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**FROM PEASANTRY TO PROLETARIAT: THE RURAL PROLETARIAT IN
THE HENEQUENERA REGION OF YUCATAN, MEXICO**

City University of New York

Ph.D. 1982

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FROM PEASANTRY TO PROLETARIAT
THE RURAL PROLETARIAT IN THE HENEQUENERA REGION OF YUCATAN, MEXICO

by

MARIE-FRANCE LABRECQUE

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Anthropology in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of Doctor of
Philosophy, The City University of New York

1982

This Manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Anthropology in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

FROM PEASANTRY TO PROLETARIAT

THE RURAL PROLETARIAT IN THE HENEQUENERA REGION OF YUCATAN MEXICO

by

Marie-France Labrecque

Adviser: Professor Eric Wolf

The subject of this thesis is the contemporary rural proletariat in the henequenera region of the state of Yucatan, Mexico. Virtually ignored by Redfield in his elaboration of the folk-urban continuum, the rural proletariat in the henequenera region holds great importance in terms of its age, number and its contribution to the economic life of Yucatan as a whole.

Through a study of economic production in two villages of this region, Temax and Sinanché, the thesis seeks to identify the social classes represented in the agrarian sector in light of an historical materialist approach and particularly the concept of class struggle. Given that the rural proletariat is often confused with the peasantry with whom it shares common roots, it was necessary to examine the theoretical status of the rural proletariat within the framework of peasant studies in anthropology before proceeding to the case study. A critical re-evaluation of these studies shows that the status of the rural proletariat cannot be understood outside of the development of

capitalism. Hence the importance given in the study to historical factors in general and the development of capitalism in particular and to the genesis of the Yucatecan rural proletariat.

Finally, a case study based on the period 1973 and 1974 examines the concrete conditions of production in which rural proletarians are implicated. It is shown that capitalism develops out of and on the basis of agriculture and that this process rests upon a continual revolution of the productive forces. Currently this process involves a polarization of social classes in the countryside and a deterioration of the conditions of economic reproduction of the rural proletariat.

DEDICATION

To Paul, Denise and
Christine Labrecque

To Yvon

Acknowledgments

Mexico

My thanks go first and above all to the people of the villages of Temax and Sinanché for the aid they provided me during my fieldwork. I am particularly grateful to my compadres, doña Esperanza Canto and don Wilfrido Palma of Sinanché and to my friends, doña Rufina Briceño and don Antonio Dzul, as well as to my young friend, Lucila Zavala of Temax.

In Mérida, I owe a special debt to anthropologist Juan Ramon Bastarrachea, his wife Argelia Ventura, and to doña Ester Ancona and her husband Ingeniero Victor Manuel Heredia for the intellectual, moral and material assistance with which they so graciously provided me.

New York

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the members of my dissertation committee for their patience and understanding in view of my stubbornness, my obligation to work far away from the Graduate Center and the resulting impossibility for me to communicate directly and regularly with them. This factor certainly resulted in more work for the committee during the latter stages of the dissertation process. I wish to especially thank them for having firmly yet gently reminded me of the limits and concrete possibilities of a thesis which at times I was forgetting. Finally, I am very grateful for the work they invested in the English in my thesis, for reasons I explain below.

Québec

My doctoral studies, including the writing of this dissertation, were made possible by grants from the Canada Arts Council (now the Social Sciences Research Council) and the Québec Ministry of Education (Direction générale de l'enseignement supérieur) in 1975-76, 1976-77 and 1979-80. Employed by Université Laval since 1977, I must thank this institution for the leave they granted me in 1979-80.

I owe my sincere gratitude to Richard Stephani, who translated the thesis from French to English. An American graduate student at Université Laval, Richard willingly undertook this unrewarding task. While not a professional translator, he is both familiar with peasant studies and Marxist terminology. Due to my own contingencies, Richard had to work under intense pressure from me while attempting to respect my style and idiosyncrasies. As I was unable myself to translate into English a thesis written in French in a French-speaking milieu on the basis of materials collected and transcribed in Spanish, I have a considerable debt of recognition toward Richard whom I thank here in a special way.

Finally, I had the occasion of benefiting from the meticulousness, speed and professional conscience of Jocelyne Jacques, also a graduate student in anthropology, who graciously accepted to type this thesis. I wish to express my sincere thanks to her.

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PART ONE

THE THEORETICAL CONTEXT

Introduction

Chapter 1 The Henequenera Region and the Study of the Rural
Proletariat

Chapter 2 The Rural Proletariat and Peasant Studies in
Anthropology

Conclusion The Peasantry and the Rural Proletariat

INTRODUCTION

If one considers the history of North American anthropology, it cannot be said that Yucatan constitutes an area that has been neglected within this discipline. On the contrary, the wealth of studies in such diverse fields as archeology, linguistics, ethnology and even physical anthropology would render illusive any attempt at survey in the confines of the present work. Given this context, the originality of yet another inquiry on this area might reasonably be questioned.

The proposed intervention in the framework of sociocultural anthropology must therefore be justified on the basis of a gap which it hopes to fill. This gap can be discerned on both an empirical and theoretical level. On the empirical level, the henequenera region with which the present study is concerned has been largely ignored by anthropologists, unlike certain other regions of Yucatan. It is a region particularly distinguished by the fact that it is there one finds the largest concentration of the agricultural proletariat within the entire state. Not only is it important in numbers, but the position of this proletariat in the Yucatan economy reveals an even greater significance. Henequen fiber, as well as the products made from it, are generally destined for export on international markets, making the fiber a considerable source of foreign revenue. In these

circumstances, the disproportion between the importance of Yucatan's rural proletariat and the attention which anthropologists have given to this group merits our concern.

An important factor in explaining this situation has no doubt to do with the theoretical lacunae in approaches to the study of the rural proletariat in anthropology. As we know, the rural proletariat involves a series of links with the peasantry and the development of studies of the proletariat began in peasant studies. However, I think that because the tools previously developed for peasant studies are not suitable for studies of the rural proletariat, anthropologists have until quite recently hesitated to deal with this latter group and neglected the regions where it is found.

The study which I therefore propose concerns the agricultural proletariat on the henequen plantations in the north of Yucatan. I am interested in its position within the class struggle at the point of production and, particularly, from the point of view of the development of the productive forces. A potential approach that would concentrate on the more spectacular aspects of class struggle, such as the non-violent or armed movements for worker demands, is put aside in favor of one which concentrates upon the fundamental basis of these movements. In fact, I wish to show how the labor-power of the Yucatan rural proletariat as a commodity and principal element of the productive forces constitutes, on the one hand, an effect of struggle in the concrete constellation of classes historically peculiar to Yucatan; and, on the other hand, in terms of the current situation, we will see

that the reproduction of labor-power of the rural proletariat in the process of production constitutes the principal focus of this same class struggle.

This work is comprised of three major parts which correspond to its three primary objectives in theoretical, historical, and ethnographic terms, respectively. The main thread of the analysis is organized around three points. First, in the theoretical part, it will be seen that capitalism develops out of the agrarian sector. Second, the historical section that follows is given over to an examination of the historical forms of this development that are specific to Yucatan. It will be argued that capitalist development results in a process of differentiation of the peasantry⁽¹⁾ and leads to the emergence of new classes in the countryside. Finally, in the third and last section, I will attempt to show that the development of capitalism in the agrarian sector is essentially incomplete⁽²⁾ and currently translates into an exacerbation of the conditions of rural toilers. Let us now consider more carefully the propositions of the various parts emphasizing the one which I am about to take up.

The first section constitutes, in effect, a long introduction to the corpus of material. I will attempt to contextualize my own contribution in reference to several previous studies carried out on this culture area and to the discipline as a whole. Beginning with a consideration of why the henequenera region has remained the poor relative in Yucatan ethnography, it will be shown how recent studies of rural proletarians in this region are circumscribed by the

tradition of peasant studies. By virtue of an historical accident of interest both to researchers on Yucatan as well as to those more generally concerned with peasant studies, it should be remarked that these developed largely on the basis of Yucatan materials. Of even greater interest to me, however, is the fact that the critique of peasant studies which began in the 1950s was also effected on the basis of materials from this same culture area.

Secondly, I will attempt to bring out the specific characteristics of the rural and agricultural proletariat in reference to anthropological definitions of the peasantry. The contributions of sociocultural anthropology to the problem of studying proletarianization of the kind which develops out of a state of peasantry will be reviewed and critically considered in light of the concepts of historical materialism. The type of critical material I use in this process should indicate the kind of Marxism I consider relevant to the analysis which follows. Briefly, I think that the elaboration of historical materialist concepts is the result of a scientific study of long-term historical processes and, therefore, the use of these concepts requires a return to the classical texts of Marxism in order to understand their genesis and also to clarify the limits of their application to contemporary situations.

In the hope of applying adequately the concepts of historical materialism to a concrete situation, I move into the second part of the work. Here I endeavor to trace the genesis and development of Yucatan's rural proletariat on the basis of historical data that are re-interpreted in light of the theoretical framework adopted.

Finally, in the third part, I examine the concrete conditions in which the struggle for control of the labor power of the rural proletariat and production has been unfolding. This ethnographic section is based on fieldwork carried out during eight months in 1973-74. While the interpretation of data does not take into account developments since 1974⁽³⁾, subsequent visits to the field in 1976, 1977 and 1979, have permitted me to reflect upon the situation which prevailed during my original fieldwork and, to a certain extent, refine my approach. I have, on the other hand, taken into account the pertinent publications relating to my subject up to the time of writing (July 1980).

It is hoped that my demonstration in this thesis will clarify some aspects of the Marxist approach to the study of the rural proletariat. I thereby wish to contribute to a better understanding of its struggles for survival in terms of a larger framework for the political emancipation of those who are exploited.

In all candor, however, it must be admitted that the present work's theoretical character is such that the living expressions of struggle have been sacrificed. It is, nonetheless, these expressions which furnished both material and inspiration to my work. While it is to be regretted that the voices which recount the daily experience of life under capitalism in the flesh and blood of the people must be left in silence, I do not think that intellectuals should attempt to take the place of the people in this struggle. Our task consists rather in examining the pertinence of certain of the analytical

instruments currently being used for an understanding and characterization of their situation.

INTRODUCTION NOTES

- (1) Differentiation of the peasantry: my use of this term throughout the dissertation is consistent with the standard English translation of Lenin (1899/1964), The Development of Capitalism in Russia. It should be noted, however, that the French translation distinguishes between the terms "différenciation de la paysannerie" and "décomposition de la paysannerie"; a distinction which has taken on key importance in recent debates on the agrarian question in France. This distinction corresponds to a parallel understanding among English-speaking students of the agrarian question in terms of the contrast between "differentiation" as understood within the methodology of social stratification models and social class differentiation in Marxist theoretical terms. However, the distinction is given yet greater weight in the French debates, whose import will be made clear in the theoretical section of this work that follows.
- (2) My use of the word "incomplete" is based on a comparison of the differential state of development of the productive forces in the agrarian and industrial sectors under capitalism. In using the word, I want to emphasize not only the interdependence of these two sectors and the "backwardness" of the agrarian sector in relation to the industrial sector in Mexico but also the fact that the productive forces under capitalism are in constant revolution. My intention is thus to draw attention to process rather than to promote any kind of unilineal evolutionist understanding. In no way I mean to suggest that one might foresee the direction that this revolution will take.
- (3) Principally the devaluation of the Mexican peso at the end of 1976 and the expansion of petroleum extraction.

CHAPTER 1

THE HENEQUENERA REGION AND THE STUDY OF THE RURAL PROLETARIAT

Modern research interest in Yucatan must be said to originate from the fact that one of humanity's most fascinating civilizations developed in this region. Most researchers concerned with the study of the Maya have agreed to define three contiguous regions as the area in which that civilization flowered. First, a southern region comprising the highlands and the Pacific Coast; next, a central region coinciding with the lowland rain-forest of the Peten department in northern Guatemala; and, finally, the Yucatan Peninsula which makes up the third region (Willey 1964: 138, after Thompson). This last region includes the northern Mayan lowlands which are separated from the southern lowlands by a line running across the peninsula from the Caribbean coast north of Belize to Laguna de Terminos in Campeche Bay (Andrews 1965: 288).

The table and following description present the reader with some landmarks highlighting the different phases of Maya Civilization both in chronological and characteristic terms.

TABLE 1

Chronology of Maya Civilization

Phase	Name	Dates
I	Paleo-Indian	7000 BC-1500 BC
II	Formative or Pre-Classic	1500 BC/2000 BC- 0/ AD 300
III	Early of Classic	0/AD 300- AD 650/ AD 900
IV	Florescent or Post-Classic	AD 650/ AD 900- AD 1200
V	Decadent	AD 1200- AD 1450

Source: Andrews 1965; Willey 1964.

No artifacts corresponding to the Paleo-Indian Period have yet been recovered in the Mayan area. Consequently, we know virtually nothing of that obscure period dating back to 7000 B.C.

The widespread use of agriculture marks the beginning of a subsequent period in approximately 1500 B.C. Nonetheless, the findings for the first part of this period are still quite limited, particularly for the northern Yucatan peninsula. The presence of pottery indicating village settlements is characteristic (Willey 1964; 142) of what is known as the Formative Period in relation to the northern Mayan region and as the Pre-Classic in relation to the south. During this period, the influence of the Olmec Civilization made itself felt throughout Mesoamerica and equally upon the inhabitants of the Yucatan Peninsula, at least in artistic production (Coe 1965: 772-73).

In fact, it is on the basis of two unprecedented artistic manifestations that certain authors (Andrews 1965) trace the beginning of the Classic Period. These two very significant artistic manifestations are the major sculpture in stone (a medium for hieroglyphics and astronomical calendars) and the corbelled vault. The early phase of the Classic Period corresponds to a resurgence of architectural activity, especially in the north (A.D. 280 -- A.D. 330-590). It is precisely in the region with which the present dissertation is concerned that we find the two largest ceremonial centers erected during this period, Izamal and Dzilam (Andrews 1965: 298; Willey 1964: 152). The construction of ceremonial centers continued throughout the entire Classic Period, in the north as well as in the south. This period is also characterized by the influence of Teotihuacan Civilization upon the Maya (Willey 1964: 152). In the north, Dzibilchaltun is the largest city known for the second phase of the Classic Period (A.D. 330-590 -- A.D. 650-900), according to Andrews. During this time, the southern lowlands were in their Late Classic Period, characterized by a "florescence in the great arts" (Willey 1964: 153).

What is generally known as the "Mayan Collapse" occurred in these southern lowlands around the ninth century of the modern era. Characterized by the desertion of ceremonial centers and their environs, a multitude of hypotheses must still be explored both in regard to the size of the collapse as well as to its causes. While the present study has no purpose in raising this debate, it can nevertheless be noted that the collapse marking the end of the Classic Period had the effect of displacing the axis of civilization toward a new

focus of events in the northern Mayan area. From then on this region would constitute the locus of Maya Civilization.

The following period in this region corresponds to the Florescent (A.D. 650-900 -- A.D. 1200) which, particularly after 900 A.D., can be termed Post-Classic. Architectural style differed from the previous age and, according to Andrews (1965: 305), there is strong evidence of external influence, which would be felt in waves throughout the peninsula. Some researchers believe this influence to be the result of either sudden or gradual military invasion (Proskouriakoff in Andrews 1965: 315); others attribute it to cultural assault (Thompson in Willey 1964: 155). However it might be presented, the Toltec influence constitutes one of the most spectacular at Chichen Itza. Chichen Itza was primarily characterized by a strong tendency toward centralization. Its subsequent collapse seems to have been more due to the struggles for hegemony among different noble families (cf. Rathje 1975: 416) than to the fall of Tollan (the Toltec capital) around 1200.

In comparison with the achievements of the Classic and Post-Classic periods, what followed appeared to indicate a state of decadence in Maya Civilization. It is, moreover, under this rubric that the period from 1200 to 1450 is known. Artistically, one remarks a re-utilization of certain materials and imitation of the past. Evolutionarily speaking, this period marked a return to small chiefdoms (perhaps similar to those known for the Pre-Classic Period), after the existence of what appears to have been a State formation. Not ...

all authors emphasize the decadent character of this period; Rathje (1975), and Sabloff and Rathje (1975), prefer to speak of a reorientation or cultural change.

However one might wish to characterize the last centuries leading up to the Spanish Conquest, they did at least correspond to the existence of conflicting chiefdoms. Only the Cocom tribe succeeded in establishing hegemony over the others, during a time from the founding of the fortress city of Mayapan until its destruction in 1440. After that, and until the Conquest, political and military splits seem to have been the dominant characteristic of Yucatan. Moreover, the Spanish would not fail to profit by this situation, a point at which we will pick up in the historical section that follows in this work.

After this brief archaeological contextualization of the region which interests us, it can at least be said that human occupation of the territory has been constant for more than 10,000 years. In this regard, the Spanish Conquest in no sense represents a break; however, the pre-Columbian Maya have received much more attention than their present-day descendants. In fact, the only contemporary Maya who have attracted researchers have been those of the Guatemala highlands, notably by way of the prestigious Harvard Project. One can no doubt attribute the attraction which these communities held to their traditional lifestyle, in contrast to those of northern Yucatan. However, some of these researchers later fell under criticism for perhaps having forgotten that it had been perhaps the case that these communi-

ties had become withdrawn for historical reasons into "zones of refuge" (Aguirre Beltran 1967).

For reasons which I examine later, merchant capitalism rapidly penetrated all of the communities on the Yucatan Peninsula and, therefore, these communities cannot be characterized as "closed". Given these circumstances, perhaps it would be more accurate to say that archaeology has become the zone of refuge for those in search of the exotic.

J.L. Stephens (1963) and his friend Catherwood were among the first North American explorers to evoke and illustrate the wealth, the complexity, and the enigma of ancient Mayan civilization. After all, it should not be surprising that with this aura of prestige and exoticism, the archaeological vestiges of the Mayan area attracted more academics and research funds than did ethnography. Even today, archaeological research forms an integral part of the development of Mexican capitalism, inasmuch as Yucatan's archaeological sites are a major asset for the tourist industry, itself an important source of foreign revenue for the entire country.

After difficult beginnings, archaeological research in Yucatan has always outpaced ethnographic inquiry⁽¹⁾. The excavations at Chichen Itza had been going on since 1924 when Redfield undertook his work at Chan Kom in 1931, about twenty kilometers from the prestigious dig. In fact, Redfield's research was part of a larger interdisciplinary project sponsored by the Carnegie Institute on the region adjacent to Chichen Itza. One might in fact suppose that had it not been for the archaeological site, neither Chan Kom nor the other villages studied

would have become pertinent objects of inquiry in the 1930s; perhaps as well, Chan Kom might never have taken the "road to Enlightenment" and "chosen progress"⁽²⁾.

A better knowledge of the internal relationships of North American academic life would no doubt allow us to understand why Redfield's research did not stimulate further work in Yucatan itself. However, the notion of a folk-urban continuum, elaborated by Redfield on the basis of Yucatan materials and presented in his book The Folk Culture of Yucatan (1941), did not miss the attention nor the criticism of others. It should be noted, however, that these responses developed on the basis of non-Yucatan materials. Even S.W. Mintz, in an article published in 1953 where he takes up the argument against the notion of a continuum, does so on the basis of the Puerto Rican material collected in the framework of a project directed by J.H. Steward. Nevertheless conscious of the similarity between the sugar plantations on Puerto Rico and Yucatan's henequen plantations, Mintz did recommend the study of the henequenera region, its plantations, and its rural proletariat. Based on his own Caribbean experience and some incidental remarks by Redfield on the henequenera region, Mintz showed that Yucatan communities presented features that were at the same time characteristic of both extremes of the continuum without either being a part of that continuum or even a synthesis of it (Mintz 1953: 142). The presence of a large proletariat in a rural region had the important effect of challenging the model while at the same time exposing its idealist character.

The validity of the notion of a folk-urban continuum no longer constitutes an object as such of current debate within anthropology.

Nonetheless, the evolutionist ideology at its base has survived criticism of the notion. It was not so long ago that Halpern and Brode, in an article that attempted to synthesize ideas about peasants, wrote that from the economic point of view,

"... the peasant may be thought of as being situated somewhere along a continuum between the self-subsisting, non-monetized (or multi-monetized) economy and the modern commercial economy." (1968: 65)

Implicitly, Geertz also evokes the notion of continuum when he talks about semi-peasants (the rural proletariat) and post-peasants (those in contact with industrial economy) (Geertz 1962: 5-6). More recently, Gamst uses the same concept when he writes

"Complex societies and their peasantries may be viewed as extending along a developmental continuum of modernization from a polar type of agricultural civilization to another polar type of industrial urban civilization." (Gamst 1974: 3)

Further on, Gamst speaks of classical peasants and post-peasants.

We see, therefore, that the vestiges of evolutionism continue to accompany anthropology and, in certain cases, to maintain its impasse. In the case of peasant studies this impasse had definite political implications insofar as the dominant conceptualization of peasantries involved a commitment to the necessity and inevitability of progress and hence, their elimination. Peasant struggles come to be seen as only minor deviations along the road to progress and are effectively emptied of their content of class struggle.

Thus, nearly thirty years ago, Mintz's criticism of the notion of a folk-urban continuum and his call for a deeper examination of Yucatan's henequenera region constituted an appeal for a historical reconsideration of data. This proposal for a concrete study of a concrete case might have led to an examination of the process of proletarianization in the specific conditions of the region, but Mintz's invitation was only partly understood. Instead, researchers preferred to base their historical reconsideration on the study of communities similar to Chan Kom. Culminating these efforts, Goldkind (1965) took up again the case of Chan Kom itself. The depth of his approach made it possible to demonstrate the highly heterogeneous and stratified character of the village, while Redfield had placed it on the folk-end of his continuum on the basis of an homogeneity that had apparently been assumed by the researcher.

It was necessary to await the decade of 1960-1970 before anthropologists would begin to tackle the problem that had been laid out for them in the henequenera region, and even then it was with much theoretical timidity. Products of their training, anthropologists were mainly interested in the limited and classical concerns of the culturalist perspective. Thus, taking up the hypotheses of Mintz and Wolf (1950), Deshon (1963) provided a reconsideration of ritual co-parenthood in one of the zone's traditional haciendas, taking account of the important changes introduced by agrarian reform. However, even if it was really the rural proletariat in question, the image of this group remained quite indistinct.

