

6. Quoted in José Ramírez Flores, *El gobierno insurgente en Guadalajara, 1810-1811* (Guadalajara, 1969), pp. 95-96.

SOURCES

The documentation on Agustín Marroquín was drawn overwhelmingly from unpublished archival sources in Biblioteca Pública del Estado, Guadalajara, Mexico—sec. "Criminal," bundles 1, 6, 9, 18, 21, 25; and in Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico City, Mexico—sec. "Operaciones de Guerra," vols. 4A, 145; and "Historia," vol. 584. A vast literature in Spanish, English, and other languages exists on the Mexican independence struggles, although only occasional references to Marroquín occur in it. The most important recent historical treatments in English are Hugh M. Hamill, Jr., *The Hidalgo Revolt: Prelude to Mexican Independence* (reprint, Westport, CT, 1981); John Tutino, *From Insurrection to Revolution in Mexico: Social Bases of Agrarian Violence, 1750-1940* (Princeton, 1986); Brian R. Hamnett, *Roots of Insurgency: Mexican Regions, 1750-1824* (Cambridge, 1986); and Timothy E. Anna, *The Fall of the Royal Government in Mexico City* (Lincoln, 1978). On Mexican banditry in the nineteenth century, see Paul J. Vanderwood, *Disorder and Progress: Bandits, Police, and Mexican Development* (Lincoln, 1981); and the articles in *Bibliotheca Americana* 1 (November 1982), dedicated to the theme "Social Banditry in Nineteenth-Century Latin America," Paul J. Vanderwood, ed., particularly Christon I. Archer, "Banditry and Revolution in New Spain, 1790-1821," pp. 58-59; and William B. Taylor, "Sacarse de pobre: El bandolerismo en la Nueva Galicia, 1794-1821," *Revista Jalisco* 2 (1981): 34-45. The major works of Eric Hobsbawm are *Primitive Rebels: Studies in Archaic Forms of Social Movement in the 19th and 20th Centuries* (New York, 1965); and *Bandits* (New York, 1969). On the criminal justice system in late colonial Mexico, see Colin M. MacLachlan, *Criminal Justice in Eighteenth-Century Mexico: A Study of the Tribunal of the Acordada* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1974). The period of insurgent control of Guadalajara is treated in detail in José Ramírez Flores, *El gobierno insurgente en Guadalajara, 1810-1811* (Guadalajara, 1969).

Atanasio Tzul, Lucas Aguilar, and the Indian Kingdom of Totonicapán

David J. McCreery

Chiapas was part of the captaincy general of Guatemala, which included all of Central America down to Panama and was a dependency of the viceroyalty of New Spain, or Mexico. Central Americans by and large did not join in the early stages of the Mexican independence struggles led by Fathers Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos (1810-1815). When Agustín Iturbide signed an independence treaty with the Spanish viceroy in 1821, Central Americans chose to remain part of an independent Mexico. As emperor (1821-1823), Iturbide unwisely proved insensitive to their local concerns, and Central Americans seized the opportunity of the 1823 revolt against Iturbide to declare their independence from Mexico. The province of Chiapas, however, remained with Mexico rather than join the other Central American republics.

Atanasio Tzul's history allows us to examine the role that the indigenous population played during the independence epoch. A member of the Indian aristocracy, Tzul had been confirmed by the Spanish as a leader of his town. As such, he shared with Spanish officials responsibility for collecting taxes and tribute. Increasing resistance by the Indians to paying tribute led Tzul and Lucas Aguilar, an Indian commoner, to rebel against the Spanish in 1820. Over the years, their rebellion gained fame as part of the independence struggles and as an example of an indigenous people who established their own king and nation.

In his essay, David McCreery points out that the Indians who named Tzul as their king did not necessarily intend to reject their other, more distant, king in Spain. Their rebellion resembled a colonial uprising against a specific grievance more than it did a revolt for independence. The pardon of Tzul and Aguilar in 1821 may have reflected Spanish uncertainty, as McCreery argues, but it also was consistent with the imperial policy of dispensing justice mildly to Indians in order to avoid creating martyrs. The lack of unity among Tzul's Indian villages reveals that, like the Creoles, Indians had different reasons for becoming royalists or patriots. Perhaps this disunity is another clue to Spain's ability to dominate millions of Indians with a minimum of force. Their divisions meant that

whether they fought to uphold the Spanish empire or to forge a creole republic, indigenous peoples would continue to be despised and granted only limited citizenship privileges.

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It was on the Friday after the arrival of the papers of the Constitution that they celebrated the coronation of Atanasio Tzul. There were public displays of joy, . . . nine days of bull fights, the music of drums and salvos of rockets. Tzul presented himself in public dressed as a Spanish soldier, with a three-pointed hat such as the Spanish use, a sword, a medal at his throat, and a staff [*vara*] of office taken from the *gobernador*. The town hall was adorned with hangings, and he and Lucas Aguilar watched the festivities from a throne set under a canopy taken from the church.

