MAYA ATLAS

The Struggle to Preserve Maya Land in Southern Belize

compiled by
The Maya People of Southern Belize
in conjunction with
The Toledo Maya Cultural Council
and
The Toledo Alcaldes Association

With the Assistance of
Indian Law Resource Center
GeoMap Group, UC Berkeley
and
Society for the Preservation of Education and Research

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The creation of a Maya map was an idea brought up by the previous leaders of the Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC) under the chairmanship of Mr. Estevan Assi. However, the idea of a Maya map did not come to fruition until a new TMCC Board of Directors was constitutionally elected on December 31, 1995. This new board was spearheaded by Mr. Julian Cho, who got to work revitalizing the Maya organization and implementing the historical work on the map to be produced by the Mayas. The TMCC asked the Toledo Alcaldes Association (TAA) to help, and a partnership was born.

The plan for the much-needed Maya map included the full participation and efforts of all thirty-six communities and leaders thereof in the Toledo District and the five communities and associated leaders in the Stann Creek District. The Mayas of southern Belize realized that having such records would help them know the historical boundaries of their land which, until recently, had never been delineated, as boundaries are a European concept.

We also needed this information to help us press our claim for legal rights to our land. Although we Maya have lived in and around southern Belize for many centuries, the laws of the government of Belize do not recognize our rights to this land. There are ten Indian reservations in the Toledo District which were created by the British colonial government, but most Maya villages are not within these boundaries. According to the information collected during the Maya Mapping Project, only 51 percent of the Maya live on one of these reserves and twenty-one villages are outside these boundaries. But, according to Belize law, the Maya do not have legal rights even to the land within the reservations. Therefore, the government can sell the land where our villages are and where we farm, hunt, and fish without asking us.

But we have been here long before this government or any other government, living on and protecting this land. It has supported us as it does now. International law recognizes these ancestral rights. So we also wanted to map our land so we could show what part of the land is ours.

Through this attempt to show where the Mayas of the Toledo District live and the areas in which we make our living, the Maya Mapping Project was begun. The end result would be the demarcation of the proposed Maya Homeland. But we wanted more than a map showing where the Mayas hunt, fish, farm, and live.

So the TMCC, the TAA, and all of the communities involved with the mapping project decided to add flesh or life to the Maya map by undertaking to make an atlas. Such an atlas would include the history as told by the Mayas, individual village histories as told by the residents, and descriptions of culture, folklore, and the Maya way of life. And by developing an atlas of our land, people throughout Belize and the world will be able to appreciate our unique way of life and respect indigenous land rights.

As an outcome of continuous collaboration and consultation with the Mayas, the TMCC, the TAA, the Indian Law Resource Center (ILRC), and GeoMap from the University of California at Berkeley, the Maya Atlas has become a much more important document containing many useful facts—for example, Maya population, Maya stories, Maya photos, Maya artwork, and a series of maps showing the Maya way of using the land.

In June and July of 1996 a number of training workshops were conducted in conjunction with a team of geographers from the University of California at Berkeley. The people involved were the executives of the TMCC and TAA, the Maya Mapping Project administrators and coordinators, and one person from each village called community researchers. At these workshops the leaders and the researchers were trained as cartographers and immediately spread out into all of the Mayan communities to begin researching the atlas, which has now been completed by the Mopan and Ke'kchi Mayas of southern Belize. This is what you are holding in your hands.

Funding for this mapping project has been provided largely by the Inter-American Foundation and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, both based in the United States. The TMCC and TAA voluntarily contributed and invested their time in this important project.

In recent years the government of Belize began granting massive long-term logging concessions in our Maya territory to foreign-owned companies without any consultation with the Maya. If the government is allowed to continue the granting of logging concessions within our territory, we will lose our Maya culture and land. We asked the Indian Law Resource Center in the U.S.A. to file a lawsuit challenging the government's right to grant concessions on our land, and to assist us in gaining legal security for our ancestral land; we want to establish a homeland that will also be an environmentally protected area under the management of the Maya.

Juan Cho, Santiago Co, Santiago Co, and Julian Cho at the Atlantic Industries sawmill, Big Falls, April 1996
The Mayas of Toledo are the direct descendants of the ancient Mayas whose civilization reached its peak around A.D. 900. The continuous use of the Maya temples for religious purposes is testimony to their connection with the past. Present-day Mopan Maya descendants were found living in the vicinity of the Moho River by the Spanish missionaries, and present-day Mopan and Ke'kch'i Mayas speak about the Christianization ordeal in Punta Gorda Town. Many of the Mayas who refused to be Christianized fled into the interior to take refuge in the Maya Mountain range. The Mopan call these people Che'el and the Ke'kch'i call them Chol.

