



Guatemalan Indians and the State: 1540 to 1988 (Lilas Symposia on Latin America)

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Violence in Central America, especially when directed against Indian populations, is not a new phenomenon. Yet few studies of the region have focused specifically on the relationship between Indians and the state, a relationship that may hold the key to understanding these conflicts. In this volume, noted historians and anthropologists pool their considerable expertise to analyze the situation in Guatemala, working from the premise that the Indian/state relationship is the single most important determinant of Guatemala's distinctive history and social order. In chapters by such respected scholars as Robert Cormack, Ralph Lee Woodward, Christopher Lutz, Richard Adams, and Arturo Arias, the history of Indian activism in Guatemala unfolds. The authors reveal that the insistence of Guatemalan Indians on maintaining their distinctive cultural practices and traditions in the face of state attempts to eradicate them appears to have fostered the development of an increasingly oppressive state.

This historical insight into the forces that shaped modern Guatemala provides a context for understanding the extraordinary level of violence that enveloped the Indians of the western highlands in the 1980s, the continued massive assault on traditional religious and secular culture, the movement from a militarized state to a militarized civil society, and the major transformations taking place in Guatemala's traditional export-oriented economy. In this sense, *Guatemalan Indians and the State, 1540 to 1988* provides a revisionist social history of Guatemala.

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