The thesis (1968) and article (1971) by Raymond, as well as the thesis by Kirk (1975), would be the first inquiries to make a frontal assault on the problem of production in the henequen region. Situated in economic anthropology, these authors have the merit of being the first to embrace regional history in putting to use the contributions of local historians and in noting the similarities and differences between this region and the one studied by Redfield and Villa Rojas. Finally, in what may be one of their most important contributions, they clarify the complex institutional mechanisms which react upon the production, transformation, and marketing of henequen. In sum, these studies broadened the field of North American anthropology to encompass a region which had until then been virtually ignored.

Kirk, as well as Raymond, implicitly recognize that the majority of regional producers constitute a rural proletariat, but the absence of any theoretical ambition beyond the simple descriptive and empirical noting of this fact surprises the reader. It is, of course, true that the two studies in question were made at a time when a certain stagnation afflicted economic anthropology. The formalist-substantivist debate that had dominated economic anthropology since the publication of Polanyi et al's Trade and Market in the Early Empires (1957) flared up anew after the appearance of Cook's (1966) article entitled "The Obsolete Anti-Market Mentality: A critique of the Substantive Approach to Economic Anthropology". Whether re-

searchers adopted one or the other of these approaches, they concentrated almost exclusively on exchange and market phenomena and gave minimal attention to production.

It was not until the reintroduction of historical materialism into American social science in the 1970s that production became a central research concern. They then began to climb out of the rut of a debate that, in the last analysis, had been quite sterile, except for its ethnographic contribution⁽³⁾. The works of Kirk and Raymond, which have much in common with "social change" studies, probably belong to this chapter of academic history. Their inquiries give greater weight than those of their predecessors to the study of production and work organization in the economic system and within the larger society. However, in the case of Raymond, this preoccupation is strictly empirical. Kirk's approach, much like that of Deshon only more elaborate, subordinates the study of economic themes to the analysis of problems traditionally reserved for anthropology like the compadrazgo and the developmental cycles of domestic groups.

We must note, therefore, that the studies concerned with the henequenera region have remained largely descriptive. Despite their implicit distance from the debates of economic anthropology, they are strongly influenced by a formalism which leads the authors to consider the economy as a flow of decisions regarding production and corresponding to a strategy clearly perceived by the producer.

The concern with production in the henequenera zone would take a new and explicit theoretical dimension in Littlefield (1976). However, this author did not concentrate on the principal labor process

in the henequenera region, henequen cultivation, but rather on an activity considered secondary, that of artisanal hammock production. Littlefield succeeds in demonstrating that the development of this type of domestic industry, placed in the larger context of production, is a response to the contingencies of capitalist development in a situation of dependency, which she contrasts with the development of capitalism in Europe and its effects on crafts production. The low level of development of the productive forces seems to constitute one of the effects of the dependency of Mexican capitalism and one cause of the involution of underdevelopment. Littlefield seems to suggest that chronic underemployment accompanies the development of capitalism in situations of dependency; the fabrication of hammocks destined for a growing tourist market fills an earnings gap, while at the same time the industry's base does not expand nor modify the class structure.

The author pursues the same kind of argument in subsequent articles on the subject (1978, 1979). In comparison with the work of her predecessors in the region, Littlefield demonstrates greater concern for theoretical questions and a more systematic utilization of Marxist terminology.

This very brief summary of research conducted in the henequenera region within the anthropological tradition certainly does not do justice to their authors. Our approach makes it nonetheless possible to identify some of the lacunae in these works and to specify the point of departure for the present one. On the whole, these all-too-rare studies reveal that the study of the process of proletarianization has been quite inadequately developed. One might even wonder

if these analyses, despite their positive contribution, have not started down the wrong path with respect to the basic concepts of historical materialism in particular. Thus, the theoretical clarifications which will later be proposed will permit me to state that the new bases upon which ritual co-parenthood is evolving, the constraints acting upon the cycle of domestic groups, and the obligation to fall back on crafts production constitute only some of the multi-form aspects of the process of proletarianization of the Yucatan peasantry. While such a demonstration is not the object of the present work, the case study which I present in the following chapters is sufficient to allow a counter-balance to the conclusions which Littlefield for example came to. We will see, in effect, that it is not the existence of a large rural proletariat or semi-proletariat which can explain, even partly, the expansion of artisanal industry. Even if this activity does sometimes improve family revenue, its expansion sharpens the polarization of social classes (and does not maintain its structure) and contributes to the deterioration of the condition of the rural proletariat and poor peasantry as a class over a long period. In effect, crafts production, despite its spectacular insertion in the development of Mexican capitalism, is only one of the numerous labor processes linked to the capitalist mode of production at the level of the circulation of commodities or social product and not at the level of production as such. The agricultural workers with which the present inquiry is concerned in general not only can but must engage in these labor processes in order to adequately reproduce their labor-power so that it might continuously be represented on the labor market. This multiplicity of labor processes

associated with wage labor on the henequen plantations contributes to the maintenance of low costs of production for an industrial commodity that is an important source of foreign revenue. The wages which, as we will see, constitute the better part of costs of production on the plantations, stay in effect very low precisely because the wage workers are able to fall back on subsistence or petty commodity activities. In other words, due to the uneven development of different sectors of production, agricultural workers are reduced to selling their labor power below its exchange value. This exchange value is determined by the cost of products necessary to the maintenance and reproduction of the use-value of labor power. And, as these products do not necessarily come from capitalist markets but, as is often the case, from the parcels of land cultivated by agricultural workers, their reduced cost contributes to the devaluation of labor power.

In this perspective, one might hypothesize that the expansion of craft industry or other activities, such as the agricultural diversification currently planned by the State, do not constitute an effect of the existence of a rural proletariat but are rather one cause of the continuing differentiation of the peasantry and the process of proletarianization⁽⁴⁾.

To conclude the first part of this introduction, it can be said that, in spite of a serious delay, the henequen region and the rural proletariat which is found there has finally become a pertinent object of study for anthropologists. The tradition of study both in what concerns the region and the group which characterizes it is, however, far from being solidly established. However, one cannot

blame the authors whom I have criticized for this situation. First, it is important to recognize the urgent need that existed for initial ethnographic inquiry into the region and, secondly, it must be admitted that the theory of the rural proletariat is still rather underdeveloped in anthropology. It is the state of this underdevelopment which I will attempt to discern in the second chapter of the introduction.

CHAPTER 1 NOTES

- (1) Brunhouse notes that seventeen years passed between the time when the archaeologist S.G. Morley explored the site at Chichen Itza and when he succeeded in obtaining funds from Carnegie to begin his own project (1971: 8,12).
- (2) I refer, of course, to the North American influence which, beginning with the site at Chichen Itza and due to the presence of numerous American researchers, spread to neighboring villages including Chan Kom. Not only does Redfield note this fact but he goes on to suggest that Chan Kom "chose progress" thanks to the North American influence. Redfield expressed it this way:

"During my stay in the village from January to May, 1931, the Americans had come to be well regarded in Chan Kom. The wave of enthusiasm was reaching its crest; the Americans were progressive, they had skills and knowledge which Chan Kom could use ..."
(1970: 16)
- (3) It seems to me that the anthropological debate was moved onto new ground by the introduction of certain Marxist concepts. Yet within peasant studies, as late as 1977 Halperin and Dow edited a book entitled Peasant Livelihood claiming kinship with Polanyi and the substantivist approach. What I find most surprising is that the authors managed to bypass Marxist theory, despite the interest they exhibit for production.
- (4) The two terms, as will be seen, are not entirely equivalent.

CHAPTER 2

THE RURAL PROLETARIAT AND PEASANT STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

Unlike the proletariat as understood in its industrial sense, the rural proletariat involves close links with the peasantry such as defined by anthropology. The history of peasant studies shows, however, that these links were not always recognized as such. Furthermore, the very existence of a proletariat in rural areas was entirely overlooked in early studies on peasantries. In retrospect, it can be said that the rural proletariat did not become a pertinent object of study until the definition of peasantry had been extricated from the culturalist tradition.

The introduction of economic criteria into definitions of peasantry does not imply, however, recognition of a rural proletariat in the sense that will be given to it in this study. Wolf's definition of a peasantry holds interest for us because it signifies a departure from culturalist criteria, the introduction of economic factors and the subsequent confirmation of the presence of non-peasants in the rural milieu:

"I therefore define peasants as populations that are existentially involved in cultivation and make autonomous decisions regarding the processes of cultivation. The category is thus made to cover tenants and sharecroppers as well as owner-operators, as long as they are in a position to make the relevant decisions on how their crops are grown. It does not, however, include fishermen or landless laborers." (Wolf 1969: XIV)

This definition constitutes both the culmination of a long development that began with Redfield and a point of departure for the ensemble of peasant studies which followed, at least by North American anthropologists. In the present section of this work, I will attempt to show briefly how Wolf's definition departed from the culturalist tradition and constitutes the result of the contextualization of different peasantries within a larger society. It will be seen that, currently, this contextualization necessarily leads to seeing contemporary peasantries in the framework of development of the capitalist mode of production. Nonetheless, the enduring "controversy" about this very concept (see for example Foster-Carter 1978) shows that its introduction in peasant studies did not suffice to solve all the problems. I argue that only by situating the development of capitalism in the context of both primitive accumulation and capitalist accumulation as such can the actual position of the peasantry be specified. This procedure allows one to define more precisely the leninist concept of differentiation of the peasantry, to which researchers are now more frequently referring. In effect, the study of the peasantry is today equivalent in large measure to the study of its differentiation and, consequently, one can either recognize or deny the continuity of this problematic according to whether one takes account or not of the class

struggle in rural contexts. Through a discussion of this debate I will indicate the direction of inquiry proposed by the present study. This will be an occasion to refer to the classics of historical materialism and to bring out some of the fundamental concepts that guide our inquiry.

2.1 The Critique of the Culturalist Tradition

The most significant advance made by Wolf and, indeed, by J.H. Steward's students in general, was to distinguish themselves from Redfield, Kroeber and even Steward himself without actually rejecting the contributions of culturalism. Once the critique of the evolutionism inherent in the Redfieldian continuum had been made, there could be no longer any question of denying that "the culture of peasant community is not autonomous" and that "it is an aspect or dimension of the civilization of which it is a part" (Redfield in Geertz 1962: 2). It could then be acknowledged that peasant societies, unlike primitive society, are not autarkic, but that rather they constitute "part-societies with part-cultures" (Geertz 1962: 2, after Kroeber) connected to market towns.

Steward's notion of "levels of sociocultural integration" furnished a methodological tool which permitted him not only to distinguish peasant from tribal society but also to measure their relative complexity. Thus,

"Tribal society is not divisible into genuine subcultural groups which have a quasi-independent existence and distinctive way of life." (Steward 1968: 481)

and,

"... peasants are not primitives, the culture of a peasant segment cannot be understood in terms of itself but is a part-culture, related to some larger integral whole ..." (Wolf 1955: 454)

The advent of ecological and economic criteria would henceforth permit the acknowledgment that all rural inhabitants were not peasants; a more restricted definition of this group identified it with agricultural producers in control of their land and whose economic objective was subsistence (Wolf 1955: 453). Thus, for Wolf, the peasant was different from both farmers and agricultural workers (in passing, it should be noted that this last group was not designated in terms of a rural proletariat). Apart from the prudence imposed upon the manipulation of this kind of terminology by the context of the period in the United States, non-peasants only interested Wolf in the measure that this category allowed him to show the specific characteristics of peasants. The linkages of this group with the larger society could then be more easily established.

Community studies - a direct heritage from the study of tribal societies (Geertz 1962: 7) - prevailed in this period. Even in recognizing the existence of several sub-cultures in peasant society, the tendency was to characterize these holistically. Rather than studying the composition of the groups present in rural contexts, inquiry was limited to the channels of their interaction: the studies of mediators and clients (Wolf 1956; Silverman 1965) were circumscribed by this context. The relations of communities with the outside world only appeared in all their complexity once attention became focussed on the question of the existence and power of the state.

By working outward from the peasantry in his exploration of the diverse levels of sociocultural integration, and in conferring a causal priority upon the material base, Wolf made an important discovery. He realized, in effect, that the symbiotic relationships were not so much established culturally with cities (as Redfield and Signer would have it in "The Cultural Role of Cities" (1954)), or economically with market towns, as they were economically and politically with the state:

"Not the city, but the state is the decisive criterion of civilization and it is the appearance of the state which marks the threshold of transition between food cultivators in general and peasants." (Wolf 1966: 11)

In fact, Wolf suggests that the existence of the state is related to the existence of a peasantry and it is on the very basis of an interception of agricultural surplus, constituted under the form of a rent, that the state could be erected. This discovery of fundamental material links between the peasantry and the dominant group of society marked Wolf's departure from the culturalist tradition without, however, being generalized to the whole of peasant studies. For Wolf, the peasantry would henceforth be identified as a subordinate group, despite its effective control of the means and processes of labor. It is no doubt the paradox represented by this effective control whose historical genesis was still poorly understood, which prevented researchers from immediately recognizing that the extraction of agricultural surplus under the form of a rent constitutes a kind of exploitation specific to peasantry and a true exploitation in the general sense of the term.

The introduction of the term "exploitation" into peasant studies in the early 1970s provoked discussion among scholars over its heuristic value for the discipline (see for instance the discussions by Silverman (1970) and particularly the debate between Dalton (1972, 1974) on the one hand, and Wolf (1972), Roseberry (1976) and Dunn (1976), on the other). These discussions did not result so much in a definitive clarification of the concept of exploitation as in a call for the historical contextualization of peasantries.

This appeal to history also involved an implicit critique of one of the remaining theoretical vestiges of the culturalist tradition in peasant studies. I refer here to the notion of peasant economy as a distinct type, a theory developed by Chayanov and his followers. By bringing out the relationship between this theoretical approach and culturalism, I hope to show some of the consequences it has had for peasant studies. In so doing, it should become clear that, despite appearances, the critique of the culturalist tradition is perhaps incomplete.

Under the culturalist tradition in peasant studies, the conviction that peasants constituted a truncated society led on the one hand to an emphasis on their differences rather than their similarities with the larger society in which they were found. Peasants could only be conceived in terms of the degree of difference that separated them from the realization of capitalist society. In this respect, the impact of North American ethnocentrism should not be underestimated

as it was this ethnocentrism which produced the "social change" studies in which the notion of progress is inherent. On the other hand, functionalism's orientation toward the study of institutions rather than processes produced an ethnography of institutions conceptualized as peasant types; e.g., a certain type of family, a particular system of kinship, a characteristic division of labor, etc.

The studies of peasant economy which viewed this as a specific type of economy constituted the theoretical culmination of an ensemble of these influences without, however, surpassing them as did Steward's students. The specificity of peasants in contrast to industrial society is underlined but the relations with this society are obscured and research concentrates on the internal characteristics of peasantries. Moreover, this conceptualization did not fail to have an impact on the definition of peasantry. Thus, writing notably in the vein of Chayanov (1966), Shanin defines the peasantry as:

"... a pre-industrial social entity, which carries over into contemporary society specific elements of a different, older, social structure, economy and culture." (Shanin 1971a: 244)

This approach considers that peasantries, even inserted in the framework of capitalism, are not subject to the same laws as the rest of society and that its economy must be treated as a system sui generis. Despite the refinements which he brings forth in a penultimate article on the subject, Shanin affirms that, among peasantries:

"... processes of production and distribution (...) are not necessarily governed by economizing concerns and have to do with "non-economic" determinants like kinship, mythology and so on." (Shanin 1973: 65)

This position, moreover, leads Shanin to consider that the peasant class can act as an autonomous society and culture (Dow 1973: 398).

The influence of the perspective in which peasant economy constitutes a specific type of economy did not always lead researchers to deny the internal differentiation of the peasantry under the effects of capitalism. Thus, Galeski, another writer in this perspective, affirms that:

"The farmer⁽¹⁾ is reduced by the development of capitalism to the class position of a worker (and not as definite as that of an industrial worker), and the occupational role of a producer. This process of class polarization is hence one of the professionalization of the farmer's labor." (Galeski 1971: 186)

Without denying the effects of capitalism, these authors tend to insist upon the levelling mechanisms which limit polarization (Shanin 1974: 193) but do no more than assert and take account of this polarization.

The Chayanovian school was the more radical in positing the externality of the capitalist mode of production in relation to peasant economy. However, it will be argued that dissociation from Chayanov's position on this particular point is not sufficient for understanding the multiple, complex relations between the peasantry and the capitalist mode of production.

2.2 The Peasantry and Capitalist Contexts

The historical contextualization of peasantry which Wolf put into practice in Peasants (1966) and Peasant Wars of the Twentieth Century (1969), provides researchers with a means out of the impasse represented by the very notion of a peasantry. Of course, as we have

seen, Wolf does provide a definition of this peasantry but hastens to underline the limits of its applicability. These limits come from the apparently transhistorical character of the notion of the peasantry.

Contrary to that of proletariat, the notion of peasantry has an inherent danger. If, for example, one defines peasantry strictly on an occupational basis, one is then led to compare peasantries belonging not only to different centuries but to different modes of production as well. For its part, despite a sometimes abusive use of the term, the proletariat essentially constitutes a class specific to the capitalist mode of production. If one considers the chronology of publications by Wolf and Mintz⁽²⁾, one notes that the danger of broad generalizations from the notion of peasantry had been recognized long before a general definition of this group had been proposed. It is, first of all, by underlining the historical specificity of different communities that Mintz, in 1953, and Wolf, in 1955, introduced a certain theoretical and methodological refinement into peasant studies. Some years would pass, however, before the notion of peasantry could be distinguished from that of community, thus enabling study of the problem of its internal differentiation.

It is important, of course, to take account of the historical and professional context in which peasant studies grew up. In this connection, one should be reminded that primitive society constituted the traditional object of anthropological study. After falling under the onslaught of colonialism, these societies were near the point of literally disappearing from the map. Anthropology was thus in search

of a new object of study when World War II caused yet another change in the rules of the game. The theoretical tools which had been developed on the level of tribal and segmentary societies could not account for the colonialist and neo-colonialist domination these societies fell under. Thus, despite the change in the object of study, the existing instruments of anthropological analysis were inadequate for this new task. The tendency to adapt the tools already in hand to this new object of study led, as we have seen, to the approach in terms of community studies. In order to counteract the tendency to thus view peasant societies in isolation, as if they were really primitive societies, an effort was made to contextualize the peasantry in relation to the larger society. In the case of peasantries of the Americas, this contextualization must take account of conquest in the framework of European mercantilism.

The distinction between "closed corporate communities" and "open communities" on the basis of their respective historical antecedents (Wolf 1955) amounts to a first attempt at appraisal of the differential influence of historical events on particular peasantries. In a correct but incomplete fashion, Wolf arrives at the conclusion that:

"In each case, the kind of peasant community appears to respond to forces which lie within the larger society to which the community belongs rather than within the boundaries of the community itself."
(Wolf 1967: 236)

Envisaged in this way, historical contextualization permits the distinction, if not of different types of peasantry, at the very least of the contrasts between different types of community. Perhaps

in this respect, the approach remained mechanical in that it placed two entities, the community and the larger society, in opposition and evaluated unilaterally the effects of one upon the other. The effect of this approach is to confound peasants and non-peasants; all members of the community seem to be subject to external influences and to defend themselves in the same way. In conceptualizing change as exclusively generated from the outside, the hierarchy within the community appears as an effect of external change. While it may be acknowledged, the dynamic within the entity under study risks disappearing under the theoretical weight given to exogenous factors.

Dualist theory presents a contrasting perspective. Unlike Wolf's view, which sees certain communities entrenching themselves under the assault of capitalism (be it in the form of conquest or internal colonization) (Wolf 1967: 237), dualist theory attributes this entrenchment to the inherent properties of the supposedly pre-capitalist structure which prevails in such communities.

In an oft-cited article, A. Gunder Frank has made an incisive critique of dualist theory in which he exposed its implications for the study of underdevelopment:

"(...) the contemporary underdeveloped institutions of the so-called backward or feudal domestic areas of an underdeveloped country are no less the product of the single historical process of capitalist development than are the so-called capitalist institutions of the supposedly more progressive areas."
(Frank 1970: 6)

This remark makes it clear that dualist theory attributes underdevelopment exclusively to the internal dynamics of the community

while, in fact, it constitutes one of the contradictory effects of the capitalist mode of production and the class struggle.

By attributing a causal role to pre-capitalist structures in the entrenchment of communities within "zones of refuge" (Aguirre Beltran 1967), dualist theory postulates in effect the immobility of underdeveloped societies and, particularly, of societies in which a large peasantry is found. Dualist theory does not consider critically the notion that the structures and institutions found in this type of society are pre-capitalist in character. Furthermore, the theory suggests that the dynamic between the dominated and the dominating society occurs at the level of structures as such. In conjuring up pre-capitalist structures within underdeveloped societies, dualist theory does not really take account of the internal dynamics of these societies except at the level of appearances. It is for this abstract character, completely removed from class struggle, that dualist theory must be taken to task.

The concern in community studies for history and the development of an approach which increasingly turned away from dualist theory led to some novel interpretations of the nature of the peasantry. As analysts began to approach reality in diachronic terms and sought the historical specificity of relationships between communities, the dichotomy between the community and the larger society became less distinct. The more history was taken into account, the clearer it became that a community does not always have the same social configuration and that this configuration could be defined on the basis of

the groups which formed the community. This perspective conceptualized the peasantry in terms of one of these groups, while at the same time its specificity favored the constitution of peasantry as an object of anthropological study. It was realized that, in the context of capitalism, the peasantry bears a subordinate relationship to a dominant group; more precisely, the state, according to Wolf's terminology (1966). Briefly stated, its subordinate character became an element of the definition of peasantry. Wolf's use of the concept of rent rendered the definition more concrete and operational while paving the way for a characterization of the peasantry on the basis of relations of production between antagonistic groups. It would not be long before the problem of identifying the peasantry's position within a configuration of social class, defined on the basis of relations of production, would be posed.

