

On the Fringes of Conquest: Maya-Spanish Contact in Colonial Belize

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The defeat of the Aztecs of Mexico by Hernán Cortés in 1521 was but the beginning of a long and torturous conquest of Central America that did not always result in the mastery of people and production for which the Spanish had hoped. The Maya of the resource-poor Yucatán peninsula were spared the heavy colonial hand that held fast to central Mexico and its riches. In addition, the dense forests of the peninsula served as a haven for refugees fleeing oppressive conditions in colonial towns. Despite the paucity of documentary information on Maya communities of the frontier, knowledge of Maya-Spanish relations in the 16th and 17th centuries has advanced in recent years through archeological and ethnohistorical research. Work in one region of the Maya lowlands has brought us closer to an understanding of the early interaction of the rulers and the ruled.

MAYA ARCHEOLOGY IN THE LOWLAND FORESTS OF YUCATÁN has traditionally focused on the Classic Period, between the 3rd and the 9th centuries, when temple pyramids rose above the jungle canopy, carved monuments recorded dynastic events in the lives of rulers, and spectacular status-markers of the elite, such as jade adornments and painted pottery, were buried with them. Most Maya centers in the southern lowlands of the Guatemalan Petén and Belize experienced political and economic collapse in the 10th century for reasons that are still not entirely understood. Populations, once distributed in cities throughout the lowlands, clustered in the Postclassic period (A.D. 900 to 1500) along lakeshores and rivers. New centers rose and fell, and new elites vied for power. When the Spanish arrived in the 16th century, some Maya communities were allied whereas others were at war, but all shared an economy that involved far-flung trade over land and sea, an advanced calendrical and writing system, an elaborate religion, and a stratified social system that included rulers, priests, scribes, warriors, craftworkers, traders, farmers, and fishermen.

Conflicting native alliances in northern Yucatán resulted in both cooperation with and opposition to Hernán Cortés and his followers, who passed through Yucatán in 1519 en route to central Mexico. There, in 1521, Cortés and his men brought down the

Aztec empire. After the conquest of Yucatán by other Spaniards 21 years later, many of the Maya sought refuge from colonial rule in the remote forests and communities along the southern fringes of the peninsula—in Belize, the Petén, and parts of Campeche and Quintana Roo. The frontier was an area over which the Spanish had weak and intermittent control. Its existence threatened the heart of colonial society by draining it of its supply of labor. More important, communities on the frontier capitalized on their remoteness by developing strategies of resistance to Spanish religious and economic domination. The communities we have studied, Tipu and Lamanai (1–3), were two of several in Belize that successfully expelled Spanish authorities for a period of almost 60 years. Our analysis of ethnohistorical documents that relate to the Spanish conquest of the southern lowlands, combined with archeological excavation of Tipu and Lamanai, has helped clarify the frontier conquest experience and the development of native survival strategies.

The Nature of the Inquiry

Although the documents left by early colonial chroniclers are cobwebbed with bias, they are a direct link to the past, and we can reveal the full dimensions of the narratives by examining the views and motives of the chroniclers—Franciscans who saw the New World as a way to redeem the Old, or tribute collectors who maligned priests who sided with the Indians against Spanish exploitation. Archeology is direct only in that the link to the past is tactual; we can touch and hold the same things that Maya families held, used, traded, or wore. Emotionally, this is the source of much excitement; intellectually, we come to know about the “social life” of these things (4) only indirectly, after a study of contexts, stratigraphy, and the logic of inference.

On the one hand, archeology is clearly not as communicative as are documentary sources. On the other hand, documents often represent only a selected sample of the population. In our case, they link us largely to the minds of Spaniards, not Mayas. We turn to archeology to illuminate aspects of the native conquest experience that might otherwise remain unclear. The focus of archeology on Maya material culture and day-to-day living also leads to insights that differ from those derived from study of documents written by Spaniards bent on economic and spiritual supremacy. A balance between documentary and material evidence must be maintained, but this does not mean that the data are always to be equally weighted. The stature of the written record will always dwarf the stratigraphic one. The former is a direct product of thought; the latter, a product of decay and destruction, is what people thought would never happen. If the process is to be productive, “the results should provide a more satisfactory explanation than would be

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forthcoming from either set of data alone" (5).