With the possible exception of the Tzotzil-Tzeltal uprisings that swept highland Chiapas in the years 1708–1713, the *tumulto* (uprising or riot) at Totonicapán in 1820 is the best known of the colonial Central American Indian revolts. In the past, interest has focused on Atanasio Tzul, “the Indian King,” and on possible connections between the rebellion and the events that led the next year to independence from Spain. In fact, Tzul, while not a minor actor, was never the “motor” of this revolt, and the *tumulto* itself stemmed less from aspirations to political independence than from demands for relief from the abuses of the Crown and of Indian officials. If it stands out from among similar protests for its duration and for the crowning of a “king,” it is otherwise not untypical of a number of late colonial uprisings among the area’s indigenous populations. The turbulent conditions of the times and the nature of the rebels, despised and illiterate Indian peasants, limit the detail available about individuals. But an examination of what the historian can recover

concerning the people, the communities, and the conflicts that resulted in the Indian kingdom of Totonicapán reveals much about the social and political tensions surfacing in the last years of Spain’s American empire.

By spring 1820 almost all of Spanish America was in turmoil. Independence movements raged in Mexico and in South America, and this violence lapped the borders of a still peaceful but hardly tranquil Central America. To a large extent, events in Spain had set these American uprisings in motion. Following its defeats in the Seven Years’ War (1756–1763), the Spanish Crown initiated sweeping reforms in the New World meant to tighten control of its empire and raise revenue to finance improved defenses. State agents had managed to put these reforms only partially in place, however, when Spain found itself again sucked into war after 1793, this time as the somewhat reluctant ally of revolutionary France. When the alliance threatened to crumble under the pounding of British guns, Napoleon, in May 1808, kidnapped the Spanish king, invaded Spain, and put his brother Joseph on the throne. The Spanish people fought back. They established a regency for the abducted king and called a meeting of a representative assembly, the Cortes, which, for the first time, included delegates from the American colonies.

○ In 1812 the Cortes, dominated by an urban bourgeoisie under the influence of the Enlightenment and aware that the survival of the Spanish state rested on New World loyalty, produced a constitution that limited the king’s power and offered equal status to most Americans and Spaniards. King Ferdinand VII swore obedience to the constitution from his exile in France, but when the British finally restored him to the throne in 1814, he reneged. Like the Restoration French Bourbons, he learned nothing and forgot nothing. Yet the drama continued, for in January 1820 an army revolt led by Liberals forced him to accept for a second time the 1812 constitution. As each twist in Spanish politics intersected with the peculiar local conditions of different areas of the Americas, individual colonies opted for independence.

Central America appeared to be an exception to this general movement toward independence. The Spanish called the isthmus “Guatemala,” and it was a subdivision of the viceroyalty of New Spain (Mexico) to the north. The Hidalgo revolts, which mingled race war and desire for independence, broke out in central New Spain in 1810 and simmered for a decade but did not spread to Guatemala. In Guatemala a series of strong governors, aided by

a tiny Spanish and *criollo* (whites born in the New World) elite, struggled successfully to keep a lid on the discontent of the Indian and *casta* (mixed blood) majority. The immediate conflict was not so much about independence as the reluctance of the lower orders to pay the taxes that supported the regime. Guatemala's indigenous population by law was liable for a head tax called tribute. So too, in theory, were the *castas*, but most ignored the tax, and the state made little effort to collect from them. Tribute in Guatemala took a number of forms in the three hundred years following the conquest in 1521. For example, until 1738 Indian women as well as men had to pay the tax, and then, for a time, unmarried and married men paid, but by the late eighteenth century, tribute fell chiefly on married Indian men aged eighteen to fifty. If by law tribute was a tax on individuals, in practice the state assessed it by community, on the basis of rough, and often out-of-date, population counts. Local Indian leaders had the responsibility for collecting and delivering the levy in twice-per-year installments to the Spanish. The Indians originally paid the tax in kind, using cacao or cotton or whatever else was the local product of commercial value, but in 1747 the Crown commuted all such payments to coin, which had an important, if unanticipated, effect. Over the course of the centuries following the institution of tribute, the money value of many of the commodities used by the communities to pay the tax had changed. When the new law converted these items to their eighteenth-century cash equivalents, some villages found themselves owing much more, often by two or three times, than that paid by other towns of similar size. Whole regions saw taxes go up dramatically. Not surprisingly, this produced complaints and calls for reform.

Crown officials began to study the problem in the 1780s and, with customary dispatch, in 1801 adopted a plan for the *nivelación*, or the leveling, of tributes. This involved new censuses and a standardization of the amount due at sixteen reales, or two pesos, per year for each Indian male. In fact, "leveling" was not exactly what occurred. Those communities already paying more than two pesos per tributary continued to be liable for the larger amount; those paying less had their taxes "leveled" up to the new figure.

The increases that resulted from *nivelación* were quite substantial in many instances, especially among the Indians of the western highlands and the Verapaz. According to calculations by the Guatemalan historian Manuel Fernández Molina, these increases amounted to:

District	% Increase	District	% Increase
Suchitepéquez	9.21%	Chimaltenango	30.29%
Chiquimula-Zacapa	10.84%	Totonicapán-Huehuetenango	37.57%
Quezaltenango	26.25%	Amatitlán-Sacatepequez	40.08%
Sololá	28.91%	Verapaz	104.23%

Government efforts to implement the leveled taxes touched off a storm of protest. A major riot broke out in Cobán in the Verapaz in 1803, driving crown officials from the town and requiring regular troops and *ladino** militia from the capital to put it down. Few towns ever had paid tribute promptly, and most now dragged their feet even more. In these years, too, they came under other, extraordinary demands on their limited resources. Between 1801 and 1807 the state took over and called in loans owed to town *cajas de la comunidad* (community reserve funds) and to the church and sent the proceeds to Europe to help finance the wars. This *consolidación* forced individuals to sell properties or liquidate businesses, often at a loss, to make good their debts, and it drained more than 1 million pesos from the local economy. Repeatedly, too, crown officials simply *hecharon la mano* (stuck their hand) in community reserve funds, to meet real or manufactured emergencies, and on several occasions they demanded "voluntary" contributions to the war effort. In these years as well, disastrous locust plagues swept up the west coast and into the highlands, devastating wide areas of export and food crops.