While Wolf was struggling with a definition of the peasantry, other researchers, such as Mintz, were also working toward the development of an analysis which saw peasants as implicated in a process that included both proletarians and capitalists. In his aforementioned 1953 article, Mintz drew a series of contrasting traits between rural proletarian communities and the ideal folk society previously theorized by Redfield. Mintz's characterization of rural proletarians at the time is reminiscent of the one Kroeber offered of peasants:

"The rural proletarians form a part society and they are members of a class which can be analyzed adequately only with reference to other classes in the total society (...)." (Mintz 1953: 140)

However, like Wolf's definition of peasants, one of Mintz's criteria in the characterization of rural proletarians is socio-economic. Hence,

"In the latter case (folk society), isolation is primarily geographic and the society can be discussed most completely in terms of itself. In the former case (rural proletarian communities), the isolation is socio-economic." (1953: 140)

Then, acknowledging both his training in the culturalist tradition and his dissociation from this tradition through the introduction of the notion of class, Mintz added:

"In short, while ethnic homogeneity and geographic isolation are lacking (in the rural proletarian community), a very real kind of cultural homogeneity, partly class-determined, is present." (1953: 140)

Most important in this article and for future developments both in peasant studies and the study of proletarianization is Mintz's concluding remark:

"What is proposed here is that both form and process be studied via typological constructs based on specific field studies, so that like and unlike features may be assessed." (1953: 143)

Mintz, in effect, had outlined an entire research program with this proposal. Much later, he would publish a preliminary synthesis of results in this area in his 1973 article entitled "A Note on the Definition of Peasantries".

In this article, Mintz states his view that defining peasantries in terms of asymmetrical relationships with an external power, as is done by Wolf and Shanin, for instance, is insufficient. Rather, peasantries would be distinguished by the fact they lack the homogeneity characteristic of the proletariat. Mintz's concern with the changing situations

of peasantries (as they sometimes appear as the prey and sometimes as the predator) enables him to talk about peasantries not so much in terms of heterogeneity as in terms of internal differentiation; that is, in terms of the relationships among the categories of people who share some characteristics of a peasantry. It is an explicit call for typologies which would not leave any category of rural dwellers "analytically marginal". On this particular point, Mintz addresses himself to Shanin (1971b) in the following terms:

"(...) the term "analytically marginal" tends to conceal the existence of important structural relationships between the peasant sectors and other non-peasant rural groups. Hence Shanin's orderly presentation, while useful, circumvents the extent to which the peasantry as such achieves or maintains its viability through the existence of these other groups and vice-versa." (Mintz 1973: 95)

Besides being a call for empirical study, Mintz's earlier critique of Redfield's folk-urban continuum included a concern for history:

"Redfield has never questioned the value of such (historical) research but has sought to get at the nature of social change without reference to historical particulars." (Mintz 1953: 137)

Mintz was to remain faithful to this commitment to history.

His call for typologies cannot and must not be confused with an attempt at a reification or rigid codification of peasant types. It is not a neo-evolutionist version of a continuum involving peasants and post-peasants. On the contrary, Mintz's approach allows one to consider the development not only of types in history but, above all, the development of interrelationships between these types⁽³⁾. It is an approach that "can presumably allow us to deepen our comparisons (...)" (Mintz 1973: 98) "in time and in space" (Mintz 1973: 102). For Mintz, non-

peasant sectors of the society are also implicated in these comparisons. This confrontation of peasantry with the larger society once more raises the question of the "peasantry as a class".

Anthropologists in the field of peasant studies were at this time showing greater concern with the question of class. For example, Shanin's reader (Peasants and Peasant Societies), published in 1971, included a section entitled "Peasantry as a Class" complete with excerpts from Marx and articles by both Shanin and Wolf. In Wolf's writings, the problem of class had been present from the moment he had introduced the concept of rent into peasant studies. However, since neither Wolf nor Mintz were interested in typologies which reified reality, they could not accept the empiricist definition of class characteristic of American sociology. Many researchers who could not agree with the dominant perspective began to consider historical materialist approaches. Mintz was among them.

For instance, his article on class consciousness (Mintz 1974) is a synthesis of his ideas on the rural proletariat re-expressed within a marxist framework. Taking the Cuban case as a point of departure for generalization, Mintz asserts that agricultural laborer and peasant should not be lumped together (Mintz 1974: 295). Non-peasant aggregates or groups can be "concealed" within the infrastructure of peasant society (Mintz 1974: 306) but it is explicitly on the basis of productive relations that one can identify these groups and define the rural proletariat as a class (Mintz 1974: 300). However, productive relations are not the only factor; to make this point,

Mintz organizes his material on the basis of a contrast between the heterogeneity of the peasantry and the homogeneity of the proletariat. At the level of objective class membership, the rural proletariat is homogenous; however, this is not necessarily the case on the level of class consciousness, which is why the objective class membership of the rural proletariat is an insufficient basis for predicting its actions.

Mintz seeks to explain the nondevelopment of rural proletarian class consciousness, at least in the cases he knows or has studied. Thus, he turns toward the specific conditions under which the rural proletariat develops and lives. This is a process of individualization, as understood in the marxist sense of a self-objectification linked to the objectification and alienation of labor under capitalism (Mintz 1974: 310). As members of the same class may differ widely in this respect (1974: 314), Mintz turns to the community as an explanatory factor:

"(...) the specific conditions under which such persons live - the quality of the community in which they function - may affect their variable class awareness or consciousness."
(Mintz 1974: 314)

One can say that Mintz thus joins together an historical materialist approach with what is perhaps the most positive contribution of culturalism - a sense of what it is to be a peasant or a rural proletarian within a community.

There are other points in this article which are worth consideration. However, for the purposes of the present work, what is

important is that Mintz's approach constitutes an invitation to study the process of proletarianization as much in relation to the development of capitalism in history as in relation to the community of which a particular rural proletariat is part. The link Mintz found between the objective process of proletarianization and the development of class consciousness deserves reconsideration. But before studying the link between these two processes, I think it is necessary to clarify each of them. I chose to pursue the objective definition of the rural proletariat because there are still problems with this definition. As a case in point, let us consider what is problematic in Mintz's 1974 article. He writes:

"Thus the present writer suggests (...) that we view rural proletarians and peasants as usually forming conjunctive (but also competing) sectors of the same society, at least for the region under discussion. The relationship of these sectors to each other may be very complex, sometimes because a substantial proportion of the population oscillates between these adaptations, sometimes because tenancy arrangements of various kinds predominate over these types, sometimes because yet other types are to be found in one system." (Mintz 1974: 300-301)

In this excerpt, "oscillation" seems to be put forward as a definition that would apply equally to the peasantry and to the rural proletariat and, indeed, even to other "aggregates". If this is so, one's concern with the rural proletariat raises the question of its specificity.

These are essentially the same kind of preoccupations which William Roseberry indicated in his article. Converging in both the North American tradition of peasant studies and the influence of European Marxism, Roseberry's 1976 article in the American Anthropologist

confirmed the penetration of Marxism into peasant studies in anthropology. Writing along the vein established by Wolf and Mintz, Roseberry attempts to restore the original Marxist content to the concept of rent by situating it within the context of the differentiation of the peasantry. In so doing, he remedied the shortcomings inherent in Wolf's conceptualization, which had imparted a virtually axiomatic character to the subordinate status of the peasantry. The notion of subordination is not really very enlightening in itself; it is no more specific than the notion of peasantry and no less characteristic of the "inferior" class of the capitalist mode of production. The concept of rent as an expression of the relationship between the peasantry and a dominant group possesses a character of generality that does not tell us anything about the type of social formation in which peasants are found. The historical contextualization of the Mesoamerican peasantry within the development of European mercantilism, for example, does not suffice as a scientific characterization of this peasantry. Obviously, it is not a question of the same peasantry in all epochs.

Roseberry was among those who took up the challenge posed by the introduction of the concept of rent into peasant studies. In order to render this concept truly operational, it was necessary to surpass the limits indicated in Wolf's use of the concept within community studies (cf. Roseberry 1978b) by referring to the context of its historical and theoretical genesis in Marxism. In other words, the concept of rent was introduced into peasant studies without the whole of the theoretical framework which generated it. It is therefore no accident

that researchers returned to Marxist sources and, in so doing, felt the European influence and particularly that of the French who, for other reasons, had taken the lead in this development.

The very introduction of the Marxist concept of differentiation represents real progress for peasant studies because the process of differentiation of the peasantry obliges us to take account both of external and internal factors on the basis of which not only the peasantry but the ensemble of social classes in the capitalist mode of production develop. This position implies the precise methodology to which Roseberry makes reference in two subsequent articles: one must begin the analysis with capital and capitalists rather than peasants (Roseberry 1978a: 9; 1978b: 35).

In Roseberry's work, this methodology seems quite rewarding. It allows him to account for the "concealment" of non-peasant aggregates in the infrastructure of peasant society (Mintz 1974: 306) without forcing them into the peasant or proletarian category. Rather than being proletarians in disguise, the coffee farmers with whom Roseberry is concerned are "embarked on a process of proletarianization" (Roseberry 1978a: 13). Finally, this methodology allows Roseberry to clarify the role of community studies in sociocultural anthropology from a Marxist perspective.

However, although Roseberry raises some points along the lines of those studied by Mintz, it seems to me that he does not exactly respond to the problem raised above concerning the specificity of the rural proletariat in relation to the peasantry. It is rather my

contention that, to be consistent with Mintz's ideas of heterogeneity and homogeneity described above, we should consider the rural proletariat to be a class that does not oscillate. The members of this class are no longer in a process of proletarianization - they are proletarians. According to Marx and Engels, one of the defining characteristics of the proletariat is that it has nothing left to lose. In this sense, it is precisely the irreversibility of the situation that defines the rural proletariat as a class. This, of course, does not preclude the possibility for some individuals to change their class address but such cases are exceptional. The definition of peasantry can thus be contrasted on two levels with the preceding remark on rural proletarians: 1) the peasantry is heterogeneous and because of this, its members oscillate between many statuses and conditions. They are caught in a process of proletarianization of which only the instances of periodization vary; 2) therefore, one can seriously question the notion that the peasantry forms a class.

Marxists concerned with this problem believe they have found a response in the concept of differentiation of the peasantry. However, not all those who are attracted by the study of processes necessarily agree with the use of this concept. It was elaborated in a particular context; that of turn-of-the-century Czarist Russia. The generalizations which one makes on the basis of this concept should be based on an awareness of this historical context and the theoretical concerns which generated it. The tendency in American peasant studies has been to borrow concepts in an eclectic fashion and then justify

their use in an ad hoc manner, a procedure which sometimes produces errors of interpretation. In the use of the concept of differentiation of the peasantry in this work, I have attempted to learn from past mistakes by first examining the theoretical framework from which it originates. This framework is that of historical materialism and it is the one which provides the principal concepts utilized in the present study.

The concept of the differentiation of the peasantry as developed by Lenin applies only to capitalist contexts. However, the genesis of this concept is inseparable from that of the peasantry to which it applies. It is for this reason that in the use of the concept we should recall the genesis of the peasantry in the specific context of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. I refer here to the 7th and 8th sections of Capital in which Marx is concerned with primitive and capitalist accumulation. I also have in mind the discussions by authors such as Dobb (1971), Dobb, Sweezy and Takahashi (1950) and Wallerstein (1974). Of some inspiration to me is Brenner's synthesis and critique of the discussion and particularly his argument that:

"... the method of an entire line of writers in the Marxist tradition has led them to displace class relations from the centre of their analyses of economic development and underdevelopment."
(Brenner 1977: 27)

This kind of argument urges us to give greater consideration to Marx's historical account of the process of primitive accumulation in England in which he shows that capitalism develops out of and on the basis of agriculture and that the class struggle under feudalism is decisive in this process. Once this process is under way, the question

becomes one of determining the position of the peasantry under the capitalist mode of production. This is the question that has to be examined in the present analysis before consideration is given to the region under study and the specific characteristics of its peasantry. In effect, the context of the peasantry is no longer the same when the basic conditions of development of the capitalist mode of production have become generalized. While taking account of this context, the concept of differentiation of the peasantry, which I take up in the next section, is designed to evaluate the relative part of the internal dynamics of the agrarian sector in relation to other sectors of production under the capitalist mode of production.

2.3 Differentiation of the Peasantry and Development of the Capitalist Mode of Production

Researchers concerned with the peasantry soon recognize that it is part of the larger society to which it is linked. This first element of a definition permits a distinction with primitive societies and requires specification of the links between the peasantry and the larger society. In the case of contemporary peasantries, the effort to define these links results in two principal tendencies. On the one hand, there is a tendency to see capitalism as external to the peasantry. In this view the peasantry either passively submits to the aggression of capitalist development and disappears sooner or later, or resists it on the basis of pre-capitalist institutions (or specific or intrinsic characteristics) before finally becoming folklorized. On the other hand, there are researchers who consider that,

in opposition to the foregoing view, capitalism develops above all out of agriculture and benefits from the expropriation of large strata of the peasantry.

The first of these tendencies corresponds to the better part of the traditional corpus of peasant studies in anthropology, which I have previously examined. The second tendency was developed on the basis of a critique generated by the limitations of this approach. In recent years, the concept of differentiation of the peasantry has become an important focus of research interest in peasant studies. Recognition of this concept's value in terms of permitting a better understanding of the contradictions within peasantries implied by capitalist development has been important in this shift in interest.

However, the application of the concept of differentiation of the peasantry seems to pose several problems. While researchers can agree on the value of the concept for the Russian context at the turn of the century, some question its pertinence in the contemporary situation of peasantries. In other words, they deny the continuity of the process of capitalist development out of and on the basis of agriculture and refute the inevitability of the destruction of the peasantry, a feature contained in the concept itself. The debate between those who continue to use the concept and those who do not constitutes an integral feature of peasant studies today. I will try, therefore, to present the concept in this section and to treat the debates which revolve around it.

The concept of differentiation of the peasantry was elaborated by Lenin in his work, The Development of Capitalism in Russia, published in 1899. This concept refers to the polarization of the peasantry into two classes once the conditions of capitalist production have been laid. The concept is designed to enable specification of the agrarian sector in relation to other sectors of production.

The concept of peasant differentiation only applies after primitive accumulation has taken place and capitalist accumulation, in the strict sense, is under way. Henceforth, the peasantry is no longer the object of a simple differentiation such as it was during primitive accumulation. In effect, as Cavailhès states in light of Lenin's contribution,

"The ancient peasantry is not only the object of a "differentiation", it destroys itself completely and ceases to exist, it is entirely supplanted by new types of rural population, which constitute the basis of a new society dominated by market economy and capitalist production. These types are the rural bourgeoisie (especially the petty bourgeoisie) and the rural proletariat; the class of commodity producers in agriculture and the class of agricultural wage-laborers." (Cavailhès 1976: 114)

Capitalist accumulation thus constitutes the specific context in which the concept of peasant differentiation can be applied. It is important to underline the difference between capitalist accumulation and primitive accumulation. I will identify its principal characteristics and deal with different concepts that are useful for its comprehension.

Capitalist accumulation as such can only occur after certain conditions have been posed by primitive accumulation. When producers have been separated from their means of production and capital seizes control of production, capitalist accumulation is now effected on the

basis of production itself and accumulation has no longer anything to do with primitive accumulation. Nor does capitalist accumulation have anything in common with accumulation by merchant's capital, which is sometimes confused with primitive accumulation. There can, in effect, be accumulation by merchant's capital in the absence of domination of the capitalist mode of production. The accumulation by merchant's capital in the Middle Ages, for example, could be effected on the basis of a pure and simple plundering of certain countries or certain regions. This accumulation did not affect the dominant mode of production as long as, by virtue of the effects of class struggle, the necessary conditions for the penetration of accumulated merchant's capital into production did not exist. It is good to remember this distinction because one historical sociologist, notably Wallerstein in The Modern World System (1974), does not seem to accord it the importance it is due, at least in the framework of historical materialism. Wallerstein considers that capitalism was dominant in sixteenth-century Europe. His conviction rests, not on the forms of production or of the class struggle, but on the spectacular accumulation of merchant's capital in that period. It should be noted that nearly all modern institutions and economic forms were present in the Middle Ages, including money, credit, bills of exchange, import-export, even some forms of monopolistic economic control. Thus, if we stay on the level of appearances, capitalism does indeed seem to have been dominant. However, historical materialism does not define the capitalist mode of production by the sum of its forms or on the basis of its appearances

but rather on the basis of the productive relations and struggle which link and divide social classes.

The characterization of modes of production on the basis of social class which defines any given mode of production is not sufficient, however, to distinguish one from another. For example, the feudal and capitalist modes of production are both characterized by class antagonism and the simultaneous presence of laborers and non-laborers bound by a relation of exploitation. In order to distinguish these modes of production, it is therefore necessary to go beyond the simple enumeration of criteria and to envisage the whole in terms of historical process.

Wallerstein seems to have forgotten that as long as merchant's capital has not generally seized control of production, that is to say, as long as the limits of the old mode of production have not been breached under the effect of class struggle, capitalist accumulation cannot occur and consequently the capitalist mode of production cannot develop. At least, this is my reading of chapters 23 and 24 of Capital (Marx 1967a) to which I refer for a clear exposition of the difference between primitive and capitalist accumulation.

Under the capitalist mode of production, capitalist accumulation constitutes the general context in which the ensemble of productive sectors must be considered. In relation to the subject which is of interest to us, the agrarian sector presents a particularity in comparison to all others. In effect, even though the conditions of capitalist development emerge first in the countryside, it is precisely

the agrarian sector which the capitalist mode of production penetrates least rapidly. The concept of penetration refers here to the rhythm of development of the organic composition of capital; thus, the greater the ratio of constant capital (raw materials, means of work containing past labor like machines) to variable capital (wages corresponding to labor power, thus living labor), the greater is said to be the organic composition of capital. This develops more or less rapidly according to sectors of production and, as has been said, it develops more slowly in the agrarian sector than in the industrial sector. However, it will be readily admitted that the capitalist development of the agrarian sector necessarily follows that of industry. The capitalist mode of production is characterized, in effect, by two interdependent sectors, that of the production of means of production and that of the production of means of subsistence. Of course, agriculture is particularly situated in the latter sector. Now, the more that the industrial labor force grows and must be fed, the less can agriculture remain at the level of self-subsistence. Since primitive accumulation unleashed a process of sapping the original population in the agrarian sector toward industry, the productivity of the entire sector must gradually rise in order to be able to provide for the expanding market. The rise in this productivity is far from being automatically effected; it follows the rhythm of development of the productive forces. Now, it turns out that this development in the agrarian sector, just as in the ensemble of sectors of capitalist production, constitutes the principal stakes in the class struggle. I will come back to this point because

before the question of productivity can even be posed, it is necessary to explain the slowness of the penetration of capital into the agrarian sector.

This slowness is generated by the obstacles which are erected between capital and the agrarian sector. One of these obstacles, if not the principal one, resides in ground-rent. Under a dominant capitalist mode of production, one no longer speaks of feudal rent but rather of capitalist ground-rent, even though both rest in some way upon a monopoly. Under the feudal mode of production, rent is extracted in virtue of the lord's eminent right over the land, that is, in virtue of an explicitly juridical prerogative that is either contested or reinforced by class struggle. Capitalist rent, on the other hand, can only exist once the conditions of capitalist production have been put into place. The most spectacular result of the bourgeois revolutions in France and England was the abolition of feudal servitude, that is, of feudal ground-rent. However, landed property, which is the basis of feudal rent, survived. In other words, the bourgeois revolutions abolished the most apparent manifestation of the juridical principle without doing away with the principle itself. In bourgeois society, the juridical principle of landed property is generalized under the form of private property and with all the rights that go with it. The principle of private property exists in all capitalist sectors but, in the case of the agrarian sector, the right and prerogatives which it bestows are reinforced by virtue of the limited character of the soil and, particularly, of arable land.

Under the capitalist mode of production, the juridical principle of landed property is expressed by a natural monopoly. This monopoly permits landowners (as a particular group in relation to other capitalists) to realize a surplus-profit over the surplus-value created during production in this sector. This surplus profit constitutes the capitalist ground-rent which, according to the conditions of its production, can take different forms.

There are two types of ground-rent dependent upon monopoly conditions - differential ground-rent and absolute ground-rent. Each of these types of rent is realized in the process of circulation. According to Kautsky (1900), differential rent originates from the fact that prices of production are determined not by the average cost of production, as in industry, but rather by the cost of production on the worst land that must be cultivated in order to satisfy a given level of alimentary requirements plus the average profit in this sector. It happens that the costs of production will vary according to the natural characteristics of land. However, when agricultural producers meet on the market to sell their products, the prices are the same for all. Thus, producers who have the most fertile land or who are the best-situated with respect to the marketplace will realize a permanent surplus profit in marketing their products.

It may also happen that landowners can realize another type of rent, which is called absolute rent. This is realized in a different fashion from differential rent. In effect, the monopoly in land allows landowners to exploit the worst land only once market prices for agri-

cultural products surpass their prices of production. They are then able to pocket an absolute rent.

These two types of rent effectively dip into the total social product. That is, what capitalist landowners are able to pocket on the basis of their monopoly represents an equivalent portion of lost value for the capitalists of other sectors. When a capitalist invests in the agrarian sector, he knows that a portion of his capital will be deducted by the landowner from the surplus-value realized on the basis of that capital. The monopoly from which landowners benefit thus considerably slows down capitalist penetration into agriculture, which is why this sector is generally more backward than other sectors of capitalist production. Therefore, it is seen that the existence of landowners affects the whole of the bourgeois class; if these owners did not exist, then average profit would be higher. The quest not only for profit but always for greater profit characterizes the capitalist mode of production; consequently, there is a continual struggle within the bourgeoisie between landowners and other capitalists. But even if this antagonism constitutes an essential aspect of the class struggle, it remains secondary compared to the struggle which pits the proletariat and the bourgeoisie against each other. Moreover, the political situation in many countries shows that landowners and capitalists do not hesitate to form alliances against the proletariat and the peasantry. The history of Mexico and especially of Yucatan are exemplary in this regard, as we will see.

There can be no doubt on the point of the specificity of the agrarian sector as a particular sector of capitalist production. It is, in fact, to this specificity, but from the point of view of class struggle, that Lenin wanted to draw attention in applying his concept of differentiation of the peasantry. More precisely, this concept applies to agriculture in terms of a potential or embryonic branch of capitalist production, under the impact of development in industry and commerce. It will be seen that the concept of differentiation of the peasantry is especially pertinent in countries or regions where capital has not yet completely or radically seized control of agricultural production. The concept should be, in any case, completely adequate in the case of the henequenero sector of Yucatan.

