that serve political, economic, educational, and religious interests. They are both symbolic and actual spaces of power in the community. Today, German is not spoken in these spaces; rather it is Spanish that represents authorized and legitimate language throughout these spaces of power. Understanding how Senahú originated as a defined political entity is necessary in order to understand contemporary language and cultural spatialization and how these spaces are maintained in public and private spaces and in open and hidden discourses.

Municipal archives prior to 1869 include original petitions from Spanish and North American landowners for government recognition as a municipal entity. In this document, the petitioners explain that although the majority of the area’s population is Indian, “all government functions, meetings, and records will be documented in Spanish, Guatemala’s official language.” This document demonstrates the existence of language stratification in Senahú since its earliest days as an organized municipal body and identifies Spanish, not Q’eqchi’ Mayan, as the official, authoritative, and legitimate language. Like the majority of officially recognized municipalities in Guatemala, although Mayan languages were dominant in terms of the number of speakers, in Senahú Spanish assumed a position as the language of power, relegating Q’eqchi’ as a perceived subordinate means of cultural and linguistic expression.

**Language in Markets and Economy**

Examining the dynamics associated with spaces of symbolic power and language contribute to determining how these aspects are linked to regional, national, and global
economies. The previous section shows how the incursion of foreign capital played a monumental role in establishing contemporary socioeconomic stratification in Senahú. It was through this stratification process that large-scale coffee producers came to form a dominant political, social, and economic class through which municipal landholdings were acquired. The distribution of land among foreign entrepreneurs generated significant disparity of wealth and economic opportunity through agricultural production in each of the geographic regions throughout the municipality from the urban core to the outlying rural periphery. Inhabitants of core and peripheral areas in Senahú presently maintain marked differences related to language ideologies. These ideologies perpetuate perceptions about language use, including; language borrowing, syntactical variation, phonetic variation, and lexicon. Each of these aspects of language use contributes to a symbolic language economy that consists of a top-down hierarchy in which each level maintains perceived value. Examining how language use and language proficiency contribute to realities of Q’eqchi’ inclusion or exclusion from potential economic and social advancement is essential to understanding what role that language plays in response to widespread social and economic hardships.

Discussing language and economy, Bourdieu (1991) asserts that there is a marked disparity between sanctioned and non-sanctioned language in the marketplace. As is the case in many rural markets in Guatemala, Spanish carries the mantra of legitimate market language in Senahú. Bourdieu suggests that ties between language and market reflect a power structure within a society, thus creating and maintaining an established market language within which speakers will either thrive or perish in the economic game, depending on their language competence. In reference to market participants and their
capacity to speak the collectively authorized language, Bourdieu demonstrates that not only must a participant understand and have competence to interact in the dominant language; the participant must recognize the legitimacy of the language that is legitimized as the language of power and value.

“This effect of the imposition of legitimacy is greater - and the laws of the market are more favourable to the products offered by the holders of the greatest linguistic competence – when the use of the legitimate language is more imperative, that is, when the situation is more formal (and when it is more favourable, therefore, to those who are more or less formally delegated to speak), and when consumers grant more complete recognition to the legitimate language and legitimate competence (but a recognition of which is relatively independent of their knowledge of that language) (Bourdieu 1991: 69).

Fairclough (2006) notes that language awareness in global economies is a key part of providing increased mobility in determining transfer of labor into new realms of employment. This flexibility allows individuals and families to decide whether or not to risk leaving their home communities in an attempt to start a new life earning a living in a region where their maternal language is not spoken. Fairclough’s discussion on neoliberal economies and language use is particularly applicable to the emergent economic and agrarian restructuring occurring in Senahú due to mass cessation of coffee production as language awareness and multilingual education play increasingly larger roles in the collective discourse of the municipality and neighboring regions. He stresses that in order to participate in the new knowledge-based economy, people must obtain the knowledge and skills required to succeed.
Although a majority of people in Senahú identify Q’eqchi’ as their primary language, speak Q’e’eqchi’ in their homes, and teach Q’e’eqchi’ to their children, Spanish is considered the authorized language in terms of market and economy. Language ideology and language use are qualities that are linked to market inclusion and participation, including employment in Senahú. This topic transcends boundaries of time and space by addressing global market issues that are partly responsible for creating an environment of economic hardship in Senahú. The impact of market and culture is also related to exclusion of opportunities that are available if an individual holds the right tools, in this case, the right language tools.

Market economics and language are related to a more broad analysis of the value of language that Senahútecos perceive and what certain language values mean for people who are faced with everyday decisions concerning the words that they speak, how they speak them, and why they choose to speak the way they do. Just as language choices are associated with authenticity, purity, and social acceptance, one of the more interesting aspects of how people discuss language and its cultural value. Inasmuch, language choices are often juxtaposed and dependent on whether or not a certain language is valued as advantageous, or derided as disadvantageous (Zentella 2005). In her analysis of bilingual education in the United States, Zentella notes that a situation-centered approach to learning that many Latino families employ allows children to become more independent and adept to adapting to a variety of situations in the family and in society. Zentella promotes the model as an advantage and a resource, particularly when individuals socialize and work with others. This is also a key concept that Fairclough (2006) discusses in his assessment of flexibility and global capitalism and the necessary
resources that give people an advantage in the shifting market economy. Knowledge of language and economy provides examples of how semiotic mobility is used in practice and how certain sanctioned knowledge – Spanish in this case — translates into economic opportunity.

As I observed language use as it relates to culture in Senahú, it became more apparent that I would need to broaden my examinations to include language as an economic advantage. I conducted semi-structured interviews in a manner in which I could examine how consultants perceived linguistic capital and economic value associated with Spanish and Q’eqchi’ Mayan, respectively. These inquiries were initiated from statements that demonstrated to me that real class and economic disparities exist between households based on language, in particular, the ability of employed family members to speak Spanish. Whereas the previous section discusses some aspects associated with language and cultural capital, this section addresses how Q’eqchi’ speakers in Senahú link language, economic value, and language use as a response to economic hardship in Senahú.

In his study of Maya vendors in Antigua, Guatemala, Little (2004) addresses particular strategies that Kaqchikel Mayas employ in their struggle to gain employment in professional occupations that are typically associated with Guatemala’s non-Maya populace. He notes that in order to obtain “professional” employment, Mayas generally believe that they must adopt certain customs associated with non-Mayas and “wear ladino-Style clothing and not speak a Maya language” (Little 2004: 75). Little asserts that language acts as a primary tool of identification in multilingual communities which reinforce acceptable norms in a collective marketplace. His examination of social
strategies demonstrates that Guatemalan marketplaces maintain a hierarchy of desired qualities in which language plays an important role in both theory and in practice.

Any desired economic and social advancement in Senahú is aided considerably by increased Spanish proficiency. Responding to my inquiries concerning why Spanish is preferred when dealing in matters of the marketplace and economics, Olga, a single middle-aged woman, remarked that without Spanish proficiency, she could not interact with vendors and clients in order to buy and sell her dairy and pre-packaged meat products in her park-side store. “I have to speak Spanish because the sellers come from a different town. They don’t speak our language and the buyers who come to my store are mostly ladinos.” Neko, a Q’eqchi’ speaker, noted that if an individual wants to obtain and maintain a more coveted job on a coffee plantation, proficiency in Spanish and Q’eqchi’ is not only desired, rather it is required to act as interpreter for plantation administrators – including the owner- and laborers. “Two languages are necessary. My father worked in the plantation office because he spoke Spanish very well. Of course he also speaks our language so he can tell the workers what the boss wants them to do and where they must work. Speaking two languages helped him to talk to the plantation owner and the workers.” These examples demonstrate that Maya speakers who are proficient in Spanish perceive language use as a means by which they maintain an economic advantage over monolingual Mayan language speakers in the economic marketplace.

In an attitudinal surveys and interviews that touched on language issues, it was apparent that most consultant responses equated value with money. One particular attitudinal survey that I conducted was methodologically constructed to focus on consultant responses concerning the “greatness of our language” – li xanimal ru li
qaatinob’aal – a phrase that associates respect, instead of the “worth of language” – li xloq’al li qaatinob’aal – which is more commonly associated with price, value of an object, and worth. Responses suggested that the ability to speak Spanish equated to better job opportunities and economic advancement. Miguel, a friend and consultant who makes a living by recruiting laborers from Senahú to work on a coffee plantation in Esquipulas noted, “Because I can speak Spanish without difficulty, I can travel anywhere in Guatemala, I can work and make more money. If you speak Spanish you have many more paths to make money.”

Indeed, the primary response to the value of multilingualism and Spanish proficiency that consultants agreed upon was that it acts as a tool of economic and social mobility through which they are able to traverse geographic boundaries and language barriers in the search for economic prosperity. In contrast, Q’eqchi’ Mayan is viewed as a language of subordinate economic value and secondary in its importance and value in a market economy, supporting Fairclough’s (2006) assertion that awareness of language as an economic tool allows speakers to traverse language boundaries and participate in diverse fields of regional and transnational employment opportunities.

**Language and Social Mobilization**

Recent sociolinguistic and cultural anthropological studies have focused on language revitalization in neighboring Maya-speaking regions of Guatemala to show the role that language plays in exclusion or inclusion into collective mobilization efforts. Maxwell (1996) investigates Kaqchikel Mayan communities who have promoted efforts to promote sociolinguistic events as a means by which cultural and linguistic maintenance is seen as a valuable tool that encourages cultural and linguistic pride through linguistic
exchange. Maxwell notes the importance of collective language revitalization projects in local-level political inclusion and advancement of Mayas in the fields of linguistics and other fields of academia.

The interplay between Mayan language use and social mobilization has spawned a wide array of scholarly debate in the decade following the signing of the United Nations brokered peace accords to end 36 years of civil war. As Maya activists and scholars remain committed to programs that promote Mayan language revitalization and maintenance (Brown 1996; England 1996; Maxwell 1996), it is clear that the language dynamic in Guatemala offers individuals and groups a number of opportunities to engage with specific programs that champion causes ranging from multilingualism for native Mayan language speakers to observing cultural efflorescence (Montejo 2005) through the use of the native language. In discussing some of the current debates concerning language use in Guatemala, Brown (1996) points out that the social conditions that motivate many Mayan language speakers to acquire a second language is the result of socioeconomic pressures. He notes that these pressures are often viewed by native Mayan speakers as “un-Mayan and [they] perceive the monolingual (in a Mayan language) as somehow ‘purer’ than the multilingual in Spanish and Maya” (1996: 167). Brown further suggests that even though people perceive Spanish language acquisition as un-Mayan, mastering two languages presents native Maya speakers to adapt and thrive in their socioeconomic domains. Multilingual proficiency, Brown argues, enables native Mayan speakers to maintain a prominent part of their cultural traditions and traverse socioeconomic boundaries that may not be available to monolingual Mayan speakers. Scholars have shown in many cases that these socioeconomic boundaries are directly linked to language
acquisition in various fields of collective development efforts and inclusion into regional and global markets (Annis 1987; Goldín 2003; Little 2004; Fischer & Benson 2006).

Whereas most of my field consultants who claim Q’eqchi’ as their native language tend to perceive multilingualism and Spanish proficiency as a tool of socioeconomic advancement, the increase in Maya cultural awareness also creates an arena in which to discuss language maintenance as a tool for creating linguistic capital in social mobilization efforts. This section explores some links between language in practice, language domains, and language ideologies in Senahú. I use the term language domain to identify groups who actively engage in language use with the intent on fulfilling a specific purpose. I address language ideologies and domains through analysis of two collective efforts that actively promote language use as a form by which to promote and maintain their respective ideals in response to deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in Senahú. Q’eqchi’ and Spanish are also employed as strategies to acquire increased socioeconomic stature at the regional level to gain more broad participation in economic markets in the Polochic Valley and hamlets of Carchá, to form collective development efforts, and to advance political efforts. This section addresses some of the characteristics that induce social motivation and how language is used both as a tool to mobilize groups of people through collective efforts and to maintain successful mobilization within a language community.

Wolf (2001) maintains that mere knowledge of what Bourdieu calls the game is merely a basis upon which social mobilization is set into motion. Action is requisite to ensure that acquired knowledge leads to a favorable result. Wolf asserts that language strategies are most successfully observable and understood when put into practice as
part of a group effort rather than viewed symbolically by an individual. In describing how language is used to shape ideological change, he states that “Signification - both in its practical form of instructions on making and using things and in its ideational aspect of exhortations and injunctions about understanding the ‘nature of things’- can be understood only in the larger matrix of social interactions” (Wolf 2001: 378). Whereas an individual might improve his economic status through the language use and language strategies in terms of affecting a larger scope of social change, interactions within a linguistic community of speakers and a shared understanding of a given problem is required before any significant change can occur.

In his discussion of language, Scott (1998) writes that practical use of knowledge is paramount in terms of understanding how to manipulate social interactions to benefit a certain group or individual. Furthermore, he suggests that certain forms of sociolinguistic performances are learned and maintained amongst groups as traditionally accepted knowledge which is dependent on social conditions of the locale. He explains that putting knowledge into practice involves the ability to measure certain social contexts and use the knowledge to manipulate that context to benefit the actor. Scott refers to this ability as métis, cunning intelligence that generates a positive outcome through the use of practical knowledge. According to Scott, métis is connected more to an informal mode of practice that does not adhere to any particular rules of obtaining knowledge and thus is dependent on human interactions and acquired knowledge more than on formally acquired rules of response. In this sense, Scott uses the term métis much in the way that he describes hidden transcripts (1990) to analyze a form of interaction that is not officially sanctioned within a community. Language acts as a form of métis as a response which attempts to
empower a certain manner of speaking through trial and error to generate the most beneficial response to hardship. The examples that follow in this section present two cases in Senahú by which language use is developed in order to form group identities through linguistic practice. In each case, the groups use language in ways that they believe will advance their cause and perpetuate the use of language that they have chosen to speak.

In situations where language ideologies are practiced for a specific purpose, it is reasonable to expect that these practices will likely affect a shift in language use. Gumperz (1982) demonstrates that norms associated with social interaction should dictate specific motivational factors that address occurrences of language shift in places where multiple language groups live in close proximity to one another. Noting that exposure to and frequency of communication with different dialects does not explain how dialect boundaries are maintained, Gumperz suggests that, “Frequency or intensity of communication is perhaps a necessary precondition for the disappearance of dialect boundaries, but it is by no means sufficient” (1982: 38). Gumperz’s (1971b) longitudinal study of social interactions and language shift in North India shows that frequency of communication across language boundaries is not a primary factor in accounting for regional dialect structures.

Language ideology plays an important role in determining how social organizations and mobilization efforts are administered and the individuals that choose to lend their efforts to the respective motives which are sought through collective action in a shared language domain. Language domains are constituted by social settings in which groups of individuals are linked by a system of language patterns that make up a larger language
ideology as part of an institution or social structure. The preceding examples demonstrate how Mayan language speakers are often clustered into specific domains as part of an ideology based on language use. This point is further supported by Brown’s (1996) demonstration of language as an ethnic marker and Maxwell’s (1996) study concerning Mayan language revitalization programs as a domain for Maya academics.

Choi (2003) identifies multi-layered domains of language use and Spanish code switching amongst K’iche’ Mayan speakers. Her focus on language ideologies set forth in her research addresses language uses and contributes to our knowledge of how language serves as an identity marker for native Mayan language communities. In particular, her research conveys a variety of distinctions that Mayan language speakers identify as marking ideological differences and performative values that separate groups into linguistic domains with shared ideologies. Choi demonstrates that the linguistic communities that she observed identified Spanish and K’iche’ Mayan as contextualized languages that carry performative styles of speech genres and that these genres are a way by which speakers convey personal and collective ideologies about culture and the contrarian other.

In subsequent findings, Choi invokes data from a political debate between mayoral candidates to demonstrate how performative speech enters into ideologies of Mayan language speakers in the public sphere. Her example shows how these language ideologies, as the candidates perform them, “are produced to perform Maya identity” (2003: 138). Choi presents multiple cases in which speakers use language to identify a specific ideology with which they are aligned. The data that I present in subsequent pages builds on Choi’s analysis of language ideologies by focusing on collective social
mobilization efforts of specific language ideologies that represent not only the self, but a
language domain in which the groups use language as a tool of action to promote a
desired outcome for their respective domains.

Social mobilization efforts offer opportunities to observe how language ideologies are
used in practice in their respective domains. Gumperz (1982) argues the importance of
understanding how social networks respond to economic and political pressures and that
social uncertainty often results in changes of various social factors; including
institutionalized language. Furthermore, he argues that language is affected as different
economic, political, and social institutions arise. The following examples of two
emerging language domains reflect his assertion that “newly created social relations give
rise to communicative conventions and standards of their own, which then become the
basis for judging the communicative effectiveness of participants” (1982: 44).