In March 1811 the Cortes abolished tribute. Official notice of this did not arrive in Guatemala until more than a year later, but unofficial news circulated much sooner and filtered into the highlands. Resistance to the tax grew apace. Confronted by

*In Guatemala, a *ladino* is someone of European or "national" culture, whatever the individual's racial makeup. The word carries, however, and this was particularly the case in the late colonial period, the connotation of less than pure Caucasian heritage.

growing protests from the communities, in April 1811 the Audiencia, or high court, of Guatemala ordered a reduction in tribute to pre-*nivelación* levels. This response satisfied no one. Indians were certain, not without reason given their past experience, that the Spanish tax officials, often in conjunction with some of their own leaders, meant to cheat them. Unrest finally forced crown officials to suspend collections in January 1812. In May of that year the new constitution arrived in Guatemala. Two of its provisions were of particular interest to the Indians. One provision decreed that, henceforth, all native-born residents of Spain and the empire not of African ancestry were full citizens with equal rights. Gone was the Indian's legal situation as a second-class citizen or perpetual "minor" before the law. And, article 339 of the constitution provided that all citizens be taxed only according to their ability to pay. This provision confirmed, or so it seemed at the time, the abolition of tribute. The Cortes had key sections of the constitution translated into Indian languages and circulated these in the communities. Victoria Bricker, in *The Indian Christ, the Indian King*, renders part of this explanation as:

Now there is no one
Who has thought to say
That we are not Spaniards
all of us. . . .
Beloved sons!
Open the pupils of your eyes
Now your tribute is gone

The Indians would now be liable for "Spanish taxes," such as the *diezmo* (tithe) and the *alcabala* (sales tax), from which they had been exempt, but the hated tribute was gone.

The fortunes of war, however, soon reversed the situation yet again. In May 1814, Ferdinand returned, tore up the constitution, and reinstituted tribute at the higher *nivelación* rates. The Audiencia published news of this in Guatemala in January 1815 and began attempts to collect the tax in November. It is hardly to be wondered that the Indians suspected a trick. Many refused to pay. The highlands rustled with rumors. Resistance seems to have been particularly strong in the villages around San Miguel Totonicapán, chief town of the Totonicapán-Huehuetenango province (much of present-day northwestern Guatemala) and

residence of the province's *alcalde mayor* (governor), which had suffered large increases in the *nivelación* reforms. A savage riot, linked to land disputes with the town of Sololá and to tributes, had exploded in 1813, resulting in the wounding of the *alcalde mayor*. In 1816, in San Miguel itself, town officials, led by the *primer alcalde* (chief town council member) Atanasio Tzul, flatly refused to collect tribute. Tzul had long been a leader in efforts to resist the tax. At the time, he was about fifty-five years old, a peasant farmer, and in addition to being *primer alcalde*, was head of the important local clan of Lincag. Tzul and his fellow officials took up per tributary only four reales for the community fund and 2.5 reales to support the priest.

By 1818 the new governor of Totonicapán-Huehuetenango, Manuel José Lara, was finding himself under increasing pressure from Guatemala City to collect overdue tribute. The towns of his district were some fifteen thousand dollars in arrears; this debt jumped to almost thirty thousand dollars by 1820. Most obstinate were San Miguel, which had paid practically nothing, the nearby towns of San Francisco el Alto, San Cristobal Totonicapán, Momostenango, and Santa María Chiquimula, and, to the north, Sacapulas, Cotzal, and Chajul. When his superiors instituted legal proceedings against him, Lara protested that he was powerless. Unceasingly, he claimed, he had crisscrossed the highlands exhorting and threatening, but the towns either appealed to the Audiencia or simply ignored his demands. Furthermore, he complained, the Audiencia, worried about touching off a general revolt, refused to allow him to punish offending officials or communities. In Sacapulas, a severely frustrated Lara pulled a knife on a threatening crowd and had to flee for his life. *Ladino* troops restored order but could not collect tribute either. In Santa María Chiquimula a mob assaulted the local priest for urging them to pay. The crisis, the Audiencia feared, threatened to get out of hand and spread Totonicapán's "noxious example" to other areas of the highlands. Without the tribute, government revenues, particularly the salaries of crown officials, would dry up.

Despairing of Lara, the Audiencia in late 1818 turned to a former governor of Totonicapán, Prudencio de Cozar, and appointed him special *comisario de orden* (commissioner of order) to bring the Indians to heel. Cozar's career in Guatemala was typical of that of many officials in the late colonial period. A Spaniard, he entered the military as a cadet in 1775 and in

1780 advanced to officer. The early 1800s found him serving as governor of Totonicapán-Huehuetenango. Following this governorship, he reorganized and commanded the militia of the region until 1813. After leaving royal service, Cozar filled various offices on the city council of Quezaltenango, the largest town in the western highlands and located some twenty miles southwest of San Miguel Totonicapán. All of his activities since 1811, as he repeatedly pointed out, had been without official salary.