Both Ke'kch'i and Mopan continue to look up to these unconverted Mayas. They speak to their leaders through prayers and incense burning, exhorting their names—Wal Itza, Wal Shucuneb, Wal Taca, and Wal Cun. These Maya leaders are considered to be the caretakers of wild animals, who live in caves and were often contacted in the past to assist hunters and chicle workers. Present-day Mayas speak of their contact with them during the period of mahogany and chicle operators. When workers came down from the forest for Christmas or Easter vacation, the forest would become silent, and the few Mayas who stayed behind speak of seeing Mayan children cracking cohune nuts on foot trails used by mahogany workers. A few chicle workers speak of being assisted by these wild Indians in the pruning of chicle trees in return for salt. Hunters have also met these Che'el and made secret agreements to exchange meat for salt.

Anthropologists and Mayanist Dr. Leventhal wrote a report for the Supreme Court of Belize supporting our claim to our land. In it he states that Maya were living in what is now the Toledo District of Belize when the Spanish first arrived here. "There is clear reference [in the 16th century] to small numbers of Maya people living within the Pusilia River area of this Toledo District region of Belize. These people are described as Manche-Chol Maya living in very small communities, perhaps of not more than 10-20 people in each cluster." Mayanist Dr. Grant Jones stated to the Court in support of our lawsuit, "The principal inhabitants of the Toledo District during the 16th through 18th centuries were Mayas who spoke Yucatecan languages, Chol, and Mopan. Peoples of Ke'kch'i Chol ethnicity may have been moving into and out of the area long before the well-known migrations from Guatemala during the late 19th century."

A western boundary to limit the expansion for British settlement did not appear on maps until 1850, but it was a hypothetical line on paper only. It was not until 1934 that a western boundary was surveyed separating the colony, British Honduras, from neighboring Guatemala and Mexico. Thus, the much-discussed boundary has only been a reality for the past 63 years.

The Toledo Maya Cultural Council

The Toledo Maya Cultural Council (TMCC) was created on April 15, 1978, in response to the systematic destruction of Mayan culture by the government of Belize. The Mayan land began to be parcelled out to political friends without consultation of the alcalde or Mayan communities. The alcalde system was being gradually eroded, and more power given to the village councils. The process of forced assimilation and acculturation was intensified. The alcalde became concerned and thus called a meeting in 1978 to discuss the issue, giving birth to the Toledo Indian Movement. The Toledo Indian Movement was immediately branded by the government as subversive. To remove the stigma, in 1982 the name was changed to the Toledo Maya Cultural Council.

The Toledo Maya Cultural Council is a representative body for cooperation among the Mayas of the Toledo District. The Council was set up to safeguard and promote the economic, social, and educational interests of the Mayas. The Council also endeavours to support and strengthen unity and mutual understanding among the Mayas and to publicize the situation and the aims of the Mayas. The Council seeks recognition of the special position of the Mayas and works toward measures to ensure that they may continue to live in their ancestral territory. The Council aims to coordinate actions by the Mayas of Toledo in the solution of common problems.

On August 29, 1986, the Toledo Maya Cultural Council was registered under the Companies Ordinance Chapter 206 of the laws of Belize.