While its development is retarded in several aspects, the agrarian sector nonetheless constitutes a domain in which one finds representatives of the bourgeoisie. This is the rural bourgeoisie including capitalist farmers, entrepreneurs, merchants, etc. The proletariat is equally represented by the rural proletariat. In this regard, the concept of differentiation of the peasantry has two functions. First, it helps to trace the genesis of class polarization in the capitalist social formation in general. Second, it shows the essentially unstable and passing character of the mass of small peasant proprietors which is found between the two antagonistic classes. Lenin considered in effect that this mass was destined to disappear under the combined effect of the development of the forces of production and the class struggle in the countryside. Nonetheless,

since Lenin studied the specific case of Russia at the end of the last century, he obviously could not predict the pace with which this disappearance would advance. This presents a few problems for researchers who wish to apply the concept in contemporary contexts. As I have already mentioned, certain researchers conclude that its application is not pertinent today.

The pertinence of the concept of peasant differentiation today can only be judged in light of the state of class struggle in the society under study. However, the exchange of views between the researchers does permit us to form an opinion on its pertinence at this point.

Notably, researchers who deny the utility of the concept of differentiation of the peasantry do so on the basis of apparent permanency of the intermediate group which is found between the rural bourgeoisie and rural proletariat. For them, this group corresponds to the peasantry and constitutes a privileged object of study in the measure that it appears to be relatively stable. This allows those researchers to continue to designate changes within the peasantry in terms of reversible differentiation rather than in terms of a destruction. Beyond concluding that the process of peasant differentiation has been interrupted, these researchers maintain that the type of production practiced by this peasantry is not only complementary to the capitalist mode of production but essential to it.

In the field of peasant studies during the past several years, this position has been vividly expressed in the development of the concept of articulation of modes of production by such authors as

Pierre-Philippe Rey (1973,1976) and Claude Servolin (1972). On the basis of the apparent permanency of small holding peasants in France, Servolin proposes the concept of a simple commodity mode of production. Servolin's work belongs to a period where many new modes of production were being proposed in relation to those that had been discussed by Marx. For certain authors, such as Emmanuel Terray (1969), the multiplicity of modes of production is founded upon a confusion of concepts like labor process and process of production. Terray, in effect, discovered as many modes of production as there are labor processes in the Guro society of the Ivory Coast that had been studied by Meillassoux (1964). As Cavailhès notes (1976: 125), Servolin's discovery of a simple commodity mode of production (Beaucage 1978: 54) followed from his hypothesis of a lasting coexistence between a capitalist agriculture and simple commodity agriculture. In Servolin's terminology itself, small-scale agriculture is not destroyed but rather "absorbed" by capitalism. The logical complement of this approach was expressed by researchers like Lebossé and Ouisse (1972), for whom the coexistence of two types of agriculture permits "the transfer of greater value than is possible in the direct exploitation of a wage labor force in capitalist agriculture" (Cavailhès 1976: 132). Vergopoulos adopts a similar approach in the analysis of the Greek peasantry and is led to assert the superiority of peasant (family) economy over capitalist enterprise (Vergopoulos 1979: 85).

Thus, he states:

"Family-farming is the best form of production for transferring to urban capitalism the greatest volume of peasant surplus labor in order to maintain the prices of agricultural products at the lowest level possible." (Vergopoulos 1979: 72)

Further,

"Family-farming constitutes really a necessary mechanism for the accumulation of urban capital in capitalist development."
(Vergopoulos 1979: 72)

This approach assumes that capitalism somehow "needs" peasants and small-scale production, especially if the capitalist mode of production is in a circumstance of a low level of development of the productive forces. Rather than destroying these, capitalism maintains them. This position, like that of a multiplicity of modes of production articulated with a dominant mode of production, amounts to a pure and simple negation not only of the concept of differentiation of the peasantry but of the class struggle as well and its specific character in different sectors of production. In fact, the articulation approach to the study of agriculture amounts to a sophisticated form of functionalism; according to authors like Servolin and, more recently, Vergopoulos, the peasantry hardly disappears and is, on the contrary, maintained in the interests of capitalism. This passive characterization of the peasantry is linked to a particular conceptualization of class struggle, which is seen as external to the peasantry, and in which it plays no role.

The negation of a class struggle that is specific to agriculture is the most immediate consequence of the introduction of the concept of articulation of modes of production into peasant studies.

The articulation of a subordinate commodity mode of production with a dominant capitalist mode of production suggests the peaceful and lasting coexistence of forms of production which are, however, incompatible - feudal or semi-feudal forms of production with capitalism forms. This approach isolates the peasantry in a mode of production which presents egalitarian characteristics since, unlike the capitalist mode of production or the feudal mode of production, the small-holding mode of production does not rest upon the exploitation of persons by persons. The peasantry, conceptualized as a homogenous mass, might be considered as the object and the locus of class struggle, but never as the protagonist. A possible conclusion to which one comes is the following:

"(...) the struggles of small peasant proprietors are always erratic struggles without any perspective." (Gutelman 1974: 65)

Many general theoretical criticisms have been offered of the articulation approach. For example, in a review article published in 1978, Aidan Foster-Carter suggests that what might be at stake is the very notion of mode of production as it has been employed by articulation theorists.

However, Foster-Carter remains on the same level of abstraction as the authors he criticizes, such as Rey. Like Rey, she entertains the confusion between analytical or conceptual abstraction, on the one hand, and the concrete reality of practice, on the other. The contrast between abstract and concrete may be very crude, as she writes (1978: 73), but what appears even cruder to me is the belief that analytical concepts or abstract structures could have some effect on

real people divided into social classes. Rey's writings, at least through 1976, are a good example of this kind of confusion or ambiguity. In theorizing emigration as an effect of the articulation of different modes of production, Rey confuses two levels of analysis (Rey 1976: 59); it is as if the confrontation of structures "thought" by the researcher could have concrete effects on population movement, which is in fact an objective, observable phenomenon. In this particular case, people are driven to emigrate as an effect of divergent interests within the dominant local and international classes.

Consequently, class alliances in Rey's terminology are seen as an effect of the confrontation of structures. On the theoretical level, it is difficult to falsify this position. One writer (Clammer 1975: 219) has brought out the Africocentrist character of the articulation approach. On the political level, a position such as Rey's is a very pessimistic one: should the proletariat regroup and develop class consciousness to combat the structures?

There is no scientific criterion which would allow one to say whether the articulation approach is right or wrong. However, it is possible to contrast the differentiation and articulation approaches on the basis of the role ascribed to class struggle. In the case of the differentiation approach, a short account of its historical genesis showed that class struggle (in the sense that, rather than being absorbed, some classes are destroyed by others) is a central concept. In the articulation approach, the concept of class struggle does not occupy this central role. Due to its neglect of social class as both

an historical cause and an historical product, on the one hand, and because the class struggle is negated or, at best, situated outside the agrarian sector, on the other, the methodology and terminology of the articulation approach is avoided in the present work.

Contrary to what articulation theorists maintain, Marx, in the aforementioned parts of Capital, attempted to demonstrate that there is class struggle in the agrarian sector. He did so by re-situating the feudal peasantry in the process of primitive accumulation and the peasantry which came out of this process within capitalist accumulation as such. This procedure of returning to the classics of Marxism is of course part of a wider current. Authors such as Cavailhès (1976), whom I have cited, and Ossard (1976), address themselves to the approach represented by Servolin on the basis of the contributions of Lenin and Marx.

Statistics in hand, Cavailhès took up again the French case provided by Servolin and noted that the small farms that are the basis of peasant proprietors did not really survive in France. Between 1882 and 1970, the number of these small farms decreased from 5.7 million to 1.5 million, representing a reduction of nearly seventy-five per cent (Cavailhès 1976: 130). Over a long period, while small farms do not totally disappear, one nonetheless remarks a tendency toward their extinction. Re-inserting this phenomenon within the process of capitalist accumulation, Ossard states that this accumulation is not entirely realized as yet, which would explain the slowness of the

differentiation of the peasantry (Ossard 1976: 164). For this author, small-scale production presents a definite character of heterogeneity (Ossard 1976: 157) in the measure that it constitutes, on the one hand, a result of the destruction of old forms of production and, on the other hand, this same cause leads to its destruction (Cavailhès 1976: 119). As an effect of class struggle, the obliteration of old forms engenders the proletariat and the bourgeoisie as well as a petty bourgeoisie which includes commodity producers. As petty commodity production is itself destroyed, a small part of the group of peasant proprietors is transformed into capitalist entrepreneurs and the majority is proletarianized. In this context, petty commodity production, far from being a mode of production with specific characteristics and its own particularities, represents simply a form "in becoming" (Cavailhès 1976: 120), a phase of transition between two societies (Ossard 1976: 157). Moreover, as Ossard notes, these forms of transition are not limited to agriculture, being found in diverse branches of production (Ossard 1976: 164).

The small holding peasantry constitutes, therefore, one of the classes of the capitalist mode of production; more precisely, it is a petty bourgeoisie which presents at the same time characteristics of the two fundamental classes of the capitalist mode of production and which oscillates unceasingly between them. The peculiar character of the peasantry resides precisely in the oscillation which it never fails to demonstrate, notably on the political level. In the economic field, during times of crisis, large sections of the peasantry are precipitated

toward the proletariat in general (the rural exodus) and toward the agricultural proletariat in particular, at the same time that some individuals will accede to the status of capitalist entrepreneurs, whether in the city or in the country. The disappearance of a part of the small holding peasantry - or even the tendency toward its disappearance - to the profit of the subordinated class of the capitalist mode of production constitutes the visible effect of its particular insertion in the class struggle. Unlike the proletariat, the peasantry is usually in possession of its labor power. The subordination characterizing the greater part of the peasantry is therefore not the result of the extortion of surplus-value on the basis of unpaid surplus labor as is the case for the proletariat. While the labor power of proletarians tends to be purchased by capitalists at its value (that is, at the value of goods necessary for its maintenance and its reproduction), the exploitation of the peasantry is effected by the sale of its products. Now, it is certain that these products are bought for less than their real value because the capitalist realizes a profit on these products in the sphere of circulation (Beaucage 1978: 64), which implies that peasant labor power is somehow "remunerated" below its value. According to Ossard, capitalists are not exploiting in this case but outrightly stealing or plundering (Ossard 1976: 170). For a researcher like Faure, this peasantry is only distinguished from the proletariat by the form and a certain specificity of the mode of extortion of surplus labor.

Thus:

"(...) the peasant finds himself in a social division of labor which brings his labor process face to face with capital. Whether selling his commodities or acquiring (items of) "intermediate consumption", (...), he comes to markets which are those of capital." (Faure 1977: 54)

One can now understand why the exceptional conditions leading to the realization of differential and absolute rent in the sphere of circulation allows only a tiny stratum of the peasantry to prosper and to themselves become capitalist.

Conclusion: The Peasantry and The Rural Proletariat

Numerous other aspects of the development of peasant studies in anthropology deserve treatment in a work specifically concerned with peasantry. However, my primary interest in this discussion has been concerned with the emergence from peasant studies of the study of the rural proletariat. In the preceding pages, we have seen that the more peasant studies develop on the basis of divergent theoretical trends, the more their object has become imprecise. The historical contextualization of specific peasantries underscores the undeniable empirical fact that as a social category, peasantries participate in class society but under varied modes of production. Even in the framework of a well-delineated mode of production, the peasantry has such an ambivalent character that it appears quite misleading to contain its definition within rigid limits; on the contrary, these characteristics seem to locate the peasantry in general within the confines of several social classes. A definition of the contemporary peasantry, for example, is only pertinent if it is made in relation to the context

of the development of the capitalist mode of production and the classes of which it is composed. In other words, one must take account of the social classes which intersect with the peasantry and which shape its own personality. The rural proletariat, which is the subject of the present work, constitutes precisely one of these classes which intersects with the peasantry. And, by virtue of its insertion in the larger category represented by the proletariat, the rural proletariat constitutes one of the fundamental classes of the capitalist mode of production.

The concept of differentiation of the peasantry shows us how the bourgeoisie and the proletariat constitute the antagonistic result of one and the same unfinished process, the development of capitalism. This develops out of agriculture by destroying the old forms of production, including the peasantry. Out of peasant differentiation emerge the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Since this process is accomplished at a more or less rapid rate, the peasantry continues to exist; thus, considered at any given moment of this process, the peasantry has characteristics which are at the same time features of both the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. It is, moreover, this feature which lends the essentially changing and unstable character to the peasantry.

The rural proletariat thus constitutes only one aspect of the differentiation of the peasantry and must be studied as such. In other words, it is important to contextualize within the limits of our methodology the rural proletariat in relation to the process from which

it emerges and thus in relation to the peasantry and the other social classes generated by the same process.

The interest and attention which I have accorded the peasantry in this part can be, first of all, justified from the methodological point of view. We know that the genesis of studies of the rural proletariat in anthropology was effected on the basis of peasant studies to the point that the distinction between the two does not appear clearly. On the other hand, the rural proletariat shares many characteristics with the peasantry. Its break from the peasantry proceeds apace with peasant differentiation. In fact, its genesis on the basis of the peasantry - and the links which it maintains with this group - give the illusion that the rural proletariat shares the mobility and oscillation which define the peasantry. If this were the case, the specificity of the proletariat just as of the rural proletariat would disappear. Such is obviously not the goal of my study. The rural proletariat is clearly distinct from the peasantry by virtue of the definitive and irreversible character of its traits. Far from being abated by its proximity to the peasantry, the socio-economic features of the rural proletariat, upon which moreover I have insisted, sharpen with the development of the productive forces under the specific effects of class struggle in this domain. Unlike the peasantry oscillating unceasingly between the two fundamental classes of the capitalist mode of production, the rural proletariat is above all defined in the same manner as the proletariat in the proper sense of the term. The labor power of its members corresponds

essentially to a commodity which they must sell if they wish to reproduce it; the rural proletariat is also separated in significant ways from its means of production as well as from the social means to exploit them. In these conditions, all forms of labor other than the wage labor in which rural proletarians are implicated remain subordinate to this definition and change nothing in regard to their determinate character of belonging to the proletarian class under the capitalist mode of production.

What is specific about the rural proletariat is that, due to social and historical conditions, it finds itself in the particular sector of agriculture. This sector is the slowest to develop in relation to the ensemble of capitalism. The constant search of ever-increasing profits by the capital which has already been invested in this sector implies that the costs of production must be kept at the lowest level possible. To this end, capital sometimes profits by particular historical conditions which, for example, let a section of the rural proletariat benefit from property in or rights of usufruct in small parcels of land. In this way, the rural proletariat can eventually look after the reproduction of its labor power; this reproduction is usually assured by wages in the industrial sector but such is not always the case in rural areas because of the forms which I have discussed. Thus, the rural proletariat is defined not only as a source of profit for capital but also by the possibility, however limited that may be, of realizing capitalist rent. Broken up to this extent, however, that rent in no way constitutes an obstacle to capi-

talist penetration in the countryside and is less and less a significant economic complement to capitalist development. The possibility of realizing capitalist rent reacts against the rural proletariat itself by tying it to the land and isolating it from its own class, a class which is defined, above all, by the radical separation from all means of production. We might even hypothesize that the periodic opportunity which the proletariat in rural areas has to fall back on subsistence or petty commodity activities is significant not so much in terms of its economic impact as in the illusion which it provides. However, it is only once the diverse labor processes implied by these activities have been contextualized in the dominant process of production in which the rural proletariat is implicated that one can draw pertinent conclusions. That is why before focussing on the divisive effects which this diversity of labor processes can have on the labor force, it is important to pose the specific historical conditions in which the proletariat which I want to discuss has developed. It is only afterward that I will be able to specify what distinguishes the proletariat both from the peasantry with which it is often confused and from the proletariat in general to which, in class terms, it objectively belongs.

The general problem examined in this thesis is that of identifying, on the basis of economic production, the social classes represented in a rural context. This identification is important because once it is translated into political terms by the various antagonistic classes, it becomes the basis for the outcome of class struggle and,

consequently, that of the reproduction of the social formation as a whole.

The identification of social classes in a rural context does, however, meet with a peculiar problem; that is, the incomplete character of the development of capitalism in the agrarian sector. The rural population is a basic factor in this development because its labor power makes up an integral part of the productive forces. This population imparts a sense and direction to that development. However, anthropologists as well as other social scientists believed for a long time that the rural population was essentially stagnant. For this reason, I felt it necessary, as a point of departure, to examine the theoretical consequences of this assumption, to refute its foundations and to explore new avenues of analysis. One of the most important problems that needs resolving in an analysis concerned with the identification of social classes in a rural context is that of defining the peasantry in relation to the rural proletariat. Here I have tried to show that the best kind of definition is one which draws attention to the study of the processes of differentiation, a study whose basic outlines were originally set forward by Lenin.

This definition remains a general one, however. At this stage of the work, nothing has been specified which would distinguish the rural population in Yucatan from any other. On the basis of historical and ethnographic materials, I now intend to provide a detailed characterization of Yucatan's rural population.

Part II concerns the genesis of the rural proletariat in Yucatan. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 examine this historical development through changes in land tenure both in Mexico as a whole and, particularly, in Yucatan. We will see that the formation of the proletariat is relatively recent in Yucatan and that its rural counterpart has maintained very deep roots in the peasantry which affect the political organization of the working class.

Part III describes the contemporary conditions of production in Yucatan's henequen region. These concrete conditions form the framework of the field research upon which this thesis is based. After a brief introductory chapter (Chapter 6) situating Yucatan's agrarian sector in relation to the larger context of Mexican capitalism, there follows in Chapter 7 a description of both the methodology employed in fieldwork and of the villages studied and the people I encountered. Each of the following chapters forms a step toward the identification of the social classes in the henequen region. The material basis of production - the land - holds an important place in each of these chapters. Chapter 8, for example, provides an examination of the distribution and utilization of the land, according to the various types of land tenure. The statistical variations in land distribution between villages have been relativized through the adoption of a comparative approach. Chapter 9 is a survey of the principal labor processes which workers carry out both on their own plots of land and on the plantations which make up the economic landscape.

These chapters should provide all the material necessary for proceeding to a final step in the identification of social classes in the countryside, based on economic production. Hence, the last chapter (Chapter 10) concerns production and the relations of production, using wage labor and commodity production as its indicators. Based on the description of the framework of wage labor and commodity production, the economic configuration of social classes in rural Yucatan gradually comes into focus. This configuration in turn forms the basis for the general conclusion to this work.

CHAPTER 2 NOTES

- (1) Judging from the context of this quote, the term "farmer" is much closer in meaning to Wolf's definition of "peasant" than to the sense in which it is used in the following section.
- (2) While I was writing this section, I discovered an article by Silverman (1979) in which she discussed the position of Wolf and Mintz in peasant studies.
- (3) Mintz's approach should not be confused either with the kind of role-set analysis proposed by Leeds (1977). This particular point was made by Roseberry in an unpublished paper read at the 1979 AAA meetings. According to Roseberry, Leeds' approach substitutes individual role-sets for history, while Mintz succeeds in taking into account both individuals and history (Roseberry 1979: 6).

PART TWO

THE GENESIS OF THE RURAL PROLETARIAT IN YUCATAN

Introduction

Chapter 3 The Encomienda and the Hacienda

Chapter 4 The Growth of Private Property and Henequen Production

Chapter 5 The Ejido

Conclusion The Material Organization of Production: Result and
Focus of Class Struggle

INTRODUCTION

The part which I am taking up concerns the genesis of the rural proletariat in Yucatan. In it I attempt to apply concretely the major points of theory which were brought out in the first part of the work. In this perspective, I will reconstitute and illustrate the process of the primitive accumulation of capital in the context of the Conquest and the colonization of Yucatan; then, I will specifically consider capitalist accumulation as such in the henequenera region, a process which is expressed by the differentiation of the peasantry and the consequent emergence of new classes in the countryside. I thus lay the groundwork for the following part in which I analyze a moment of this process corresponding to the years 1973-74 in the selected villages.

What I am proposing, therefore, is a re-interpretation of history or, at least, a reorganization of existing material. Two interrelated problems immediately present themselves; that of periodization and that of the importance to be accorded factors relevant to the general history of the area under study, to which may be added the problem of the selective utilization of sources.

As Christian Deverre has stated in a recent work on the central zone of Chiapas:

"The division of historical sequences (...) should not be considered as absolute, but as a simple periodization of processes essentially in movement (...)" (Deverre 1980: 25)

Thus, the periodization which I adopt depends essentially on the goal of the research. Since I seek to retrace the genesis of a rural proletariat within a specific region, my guideline must be defined by the establishment of the material conditions in which this proletariat is born and develops. The general context of Latin American history shows that the struggle over land constitutes one of the fundamental aspects of this material framework. Consequently, I must retrace the expression of this struggle in taking as a landmark changes in land tenure since the Conquest. It is for that reason I have divided the present part of my work into three chapters which correspond to the three principal types of land tenure that have characterized the rural landscape of Yucatan in different periods. Bearing in mind that these types are not mutually exclusive, I take up in order the hacienda, the growth of private property and, finally, the constitution of the ejido. It is in this framework, according to my hypotheses, that the forced differentiation of the peasantry took root and that its transformation continues.

The importance to be accorded general historical factors seems much more problematical than the periodization of local history. In effect, what part can be attributed to the elements of world, metropolitan, or national history? And, how can the non-historian overcome the sometimes tragic absence of treatment of certain portions of history? The problem is all the more acute for those interested in the Mayan Lowlands in that, as Jones remarks (1977: XII-XIII), the historical approach remains schematic, particularly for the post-colonial period. Only a few authors, such as Cline (1948 in particu-

lar), Reed (1971), and Strickon (1965), have contributed to opening up perspectives on this region; the book edited by Jones, Anthropology and History in Yucatan (1977), while it does not accord the attention to the henequenera region one might have wished, claims to be a part of this effort.

Within these limitations, I can only try to keep constantly in mind the object of this part of my work; that is, the rural proletariat constitutes the result of a long process of the separation of the labor force from its means of production. I endeavor to identify the indices which mark out the route travelled by this labor force over the course of the centuries that separate the Conquest from the contemporary epoch.