We wanted to reconstruct the course of Maya-Spanish interaction in a region whose remoteness permitted mechanisms of resistance that were not viable choices for the Maya in the colonial core. These mechanisms included not only outright rejection of Spanish rule but also different forms of cultural adaptation and cooperation. We wanted primarily to illuminate the conquest experience, but remained hopeful that what we learned about the patterns of Maya life might give us insight into pre-Columbian behavior.

Discovery

Our research has focused on two Maya towns of the southern colonial frontier of Yucatán: Tipu, at the modern site of Negroman in western Belize, and Lamanai, near the modern village of Indian Church in northern Belize (Fig. 1). The communities created or altered by the Spaniards in this area had few masonry buildings; they even lacked the masonry-faced substructures that characterize traditional Maya architecture. As a result, new strategies were required for the location of archeological remains; they do not betray their presence by the large mounds familiar to Maya archeologists focused on pre-Columbian settlements.

In the search for Tipu, Spanish documents were used to identify probable locations of the small *visita* churches (served by circuit-riding priests and local Maya religious personnel) that were built by native populations under Spanish direction throughout northern Belize and adjacent areas in Mexico (6, 7). Through this process, Tipu was tentatively placed on the west bank of the Macal River at Negroman (1, p. 206). Although numerous structures there failed to yield evidence of Spanish-period occupation, testing in an enigmatic zone characterized by scattered concentrations of cobbles and 10-cm rises in ground level revealed historic remains. Among the structures of this period is a 16th century church that confirms identification of the site as colonial Tipu.

The discovery of Lamanai was more straightforward; 17th century documentary evidence left no doubt regarding the location of the community, and the remains of the sanctuary of a substantial Spanish church were recognizable. Nevertheless, the community served by the church continued to defy detection through the first decade of a 13-year project designed to investigate the full span of the site's prehistory (2, pp. 51–52; 3, pp. 243–244).

Some of the success we have had in reconstructing what happened during the first encounters between Maya and Spaniard in Belize is presented below, where archeological information has been woven into the narrative. All too often the documentary and archeological records provide disparate and sometimes conflicting perspectives. We discuss some of these conflicts and propose resolutions.

The Narrative of the Colonial Encounter

Spanish contact with the coastal populations of the Chetumal province, which straddled Mexico and northern Belize, began in 1528 (8, 9). A second attempt at conquest in 1531 resulted in the formation of Villa Real at the town of Chetumal itself. Strong Maya resistance led to the abandonment of Villa Real within a year, and it was not until 1544 that Melchor and Alonso Pacheco actually conquered the province of Chetumal and the more southerly province of Dzuluinicob. The Pachecos established a *villa* (administrative town) at Salamanca de Bacalar, but their notoriously violent conquest techniques resulted in depopulation of the area as many Maya either died or escaped to more remote regions to the south and west.

Both archeological and ethnohistorical evidence place Tipu squarely in the Dzuluinicob province. Lamanai's provincial identity is less certain; archeological evidence argues for its northern orientation, whereas the early documents suggest that the Chetumal province was concentrated farther north and that Lamanai was part of Dzuluinicob (9, pp. 280–286). Lamanai's location on an important riverine trading route along which goods and ideas were passed between northern and southern spheres of political influence suggests that boundaries were flexible and permeable and that Lamanai was situated in a transitional zone influenced by both provinces.

Conquered Maya populations in Chetumal and Dzuluinicob were variously required to render cacao beans, money, and labor to their new *encomenderos* (Spaniards awarded royal grants for the right of tribute from specified native populations). At Tipu and Lamanai, whatever restructuring took place in agricultural priorities to increase production of tribute crops is not reflected directly in the archeological data. Corn and squash were grown at Tipu after the Conquest as before, and the faunal remains from both sites demonstrate that the same wide range of animals, birds, and fish was exploited. The documents offer few details on the colonial economy of towns as remote as Tipu and Lamanai, but they indicate that Spanish extortions from Maya towns were great, far surpassing the legal limits imposed by the colonial system. Such tribute payments were effected through means other than long-term residence by Spaniards. None of the more than 550 cemetery burials from Tipu or 300 burials from Lamanai is that of a Spaniard. The implication is that a significant number of Maya cooperated with Spanish authorities in administering the civil and religious life of their towns.