According to the mission statement, the main objectives of the TMCC are:
1) To ensure unity among the Mayas of Toledo.
2) To strengthen the concepts of indigenous and cultural rights based upon the principle of equality.
3) To represent all Belizean indigenous Mayas of Toledo in international and national forums.
4) To be a non-religious, non-governmental, and non-profit-making organization.
5) To participate in international forums concerned with solving the issues of human development and solidarity.
6) To assist Maya communities in identifying and implementing projects with a view of creating employment, self-reliance, and improvement of the quality of life.
7) To promote, coordinate, and supervise cooperative ventures.
8) To take steps for the recognition of the Council in government policies and decisions in matters relating to the well-being of the Maya People, e.g. Indian land rights, archeological sites, museums, etc.
9) To preserve the archeological presence of the indigenous people and to obtain a leading role in its management.
10) To promote the Mayan languages and to encourage cohesion among Maya through cultural activities such as the arts, music, drama, craft, science, and ceremonies.
11) To promote activities that will strengthen the cultural base of the indigenous people in their struggle to preserve their values and identity.
12) To seek and raise capital and financing from person(s) or agencies in Belize or elsewhere for the purpose of aiding or carrying into effect projects or undertakings to
This page contains a map and text discussing cultural and historical topics. The text is not legible due to the nature of the image. However, it appears to be discussing the historical significance of the land and its importance to the indigenous population. The map includes boundaries and cultural heritage sites.
In the past, the Maya never had the opportunity to progress in the educational field. In part through the TMCC's efforts, approximately 300 Maya students are currently receiving secondary education at the Toledo Sister Caritas Lawrence CSC and the Toledo Community College in Punta Gorda each year. TMCC has also challenged the government of Belize to upgrade and create schools in Maya communities and to make scholarships available to young people beyond primary school. We fought for a place for Maya teachers in schools. The late Fr. William Mesmer SJ, manager of Catholic primary schools in Toledo, was open to TMCC's suggestion in the 1980s of allowing Maya teachers to teach their own people, and Sister Caritas encouraged Maya girls to pursue secondary education. However, much more needs to be done if we, the Maya, are to advocate effectively for our human rights to pursue sustainable economic development. We would like to train our young people in conservation management, in administration and managerial tasks, in the biological sciences, and in other ways that will make it possible for us to solve the problems our people face.

The Mayas of the Toledo District of southern Belize are faced with severe socioeconomic and political problems. The education system is woefully inadequate, and the literacy rate is the highest in the country. The Mayas are often called "the poorest of the poor" in Belize, with government statistics indicating that the average annual family income is only US $600. Basic social infrastructure, including health care, transportation, and community services, is sorely underdeveloped. To compound these problems, the Mayas are often treated as a "forgotten people" of our own country. The TMCC wants to change that.

In its attempt to alleviate the economic hardships faced by the Maya people, the TMCC, through the Cedar Farmers Group, has established a small sawmill project to harvest logs on areas cleared for farming.

The TMCC acquired funds for a video project and trained and provided jobs for Mayan youths in the documentation of Maya culture. The Toledo Maya Cultural Council assisted women's groups to improve the quality of their native crafts through workshops and exchange visits. In 1993, the TMCC was able to secure a British market for organically grown cacao beans. Some 40,000 pounds of cacao beans are exported to England annually.

Through a Bi-annual General Assembly, community workshops, and involvement in community affairs, the Toledo Maya Cultural Council is able to bring back to the communities an awareness of Mayan identity and pride in their culture. Mayan cultural dances are revived and many other indigenous organizations sprang up: the Belize Maya Institute in Belmopan, the Sucootz Maya Organization in the Cayo District, the Mayan Association of Belize City, the Ke'chik' Council of Belize, and the Maya Centre Indigenous Organization.

The Toledo District contains the most intact tropical forest remaining in Belize, and possibly all of Central America. The majority of the inhabitants of the Toledo District are indigenous Maya people, most of whom subsist through milpa (slash-and-burn or slash-and-mulch) agricultural production, growing maize (corn) as the staple crop. The land the Maya live on and that has sustained us for centuries still retains abundant forests, but these are threatened every day. A recent report by World Resources Institute states that Belize has already lost 65 percent of its frontier forest, and 66 percent of the remaining forests are threatened.

The ultimate dream of the Maya is yet to be achieved—the security of tenure to their lands and the creation of a 50,000-acre Maya Homeland. To achieve this, the Mayas have obtained legal assistance and are developing a practical, long-term sustainable development plan for control of their homeland. The government of Belize can rest assured that the Mayas are not seeking the establishment of a state, but merely secure land tenure, a fair share of the Mayas' patrimony, and a meaningful sustainable relationship with Mother Nature. The development envisioned is one that would preserve humanity and nature, not the reckless use of resources, based on greed, that hastens the extinction of our way of life and that of humankind.