This study proceeds from the general to the particular. Thus, a large part of the first chapter concerns the general history of Mexico at the time of the encomienda and hacienda while indicating the particular forms of colonization in Yucatan. The sources I have used are generally of scholarly character and originate from recognized authorities on the matter. As we move to the level of the region which would become the henequenera region, I have greater recourse to sources originating from local historians. The foray into history which I propose has a very specific purpose; that is, to identify the forms in which the henequenero sector has developed, both at the level of production and at the level of the commercialization of this product. For this reason, the treatment in the chapters is more detailed as we progress toward the contemporary period. As we move closer to

the ethnographic present, statistical and other data from official sources and journalistic data which I gathered in the field take on greater importance.

I do not claim, therefore, to offer an orthodox or even complete history of the henequenera region. I have principally retained what could best illustrate, in my opinion, the gradual dispossession of direct producers of their basic means of production and most adequately situate our own ethnographic data. Despite the dimensions of this part of the work, the claims which I make for it are thus quite modest. However, even if the analysis of ethnographic data is thus shifted to the last section of this work, the historical part remains essential for a comprehension of the whole. It is hoped that the proposed re-interpretation will permit the reader to see that the contemporary situation of direct producers has nothing stagnant about it, despite the similarity of the forms of their subordination and dependence with those of the past. On the contrary, it provides an occasion to grasp the dynamic which has characterized class relations in the region since the Conquest.

Finally, this part allows a relativization of the ethnographic analysis which is necessarily limited in time and recognition of the fact that the capitalist mode of production corresponds only to a determinate period in the class struggle.

CHAPTER 3

THE ENCOMIENDA AND THE HACIENDA

Unlike other regions of New Spain, Yucatan offered sustained resistance to the conquerors. While Yucatan had been discovered in 1517 by Francisco Hernandez de Cordoba, it was not until 1526 that Francisco de Montejo obtained permission to conquer the region. Up to that time, most efforts had been concentrated on the region around Mexico, which seemed to present more interesting stakes for the conquerors (Chamberlain 1948: 3,16). Sixteen more years would pass between the time Francisco de Montejo obtained permission to conquer the region and the founding of the town of Mérida in 1542.

The hostility of the Maya was so fierce that the Spanish practically had to abandon Yucatan in the years 1534 and 1535 (Chamberlain 1948: 3). Even once the Spanish had secured a permanent base, they were never safe from bursts of indigenous revolt. Despite the division of autochthonous provinces, which dated from before the Conquest, the Maya managed to keep the Spanish forces of repression out of breath until 1695. It was only then that the conquerors could claim complete pacification of the peninsula (Molina Font 1941: 30-31).

The balance-sheet of Conquest and the submission of the Yucatan in no way constitute a glorious piece of Spanish history. In fact, it seems that the conquest of the Maya cost more lives than the Aztec and Inca conquests combined. Yet the Yucatan offered none of the natural wealth that was so important to the conquerors at the time (Parkes 1971: 85), whether they be adventurers or the dignified representatives of the Spanish Crown. The gold and silver that might have permitted Spain to balance its commercial deficit was not to be found in the Yucatan.

Rather, it is necessary to recall the European context of discovery and colonization in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Under the reign of the "Catholic kings" Isabella of Castile and Ferdinand II of Aragon, Spain knew unprecedented prosperity as a result of the discovery and conquest in the New World, events which contributed to the expansion of the Spanish Empire. The apogee of this empire was reached under the reign of Charles V between 1519 and 1540. However, with the election of Charles V to the head of the empire by the peers of Europe (which, by the way, was at the expense of Francis I, who also coveted the crown), the Spanish throne was effectively mortgaged. In fact, Charles V owed his election to the financial support by the Fugger merchant-and-banking house of southern Germany (Wallerstein 1974: 174). This leads us to believe that the Empire was confronted with several creditors. In order to mount its wars of hegemony and to meet the various economic crises of the period, Spain had to exploit the wealth of its different European states. However,

their resistance forced the Empire to depend more and more upon the resources which Castile herself could provide. As it was Castile that had conquered and colonized the New World, her colonies would become the object of attempts to extract greater wealth, not in order to dominate the rest of Europe, but rather in order to establish equilibrium again in a commercial position that had become seriously unbalanced. In effect, Spain depended on other countries for its supply in many essential products. Spain, or shall we say, the Spanish ruling class, never put together national industries in iron, steel, nails, textiles and paper (Stein & Stein 1971: 52). Consequently, the wealth coming from the Americas was just as soon re-directed toward France, Holland, England and Italy. England, notably, benefited tremendously from the gold and silver provided her by Spain through the purchase of luxury products in the Far East and their re-sale to the European rich (Stein & Stein 1971: 15).

Transatlantic commerce, even that out of the Iberian Peninsula, was practically never an affair of the Spanish. Just as foreign bankers controlled the finances of the Crown, so too did foreign merchants control Spanish commerce with the Americas (Wallerstein 1974: 192 ff.).

All of these factors meant an intense exploitation of the Spanish colonies. Where significant resources like gold and silver were to be found, this exploitation reached unimaginable proportions. In fact, resources and the labor of men alike were literally wiped off the map. Where these resources could not be found, like in the

Yucatan, more time was given to harnessing the labor power of the population. But for these populations, as we will see, it was only a reprieve of the condemned.

The specific form which Spanish colonization took in the Americas reflected the needs of the mother country in Europe. America was far away, its conquerors were often adventurers who sought personal gain at least as much increased wealth for Spain. The Crown was thus faced with the problem of establishing an enticing system of rewards for the colonizers and relatively inexpensive mechanisms for controlling both conquerors and indigenous populations.

The encomienda was to be the enticement that would tie adventurers to the land and the first step toward regularizing the flow of wealth toward the mother country. The encomienda was a system of allocating not only territory but also the populations living within this territory. It was thus a mechanism which both secured an indigenous labor force and provided for a certain measure of control over the population. This control was, in fact, facilitated by the partial yet basic integration of the indigenous nobility into the Spanish ruling class.

The purpose of this section is to describe the situation of the indigenous population. First, I investigate the internal composition of the indigenous social formation at the time of the Conquest. Second, we will see the effects of the encomienda and of its developments on this social formation.

As an effect of the rappports de force between the Spanish Crown (Centralizationist) and the conquerors, the encomienda would be imperceptibly transformed from a political instrument for the submission of indigenous populations into a system of land tenure. This system is characterized by the more and more permanent appropriation of the land to the loss of its first occupants and by their incorporation onto the large estates.

3.1 The Indigenous Element

At the time of the Conquest, for reasons I have mentioned earlier, Yucatan was comprised of sixteen (16) states or indigenous provinces. The division into provinces was a result of the wars that followed the fall of Mayapan. Each province was ruled by a halach uinic, who was in fact the batab or chief of the town in which he lived and to whom all the batab in other towns were subordinate and rendered tribute (Roys 1957: 6). The halach uinic received tribute in virtue of his eminent possession of the territory, in return for which he was obligated to prevent the appropriation of portions of this territory by neighboring powers. The territorial and military functions seem to be the principal obligations of the halach uinic, while he also fulfilled some religious and administrative functions. These functions were shared by other members of the ruling class, be they warriors or members of military orders, or prosperous farmers and big merchants (Roys 1972: 33). Within each province there was a hierarchy within the ruling class, the principal one being manifested by the subordination of the batab of different towns to the halach uinic of the principal town. This ruling class, of course, constituted a minority, ideo-

logically cemented by the belief that its members were of foreign origin. As Roys notes (1972: 33), they took great interest in their genealogy.

The majority of the population was made up of peasants who presented no significant differentiation. There were also slaves bound to nobles or to the occasional prosperous farmer.

Schematically, it can be said that the indigenous social formation at the time of the Conquest was founded upon a relationship of social class and, in the case of the ruling class, one in which kinship played an important role. The principal territorial function of this class was to serve as a conveyor belt for tribute between the peasantry and the nobility of high rank. The two fundamental classes of this social formation were thus, on the one side, the warrior, religious, merchant, and administrative nobility, and on the other side, the peasantry. The two classes and their fractions can be located territorially. The nobility apparently resided in the capitals, while the lesser nobility or gentry was distributed throughout the principal towns.

This territorial distribution was, in fact, effected through a principle of kinship. Thus, the office of halach uinic was incumbent upon a family in each province where this office existed (Roys 1972: 60). Moreover, the batab designated by the halach uinic were often blood-relations (Roys 1972: 60). It can be assumed that kinship in this case assured the maintenance and the reproduction of the hierarchy within the ruling class that was essential for its hegemony over the peasantry.

At first glance, it may appear that the peasantry formed a world of its own, living as it did in more or less isolated hamlets that were, in any case, far enough apart to allow for slash-and-burn agriculture (Roys 1972: 65) which requires extensive land areas. Nevertheless, the peasantry constituted the cornerstone of this social formation.

The subordination of the peasantry, hardly a new thing at the time of the Conquest, was expressed in the obligation to render tribute, usually in kind but occasionally in labor, to the batab of the town. According to Roys (1972: 61), this tribute was nominal. Each town had to supply moderate quantities of corn, beans, peppers, poultry, honey, cotton cloth, game and, on the coast, salt and fish. Contrary to what Roys suggests, however, we obviously do not dispose of enough data to qualify the amount of tribute in relation to production.

Also according to Roys, slaves constituted one of the three social classes of indigenous Yucatan society (Roys 1972: 33). They were not, of course, members of the ruling class; nor did they form a part of the peasantry, which, although required to render tribute, enjoyed freedom of movement.

However, slaves did not occupy a position in relation to production that was exclusively their own. They were rather fallen members of the two fundamental classes of the social formation and, especially, of the ruling class. Slaves were either the spoils of war - in this case, originating from the warrior nobility - or persons punished for a crime or indebtedness (Roys 1972: 34). Their

relation to others was not principally economic, such as the relation between peasants and nobles, but rather personal. The economy of the indigenous social formation did not, in any case, depend systematically on slavery. This kind of interpersonal relationship, while an object of disapproval by the Christian missionizing of the Spanish, would not, however, be neglected by them. It would later become one of the cornerstones of the primitive accumulation of capital.

Fundamentally, despite the appearances and forms of the indigenous social formation, the Spanish encountered a class organization remarkably similar to their own: two antagonistic classes, with the same recruitment of the ruling class through the principle of lineage and the same potential of servitude of the labor force. Given the fierce resistance of the warriors during the campaigns of conquest, it was easier and, especially, more useful for the Spanish to co-opt this ruling class than to abolish it. Thus, certain elements of the indigenous nobility were incorporated into their own class structure, after the indigenous priesthood had been abolished (Stein & Stein 1970: 62). This is how the cacique system developed, notably in Yucatan (Roys 1972: 134). This system of indirect government permitted the Spanish to profit fully from the advantages of the encomienda system.

3.2 The Encomienda, Allocation of Lands, and the Situation of the Labor Force

The encomienda, both in the European and American sense, corresponds to an attribution of privileges and bears an aspect of compensation for services rendered. For example, in Andalucia, towns,

villages, castles, and lands were split up among knights in the form of perpetual inherited property that carried with it jurisdiction over persons (Chevalier 1952: 39).

In the case of Yucatan, the expedition led by Francisco de Montejo, even though it had been made in the name of the Crown, was completely financed by him. The encomienda which was given to him constituted one of the terms of the accord between de Montejo and the Spanish Crown.

While corresponding to a determinate territory, the encomienda only conferred a right of tribute and to personal labor service over the population within its limits. In its pure definition, the encomienda did not come into contradiction with the indigenous communal land tenure (Betancourt Perez 1953: 22). As a prerogative ceded by the Crown, the encomienda corresponded to the obligation of its title-holder to protect the local population. Besides providing protection, the encomendero was supposed to convert this population (Irigoyen 1980: 220). It should not be forgotten that it was by virtue of the Papal line dividing the world into Spanish and Portuguese zones that Spain was authorized to colonize this part of the world, on the condition that it win the inhabitants over to Christianity (Chamberlain 1948: 26).

The allocation of encomiendas combined with the lack of communication signified, however, a dispersal of the Crown's authority and meant a loss of revenue for Spain. Thus, Montejo and his heirs enjoyed the privilege of intercepting 4% of all the revenues generated in Yucatan, the Crown having exempted them from certain taxes and

tariffs on imports and exports (Chamberlain 1948: 21).

After having left the financing of the Conquest and colonization to the discretion of private individuals, and finding its power weakened as a result, the Crown embarked on a program of centralization. The conquerors soon found their authority undermined by the high-ranking civil servants sent to administer the colony. Beginning in 1542 (Chevalier 1952: 50), tribute was carefully and heavily taxed by the Crown which also tried, but without success, to reduce personal labor service. These services were not removed from the prerogatives of the encomienda until 1549 (Chevalier 1952: 50) but, even then, they could not be completely abolished.

These attempts at centralization were, however, countered by the financial reverses of New Spain. The decline of mining during the seventeenth century accompanied a decrease in commercial activity. Conquerors and colonists no longer disposed of the mining wealth which they had used in exchange for imported European products (Chevalier 1952: 54) and, consequently, New Spain became more inward-looking. Henceforth it was necessary to proceed with a re-orientation of the economy and the intensification of the production of essential goods such as wheat and livestock.

Since the early days of the colony, imports of products considered basic by the colonists, notably wine and oils, had been effected on the basis of products intercepted in the form of tribute. Thus, cotton cloth and beeswax constituted precious assets for Yucatan and came to be greatly prized in Spain itself (Ramirez Aznar 1979: 8). One might conclude, therefore, that unlike the rest of

New Spain, the dominant class in Yucatan was not particularly affected by the mining crisis. The general decrease in commercial activity did not fail to reach Yucatan, however, and eventually led to an intensification of the perception of tribute and a re-orientation of production toward animal husbandry and the production of indigo for the export market.

In 1576-1577, the weight of epidemics was already being felt and the indigenous labor force was breaking down. The repartimiento prescribed by royal decree since 1549 offered a partial solution to the shortage of labor power as well as to the urgent need to produce goods essential for the subsistence of the colony or for the revitalization of commercial activity. Officially, then, the corvéés and labor services no longer constituted prerogatives of the encomienda. The repartimiento foresaw the redistribution of this newly-freed labor force among the enterprises judged most useful in the context of this period.

With the simultaneous expansion of lands, the repartimiento amounted to, at least in theory, a progressively radical separation of labor power from its means of production. The invasion of lands was neither limited to nor especially an act of the encomenderos but one as well of the private individuals who had been given land by the Crown.

If, on the one hand, the encomienda with its privileges and royal duties was a fact of the nobility, the lesser nobility which had fought at its side or the private individuals who arrived later

(Chamberlain 1948: 21) were allocated parcels of land that were called caballerías (Chevalier 1952: 60). The allocation of these sometimes considerable areas was not accompanied by any particular obligations toward the indigenous population.

Aside from the caballerías and their more plebeian version, the peonías (five times smaller), there were several other types of endowment in land by the Crown. Thus, certain individuals, including Spanish and indigenous nobles, encomenderos and private individuals, officially obtained land through royal favor (real merced). In these cases, the average area covered a square league (Chardon 1961: 19).

Colonists could eventually acquire, by royal sanction, previously untitled lands through composición; or, they could buy and exchange land with the indigenous population; and, finally, natives could themselves obtain recognition of title (reconocimiento) to lands which belonged to them before the Conquest. Lands left untouched by these transactions remained Crown land (terrenos realengos or baldíos) and could be used by private individuals or groups (Chardon 1961: 18).

For those who had acquired their land through these varied means and whose enterprises had the good fortune of being judged useful by the Crown, the repartimiento solved the problem of a supply of labor power.

One aspect of decentralization materialized through the improper interpretation of royal decrees whose very ambiguity left the door open to this kind of abuse. Thus, the protection of natives extolled by the Crown became more and more nominal as decentralization progressed and the concentration of land was effected.

The difficulties that the indigenous nobility, and especially, the caciques had in collecting tribute from their subordinates in the name of the encomendero constituted one of the breaches in the system through which the expansion of lands was produced and the expropriation of the indigenous population proceeded.

Before the close of the sixteenth century, the indigenous aristocracy was in such a bad state of affairs that it was obliged to cover tribute with its own revenue. Epidemics had decimated the population yet the amount of tribute that had to be collected was not reduced. The caciques were often left with no choice but to cede parts of their domain to the victors of the Conquest in order to make up the difference between the tribute that had actually been collected and that which was due (Chevalier 1952: 274).

One should not believe, however, that the pace of expropriation of the indigenous group was rapid. If we base ourselves on Chevalier and take New Spain as a point of reference, it can be stated that the process in Yucatan progressed at a moderate pace. Since there were no mines in this part of Mexico, from the beginning encomiendas were involved in subsistence agriculture, animal husbandry and, mainly, indigo production. Cultivation of this latter product appears to have been particularly important and all of it was sent to Spain (Chevalier 1952: 88). Along with wood from Campeche, salt and cotton fabrics (or paties), indigo was the main basis of the regional colonial economy during the first two centuries of its existence (Irigoien 1980: 290). The colonists began producing indigo around

1565 and the industry reached its peak in the mid-nineteenth century. Production then ceased with the invention of aniline by German chemists (Irigoyen 1980: 285,289). Historical descriptions of indigo production reveal that it was very demanding work from seeding through to harvest and processing. One is not surprised that, as of 1577, some encomenderos were still using indigenous labor to produce indigo in the villages of their encomienda, even after the official abolition of personal and compulsory labor service (Chevalier 1952: 88). This was no doubt their interpretation of the repartimiento. Nothing, in fact, prevented these "useful" enterprises from setting up within the encomiendas or on lands taken over through individual title by encomenderos.

Repartimiento labor was used for producing other commodities on the Yucatecan encomienda as well, such as wax, cotton, Campeche wood, sugar, tobacco, salt and fish (Irigoyen 1980: 294-338). By the beginning of the eighteenth century, wax had become the third most important export product (Irigoyen 1980: 290). Yucatecan wax came from an indigenous species of bee which had no stinger. The commercialization of hives cost much less than in Europe (Irigoyen 1980: 290), which must explain the success of this product on the export market, a market which Yucatan shared with Cuba. Cotton had been produced in abundance since before the Conquest, particularly in the regions of Tizimin and Valladolid and, to a lesser extent, on the coast (Irigoyen 1980: 296). The production of cotton fabrics or paties was a unique

case of the systematic use of indigenous women's labor. Spinning and weaving were essentially women's activities. These fabrics made up a part of the tribute which the indigenous caciques paid to the encomenderos (Irigoyen 1980: 299). For the caciques, tribute obligations became a way of intensifying the exploitation of a group which already occupied a subordinate position within the indigenous sexual division of labor. Cotton fabric production declined but did not completely disappear after the abolition of the encomienda system. For example, in 1834 the La Aurora factory was established in Valladolid for the purpose of ginning, spinning and weaving cotton (Irigoyen 1980: 300-301). Political struggles between centralists and federalists combined with unfavorable tariff regulations, however, broke the back of this nascent industry in 1844 and the Caste War, which began in 1847, put a definitive end to what had been the first industry in Yucatan.

Sugar production remained marginal throughout the colonial period due to policies established by the mother country. Yucatan was obliged to import sugar for its population from Cuba (Irigoyen 1980: 311), a situation that would change only after Independence.

During the two centuries of colonial rule, salt was one of the most important export products. It was sent to markets throughout New Spain and Honduras (Irigoyen 1980: 332). One still finds today salt being extracted from the marshes which stretch along Yucatan's coastline from Cabo Catoche to Campeche. These are the same salt areas that were exploited in pre-Hispanic times when salt was exchanged

between coast-dwellers and inland groups (Irigoyen 1980: 332). Salt extraction is exceedingly rough work which is done in the months of March, April and May. Before wage-labor was established, several methods of commanding labor service were employed by the colonizers, doubtlessly including repartimiento.

Fishing was, of course, linked to salt production and had been practiced on the coast since time immemorial. It seems that during colonial times, salted fish from Campeche was a Lenten dish in Veracruz and Mexico City (Irigoyen 1980: 337).

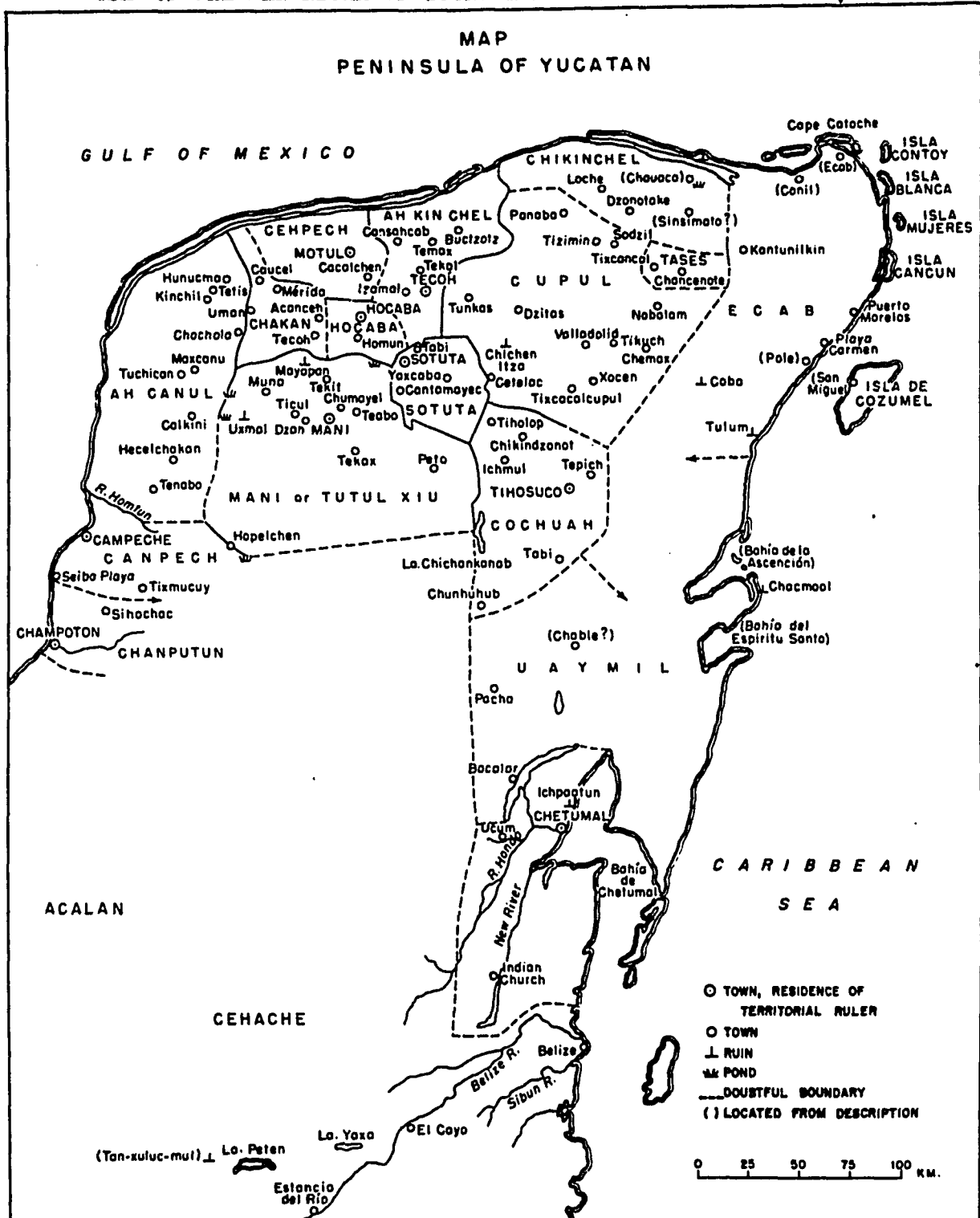
Tobacco was a hardy plant which grew virtually as a weed particularly in the south and east of the state of Yucatan (Irigoyen 1980: 338). Though widely available, Spanish Crown policy did not favor its commercialization and it was only at the end of the eighteenth century, that is, after the encomienda period, that Yucatan became a significant commercial producer of tobacco. Despite the small scale of this production, we find that cigar export to New Orleans had become a significant economic activity by the end of the nineteenth century (Irigoyen 1980: 340).

