

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

When I decided to write this guidebook, I set out to find a research assistant in Nebaj to help me document aspects of Ixil Maya culture, geography, and history. I tentatively floated the idea among a few Ixil contacts. Such was the enthusiasm for this project that I promptly harvested a talented team with abundant expertise. Juan Clemente Raymundo Velasco of Nebaj, a graduate of the University of San Carlos and former director of the European Union–funded Project Ixil, took the lead in organizing the investigations, interviewing community leaders, and providing analysis of economic and social trends. Ana Laynez, president of the Association of Maya Ixil Women, contributed information on the history, organizations, and traditions of Chajul. Beth Lentz, a former U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Cotzal, with a master’s in international relations, documented cultural traditions, education, health, and social issues in Cotzal. Miguel Ceto Raymundo of Nebaj, with a master’s in social development from the University of Rafael Landívar, educated me about Ixil religious customs, traditional community authorities, and land-ownership issues. The contributions of this team were invaluable, and their voices resonate throughout these pages. I cannot thank them enough for their insights and friendship. Out of respect for my hosts’ privacy and for reasons of political and cultural sensitivity, I purposely wrote this guidebook in first-person. The opinions expressed here are my own, as are any shortcomings.

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AUTHOR’S NOTE

The Ixil Maya people constitute one of twenty-four distinct linguistic communities in Guatemala today, including twenty-one Maya communities, plus the Garifuna, Xinca, and the exclusively Spanish-speaking population.

Ixil is pronounced “ee-SHEEL,” [iʃil] in the International Phonetic Alphabet.

The term *Maya* is used as both a noun and adjective.

The average US\$–GTQ (Quetzal) exchange rate in 2011: US\$ 1 = Q7.8

All altitudes are stated as from sea level.

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