We are now working harder than ever to help our people participate in all levels of the political process. More recently, the TMCC has taken a direct interest in environmental affairs, understanding the relationship between clean and protected natural environment and the well-being of our people. We are currently confronting several urgent problems that threaten our environment and lands. Since 1993, the government of Belize has granted seventeen logging concessions on Maya land—over 500,000 acres of land. One 48,000-acre concession is in the Columbia River Forest Reserve. Local communities can expect nothing more than a few very low-wage jobs in return for muddied rivers, damaged roads, loss of wildlife, and social disruption caused by logging. Given the tenuous legal status of Maya land claims in the region, an intrusion of exploitative, land-destroying operations directly threatens the Maya communities. The TMCC has led an historic campaign to protect our natural heritage. We organized a successful public demonstration; published several articles in the national and international press; negotiated with the Prime Minister of Belize; and traveled to Washington, D.C., twice to seek support for our efforts. The TMCC will continue its struggle to achieve the goals of the Maya as long as it is necessary.
Chapter of Ohio Physical Education Association

Today we take a moment to reflect on the importance of physical education in our lives. As a chapter of the Ohio Physical Education Association, we recognize the contributions made by our predecessors. The chapter was founded in 1925, and it has played a significant role in shaping the field of physical education in Ohio. Throughout its history, the chapter has worked to improve the quality of physical education programs and to promote the well-being of students. Our mission is to support and empower educators in their efforts to provide high-quality physical education experiences for all students.

Key goals of the chapter include:
1. Promoting the physical, mental, and social well-being of students.
2. Advocating for the importance of physical education in schools.
3. Providing professional development opportunities for educators.
4. Advocating for equitable access to physical education for all students.
5. Collaborating with other organizations to advance the field of physical education.

We invite you to join us in celebrating our chapter's contributions and in supporting the ongoing efforts to improve physical education in Ohio. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of our students.
The Mayas will undoubtedly remain a distinct ethnic group for generations to come, continuing to press for equality in educational standards, occupations, and social life. They strive to retain the right to maintain their own identity and develop their lives as they wish within the framework of their culture and Belizean society.

It is with these goals in mind that the Mayas claim a Homeland to preserve their culture, land, freedom, and democracy. The idea was born among the Ke'chí and Mopan Mayas of the Toledo District, developed by the Toledo Maya Cultural Council, and endorsed by the Toledo Alcaldes Association. The Homeland would encompass all the Maya villages and geographical areas traditionally used by the Mayas. Since our ancestors were the original inhabitants of Belize, and because we are still using the land, we have a legal claim to the land based on ancestral rights.

Encounters between the Maya and the British woodcutters were not peaceful. The Mayas were forced to retreat into the interior to accommodate logging. The British, in an attempt to subdue the Mayas, created ten Maya reservations amounting to about 77,000 acres. The reserves were never physically demarcated nor defined in the country's constitution as the communal property of the Mayas. The reservations constructed by the British to subjugate the Mayas were not honored by the Mayas. Many villages were constructed outside of the reservations without the government's approval, as the Mayas regard all of those lands as their own, the home of their forefathers, who built magnificent temples to manifest their presence.

Despite the neglect of regional infrastructure by the central government, the Mayas flourished in these lands by being self-sufficient like their ancestors thousands of years ago. They planted their corn, beans, and fruit trees and built their houses out of materials from the forest. The Maya traditional healers treated ailments among the populace. The communal land system was the norm. Law and order was kept by the alcalde. The first two villages to be opened to Western civilization, by the introduction of primary education in the 1940s, were San Antonio and San Pedro Columbia.

In 1974 the Honorable Florencio Marin, Minister of Lands in the government of Belize, initiated plans to abolish the reservation system and to open the Toledo District to foreign investors. The TMCC opposed such a move, arguing that once the reservation system was abolished, the alcalde would have no role in determining who gets land in the villages, and law and order would not be respected. The government of Belize regards the communal land system as an obstacle to development.

The TMCC is willing to accept the abolition of the reservation system on the condition that a Maya Homeland is secured. Only a Homeland would guarantee adequate land distribution for the Mayas. Under a Communal Homeland proposal, those who prefer to work the land communally would have that privilege. The Homeland would accommodate Mayas who want to lease land for milpa, tourism, or other meaningful development.

It is the philosophy of Mayas that land cannot be bought or sold. The land is sacred. For example, can we buy air?
Land Trust Committee

Land Trust Committee.

Community property on land. The Land Trust Committee.

Community property on land.

Community property on land.

Community property on land.

Community property on land.

Community property on land.

Community property on land.

Community property on land.

Community property on land.
The Oldest Village

Pueblo Viejo is considered to be one of the first settlements in what is now southern Belize. Returning to our ancestral lands in the year 1840, our forefathers settled near the western border of neighboring Guatemala, approximately two and one half miles to the east. Later the community began to expand and grow rapidly in population, and it now houses about one hundred seventy-five families.