The picture the archeology provides is one of Maya-run communities well integrated into the colonial system. Buildings incorporat-

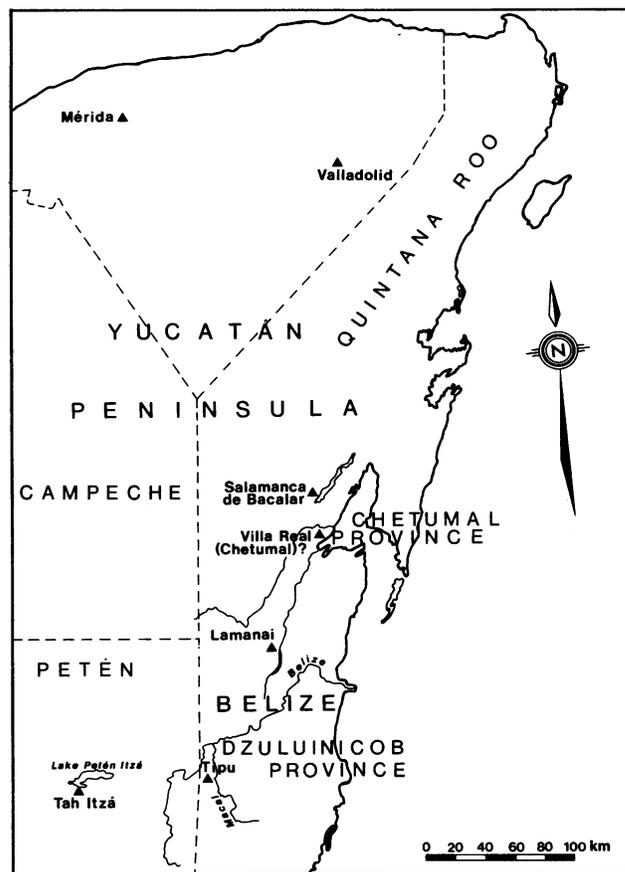


Fig. 1. Map of Belize and Quintana Roo, Mexico, showing Spanish-period sites.

ed Maya and non-Maya components. Goods of European origin, such as glass-bead necklaces and bracelets, brass needles, pins, silver earrings, and copper rings and pendants were worn by men, women, and children and were buried with them. Spanish-made majolica pottery and olive jars (10, 11), metal hooks, iron nails, locks and other Spanish ironwork occur in refuse deposits and building debris. The presence of these artifacts indicates that both Tipu and Lamanai were participants in exchange networks that distributed European products throughout the Yucatán peninsula. Such exchange was facilitated by numerous mechanisms, including visits by Spanish priests and secular authorities, the circulation of Maya traders, the movement of Mayas from northern Yucatán to the frontier, and the imposition of forced trade for local products (particularly cacao beans) by Spaniards from Bacalar.

The Maya were clearly part of a system in which not only were goods circulated but also values were upheld that differed from those of the preceding century. The archeology tells us that relatively abrupt change in the structure and material expression of Maya society took place sometime in the 16th century; the documents tell us that the source of change was the Spanish presence. What neither source reveals readily are the specific mechanisms of Spanish establishment of control. As a result, the apparent efficiency and rapidity of the Spanish conquest of Belize remains to be fully explained.

A major factor may have been preconquest population decline. Epidemic disease—perhaps smallpox, but the records are unclear—was introduced to Yucatán as early as 1517 by Spanish soldiers on the initial expedition to mainland Mexico out of Cuba (12). In the quarter century between initial contact and the establishment of a major Spanish presence with the founding of Mérida in 1542, and Bacalar and Valladolid in 1544 (12, p. 31), the peninsula's native population may have declined from at least 800,000 (a conservative figure) to about 250,000 (12, pp. 36 and 13, p. 212). The magnitude of population loss suggests that community integration and morale were lowered, paving the way for Spanish conquest and economic reintegration.

Tipu and Lamanai have a long preconquest history of contact and exchange, as does Lamanai with villages and towns in northern Yucatán (3, pp. 236–240; 14). Routes for rapid transmission of disease are not hard to visualize, and there is little doubt that Tipu and Lamanai experienced early major population decline. Further population reduction resulted from the Pachecos' violent conquest methods, which reportedly included the use of dogs of war and outright massacre (15). By 1582 the towns under the control of Salamanca de Bacalar had a population of under 1000, although we have no way of knowing how many remained unconquered in the forests.

