

as the Unification Church [Moonies], which has over 150,000 followers.

"The people who belong to these churches no longer relate to the rest of the community people. They do not participate in traditional events and will not participate in community organizations. The social base is being divided.

"Under President Roldos, the Summer Institute of Linguistics was expelled from Ecuador, but the current government has been doing everything possible to bring them back. These sects do much work on the government's agenda in terms of providing basic education and controlling the level of Indian community unity and organizing.

"There have been three pillars of colonial rule: the state, the military, and the Catholic church. The Catholic church has maintained that position, a power position. There has been a spiritual gap and a lack of direct attention. So in some instances, the evangelical churches have responded to some of the direct needs of Indian communities."

SIL Divides Indian Communities In Mexico

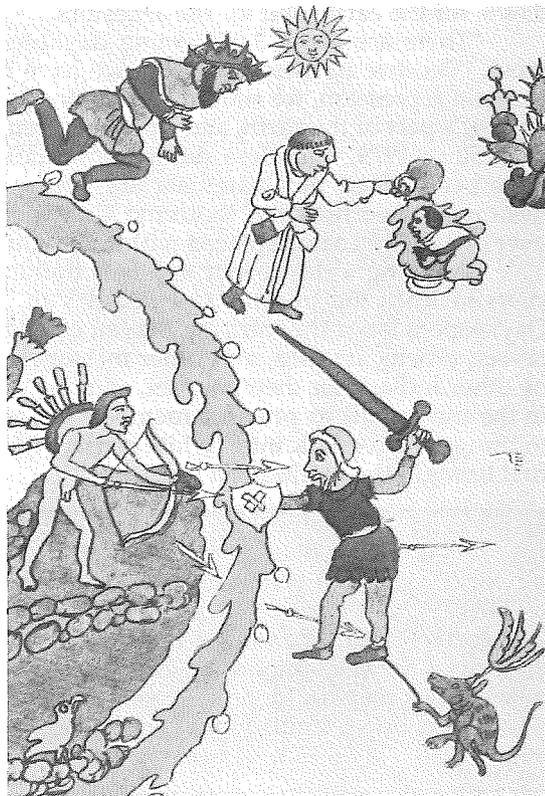
Floriberto Diaz Gomez of the Assembly of Mixe Authorities in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, recently described to SAIIC the activities of SIL in his community.

"The Summer Institute of Linguistics came into the Mixe region in 1936 during the Cárdenas era. They came first to work as linguists. When we were little kids, we were very frightened of the gringos because our parents told us that they ate people. Our families tried to protect us any way they could. The Institute introduced a different religion and their consciousness began to intrude into the communities. They sent Mixe to study at Mitla, which was their training center. After a while it was even Mixe who were pushing their religious belief while doing linguistic work.

"They have made bible translations, but they haven't made their linguistic work useful to the people. Even though they have been working here since the 30's, Mixe people still don't read and write in Mixe. If they really had an interest in teaching us to read and write our language, there would have been two or three generations reading and writing by now.

"We consider that religion is something

Attempts by outsiders to impose religious beliefs on Indians has a long history, as shown in this Indian painting from the first years after the Spanish conquest of Mexico. A Spaniard with a sword fights one Indian while a priest baptizes a child.



that should unite us, not separate us. Their work in the end divides our communities. They always try to provoke problems in the communities. Each one with their interpretation that people shouldn't eat meat, or participate in community celebrations, or that children shouldn't go to school to get this kind of education or that kind of education, or that we shouldn't participate in community work. They present the communal life as oppressive. *Tequio* [community work] is free labor. They say no one should work for free, so we should not participate in *tequio*. But we say we should in this case, because the work is for the community as a whole. This is a collision between a collective approach that is the basis of our communities and an individual approach."

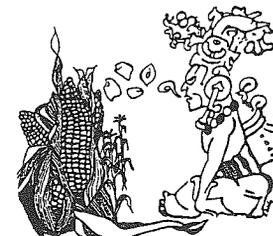
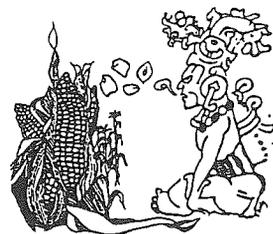
Rebirth Of Mayan Spirituality

Last year, for the first time in decades, hundreds of Mayan Indians gathered in the mountains of Guatemala to celebrate the Mayan New Year. In sacred places priests called daykeepers offered tallow candles and marigolds, burned incense and spices, and gave thanks for the dawn, for the earth, and for the ancestors.

"There are about 3,000 young daykeepers now," explained one of them. "Because in these last years we have been paralyzed by so much fear and repression, we started looking for something real that belongs to us, that's part of the earth, and that we haven't found in other religions."

Since 1979, countless numbers of Indians have disappeared and have been killed in Guatemala and many Indian villages have been destroyed. Two hundred thousand Guatemalans are living in exile and over one million are displaced within the country.

Becoming a daykeeper involves training with an elder for several years to learn the traditions of Popul Vuh, the ancient Maya scripture. Daykeepers learn the intricate Mayan calendar and how to interpret illnesses, omens, dreams, and other messages. Daykeepers are sought out by other Indians for their counsel, and they fast and conduct pilgrimages in the mountains to pray for members of the community. Their work is to bring what is dark into "white clarity," just as the gods of Popul Vuh first brought the world itself to life.



"It is very hard for prisoners to keep up with most of what is going on 'back in the world.' You can watch television and see things on the news, but that is usually not the TRUTH, and very often it is only part of the whole story that is told to give people an incorrect impression of what is really going on. The facts and information that you shared with us are very important. Without this knowledge that you brought to us, that you shared with us, we would remain very ignorant about the things that are happening to our brothers down south, to you and to your people."

—David Leavitt, Native Spiritual Circle, Folsom State Prison, in a letter to SAIIC.