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Source: *Latin American Research Review*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1991), pp. 171-179

Published by: The Latin American Studies Association

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2503669>

Accessed: 06-07-2017 23:37 UTC

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# PARISH REGISTERS IN JACALTENANGO, GUATEMALA

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Jacaltenango is a forlorn, unkempt-looking town lying in the *tierra templada* toward the western edge of the Cuchumatán highlands of Guatemala. It is perhaps best known to the academic world as a stop on the route taken by Frans Blom and Oliver La Farge (1926, 1927) in their pioneering reconnaissance of Mesoamerica earlier this century, a place to which the latter returned with Douglas Byers to document an intriguing array of Maya cultural survivals (La Farge and Byers 1931). More recently, one of its native sons has given local lore and storytelling eloquent written form, as well as documenting the town's painful experience during counterinsurgency operations in the early 1980s (Montejo 1984, 1987).

Despite the advent of a new road and improved transportation services, Jacaltenango remains off the beaten track, a sleepy destination at the end of the line, somewhere only a lost few would stumble across by accident. I first arrived there in May 1978 to set off on a walking tour of remote parts of the Sierra de los Cuchumatanes, wishing to see as much of that wild, beautiful country as possible before writing a doctoral dissertation about land and life in the region during colonial times (Lovell 1980). Three archival sojourns (two in Guatemala City and one in Seville) had furnished me with what I considered enough raw material to satisfy reasonable scholarly expectations, and thus I was not especially disposed toward finding additional data that might call for more research than I had already done or could still undertake, given the time and resources then available.

It turned out, in fact, that a rich assortment of documents had been housed for safekeeping in a room of the hospital built by the Maryknoll order adjacent to the parish church. Some of the documents were gleaned by Anne Collins (1980) in her reconstruction of how the colonial experience in Jacaltenango resulted in the formation, along lines first suggested by Fernando Cámara (1952) and Eric Wolf (1957), of what anthropologists consider a "closed corporate peasant community." Other scholarly demands (to say nothing about the violent civil war) prevented me from revisiting the archive until June 1990, by which time postdoctoral endeavor

ors had transformed my original thesis into two books (Lovell 1985, 1990). Thus it was not until twelve years after first knowing about the archive that the opportunity arose to return to Jacaltenango and to look more carefully at the information at hand.

The preservation of local records in Jacaltenango resulted from the foresight and initiative of one individual, a woman doctor (now in her seventies) whose real name is Dorothy Erickson but who generally goes by her adopted Maryknoll name, Rosa Cordis. Everyone in Jacaltenango refers to her simply as *Madre Rosa*, and a bronze bust of her likeness stands in the park in front of the hospital. The analogy with a more celebrated mother of the church a continent away is neither contrived nor off the mark, simply valid and compelling. Ever since she moved to Guatemala from Bolivia in 1960, *Madre Rosa* has attended to the spiritual and medical needs of the people of Jacaltenango, spending long hours in hospital wards as well as in the consulting room and the operating theatre. Three decades of such service have been combined with what *Madre Rosa* calls her hobby, the meticulous classification and transcription of bundles of documents that she rescued from slow disintegration in the parish church, mostly registers of baptisms, marriages, and deaths. After putting Jacaltenango's records in order, *Madre Rosa* then contacted resident clergy in surrounding communities, asking them to send to her the registers extant for their parishes, which she has also classified and transcribed. When I asked how many years this project had taken, *Madre Rosa* smiled and joked, in a lingering Bostonian drawl, that nights in Jacaltenango can be decidedly long.

Her unique effort means that anyone interested in studying historical demography can go to Jacaltenango and expect to find there data relating not only to the town itself but also to some two dozen neighboring communities, three of which (Amatenango, Masapa, and Motozintla) now belong to Mexico. *Madre Rosa's* work does not dispense with having to go elsewhere in Guatemala for material on vital population statistics, but her dedication complements nicely sources available from the Archivo General de Centroamérica (Lutz and Webre 1980; Luján Muñoz 1982) and the Dirección General de Estadística, to name but two key repositories of demographic information. In view of the loss of records suffered in recent years through flood, fire, earthquake, theft, or neglect, *Madre Rosa's* example as a part-time researcher (to say nothing of her quirky humanity) constitutes a bright spot in a country where even the most cheerful of optimists soon recognizes the inevitability of despair.

The appendix that follows concentrates exclusively on parish registers of baptisms, marriages, and deaths. These sources reveal illuminating details of local events and circumstances that, in turn, modify patterns of population collapse, recovery, and growth at the regional level of analysis (Lovell 1982, 1988). *Madre Rosa* has also catalogued and pre-

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served records concerning payment of tribute (1655–1690) and *cofradía* resources (1673–1862). In addition, she has pieced together elaborate chronologies of the men who served in the region as parish priests. Among other interesting items are two impressive volumes of music, masses written by hand and in Gregorian notation that date to the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Original documents are those relating to Jacaltenango and its immediate parish constituents, the communities of Petatán, San Antonio Huista, Santa Ana Huista, San Andrés Huista, San Marcos Huista, and Concepción. All other listings exist at Jacaltenango in typescript form only. Anyone wishing to consult these sources should contact Dr. Rosa Cordis Erickson at the Hospital Jacaltenango, 13007 Jacaltenango, Department of Huehuetenango, Guatemala.