We know from the documents that the Pacheco conquest of 1544 resulted in the establishment of nominal colonial rule at both Tipu and Lamanai. The archeological evidence alone does not permit us to be this specific; Spanish ceramics and beads found in refuse deposits and burials indicate only that Tipu and Lamanai became part of the colonial world in the latter half of the 16th century. Architectural data suggest that the first Spaniards to contact Tipu modified existing structures rather than mustered labor to build new ones; in light of the documents, this took place in 1544 or shortly afterward. The church is not mentioned in the earliest documents, and it was probably not built as early as 1544. Spanish pottery has been recovered from the core of the church walls, which were erected over the corner of a pre-Columbian building modified in historic times. This indicates the passage of some time before the church was built.

The Maya of Dzuluinicob and Chetumal engaged in extensive anti-Spanish rebellions during 1567–68. In their efforts to quell

these movements the Spanish used Tipu as a base for pacification of the surrounding countryside, and they brought apostate Maya from remote villages to be resettled in the community. Given the architectural sequence, it appears that the Spanish focus on Tipu in 1567–68 resulted in a major physical reorganization of the community represented by the laying out of a European-style, ground-level plaza around which the church and other buildings, entirely colonial in construction style, were arranged. The position of unexcavated structures beyond the plaza suggests further expansion to the west. Even if we are incorrect about the exact coordination of archeological and documentary events, the sequence of construction suggests investment of Spanish efforts intensely but intermittently over a long period of time.

In contrast, Lamanai saw no significant restructuring of its pre-Conquest form of strip settlement along the lakeshore. The absence of an imposed European town plan probably reflects Spanish hopes of attracting runaway populations without imposing major changes in traditional town layout. In Spanish terms, Lamanai was more strategically located than the remote town of Tipu; it stood midway along the major riverine route from Bacalar to Tipu and was an important node in the networks of 16th and 17th century trade and communication, as it had been in pre-Columbian times. Because it was closer to the administrative seat of Salamanca de Bacalar, Lamanai was more vulnerable than Tipu to Spanish economic controls, and Spanish *encomenderos* had difficulty keeping inhabitants from running away.

The impressive second church built at Lamanai in the early 17th century (Fig. 2) may have been conceived as a means of attracting Christianized Maya from the surrounding countryside to a community over which the Spanish could exercise a watchful eye. Such a church was never built at Tipu, or at least its presence has yet to be detected in the archeological record. Local populations sought remote towns such as Tipu for settlement simply because they were not as vulnerable to Spanish interference. Lapses into idolatry were harder to monitor, and such lapses make a striking appearance in both the archeological and ethnohistorical record.



Fig. 2. Sanctuary of second Lamanai church. A thatch nave covered the area at right.

From 1544 through 1638 Tipu and Lamanai functioned nominally as Christian communities. Continuation of Christian practice during this period is indicated rather sparsely in the documents but reflected strongly in the archeological record. Adherence to Christian burial practice seems to have been rigid, and the churches were regularly maintained. We can infer from this that much if not all essential Catholic ritual became part of Maya life. On the other hand, the appearance of pre-Columbian-style animal and anthropomorphic effigies in refuse deposits and in offerings in buildings indicates that the new religion had not entirely replaced the old, and references to fears of Maya apostasy pepper Spanish reports.

One mechanism that surely helped buttress the strength of Christian belief and practice was the training of individual Maya by the church in order that they carry on the rituals and catechization essential in a remote Christian community. At Tipu, a 16- to 20-year-old individual buried in the church nave, probably a female (though preservation is poor), held a thurible, or censer (Fig. 3). The vessel is a striking example of the blending of two traditions; the form is European, but the pottery is locally made. We know that children served as singers, sacristans, and as assistants during mass (16); the person may have been responsible for swinging the smoking censer in Tipu's thatch-roofed church on holy days.

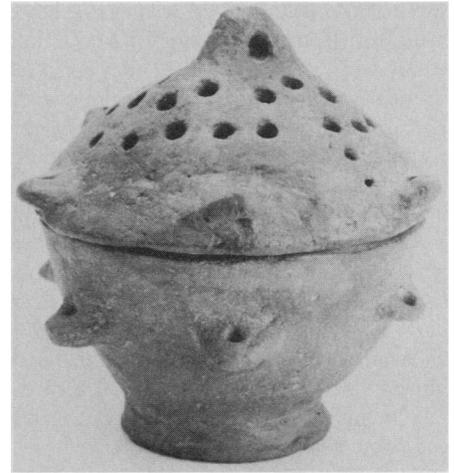
By 1638 Lamanai and Tipu were joined in a widespread rebellion that succeeded in expelling the Spanish from most of Belize until 1695 (9, pp. 189–211). On a later unsuccessful *entrada* to attempt to reverse the effects of this rebellion, Franciscan priests in 1641 found the Lamanai church and related buildings burned and the people turned apostate and in league with the rebels at Tipu (9, pp. 214–224; 17). Tipu had become a center for most of the rebellious population, although some people from Lamanai and other towns in Belize had been forcibly resettled by the Spanish near Bacalar.