Comisario Cozar visited town after town in Totonicapán-Huehuetenango to explain and threaten, but he met with no more success than had Lara. This already unpromising mission became next to impossible with the arrival from Spain of the first news of the 1820 liberal revolution and reinstatement of the 1812 constitution. Even after official publication of the document in Guatemala in July 1820, however, disagreement continued among crown officials (as it has among writers on the topic since) as to whether this ended tribute for a second time. The Audiencia argued that, in the absence of a specific ruling, restoration of the constitution did not end tribute and continued its attempts to collect the tax. The Audiencia's interpretation only reinforced Indian suspicions and resistance, convincing many that tribute probably had not been reinstated in 1815. Delegation after delegation from the highland towns visited Guatemala City to ask the truth of the Audiencia; each received the same answer and went away dissatisfied. San Miguel Totonicapán sent three delegations to the capital in the first months of 1820, at least one of which was headed by Atanasio Tzul and by an individual named Lucas Aguilar. Aguilar, about the same age of Tzul and, like him, a small farmer, was also a longtime activist in antitribute agitation and once had led a *tumulto* against the local priest over the tax. But whereas Tzul was a member of the town's hereditary aristocracy, Aguilar was a *macegual* (commoner). He figured, nevertheless, as an individual of considerable local importance because of his wealth, his position as *mayordomo* (head) of the important *cofradía*, or religious brotherhood, of Santísimo Sacramento, and his evident leadership qualities. The Audiencia told Tzul and Aguilar that, as far as it knew, tribute remained in effect and that even if it were to turn out that the constitution did abolish the tax, back tribute for the period 1815–1820 would still be due.

To understand the conflict about to turn violent in Totonicapán, it is necessary to understand the political organization of the highland Indian towns. Several overlapping and interconnected but distinct groups and institutions, commonly lumped together by the Spanish as *justicias* (justices), ruled the villages. The titular, if rarely *de facto*, head of the community was the *gobernador* (governor), an Indian appointed by the *alcalde mayor* to oversee the town in the interests of the colonial state. For this position the Spanish selected, or claimed to select, individuals from among the survivors of the preconquest hereditary town aristocracies, identifiable remnants of which have existed in some communities into the twentieth century. In these elite families, males called *principales* (principal men) headed kinship groups called *parcialidades* (clans), members of which commonly lived in the same area and held property together. *Parcialidades* continued to be particularly strong institutions in the Totonicapán area; the town of San Miguel, for example, according to testimony at the time, had five. In 1820, Tzul was first *principal* of the large *parcialidad* of Lincag, but he was not the *gobernador*. Whatever the supposed qualifications for this position, Spanish colonial officials, in reality, made and unmade *gobernadores* with such little regard for local sensibilities that by the late colonial period most were obvious creatures of the Spanish rulers and commanded little respect among the indigenous population.

Colonial law provided that each Indian or Spanish community have a *cabildo* (town council) presided over by elected *alcaldes* (council members). Although in theory these posts might be filled by any male of the community, much more powerful *costumbre* (custom) dictated that the hereditary *principales*, where they persisted, dominate both the selection process and in the membership of the town council. The *alcaldes* handled day-to-day administration and justice within the village, collected taxes, apportioned labor for community needs and to meet the demands of the Spanish, and generally mediated contacts between the town and the outside world.

Also important in the village structure were the *cofradías*. Each was a lay religious brotherhood devoted to a specific saint or religious figure. Men occupied the major offices, although women assisted their husbands and sometimes held minor or subordinate posts. In 1820, San Miguel Totonicapán had eighteen Indian *cofradías*.

<i>Cofradía</i>	<i>Capital</i>	<i>Cofradía</i>	<i>Capital</i>
Santisima Trinidad	\$50	Las Animas	\$24
Santa Cruz	\$50	de la Llagas	\$46
Santa Catarina	\$53	Santa Ana	\$28
Rosario	\$46	Guadalupe	\$80
San Francisco	\$37	San Nicolás	\$52
San Antonio	\$31	Chiantla	\$100
Señor de Esquipulas	\$65	Santisimo Sacramento	\$64
Merecedes	\$45	Concepción	\$45
Santa Cecilia	\$132	Archangel	none

Members joined voluntarily and contributed their time and money to adorn the saint's image and to celebrate its fiesta with church services, firecrackers, music, and ritual drunkenness. *Cofradía capitales* (funds) served too as reserves to help meet community emergencies or expenses, such as sending delegations to the capital to inquire about tribute. Service to a *cofradía*, especially as the *mayordomo*, brought an individual prestige in the community, and *maceguales* as well as hereditary *principales* might hold the post as head. The important qualifications were devotion to the cult and the time and the money necessary to undertake the often elaborate ceremonies and ritual connected with a given image.

Taken together the offices of the *cabildo* and the *cofradía* made up, and still make up, the much-studied *cargo* system, common throughout much of Mesoamerica, in which different *cofradías* assume the financial responsibility for sponsoring various religious festivals. Those persons who served successfully in a series of civil and religious offices entered in their advanced years into the category of "elder" of the town. The usual name for these elders in Guatemalan indigenous communities is also *principales*. A self-selecting and self-perpetuating institution, the body of elders had responsibility, along with the hereditary *principales*, if these existed, for selection of the *alcaldes*, for advising on all aspects of community life, and, in general, for the preservation and perpetuation of values and customary practices. The double meaning of *principal* would have confused no one in Totonicapán, as the specific content of the word would be obvious in the

context of a given individual. A number of men, including Atanasio Tzul, had the status of *principal* in both senses.