One recent attempt to combat economic hardship brought on by the closure of coffee
plantations is found in a collective effort to promote multilingual education as an
economic resource. At its core, this effort promotes the idea that formally educated
Q’eqchi’ teachers will have greater opportunities for economic advancement because of
the growing national initiative towards multilingual education in rural areas dominated by
Indigenous populations. As the municipal seat, Senahú boasts the only teachers college
for primary level education in the immediate region, offering formal training to educators
for the advancement of education for Indigenous children in a region that historically
leads undesirable data sheets that document illiteracy and educational inequality in
Guatemala, and in turn, Central America. The Colegio Instituto Privado Mixto de
Formación Magisterial de Senahú is an academic institute that is comprised of Q’eqchi’
educators who rigorously integrate Spanish language instruction with future teachers and stress the importance and necessity of Spanish proficiency for students to obtain advanced status employment in the future.

One consultant, a teacher in a multilingual school and father of three young children, expressed his perceptions of the multilingual education initiative and the dynamic of teaching children in Senahú both Spanish and Q’eqchi’. “I want my children to learn Spanish in the schools because they will learn our language in our home. It is very important for my children to learn the two languages.” In October, 2008 I attended a community meeting in which the head of the teachers college spoke to a group of approximately 200 parents in the municipal salon. The Mayor of Senahú, Hector Choc, explained that he and his counselors had allowed the teachers college to address the parents because it was time for children in Senahú to receive formal instruction in Spanish.

A number of parents present at the meeting with the teachers expressed their thoughts about possible benefits of Spanish proficiency in the lives of their children, as well as the desire to encourage their children to maintain Q’eqchi’ as their primary language. All who spoke, parents, teachers, and municipal leaders all agreed that Spanish should be taught in a formal setting (secondary schools and high school equivalent); that Q’eqchi’ should be the focus of language learning in the home. The dynamic of multilingual education rests in a desire to advance through the dominant language (Spanish) as a means by which economic advancement is attainable while conserving cultural and family ties through Q’eqchi’ in the home. Parents desire for their children to advance economically and maintain cultural knowledge contrapuntally by learning both languages.
in their respective domains. Because coffee production continues to wane, many people in Senahú realize that their children will have to incorporate more Spanish in their lives in order to respond to shifting economic realities.

In contrast to initiatives championed by the teachers college, religious groups in Senahú also use language domains as a means to promote social and religious programs that are broadcast in homes throughout the entire municipality. From the urban center to the most rural hamlet in Senahú, the Catholic and Nazarene churches provide radio programming that promotes Christian instruction and community forums to Q’eqchi’ parishioners in their maternal tongue. Using the New Testament proclamation that the good news should be preached to all inhabitants of the earth in their native tongue, religious radio programming was established as a way to assure that rural monolingual Q’eqchi’ speakers maintain observance to their respective religious affiliations, especially when they are located up to an eight hour hike from the municipal center.

Radio broadcasting is an established form of communication, a means of social entertainment, and educational platform in many rural Mayan speaking municipalities throughout Guatemala; it certainly is not unique to Q’eqchi’ speakers. Some of my earliest memories as an undergraduate researcher in Santa Catarina, Ixtahuacan, Guatemala involves nightly broadcasts of K’iche’ talk programs, marimba music, and remote festival coverage while staying warm around the grounded hearth. Indeed, Nahual Estero was a constant in the K’iche’ home that was my home for four months and the single form of mass communication which all members of the rural community could share. Even in the poorest of areas in rural Guatemala, there seems to be one constant
item of luxury and entertainment: the simple black and brown, battery-operated portable radio.

Radio stations in Senahú are funded in part by external organizations that promote language maintenance through regional radio broadcasting in rural Guatemala. Since the signing of the Guatemalan Peace Accords in December, 1996, Mayan language radio broadcasting has grown in tremendous numbers in the rural provinces. By broadcasting in Mayan languages, radio stations are advancing the use and impact of Indigenous languages through a medium that is widely accessible to large numbers of the rural and urban populace. Although recent and current debates address monetary issues related to government funded Maya-initiative broadcasts, Mayan language television programming, and cultural and linguistic activism, radio continues to receive multiple sources of funding and is widely accepted as one of the most well established and well organized institutes catering to Mayan language maintenance initiatives. Although Senahú’s religious radio broadcasts contribute to wider collective discourses related to social disaffection in the region, its primary goals is to obtain funding from private donors/parishioners in order to supply the church and its membership a means by which to advance their own religious agendas. The stations broadcast various programs under the direction of the pastor and priest, respectively, asking people to donate time and money to church causes.

These two cases denote the importance of language as a means of advancing social causes and mobilizing different sectors of the populace. Those involved with economic and community development view language use as an accessible social and economic vehicle that enables them to reach their respective goals. It is because of the various
forms of linguistic performance that makes Senahú such a vibrant community for examining language in discourse and activism throughout the municipality, as well as providing a comparative model by which to observe other urban and rural linguistic communities throughout the greater Q’eqchi’ speaking region. Language serves the purposes of education, economics, social status, religion, and cultural maintenance in Senahú; a point that is not lost on the inhabitants of the community.

Conclusions to Chapter 6

This chapter addresses numerous characteristics related to language that contribute to social and economic stratification in Senahú, discussing particular cases in which collective agencies employ performative language and language ideologies in a strategic manner to advance their causes. This chapter also examines ways in which language domains are constructed and how language functions in everyday practice. Through this examination, it is apparent that one of the primary functions of language use involves economic advancement and proficiency in a second language (Spanish in this case) to achieve desired advancements. Performative secondary language strategies related to economic advancement is a response to economic hardship, bound to declines in coffee production in Senahú. The examples of religiously based radio broadcasts and the prestigious rise of the local teachers college show how organizations are employing language strategies that are driven both by social and economic issues in Senahú.

The examples that I present in this chapter contribute to a larger discourse of social mobilization efforts in rural communities that I will explore in more detail in presenting social disaffection in Senahú and subsequent community responses. Exploring language
in the realm of social movements contributes to understanding factors that drive performative language in multilingual and multiethnic communities, including encounters that provide insight into language shifts in Q’eqchi’ Mayan. As Bourdieu (1991) and Blommaert (2005) suggest, language discourses are not solely comprised of internal factors that allow people to communicate. Rather, language discourses are often the product of external forces that surround discourse participants and create context and framing of not only what is being said, but why and how. The examples that I provide show that language discourse is comprised of multiple aspects of cultural practice that are manifest through various forms of language use and ideologies in Senahú. These examples also demonstrate that language discourse is based within a wider scope of global, national, and regional socioeconomic structures which I presented by way of a four-tiered approach that examines language form, language use, language ideologies, and language domains.

This discussion presents the idea that examining culture through language discourse provides the opportunity to examine practical knowledge. Historical processes that shape and contextualize individual and collective opinions about language are themes that permeate social, economic, and linguistic ties to Senahú. A recurring theme that I encountered in consulting Q’eqchi’ speakers in Senahú was how inhabitants of dynamic linguistic communities learn to use language in multiple contexts and how language continues to emerge in myriad interactions involving language discourse. This chapter demonstrates that Senahútecos are remarkably aware of how performative language plays a part in their lives. Furthermore, by defining themselves within a certain linguistic domain, Q’eqchi’ speakers in Senahú provide a comparative model by which to examine
marked differences between linguistic domains and the socioeconomic stature of those respective domains through time and space.

The following chapter begins by examining neoliberal economics associated with the CAFTA-DR model that was implemented in 2006 as another economic policy that allows the wealthy to maintain and grow their riches while the poor continue in exclusionary roles throughout Senahú. The CAFTA-DR structure continues to stifle significant inclusion of Q’eqchi’ agriculturalist communities in Senahú as they continue to emerge from the post-coffee economic dependency in an attempt to realize socioeconomic stability and a semblance of autonomy through collective efforts to restructure land tenure and subsistence agriculture models on the abandoned Se’amay Plantation lands. The chapter begins by discussing why CAFTA-DR continues to fail the rural Q’eqchi’ populace in Senahú in spite of coffee’s astounding recovery and record-high values on the international market while creating economic opportunity through migration labor in other coffee-producing sectors of the nation. I also discuss social disaffection in Senahú as it pertains to community concerns over poverty and increased occurrences of public delinquency. The effects of these social ills impacts that the community at large as municipal leaders join together with community organizations throughout the municipality to combat what many people in Senahú perceive as a “rotted town” in need of intense efforts to improve the overall quality of life.
Chapter 7

Coffee’s Recovery, Altitude, and Abuse: How International Trade, Geography, and Social Disaffection Shape “Our Rotted Town”

“Let the coffee trees stay with the chicken men (foreigners) because we don’t want it anymore. The truth of it is we never wanted it, my father and his father the one before him cursed that tree for its filth and the evil that it brings. Let it be that we, the sons of this land (lao, ralalo li ch’och’ a’ in), fill these mountains and these valleys below with our plants and trees; honored maize, beans, pine, squash. That is what we desire.”

José Herculano Po’ou: Native Son of K’aleb’aal Se’pamak and Community Activist.

“Everyone told me that I would find great coffee in Guatemala but I have been here for ten days and all I have had to drink is coffee-flavored water laced with heavy doses of sugar.”


Among the primary advantages that anthropology asserts is that its practitioners are in-situ field participant-observers with direct access to community affairs; thus allowing accurate analysis and documentation of empirical findings by way of weaving theoretical interpretations with practical occurrences as they unfold. Fieldwork, it is said, separates anthropology from its contemporaries in the social sciences by gaining an intimate understanding of culture through long-term personal experience and immersion into a community. That which we do not boast nearly as often is the aspect that allows us to
mold our interpretations over space and time according to our understanding and newfound contributions that contrast or bolster previous findings as social contexts change. This aspect pertains to the fact that we are ever-returning to our field sites; evaluating and re-evaluating our assumptions and findings and rejecting the notion of cultural stagnation in favor of emergent cultural fluidity, emergent economic strategies, language shifts, and emerging spaces and fields within a given community or society.

At the beginning of each successive field season when I returned to Senahú I was obligated to re-evaluate the prior year’s conversations, observations, and events based on the progression or regression of the topic under consideration. In each occasion it was clear that significant change did in fact occur regularly as a result of the coffee crisis, the ensuing unemployment and displacements of plantation laborers, and subsequent poverty and social maladies that are heading to the forefront of significant collective action organizations Senahú. This long-term examination will undoubtedly evolve in the coming years as progress and change continue to define, if only for a short amount of time, Senahú and its inhabitants as they navigate their lives and ever-changing external pressures in their midst.

This chapter examines how the members of Senahú’s community, affluent and abject alike, perceive social deterioration in their community and the networks upon which they rely to make sense of and respond to the hardships of poverty, crime, vice, and social disaffection. These perceptions became more confounding when juxtaposed to the strong recovery of coffee values in Guatemala and in the global market since 2006 harvests were reported. Coffee values maintain high values at present (2012), which raises the question of why, apart from a few wealthy large-estate proprietors, Senahú’s coffee-producing
communities are decidedly abandoning any thoughts of re-initiating production of this valuable commodity. Some of the reasons to abandon coffee altogether come by the way of the lack of financial backing while others arrive by community consensus. Still others who are interested in producing coffee anew are simply excluded from participation in the coffee market by organizations in Guatemala that promote, market, and distribute coffee to the nation and in the global marketplace.

Local perception in Senahú is reminiscent of the old adage that idle hands are the devil’s playground in explaining how unemployment and poverty contribute to increase of occurrences of what Goldstein (2004) calls “spectacular violence”, akin to the violent uprising with the municipal judge presented in chapter 5. On a day to day basis in Senahú more subtle forms of everyday violence and delinquency are a causing great concern of social disaffection throughout the municipality. This discussion includes an examination of disaffection through the eyes of cultural maintenance as older generations of Maya agriculturalists express “shame” in the younger generation’s desire to move away from subsistence farming in favor of pursuing “modern” avenues of employment through education (if they can gather the required costs to study). This outright resistance against subsistence farming and the traditions of their families permeates central and rural Senahú alike and is a major cause of what Burrell (2009) describes as intergenerational conflict in Maya communities in the post-war era. In many cases this resulted in progressive delinquency as students emerged from their educational endeavors to find limited employment in the immediate area and a lack of food on the table from a continuing dearth of harvested crops on because of smaller farming fields and continued erosion of arable lands.
Market Recovery and Tenuous Optimism among Coffee Producers

By 2009, the international coffee market made significant gains in values and overall sales throughout the world (See Table F in Appendix). Proprietors that were able to weather the economic storm were once again poised and positioned to reap the rewards of the market’s financial rebound. The following excerpt from the International Coffee Organization’s press release after holding its World Coffee Conference in Guatemala City supports the notion that the coffee industry is maintaining high levels of production throughout Guatemala and in neighboring Central American countries. Increased product promotion and marketing throughout urban Guatemala and in the international tourist zones is contributing to the success that continues to sustain large-scale coffee producers since the rebound began in earnest around 2005:

“The ICO World Coffee Conference 2010 took place in Guatemala from 26 to 28 February 2010, chaired by the President of Guatemala, H.E. Mr. Alvaro Colom Caballeros. It brought together over 1,400 coffee growers and representatives from government, the private sector and international agencies from the 76 Member countries of the ICO. The Conference was inaugurated by the President of Guatemala, with the participation of the President of Honduras, H.E. Mr. Porfirio Lobo. The President of El Salvador, H.E. Mr. Carlos Mauricio Funes, participated in the Closing Ceremony. The main theme was “Coffee for the future: towards a sustainable coffee sector” and over 30 high-level speakers spoke on issues ranging from changes and trends in world supply and demand to environmental and social sustainability.”

Anacafé, Guatemala’s governing board of coffee production and exports is engaged in strategies that stress the importance of coffee quality and marketing as the industry
moves into the future. During a week-long visit to one of Anacafé’s research and testing facilities near the hamlet of Chikoj in Carchá Municipality, I spoke with a pair of agricultural engineers that stressed the importance of quality of the commodity that they select and purchase for export. Noting that the coffee industry in Guatemala has indeed reaped the benefits of a strong international market, considerable concern persisted in regards to long-term sustainability and Guatemala’s security as a significant participant in global coffee trades moving into the future. Much of this timidity is attributed to the fact that Anacafé expresses that the association is at a “significant disadvantage” as a privately organized entity in competition with neighboring nations that boast strong government financial subsidies to their coffee producers. According to José Angel Zabalda, one of the administrators on duty, stated the following: “Our margin for error is very small. We are competing against nations, thus we have to be very selective if we hope to avoid future disasters of the type that you see for many small coffee producers in our rural regions” Brazil, El Salvador, and Costa Rica all enjoy considerable government support in their local industries and in the case of Costa Rica and Brazil, we are at a large monetary disadvantage so we have to focus on cultivating a higher quality of green coffee and we have to market our product locally here in Guatemala as well as to international markets.”

Although Anacafé is not officially administered by the Guatemalan government, its lobby and influence are undoubtedly present and continues to use its influence to expand export destination markets. In the years since the coffee market recovery began to gather steam, Anacafé expanded its markets into a growing number of European markets (Germany and the United States were high-quantity destination markets since the 1800s)
and hopes to maintain recent momentum in maintaining and expanding exports to Japan and South Korea by understanding consumer desire to drink high quality coffee. The influential social theorist and anthropologist William Roseberry (1996) noted that in order to fully understand the shifting economic and social spheres in the global coffee economy, we need to understand both sides of the market. His work on “coffee-yuppies” in the United States showed that a growing demand for specialty coffees could have an increased affect, not only on the people who demand a higher quality of coffee to consume, but also, on the people who will be forced to shift their modes of production in order to meet those demands.

While coffee for export continues to be the main focus of Anacafé, the association is mindful of market volatility and continues to explore avenues that increase consumption in Guatemala, particularly in the urban cities where coffee shops and internet cafes continue to gain favor with Guatemala’s own yuppie crowds. In order to establish local consumption, Anacafé has spent the past several years increasing its visibility through coffee festivals and began to promote and market coffee by region; following the long-established marketing method incorporated by wine producers in Europe and the United States. Producers are hopeful that they will be able to establish market stability through local consumption along with continuing to expand export to global markets. According to Anacafé’s president, Ricardo Villanueva, the coffee industry cannot allow such dire impacts from external factors and must establish stronger modes of product promotion to consumers in Guatemala to maximize distribution to local markets while minimizing economic risks in the future. “It is undeniable that the substantial increment that coffee prices have had in the final months of 2010. One year of good prices does not resolve the
accumulated financial problems in the past ten years, there is still much lacking” (Ricardo Villanueva 2011 interview in El Cafetal Magazine). Anacafé’s goals are closely associated with the school of thought set forth by economic historian Robert Boyer (1990). Through analysis of economic instability in France in the 1970s, Boyer presents the regulation approach to describe how financial systems emerge from economic calamity, in part, by mass accumulation and consumption of commodities to stabilize social and economic systems. By regulating coffee quality and selective inclusion of producers, Anacafé is stabilizing coffee production through parallel methods of international export and increased local consumption.