The encomienda was thus diversified in terms of economic production. On the political level, the Yucatan encomenderos enjoyed a considerable cohesive force that allowed them to evade royal decrees. While in the rest of Mexico 55% of the towns were comprised within the encomiendas, this proportion reached 90% in Yucatan (Strickon 1965: 42). In absolute figures, in 1549 there were 180 encomiendas totalling 37,000 tributaries in a population of 256,000 inhabitants.

The villages discussed in the third part of this study existed in that period and were incorporated within encomiendas. In 1567, for example, the village of Sinanché was led by an indigenous cacique named Juan Euan and formed, in turn, a part of the encomienda of a certain Ambrocio de Villafrades which counted 320 tributaries in a population of 1440 inhabitants (Roys 1957: 82). Regarding Temax, the tax lists of 1549 indicate that one of the first citizens of Mérida, Juan de Sosa, was its encomendero. Within this encomienda, there were 580 tributaries or about 2610 inhabitants (Roys 1957: 86) and the tribute of six (6) fanegas of salt was the highest in the entire province of Ah-Kin-Chel. However, there is evidence that present-day Temax is the fruit of a merger of two other villages, Tixtial and Achtuniche, that are mentioned on the tax lists prior to 1591, the date at which a convent was founded and whose ruins are still to be seen in Temax. In this regard, Moreno Toscano mentions that in each of the provinces there was an administrative capital (cabecera) surrounded by its sujetos de doctrina or satellite villages and that the distance separating them was usually only one or two leagues (Moreno Toscano 1968: 107). Basing himself on Chamberlain (1948: 283), Roys specifies that a large number of small hamlets were abandoned and their inhabitants were relocated into more sizable villages, thus submitting to the aims of the conquerors' policy (Roys 1957: 10).

The encomienda was not abolished in Yucatan until 1785, which was later than anywhere else (Strickon 1965: 42). In fact, the Yucatecan encomienda had always been exceptional in terms of its particular economic and ecological conditions, such as the poverty of

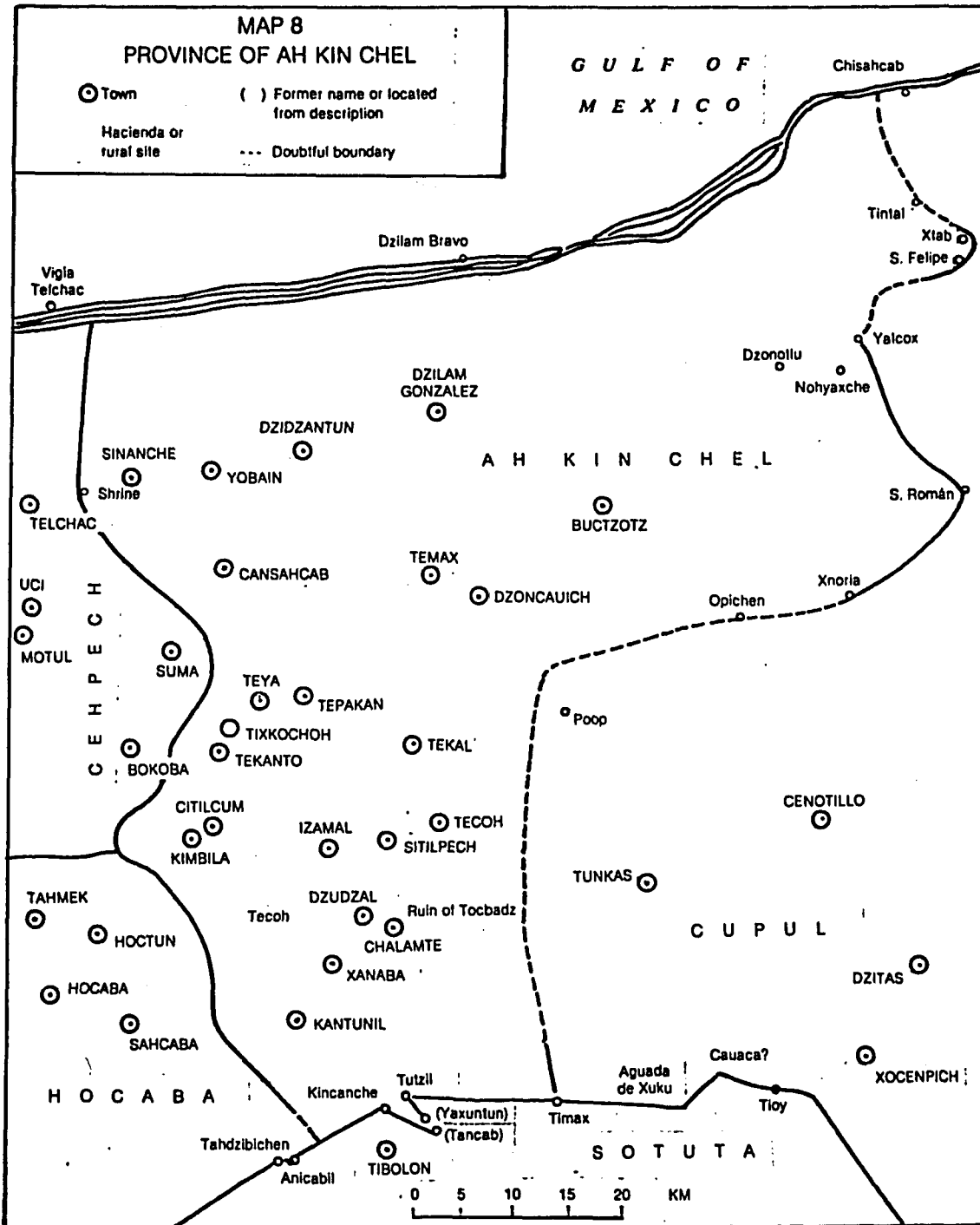
MAP OF THE PENINSULA OF YUCATAN AT TIME OF SPANISH CONQUEST



Source: Wauchope 1965: 666

MAP no. 2

The Province of Ah Kin Chel



Source: Roys 1957: 78

the soil, especially in the north (Irigoyen 1980: 231). These are factors in the persistence of personal labor service in Yucatan after 1549, when it was abolished in the rest of Mexico. There were other Crown measures, too, which had been challenged by the colonists in Yucatan. Thus, in 1687, 1691 and again in 1697, the encomenderos escaped Crown measures to increase its share of their tribute first to half and then more (Irigoyen 1980: 231). Finally, in 1718, Yucatan's poverty was cause for its exemption from a royal tax schedule ordering the incorporation of all encomiendas under direct Crown control (Irigoyen 1980: 231). The prolongation of the Yucatecan encomienda did not, however, stop the process of separating indigenous labor from their means of production, just as it was occurring elsewhere in Mexico. More importantly, the longevity of the encomienda contributed to the more binding attachment of this labor force to lands it no longer owned.

In the case of northern Yucatan, which is the region of interest to us, dispossession of the labor force from its means of production advanced almost simultaneously with its incorporation into processes of production whose control it had lost.

If, on the one hand, animal husbandry, which was developing as the cornerstone of the regional economy, required abundant land and little manpower, the production of goods like maize on which even the subsistence of the conquerors depended required a large labor force.

3.3 The Transition to the Hacienda and its Growth

In virtue of the decentralization of royal power, livestock raisers proceeded toward dividing the land among themselves. Chevalier sees the origin of private property in this development.

With the increase in livestock, the use of common grazing land became quickly outmoded. Beginning in the first half of the sixteenth century, livestock breeders were forbidden to have herds without first possessing estancias within well-defined limits and far enough away from villages to avoid harm (Chevalier 1952: 121-122), as each estancia covered a minimum of 1760 hectares (Chevalier 1952: 346). A certain legitimate basis was conferred upon this acquisition of tax in that by turning over a certain sum to the Treasury (in virtue of two tax schedules dating from 1591), title to this land could be acquired (Chevalier 1952: 348-362). Due to the growing numbers of estancias and the many interpretations of royal decrees which were supposed to guarantee communal possessions for the indigenous population, this last group saw their territory reduced within two centuries first to the ejido and then to the fondo legal.

As originally defined, the ejido corresponded, at least in North America, to the communal land on which the indigenous population grew their crops. The ejido had been thus defined in order to prevent animals from harming crops (Chevalier 1952: 254).

The fondo legal existed in relation with the cajas de comunidad, which had been set up by the clergy and in all likelihood assured a fund upon which the community could draw for diverse pur-

poses. Created at first by monetary contributions, the cajas de comunidad were later constituted on the basis of the communal cultivation of fields. The Indian's obligation to provide for the community fund became in turn an obligation to cultivate a certain amount of land for the community. The fondo legal was equivalent to the total area which each individual had to cultivate. Many communities would find themselves trapped within this minimal land area, whose maximum limit had been fixed at 504 square meters by the king in 1687, as the monopolization of land progressed (Chevalier 1952: 251-258).

Yucatan livestock was bred, at first, to supply meat for the local population. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, producers began to export tanned hides, particularly to markets in Cuba (Irigoyen 1980: 325). Due to its nature and finality, animal husbandry could only be based on the maintenance of subsistence crops. Henceforth, the lot of colonists as a class was linked to a particular combination of labor processes, especially animal husbandry and maize cultivation. Regarding this combination of labor processes, the invasion of agricultural land by cattle provoked a certain liberation of labor power (the term "liberation" to be understood in its Marxist sense). However, the absence of a significant home market either in commodities or labor power prevented its radical liberation.

Thus, even in the absence of a pressing need for labor power, a second development began that would lead to the hacienda. This development corresponded, firstly, to the incorporation of Indian

labor power within the conquerors' enterprises and, then, to the progressive attachment of their person to lands which no longer belonged to them. The lack of imported slave labor led to disputes between the encomenderos and other colonists over the indigenous labor force.

Unlike the colonists, the encomenderos enjoyed or, at least, had enjoyed a significant power of coercion over the indigenous population. For example, Montejo had been authorized to cast into slavery any Indian who refused Christianity or who denied the Crown (Chamberlain 1948: 22). It was, therefore, relatively easy for the encomenderos to convert labor service into forced labor on lands that had either been legally acquired or stolen outright.

Regarding those colonists who did not enjoy the prerogatives obtaining to an encomienda, they had recourse to other means of coercion. The best known and certainly most common of these was usury in its varied forms. What would become the most vivid characteristic of the hacienda existed, in fact, at the time of the encomienda. A colonist could offer to pay the tribute which the Indians owed the encomenderos or their village taxes in return for the use of their labor power (Chardon 1961: 20). Given their competition with the encomenderos, who were also engaged in producing activities, usury became one of the means whereby the colonists could intercept the scarce supply in labor power.

The move to incorporate a part of the indigenous population onto rural estates is certainly very old, as legal interventions and orders attest. Thus, in 1560, the viceroy Velasco forbade the payment

of advances to the Indians in order to prevent these from serving as a pretext for holding them prisoner (Chevalier 1952: 369). The tienda de raya, a kind of general store on the hacienda where Indians made their purchases and fell into debt, had developed by 1590 (Chevalier 1952: 370). In 1601, and again in 1609, the king had to intervene directly in order to prevent Indians from being held against their will on the hacienda (Chevalier 1952: 370). Thus, it is seen that the process of binding Indians to the hacienda unfolded simultaneously with the alienation of their lands. Yet, even if the interests of the encomenderos and colonists seem, at first glance, to be contradictory on the juridical level, they occupied the same position with respect to production; that is, one of non-producers. It was this position which prevailed when the encomenderos, seizing the occasion afforded them by economic crisis and poor communications, broached Crown jurisdiction and redefined the encomienda to their own desires. In this sense, it can be said that the late abolition of the encomienda in Yucatan in no way inhibited the development of capital from being set into motion. Long before its abolition, the encomienda no longer had anything in common with its original definition. As Wallerstein states:

"(...) Crown policy has been credited with the destruction of the encomienda but natural developments in the colonies had doomed the institution (...) the fortunes arising from commerce and mining were not directly dependent upon the encomienda (...); the sheer growth of Spanish Society produced the newly powerful families who began to carve out estates of their own, undermining the inflexible encomienda system." (Wallerstein 1974: 190)

However, even if all the elements characteristic of the hacienda were already present at the time of the encomiendas, it is nonetheless the case that basic changes separate the two periods. These changes can be concretely traced on the level of infrastructure.

As long as the encomendero engaged in livestock-breeding could receive a tribute constituted in large part by subsistence goods, the parallel processes of production of livestock-breeding and agriculture could remain as such. On the level of work organization, the Indian remained master of his decisions in this area inasmuch as it evolved within the framework of subordination prescribed by the encomienda. The annual obligation of each head of household to cultivate a milpa of sixty (60) mecates (roughly 2 hectares) did not fundamentally alter the way in which maize was to be produced.

However, the two processes of production were competitive. Within any given area, the means of labor of one category of producers (those engaged in the cultivation of maize) could be the object of the labor of another (livestock breeders). Since these producers were already implicated in a relation between the ruled and the ruling, the process of production proper to the dominant group knew no restriction in theory, provided that they succeeded to supply themselves in subsistence goods. However, as we have seen, this was not the case. Due to epidemics, tribute had diminished and the invasion of Indian lands by the colonists inhibited the production of these subsistence goods. Moreover, the slowdown in commerce made it impossible for the conquerors to find supplies in the mother country.

For the Indians, the loss of the material support of their process of production signified no less than the loss of their decision-making power regarding production. The onetime parallel labor processes characteristic of the north of the peninsula were integrated into a single process of production under the control of those who had amassed lands and whose rural estates would henceforth be known as the haciendas.

The fact that the Indians could at first commute between the village and the hacienda where they cultivated maize constituted a worrisome gap in the power of the new hacendado. As long as this situation persisted, his control was always reversible. The hacendado's control of watering-holes or cenotes would, at least in the north of Yucatan, accelerate his absolute hold over a large part of the indigenous population. Cenotes are natural watering-holes formed by the sinking of calcerous surface into underground caves (Strickon 1965: 44). Given that the entire peninsula lacks rivers and lakes, cenotes are the only source of drinking water for the population. Whole populations were thus forced to move and converge from the village toward the hacienda.

At first, these people were free renters but they were gradually enslaved by the classic system of indebtedness (Betancourt Perez 1953: 25) and became hacienda Mayans in contrast to the free village-dwelling Mayans (Strickon 1965: 47). However, both groups defined themselves in relation to the hacienda even though the character of their link with it differed.

Regarding the different groups found on the hacienda, the first of these I may mention are the salaried servants who, in exchange for a fixed monthly wage, worked every day on the estate. They enjoyed the use of a house and courtyard, water and firewood for cooking. The mayordomos, mayorales (work crew chiefs) and cowherds also belonged to this group.

The luneros were obligated to cultivate without return ten (10) mecates of first-year milpa (caña-rosa) and ten (10) mecates of second-year milpa (caña) every year. They were also subject to compulsory labor-service, whose duration varied from one hacienda to another. The luneros were also obligated to cultivate a parcel of land for their own subsistence. It was the duty of a mayacol to see that this obligation was met.

Another category of dependents on the hacienda was formed by the renters (arrendatarios). These were free village-dwelling Mayans who paid ten to fifteen percent (10-15%) of their harvest of first-year milpas and half of that on second-year milpa.

Finally, there were the "volunteers"; peasants who furnished their labor power on a contractual basis. The volunteers also came from the villages (Betancourt Perez 1952: 30-33). It might be noted in passing that this ranking of the labor force constituted from that period on a division of unity within the dominated class.

Being disposed of abundant lands and a stable labor force, the large estates tended to form semi-independent economic units

(Chevalier 1952: 377). The village lost ground in terms of an economic unit and the actual rural community was henceforth based on the hacienda (Chevalier 1952: 377). In fact, the stability of the hacienda would not be shakened until the political changes brought on by Mexican Independence.

In conclusion, it can be said that the encomienda played an important part in transforming a pre-existent structure of social class into a specific colonial form. The absence of raw materials sought by the Empire did not prevent the insertion of indigenous labor into the form of mercantile capitalism which was characteristic of this epoch. Only the specific forms of the development of capitalist production as such would differ between Yucatan and that of other colonies.

CHAPTER 4

THE GROWTH OF PRIVATE PROPERTY AND HENEQUEN PRODUCTION

In post-encomienda colonial times, the raising of cattle for export constituted the major source of income for the Yucatan hacendado (Strickon 1965: 44). Before Mexican Independence and particularly until 1821, the date Yucatan entered the Mexican Union, Yucatan exported livestock to Europe and, especially, to Cuba. In this latter market, Yucatan producers enjoyed the protection of Spain (Reed 1971: 19). However, this advantage over potential competitors was lost with Independence and traditional markets quickly disappeared. Argentinian beef producers soon entered the field traditionally reserved for Yucatan and, as a result, new sources of income, new products for export, and, finally, new markets had to be found (Reed 1971: 19).

Since colonial times, sugar cane cultivation had been practiced on a limited scale in Yucatan but, until Independence, its scale was restricted by the Spanish Crown (Reed 1971: 20). It seems that the Crown sought to avoid competition for Spanish wine (Reed 1971: 20). Once the Cuban market for Yucatan cattle was removed, Yucatan also lost its traditional supplier of sugar and rum (Strickon 1965: 49). Beginning at this time, the State gave priority to investment

in sugar cane production through the adoption of preferential tariffs (Strickon 1965: 49). Since the soils in northern Yucatan were not suitable for this crop, the center of economic interest shifted toward the south. Here the soils were richer and more humid and the free Mayans practiced their traditional agriculture. Sugar producers there proceeded to amass lands and to intercept labor power. The sugar hacienda dominated from then on the economic scene in Yucatan. In 1844, the peninsula was self-sufficient in sugar and aguardiente (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 180).

Mexican Independence and economic changes brought about by it did not alter the nature of the relationship between laborers and non-laborers. On the contrary, it provoked an intensification of subordination. After 1821, no protectionist measure intervened to slow this intensification (Betancourt Perez 1953: 27). On the other hand, local legislation favored the accelerated dispossession of Indian communities and the appropriation of free lands (baldfios) (Betancourt Perez 1953: 28).

4.1 The Effect of Economic Liberalism on Land Tenure

The institution of private property would mark one of the triumphs of the liberal spirit. At the time of Independence, however, there was still a considerable distance to be travelled before it could become a realization. In order for that to be accomplished, it was first necessary to abolish the privileges accruing to the nobility, the Church, and to Indian communities or, at least, what was left of them.

This confrontation between two fractions of the ruling class had been developing for a very long time. Trade had in effect favored the rise of a merchant fraction which from the beginning of the colony had been more or less allied with the landed aristocracy. The nobility did not hesitate to marry the daughters of rich merchants who were themselves anxious to mingle with the landed aristocracy (Chevalier 1952: 402). However, due to the withdrawn nature of the hacendados and their landed hegemony, the Creoles were left only with the option of orienting themselves toward commerce, management or the clergy without enjoying the prerogatives of the landed aristocracy. While forming a part of the ruling class, the merchants who were deprived of noble privileges constituted a distinct fraction within it. Since they were in contact with the wider world, the merchants and educated clerics, particularly the Creoles, were more open to the new revolutionary ideas propagated by Enlightenment philosophers that had been concretely applied in American Independence in 1776 and in the French Revolution in 1789. The proximity of the United States amplified the contrast between a nation which had accomplished its bourgeois revolution and another which still lived under the hold of semi-feudalism.

As the historian Parkes states, the Creoles became imbued at this time with liberal ideas. They steered the Mexican Nation toward Independence, republicanism, and breached ecclesiastical domination (Parkes 1971: 147). However, the realization of the ideals proclaimed by Morelos was still far off. When the proclamation of Mexican Inde-

pendence came, the various fractions of the ruling class plunged into more than a half-century of internal struggle.