Such were the *justicias* with whom *Alcalde Mayor* Lara and *Comisario* Cozar had had so little success. The Audiencia finally ordered Cozar to "pacify" the towns and put an end to the resistance. In March and again in April 1820, Cozar ordered Tzul, Aguilar, and the other rebellious authorities of San Miguel to appear in Quezaltenango to explain themselves. They refused, saying that if Cozar wished to talk to them he could come to Totonicapán, but they threatened to cut off his head if he did! Clearly, the *alcalde mayor* had little control over even his chief town.

In the early months of 1820 it was, in any event, not so much San Miguel but the neighboring town of Santa María Chiquimula that took the leading role in actively resisting tax demands. Most of the towns around Totonicapán were land poor, but Santa María's situation was particularly difficult. With a growing population and few resources, the aggressive Chiquimulas invaded or rented the lands of their more fortunate neighbors, migrated to distant townships in search of land and work, and engaged in long-distance trade. They were not about to pay unnecessary taxes.

After repeated clashes with their own town authorities, on March 17, 1820, some two hundred inhabitants of Santa María Chiquimula descended on San Miguel Totonicapán to inquire yet again of *Alcalde Mayor* Lara about tribute. They claimed to know that a paper recently had arrived from the capital supporting their position and demanded to see it. Because Lara was out of town, the Chiquimulas, soon joined by a large number of Indians from San Miguel led by Lucas Aguilar, congregated in front of the lieutenant governor's house, yelling that Lara was a robber and demanding to see the document. The lieutenant governor, with a howling mob at his door, ordered the scribe of the town council to read the only newly arrived order he could find, which dealt not with tribute but with taxes for the support of the priest at Santa María Chiquimula. Not satisfied, Aguilar "took the voice of the crowd" and threatened the lieutenant governor, and the mob roughed up the scribe, saying that he either was lying or could not read. Several *justicias* who sought to calm the Indians found it necessary to take refuge in the lieutenant governor's house. The crowd then dispersed, the Chiquimulas returning to their village, and the residents of San

Miguel going to Aguilar's house to discuss what to do. When the lieutenant governor learned, or so his informants warned him, that the Indians planned to kill him that night "because they wanted no *ladinos* in the town," he bundled himself and his family out of San Miguel.

The conflict simmered. Cozar, with little force available to back up his threats, adhered to the standard axiom of Spanish colonial government: do little, and that slowly. Aguilar and Tzul, for their part, continued to meet with groups from other towns to discuss the situation, and, periodically, they clashed openly with Lara; neither side, however, seemed able or willing to force the issue.

Suddenly, in early summer, the situation at Totonicapán exploded, touched off by the July 5 arrival in San Miguel of "the papers of the constitution." Apparently, the villagers were expecting something, for they went out to meet the mail carrier arriving from Guatemala City and brought him into town accompanied by "riotous" celebrations. One of the most intriguing, unanswered questions about the rebellion concerns the exact nature of these "papers," to which various participants refer but never describe. The Spanish at the time, and some writers since, believed that the leaders of the outbreak had contact with proindependence agitators in the capital and that these papers might have been such a link. But crown officials who questioned the leaders of the uprising after its repression, although clearly aware of the existence of the papers and interested in connections to Guatemala City, failed to pursue the topic. Who sent the papers? Of what did they consist? One source speaks of five printed items. Probably the papers were copies of the constitution, together with the explanations of key passages earlier translated into Indian languages. Individuals or a group of proindependence enthusiasts in the capital may well have sought to stir up trouble for the Spanish authorities in the countryside by encouraging the Indians' just complaints. What Tzul, Aguilar, and their supporters said the papers were (remember, only the scribe of the *cabildo* and perhaps a few others among the Indians, but not Tzul or Aguilar, could read) was confirmation of the end of tribute.

The papers proved too, the leaders argued, and here they more clearly erred, that the Crown never had reestablished tribute. To the cries of "thief," *Alcalde Mayor* Lara fled the town the next day for Quezaltenango and the protection of *Comisario* Cosar. Aguilar and Tzul, with their supporters, cornered several *justicias*

who had counseled cooperation with the Spanish and upbraided them for stealing from the people. When the *justicias* denied the charge, the rioters beat them and threatened to "rip out their guts." Tzul took the staff of office of the *gobernador* for himself and gave that of the second *alcalde* to Antonio Sitalan. Later, Sitalan recalled, under interrogation, that he had tried to turn down the "honor," but when Aguilar questioned his manhood, asking whether "he was a man with balls," he had had to accept the post.

The power and pretensions of the rebels grew quickly. Groups of Indians came from the surrounding towns to confer with Tzul and Aguilar; armed with clubs, they stayed to guard the leaders' houses. Aguilar ordered the *justicias* of San Francisco el Alto, San Andrés Xecul, and other villages to appear in Totonicapán and explain why they had continued to collect tribute. Surrounded by bodyguards, Aguilar berated these officials and demanded that they return the money to the people. He had them hung up and whipped "until they passed out." Most of Aguilar's victims later claimed that they had had no intention of obeying his orders but that upon returning to their towns they were threatened by mobs and forced to give up what tribute funds they possessed. Aguilar also instituted a tax of two reales each on all married men, to repay, he claimed, community and *cofradía* funds spent pursuing the tribute question.