Most of the Kekchi and Mopan Maya came in groups from neighboring Guatemala to find their roots here in Belize. At present Pueblo Viejo has gone through many changes; development is taking place very quickly. Services for health have been placed within the community. There is now a new school, a police station, a community telephone, and water pumps. All-weather roads are also in place.

Transportation of crops is done by people who own bus services, and other small vehicles that go to and from Punta Gorda Town. Many Maya students travel by schoolbus on a daily basis to educational institutions in Punta Gorda Town.

Corn in the Cave
A Story

Once upon a time, there was an old man named Mr. Shucaneb. He had a daughter named Miss Abas. A boy named Quix Mes came to Mr. Shucaneb’s house looking for his daughter and went away with her into a mountain cave called Sak-lege. He did not tell the dog what he ate. After that they started to track him. Everywhere he went, they went along with him because they wanted to know what he ate. After they stopped to watch him, he spitted down by a weee-ee ant trail, when the weee-ee ants [leaf-cutter ants] were backing more corn off [carrying] from the cave called Sak-lege.

The Rabbit took away the corn from the weee-ee ant and ate it, but the others were tracking him, and they told the Rabbit, “Now we know what you eat.” And they knew that corn was in the Mountain Cave.

The Rabbit pushed his hand in the cave, but the weee-ee ants bit him and he jerked his hand from the ground. All kinds of birds were there to eat corn. There they found corn and they brought back the news to Mr. Shucaneb.

He knew that all his belongings were services, and other small vehicles. He then Shucaneb chose three young strong men to break into the Mountain Cave and take away all his riches, his belongings, his daughter, and the corn that was discovered.

These three young men are named Sext: first, second, and third Sext. They tried and tried to break into the cave. They could not. They finally gave up.

Discouraged, they came up with a plan. They had a younger brother named Puc-Bulun, but Puc-Bulun had a sickly, swollen foot. He was weak, but at last the three young men went and told him that they were going. He accepted. “What will I do? I am not strong. I am sick.” But finally he said he could try. “But don’t depend on me,” he added.

Puc-Bulun had an idea. He did not go immediately. He set a date and time. He thought first how he would do it. He went to the cave. He went over it [to find] which side of the cave was shallow. But this Puc-Bulun is really the thunder.

While watching the cave, he saw a woodpecker. He told the woodpecker to check out which side of the cave was shallow. Finally, the woodpecker found the
Traditional Hunting

Once upon a time, there was a young boy who loved hunting. His father, an experienced hunter, taught him the art of tracking and the importance of respecting the animals. One autumn day, they went out into the woods, equipped with their gear and a sense of adventure.

As they walked deeper into the forest, they could hear the rustling of leaves and the chirping of birds. The boy's heart raced with excitement, knowing that they might catch a glimpse of a deer or a fox. His father showed him how to read the signs of the animals - the paw prints in the mud, the scent trails left behind.

They traveled through the thick undergrowth, their footsteps silent as they followed the path that the animals had taken. Suddenly, a rustling in the bushes caught their attention. They stopped, listening...and then they froze. From out of the bushes emerged a beautiful deer, its eyes fixed on them.

The boy's heart thumped in his chest. He had never been so close to a deer before. His father guided him through the process of making a shot, emphasizing the importance of timing and accuracy. Finally, the boy took his shot, the arrow true and steady. The deer fell to the ground, its life snuffed out by the carefully aimed arrow.

The boy, filled with a mix of excitement and guilt, watched as his father tied a rope around the carcass. They would carry it back to their camp, where they would clean it and prepare it for a delicious meal. The lesson had been learned - hunting was not just about the thrill of the kill, but also about respect for the creatures that they hunted.

From that day on, the boy hunted with a new understanding. He learned not just about the skills of tracking and shooting, but also about the importance of conservation and the delicate balance of nature. And so, the cycle of life continued, as it has for centuries, teaching its lessons to those who are willing to listen.

The end.
Diego Bol (administrator to the mapping project and advisor to the TMCC) working with Cayetano Ico (TMCC treasurer) and Leonardo Acal (founding father of TMCC), compiling information from the survey work.

Basilio Alh (cartographer) studies the map produced by village researcher Juan Bo of San Lucas.

TMCC accountant Crecencio Cho manages the books for the atlas project.

Julian Cho leading an atlas planning discussion in San Antonio.

The Making of the Maya Atlas
Come to provide an explanation of how things have been and to provide answers to the people of the community. The process and procedures that have been implemented are:

1. The entire process must be transparent and accessible to the community.
2. The procedures must be practical and effective.
3. The procedures must be documented and recorded.

The community-based procedures were developed in collaboration with the people of the community. The procedures are:

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Maya Workshops and Mapping

In 1995, the leadership of the Toledo Maya Cultural Council and the Toledo Alcaldes Association decided to seek assistance making a map of Maya land use as a means of demonstrating the Mayas' historic rights to their lands and resources. Their decision was prompted by the government of Belize's claims that the Maya peoples were squatters and immigrants on Crown Lands and that they had no communal, historic, or indigenous land rights; therefore, the government of Belize was free to grant logging, toxic waste dumping, and road-building concessions on what the Maya people said was their land.

The TMCC and TAA received initial funding from the MacArthur and Inter-American foundations. The Indian Law Resource Center in Washington, D.C., advised TMCC to ask Mac Chapin at Native Lands and Bernard Nietschmann at UC Berkeley's GeoMap to collaborate on the mapping project.

On April 8, 1996, at the Indian Law Resource Center office in Washington, D.C., a meeting was held to discuss how best to go ahead with the mapping project. At this meeting were Julian Cho (TMCC), Santiago Coh (TAA); Curtis Berkey, Steve Tullberg, and Armstrong Wiggins (ILRC); Mac Chapin and Bill Thrakeld (Native Lands); and Bernard Nietschmann and Charles Tambiah (GeoMap, UC Berkeley). Julian Cho and Santiago Coh said it was critical to begin the project immediately because people in the communities demanded a response from their leadership to the Malaysian logging. It was agreed to hold a planning meeting at the end of the month in San Antonio, Toledo District. Mac Chapin informed the group that Native Lands had a pre-existing obligation to assist an indigenous mapping project in Bolivia, and that his group could help on the Maya project afterwards.

Agreement was made to collaborate on the Maya Mapping Project (MMP). The TMCC and TAA would be responsible for organization and logistics in the Maya communities, the ILRC would be responsible for communications and fund-raising, and GeoMap would be responsible for workshop training and mapping.

Three principles were forged at this meeting that guided successful collaboration on the Maya Mapping Project: 1) no top-heavy control — maintain equal sharing of responsibility and open communications; 2) no bureaucracies — keep it personal, respectful, and at the same scale (TMCC, TAA, ILRC, and GeoMap are all small, and small works well with small, but big would not work well with small, for example USAID and the TMCC); and 3) no prima donnas — this isn't about personal careers, agendas, elections or propositions; this is about something sacred, a people's land.

At a TMCC-hosted meeting in San Antonio, Toledo District, April 27-28, 1996, representatives from the UC Berkeley GeoMap team, Indian Law Resource Center, and the TMCC and TAA met to decide on what would be mapped and what would be produced. Instead of a single land use map, it was decided that an atlas would be more appropriate because it could include a more complete range of Maya contributions: maps, writings, photographs, interviews, drawings, and household survey results. A single-page land use map only shows a narrow aspect of an indigenous people's claim to a homeland, whereas an atlas could provide a powerful, standalone, full-spectrum testament to validate a people's historical claim to a territory, a Homeland.

The meeting was led by Julian Cho (TMCC) and Santiago Coh (TAA). Domingo Choc translated between Mopan and Ke'chiki speakers.

The Maya Mapping Project and the Maya Atlas were designed to be an assessment of the natural and human resources of the Mayas' proposed homeland. To govern a Homeland it is necessary to know what is there to govern. Therefore, the Maya Mapping Project would map and inventory the Homeland communities and community lands, to do this everyone field would be mapped and every household would be surveyed with a questionnaire. People from each community would be trained to do the research.

At this meeting an itinerary was scheduled so that the first workshop would be held after the first corn planting; the subsequent community research could then be done during the rainy season when people would stay close to the village; and the second workshop would be held before the major weeding of the fields was necessary. The production schedule for this mapping work was ruled by the sun, rain, and corn. It was decided that Deborah Schaaf, from the Indian Law Resource Center office in Helena, Montana, would be the lead counsel in the project, assisted by Lisa Shoman, an attorney in Belize City. Joël Wainwright,
The First Mapping Workshop
June 12-18, 1996
Machaca Camp, Toledo District

The First Mapping Workshop was led by Julian Cho and Diego Bol (TMCC) and Santiago Coh (TAA). English was the main language used to teach in the workshops. Most Maya in southern Belize speak English as a second language to either Mopan or Ke'chí. Mopan and Ke'chí speakers use English to speak to each other. Oftentimes, however, it was necessary that cartographic concepts and methods be explained in Mopan and Ke'chí for greater clarity. Several able people assisted in this.