Until 1821, Yucatan remained outside the struggles which affected the rest of Mexico. Due to the trade links with parts of the Spanish Empire, the Yucatan ruling class hesitated to participate in a war against Spain. Nevertheless, the majority of those people who were able to express their preference tended to favor the cause of independence (Molina Solis 1921: 34). Trade with Spain was, in any case, suspended by the federal government (Molina Solis 1921: 34). With little debate, Yucatan declared itself in favor of the Iguala Plan proposed by the opportunistic power-seeker Agustin de Iturbide. The Iguala Plan demonstrates the relativity of liberal ideas in that period. It foresaw an independent monarchist government for Mexico to be ruled by Ferdinand VII or some other European prince; the Roman Catholic Church would keep its privileges and, finally, Creoles and gachupines (settlers of Spanish origin) would be equal (Parkes 1971: 183). Royalists and liberals rallied under the plan; the Spanish governor of Yucatan fell aside and the peninsula joined the Mexican Union under the aegis of this Plan (Reed 1971: 18). Iturbide declared himself emperor and the first Mexican empire became a sovereign nation (Cline 1962: 18). Liberals and conservatives united for the first round of debate. The struggle between these two groups was still to come and would play around the two principles of centralism and federalism. The conservatives, the Church, and the army would advocate a strong central government. On the other hand, the federalists, proud

heirs of classic liberalism, would call for a confederation in which the provinces would keep a certain autonomy (Parkes 1971: 18).

The agrarian question found itself periodically in the center of these debates. In fact, the progress made by the liberals could be measured by the numerous assaults upon communal lands. During the early years of Union, certain politicians in Yucatan recommended the total abolition of communal lands. The idea did not captivate the voters but the expansion of ejidos was afterward reduced or limited to one square league. Moreover, their use was no longer restricted to the indigenous population (Molina Solis 1921: 57).

After uncertain beginnings, the centralist tendency won in Yucatan and would prevail for nearly twenty years. However, an overzealous application of this principle would come to provoke deep discontentment within the dominant class and lead, finally, to a bold proclamation of independence for the peninsula in 1840. The domination of centralist government was secured by the de facto transfer of legislative powers into Mexican hands and concomitant economic and social disadvantages for Yucatan.

Soon merchants complained of laws made by the central government which prohibited some articles of consumption considered as necessary from entering Yucatan; for example, foreign flour was prohibited (Molina Solis 1921: 91). Around 1834-1835, the central government ordered the only port in northern Yucatan, Sisal, to be closed. All outside commerce now had to be handled by the port of Campeche which meant increased shipping and storage fees, as well as

higher commissions for merchants in the northern region of Yucatan. Consumer prices would also rise. The outcry of protest by merchants, hacendados and the population was so unanimous that the government had to withdraw this initiative (Molina Solis 1921: 121-122).

In 1837, Mexico went into war against secessionist Texas. Yucatan, like no doubt other parts of the Union, had to supply arms and provisions. Another tariff law was imposed on top of the other obligations; according to an estimate by Molina Solis (1921: 134), Yucatan thus had to furnish 200,000 pesos annually for support of the garrisons at Mérida and Campeche. Taxes on rural enterprises (fincas rústicas) and aguardiente distilleries rose, as well as toll rates. Merchants found it difficult to pay for their licenses. Finally, a personal tax of 12 pesos annually was imposed to fill the gap caused the government's abandon of its monopoly on powder, salt, tobacco and gambling (Molina Solis 1921: 125). Furthermore, the government took away troops on a regular basis and sent them inland into the Republic (Molina Solis 1921: 139). This last measure exacerbated the rising discontentment in Yucatan, particularly among the popular classes, who were subject at any given time to be drafted for obligatory military service. The federalists channeled this discontentment and succeeded in overthrowing the central government in Yucatan in 1839. Nonetheless, the Mexican Government continued to take troops. Looking for allies, the new federalist government called upon the Indians, offering to abolish the numerous taxes to which they were subject in

the parishes (21½ reales per marriage) and to lighten their civil taxes. A promise was also made to respect their ejidos and to divide up public lands among them (baldfios). Of course, these promises were made on condition that the Indians participate in the campaign against the centralist government of Mexico (Molina Solis 1921: 145-148).

This campaign did lead to the formal independence of Yucatan with the proclamation of the Provisional Federal Republic in 1840. The re-establishment of a federalist government in Mexico City constituted the condition set by the new republic for its re-entry into the Union. While continuing its campaign in neighboring regions, the new Yucatan government distributed lands and reduced the annual religious tax of Indians to a mere 12 reales (Molina Solis 1921: 166).

The trade question remained crucial for independent Yucatan. In fact, it was in this area that Mexico City made its reprisals. Under the guise of protecting the integrity of national industry, Yucatan's export products were forbidden entry at Mexican ports. Thus, Yucatan accumulated surpluses in maize, sugar, tobacco, aguardiente, cotton cloth, sugar cane honey and panela (Molina Solis 1921: 242-243). It should be said that Mexico had been in severe straits since 1821. A halt to mining forced by floods put the entire national economy in peril. Capital left the country with the gachupines and the money-lenders who remained profited from the situation by demanding interest rates of up to 300% per month (Parkes 1971: 189).

Meanwhile, in Yucatan itself, once the centralist tendency had been wiped out by the proclamation of the Provisional Federal Republic,

an opposition set in between two federalist tendencies, one of which advocated the immediate re-entry into the Union and the other of which favored separatism. The history of this period is nothing other than a succession of coups, pronunciamientos, and reversals which sapped not only the energy but as well the treasury of the government. Slowly but surely, the new Republic headed towards ruin.

The question would be resolved in an unexpected fashion, at least for the ruling class. It will be recalled that during the campaign against the government at Mexico City, one of Yucatan's political factions had profited from Indian dissatisfaction. Since that time, the Indians enjoyed the use of weapons and continued to take part in the struggles led by the different political factions of the ruling class.

However, the exploitation of the peasant and, particularly, Indian labor force went ahead full steam in various enterprises and especially in the south on the sugar haciendas. Indian opinion was not satisfied that personal taxes had been sufficiently changed.

In 1847, the government announced special treatment for the Indians. Indigenous republics similar to those that had existed in the colony were re-established. At the head of these variety of municipal councils, the governor named a cacique of his choice, who might be a White in individual cases. A special tribunal was charged with the civil administration of Indians, who in turn were required to support it with an annual tax of 1 real. Personal taxes rose to 1½ real per month and religious fees were set at 1 real each month. On

the other hand, obligatory labor was established. Each head of family had to cultivate enough grain for the maintenance of his household and, in addition, was obliged to work without remuneration on the plantations. Finally, Indians were forbidden to have military training and, of course, firearms (Molina Solis 1921: 283).

The response was not long in coming. On the 30th of July, 1847, the Mayan Indians in southern Yucatan rose up in mass in what would later be abusively termed the Caste War.

Judged in a one-sided fashion by local historians in terms of a racial and barbaric conflict (Molina Solis 1921; 1927; Irigoyen 1975; and, even, Parkes 1971: 187), this uprising constituted the culmination of several centuries of exploitation and repression. The fact that the most-exploited class coincided with the subordinate ethnic group permitted local historians and essayists, in underlining the viciousness of massacres and the brutality of destruction, to emphasize the racial aspects of the revolt to the exclusion of its content in terms of class struggle.

This period of Yucatan history requires an in-depth analysis by itself, which I am not able to carry out here. I desire only to point out the broad effects of the Indian uprising.

Following years of anarchy in Yucatan, the state treasury was in miserable straits with the result that the local government found it impossible to hold off the Indian forces. Thus, on the 17th of August, 1848, the local government decreed a law "recognizing the

supreme powers of the Mexican Federation" (Molina Solis 1927: 140), which did not stop the various Yucatan political factions in favor of independence from pursuing their internal quarrels. In return, the President of the Republic offered to take over a situation that was, at the very least, perilous in Yucatan (Molina Solis 1927: 140). Thus, Yucatan independence came to an end in exchange for promises that would hardly ever be respected. Financial aid did not arrive. As for military aid, it was worse than inadequate.

However, the situation was alarming. In less than two years, the indigenous rebels who, by the way, found a supply of arms in the British colony of Honduras, controlled a territory extending from Honduras to the border of present-day Campeche; more precisely, from the Bay of Chetumal to the village Maxcanu and from Cape Catoche to the village of Temax, this last village being situated at the limit of the line of fire between the east and the west. In a short time, the population had been reduced by extermination or emigration to a third of its former size (Molina Solis 1927: 115).

Left to fend for itself, the Yucatan government sought its own solutions. On the one hand, it drafted non-rebel Indians from the western part of the territory as auxiliaries into the army. Armed only with machetes and axes, these conscriptees were given derisory title of hidalgo while the government gave assistance to their families (Molina Solis 1927: 118). On the other hand, the government persuaded merchants to give monetary aid (Molina Solis 1927: 184). It was attempted without success to negotiate an end to arms sales

to Indians with the British merchants of Honduras (Molina Solis 1927: 202) and, in a telling move, amnesty was offered to rebel Indians (Molina Solis 1927: 206). The only success Yucatan had in all this was, with the aid of its armed force, to limit disorders to the southeastern region of the Peninsula.

It was only at the dawn of the twentieth century that the last flicker of the rebellion finally died out with the intervention of Federal troops, the creation of the territory of Quintana Roo, the development of the chicle industry, and finally, the secularization of the Cult of the Talking Cross which had given a second wind to the war after 1857⁽¹⁾.

4.2 The Rise of the Henequen Industry

The rise of the henequen industry is often presented as the last hope for a Yucatan in the grips of the so-called Caste War (Strickon 1965: 52). Certainly, there is no doubt that the destruction and looting of the sugar haciendas - as much as by Indians as by the troops in their pursuit (Molina Solis 1927: 208) - effectively reduced by two-thirds the value of real estate (Benitez 1965: 62). There was no longer any way for the government to procure tax revenue in this sector. However, the extended pursuit of repressive measures and the re-establishment of Peninsula economy required funds at all cost. The aid which the government furnished the henequen industry, by favoring its conversion into an export industry, was only one additional means of re-floating a treasury that was constantly empty.

Traditionally, henequen was produced in this region unaffected by war, although sporadically. The true origin of this category of agave termed henequen and universally known as Sisal, the port from which it is expedited, is not known. Moreover, until the last century, henequen was found only in Yucatan. The history of the origin of henequen is part of Mayan mythology. Even today, it is said that this plant was discovered by a noble Maya named Zamná, an herbalist in his free time, when he was looking for new plants to dress his herb garden. Touching a large needled leaf of the plant that would later be called henequen, Zamná cut his hand. Then, a servant, wanting to avenge his master, ripped off the leaf and hit it repeatedly against a rock. The leaf split open and out came a bundle of white fiber whose practical use for his people Zamná immediately glimpsed (Benitez 1965: 55). It is, in any case, certain that the discovery of henequen and its practical utility dates from time immemorial (Cardos 1959: 28-29) and it seems that the Maya always made use of it on a small scale for household use. In colonial times, there were even some villages specialized in the cultivation of henequen and the fabrication of rope, cord and sacks for export (Strickon 1965: 53). In 1780 and 1781, there is mention that "73 cables, 61 mooring lines and 876 small pieces" were sent to Spain (Rodriguez 1966: 303-304).

Corporate henequen production began in 1783 with an enterprise spread out over 32 hectares (Strickon 1965: 53). A small industrialization thus commenced. Little by little, without abandoning livestock-

raising or maize cultivation, the hacendados started growing henequen for commercial purposes. In 1811, the statisticians of the time realized that the export value of manufactured henequen products attained 60,000 pesos monthly (Betancourt Perez 1953: 49). Tables 2 and 3 summarize the state of henequen's commercial activity near the end of the colonial period.

TABLE 2

The First Shipments of Henequen Products 1770-1784

quantity	nature of product
171	cables
101	mooring lines
1,180	small pieces

Source: Irigoyen 1975: 118

TABLE 3

Exports of Henequen Products in 1802

quantity	product	value (pesos)
1,194 arrobas ⁽²⁾	raw henequen	6,065
130,800	sacks	42,388
unknown	rigging, tackle	2,824
325	hammocks	846
etc.	etc.	etc.

Source: Irigoyen 1975: 91

However, it was only during the economic stagnation after Independence that Yucatan's dominant class gave serious consideration and effort to the systematic cultivation of henequen.

Thus, beginning the 25th of April, 1828, a few years after having joined the Mexican Union, the Yucatan government made arrangements whereby sections of bush were given in concession to small farmers who were obligated to plant a certain amount of henequen each year (Molina Solis 1921: 89; Cline 1948: 32). This arrangement recalls a decree made by the colonial government at the beginning of the nineteenth century according to which all Indians were required to plant agave around their courtyard and along their stone fences "both for their benefit and security" (Irigoyen 1975: 93).

In 1830, an organized effort at the establishment of the henequen industry is noted (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 181) with the formation of a "Compañia para Cultivo y Beneficio del Henequen" (Irigoyen 1975: 15). Its purpose was to promote, perfect and increase the cultivation of henequen and to aid in the transformation of the product (Cline 1948: 35).

Already at this time, Mérida had a workshop where cables, riggings, rope, sacks, and hammocks were being fabricated. These products were mainly destined for local consumption although there was some export to Cuba and Mexico City (Molina Solis 1921: 299).

As a result of the Caste War, many Indian and mestizo refugees flocked toward the western part of Yucatan (Cline 1948: 47) and Mérida in particular. This labor force soon found work in the rigging work-

shops whose number rose in 1847 to seven. The concentration of these workshops in Mérida is in part a consequence of poor roads which made it the only town directly linked to the port of Sisal. In effect, most of these products were destined for export. The fact that the workers in these shops were exempt from military service during the middle of a war (Rodriguez 1966: 305) gives a good idea of the importance the local government attached to this industry.

The export of sacks manufactured in these workshops (Cline 1948: 47) constituted a significant source of revenue for Yucatan. However, there was a shift more and more toward to the export of crude fiber rather than manufactured products. In 1847, to be exact, the export of crude fiber reached a volume of 100,000 arrobas; one arroba equals 25 pounds (Molina Solis 1921: 299). Tables 4A and 4B show the situation at this time.

TABLE 4A

The Henequen Situation in 1852

	quantity	
	arroba	kilograms
Exports of Manufactured Products	84,648	973,452
Exports of Raw Fiber	100,000	1,150,000
Domestic Consumption of All Kinds	75,759	871,228.5
Total	260,407	2,994,680.5

Source: Betancourt P. 1953: 49
(based on statistics for 1852)

TABLE 4B

Consumption and Export of Henequen in 1847

nature of product	market	quantity			%
		arrobas	kilograms	short tons	
manufactured	local	73,759	848,228.5	920	28.6
	Cuba	84,648	973,452	1,040	32.4
crude fiber	U.S.A.	100,000	1,150,000	1,250	39.0
total		258,407	2,971,680.5	3,210	100.0

Source: Cline 1948: 43
(after Regil and Péon Estadísticas: 313)

Already, it can be seen that the export volume of henequen in its various forms surpassed that for local consumption. However, the export of henequen manufactured products remained greater than that of crude fiber.

The discovery and subsequent perfecting of a machine for decortivating the leaves of henequen provides a convincing illustration of the non-determinant character of technology in itself. The process of decortivating a henequen leaf is very simple. It amounts to freeing the fiber from its thin envelop of cellulose and then drying this fiber, which is then ready for transformation. When the fiber was destined for household consumption, the ancient Mayan tonkos used for decortivating one leaf at a time were sufficient. The nascent

industry, however, could not rest content with that technology, particularly given the fact that the labor force still attached to the land and now decimated by the so-called Caste War was quite scarce. The incentive to invent would come to offset the lack of truly adequate conditions for development of the industry. Of course, the local government cast a favorable eye upon any initiative in this area. In 1833, the American consul in Campeche, Henry Perrine, is credited with the invention of decortivating machine. This machine left much to be desired in regard to the rate and quality of decortication, despite subsequent improvements incorporated by Manuel Cecilio and Timoteo Villamor (Molina Solis 1921: 300). In 1852, the local Congress announced a reward of 2,000 pesos to whoever might invent an efficient machine (Irigoyen 1975: 33). The response was not long in coming. The sorcerer's apprentices got quickly down to work and produced in 1857 the famous rueda Solis, invented by José Esteban Solis (Molina Solis 1927: 425) which resulted from an improvement upon the machine of Manuel Cecilio Villamor. In the space of 10 years, the haciendas acquired 64 of these machines (Echanove Trujillo 1944: 639).

Thus, the technological conditions of the development of the henequen industry were gradually put into place. The commercial and financial conditions, on the one hand, and the juridical conditions concerning land tenure must now be considered.

Between 1830 and 1850, while Yucatan inventors looked for a solution to their problems with the decortivating machine, the young American inventor McCormick was perfecting his famous combine. After

several trials, henequen rope was adopted for use in pulling off the sheafs of grain because this type of rope showed itself to be the most resistant and reliable. It had been thought to use pins for a link but these were lethal for the cattle which grazed in the field after harvest. The international conjuncture also favored the adoption of henequen fiber. War was declared against Russia in 1853, which had been the principal producer and exporter of hemp. Henequen thus filled the gap created by the market scarcity of hemp (Irigoyen 1975: 27; Chardon 1961: 30).

In addition to the necessity for the Yucatan government to find sources of income in order to refloat the state treasury, this element of conjuncture as it relates to grain cultivation in the United States made it even more urgent to develop the technological infrastructure for henequen production in Yucatan itself. Once this problem had been resolved, there still remained the difficulty of finding capital for the development of this infrastructure. In Yucatan, financial capital was notable only for its absence; without banks, the would-be Yucatan capitalists had no recourse but to seek credit outside of Yucatan itself.

A prosperous merchant and native of Tekax, don Eusebio Escalante, took charge of this mission. Through him, the local ruling class was able in a short time to re-orient production.

It was because of his prosperity and prestige that, during the troubles of 1847, don Eusebio was summoned to Mérida where he would

take over the re-organization of public finance (Irigoyen 1975: 69). In 1851, he was made a member of the Mérida town council and became one of its most influential participants (Irigoyen 1975: 69). Due to his commercial activities, don Eusebio was in close contact with the Thebaud Bros. house in New York, which did business with the regional bankers (Betancourt Perez 1953: 53; Irigoyen 1975: 71).

The conditions of credit for the henequen industry which were negotiated by don Eusebio and Thebaud Bros. may be described as follows. American financiers would lend to the hacendados at an annual rate of 9% of which 5% would return to bankers, 2% to Thebaud, and 2% to don Eusebio himself (Irigoyen 1975: 71). Since the hacendados disposed of no liquid assets, capital and interest was to be paid in kind; that is, in crude fiber. Thus, the hacendados found a source of capital but, at the same time, became involved with two costly intermediaries. Moreover, this arrangement put an end to the local transformation of crude fiber. It was only a taste of what was to come but, for the moment at least, the future of the dominant class seemed assured.

This source of financing soon allowed the hacendados to complete their technological infrastructure. A steam engine was added to the Solis wheel in 1858, the first press for making bales of fiber was brought in, and a narrow-gauge decauvilles railway was built for speeding the transportation of henequen leaves from the field to the decorating complex (Irigoyen 1975: 73).

The period was characterized by vigorous economic and political development. On the one hand, henequen exports from Sisal had already attained 31,000 tons in 1856, which represented 1,400,000 pesos of income for the Yucatan State (Pasos Peniche 1967: 6). On the other hand, the Caste War had been relatively contained and the Reform Era (La Reforma) was entered.

4.3 The Institutionalization of Private Property

While the Yucatan government attempted desperately to repress the Indian revolt and to refloat its budget, the rest of Mexico was embroiled in a series of civil wars opposing conservatives and liberals. The liberals under the aegis of the Ocampo's were, for the moment, contained by Juarez. Hardly had the liberal Constitution been proclaimed in 1857 when war broke out anew, escalated this time by the entry into conflict of France, Great Britain, and Spain, countries to whom Mexico owed sizable debts (Cline 1962: 19). Political tendencies were polarized between the Republicans (liberal) and Imperialist (conservative) camps (Cline 1962: 19).

In February, 1856, Yucatan's representatives in Mexico City allied themselves with the liberal party (Molina Solis 1927: 278). Both centralists and federalists in Yucatan then seem to have become liberals (Molina Solis 1927: 278).

Despite the conservative victory by Zuloaga in Mexico City in 1858 and the momentary recognition of this new president by the Yucatan governor (Molina Solis 1927: 309), both Yucatan and Campeche remained

for the most part loyal to Juarez (Molina Solis 1927: 309). This did not prevent partisan groups from forming within this tendency; thus, in less than two or three years, the Yucatan government had to silence some 14 pronunciamientos (Molina Solis 1927: 369). Such political vitality provided, moreover, an excellent pretext for centralizing powers and the laws of the Reforma were applied with exemplary rigidity (Molina Solis 1927: 368). Despite such legislative waves by the Yucatan government as the order that uncultivated lands (baldíos) should be returned to the villages (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 190), the process known as desamortización soon entered into vigorous development in Yucatan. These desamortización laws led to the dismantling of village ejidos. Moreover, they confirmed a process of seizure and land concentration that had begun with the Conquest and colonization. Thus, between 1878 and 1912, 66 ejidos totalling an area of 134,000 hectares were split up into 12,000 lots of about 11 hectares each (Betancourt Perez 1953: 52). In fact, some of these lots have survived on present-day deeds and will be seen in the last part of this work. These lots were divided up among free peasants, which is how peasant lands first entered into commercial circuits. Consistent with liberal ideology, these new small-holders could henceforth dispose of their land as they saw fit. In fact, one of the last bastions of the indigenous social formation had just been obliterated. The final phase of the process of liberating labor-power could now proceed. Henceforth, the hacendados now transformed into large landowners no longer had to rob but rather had only to buy these small lots and

public lands (baldfios), which also had been integrated into commercial circuits by virtue of the same Reform laws. This does not mean that the purchases were always equitable (a few bottles of aguardiente served handily to speed along the signature, a simple X, of the smallholder) but, rather, no "anti-capitalist" law provided anymore an obstacle. Thus, a plethora of small lots enlarged the haciendas and the labor-power now definitively divorced from its means of production was there absorbed. The growth of henequen plantation was so rapid that the local labor supply did not suffice. Consequently, workers from Italy, the Canaries, Korea, Java, and China, and later, Yaqui rebels (Chardon 1961: 32) had to be imported. During the early period of the Reforma, Mexico was besieged by the French, who were thinking not only of the debts Mexico owed her but still dreamed of empire on this side of the Atlantic. The victory against the French on the 5th of May, 1862, provoked much enthusiasm among the youth of Yucatan's ruling class (Molina Solis 1927: 361), who were won definitively over to liberalism. However, the French troops invaded Mexico City and the republican government under Juarez was ousted (Cline 1962: 19). Mobilization around this event and loyalty to the now-defunct liberal Republic constituted a kind of political springboard for future big capitalists like the Molina's (Olegario Molina in particular), the Donde's, the Péon's, the Ancona's, etc. Olegario Molina first distinguished himself as a leader of the student forces who denounced the Empire (now represented in Mexico City by the Emperor Maximilian of Austria and his wife Charlotte) and advocated the re-establishment

of the Republic (Molina Solis 1927: 373-376). Despite threats of imprisonment, this golden youth made an appeal to the public through the press; first, by the satirical magazine La Píldora and later with the newspaper Yucatan (Molina Solis 1927: 394).