Hernández Castillo & Nigh’s analysis found in Chapter 4 of this study offers a valid and important argument regarding Maya participation in global economies throughout their post-contact history as we continue to examine the forms by which Maya communities engage in external aspects of culture and economy. It is also important to recognize that they are writing in the years preceding the implementation of the Dominican Republic-Central American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR); a measure that established an entirely new set of meanings and structures in terms of defining what “globalization” would come to mean for Maya communities once implementation took place in 2006. CAFTA-DR is an economic treaty established in an attempt to usher in a new era of free trade with Central American states and allow more inclusive participation for developing nations in the global economy. CAFTA-DR proposed to limit trade regulations and taxes in an effort to promote increased production; an ideal that many hoped would aid small-scale agricultural producers such as community cooperatives and small-holding family producers. Although the implementation and execution of CAFTA-
DR’s stated goals are still in its infancy and import and export trade in Guatemala hover between three and six billion dollars annually (See Table H below), the few remaining coffee-producing cooperatives in Senahú have not benefited from CAFTA-DR’s neoliberal-based model that proposes theoretical equality and inclusion in urban and rural industries.

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Table H: United States Trade with Guatemala See Extended Table H in Appendix for detailed Guatemala trade with Unites States; 1985-Present.

A close examination of CAFTA-DR’s economic impact on Guatemala’s agricultural sector shows that roughly 31% of agricultural exports to the United States in 2011 were coffee beans (the majority of which were purchased as “green” unroasted beans) and accounted for approximately 14% of Guatemala’s overall exports to the United States. By all accounts, the coffee sector has rebounded and currently maintains positive export numbers in terms of lbs. sold and incoming money from exports and trade agreements. These numbers alone should signify a healthy and robust part of Guatemala’s overall agricultural sector and allow small-scale producers such as community cooperatives to take advantage of the market and to remain a volatile part of the nation’s economy.
Unfortunately this is not the case. Longstanding community coffee cooperatives continue to reassert their perceptions that coffee is a dead end commodity for their communities. “Coffee is dead” they say ("kamenaq chik li kapé.").

By contrast, Lyon (2007) demonstrates benefits and limitations of fair-trade coffee production in her study of Tz’utujil coffee producers in Sololá, including the benefits that coffee provides to the community in establishing a local economy that is less dependent on migration labor. On the economic side of the question, Lyon’s case study points to contracts with international trade contracts and increased values for participant communities as a benefit that provides security to producers through long-term relationships with distribution networks that decrease risks taken on the part of coffee producers. Working with agrarian consultants, community leaders from Ch’ulak Cooperative expressed their frustration with their inability to gain access to fair-trade networks while others continue to shift away from coffee production altogether in favor of alternative agribusiness commodities. Although some Senahú communities would like to conform to the specialty coffee markets and the increased security associated with producing organic fair-trade coffee, there is little progress towards large-scale implementation.

Lyon’s latest examination (2012) demonstrates less positive outlooks shared by smallholder coffee producers in Guatemala based on concern that Guatemalan agriculturalists are losing out on international aid. Lyon further examines how neoliberal economic policies affect smallholder producers who might find it difficult to conform to the regulations and certification models that fair trade coffee brokers demand. Harvey (2005) describes that the neoliberal economic model is based on the assumption that
freedom in the marketplace and individual choices will allow individuals and societies to eliminate poverty when they are allowed to participate in free trade. Harvey asserts that the neoliberalist economic model espouses eliminating barriers that would otherwise impair markets from participation in free market trade and allow increased inclusion to commodity and capital accumulation.

“The free mobility of capital between sectors, regions, and countries is regarded as crucial. All barriers to that free movement (such as tariffs, punitive taxation arrangements, planning and environmental controls, or other locational impediments) have to be removed, except in those areas crucial to ‘the national interest’, however that is defined. State sovereignty over commodity and capital movements is willingly surrendered to the global market. International competition is seen as healthy since it improves efficiency and productivity, lower prices, and thereby controls inflationary tendencies” (Harvey 2005: 66).

Along with Lyon’s case study, Fischer & Benson (2006) provide a case study that describes Kaqchikel Maya agriculturalists in Tecpán, Guatemala as participants in global trade through broccoli cultivation and the associated risk-benefit relationship of producing non-traditional foodstuff for global consumption. Their piece on the desire to achieve socioeconomic advancement is a case that provides some evidence to support global trade agreements as an economic incentive to traditionally marginalized farmers. In contrast to Fischer & Benson’s broccoli farmers, Senahú is at a disadvantage pertaining to Maya agriculturalists entering into and maintaining successful national and international trade relationships. Three specific detrimental factors in particular explain why Senahú agricultural cooperatives have found very limited success in gaining access
to the fair-trade free markets that Harvey describes, none of which can be solved by community organization or financial investment.

The first detrimental factor that excludes many communities in Senahú from benefiting from trade security in the coffee industry is found in its geography. Situated on the right side of the main road entering central Senahú, Porvenir Plantation’s wall announces to all who walk or drive by that it its altitudinal coordinate sits at 3,315 feet above sea level. Coffee, like any agricultural foodstuff, thrives in terms of quality and desirability and value in certain environments and languishes in others. The most lucrative fruit is generally harvested between 3,900 – 5,200 feet above sea level. Higher altitude allows the fruit to mature at a slower pace and increases the density and quality of the bean. While there are some areas in Senahú that are situated in the high altitude zones (sweet zones) that produce coffee, the majority of the municipality and its traditional coffee producing areas are considerably lower in elevation. Se’amay Plantation and Ch’ulak Cooperative are situated in low-lying elevations between 3,000 – 3,200 feet above sea level while other communities that have engaged in coffee production sit even lower (Aktela’ Cooperative and San Juan Plantation are each below 2,500 feet above sea level). The few cooperative communities who express a desire to re-engage in coffee production are often excluded from participation because of the general perception associated with low elevation coffee and the facts that make the fruit less valuable to buyers.

As part of Anacafé’s efforts to develop ties to high-quality coffee producers, the association released a calendar announcing capacitation and development forum events throughout Alta and Baja Verapaz during 2010 and 2011. Surprisingly, only three coffee
producing communities were included in the list of events; including one high altitude location each the neighboring municipalities of Tamahú and Tucurú. Out of the various coffee producers still remaining in Senahú, Se’ritk’iche’ Cooperative (once owned and operated as a plantation by Augusto Ponce) was the only locale invited to participate in the events over those two years. Responding to my question concerning Senahú’s place in Anacafé moving forward the administrator at the association’s research site near Carchá explained:

“We have maintained long relationships with producers in Senahú over the years. What makes their situation so difficult is that as a business we are actively searching always for the highest quality product. With no offense to the people there, the quality of the coffee for the most part historically is less than what we require based on altitude and location. As regulators of this product we are also concerned that most of the cooperative communities that we know were no longer dedicated to improving the plants and initiating new ideas that we desire in our product. In some places the efforts have failed and so we have to focus our efforts on other regions throughout Alta Verapaz that are dedicated to bettering their product and maintaining that dedication for the long term” (José Angel Zabalda 2011 interview).

Because there is a shortage of high altitude coffee-producing communities in Senahú many cooperatives remain at a disadvantage in terms of gaining access and credibility with coffee merchants and Anacafé, although there are myriad factors that explain why production levels continue to languish. After all, lower elevation coffee producers thrived for more than a century harvesting beans graded at a lower level than high altitude coffee. Infrastructural limitations, including access to mass distributors near Cobán, are other factors that make it difficult for Senahú producers to engage in today’s resurgent coffee market and a major detriment to communities that aspire for inclusion in the coffee
economy. The Polochic mountain valley region has long been a neglected portion of Guatemala’s agricultural zones in terms of access to and from the prominent urban markets. Residents, transportation services, and commerce suppliers contend with mudslides that often shut down the one thoroughfare that connects El Estor in the East to the main highway at San Julian junction in the West and until the cemented road connecting Senahú to the Polochic Valley floor in Telemán was completed in February of 2011, the region did not have a single paved road on which to travel.68 Fischer & Benson (2006) and Lyon (2007) present case studies that are both similar in terms of examining Maya communities involved in non-traditional commodity production with national and international trade networks and the benefits and consequences associated with these avenues of income and global impact at the local level. Both cases studies involve communities that are centrally located to access urban markets and trade networks through a modern thoroughfare connecting highland communities in the West to Guatemala City, Quetzaltenango, and multiple borders and ports. Senahú does not enjoy these same points of access to markets and must endure six hours on a slow cargo truck to deliver goods to the closest large-scale commodity purchasers in Cobán; including Anacafé’s central distribution point in Alta Verapaz.

The lack of adequate infrastructure is also apparent in communication and modern amenities in the rural communities throughout Senahú where a majority of the populace resides. The majority of these communities do not have access to electricity, potable water, telephone service (including cellular phone towers) or fuel for vehicles and power generators. Rural communities often rely on communal water wells and cisterns to collect rain water to in which to bathe, launder clothing and use for general household
consumption. Reginaldo Choc of Ch’ulak Cooperative describes why the absence of these amenities is disheartening to his community and their own desires to feel a sense of inclusion and development:

“It is very hard because our road is not good, still we do not have electricity or clean water. These little things are not necessary for our lives but we want them. Yes, we want some of these little things but many days we feel rejected. We are not alone. Many of the villages are like us living in darkness [literal lack of light] each night. We notice our poverty, we who travel to town [Senahú] and see the strength of the electricity and we feel neglected. It is not pleasant to feel rejected by the leaders seated in the municipality and in Guatemala. Rather, it is difficult but there is no changing it” (Reginaldo Choc 2010 interview).

Deteriorating infrastructure is also seen in communities throughout Senahú in the processing houses where coffee is washed, sorted, and dried. Without fail, the existing structures are wood structures erected in the early part of the 20th century by foreign landed elites that are rotting after enduring decades of heavy rains, tropical humidity, and very little maintenance. A number of community cooperatives that abandoned coffee production in the past decade decided that the only sensible action to take with the structures was to raze them and collect the wood for firewood. Se’pamak Cooperative, formerly annexed portion of Sepacuité Plantation, decided at a community meeting in 2003 that the day of coffee was over and that the manner in which they would mark an end to coffee was to take down the physical structures that symbolized its influence on their lands. Expanding on his statement at the beginning of this chapter, José Po’ou explained the decision to raze the plantation house and processing structure in the following way:
“Let the coffee trees stay with the chicken men because we don’t want it anymore. The truth of it is we never wanted it, my father and his father the one before him cursed that tree for its filth and the evil that it brings. Let it be that we, the sons of this land, fill these mountains and these valleys below with our plants and trees; maize, beans, pine, squash. That is what we desire. Many years the coffee’s plant replaced our honored maize and now we are looking forward to the days coming in the future. We did not collapse the old structures out of anger. We collapsed the old structures with consoled hearts. We of Se’pamak no longer walk in these fields and recognize the signs of old. We are traveling on a path that will arrive to the days ahead.”

![Figure 12: Structures at Se’pamak Cooperative prior to the community’s decision to raze the buildings and use the wood for firewood. Picture taken in January of 2000.](image)

**Roadside Hijacking, “Fame for Drunkenness”, and “Women in Pants”**

The final factor that gives Anacafé reason to pause over associating with coffee producers in Senahú is the turn towards violent encounters and the lack of security during harvest season when cash is exchanging hands in large amounts. Increased violent occurrences occur during peak harvesting season in Senahú (October-January) as more
currency circulates among producers, buyers and distributors. The majority of these occurrences are manifest as roadside hijackings involving indiscriminate shootings and cash theft mirroring Tilly’s (2003) discussion of opportunistic violence in which individuals or groups forcibly extract goods from other prosperous groups. Walter Coc Chen, a businessman who sells and distributes cement, laminate roofing, and foodstuff to rural communities throughout Senahú recounted the day that he was attacked on the road past Sepacuité Plantation when he was mistaken for a coffee purchaser:

“I almost died by three bullets and multiple buckshot wounds. I still have one buckshot that remains here in my palm as a reminder [allows me to feel the buckshot lodged in his hand]. This happens too often these days because we recognize that there is not any work in our rural villages. People are desperate. Those who are involved in these assaults, well we generally know who they are. I was unlucky in the name of my being mistaken for a coffee purchaser but also lucky because I am still alive. I am not angry with them, but I no longer travel to the villages. I send various drivers to deliver goods now, but I learned my lesson” (Walter Coc Chen 2011 interview).

“You take the risk because you need the work.” Federico García, another Senahú resident, lamented his experience as a purchaser for a coffee distribution network while traveling near Se’pana’u. Federico was also shot three times in his shoulder region and recounted the attack he suffered as he removed his sweatshirt to reveal the scarred wounds. One bullet exited his chest near his heart, causing him a great amount of fear and psychological trauma that he says changed his life. “There is no changing our situation here to be sincere with you. These things happen every year and we face the challenges as they come.”
Spectacular violence (Goldstein 2004) such as community-led lynching and rural roadside hijacking by force of arms contribute to the overall perceptions that security is non-existent in Senahú and that the only way to avoid these types of violent occurrences is to avoid potential encounters altogether. The National Civil Police (PNC) in Senahú consistently maintains a force between 6-8 officers that are charged with maintaining law and order for a municipality of approximately 65,000 individuals. Beyond the enormous

Figure 13: Bullet wounds suffered by Federico García, Coffee purchaser in Senahú, during a 2007 purchase outside of Se’pana’u.

discrepancy of officers to citizens, there exists community consensus, particularly among the Q’eqchi’ Maya populace, that widespread corruption and disinterest in enforcing existing laws is rampant in the police force. A more common form of protection is found in personal security measures that well-to-do individuals set in place when travelling the “dangerous paths” throughout the rural areas of the municipality. During a dinner with Oscar Elias Tení in 2009 (See Chapter 5), I discussed the armed encounters occurring in
the rural villages and roadsides. Oscar took out his 38 caliber handgun and explained why he carried one. “I feel more secure carrying this handgun because I know there are people out there waiting for me to pass by in my vehicle who are ready to kill me. They shoot first here without giving you a chance to escape without your cash. I decided years ago that if they are willing to kill me without reason then I better be prepared to kill them.”

Like Burrell (2009), I was not sure how to address and define the perceived problem of spectacular violence as it pertains to the increases in organized assaults on coffee and cardamom purchasers in the region. It was clear that the assaults in Senahú’s rural roads were not affiliated with transnational gangs such as Mara Salvatrucha and Mara 18 that have grown in influence in other highland Maya communities and urban centers in Guatemala. The effort to identify underlying factors associated with the increase in spectacular occurrences of violence is at the heart of many concerns in Indigenous communities in post-war Guatemala and the subject of vigorous debate among human rights activists, non-governmental humanitarian groups, and academics. Burrell asserts that the increase of violent occurrences in Maya communities may be attributed to a generation of post-war adolescents who were shaped and defined by the atrocities of 36 years of civil war and faltering traditional social hierarchies that had maintained higher levels of community harmony in the past.

“Generations are generally defined through life cycles or historical moments. Traditional civil-religious hierarchies that once ordered lives in terms of cycles have broken down in many places, contributing to fuzziness in terms of age or grade and what one ought to be doing at a particular point in life, roles that were formerly sharply defined. Instead, current generations are defined by the historical moments that have shaped their lives: war and
counterinsurgency for parents and postwar and post-Peace Accords for their sons and daughters” (Burrell 2009: 102).

What is certain is that these particular manifestations of violent occurrences are being performed by younger individuals as part of multiple organized assaults on specific individuals of means and on caravans of large groups travelling through the back roads of the region. It is also clear that these violent occurrences have increased since the global coffee crisis crippled many of the smaller rural villages that depended on the yearly harvests to maintain economic, subsistence, and community structures. There are far too many accounts that describe near misses, wounded assaults, and even death of innocent bystanders at the hands of roadside hijackers. There is also anecdotal and empirical evidence that supports the theory that the assaults are organized efforts of a few groups that target those who have significant means. Roins Sagastume, a businessman in town who was fired upon while driving his Toyota truck from Senahú to his farmland in the valley, describes his worries that violence will continue to breed violence until the offenders regain some motivation to stop; motivation that he says can only come about with economic stability.

“We all understand the problem and that the problem begins and ends with money and work. This town worsened, even rotted when communities lost their money and even lands because of the problems with coffee prices. This is the cause for our situation and we accept violence and assaults on our roads as part of life. It has become part of our lives each day and will stay this way until we see improvement in our rural villages and opportunities to develop security. Many people with money carry guns. Not me, no. Violence will not resolve violence. This is Guatemala. I was raised in Chiquimula, a place with much poverty and little law. Until we
solve the problem of poverty in our rural communities we will not encounter a solution to the violent assaults and assassinations.”

Intergenerational conflict is also prominently manifest through growing trends among youths to reject subsistence agriculture and “traditional” cultural maintenance structures based in kinship and community alliances. The two primary reasons most often mentioned when discussing intergenerational conflict between parents and youths are more intricate than what many would describe as a universal generation gap. In a culture that values “our people, our language, our land, and our doings” there is palpable concern over losing the sense of community and togetherness as individual desires replace long-valued traditions that stress unity and cooperation.