Domingo Choco again assisted in translating directly between Mopan and Ke'chí. Food preparation and cooking for the eighty participants was done by Teodora Castellano, Clara Bol, Sophia Cho, and Linadora Bol.

The UC Berkeley GeoMap team of Bernard Nietschmann, Charles Tambiah, Jennie Freeman, and Tim Norris led the training of village researchers from Mopan and Ke'chí communities in Toledo and Stann Creek districts. The intensive seven-day workshop covered the basics in field mapping, including map projections, scale and scale transformations, coordinate systems, map reading, map design, data categorization and presentation in map-making with symbols and legends, portray physical and cultural features, locating points and places in the field using compass and map, making transects and orientation with compass and map, and the use of cartographic tools. Additionally, training was given in how to carry out the survey. The training in survey questionnaires and field mapping methods was taught by lectures, demonstrations, and hands-on exercises.

Workshop participants spent one day designing, selecting, and voting on some thirty Maya-made symbols to depict the physical, cultural, and historical features of their region, including types of landforms, vegetation, and land use found in the area. Conventional or Maya-invented symbols and colors were used as appropriate. Conventional symbols were selected for such things as roads and rivers; Maya symbols were selected for such things as caves, ruins, traditional healers, hunting grounds, traditional medicine areas, and waterfalls—all of which have strong cultural and territorial significance. All selected symbols were compiled onto one page, photocopied, colored appropriately, placed in a protective plastic sleeve, and a copy given to each village researcher so that everyone would follow the same system of symbolization.

The maps in the atlas are made with democratically selected legends, symbols, colors, and land use terms. Where professional cartography follows conventions of standardized map symbols, community-based cartography is different because map symbols are almost always designed and selected by “town meeting democracy.”

Each village researcher was supplied with a complete mapping and census kit which included mapping materials, paper, a 1:25,000 base map for each village region, a map tube, a clipboard and questionnaires, compass, and a cuxtal (woven wool bag) with the MMP letters and labels (Project to carry the mapping supplies. The bags were woven by women in several Maya communities.

Three people—Basilio Ah, Julio Sanchez, and Andres Coh—were selected by the TMCC to be trained as cartographers, and they received a full kit of professional cartographic equipment and a cartographer’s backpack.

The village researchers and cartographers learned very quickly, in part because of the way they organized themselves into work groups. The GeoMap team had planned on teaching the researchers and cartographers as in a classroom in the United States, one person per
Community Mapping and Household Surveys
June 20-July 21, 1996
Toledo and Stann Creek Districts

The village researchers made 1:25,000 land use maps and conducted a questionnaire survey for each household in each community. The land use maps were made by overlaying 30 x 40-inch sheets of .005 inch single-sided frosted mylar over same-size 1:25,000 maps enlarged from the D.O.S. 1:50,000 topographic map series. Land use locations, areas, and geographic extent used by people in the village were then mapped and crosschecked by on-the-ground field mapping and interview/questionnaires with members of each household. The Maya communities use an intricate system of names for their local lands which allows them to pinpoint, with a great deal of accuracy, areas where they farm, hunt, fish, collect medicinal and food plants and firewood, as well as where their culturally important caves and waterfalls are situated, and where their ancestral ruins are found. Most of this information is not found on Belize's 1:50,000 map series. This work was completed in four weeks in the larger communities such as San Antonio and San Pedro Columbia, and over less time in the smaller communities such as Sunday Wood and Silver Creek.

Tape recorders and 35mm cameras were distributed to people expert in different specializations so that they could photograph and record activities and descriptions for inclusion in the atlas. The regional coordinators evaluated the village researchers' progress in completing the mapping and household surveys and helped solve problems such as convincing uncooperative families to participate, explaining that the mapping and surveys were for the Maya, not for the government, and keeping the work on track in the face of rain, flooded creeks, and rivers, often making difficult communications in isolated areas.