While all agreed that Aguilar was "principal head" of the uprising, and several witnesses even labeled Tzul his "pawn," it was Atanasio Tzul who took the crown of "king." Or did he? Tzul, not surprisingly, later denied that any coronation had occurred. Bricker, in her treatment of the revolt, accepts this statement, arguing that since the Indians never wavered in professing loyalty to the Spanish king they could not very well have raised another king. Yet Bricker's interpretation presumes an elaborated theory of unitary kingship, which the Indians almost certainly did not have. Rather, they seemed to find no difficulty with the idea of "subkings"; for example, while Tzul ruled Totonicapán, Justo Rainos claimed to be "king" of San Francisco el Alto. As head of one of the largest *parcialidades* in the town, as a hereditary noble (even if not, as some have suggested, in any identifiable sense a direct descendant of the Quiché kings), and with a long history of leading resistance to tribute, Tzul was the logical candidate. Almost certainly, then, Tzul did put on "the crown of Saint Joseph," borrowed from the saint's statue in the

town church; his wife, Felipa Soc, donned that of Saint Cecilia, obtained from the image of the *cofradía* of that name. Tzul's regalia—Spanish three-cornered hat, pants, shoes, and sword—he took, with no apparent conscious irony, from an available costume for the Dance of the Conquest, a dance performed by Indians on festival days and that commemorates the defeat of the Indians by the Spanish conquerors.

Real power, however, lay with Lucas Aguilar. It was Aguilar who “raised the *cofradías*” and led the crowds; his son carried his invitations and orders to the neighboring towns and his messages to Guatemala City. Delegations from other towns visited him chiefly, and it was at his house that meetings took place and that doubting *justicias* and *ladinos* were interrogated and punished (one claimed to have had his ear cut off). It is of interest, and probably indicative of their perspective, that Aguilar, Tzul, and others spent one evening trying to repair a paper picture of King Ferdinand. Aguilar took the title of “president” under Tzul, the king. This, of course, followed the pattern of titles within the Spanish imperial system in which the president of the Audiencia of Guatemala served under the king of Spain. President was the highest title to which Aguilar, as a commoner, might logically aspire, and it was an office, within the experience of the Indians, of great day-to-day power. The king might rule, but like God, was far away, whereas the president was an all-too-concrete reality.

The flight of Lara and the coronation of Tzul forced Cozar to take more active steps. Even so, he could not act precipitously because he lacked an adequate armed force to move against the towns. The colonial government of Guatemala maintained few regular army troops. Most of these it stationed in the capital to maintain order and on the north coast for defense against the British and pirates. To control the countryside the state relied on a militia made up of some Spanish and creole officers but filled out mainly with small-town and rural *ladinos* and *castas* drawn to the units by *fueros* (legal privileges granted to those connected with the military). The core of the forces available to Cozar were four battalions of town militia from Quezaltenango. These he claimed to have organized, or reorganized, himself between 1811 and 1813, but, he now lamented, they had been allowed to fall into disarray in subsequent years. It took time to get the troops into shape and to arm them with muskets from

state warehouses. To reinforce these battalions, Cozar called up the militia of the nearby towns of Santa Cruz del Quiché and Sololá and from the *ladino* settlements of Salcájá and San Carlos Sija. These soldiers came with what arms they had on hand, typically pikes, swords, and machetes, and a few shotguns. In all, Cozar put together a force of some one thousand men.

After several weeks of preparation, Cozar moved on San Miguel on August 3 from four directions simultaneously. To cover his flank and provide an avenue of retreat if necessary, he left a detachment of fifty men of the Salcájá and Sija militias at the junction of the road to San Francisco el Alto. Entering San Miguel, the militia troops encountered hostile crowds but little active resistance. Their commander went to Tzul's house first and then Aguilar's, where the Indians waited. Most of the Indians spoke no Spanish, so the commander could not make himself understood, and he dared not enter the leader's house for fear of being cut off from his men and killed. Instead, the Spanish recruited the town priest, who seems to have remained in San Miguel throughout the uprising without any problem, to get up on a table in front of the crowd and explain to the Indians in their own language that they did have to pay tribute. This news was not well received; one witness spoke of a shower of rocks. At that moment, news arrived of an attack by the rearguard.

The militia left at the road junction had taken up position in a strategic pass. Soon, however, hundreds of Indians from San Cristobal Totonicapán and San Francisco el Alto congregated on the hills above them and then attacked, hurling rocks down on the soldiers. Soon all of the militia members were wounded. The attacking villagers forced them to give way, falling back toward Totonicapán until they met reinforcements rushing to their rescue. With these the militia counterattacked and captured several of their tormentors. Why San Francisco and San Cristobal had attacked the troops when the Indians of San Miguel and of other communities did not is a mystery. The incident does make clear, however, the lack of coordination between the towns and the indigenous population's evident failure to prepare for what they must have realized would be the Spanish response to their rebellion.

The events that followed were later hotly disputed by the parties involved. The troops “denuded” San Miguel, its inhabitants claimed, carrying off “pots and pans, wheat, corn, pigs, and

chickens." They dragged people from their houses and put nooses around their necks to terrorize them into revealing hidden weapons or, of probably greater immediate interest to the troopers, more loot. Militia members bayoneted one woman repeatedly, reportedly because she attacked them with a stick of firewood. She later died, but Cozar denied any necessary connection between the two events. The Indians protested that at least three villagers died from such abuse and complained that the priest had refused them "the holy oils."