The year 1867 marked throughout Mexico the surrender of the Empire and the restoration of the Republic. Campeche was definitively separated from Yucatan in 1867 (Pasos Peniche 1967: 13). Its territory now reduced, Yucatan's population attained only 300,000 inhabitants as compared with the 500,000 that made up the entire peninsula in 1812 (Molina Solis 1927: 414). The new state was divided into 16 parts. At the head of each of these, the governor installed under the guise of popular suffrage a political chief (jefe político) (Molina Solis 1927: 414) who was charged with several functions but who, according to Betancourt Perez (1953: 56) was practically at the service of the hacendados for recruiting labor in the villages. Commercial affairs remained under the jurisdiction of the State (Molina Solis 1927: 415).

Most of the youth who had distinguished themselves in support of the Republic were integrated to greater or lesser degrees into the Yucatan government. In 1868, Olegario Molina was named advisor to the government of Manuel Cepeda Peraza. It was Peraza who had held off the imperialist troops at Mérida (Molina Solis 1927: 425). We will soon hear more of Molina in regard to henequen at the turn of the century.

By the end of the decade 1860-1870, all the necessary conditions for the development of the henequenera industry were in place. The technological infrastructure was gradually developing, thanks to commercial and banking capital. Yet, even more importantly, the liberal ideology favoring industrial development at the juridical level presided over the constitution of both the Mexican and Yucatan governments. The old aristocracy was finally ousted from political life to make way for young industrialists. In brief, after a thousand-and-one twists and turns, Mexico finally arrived at the end of the first stage of its bourgeois revolution. The second would not be long in coming.

The ensemble of factors just described concerning the particular arrangement negotiated by don Eusebio Escalante with North American banks led rapidly to an increase in the area under henequen cultivation and a rise in export volume. The following tables permit us to update the situation in quantitative terms and to judge its progress.

TABLE 5

Cultivated Surface Area in Yucatan in 1845

product	surface area	
	mecates	hectares
Maize	6,000,159	240,006.36
Tobacco and Henequen	181,572	7,262.88
Sugar Cane	102,081	4,083.24
Rice	46,666	1,866.64
total	6,330,478	253,219.12

Source: Betancourt P. 1953: 35

Table 5 shows the relative importance of henequen in relation to other products in 1845. The fact that the statisticians of the time did not see fit to distinguish henequen from tobacco production can be taken as an indicator of the minor importance accorded henequen.

TABLE 6

Surface Area Planted in Henequen 1860-1916

Area Planted in Henequen				
year	area			rate of increase %
	mecates	hectares	increase (has)	
1860	65,000	2,600		
1869	153,802	6,152	3,552	57.7
1878	781,000	31,240	25,088	80.3
1909	3,660,500	146,420	115,180	78.6
1916	8,000,000	320,000	173,580	54.0

Source: (after Betancourt P. 1953: 54)

This table gives an accurate idea of the spectacular increase in the area under henequen cultivation⁽³⁾. The rate of seizure of lands that have now become private can be deduced from it.

TABLE 7

Exports Destined for the United States 1860-1916

year	quantity	
	bales	tons
1860	1,793	340.67
1861*	627*	119.13
1870	19,893	3,779.67
1874**	30,527**	5,800.13
1880	112,911	21,453.09
1889**	252,432**	47,962.08
1897**	419,975**	79,795.25
1916	1,191,433	226,372.27
1918**	798,862**	151,783.78

Sources: Betancourt P. 1953: 57

* Irigoyen 1975: 111

** Benitez 1965: 69,113,114

Finally, Table 7 provides irrefutable evidence that the true take-off in the commercialization and export of henequen occurred precisely between 1861, when only 627 pacas were exported, and 1870, when exports reached already 19,893 pacas. As for the export of manufactured products (tobacco, sugar cane, rice), they virtually disappeared from the chart. This change in orientation resulted directly from the conditions under which the nascent henequen industry was financed. Yucatan was thus transformed into a supplier of raw materials for foreign markets. The manufacture of finished fiber went into bankruptcy locally and the last rigging factory in Mérida was forced to close in 1883, unable to compete with North American manufacturing (Irigoyen 1975: 102; Rodriguez 1966: 305; Chardon 1961: 32). The fate of Yucatan was henceforth tied to fluctuations in the world, and particularly the North American, demand for crude fiber. This dependence, such as it related to credit terms, led rapidly to dramatic changes in price levels.

While the value of exports increased, the price of crude fiber offered to producers not only did not increase but actually dropped sharply, as the following table shows.

TABLE 8

Prices for Crude Fiber 1845-1915

year	selling price	cost of production	net profit	interest rate
1845	0.02	n.d.	n.d.	5 %
1847	0.03	0.024	0.006	6 %
1860	0.03	n.d.	n.d.	9 %
1872	0.118	0.022	0.096	18-24 %
1873	0.090	n.d.	n.d.	
1874	0.082-0.055	n.d.	n.d.	
1875	0.055-0.045	n.d.	n.d.	
1876	0.028	n.d.	n.d.	
1877	0.022	0.022	n.d.	18-24 %
1884-1885	0.018-0.017	n.d.	n.d.	
1915	0.135	0.100	0.035	10 %

Sources: Cline 1948: 46

Benitez 1965: 70

This depression of prices was perfectly foreseeable; it was a potential of the arrangement which Eusebio Escalante had negotiated with Thebaud Bros. Since then, other intermediaries placed themselves between fiber producers and North American consumers. In perfect competition, the houses of Dondé, Escalante Ibarra, Skinner, Pierce and Molina found a place as intermediaries alongside Eusebio Escalante (Betancourt Perez 1953: 58). As producers of fiber, they were also subject to low price levels. On the other hand, the difference that had to be made up by all the hacendados was in their case filled by the profits they seized as intermediaries in the service of North American financiers. Beginning in 1875, the rate of interest varied accordingly between 18% and 25% (Cline 1948: 42).

In 1876, faced with the decrease in prices, the hacendados turned to their government for help, which granted them a premium of 5 centavos of one peso for each arroba of crude fiber bound for Europe. It seems to have been the first step toward the establishment of a truly Yucatan bank (Cline 1948: 42), but represented only one step in what was to be a very long road.

This encouragement of export to European markets prompted discontent in the United States, which that country expressed in a diplomatic note to Mexico City (Irigoyen 1975: 103). While the results of this diplomatic intervention are not entirely clear, it is at least certain that the United States intended more direct involvement in political decisions concerning henequen.

The reigning spirit of free enterprise rendered the hacendados even more vulnerable. They still had recourse to several intermediaries who would offer them varying conditions, thus discouraging any effort at corporate action. Were the intermediaries not for the most part genuine Yucatan sons themselves and, what is more, hacendados? Confidence reigned.

On the other hand, the hacendados could always try to reduce their costs of production. If machines could not be written off, at least the labor force constituted a malleable raw material. It suffices to read John K. Turner's Mexico Bárbaro (1974 edition; first published in 1911) and inform oneself of the polemic of the period in Yucatan and elsewhere (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 222-225) to be convinced of that fact. Looking only at day-worker's wages, Cline noted that on one hacienda, Chaczikin, farm workers in 1846 received 1 real/mecate for weeding; fifteen years later, in 1861, the wage was the same (Cline 1948: 36). Farm workers were still "lucky" to get a wage. As we know, despite the official abolition of serfdom in 1821, it continued a de facto existence until the Mexican Revolution. Official statistics never provide a chance to analyze this phenomenon in a systematic fashion but it suffices to listen to the accounts of old people who still today refer to this time as they do to slavery days. The Spanish word, esclavitud, moreover, passed directly to the Mayan language. Here the word "slavery" refers to a particularly severe form of peonage. Those who mystify (Raymond 1977) this era by underlining the low level of prices and the security that the paternalistic

domination of the hacendado offered them perhaps lived in the time of slavery (as a small farmer-ranchero, for example, working freely on the hacienda) but surely were not themselves peones. According to Cline (1948: 46), in 1880 there were at least 20,767 families held through debt on the hacienda. At that time, it was inconceivable for either sugar hacendados, henequeneros, or the individual toilers on forest concessions to question the maintenance of peonage (Cline 1948: 46). Soon, peonage was not even restricted to Indians as certain mestizos fell into servitude (Cline 1948: 48). Nor was peonage restricted to heads of families. As Strickon mentions (1965: 57), the quota of leaves that had to be cut was higher for a married man than a bachelor. Thus, a married man had no choice but to make his family work with him in the fields. The costs of training workers never presented a problem for the owners. Given the shortage of labor power (were foreign workers not imported in an attempt to compensate for it?) and the competition for this scarce labor power among different sectors, it is not surprising that peonage intensified at the close of the 19th century. In fact, some early twentieth century revolutionaries in Yucatan began their actions by blowing the padlocks off the barracks that served to house enservfed workers (according to a Temax informant).

The entire Republic entered, in 1876, into the period of the porfiriato (President Porfirio Diaz's time). A page had just been turned on a tormented era. In contrast, the porfiriato, particularly in its early days, created a time of calm and social peace capable of attracting foreign investment, especially British and French.

Yucatan continued to rely on the cultivation and export of henequen. As the table shows, the prices for fiber had not ceased to go down since 1873 and reached the dramatic level of 0.01.76 dollar in 1885. The more widespread use of McCormick's combine in the United States had momentary repercussions in Yucatan in terms of a short-lived rise in prices, especially between 1885-1890 (Pasos Peniche 1967: 6).

TABLE 9
Fiber Prices 1880-1934

Year	price
1880	0.02.22
1885*	0.01.76*
1887	0.03.68
1889	0.05.72
1895	0.02.25
1902	0.09.84
1910	0.04.25
1915	0.05.89
1916	0.05.59
1917	0.12.25
1918	0.14.70
1919	0.06.50
1920	0.04.50
1925	0.06.66
1930	0.05.50
1933	0.01.90
1934	0.03.48

Sources: Betancourt Perez 1953: 58,70,72

* Irigoyen 1975: 111

The rise in prices in 1902 was in reality a consequence of the Spanish-American War of 1898 because, in fact, a new financial arrangement was about to put most hacendados into a squeeze.

This time it was don Olegario Molina who served as the instrument of North American financiers. Don Olegario had in timely fashion climbed the ladder from his position as advisor to the Yucatan government in 1868 to governor in 1902. This period was characterized by the enforcement of the laws of colonización, put forward by President Porfirio Diaz in 1883 and 1889. These laws gave the right to concentrate untitled lands, supposedly virgin (Lapointe-Lavoie 1978: 188), without taking account of their customary use by Indians. It was required that these lands be surveyed and, for this service, surveying companies claimed of a third of the surveyed land in return (Lapointe-Lavoie 1978: 188). Once again the rate of the dispossession of Indians and the peasantry was intensified. Chardon even cites the case of small landholders who had their parcels surveyed in order to protect their rights and then, incapable of paying the surveyor, had to turn their land over to him (1961: 34).

Olegario Molina had a direct interest in the enforcement of these laws. He was one of the principal shareholders in the Compañía Colonizadora (Lapointe-Lavoie 1978: 192) and the Compañía de Ferrocarriles Sud Orientales de Yucatan (Lapointe-Lavoie 1978: 187), companies which distributed concessions on the basis of this classification of land.

At the same time, in the United States, competition between the various manufacturers of agricultural machinery (McCormick,

Deering, Jones and Glessner) who were the major customers of henequen fiber, had been eliminated. Henceforth, Yucatan intermediaries would have to do business with the International Harvester Company, a trust formed in 1902. The hacendados, as fiber producers and purchasers of decorticating machinery, now faced a veritable monopoly. As governor of Yucatan, Olegario Molina was designated as the right-hand man of the monopoly.

The house of Olegario Molina & Company became the local agent of International Harvester. The contract under whose ironclad terms the hacendados of Yucatan now fell is surely worth citing:

"... it is understood that Molina Y Compañía will consecrate their efforts to the lowering of prices for sisal fiber, for which they will pay only the price dictated by The International Harvester Company. In anticipation of the success of these efforts, they (Molina y Co.) will purchase the smallest quantities possible of fiber." (cited by Irigoyen 1975: 104)

The agreement would be profitable for International Harvester. Between 1902 and 1907, this company extracted \$37,845,165 in profits from Yucatan (Mena Brito 1967: 207). Until 1913-1914, International Harvester and Plymouth (which had not been absorbed by the trust) consumed between the two of them more than 80% of the harvest of Yucatan henequen (Irigoyen 1975: 104).

The political and financial control of the henequenera industry enjoyed by Olegario Molina and ten or so other families (locally called the "divine caste") provoked several subsequent attempts by hacendados outside any alliance with these families to mount unified action. In 1906, when prices appeared to tumble in an irreversible direction, the

hacendados created the Cámara Agrícola de Yucatan, hoping to strengthen their economic position (Betancourt Perez 1968: 2; Irigoyen 1975: 105). They also tried to rally local intellectuals like Delio Moreno and Carlos R. Menendez of the Revista de Yucatan (Betancourt Perez 1968: 2); Menendez was the founder of the present-day daily Diario de Yucatan. On the ideological level, the hacendados founded the Liga de Acción Social (Betancourt Perez 1968: 2) which, beginning in 1910, established schools on the different haciendas (Betancourt Perez 1963: 5). Finally, on the political front they formed the Centro Electoral Independiente in 1907 (Betancourt Perez 1968: 5). In 1910, they organized the Compañía de Hacendados Henequeneros and, finally, the Compañía de Negociación Exportadora de Henequen (Irigoyen 1975: 105).

In Yucatan as throughout the Republic, the power of the oligarchy was beginning to be challenged, not only by the hacendados frustrated with the privileges of the oligarchy but also by the intellectual petty bourgeoisie, which was often financed by property owners. The petty bourgeoisie, bullied for at least three decades, had no other option left to it except to ally with the great majority of the Mexican people - the peasantry. A new conception of the ejido would later concretize this opportunistic alliance. However, a long and painful road had yet to be travelled. The pre-revolutionary period had begun.

CHAPTER 4 NOTES

- (1) See Bartolomé y Barabas (1977).
- (2) 1 arroba = 11.5 kilograms.
- (3) Comparison of this table with Table 7 shows that the most important increase in area planted in henequen (an increase of 80.3% between 1869 and 1878) corresponds to the period during which prices constantly rose.

CHAPTER 5

THE EJIDO

5.1 The Revolution and Yucatan

Following the efforts led by Francisco I. Madero against the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz, groups were organized here and there throughout the Republic and joined the anti-re-electionist party which he had helped found. In June 1909, Madero visited Yucatan and the local delegation of this new party proposed its candidate, José Maria Pino Suarez, for the governorship in the term 1910-1914 (Betancourt Perez 1968a: 4). Olegario Molina had been governor until 1907 and was then invited by Porfirio Diaz to fill a post in Mexico City. Molina, however, left a trusted confidant in his place (Betancourt Perez 1968a). At this time, O. Molina controlled more than 6 million hectares on which toiled 8,000 Yaquis banished from Sonora by Porfirio Diaz, 3,000 Koreans, and between 100,000-125,000 Mayan Indians (Mena Brito 1967: 246)⁽¹⁾.

The hacendados who did not belong to the "divine caste", as they were called, financed the anti-re-electionist party while at the same time presenting their own candidate in the name of the Centro

Electoral Independiente, Moreno Canton. This splitting-up of candidates intensified agitation against the oligarchy, which is precisely what the hacendados sought to do (Betancourt Perez 1968a: 4). While Madero's party advocated legal means to put an end to the dictatorship, the Centro Electoral Independiente controlled by the hacendados fomented a mini-insurrection. This was quickly put down and the principal actors, including Carlos R. Menendez, had a taste of the local version of porfirist prisons (Betancourt Perez 1968a: 5). They came out of prison with the prestige of having struggled against Porfirism.

Repression of Madero's party was not long in coming. Madero was forced into exile in the United States and from there proposed his famous plan of San Luis Potosi. This plan called for massive armed insurrection on the 20th of November, 1910, and demanded that the elections scheduled for just before that date be declared illegal (Cline 1962: 26). The plan was a success. Porfirio Diaz abdicated the 21st of May, 1911, and escaped to France; Madero became president of the Mexican Republic (Cline 1962: 26). Pino Suarez, who had in the meantime become governor of Yucatan, was called upon by Madero to be vice-president. Both would later be assassinated by the counter-revolutionary forces represented by Huerta (Cline 1962: 27) in 1913.

During his short term at the head of the provisional government in Yucatan, Pino Suarez presided over the organization of the Comisión Reguladora del Henequen in 1912 (Irigoyen 1975: 105). The purpose of this institution was to "defend" henequen prices and

stabilize its market (Irigoyen 1975: 105; Betancourt Perez 1953: 59); in other words, to help the hacendados sell henequen directly to American consumers (Chardon 1961: 36). Despite political changes (in 1913-1914, the huertistas dominated the Yucatan government), the hacendados continued to win benefits for the cultivation and marketing of henequen. In 1914, it was decreed that all the debts contracted by the hacendados and payable in henequen were cancelled. The majority of hacendados had been paying in kind to North American financiers for their costly machinery, which is why they were not previously able to control the marketing of henequen. The hacendados were now freed from their costly intermediaries (Chardon 1961: 36). Meanwhile, another part of the population officially received a different kind of liberty when peonage for indebtedness of the acasillados was abolished by decree (Chardon 1961: 37).

The armed revolution was meantime pursued. In 1913, the revolutionary forces regrouped under Carranza. Carranza's Plan de Guadalupe proposed the formation of a constitutional government consistent with the plan previously put forward by Madero (Cline 1962: 28). Huerta was eliminated the 15th of August, 1914.

Beginning in 1915, the constitutional government was represented in Yucatan by the general Salvador Alvarado. He put an end to a period of deep political confusion and local counter-revolutions of which the last, led by a certain Ortiz Argumedo, lasted only one month and five days (Bolio 1973: 66) but cost no less than 600 lives (Betancourt Perez 1974: 45).

Certain elements of conjuncture would preside over the political and economic reorganization of Yucatan. The First World War had just broken out. For the henequen, this war, like those that had preceded it since the end of the nineteenth century, meant increased demand and higher prices for the fiber. As Table 9 illustrates, the price per pound of fiber went from \$0.05.59 in 1916 to \$0.12.25 in 1917 and reached a record high of \$0.14.70 in 1918. However, a recession was coming that would not be due only to the end of War.

Originally, the principal type of agave (agave sisalana Perrine) grown in Yucatan was not found in other parts of the world. Once the prospect of its utilization became significant, investors sought to develop plantations in other countries. Henry Perrine, the American consul in Campeche, was among those who, after 1838, attempted to have the agave grown in southern Florida (Irigoyen 1975: 97). This experimentation, however, had no practical effects on the production and marketing of henequen in Yucatan until the beginning of the twentieth century. Acting with the complicity of the local oligarchy and despite a prohibition against the exporting of young henequen shoots, the International Harvester Company set about propagating the Yucatan agave in other parts of the world (Irigoyen 1975: 107). The trust had no difficulty in diffusing the plant because Dutch, German, and English colonizers were receptive to any innovation that could be profitable in their African colonies (Diaz 1938: 39). In the same stroke, International Harvester was able to diversify its sources of supply. Since the colonial powers were financially stronger than Mexico, they were able to invest in improving the plant and the fiber

itself. Thus, in a short time the African and Asian countries to which henequen had been introduced became more important producers than Yucatan. Tables 10 and 11 summarize the effect on Yucatan of the propagation of henequen plantations in other parts of the world.

TABLE 10

Proportion of World Demand Supplied by Yucatan
Henequen in the Period 1900-1938

Year	1900	1916	1922	1929	1933	1938
Proportion	100%	88%	75%	53%	39%	23%

Source: Benitez 1965: 118

TABLE 11

Comparison of Production of Different Countries
in Various Years (in tons)

Year	Yucatan	Java	Africa	Haiti	Brazil
1921	106,800	14,000		nil	n.d.
1936	112,000	75,000	150,000	6,000	n.d.
1950	n.d.	n.d.	n.d.	30,000	40,000

Source: Irigoyen 1975: 100

However, it would only be much later that the effects of the displacement of Yucatan as the sole producer of henequen would be felt.

The constitutional period in Yucatan opened with the arrival of General Alvarado. Reformist measures were taken and began to affect to differing degrees the various classes in the Yucatan social formation.

5.2 The Faltering Start to Agrarian Reform and the Socialist Episode

One of Alvarado's first acts in Yucatan was to reorganize the Comisión Reguladora del Henequen, which had been founded in 1912. The new Reguladora tried to eliminate competition between henequen producers and exploitation by buyers and intermediaries (Betancourt Perez 1953: 66). It appears that the measure, which temporarily put an end to a free market for henequen, was beneficial to the hacendados. Within three years (1915-1918), Yucatan sold more than two million bales for the sum of 191 million pesos and a profit of 41 million pesos (Betancourt Perez 1953: 70-71). However, in fact Yucatan workers did not really profit from this income. Apparently, the Reguladora served as a conveyor belt relaying the benefits of henequen export to the Federal government. Henequen was a significant source of foreign capital and no doubt helped finance Carranza's campaigns. Yucatan gave more than 8 million pesos to Carranza in support of his campaign against the enemies of constitutionalism (Carta Peninsular 1976; Gilly 1971: 167). This drawing-off of

Yucatan revenue by the constitutional Federal government became in the long run a symbol for some of the excessive centralization by the Federal government at the expense of localities.

While Alvarado tried to re-organize henequen marketing and rally the hacendados to his side in this effort, he also had to enforce the law of the 6th January, 1915 decreed by the constitutional government. Essentially, this law proposed to return the ejidos that had been seized by large landowners to the villages; thus, it meant the dismantling of the large estates or latifundia and, in Yucatan in particular, the return of henequen fields to the ejidatarios (Betancourt Perez 1953: 66; