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In the central highland Maya communities of Guatemala, the demands of the global economy have become a way of life. This book explores rural peoples experience economic and cultural change as their country joins the global market, focusing on their thoughts about work and sustenance as a way of learning about Guatemala's changing economy.

For more than a decade, Liliana Goldín observed in highland towns both the intensification of various forms of production and their growing links to wider markets. In this first book to compare economic ideology across a range of production systems, she examines how people make a living and how they think about their options, practices, and constraints. Drawing on interviews and surveys-even retellings of traditional narratives-she reveals how contemporary Maya respond to the increasingly globalized yet locally circumscribed conditions in which they work.

Goldín presents four case studies: cottage industries devoted to garment production, vegetable growing for internal and border markets reached through direct commerce, crops grown for export, and wage labor in garment assembly factories. By comparing generational and gendered differences among workers, she reveals not only complexities of change but also how these complexities are reflected in changing attitudes, understandings, and aspirations that characterize people's economic ideology. Further, she shows that as rural people take on diverse economic activities, they also reinterpret their views on such matters as accumulation, cooperation, competition, division of labor, and community solidarity.

Global Maya explores global processes in local terms, revealing the interplay of traditional values, household economics, and the inescapable conditions of demographic growth, a shrinking land base, and a global economy always looking for cheap labor. It offers a wealth of new insights not only for Maya scholars but also for anyone concerned with the effects of globalization on the Third World.