The militia whipped dozens of Indians, as exemplary punishment and in pursuit of hidden animals and goods. They "gave them the leather," one soldier recalled, for two days, and some Indians were said to have received as many as three hundred lashes. Few of the leaders tried to escape, and Tzul and Aguilar fell prisoner without resistance. Either they did not understand the gravity of their offense, which, given their past experience and in spite of their protests of innocence, seems highly unlikely, or, as Severo Martínez Peláez suggests in his book *Motines de Indios*, they accepted responsibility for their actions and the punishment that would certainly follow as an inevitable consequence of their role as community leaders. The purpose of the uprising was to call the Crown's attention to the real and perceived abuses of Spanish and Indian officials. In this the villagers succeeded—but, that done, someone had to "take the fall" in order to maintain the legitimacy of the system. One individual who did escape was the town's scribe, one of the few people who could have read and testified to the contents of the famous papers.

The following day on August 4, Cozar sent thirty-four prisoners, including Tzul and Aguilar, in chains to Quezaltenango for trial. What is striking in the leaders' testimony is their willingness to incriminate each other. Each claimed to be ignorant of his supposed offenses, and each sought to shift the blame for the disturbances to others. Aguilar, the first to be interrogated, said that he did not know why he had been arrested but guessed that it had to do with the soldiers finding some papers, about which he knew nothing, in his house. He allowed the use of his house for meetings at the request of the *principales* because it was large, he said, but he had nothing to do with any whippings of Indian officials or attacks on *ladinos*. Tzul, for his part, protested that it was not he but Aguilar who had ordered the other towns to stop paying tribute and who had had the *justicias* beaten. Tzul denied crowning himself and said that he and others of the

principales had taken the staffs of office from the *gobernador* and second *alcalde* only because they had failed in their duties. It was Aguilar who had stirred up the towns; they sent delegations to him with money, for what purpose Tzul did not know. Aguilar's son professed to know nothing of his father's activities, and although he admitted calling the *alcalde mayor* a thief, he claimed he had been drunk when he had done so. In part, Aguilar's son's denial played to Spanish prejudices, which assumed a childlike and stupid Indian. But, as Severo Martínez points out, it may also reflect the relatively unpremeditated, spontaneous nature of the outbreak itself, which limited the opportunity for "revolutionary solidarity" to develop.

During the *tumulto*, class conflict bubbled to the surface in several of the communities. Aggrieved *principales*, abused by Aguilar and his accomplices, had hastened to tell the Spanish after repression of the uprising that the *maceguales* of their towns had supported the *sedición* enthusiastically: "the very same commoners held the bull fights and shouted 'Long live Lucas Aguilar who is our king.'" The appeal of the Totonicapán uprising for the masses of the community had been abolition of tribute, a tax from which *justicias* not uncommonly had exempted themselves. Indeed, some *justicias* had profited from skimming the tribute before turning it over to the Spanish or had cooperated with Spanish officials in coerced labor schemes and the *repartimiento de efectos* (forced sale of unneeded goods at inflated prices). It is hardly to be wondered that given the opportunity the populace had beaten the *principales* of San Cristobol Totonicapán "with sticks" or that these officials had reported the attacks to the Spanish with relish, in hopes of revenge. Not all local officials had worked for the community as singlemindedly as Tzul; even in the case of Aguilar there remain questions concerning not only abuses of power but also what happened to the monies collected from the two-reales head tax.

Crown officials at the time, and a number of writers subsequently, have attempted to link the events in San Miguel to designs for political independence from Spain. Daniel Contreras, in one of the first studies of the *tumulto*, concluded that "the rebellious Indians of Totonicapán in 1820 ought to be understood as part of a whole process, the process that culminated in the proclamation of independence." He has a point but a limited one. Certainly the decade-long conflict over tribute contributed to the general unrest that prefaced independence. The events at

San Miguel thus were both a product and a cause of this unrest. But the uprising clearly did not have independence from Spain as its goal. It was in most ways a typical colonial riot against the abuses of Spanish and Indian officials. The idea of a "king" seems to have emerged chiefly because the uprising lasted much longer than was normal in these cases. And it lasted longer because of the unsettled condition of the colony brought on by the situation in Spain, by the independence revolts under way to the north and south, and by the decade of resistance to tribute collection. Whereas tax rebels in the early part of the century found themselves quickly rounded up and shipped off to serve stiff sentences in the penal fortresses at Omoa on the Honduras coast and in the isolated Petén, between 1818 and 1820 Guatemala's Audiencia moved slowly, fearing a race war and independence movement such as had erupted to the north. Most witnesses remembered that the festivities in Totonicapán included *vivas* for King Ferdinand. Indeed, and only slightly disingenuously, the *tumulto's* jailed leaders claimed not to understand why they had been imprisoned simply for celebrating the king's constitution.

Why did Totonicapán's revolt not develop into a broader Indian and *casta* uprising such as had occurred in Peru in the 1780s or in Mexico from 1708 to 1713 and during the nineteenth century? Certainly the leaders tried, sending out calls to join them not only to the towns of the district of Totonicapán but also to Indian communities in Sololá and Quezaltenango. However, the Indians themselves were a product of the Spanish colonial system or, more accurately, a product of the interaction over several centuries of this system with indigenous institutions and values. In Guatemala, this limited the Indians' perspective to the *pueblo de indios* (local community) and regularly blocked or destroyed any institution above the municipality not under direct Spanish control. Indian villages of highland Guatemala remained isolated from each other by language and dialect, by costume, by custom, and by the hostilities engendered in centuries of conflict, chiefly over land, among themselves. What drew a broad range of Indians to the 1708–1713 Tzotzil-Tzeltal revolt in Chiapas and the nineteenth-century Caste War in Yucatán, for example, and, more importantly, what held them together over time, was messianic religion. This unifying element was lacking in Totonicapán. Contreras suggests as a possible substitute Tzul as a descendant of the last Quiché kings. A similar claim

seems to have been effective in eighteenth-century Peru, but there is scant evidence that the Totonicapán rebels thought in such terms and even less that the other towns found the idea appealing or convincing. In any event, only the villages in the immediate vicinity of Totonicapán answered Aguilar's call, and even several of these exhibited doubts about an Indian "king."