The village researchers were taught how to do a second draft and a final map using their 1:25,000 field map, redrafting it using an overlay sheet of .005-inch frosted mylar, permanent ink drafting pens, and colored pencils to fill in land use and land type categories. The UC Berkeley GeoMap team taught and assisted during every stage of this workshop. By the end of the ninth day, every village map had been crosschecked, redrafted in ink and colors, and used to make several thematic 1:250,000 maps of Maya lands in the Toledo and Stann Creek Districts, such as land use and threats to Maya lands (destructive logging, orange tree plantations, and foreign-owned lands located within the Maya territory).

We had planned to reduce the completed 1:25,000 maps to 1:250,000 using "similar squares," that is, a process by which grids of different sizes are used to redraw maps.

Martin Pop of Hicatee at Cockscomb
Making the Land Use Map

Mary Carrothers, Training and Evaluation Administrator, UC Berkeley Extension Field Center

The second workshop in the series was held at UC Berkeley Extension Field Center. Participants were introduced to crop identification and location, and learned how to map land use. The workshop covered the basics of mapping, including the use of GPS and GIS software. Participants also learned about the importance of land use mapping in sustainable agriculture and how to create maps that are useful for decision-making.

The workshop ended with a group discussion on the challenges and opportunities of using land use maps in sustainable agriculture. Participants shared their experiences and insights, and discussed how they plan to use the skills and knowledge they gained during the workshop.

Stay tuned for the next workshop in the series. For more information about UC Berkeley Extension Field Center, visit their website at www.ukbm.org.
put together (much like pieces of a puzzle) to produce the land use map, the first of several maps being made for the Maya Atlas. The Maya cartographers assisted at every stage of the computer work and made decisions on many atlas map questions and problems. The Maya cartograp-

Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley

At the end of November 1996, all Maya Mapping Project funds had been spent. Some back salaries to the GeoMap group were unpaid. This did not come as a surprise. What was surprising was how long the MMP was able to continue by stretching out the funds. Work on the project slowed down and stopped. Charles Tambiah returned to work on his dissertation. Jennie Freeman began work on other projects. Tim Norris continued to work on a volunteer, part-time basis.

Running out of funding is a common hazard in community-based mapping projects. The more participatory, democratic, and collaborative a project is, the more it costs. Funding organizations will support expenses for mapping workshops and supplies but usually will not fund salaries, expensive equipment, overhead, and publishing costs. Therefore, it is very difficult for a community-mapping project to overcome funding limitations and to carry through with the original goals, which invariably involve using maps to assert rights to territory and resources. Because of funding limitations, what usually happens is the great enthusiasm from the workshops and all the work and hopes dissipate and are distilled into a couple hundred copies of one map. The Maya Mapping Project was developed not simply to make maps, but to use mapping to organize the communities, assess the natural and human resources, provide the leadership with a blueprint for sustainable development, authenticate Maya land rights, promote a homeland, conserve one of Central America’s most important centers of biodiversity, and to defend against and challenge the invasion of Maya lands by clearcut logging, citrus plantations, plans to site toxic waste disposal centers, and impending International Development Bank (IDB) loans to pave penetration roads.

So, when the money ran out at the end of 1996, we didn’t just close up and let the MMP and Maya Atlas die. By this time the project had become very visible internationally and the story of the Maya vs. the Malaysian loggers had been prominently featured in newspapers and news magazines. The IDB loan to Belize to pave the Southern Highway was on hold because of the TMCC, ILRC, and the Maya Mapping Project.

Five things happened within the space of five weeks in February and March, 1997, to recharge the Maya Mapping Project and production of the Maya Atlas: 1) the Government of Luxembourg provided a grant of $100,000 to TMCC; 2) GeoMap hired two very talented cartographers, Madison Roswell and Steve Rose, to work with Tim Norris on the atlas; 3) money from the Pew Charitable Trusts was used by GeoMap to purchase the best computer equipment and software to produce professional-quality maps and layouts; 4) a leading alternative press, North Atlantic Books in Berkeley, agreed to publish the Maya Atlas under contractual conditions that are very favorable to the TMCC and TAA; and 5) the National Geographic Society provided a $25,000 grant to assist publication of the Maya Atlas.
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Your employer will provide you with proper equipment and

you should be trained before using it.

The equipment is designed to work

with the equipment provided by your employer.

It is important that you read and understand the

manual before using the equipment.

Be sure to consult with your employer

before using any equipment.

The equipment must be used

in accordance with the instructions provided.

It is important to follow all safety

precautions while using the equipment.

Your employer will provide you with

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