Here the documentary record of life at Lamanai ends. Archeology, though it did not reveal clear evidence of the burning of the church, tells us that the Maya lived on at Lamanai after Spanish presence had ended, perhaps for a half century or more. During this time they reestablished many of their pre-contact religious practices; they erected a pre-Columbian monument in the church nave and buried beneath and around it objects of types used in late 15th and early 16th century offerings (18). Near the monument they built a small altar of pre-Columbian form, and they may have erected a new, small village center south of the main historic community. Following the period of ceremonial activity focused on the Spanish church, at least one family used the sanctuary as a residence for a considerable period. As the last occupants of the Spanish colonial period slipped away into obscurity, the record gives way to the paraphernalia of British occupation.

Unaffected by the demise of Lamanai, Tipu continued as a functioning community, and, according to the documents, it was strengthened by incorporation of refugees from several rebellious towns and by a growing alliance with the independent Itzá Maya of Tah Itzá, in the central Petén. However, the refugees are thus far indistinguishable from Tipuans in the human skeletal record, but their arrival from the north may be reflected by the appearance of a northern Belize style of pottery (14, pp. 91–95; 19).

The archeological record does not entirely bear out the documents' claims of Tipu's apostasy during the period of rebellion. It is true that a platform of pre-Columbian style was built within the church nave, presumably for the purpose of carrying out non-Christian rituals, and in the eyes of the Catholic clergy such an act would be desecration. Yet excavations show that the Tipuans continued Christian burial practice in the cemetery outside the church at a time when the church grounds and adjacent buildings were not swept or well maintained. The fact that they adhered to certain tenets of Christianity while maintaining the community's

Fig. 3. Thurible (censer) from Tipu church; height, 12.2 cm.



focal role in the rebellion until almost the end of the 17th century suggests that they may not have seen themselves as anti-Christians so much as anti-Spanish.

Despite sporadic Spanish efforts to reincorporate the Dzuluinicob rebels into the colonial system, Tipu remained beyond the pale of Spanish influence until 1695, when the town sent representatives to Mérida and thereafter became a center for unsuccessful Spanish attempts to seek the peaceful capitulation of the Itzás (9, pp. 259–268). Tipu's importance to the Spanish declined following the violent conquest of the Itzás in 1697, and Spanish interest in the Maya populations of Dzuluinicob waned once the people of Tipu were removed to the shores of Lake Petén Itzá in 1707 (9, pp. 270–272). Though Tipu was no longer an occupied town, it was not entirely forgotten. Pre-Columbian-style vessels found cached in the collapse debris of abandoned buildings suggest that pre-Conquest habits persisted, and that the memory of Tipu's importance remained for some time in Maya consciousness.

During the 17th and 18th centuries, Belize's coast sheltered British privateers who preyed on Spanish shipping, and its forests yielded logwood for British markets (20). Despite Spanish efforts to dislodge these foreigners (21), "British Honduras" and its few remaining Maya communities eventually became part of the British empire in the New World.

The Process of Integration: Material Culture

Extensive reflections of Spanish power exist in the largest elements of material culture at Lamanai and Tipu: community planning and construction techniques. At Tipu, the traditional multiple groups of inward-facing structures, each group with its dominant and lesser units, were replaced, at least in part, by the single large central plaza around which the community's most important buildings were arranged. At both Lamanai and Tipu, much colonial-period masonry differed markedly from that of pre-Conquest times, and similarities in the plans and style of masonry between buildings at Tipu and Lamanai suggest common Spanish inspiration for some of the changes.

When we turn to portable objects, the picture is less clear. Where documents focus on incidents in which material culture descriptions would be extremely illuminating, the recorders fail to provide the desired information. For example, the nature of Maya apostasy received considerable attention in Spanish records, but only the rituals and people are described, not the artifacts. We know that the Maya placed "idols" in churches, caves, and the recesses of their houses (9, pp. 148–149; 13, pp. 287–293), but Spanish reporters

were loath to describe pagan images. Hence differentiation of pre-Columbian from post-Conquest Maya ritual paraphernalia comes entirely within the purview of archeology.

Similar problems arise in the realm of technology. In the absence of firearms, or owing to a prohibition against them (22), the Maya continued to use stone such as chert and obsidian for hunting and other tasks, and the materials presumably formed part of the native trade inventory. Chert could be mined locally, but obsidian had to be imported from the Guatemalan highlands. A preliminary program of obsidian hydration dating suggests that trade in obsidian may have been disrupted once the Spanish established *encomiendas* in Belize. The consequences of disruption would have been ignored by the Spaniards, and we must infer the manner of Maya resource stabilization from the archeological record. Many other goods of Maya manufacture were likewise disregarded by the Spanish and hence were not recorded for posterity.

European goods fare slightly better. There are references to gifts given out by priests in the early years of contact to encourage natives to convert (23). In our area, we know that glass beads, axes, machetes, earrings, and necklaces were brought to the Petén by priests in the months before and after the Itzá conquest (24). Similar supplies may have been brought by the ten secular priests who stayed in Tipu for several months during 1696 (9, pp. 265–266). All but machetes have been found either at Tipu or at Lamanai. However, artifacts of both European and Maya manufacture are more numerous and more varied than the documents would lead one to expect. In addition, some excavated objects raise the possibility that the Maya were reworking European brass as they did iron (17, v. 1, p. 243) and were importing native smelted copper.

There is evidence that pre-Columbian manufacturing traditions in ceramics (14, p. 91), tools, and weapons continued, in some cases unchanged, at Tipu and Lamanai throughout the Spanish period. Even in the case of non-utilitarian artifact classes such as beads at Lamanai, for which issues of efficiency obviously do not arise, Maya clay and Spanish glass exist side by side, and the native products are the more numerous. At Lamanai, disappearance of Spanish influence signalled reversion to the manufacture of ceramic forms for religious use that were seemingly suppressed between 1544 and 1638 (18). From these several lines of evidence it can be argued quite convincingly that Spanish material culture was never more than an overlay on that of the Maya. It is entirely possible that the perseverance of much of the Maya way of life was made necessary because the native population was not given a real alternative to reliance on its own abilities. It is equally likely, however, that the minimal impact of European material culture was partly a reflection of the enduring strength of Maya tradition.

Community Response to European Control

All Maya communities at the time of the conquest were threatened by essentially similar political, economic, and ideological pressures. Yet the data from Lamanai and Tipu demonstrate that even in these two towns the responses differed. Though they share aspects of architectural style and building form that combine local techniques with a common blueprint of probable Spanish inspiration, the two communities are not duplicates in this respect any more than they are in site plan. This may reflect the nature of Spanish input, or the character of Maya response, or both. In any case, as documentary descriptions of Maya relationships with Spanish authorities illustrate (9, pp. 108–109 and 176–177), there was no monolithic response to Spanish pressure. Individuals differed in the kinds of strategies they thought should be implemented, and this manifested itself in the way communities participated in the Span-

ish-dominated political, ideological, and economic spheres.

In addition to settlement pattern, diet may have differed between the communities. Whereas the Lamanai population exhibits a high frequency of porotic hyperostosis, and by inference anemia, during the colonial period (25), the Tipu population exhibits a low incidence of this and related bone disorders (26). The existence of community-based dietary strategies among the Maya has implications for any generalizations we might make about Maya responses to stress or change in any period, including that of the collapse. In our case, a basis for dietary difference exists in conditions described in the documents: Lamanai was a colonial community of reduced Indians, whereas Tipu was a stable, continuing center. Reduced populations, especially those suffering periodic forced resettlement, suffer from the absence of dependable, continuous agricultural support. Beyond this, differences in diet may be attributable in part to population composition, as well as regional traditions in child-rearing and family care.

Regional traditions are clearly visible in the marked differences between Tipu and Lamanai in the manufacture, ornamentation, and possibly the uses of pottery. Similarities between Lamanai and northern Yucatán may reflect Lamanai's strong trading ties with the Chetumal province, whose connections with northern Yucatán were longstanding (27). This may in turn have dictated Lamanai's role as a reduction center for runaways from the region of Bacalar, which served as the Spanish center for control of the ancient province of Chetumal. The potters of Tipu, on the other hand, fashioned crockery within a tradition that embraced the Petén (28), and documentary evidence describes relationships with the Petén Itzá maintained through the 17th and 18th centuries.