What happened to the leaders jailed in Quezaltenango? Tradition has it that they either paid with their lives or gained release only after independence. In fact, their fate was less dramatic. Late in 1820 and again in March 1821, the prisoners applied for pardons. They denied any intention of disloyalty, and they put forward a calculated explanation of their actions, claiming, "[As we were] born in the countryside and raised accustomed only to the crudest circumstances and like our parents used only to being with animals, it is not possible that with this sort of upbringing we could distinguish right from wrong and for this reason we should not suffer the fate of a civilized man." On March 22, 1821, the Audiencia granted pardons to Aguilar, Tzul, and various of the others still in jail. This is in dramatic contrast to the harsh penalties passed out to earlier tax rebels and obviously reflects the uncertain climate of the last year of the Spanish colony of Guatemala. *Alcalde Mayor* Lara protested bitterly, saying that the Indians sought their freedom only in order to return to San Miguel Totonicapán to seek revenge against him. Cozar expressed fear for his life if he had to return to Totonicapán to try again to collect tributes. And the inhabitants of the town openly threatened that, once the troops left, they would wreak vengeance on any of their fellows who had cooperated with the Spanish.

SOURCES

The chief sources for this chapter are original or primary documents in the Archivo General de Centro América in Guatemala City. These include the interrogation records of Tzul, Aguilar, and their compatriots and the reports of Cozar and Lara to the Audiencia. Given the usual bulk of colonial judicial records, the court proceedings are surprisingly sketchy, perhaps yet another indication of the weakened condition of the state.

Victoria Reifler Bricker includes a useful account of the uprising in *The Indian Christ, the Indian King: The Historical Substrate of Maya Myth and Ritual* (Austin, 1981); and in Spanish there is J. Daniel Contreras's *Una rebelión indígena en el partido de Totonicapán en 1820* (2d printing, Guatemala, 1968). Severo Martínez Peláez treats the rebellion topically, together with a dozen others, in the first chapters of *Motines de Indios (la violencia colonial en Centroamérica y Chiapas)* (Puebla, n.d.) and promises in the future a chapter specifically on the events at Totonicapán.

Good treatments and bibliographies in English of late colonial Guatemala include those in W. George Lovell, *Conquest and Survival in Colonial Guatemala: A Historical Geography of the Cuchumatán Highlands, 1500–1821* (Kingston, Ontario, 1985); Thomas Thorstein Veblen, "The Ecological, Cultural, and Historical Bases of Forest Preservation in Totonicapán, Guatemala" (Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1975); and Miles Wortman, *Government and Society in Central America, 1680–1840* (New York, 1982). William B. Taylor's *Drinking, Homicide, and Rebellion in Colonial Mexican Villages* (Stanford, 1979), although it does not deal specifically with Totonicapán, sets the rebellion in perspective.

4

Maria Antônia Muniz: Frontier Matriarch

John Charles Chasteen

As noted in the introduction to Part 1, Dom Pedro I proclaimed Brazil's independence from Portugal in 1822 with a minimum of conflict or bloodshed. Yet the imperial ambitions of Dom João VI (1808–1820) and Dom Pedro I (1820–1831) caused considerable trouble for the inhabitants of the region far to the south, the *banda oriental*, or eastern bank, of the Plata River. Both the Spanish and the Portuguese coveted control of this magnificent river system. During the colonial period the Spanish saw the river as a vulnerable path to the famed *plata* (silver) mines of Potosí in Bolivia. The Portuguese saw the Plata River as the most convenient way to reach their western inland regions of Mato Grosso. After Argentina's independence in 1816 and Brazil's in 1822, the two Latin American behemoths continued to press for advantage in the area; both ignored the challenge of the Uruguayan caudillo José Artigas, who fought for independence of the region. In 1828 the British forced Argentina and Brazil to recognize an independent Uruguay as a buffer state between them, but for years both of the larger nations continued to intervene in Uruguayan politics.

The people who lived in the disputed territory suffered and profited in their no-man's-land. Maria Antônia Muniz lived in the region for an incredible ten decades, from her birth in 1762 to her death in 1870. She married, brought up thirteen children, and, after the death of her husband in 1824, indirectly managed the family estates.

John Chasteen's essay raises various historical issues. For Maria Antônia, the frontier was a land of opportunity, much as the U.S. frontier was portrayed by the historian Frederick Jackson Turner. Frontier families, like most families in Latin America, were large and extended. Maria Antônia's experience suggests, however, that among family members competition may have been as common as the more idealized notion of cooperation. The Indian and mestizo gauchos, or cowboys, contrast strongly with members of more settled indigenous communities under Atanasio Tzul in Guatemala. Did they have more personal autonomy and opportunity than their Guatemalan counterparts? Issues of royalism or patriotism, of empire or independence, seem to have been less intense in this region, overshadowed by the competition between Brazil and