I view this particular conflict in direct correlation in three parts that coalesce to define youth perceptions of subsistence farming and tolerated delinquency. The first part adopts Burrell’s assertion that desensitization to acts of violence is a result of environment and influence. Youths are consistently saturated with images and accounts of spectacular violence and come to accept these occurrences as semi-tolerated acts; particularly in light of the severe lack of law enforcement to curtail such acts locally and across the nation. The second part is directly associated to the lack of agricultural stability in Senahú over the past decade as youths view the future of agriculture and subsistence farming as a bleak prospect that does not accommodate upward socioeconomic mobility. The alluring aspects of town and modern amenities are strong to rural youth in particular that are otherwise conditioned to make their way in life by laboring in the fields and relying on subsistence agriculture and community cooperation to provide home and sustenance. The third part of this conflict is closely related to the previous and pertains to perceived
symbolic capital that accompanies socioeconomic advancement and accumulation of material and social wealth by way of education. Education in theory and practice is not the cause of intergenerational conflict; in fact, Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú strongly favor offering youth the opportunity to receive a good education and to achieve good progress reports. The conflict with education exists because of accessibility to gain education past the primary level because of location and financial restrictions that result in perpetuating social, economic, and ethnic divisions between those who have and those who do not and a loss of respect for the older generation who cannot seem to provide their youth with the means to reach their goals.

As disconcerting and detrimental to the local society as violent assaults and roadside hijackings are to outside perceptions of Senahú, these cases of spectacular violence do not define the community from within as much as what people describe as “slow rotting” (nach’inaq’aa timiltimil) of the central Senahú because of the rise in public acts of delinquency, drunkenness, and the arrival of sex workers at a number of local watering holes on the Western edge of the town plaza. Qaawa’ Mako, an elder Q’eqchi’ man who oversees activities and tariffs in the central market in Senahú expressed his dismay that sex workers were publicly flaunted at what he uneasily described as “our little corner of sin”; a perception that many community members share. This area consists of four adjacent bars where patrons choose from beer, rum, and commercially-regulated aguardiente (high-proof liquor distilled from sugar mash). During our initial conversation concerning the cantinas in 2008, Qaawa’ Mako described the various social ills that the town suffers as a result of their presence; “I am ashamed for our town. You see what is occurring now at the cantinas; well now they are bringing women of pants from El
There are too many difficulties that happen in the name of those places: fights, shooting, knives, and men go there to forget their problems. When they leave they cause more problems because they spend money that they don’t have. They gather debt on top of their names and on top of the names of their families.”

In subsequent field seasons (2009 and 2010-2011), support to shut down that particular area of bars created conflict within the community and raised the issue in the public discourse concerning poverty, domestic violence as a result from increased levels of drunken behavior, and the right of proprietors of the bars to conduct business under the rule of law. Similar community-led efforts to curtail public drunkenness and alcohol abuse persist in Maya communities throughout Guatemala; including Todos Santos Cuchumatan, Nahualá, and Santa Catalina La Tinta. In Senahú the immediate response to frequent occurrences of delinquent behavior in and around the bars included categorizing the main offenders into ethnically distinctive groups. Blame was given to the rural Q’eqchi’ populace that traveled to town on market days (Tuesdays and Saturdays) to spend the little money that they had in the bars and drink “like uncivilized children” according to one consultant. Local ladino business leaders, including Fidel Ponce, decided in 2011 to put their influence behind the cause and had the bars relocated to an area out of away from community eyes and more importantly to Fidel, out of earshot of his hotel-restaurant.

The manner in which Senahútecos imbibe alcoholic beverages speaks to the discussion of authorized and accepted spaces for certain behaviors and further defines the ethnic divisions of ladino and Q’eqchi’. Ladinos regularly describe alcohol consumption by qualifying substance, place, and behavior in codified and ethnically defined spaces.
that mirror similar views of acceptable consumption in American society that deal with
distinction, taste (Bourdieu 1984, 1993) and acceptable behavior. Pancho Tení, former
mayor and hotel proprietor who worked to close the bars described acceptable and
intolerable alcohol consumption in the following statement:

“We, as community leaders, don’t have a problem with people drinking alcohol. The problem
exists because of the manner that they are drinking over at the bars. The people are coming
from the communities and losing their money. They don’t drink like civilized men. You
watch me or any man who drinks, we drink like educated men. Hear in my house where my
wife is present, I may like to pour a little swallow of whiskey. I enjoy the drink while talking
to a friend maybe. In contrast, over there they are drinking aguardiente of the low quality in
large amounts where they do not think of the family or of the financial problems in which
they are entering. No, those places are not civilized and the clients who drink there are of a
low education. We give witness of too many problems over there. Once the women started to
hang out inside, we decided that that was sufficient to make the effort to close them or
relocate them” (Pancho Tení 2011 interview).

Curtailing alcohol abuse, it is hoped, will aid efforts to protect women in the home
and grant wives, mothers, sisters, and daughters increased levels of security and support.
Mónica Sagastume, the current mayor, increased efforts to reach women in central and
rural Senahú through a series of educational forums and outreach networks when she was
promoted to interim mayor for six months in 2009. At the time, Mónica stated that the
main purpose of establishing an organization for women was “to combat the physical and
emotional abuses that occur in the home when angry men return to their homes after
hours in the bars.” Moral and financial deterioration are at the center of the question of
alcohol consumption in Senahú according to Mónica. “They say that we have fame for
good drunkenness in our town (fama de una buena borrachera en nuestro pueblo) and we are determined to combat that reputation and give help to our women who suffer and live in fear of physical and emotional abuse because their husbands and sons become violent when they are drunk.”

Apart from worries that stem from alcohol abuse, there is also an issue that gains less public attention because of mortal fear associated with the general increase of narcotics trafficking in Guatemala and an unspoken concession of drug transport networks happening along the rural roadways throughout the municipality. The presence of international drug trade is not new to the area. As I mentioned in Chapter 3, agriculturalists in an agricultural Cooperative in rural Senahú were encouraged to engage in marijuana cultivation (even producing small amounts for a short time). In 1997 I hiked with local guides from Takinko’, a hamlet bordering the Cahabón River at the edge of the municipal border, to a landing strip at the top of a mountain on the other side of the river. This particular drop-off point was complete with a fueling station and a runway carved into the side of the mountain. Locals recalled a small airplane crashing while making its descent a few years prior that left two unidentified bodies mangled and burned. According to Pedro Xol, drug traffickers did not bother the local inhabitants and came and went with little notice. “They come from Costa Rica and leave Cocaine. Then they carry the cocaine to Cobán. We don’t pay attention to them and don’t think about them. They don’t bother us.”

In contrast to the perceptions in 1997, recent narcotics activity is an issue that garners more attention and care in how it is discussed throughout Senahú. One reason is because people generally equate drug trafficking with horrific acts of violence, murder, and
gunplay. All of these perceptions come from descriptions of trafficking wars and cartel movements throughout Guatemala in the national newspapers. Most Q’eqchi’ Mayas believe that wealth, prosperity, and material accumulation these days is directly tied to participation in drug trafficking. Because of the associated images and accounts of violence, few people care to engage in discussion of how the perceptions of local narcotics trafficking affect the community because of fear that they will be targeted for revealing information.

Narcotics trafficking became a local issue in December of 2010 when the President of the Republic, Álvaro Colom, instigated a state of siege that encompassed urban and rural areas of Alta Verapaz. The siege was designed to diminish cartel turf wars in Cobán and was extended into Senahú, Cahabón, and surrounding areas because of information that led the military to search homes and rural roadways. I was surprised at the lack of discourse and public concern, however, when military forces entered Senahú in order to search the home of a prominent landowner and coffee purchaser. The raid did not turn up any evidence against the local man or his family and was generally considered a token show of force by “corrupt military agents that are perhaps involved in drug trafficking”, according to Walter Chen. The minor discourses that did relate to the state of siege and the military’s failed raid involved outward expressions of indifference that masked more intimately held fears of social deterioration and future violence as a result of tangible evidence as manifest through military presence that solidified clandestine belief that drug trafficking had become an engrained part of the social fabric. Always a man who delights in expressing his opinion on local matters, Secundino Rax explained his perception and concerns over a growing sense of rural narcotics trafficking in his midst:
“You noticed that the military came to town three days ago. Our people are scared and they are ashamed at the signs of this danger. We see a lot of bad things in our town day by day and we don’t want bigger more terrible violence in the days or in the years to come. I see the news in Cobán and in Petén that is terrible to see. Only god knows if we will receive that evil in our midst; yes, only god can protect us from that evil. Our town slowly rots, don’t you see? We must watch ourselves and protect our communities in the name of good because I fear for my life when I see the military comes to our town. We don’t want more difficulties in the name of war.”

**Conclusions to Chapter 7**

The global recovery in coffee producing sectors has yet to provide positive tangible impacts on small-holding communities and agricultural cooperatives that were once dedicated to producing the commodity. This is due in large part to a combination of factors that make Senahú a less attractive area for high quality coffee production and the inability to secure financial backing and inclusion into trade networks that would otherwise allow production and a level of increased financial security. Any level of potential security would also aid communities to establish stability in collective landholding ventures and enable them to stabilize subsistence farming. Anacafé, Guatemala’s coffee regulators, marketers, and distributors, is tentative to include Senahú into current and future market inclusion and negatively impacts rural agricultural sectors in Senahú because of detrimental factors associated with geography, deteriorating and neglected infrastructural support, concern over security of commodity transportation, and long-term dedication and economic viability of small cooperative producers.
As a result of financial insecurity, increased poverty, and desperation, social disaffection and increased social ills have led to increased occurrences of spectacular violence and everyday forms of delinquency and concern for the moral and economic prospects of the community. Ongoing exclusion and non-participation of the rural populace in establishing and maintaining sustainable alternative modes of economic activity continues to contribute to economic and social disaffection in Senahú while leading community members to identify specific areas of social deterioration. The general sense of “rotted town” contributes to growing concerns over Senahú’s overall economic future as it continues to seek a way forward after economic calamity.

In the next chapter I discuss how CAFTA-DR is impacting local and regional large-scale commodity export and how involvement impacts economic opportunity through migration labor and current perceptions of neighboring Q’eqchi’ squatters who experience their own high levels of discrimination and abuse at the hands of national and multinational agribusiness and mining corporations. This discussion includes an examination of how these corporations represent the next cycle of economic exploitation and oppression to the local Maya populace and the divisions that result from the allure of employment with these entities.

I also discuss a recent trend of migration labor for displaced agriculturalists and opportunities available to bilingual Q’eqchi’ Mayas in Senahú by looking at employment in neighboring municipalities in El Estor and far-away provinces where Q’eqchi’ is not spoken. This discussion includes examination of how language affects opportunity and labor-based migration strategies from Senahú’s displaced labor population in practical terms and a larger discussion of seasonal migration laborers who attempt to maintain
permanent ties to Senahú while securing minimal levels of economic security on coffee plantations in Esquipulas, Guatemala.

The chapter ends with a discussion of localized social mobilization efforts that are employed as a response to the impacts of poverty and delinquency over the last decade in as a result of economic calamity. These efforts are based in humanitarian and religious networks that are implored by their congregations to provide security and amenities that the Guatemalan government continues to deny rural communities. This discussion also examines social networks as a means by which people choose to associate and the perceptions of religious and affiliation as a social base on which to rely.
Chapter 8

(Xulxu) Upside Down: Migration Labor, Intercommunity Discord, and Maintaining Homeland in Senahú

September, 1997:

Hiking the back trails leading from Ch’ulak Cooperative to central Senahú, I was struck when we came across a wall of bushes that were eerily straight and consistent in height. “This reminds me of Wrigley Field”, I said to the five friends who accompanied me on the long, humid trek. “What is Wrigley Field?” Three Guatemalans replied. The surprise of examining an ancient wall structure quickly faded as a family approached in the opposite direction. The woman and her children were dressed noticeably different than the local inhabitants of Chirixk’itz’ak Plantation, which was the nearest Q’eqchi’ community at that point of the hike. I greeted the father in Q’eqchi’: “Chowa’! Ma sa sa’ laach’ool?” “Buenas tardes!” He responded. It was clear that Q’eqchi’ as a mode of communication was not going to get me anywhere with the man and we began to converse in Spanish (his Spanish was noticeably more proficient than my own). He told us that they were from Sacapulas in El Quiché Province and that they had been travelling over the course of three days by truck and by foot before resting for a day in Cahabón. “Where are you headed?” I asked. “We’re going to the big plantation to remain there some months looking for coffee.” Sepacuité Plantation was their destination.

The most recent waves of migration labor is well represented in Maya ethnography beginning as early as the 1930s when Sol Tax (Highland Guatemala) and Robert Redfield (Yucatán, Mexico) provided early descriptive analysis of Maya communities in Mesoamerica. Danien (1985) gives an account of earlier ethnography by a man who traveled throughout Central America beginning in the 1890s and later compiled linguistic data and archaeological artifacts. Robert Burkitt, a Harvard graduate from Canada originally joined his college friend George Byron Gordon as a field assistant at Copan, the famous Maya archaeological site in Honduras. Burkitt eventually became familiar
with Kensett and Walter Champney at their Sepacuité estate in Senahú, establishing early lexica for Q’eqchi’, Kaqchikel, K’iche’, and numerous Mayan languages throughout Guatemala. Many of these early descriptions mention migration labor on plantations ranging from cotton and sugar cane production in the Southern Guatemalan coast to coffee in high altitude regions of the country. Migration labor is described in the literature by examining culture and economics and the hardships that many Maya communities endured under consistently harsh labor policies and vagrancy laws to ensure maintenance of the corporate export machine that continuously molds social and economic realities since the time of European invasion.

A common factor in documenting migrant laborers from Maya communities throughout the years involves analysis of seasonal laborers traveling to neighboring regions and provinces for the sole purpose of ensuring that they maintain subsistence fields in their home communities by avoiding vagrancy penalties and outright loss of land as a result of inability to fulfill lease agreements for subsistence fields. More recently Goldin (1999) demonstrated how migration labor within Guatemala impacts K’iche’ speakers as they migrate to urban factories to manufacture goods and the positive and negative impacts that their labor has on collective identity in formative processes that include re-examining perceptions of gender roles, economic opportunity, and structural power relationships. Burns (1999) examines trans-national migration experiences of Mayas in Florida to determine Maya community organization and adaptation in new spaces through diaspora and refuge during heightened violence in Guatemala in the 1980s. More recently, Burrell (2005) established the importance of maintaining cultural ties to homeland in relation to trans-national Maya migrants in the United States as trans-
national migration to the United States in her research community increased because of concerns about the future of economic opportunity and security in their homeland in the post-war era. Burrell examines performance in the annual festival of the patron saint “as ground on which concepts of community and family are renegotiated and enacted and terms of belonging are (re)established (Burrell 2005: 13).

Similar to the aforementioned case studies, economic necessity and potential opportunities to access upward social mobility is becoming commonplace in Senahú in the aftermath of economic calamity resulting from the global coffee crisis. This chapter examines specific cases in which Q’eqchi’ Maya in Senahú, who were once securely situated as tenant laborers, had their lives flipped upside down as they find themselves becoming increasingly reliant on seasonal migration labor in neighboring regions and distant provinces throughout Guatemala. This examination of migration laborers is focused on the allure of economic opportunity in relation to recent incursions of national and multinational corporations and the impact that these entities have on local economic and social structures.

Currently, the latest wave of foreign interests are looking to Senahú and neighboring municipal lands to explore and exploit new options to extract natural resources and foodstuff for national consumption and international export. In particular, Canadian mining corporation HudBay Minerals Inc. and its Guatemalan subsidiary, La Compañía Guatemalteca de Niquel (CGN) were actively engaged in the late 1990s and early 2000s exploring potential mining ventures in search of nickel and other precious metals in multiple hamlets and cooperative communities throughout Senahú and in various communities surrounding Lake Izabal and Panzós Municipalities, respectively. Engineers
of the Mayaníquel Project (a mining project separate from the Fenix Project in El Estor described below) that is currently active in the region spoke with me during initial stages of my research in 2008 and 2009 about employing people who were already living in the area as laborers; thus establishing new modes of economic imperialism as they explore the mountain regions inhabited by Q’eqchi’ Mayas in search of valuable natural resources. This chapter looks at the impact of potential long-term economic opportunities for laborers in need of steady employment in immediate and neighboring regions and how increased presence of new businesses profiting from the land impacts current social spheres in multiple Q’eqchi’ communities and their perceptions of the most recent wave of outsider dominance of their native lands and resources.