APPENDIX 1

JACALTENANGO	<i>Libros de defunciones</i>
<i>Libros de bautismos</i>	1740–1854 (4 libros)
1718–1802 (8 libros)	1854–1936 (3 libros)
1802–1836 (4 libros)	
1831–1857 (5 libros)	CONCEPCION
1857–1880 (5 libros)	<i>Libros de bautismos</i>
1880–1889 (3 libros)	1770–1791
1889–1894 (2 libros)	1792–1821
Twenty-seven books in total, plus an	1821–1836
<i>índice de bautismos</i> for the nineteenth	1837–1848
century	1848–1875
<i>Libros de casamientos</i>	<i>Libros de casamientos</i>
1754–1799	1849–1879
1786–1841	1859–1860
1787–1832	<i>Libros de defunciones</i>
1814–1832	1754–1801
1840–1887	1802–1879
1857–1859	
1859–1863	SAN ANTONIO HUISTA
1864–1873	<i>Libro de bautismos</i>
1885–1891	1781–1876
1888–1904	<i>Libro de casamientos</i>
1892–1914	1675–1880
<i>Matrimonios civiles</i>	<i>Libro de defunciones</i>
1856–1873 (various towns)	1689–1879
1857–1860 (Jacaltenango)	
1888–1926 (various towns)	
1929 (various towns)	

APPENDIX 1 (continued)

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<b>SANTA ANA HUISTA</b>	<i>Libros de defunciones</i>
<i>Libros de bautismos</i>	1754-1821
1713-1752	1822-1879
1752-1821	
1821-1875	
<i>Libros de casamientos</i>	<b>HUEHUETENANGO (INCLUDES SAN</b>
1714-1837	<b>LORENZO MAZATENANGO)</b>
1849-1880	<i>Libros de bautismos</i>
<i>Libros de defunciones</i>	1804-1816
1675-1820	1816-1822
1820-1874	1822-1826
	1826-1830
	1830-1837
	1849-1853
	1856-1863
<b>PETATAN</b>	1863-1865
<i>Libro de bautismos</i>	1865-1868
1714-1875	1869-1871
<i>Libros de casamientos</i>	1871-1873
1789-1796	1873-1875
1858-1879	1875-1878
<i>Libros de defunciones</i>	1878-1881
1677-1831	1881-1884
1849-1880	1884-1886
	1886-1889
<b>SAN ANDRES HUISTA</b>	<i>Libro de confirmaciones</i>
<i>Libros de bautismos</i>	1873-1906
1713-1778	
1778-1848	<i>Libros de casamientos</i>
1849-1876	1817-1865 (San Lorenzo
	Mazatenango)
<i>Libros de casamientos</i>	1829-1847
1735-1777	1847-1862
1778-1847	
1849-1881	<i>Informaciones de matrimonios</i>
<i>Libros de defunciones</i>	1872-1876
1718-1820	1876-1880
1820-1880	1880-1888
	<i>Libros de defunciones</i>
<b>SAN MARCOS HUISTA</b>	1819-1840
<i>Libros de bautismos</i>	1840-1847
1797-1848	1847-1857
1849-1876	1869-1903
<i>Libros de casamientos</i>	
1753-1834	
1849-1880	

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APPENDIX 1 (continued)

<b>CHIANTLA</b>	<i>Libro de casamientos</i>
<i>Libros de bautismos</i>	1699-1795
1711-1770	
1770-1792	
1794-1806	<b>SANTA BARBARA</b>
1806-1818	<i>Libros de bautismos</i>
1818-1834	1769-1802
1834-1843	1802-1835
1843-1849	1836-1860
1849-1855	1860-1871
1855-1859	1872-1875
1859-1864	1875-1885
1864-1871	1885-1895
1871-1875	1895-1901
1875-1878	1901-1906
1878-1881	<i>Libros de casamientos</i>
1881-1886	1759-1809
1886-1889	1809-1836
1889-1893	1836-1848
1894-1896	1848-1869
1905-1907	1869-1887
	1879-1895
19 books in total, plus an <i>indice de bautismos</i> (1711-1782)	(includes Colotenango and San Ildefonso Ixtahuacán)
<i>Libro de confirmaciones</i>	
1684-1819	
<i>Libros de casamientos</i>	<b>COLOTENANGO</b>
1668-1798	<i>Libros de bautismos</i>
1798-1820	1767-1783
1843-1856	1783-1793
1901-1910	1793-1807
<i>Libros de defunciones</i>	1807-1819
1725-1807	1827-1834
1870-1887	1835-1840
	1840-1846
	1846-1859
	1859-1865
	1865-1870
<b>SANTA ANA MALACATAN</b>	1870-1872
(MALACATANCITO)	1873-1882
<i>Libros de bautismos</i>	1882-1888
1728-1758	1888-1895
1758-1770	1895-1899
1770-1782	1899-1906
1782-1795	
1795-1816	
1816-1836	