Another matter of concern in the colonial period is whether any intra- or intercommunity differences may be attributable to the Yucatec Maya, who fled northern communities for the relative isolation of towns such as Tipu and Lamanai. Their presence might be indicated by a distinctive style of pottery that makes its appearance at Lamanai and later, at Tipu (14, p. 95; 18, p. 2). The time of appearance is roughly compatible with documentary evidence regarding Yucatec immigration, but such a circumstantial relation is far from conclusive.

Individual Variation

Up to this point we have of necessity submerged the individual in the discussion of the community, but there is archeological evidence that allows the individual to emerge and supports the documentary picture of persons adapting to conquest conditions in different ways. The documents tell us that some fomented rebellion while others advocated cooperation (9). The Tipu burial record also provides us with interesting information on the varying individual attitudes in the post-Conquest context. No pre-Columbian-style offerings characterize the colonial-period burials, though the thurible with the young adult near the altar can be seen as a status marker in the pre-Columbian tradition. Most of the individuals in the cemetery were buried in Christian fashion: supine, head to the west, facing east, with the hands drawn over the stomach or chest. However, a small number were interred in flexed position according to pre-Columbian practice. These decisions to follow pre-Columbian rather than Catholic ritual, apparently made on an individual basis, have political as well as religious implications.

The objects found in graves at Tipu and Lamanai also suggest that people and their communities keyed into newly developing colonial trade and exchange networks in different ways. Grave accompaniments at Tipu, which include silver earrings, elaborate clothing fasteners, glass bead necklaces, bells, needles, pendants, and rings,

occur in a highly varied distribution that suggests the sorts of individual differences in wealth likely to have stemmed from disparities in resource ownership or control as well as in entrepreneurial skills. Differences may also reflect dynamics of accommodation to the Spanish presence. Tipuans seem to have had greater access to such goods than did the people of Lamanai, perhaps as a result of the community's export strength. Cacao was known to have been an important item of tribute at Tipu (29), and despite the town's distance from Salamanca de Bacalar, the value of its products, especially cacao, enabled some individuals to express wealth in the form of a greater range of European goods than existed at Lamanai.

Individual initiative is visible in the ceremonial sphere as well. At Tipu, someone buried the likeness of a pre-Columbian god along with a marine bivalve on the midline of a colonial-period building during its construction. At Lamanai, the placement of a bat effigy in a platform about to be incorporated within the first Christian church appears to have been the act of a workman, anxious to appease the old gods though under the watchful eye of a new deity (30). These occurrences leave little doubt that individual Mayas did not wholly succumb to Spanish influence and often took some sort of direct action to maintain cultural traditions that were in place before the Spanish arrival.

The Consequences of Conquest

When the Spanish first lost hold on the Maya in Belize during the rebellion of 1638, the political consequences differed markedly from the ideological. Politically the Maya were now independent, but at Tipu some of the inhabitants persisted in burying their dead in the cemetery according to Christian practice even after the church walls had collapsed. Rejection of Spanish authority clearly did not necessarily mandate rejection of Christianity. Seventy years or more of cooperation and accommodation had resulted in the internalization of some Christian values in a belief system still partly pagan. This result was not foreseen in the ethnohistorical accounts of the period, which were guided by a frame of reference that understandably perceived Christian worship solely in European terms and measured the intensity of Christianity by the extent to which all native ritual had been abandoned.

Though incorporation of a variety of native customs was the hallmark of early Christianization efforts in both the Old and New worlds (23, pp. 19–20; 31, 32), the expectations were that the Maya would ultimately come to view Christianity as Europeans did. That they failed to do so is made clear by the Tipu archeological data, as it is by enactment in Yucatán of pre-Columbian rituals, sometimes human sacrifice, within Christian churches, accompanied by offerings of Spanish wine and references to Jesus Christ (12, pp. 195–207). To the priests this violated the sanctity of the church, as the pre-Columbian-style ritual platform in the church would have done at Tipu. Nonetheless, the platform suggests, as does post-1638 activity at Lamanai, that some individuals, and perhaps the community at large, continued to regard the church as a holy place.

Though never able to abandon past customs totally in order to

accept Christianity and its practices on wholly European terms, the Maya of the early colonial period managed to draw from Spanish hegemony a faith and way of life in which two worlds could survive side by side. Pre-Columbian Maya technology and economic networks likewise coexisted with the way of life introduced by the Spaniards, probably as hidden in some respects as was the union of pagan and Christian belief.

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