**Esquipulas: Temporary Economic Relief at a Cost**

Previous chapters examined how mass coffee production and large estate entrepreneurial oligarchies played a key role in establishing government municipalities in Senahú and throughout the Polochic region. These municipalities were eventually inhabited by thousands of Q’eqchi’ Maya laborers and agriculturalists because of combined factors; including forced labor policies and vagrancy laws that resulted in forced migration labor, voluntary migration to escape government authority by moving eastward towards El Estor and Southern Belize, and eventual sedentary communities that found some relief through community organization and communal subsistence and economic structures based on cooperative agricultural venture.

During expansion of coffee production in the late 19th century and through the first half of the 20th century, Q’eqchi’ communities were seemingly more sedentary than they
are at present. This is due to a considerable extent because many communities grew as in-situ plantation tenant laborers and cooperative communities with consistent access to subsistence fields that were more desirable than seeking opportunity by way of migration to unfamiliar lands in neighboring provinces and countries (Honduras and Belize in particular). In examining how many Q’eqchi’ communities sprang up in Guatemala’s Northern lowlands, Grandia (2012) describes three stages of Q’eqchi’ migration over a prolonged period of time that drove Q’eqchi’ communities East and North of the present day cultural and linguistic prestige triumvirate: Cobán, Carchá, and Chamelco (See also Kahn 2006 for monograph on Atlantic coastal Q’eqchi’).

“Q’eqchi’ lowland migration began mostly in a northeasterly direction. Since the nineteenth century, there have been three notable surges pushing Q’eqchi’ settlers deeper into the forests. Following the coffee boom, Q’eqchi’ people ventured as far as San Luis, Petén, and out to the Atlantic coast of Belize. During the Ubico dictatorship, Q’eqchi’ migrants made more substantial forays into Petén and Belize. During and after the civil war, Q’eqchi’ migrants fanned out to the Northwest toward Ixcán and also Northwestern Petén” (Grandia 2012: 59).

Although Grandia uses the term “Maya Gringos” because of their seemingly astute ability and determination to stay on the move in the face of uncertainty, the Q’eqchi’ Maya story actually provides multiple models of sedentary communal lifestyles as well as a history of following the path of migration. Q’eqchi’ communities throughout the rain forests, lowlands, and Atlantic coastal region consistently provide evidence that demonstrates preference of both models that are dependent, although not entirely, on obtaining access to land for subsistence agriculture, political insecurity, and economic...
uncertainty. Based on migration patterns, or lack thereof, in Q’eqchi’ social networks in Senahú, there is not any one definitive reason that demonstrates that Q’eqchi’ Mayas are neither less nor more capable than any of their contemporary rural neighbors in regards to establishing long-term communities and social structures. Q’eqchi’ Mayas continue to demonstrate the ability to adapt to external pressures and to maintain existing social structures by employing multiple strategies; seasonal migration in response to economic insecurity is one such strategy.

In contemporary Senahú there are three consistently viable migration models that people employ to access economic opportunity if they have limited education and Spanish proficiency. The first, and least prevalent model, involves migration to urban centers in Guatemala to work in private security firms as guards in neighborhood businesses and as night watchmen over industrial factories. This type of employment often pays the Guatemalan minimum wage standard (See Table I below) but requires individuals without family or acquaintances to rent a room with multiple coworkers in order to meet their financial obligations. The second model is more appealing among younger migrant laborers in Senahú in search of temporary labor (20 days per month for full time employees) in the coastal town of Puerto Barrios. Labor at the port is a more desirable option for migrant laborers who want to maintain close geographic ties to family and social networks while maintaining claims and access to their maize fields in Senahú. The labor is difficult and the pay is less than Guatemala’s minimum wage standard of 2,000 Quetzals per month according to Roberto Quib, a Senahú resident in his late 30s who spent parts of two years as a dock worker in Puerto Barrios. Port labor is most popular among young single males because of the opportunity that the location and
port culture affords them. Most of the young men that I spoke with mentioned how they enjoy access to women, alcohol, and marijuana without feeling guilt associated with engaging in those activities in their home community where every move is scrutinized by family and church congregations.

The third model that is gaining in popularity with older migrant laborers who wish to maintain their homes and fields in Senahú and stay away from what Miguel Cuz joked were “the malicious desires of young men” is found in a familiar field of employment to more than 70 regular migrant laborers who were displaced from Se’amay Plantation after its fall: coffee production. Qaawa’ Miguel began working as a field laborer and labor coordinator/recruiter in Esquipulas, Guatemala in 2003 when he feared that Se’amay Plantation’s fall would upend his entire life and create increased hardship for his wife and children. Miguel used his religious network to obtain work in Esquipulas at the Granadía Plantation as a field laborer clearing land and cleaning between coffee trees in the off-harvest season. In one meeting during the offseason, he arranged for me to meet more than a dozen men who were in the same situation as he; unemployed and displaced family men who wished to maintain roots in Senahú. While noting that their employment was not ideal, the men expressed that it was sufficient for the time being until the economic situation in Senahú improves. The following statements are indicative of the group as a whole in explaining why they leave Senahú, why they come back, and what they hope the future entails for them:

Alberto. “It is true that we travel far for our little money but we do what is necessary for our family. It is exceedingly difficult to leave my home and my family and there is no changing the situation because we are hurting here in our town because of the lack of work the lack of
money. I don’t know what my fellow workers say but I think I am lucky. My family is healthy and god gives me health you will see to do my work as long as it is necessary. I save my little money to travel and I come home every now and then and I am happy to find my wife to find my children in our place upon the earth; this place where we are standing in this moment.”

Edmundo. “‘Things will improve’ they say. I believe that since the day we were uprooted from our homes since our hardship started; from that day until this day that we cannot abandon our place in our little village. We are obligated to work wherever we can. I await the years ahead and think that I will stay here each and every day in my work. In that way I will not abandon my home nor my family; I will not worry in the name of my children. I thank god the one over us because I have sufficient work for my family and I remember that we are not alone. I was born at Se’pana’u therefore my mind recalls our brothers and sisters the K’iche’ that travelled many days to work in our fields. Now our lives are upside down and we of Senahú are travelers seeking our little payment. We no longer receive travelers in our village like what occurred in the old days. In these days we are the travelers; you took notice of this truth.”

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Comparative Wages for Migrant Laborers</strong></th>
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<td><strong>By Guatemalan law, minimum wage is currently (2012) Q2,000/month (approximately U.S. $250.00) plus benefits:</strong> ½ month vacation per year, one month indemnification for each year of service, two months bonus pay (Aguinaldo and Bono 14) due bi-annually, and Social Security (IGGS)</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Security Guard</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Port Labor</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Esquipulas Coffee</strong></td>
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Table I: Wage Comparison for the three most prominent options to Senahú migrant laborers. The exchange rate during this study was between 7.50 and 8.00 Quetzals for one U.S. dollar.
Whereas men who migrate to Granadía Plantation as seasonal laborers tend to focus on the economic necessities associated with their situation, wives and children who stay behind are more often concerned about the prolonged periods of absence as a necessary yet undesirable cost that is perceived as detrimental to “the united family” in the long term. Economic necessity stipulates that these men migrate for seasonal employment but their desire to maintain a place in their homeland is the aspect that brings them home at the end of each period of employment; a point demonstrated by Qana’ Candelaria Cuz, Miguel’s wife when she explained why she and her kids do not accompany Miguel to Esquipulas:

“I understand why he [Miguel] leaves in the name of picking up our little money. The truth is that it hurts my soul but there is no changing it right now. Thanks to god there is work for him and he comes back to us every so often. It is not pleasant for him to go and I do not feel pleasant but he is accompanied by our family and our people. In that way I know god is watching over each and every one of them because god knows that the desire of our hearts is to see our family grow here in Senahú day by day. Only in that way will our hearts be consoled. This is our land you will see. Because of that we want to see our children prepare their lives on this revered land.”

In stark contrast to the subsistence and spirituality adaptations that Q’eqchi’ migrants display in Grandia’s (2012) examination of Q’eqchi’ migrants into the Northern Petén, Senahú’s seasonal migrants eschew any idea of permanent wandering for many of the very same reasons that Grandia’s case study proposes. “Of those who had migrated to Petén, about 33 percent said a family member helped them get established, another 15
percent got help from a friend, 5 percent were aided by other sources, and 48 percent received support from no one” (Grandia 2012: 77). The same strong ties to kinship and religious congregations bind Senahú’s seasonal migrants back to their community as they maintain small plots of subsistence fields with the help of those who stay behind. According to German Ovidio Molina, a community leader who leads volunteer projects for local Catholic Charity Services and is the Municipal Director of education, two events during the prior decade sparked migration from Senahú to new opportunities in the East and to the North. The first wave of migration happened shortly after the municipal judge was murdered during the uprising in March, 2001. German noted that as soon as the event had passed, a large number of the mob’s culprits feared retaliation and arrest; thus fleeing the town for good. The second wave of migrations progressed over the next few years as the coffee market faded and agreements to cut and redistribute land tenantry on plantation lands left a large number of less tenured laborers without sufficient land on which to subsist; as well as sufficient prospects to persuade them that maintaining residence in Senahú would be good for their futures. Don German explained why some migrated while others stayed by attributing three specific reasons in order of importance: “Land and family are the principal reasons why many of our community stayed during those years of suffering. The third principal reason that they stayed was because they belonged to churches with capabilities to help them start over again. But those who were left without land during the distribution of fields had no other options but to leave.”

Examination of the demographic makeup of 31 migrant workers (30 men and 1 woman) who are seasonally employed on Granadía Plantation in Esquipulas demonstrates that as a more mature and established group of individuals before the economic calamity,
this group endured in large part because of the three principal reasons that German listed. 82 percent of the men surveyed and interviewed were part of the group were displaced Se’amay laborers and each had accumulated more than a decade of employment when the plantation fell; thus maintaining increased access to arable land when land was distributed among the displaced populace. The average age of the migrant laborers is 38 years with an average family of five children and a spouse or common law spouse. Of the 31 consultants only two work in administrative duties while the rest are field laborers. Every respondent except for one mentioned the lack of work in Senahú as the reason for their migration; the lone exception was a 67 year old woman who noted that she was bored with her life in her hamlet and decided to accompany her husband and attempt to gain employment as a cook. All respondents claimed Q’eqchi’ as their maternal language and 58 percent of them boasted proficiency in Spanish. Another 10 percent mentioned limited proficiency with the remaining 32 percent claiming no working proficiency. All but one respondent spoke Q’eqchi’ as their primary language in the home; the lone exception was a plantation administrator who prefers speaking Spanish exclusively. Each of the respondents started their employment based on prior kinship or congregational relationships that were established in Senahú over the years.

Although each of the respondents expressed their gratitude to have some form of work as seasonal migrant laborers, they consistently reminded me that their work as migrant laborers was temporary and that they would gladly trade for steady work in their homelands. More than one third of the migrant laborers return to Senahú during their rest period and spend their days organizing community efforts to acquire a small portion of the fallen Se’amay Plantation. On top of providing some of the reasons why some Senahú
migrants were denied the opportunity to maintain some semblance of their former lives on their homelands, German’s short list of land, family, and church also provides a reason for seasonal migrants to return to Senahú to work as full-time residents and subsistence agriculturalists. As seasonal migrants and in-situ Senahútecos attempt to create a new space for themselves in their homeland there are dire warnings that demonstrate the constant pressures working against the Q’eqchi’ Maya in Senahú. These pressures exist in the forms of interregional Maya factions in a struggle over land and present incursions onto Senahú’s maize fields and natural resources by national and multinational industrialists that are interested more in their own bottom lines than in providing a space for the Q’eqchi’ to determine their future.

“Those people don’t deserve to walk among us. They’re Aj CONIC.”

There are recurring disturbing conflicts at play among neighboring Q’eqchi’ communities in the Polochic Valley and Senahú at present that involve identifying land rights and organized tenantry based on ancestral ties. In actuality, growing conflicts are multi-tiered problems that represent continuing struggles for land holding, commodity dominance by foreign producers, and divisions within Q’eqchi’ communities to ensure participation in new forms of employment; thus securing subsistence strategies and establishing social structures for future decades. The most recent struggle in the Polochic region that continues to garner national (in Guatemala) and global attention began in 2007 when a long-dormant nickel factory on the shores of Lake Izabal re-instigated exploration operations that resulted in two separate violent confrontations with Q’eqchi’ communities near central El Estor and yet another alleged assault on homes and women in a small mountain community near Cahabóncito in Panzós municipality. The confrontations
perpetuated by the Fenix Project, a multinational mining operation, resulted in 11 alleged occurrences of forced entry into private homes resulting in as many occurrences of rape by private security forces employed by La Compañía Guatemalteca de Niquel (CGN) on January 17th, 2007. Further allegations in a Canadian lawsuit against the parent company, HudBay Minerals Inc., claim that on September 27th, 2009 the corporation’s private security forces claimed the life of Adolfo Ich of La Union community in El Estor and caused further ballistic injuries to another Q’eqchi’ Maya community member named German Chub Choc. A lawsuit alleging these shootings contends that CGN’s security chief, Mynor Padilla Gonzalez, opened fire on community members attending a Sunday soccer match.76

Further concerns over corporate interests in the region were raised as recently as March 15, 2007 when private security forces working for sugar cane producers Chaabil Utzaj [sic in Q’eqchi’ orthography]77 attacked Q’eqchi’ squatter communities associated with the CONIC movement in the outlying fields between Telemán and Panzós. The attacks occurred a few kilometers away from the road that connects Senahú to the Polochic Valley below and were perpetrated by private security forces employed by the Widmann family; the politically situated, long-standing Guatemalan oligarchy with interests in rice, cotton, and sugar cane production. The attack included firing gas canisters into maize fields and in which Q’eqchi’ farmers had recently planted their yearly crop; as well as reports of three separate helicopters from which security forces dropped the gas grenades. The attack resulted in the death of Antonio Beb Ac, a Q’eqchi’ agriculturalists, and mass displacement of more than one hundred Q’eqchi’ families from
various communities that claimed incorporated status as agricultural cooperatives on their ancestral lands.

By all objective accounts, including subsequent documentation by the television station Guate Vision, the events in El Estor and Telemán offer further support to claims by rural and marginalized Guatemalans –Indigenous Maya communities in particular—that the peace accords that were signed in 1996 continue to undeniably fail individuals and communities that refuse cultural, linguistic, and economic assimilation in post-war Guatemala. The events further support the claim that the post-war era continues to provide elite oligarchs with beneficial policies and protection that sweeps aside individual and communal rights of the rural populace in favor of promoting business and export. In this sense, the Polochic region, including the abundant resources in Senahú, are currently part of an ongoing play that perpetuates inequality and marginalization of one class at the behest of political, social, and economic hegemons. Whereby the players of domination continue to change from the era of European contact to the present day, the modes are well established in order to benefit the small minority of wealthy elite at the expense of the Maya majority.

Each of the aforementioned conflicts merits separate and thorough scholarly examination that I do not attempt to undertake in this particular case study. The violence in Panzós and El Estor provide contemporary examples of ongoing oppression of the Q’eqchi’ populace in the immediate region and are contextually pertinent if we are to understand just how closely associated the economic future for Q’eqchi’ communities is eerily and dishearteningly familiar to previous centuries since European contact began to mold social structures of Maya communities in Guatemala. However, these places and
these events are directly correlated with the present case study for two specific reasons that I discuss in the following pages. The first correlation deals with migration and seasonal labor that mining corporations offer and how unemployed and displaced Q’eqchi’ agriculturalists from Se’amay Plantation support these corporations in the face of blatant human rights violations and environmental exploitation. The second correlation to these cases involves examining the harsh reality in how economic struggles continue to divide Q’eqchi’ Mayas of neighboring regions; including an honest examination of the uphill battle facing Maya leadership in the region as leadership struggles to secure and maintain human rights for the Q’eqchi’ populace through demonstrations of solidarity in culture, language, and collective heritage.

One increasingly difficult aspect facing local Maya organizations in their efforts to organize the larger populace and make gains in land tenantry and economic autonomy is the lack of Q’eqchi’ solidarity between neighboring communities and municipalities. In a majority of cases in Senahú, a family’s financial bottom line drives perceptions about mining and sugar cane operations in the municipality and in the regions immediately adjacent to Senahú. In an eerily similar fashion to that preceding the Panzós massacre in 1978, Maya agriculturalists from disparate communities are fractioned due to conflicts over land usage rights and the influence of large estate owners that promise higher wages to employees at the expense of communities who are losing their claims to access arable land for subsistence farming.

CONIC (National Coordinator for the Indigenous and Peasantry) continues to be very active in the valley below Senahú in communities throughout Panzós Municipality in assisting communities to organize in the struggle for rights to land and political inclusion.
I anticipated that Senahú’s Q’eqchi’ populace would be supportive of the activists working with CONIC; particularly those so adversely affected by the calamity that caused displacement and loss of access to maize fields. After all, the shared similarities between the communities appear far more prevalent than are the minor regional differences that divide them. I was proven wrong on multiple occasions and soon learned that the growing consensus surrounding the valley peasantry in Senahú was based in baseless fear resulting from two falsehoods that Mayaníquel and Chabil Utzaj promote.

The first falsehood is that the agriculturalists associated with CONIC are squatter communities who migrated in masse from various villages near Cobán. Mayaníquel and Chabil Utzaj use this narrative to make their case that they are in conflict with people who do not have ancestral claims to the land on the valley floor and are in direct violation of the corporate rights to privately owned land. They claim that the lands were legally procured and intended to enhance the overall economic environment in the region by way of sugar cane production and mineral extraction. The second falsehood involves creating fear in Q’eqchi’ communities in Senahú that supposed squatter communities in the valley are currently increasing in numbers and encroaching on lands pertaining to Senahú in order to establish squatter communities and plant subsistence crops on vacant tracts of land.

By making these claims, Mayaníquel and Chabil Utzaj defame the communities in Panzós by instilling fear in the agricultural communities and denying any claims that those communities have to the land. They are also engaged in efforts to discredit and defame CONIC by painting a portrait of the organization as overzealous political activists who combat progress by fabricating claims and using unwitting individuals as pawns in
their political struggles. Many conversations with Q’eqchi’ throughout Senahú sustained a belief that supposed squatter communities that were positioned to encroach on Senahú lands over time. One conversation in particular struck me because of the perceived certainty that the statement conveyed and because the consultant was a man who I know is consistently available to reach out to the disadvantaged and less fortunate portions of his town. Pancho Tení, a former mayor and long-time proponent of Maya culture related the following explanation to the tragedy that claimed the life of Antonio Beb Ac days after the event:

“All of this news of murder is sad but incorrect. What the people who are proclaiming murder do not understand is that this was a tragedy committed by his own companions. Listen and I will tell you exactly what happened. That poor man was working with CONIC, which is true. The factory [Chabil Utzaj] offered a deal to these communities. The deal that was offered included employment and encampment on certain area of the land, including some land to harvest maize and little beans. It’s more that the majority of people expressed their desire to accept the offer. When the day arrived to accept the offer this man was part of a small group working with CONIC that rejected the company. So well, what happened? Those who wanted the offer were enraged and they are the people responsible for the death. Not the company.”

Pancho’s claim that Antonio’s companions turned on him was widely dispersed in the hamlets and markets throughout Senahú; a claim that has been successfully disputed based on evidence and eyewitness statements to the contrary. For the purposes of this study it is sufficient to examine some of the underlying reasons for the animosity and unwillingness on the part of in Senahú’s Q’eqchi’ communities to join with the activists in neighboring communities; thereby participating in the organized effort to secure their own rights and privileges. Approximately one month after Pancho gave his explanation
for the conflict in Panzós I was surprised to hear comments made by my research assistant and friend, Miguel Cuz, as we were travelling in my Jeep to harvest a small plot of pineapple. Miguel reiterated the existence of false and unwarranted fear of the Panzós activists when we encountered a man at the side of the road approximately halfway down the mountain who was in search of a ride. When I asked Miguel if we should pick him up he responded with disbelief at my suggestion and offered me the following descending explanation.

“Well, we are in your car don’t you see, so you decide. Pardon my sin but I think that it is better if we do not stop. He is Aj CONIC78; he is among those who are wandering down below. They are going to multiply here among us [in Senahú] they say. So we must watch ourselves and not give them reason to come here. Those people are wanderers. Those people don’t deserve to walk among us. They are Aj Conic you will see.”79

Miguel continued to explain his belief that mining and sugar cane operations would be positive for the wellbeing of Senahú and its citizenry; most of all for those who have struggled to maintain any type of steady employment since they were displaced and left unemployed. “Money isn’t what we put in first place in our lives.” Miguel stated. “I will tell you the truth of this idea though. We endure many hardships and difficulties because we have travelled to many years to find our little money. It is better to find our money and our little work close to our lands and our families you will see. They are paying well in those companies, they say.” Miguel’s statement about enduring years of financial hardship and the perceived benefits and increased pay for labor encouraged me to find consultants who were working for these companies.
In comparison to payment that a day laborer in Senahú can earn, mining and cane labor appear a step up on the ladder to economic stability and one of the forces that divides the Q’eqchi’ populace who struggle for land and those who are ready to find steady work and steady pay. In speaking with employees that cut cane for Chabil Utzaj, I learned that the lowest grade on the pay scale (harvesting the cane) is 75 Quetzals per day (approximately U.S. $9.30). This amount is almost double what a municipal day laborer earns and is further desirable to many laborers because there is not a set limit on days per month in the fields. Contrastingly, municipal day labor rotates a pool of workers that allows a maximum of eight days of service per month. I also travelled to Ch’ulak Cooperative in the Eastern region of Senahú to speak with a group of men who work full time at the Mayaníquel encampment that is located at the failed hydroelectric plant headquarters. These men earned 95 Quetzals per day (approximately U.S. $12.00) by working five days per week (limited to 20 days per month) performing tasks that range from kitchen duties to manual labor and building water cisterns as part of the mining exploration process.

The lure of economic security continues to divide Q’eqchi’ in Senahú with their sister communities in the valley below. The lure of steady employment at increased wages that exists amidst efforts to unify the Q’eqchi’ in the region that organizations such as CONIC promote is the latest model in a cycle that Guatemala experienced over the centuries. This cycle consists of external players pulling the strings to capture wealth from the land and its people; thereby rendering those same people at the mercy of the pressures controlling the game. These companies offer Senahú laborers options that they feel are better than what they experienced since the coffee calamity shifted their worlds to an unsecure and
wavering place where their agricultural spaces that are necessary for survival were threatened and their financial livelihoods were upended.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative Wages for Municipal, Mining and Sugar Cane Labor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Guatemalan law, minimum wage is currently (2012) Q2,000/month (approximately U.S. $250.00) plus benefits: ½ month vacation per year, one month indemnification for each year of service, two months bonus pay (Agualdo and Bono 14) due bi-annually, and Social Security (IGGS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Day Labor in Senahú</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Mayaniquiel Project</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sugar Cane Field Labor</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table J: Comparative wages for regional migrant laborers and municipal day laborers.*

Near the end of my fieldwork in 2011 I sat down with Qaawa’ Reginaldo Choc at the end of a long day of work as harvest time neared in Ch’ulak. I could tell that he was tired and I didn’t want to upend him with a lot of questions about the mining operations and the uncertainty of his cooperative’s future at that moment. His wife, Angelina, topped off the table’s *seel* (a gourd commonly used in Q’eqchi’ homes to store hot tortillas) with what I consider to be the world’s lightest and delectably most appealing tortillas in Guatemala. Reginaldo made the sign of the cross before eating and after devouring a few of the tortillas with hot chile paste and some stewed chicken (“prepared” that morning by Angelina’s daughter, Dalila) Reginaldo spoke up. I met this man in the late 1990s when I worked in his community as a project volunteer for CHOICE Humanitarian and I cannot remember a time before when I felt such levels of weariness worry from him. He began to speak about his deceased father, Qaawa’ Carlos, speaking about all of the trouble and
uncertainty that he experienced as a child and into his elder years. We talked about the presence of Mayaníquel and he expressed concern about all of the extraction he witnessed near Ch’ulak Cooperative lands. In a tired voice of a man his early 60s, Reginaldo simply said the following: I do not believe that it is good. We are obligated to seek a different path for our people; we of Ch’ulak.”

**Conclusions to Chapter 8**

This chapter examined some of the forms that Senahú’s Q’eqchi’ populace continues to adapt and endure in the aftermath of economic calamity, unemployment, displacement from former coffee plantations, and the new wave of uncertainty associated with outside business interests throughout the municipality and Polochic mountain valley region. People are finding ways to make money and maintain a semblance of homeland through seasonal migration labor to neighboring port towns, nearby mining and sugar fields, and to coffee plantations in Esquipulas. As such I have presented some of the temporary strategies that the Q’eqchi’ in Senahú employ as they continue to endure the economic and social uncertainty that continues to persist after a decade of sustained economic and social hardships. I also presented cases that stress the importance of kinship and other social networks that aid individuals and families to endure and adapt; whether that entails staying at home in Senahú or taking a chance on the road as a seasonal laborer.

The social fabric of the region is also at odds because of persistent poverty and current clashes between agribusiness, mining operations, and the peasantry caught in the middle of emerging power plays. These clashes include negative consequences for interregional Maya relations and social movement efforts moving into the future as economics and land tenantry are used to further divide neighboring communities. This
uncertainty is highlighted by conflicts that threaten Q’eqchi’ lives as private security forces continue to work with impunity at the behest of national and multinational businesses. These businesses further insert a wedge between Q’eqchi’ communities by offering a certain extent of economic security in exchange for unrestrained license to extract the earth’s resources as they continue their “march of progress” through the fertile lands of the region.

The concluding chapter discusses a brief synopsis of where Senahú stands to benefit in the coming years as a result of innovative thinking by some of the municipality’s cooperatives and increased initiatives by the new mayor to involve women in local government and community leadership. Although the story remains far from complete, Senahútecos maintain hope through community development and economic stability thanks to some outside resources and the persistence of its working class to achieve security and increased inclusion in the social structures that envelope the municipality. I will examine some of those efforts in a way that demonstrates how people’s engagement in community development efforts is changing perceptions that the municipality is completely rotted; choosing instead to believe that Senahú may just achieve a brighter future.
Conclusions

Looking Forward: Fanning the Flames that Ignite Change

“Those who want to create change must watch the path they are on with care. It is possible that change is good and it is possible that change is bad. The same fire that warms our homes and allows us to cook our little food also has a dangerous side if we deny its maintenance you will see. If you fan the flames slowly, the flame extinguishes quickly. If you fan the flames with too much strength, the flames will grow too great and you will feel its pain.”


Anthropologists often talk, write, and lecture about culture as a construct of relativity and how each of the independent parts that make up the collective whole of culture continuously evolves and changes. This dissertation presents an ethnohistorical examination of myriad changes that came about as a result of centuries of contact between Maya and non-Maya inhabitants of Guatemala; particularly in Senahú municipality and the neighboring regions that make up the Polochic mountain valley region. This examination began by presenting Senahú Municipality in the post-colonial era when Guatemala and its neighboring Central American nations began their journey as autonomous and economically viable nation states. Similar to the eco-agricultural model of the colonial era under the rule of the Spanish crown, Guatemala continued to rely on
agricultural production in the vast agrizones during its infancy as a sovereign nation state and opened the doors of trade wide open to foreign capital in order to provide means of production for new non-traditional crops that were intended to bolster a fledgling economy. Coffee entered the picture in Guatemala and throughout the neighboring Central American states as a desirable export crop and played a significant role in ushering in a new era of ethnic clashes over land, labor, and political policy.

This dissertation contains chapters that focus on longitudinal examination over the period of the recent decade (1999-2011) and the significant events associated with the global coffee crisis that wrought considerable hardship on Senahú’s Q’eqchi’ populace; hardships that affected thousands of laborers on large-scale coffee-producing plantations and on small-scale coffee-producing cooperatives that depended on the success of coffee commodities on the international market to ensure a harmonious balance between social and economic stability. This examination documents and analyzes multiple intertwined factors that contributed to recent hardships and local Maya and non-Maya perspectives from within the research community.

Current shifts and changes continue to emerge as a result of socioeconomic disparities and instability; dictating that the years and decades to come will assuredly add new successes and failures to Senahú’s evolving social spheres that contribute to the makeup of this multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and culturally dynamic municipality. As I packed up my belongings at the end of my final year of research in Senahú I continued to see emerging power structures forming and new economic models in various cooperatives that local and municipal leadership planned. As I wrote this dissertation I diligently followed these emerging changes thanks to the ever increased accessibility of cell phones.
in rural Guatemala (Senahú is still very limited in terms of internet access). Some of these changes happened very gradually over the period of years; the rewards of development efforts becoming manifest only after I had left the field while others came about rather quickly by comparison. I examine some of these aspects in the following pages as a way to signal my commitment to ongoing research endeavors that I will undertake in the future. This includes a discussion about how Senahú is slowly emerging from more than a decade of economic hardship to set aside their feelings of social deterioration and disaffection through sustained community efforts to achieve a more stable municipality. As such, this chapter focuses on how renewed efforts by the municipal government, led by the municipality’s first female mayor, are actively aiming to curtail delinquency in the streets, in the fields, and in the homes by increasing awareness of social programs that aim to create a more economically and socially stable environment in which to live. Primary among these programs are: the municipal women’s rights office and welfare assistance program; collaborative efforts to secure external aid from humanitarian and religious networks that are dedicated to economic, educational, and infrastructural development; and training in various by Guatemalan food merchant networks on various community cooperatives to establish new forms of non-traditional agricultural production designed to minimize risk to communities by producing foodstuff or material goods for regional and national consumption. The desire to harvest less risky crops and products is a direct result of seeking to provide goods that are considered more economically stable than commodities such as coffee that are otherwise subject to the volatilities and whims of the global market.
“A New Day for the Women of Senahú.”

When Guatemala held its national and municipal elections in September, 2011 I was one month removed from field work and still readjusting to life in the United States after a year’s absence. Excitement for the municipal election touched many of the rural hamlets and cooperative communities that otherwise showed a great amount of disdain and disinterest in the political process in past years. These are communities who are accustomed to feeling disenfranchised and rejected by all levels of government over the decades. However, the 2011 local elections offered promise to the female populace in Senahú because the former Deputy Mayor Mónica Priscila Milian Sagastume was gaining increased support in her candidacy to become the next mayor of Senahú. Shortly before I returned to Senahú in 2009 for three months of field work, Mónica assumed the mayoral office on an interim basis while Hector Choc, the embattled mayor under whom she worked, was engaged in alleged mismanagement of municipal funds. When Mónica assumed the mayoral seat in Hector’s absence she began a program devoted to assisting widows in Senahú’s rural hamlets obtain financial support and food by way of community service exchanges. Her initiatives quickly garnered increased interest when she asked me to speak to a group of women one afternoon in the municipal meeting hall.

More than 450 women showed up that afternoon to discuss their thoughts on how to improve the overall living conditions and security for women throughout the municipality. By the time I left the field Mónica had already installed three directors (all female) to assist women in the following areas of necessity: domestic abuse; dealing with alcohol abuse in the home; food welfare exchange for single mothers; education for young women who are victims of sexual harassment and abuse. At the time I asked Qana’
Angelina Chub Choc, one of the meeting’s attendants, how she felt about the discussion:

“It makes my heart pleasant because she [Mónica] is a woman and she understands our problems. It is true that she is not a native woman like us but she speaks our language. I believe that day by day she is giving her heart to help us; we the poor women. In my heart I think only she will complete the work that she created. She is the only one that gives hers time to help the poor.” By the end of 2009 the Women’s Assistance Group was aiding women in central and rural Senahú of all ages; allocating municipal funds to travel to various hamlets and engage in discussion and workshops to assist women in need of a community and network that specifically catered to the issues in their lives. By the time I returned to Senahú in August of the following year, the mayor had returned to his office and demoted Mónica from Deputy Mayor and cut off all municipal funding to the women’s organization; citing that other projects demanded the mayor’s time, attention, and money. In order to say that he was not eliminating the women’s office in its entirety, the mayor staffed the office with a single director in a small room in the municipal building to answer incoming inquiries.

After the 2011 elections I called Mónica to congratulate her on her victory and she began to discuss her excitement of assuming the role of mayor; in particular, excitement that she was representing the female populace in Senahú and for her plans to re-institute work for women’s assistance that she started two years earlier. She stated the following in that telephone conversation in late September, 2011: “This is a proud day for me and our family. It is a new day for the women of Senahú. They worked hard to assure this election and we are going to work together to begin anew the work that is important to all
of them. Now more than ever, women are important pillars of society. If our women are strong, our society will become strong.”

Figure 14: Participants during the 2009 Day of Recognition for Senahú’s newly founded Office of Women’s Assistance.

Mónica’s rise to the mayoral seat is important in two specific areas that I am closely following moving into future research projects in Senahú. The first surrounds the fact that she is the first female mayor in a society heavily dominated by males in positions of power. This speaks to her ability not only to mobilize the female populace in Senahú; but also to her ability to successfully create programs that empower women to strengthen the community as a whole without fear of political backlash from rivals. The second area of importance stems from the first as Senahú women are coming together across socioeconomic and religious boundaries in an attempt to address these issues as one community. It is true that many projects came and went in the past that were worthy of
praise among disparate segments of society that sought community development and economic welfare for the poor and disenfranchised. However, these programs were all too often dedicated to limited and exclusive portions of the greater populace; existing almost entirely within specific religious networks in central Senahú while ignoring the rural hamlets and cooperative communities. When I last spoke with Mayor Mónica in late October, 2012 she mentioned how much excitement she was feeling because of participation throughout Senahú in the women’s assistance effort and the education that is offered at present to women in need of economic assistance and social support.

![Figure 15: Mayor Mónica Priscila Milian Sagastume (dressed in white) waving to a procession during the festival for San Antonio in June, 2012.](image)

**Newfound Stability in Se’amaycito**

Another continuing development that I am following involves a multi-year community and economic development project for the hundreds of displaced coffee plantation
laborers in Se’amaycito. During the three months that I conducted field work in 2009 I began to hear rumblings of monetary aid and community development programs to assist families that were displaced from their homes when Se’amay Plantation fell in 2002. The news came about when I met with a man named Jose Manuel Flores for dinner at his home in Guatemala City. Jose was pursuing his doctorate in Sociology at the time and a mutual friend put him in contact with me because a significant portion of his dissertation included analysis of Indigenous laborers working on sugar cane plantations in Escuintla near the Southern coast. During dinner I explained to his that I was presently conducting research in a municipality in rural Alta Verapaz called Senahú. He recognized the name Senahú from a previous conversation that he had with high level Latter Day Saint (Mormon) leaders from the United States who were visiting the sugar plantation where he worked full time as an environmental engineer.

Nobody in Senahú’s Mormon community knew anything about any project of that kind and by the time I left to return to the United States the rumblings seemed to fade. Shortly after my research fellowship began in 2010, it became apparent that the aforementioned program was well into the planning and infrastructural stages; Se’amaycito families were hard at work in contributing myriad forms of communal labor by digging trenches to bury pipeline from a large water cistern near Sepacuité where they planned to service the entire community. The project would allow a consistent flow of much needed water to each family in Se’amaycito for the first time since the shantytown was founded after Se’amay Plantation collapsed in 2002.

More than one thousand individuals from Se’amaycito gathered later that year to listen to leaders of each of their respective faiths and to celebrate with hymns and a feast
of boiled beef, tortillas, tamales, and cacao. According to John Clark, the presiding leader over all affairs for the Mormon Church in Central America at the time, establishing the water project was the first in what they hope will be multiple community-led and community-owned undertaking that will bring increased infrastructural and educational support and development to all of the community’s families. We ate at the same table after the celebration, at which time he cited future projects to promote water filtration systems in every home and efficient wood burning stoves that funnel smoke directly outside in place of the traditional hearth that releases harmful smoke that is trapped in the home during cooking. Since the time I left the field, some of the completed projects have been realized; including construction of a two-level school that houses multiple computers and technical training to teenagers and a micro-credit program that promotes raising hens to sell the eggs to a merchant in central Senahú.

Figure 16: Celebrating Se'amaycito’s water project in November, 2010.
As the water project neared completion at the end of my fieldwork I began to hear about problems associated with families in Se’amaycito from within various religious communities. Whereas each of the sects that represent Se’amaycito came together in celebration months earlier, accusations arose in later months concerning leadership of successive projects and doubts about financial accounts that were allocated to fund the collective work. Some of the arguments and accusations stem from within the same congregations as a result of an increase in religious prestige and cultural capital that are obtained by some while others feel that they are being scorned in their day to day dealings within the community because of a perceived lack of religious devotion and service. According to Secundino Rax, one of the Mormon leaders in charge of constructing the school, the community started the projects by working together and they are slowly splintering as “envy and jealousy enter the hearts of many of our brothers.”

**Citrus, Bamboo, and Pines. Alternatives to Coffee Production on Cooperatives**

As cooperatives continue to discuss their desire to leave coffee production behind they discuss alternative options in crop or material production in order to maintain their rights to communal lands and to fulfill financial obligations where they exist. Se’kantzin Cooperative, located in the elevated zone near Sepacúiṭe initiated work in the latter part of 2011 to begin harvesting pines for merchants in Guatemala City. Qaawa’ Ronaldo Rax explained that the investors gave them a desperately needed lump sum of cash up front to cover the costs of procuring the pine seedlings; the funds were also to be distributed to families on the cooperative. “The trees will grow for 15 years, maybe more before they fall them. This is a blessing to us because cardamoms value is exceedingly low and we
have debts with the bank in Cobán. Yes, these pines are small now but they are a blessing to our people.”

In lower elevation communities emerging ideas about producing material goods is also focused on harvesting wood for merchants in Guatemala City. Qaawa’ Horacio Chen, former director of Koralpek Cooperative, explained that his community is discussing how to profit from the vast amount of bamboo (technically grass, not wood) that grows throughout the surrounding lands. Unlike the community at Se’kantzin, Koralpek Cooperative has yet to receive any financial commitment; a prospect that has his community at odds with those who would otherwise engage in the risky venture; a prospect that is very worrisome to many because they do not have any experience harvesting the material except for in small amounts to use in construction of their own homes. “The value of bamboo is very high they say. We have bamboo surrounding us; you took notice? Now we have to pray and learn among ourselves the path we will take. Nothing is sure for us and many of our members are scared because of the problems that we endured in the name of coffee. We will meet as a cooperative until the time that we carry an agreement of words.”

Since the day in 2002 (See chapter 4) when Qaawa’ Reginaldo called me to give notice of the dire straits in which Ch’ulak Cooperative found itself as a result of the global coffee crisis, the community has been hard at work meticulously planning and increasing production of existing crops for regional and national distribution to satisfy their financial obligations. A week before I left the field, the cooperative received agricultural engineers in their midst to discuss how to improve the market value of tangerines and pineapple; crops that they harvested on a small scale basis for local and
regional consumption. The agricultural engineers have since performed multiple workshops in the cooperative to teach member families optimum harvesting procedures that will increase the value of their crops; including how to cut the fruit so that the stem remains intact to ensure longer shelf life from harvest to market. They also met merchants from Guatemala City that committed financial backing so that the cooperative can increase the amount of pineapple that they harvest.

Figure 17: Children gathering bamboo at Koralpek Cooperative for local use.

Whereas Koralpek and Se’kantzin cooperatives perceive a certain amount of risk associated with producing material goods (bamboo and pine, respectively), members of Ch’ulak Cooperative feel slightly more optimistic about their immediate future based on the fact that they are not venturing into unknown territory with their crops. They are simply increasing the amount of space on their lands to harvest the fruits that are familiar to them and that seem to them less volatile in their immediate area markets and in
Guatemala City. I plan to follow up with each of these communities in the coming years to examine not only the economic questions pertaining to their respective ventures; but also to examine the potential ecological impacts associated with harvesting material goods and increasing production of fruits. In each of these three cases, the communities perceive coffee as part of their past; a commodity with more negative connotations than positive benefits in their lives. Their future depends on adapting to current circumstances and to strategically take advantage of the resources that they have at their disposal.

**Economic Stability and an Increased Sense of Personal and Collective Security**

This dissertation presents how economic and social stratification are intertwined with the overall society in Senahú and the adverse effects that result from such high levels of marginalization between ethnic factions; including factions from within the same communities of the Q’eqchi’ populace in Senahú and its neighboring municipalities. I also demonstrate how so many of the Q’eqchi’ populace equate economic stability to increased personal and collective security and how they perceive the causality of economic calamity with a rise in social disaffection. This idea is most vividly described by Qana’ Olga Chub, a Q’eqchi’ woman in her late 50s who I first met during four months of archival research in Senahú during the latter part of 2008. Qana’ Olga has a wonderful sense of humor; even if that sense of humor comes to the forefront at my personal expense and mild humiliation. Her personal history over the last decade reminds me of the incredible level of perseverance that so many in Senahú continue to demonstrate, even if they do describe their town as rotted from time to time. She always conversed with me about her concern for the lack of justice for Q’eqchi’ people in Senahú and the need for the Maya populace to seek the many characteristics that bind
them and to reject those that divide them; often expressing concern for her son, daughters, and grandchildren as they continue to grow and make their way in the community.

On a hot Sunday afternoon in late July of 2011, Olga invited me to her home for lunch with her kids. After a delectable lunch consisting of chicken feet, chicken heads, chile paste, and the requisite tortillas, we discussed her late husband, a bread maker named Arturo Chub. I learned shortly before that day that he had been murdered while delivering bread to a hamlet in rural Senahú in February, 2004. We walked into the courtyard after lunch while her daughters cleaned up and grandchildren ran outside to play with a soccer ball. Before we sat down in small wooden chairs she proudly showed me her large earthenware oven where she and her family prepared bread to sell in the market each Tuesday and Saturday. Her eyes were watery as we discussed her husband but she did not shed a single tear in that hour. She looked at me sternly and recounted the following:

“Listen Kanche, and you will hear what I am about to tell you. Arturo . . . my husband Arturo, he never harmed a man. His heart was soft and his mind was quick. He died on the 18th day of February in the year 2004. He was returning from Choloma’ down below where he sold his little bread and two men stopped his truck. They had guns each of them you will see. He was driving with two or three men in the back of his truck and they were scared. After that they took all of the money from each and every one in the truck. In that manner, I don’t know what entered into his thoughts. This is what happened next: My husband, beloved by me, he got out of his truck and he ran after the two thieves. He pursued them alone they say because nobody else followed him into the brush after the thieves. However, it was seen
by others. My husband grabbed one of the thieves and hit him to the ground. But it pains my heart and it is exceedingly painful to my soul what happened just after that. The second man shot him here [motions to the back of her head] and there he died. The men, those men were grabbed by the police some days after. Then those men walked out of jail some more days after that. I do not know why we endure this hardship. However, I know that the poverty in which our people find themselves pushes them to do horrible things until they can only do terrible works. We make my husband’s bread every week in his place you will see. That is how we honor him. Our town can only heal when all of our hearts are pleasant. When that day arrives we will heal. All will have work and each man is in his field with his little maize; only on that day, and I believe in my heart and in my mind that those days are coming. If God wants it we will see these terrible works stop; those works that are horrible to endure.”

Qana’ Olga bypassed her well-deserved right to criticize the police and the judicial system for their mistakes and even corruption She chose always to focus on potential solutions to the maladies that impact her and many of the Q’eqchi’ citizenry in Senahú and in all disenfranchised Maya communities in her beautiful country. Before our conversation ended Qana’ Olga decided to become the anthropologist and ask a couple of questions: “Do you know Kanche? Do you know how to endure all that is exceedingly frightening to see? Do you know why our hearts are pleasant in the face of poverty?” “Please tell me.” I responded. She arose from her chair and smiled and said, “I look forward and that is where my feet follow. Forward. Did you take notice? (Chi ub’ej. Ma xak’e reetal?).”
Extended Tables

Table B: Senahú’s Plantations before Nationalization

Land Area Classification:

30 Baras = 1 Cuerda (K’aam)

16 Cuerdas = 1 Manzana

1 Manzana = 1.7 acres

64 Manzana = 1 Caballeria

1 Caballeria = 108 acres

Sepacuité: Consisting of 43 Sub-Districts in Three Municipalities (Senahú, Cahabón, and El Estor)

Owners: Owen Family with Kensett and Walter Champney (1900-1939), Benjamin Champney Choc (1939-1956), Edgar Champney (Initial time disputed – 1985 – also disputed).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-District</th>
<th>Caballerias</th>
<th>Manzanas</th>
<th>Municipal Register</th>
<th>File</th>
<th>Book</th>
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<td>49</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>Sepamac</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>278</td>
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<tr>
<td>Secantzin</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>178</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Setzimaj</td>
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<tr>
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<td>449</td>
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<td>14</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>26</td>
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</table>
This number reflects municipal records in total land size in the 1970s. The total size is greater than the acreage documented by Grandin (2004) under control of Benjamín Champney as it takes into account various lands that were previously designated under German ownership, in particular, the Sillap lands in Cahabón that were under the control of the Gerlach family.

Table C: List of Foreign Residents in Senahú in early 1900s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Residence in Senahú</th>
<th>Marital Status</th>
<th>Year of Incription</th>
<th>Age</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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### Table D: Organization and Administration of Plantations in Senahú Post-1944

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**Table E: International Coffee Organization World Market Prices 1998-2012: Green Coffee**

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Extended Table H: U.S. Imports and Export with Guatemala. 1985-Present. 80

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United States Exports to Guatemala (in millions of U.S. dollars)
This data reflects the 2002 Guatemalan national census. Current (2010) municipal data estimates Senahú’s total population at approximately 80,000 – 85,000 inhabitants throughout the municipality.

Sepacuíté (also spelled Sepacuíte with an accent over the final vowel “e” in Danien (1985) and Grandin (2004)) is derived from two Q’eqchi’ utterances. Se’, meaning inside of, and pacuite’, combined to denote a specific type of brush abundant to the area. In the current orthography it is spelled Se’pawite’. I prefer to spell the name by including the phonetically correct glottal stop after the final vowel, but still spell the word with “cui” instead of “wi” to avoid confusion with non-Q’eqchi’ speaking readers.

Dated 11, September, 2003, the International Coffee Organization addressed its letter to the International Coffee Council’s (ICC) 89th session in Cartagena, Colombia (17 - 19 September, 2003).

The report examined 14 coffee-producing countries individually. In total, 49 members of coffee-producing countries are listed in data that examines totals of global coffee exports. Honduras and Panama were among the other Central American countries that were excluded from in-depth analysis in the report.

Ladino is a term that is used in Guatemala to describe Guatemalans of mixed descent; the expression is akin to the term mestizo in Mexico. They are most often juxtaposed to Mayas and typically dress in western-style clothing, speak Spanish as a primary language, and identify themselves as non-Maya.

I use the term finqueros and its plural equivalent, finqueros, synonymously with the term plantation owner. I attempt to maintain uniformity by using the English term when discussing Anglo-European plantation owners, the landed elite, also known in other works as coffee barons. I tend to use the term finqueros in my discussion and characterization of ladino finqueros who rose to sociopolitical and economic power in the decades following the October Revolution.

See End of Introduction for Q’eqchi’ Mayan orthography.

These rules are true for the neighboring Q’eqchi’ Mayan speaking communities located in the Polochic mountain valleys. These rules also hold true for Cahabón and neighboring Q’eqchi’ speaking communities in Izabal municipality. Otherwise known as the eastern Q’eqchi’ speaking region.

Comedor is a small eatery found in every part of Guatemala usually offering limited gastronomical fare.

Although the term tree generally refers to flora which originates from wood, the Q’eqchi’ Maya classify the maize stock as a tree (che’), not a plant nor a bush. This is also true in K’iche’ and Kaqchikel Mayan, languages that pertain to the same language family, K’iche’an, as Q’eqchi’.

This scene is most likely a depiction of Fray Bartolomé de las Casas, the man who is widely credited with conquering the Verapaz region with the word of God, not the sword.

Indigo and cochineal are natural dyes that Cambranes (1985) and McCreery (1994) contend is incorporated into pre-contact trading markets among Guatemala’s Maya peoples.

This information is provided by the 2002 Guatemalan Census Report. Numbers are considered low to some who have analyzed the source of data and accuse census takers of reducing numbers of Indigenous groups.

Oaxaca in Mexico also produced high quality cochineal.
Kaxlan is a term that delineates foreign element (See also Scott 2011 discussion on K’iche’ Mayan term “amu’s”). Kaxlan is a mispronunciation of Castellano, a post-contact term by which Spaniards, and by way of foreign appearance, non-Maya elements were named. The term kaxlan means chicken in the market, as hens and roosters arrived with the Spanish and are not Indigenous to Mesoamerica. More broadly, kaxlan is used to describe foreign entities and anything adopted for the post-contact Spanish, or Castilian, invaders.

Any and all citations of Cambranes 1977 are translated by the author of the present paper. Any and all errors in translation should be attributed to Winston Scott.

Qaawa’ is Q’eqchi’ Mayan term of respect used to refer to a gentleman. It is used interchangeably with “Lord” as in “The Lord God” but without stress on the w making it a semi vocal “w” and not a velar “kw” pronunciation. Contrary to Kockelman’s assessment, it does not mean “our tortilla” (qawa) which negates one of the vowels and the glottal stop after the final “a”. Qaawa’ is used much in the way that “don” is used when preceding a Spanish gentleman’s name, i.e. don Emilio. Its English equivalent is sir. Qana’ is the female equivalent. It literally means, “our mother” and is also a term of high respect. Equivalent to the Spanish doña and English Ma’am.

B’oj is a traditional Q’eqchi’ beverage. It is made from sugar cane mash and fermented. B’oj is moderately sweet and not nearly as high in alcohol content as kuxa (tzam), the traditional homemade liquors of Guatemala’s Western highlands.

The number of Pancho’s family has unfortunately diminished. His eldest sister, Cristina, died during my first month of fieldwork in 2010. The conversation in the finca house was recorded and transcribed one year prior.

The Owen family is not well known in Senahú today. Although a limited number of families have photographic documentation of the Owen family, the name is not widely recognized, especially in comparison to that of the Champney name. This is due in part because of the limited time that the Own family resided at Sepacuité before they sold their stake in the plantation to the Champney’s outright. The Champney family owned and managed the plantation until the time of Kensett’s son, Benjamín Champney, died in an airplane crash in route to Panzós in 1956.