APPENDIX 1 (continued)

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AGUACATAN AND CHALCHITAN

*Libros de bautismos*

1722-1773  
1774-1793  
1794-1803  
1805-1814  
1814-1830  
1830-1843  
1844-1855  
1855-1867  
1867-1871  
1871-1878  
1878-1882  
1882-1886  
1886-1890  
1890-1893  
1893-1899  
1900

*Libros de casamientos*

1722-1806  
1806-1844

*Informaciones matrimoniales*

1855-1871  
1873-1900

*Libros de defunciones*

1731-1772  
1806-1831  
1831-1843

TODOS SANTOS AND SAN MARTIN

CUCHUMATAN

*Libros de bautismos*

1675-1733  
1717-1813 (San Martín)  
1843-1858  
1871-1879  
1879-1888  
1888-1894  
1894-1896  
1896-1900  
1908

*Libros de defunciones*

1715-1830 (San Martín)  
1797-1830  
1831-1841

SANTA ISABEL

*Libros de bautismos*

1816-1863  
1863-1887  
1887-1903

*Libros de casamientos*

1768-1816  
1817-1882

*Libros de defunciones*

1843-1865 (includes San Juan Atitán, Santiago Chimaltenango, San Pedro Necta and Santo Domingo Usumacinta)  
1865-1881 (includes San Juan Atitán)

SAN SEBASTIAN HUEHUETENANGO

*Libros de bautismos*

1796-1804  
1823-1828  
1828-1844  
1863-1866  
1866-1874  
1874-1878  
1878-1883  
1883-1889  
1889-1904

*Libros de casamientos*

1809-1825  
1870-1882

*Libros de defunciones*

1828-1869  
1871-1879

SAN JUAN ATITAN

*Libros de bautismos*

1785-1808  
1808-1826  
1848-1860  
1860-1868  
1868-1876  
1875-1881  
1881-1892  
1892-1902  
1902-1904

9 books in total, plus an *índice de bautismos* (1857-1871)

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APPENDIX 1 (continued)

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<i>Libro de casamientos</i>	1880-1884
1864-1881	1884-1886
	1887-1890
<i>Informaciones matrimoniales</i>	1890-1894
1872-1877	1894-1901
1877-1881	1901-1903
<i>Libros de defunciones</i>	
1795-1852	<i>Libro de confirmaciones</i>
1843-1865 (includes Santa Isabel, Santiago Chimaltenango, San Pedro Necta and Santo Domingo Usumacinta)	1814-1889
1863-1865 (includes Santa Isabel)	<i>Libros de casamientos</i>
	1727-1784
	1784-1798
	1824-1873
	1873-1901
<i>Indice de bautismos</i>	1903-1922
1857-1871	
	<i>Libros de defunciones</i>
<b>SANTIAGO CHIMALTENANGO</b>	1720-1782
<i>Libro de bautismos</i>	1782-1820
1663-1730	1820-1867
<i>Libro de casamientos</i>	
1663-1766	<b>TECTITAN</b>
	<i>Libros de bautismos</i>
<i>Libro de defunciones</i>	1774-1796
1678-1723	1796-1814
	1814-1822
	1814-1824
	1824-1867
<b>SAN PEDRO NECTA AND SANTO DOMINGO USUMACINTA</b>	1867-1895
<i>Libros de defunciones</i>	1899 (Tacaná)
1843-1865	
1865-1888	<i>Libros de casamientos</i>
	1765-1819
	1824-1867
<b>CUILCO</b>	1868-1896
<i>Libros de bautismos</i>	
1729-1759	<i>Libros de defunciones</i>
1759-1774	1767-1780
1774-1785	1781-1829
1786-1801	1829-1871
1801-1816	
1816-1823	
1831-1842	<b>MASAPA</b>
1843-1853	<i>Libros de bautismos</i>
1853-1864	1765-1843
1864-1873	1843-1875
1873-1876	1886-1899
1876-1880	

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APPENDIX 1 (continued)

<i>Libros de casamientos</i>	<i>Libros de defunciones</i>
1725-1826	1681-1776
1825-1892	1777-1876
	1875-1877
<i>Libros de defunciones</i>	
1684-1788	
1788-1876	
	AMATENANGO
	<i>Libros de bautismos</i>
	1809-1873
	1874-1888
	1888-1898
MOTOCINTLA	
<i>Libros de bautismos</i>	
1723-1791	
1792-1865	
1884-1890	
1890-1898	
	<i>Libros de casamientos</i>
	1815-1872
	1872-1891
<i>Libros de casamientos</i>	<i>Libro de defunciones</i>
1682-1824	1810-1877
1825-1873	

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