Grandin (2004) estimates the Champney plantation at Sepacuité at approximately 50,000 acres. See Table B in Appendix for comparison on most current land estimates for Sepacuité plantation and its sub-districts. There is a discrepancy between my numbers and those reported by Grandin. My numbers come from Senahú’s municipal records and include lands that, although part of the old Sepacuité plantation, are technically located in Cahabón municipality’s jurisdiction. Municipal records estimate the early Sepacuité plantation, under the control of Kensett Champney, to include well over 120,000 acres of land.

“Aj eechahom” is derived from the Q’eqchi’ root, “eechanink” which primarily means to inherit. The word also means to own, to procure, and to possess. Aj eechal re is a generalized term meaning, the owner/the possessor.

Anecdotal narratives about the Champney’s lavish lifestyle comes by way of numerous individuals in Senahú and in the United States. In Senahú, consultants reported narratives relating to parties with other Anglo-European plantation owners and administrators. Elin Danien at the Museum Library at The University Pennsylvania discussed aspects of gift giving. Elin has researched Robert Burkitt, a resident at Sepacuité for more than 30 years, recovering some of Burkitt’s linguistic papers and notes at the plantation in 1979.
In fact there is a memorial in the central park plaza and name of the urban school that commemorate the life of Denis Scott Koester, the son of Se’amay plantation owner George Koester. When I reminded Rubén of this, he calmly explained that Denis was more recent, he did not consider him one of the early foreigners.

All translations of de la Cruz are my translations.

Trece Aguas (Oxlahu Ha’) plantation was later procured and operated by another man of German ancestry. Arturo Martín Fleck Coordenes was deported from Guatemala in January 1943 at the age of 49.

Amazingly, the telegraph system remained the most reliable and accessible mode of communication between municipalities in the Polochic region up to and after the turn of the 21st century. Telegraph stations functioned at each urban center’s post office at the time of my introduction to the region in 1998. Until recently, telephones were a luxury that only the wealthy could afford. Those who did not own a land line telephone would wait in line at two or three designated and independently owned locations in each municipal center. The rise of affordable cellular telephones is a recent addition to the communications fray in the region, meaning that the telegraph system was in use for over 100 years as a communication tool between towns.

Mozo, Spanish for servant, is still very much a part of the Q’eqchi’ lexicon. It denotes anyone who maintains steady employment under the instruction of another individual or family. The Q’eqchi’ moos is pronounced phonetically as mose. Traditionally, mozo defined plantation servant/laborer and was used only between two parties involved in large-scale agricultural production and usually between two differing ethnic entities. The term is now used broadly to refer to any working relationship where one is paid to perform a service to the other, no matter the ethnic divide or lack thereof.

Tzuul = hill or mountain. Taq’a = plane or valley. In essence, the 13 entities that are associated with this pantheon reflect the number 13 in the Maya calendric. The names vary and are dependent on region and community.

National archives were collected and analyzed in Zone 1, Guatemala City at the Archivos Generales de Centro America (General Archives of Central America) during from October-December, 2008. I examined Senahú’s municipal records over the span of three separate field seasons in 2008, 2009, and 2010-2011.

Many members of Rosalinda’s generation and the generation that followed do not actively track their age. In many cases, the only age marker that they consult is their government-issued identification papers (cedula) which may or may not be accurate; depending on the lag time between actual birth and registry of birth in the municipal records.
34 See Grandin 2004:163 for more on Fidel Augusto Ponce in other records concerning peasants in the Polochic region of Alta Verapaz.

35 George D.S. Koester actually flew in air missions in Europe for his native England during WWII.

36 Plan Sofia, referred also as Operation Sofia or the scorched earth policy of General Ríos Montt, was an act of state ordered genocide that sought to eliminate Guatemala’s insurgency movement in 1982. Plan Sofia was responsible for murdering, “disappearing”, and displacing tens of thousands of the Maya-speaking populace in the Western highlands of Guatemala by way of military and civilian death squads. The majority of the violence that Plan Sofia wrought was aimed at K’iche’ speaking communities in Quiche’ Province who were thought to be actively engaged in fighting for the insurgency against the Guatemalan state. Efraín Ríos Ríos Montt is currently (2012) awaiting trial in his alleged role as architect, commander, and general in command of the massacres that ensued as a result of this plan.

37 The URNG is a coalition of rebel armies that consisted of four separate entities that came together in 1982 to form a unified and organized central body. El Ejército Guerrillero de los Pobres (EGP) Las Fuerzas Armadas Rebeldes (FAR), La Organización del Pueblo en Armas (ORPA), and Partido Gutemalteco del Trabajo (PGT) unified to represent the collective body of the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Unity (URNG).

38 Although the names of these communities are known to me and to a majority of people living in their immediate regions, I choose to maintain their anonymity. In doing so I guard their wishes to remain unknown and any future repercussion from individuals and state organizations to which they were so vigorously opposed.

39 See Sol Tax (1937) for a discussion of how Indigenous communities are organized and view outside entities. To Qaawa’ Gilberto, even though the men who came from Guatemala City were technically his countrymen by citizenry, he, and most consultants I have known over 15 years’ time, still refer to individuals from outside of their community and municipal region as “foreign”.

40 Qaawa’ Gilberto was referencing a short-lived marijuana operation that was tested in a limited number of low-lying areas in his community. I confirmed that the “bushes” were indeed cannabis in a subsequent conversation with his son. Years later, the son jokes about the operation by saying “we were told that ‘gringos’ liked to smoke that plant but I knew it was a poisonous plant.” Still he would laugh at the idea of incapacitating North Americans, or white me (saqi wink), and getting rich at the same time.

41 Qaawa’ Gilberto is referencing the commencement of a large base camp and hydroelectric project that began in the early 1980s but was never finished. The base camp exists still and houses an exploratory mining project. The hydroelectric damn “down below” remains unfinished on either side of the Cahabón River. Conventional wisdom in the community explains that the builders stole all of the money that was allocated to build the damn and were cut off before the project was finished.

42 Cooperative communities discussed at length in Chapter 4.

43 Chapter 8 is dedicated, in part, to a detailed discussion of Senahú’s response to recent clashes between agribusiness and agricultural cooperatives in Panzós and the divisions that separate any current hope of intercommunity solidarity to struggle against encroachment by a large-scale sugar cane producer.

44 “Loq’laj ixim” = honored maize or holy maize. Loq’ as a root defines value, price, and great and is the verb root for the verb to buy. The connotation “holy” is more closely aligned to post-contact Mayan
languages that have been influenced by Christian terminology used in Christian scriptures and ceremonies.
I gloss the term “honored” to more closely define the cultural value

Se’ritk’iche’ was originally owned by Friedrich Gerlach, German national, and later purchased by Augusto Ponce.

The three examples that I provide are phrases in Q’eqchi’, K’iche’, and Kaqchikel, respectively, and represent those three distinct language groups. I use these three examples but am also aware from my travels throughout Poqomchi’ communities and having discussed the matter with Mam speakers/researchers that the phraseology follows this distinction.

Due to her concerns with rising violence, drop in tourism, and tension in Cobán resulting from drug cartels in, Patricia Hempstead sold her hotel, La Posada, a few months after I completed my field research in 2011. She is now retired.

I discuss how competing factions of displaced laborers on Se’amay Plantation are currently at odds in regards to land distribution and availability in Chapter 6.

La Oficina Central del Café was originally established in 1928 as the national ministry of coffee trade and statistics.

Further discussion about Anacafé appears in Chapter 6.

Cell phone service was not established in Ch’ulak until my primary research project began in September, 2008.

The terms “little maize fields” and “little fields” appear in a number of comments throughout the interviews in this study. This is not meant to describe actual size of the fields. It is, in fact, a form of expression that Q’eqchi’ speakers use (ch’ina = little) – inch’ina k’al, qach’ina wa, laach’ina’ na’leb” – “my little field, our little tortilla/bit of food, your little knowledge.” They are not saying that the object is small in actuality. Rather it is more of an expression of humility and gratitude. As little or great as one may possess, in the grand scheme of things, gratitude is shown for the smallest amount.

Orthographical note - Café, the Spanish word for coffee becomes “kapé” in Q’eqchi’ – and in all Mayan languages in which I have heard the term used. The letter “f” is on-existent in Mayan language orthography and is replaced with the letter “p”. Examples include: The word for fortune/luck, fortuna >>> portuna. Coffee, café in Spanish >>> kapé. Names such as Federico and Fernando do exists but are also pronounced with a “p” or are negated altogether by using nicknames. Federico >>> Pederico >>> Laj Liko.

Kanche (derived from Canche, Guatemalan Spanish for blonde) is what Q’eqchi’ speakers call me. Winston is difficult to pronounce and usually comes out as Wilson. I spell canche with a “k” for orthographical consistency with Mayan language text where “c” does not appear in the lexicon unless it is followed by an “h” as in k’iche’=forest.

Prices in Table F in Appendix of extended tables pertain to Standard ICO market prices in the New York and Hamburg, respectively.

These are not the only church congregations in Senahú by any means. However, the Catholic, Nazarene, and Mormon churches are far and away the most heavily populated church memberships in Q’eqchi’ and ladino communities and all hold significant political sway in Senahú government and throughout the municipality. In this case, they distinctively represent more than 98% of the displaced Se’amay population.
and their numbers offer a significant base on which to examine population clustering of displaced laborers and their families.

57 Fidel owns the only gas station in the entire municipality. His Texaco station in central Senahú is the only option for motorists. He also owns one of the only three gasoline stations in Panzós Municipality; also a Texaco station in Telemán.

58 See Vincent C. Peloso’s Peasants on Plantations: Subaltern Strategies of Labor and Resistance for a comparative view of choice versus coercion on Peruvian plantations in the late 1800s. In Peloso’s study, he illustrates that peasants on cotton plantations held more negotiating power with plantation owners based on their choice to enter into contracts of short-term and long-term land tenancy.

59 There are approximately 125 total communities in the municipality. Some of the smallest villages and neighborhoods are not officially recognized as separate communities.

60 Literal translation meaning “in the weeds”. This expression is often used in everyday speech to imply a backwards rural upbringing. This expression is also used as a derogative term to describe an uneducated and/or uncivilized person or group of people.

61 Our language is a common term that used in Mayan language communities to identify a common language. I use this term in this research when quoting consultants as it was the way in which the spoke to identify their language, Q’eqchi’ Mayan. In my experience with K’iche’ and Kaqchikel Mayan speakers, this is also the case (qach’ab’al in each language, respectively). This term is used most frequently in rural areas. In more urban settings, speakers are more accustomed to identifying their language by a given name: Q’eqchi’; Kaqchikel; K’iche’.

62 Porque = because. Más = more. In Q’eqchi’, the Spanish loan, porque, is literally used to mean because. The Q’eqchi’ word(s) for this are xb’aan naq (by way of/because of) and/or xmaak (by fault of). Más is used in a variety of ways as a loan word to mean: more, very, exceedingly. The Q’eqchi’ words for these expressions are jwal, q’axal, and k’ajo’. Pero is used as a Spanish loan to mean but/however. The Q’eqchi’ word(s) for these expressions are a’ut, ab’an, and ab’anan.

63 The percentages represented in this chart reflect percentages among all foreign nationals. 75% Germans represents 75% of foreign inhabitants of Senahú. This percentage does not reflect number of total municipal population.

64 Even though Fidel’s home is a private place of residence, I conclude that it is, in part, a public space because of its service as a community store, cafeteria, and hotel.

65 Whereas DeCerteau uses the term “tactic” to describe social action, Wolf uses “strategy.” DeCerteau asserts differentiates between the two terms in that he states that strategies are used by the dominant class whereas tactics are employed by a subordinate class.

66 Kaxlan winq = “chicken man” and is the term that refers to any foreign person pertaining to Maya lineage. Grandia (2012) explains it as a derivative and reference to foreigners introducing domesticated foul to the new world which is in part correct. Kaxlan is derived from the mispronunciation of “Castellano” which is the term to describe early Spaniards in Guatemala and Mesoamerica. The name Castellano morphed into kaxlan to describe any foreign entity or that which did not already exist in the Maya lexicon. Therefore, kaxlan refers to the foreign entity rather than the chicken itself, which in itself was foreign to Mayas at the time of its introduction. Further examples of foreign items adopted into popular lexicon and
given the derivative include: kaxlan wa (foreign tortilla=bread), kaxlan is (foreign yam=potato), kaxlan q’een (foreign spiced plant=black pepper), kaxlan aatin (foreign word=foreign language).

Coffee trees are referred to as trees in Q’eéchi’ (xche’ul kapé). K’iche’an languages, of which Q’eéchi’ pertains, distinguish plants from trees based on the fruit that germinates from its branches or the leaves that are consumed. Che’ provides ru (its face or fruit) = tree. In contrast Q’een provides raxq’een (green leaves or greens) = plant.

The story of how Senahú was “selected” to receive a highway from El Rosario on the valley floor up to central Senahú happened by mere dumb luck. After completion of the paved road connecting Rio Dulce to El Estor in 2009, municipal governments in the Polochic Mountain Valley region began to lobby the government for their own paved highway. Having received approval from the government to improve the infrastructure and access to and from the region with funds from Japan, the mayors of each municipality held a meeting to discuss logistics and potential contractors who would build the road in sections. Each mayor voiced their respective opinion over corruption and reliability as it pertained to awarding the construction contracts. Nobody wanted CONASA, a large Guatemalan construction company, to perform the work based on perceptions of corruption and fear that the project would not be completed. Each of the mayors opted to award the project to Katahira Engineers, a Japanese company that provides international support and engineering design. Because Senahú’s mayor, Hector Choc, did not attend this particular meeting, Senahú was to be stuck with CONASA. In the early months of 2011 the amplification and pavement of the cemented road to Senahú was completed by CONASA under supervision from Katahira engineers and the rest of the region remains unpaved because of “lack of funds” to amplify and pave the road. Much to the region’s profound humiliation, Mayor Choc’s failure to voice his opinion at the mayoral meeting secured his town a brand new roadway that is the envy of the neighboring municipalities.

From a personal standpoint I attest to the preoccupation, anxiety, and uncertainty associated with travelling the narrow and dark roads of Senahú, especially during the night. During my fieldwork in 2008 I was part of a minivan travelling from Senahú to Cobán at the only time that transportation was available to those who did not own their own vehicle or have an acquaintance to offer a ride: midnight and 1:00 a.m. About halfway down the mountain the minivan ayudante (transportation usher and ticket vendor) told the driver that there were flashlights in the weeds and that he better hit the gas. Sure enough two shots were fired at our vehicle. The ayudante, at my immediate right, pulled out a six shooter and returned fire towards the flashlights as we sped away down the mountain. Fortunately nobody was hurt. Unfortunately, these types of attacks happen all too often as hijackers target minivans carrying up to 25 people who are all in possession of some form of cash. Or so it is assumed.

The insinuation regarding pants is that local women, Q’eéchi’ women, are distinguishable by their traditional dress while a woman who is from an outside town and who wears pants is a sex worker.

I am leaving the man’s name out of print here because of failure to locate any immediate evidence against the man as a trafficker or distributor.

This is actually a term that she borrows from an unnamed anthropologist. I am citing her, however, for its use as she incorporates the term in her published work and the title of a chapter in her monograph.

Administrators on the plantation in Esquipulas earned 25% more than standard minimum wage and received benefits. Nobody from Senahú worked as an administrator, rather, all worked as field laborers or as labor coordinators/recruiters.
Grandia communicated with me in 2005 as she was finishing her dissertation writing at Berkeley that she was struck by how many of her migrant communities originated in Senahú. Her fieldwork coincides with large numbers of individuals that left Senahú after the coffee market fell and temporary land distribution left many of the less experienced laborers on fallen plantations with little or no land to bind them to the municipality. The time of her data also coincides with the aftermath of the 2001 uprising that resulted in the death of Senahú’s municipal judge.

Coordinadora Nacional Indígena y Campesina. CONIC grew from the roots of the Comité de Unidad Campesina that was vital to rural organization and human rights struggles during the thirty-six year civil war. CONIC was officially organized in 1992 in order to focus its entire attention on Indigenous rights in their political forum.

As of September, 2011, La Compañía Guatamalteca de Niquel (CGN) is subsidiary to Solway Investment Group. Solway is a multinational investment group that is currently in charge of the Fenix Project in El Estor. By way of disclosure I must add that I acted as a retained interpreter for depositions in this lawsuit held in Toronto, Canada during November of 2012.

Chaab’il Utz’aajl. Meaning Good Sugar Cane. Regional variations also include utz’aal and utz’aajl.

Aj CONIC = one who is part of the organization CONIC. The Aj delineates place and participation in something in K’iche’an languages. (L)aj is also the male name marker in Q’eqchi’ Mayan.

I stopped and gave the man a ride to town on the way home and we spoke about everyday normal topics. Miguel wasn’t convinced of the man’s innocent intentions to travel to town to buy some hardware for a job he was hired to do.

Source - [http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c2050.html](http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/balance/c2050.html)

The months of August – December not calculated at the time of this report.
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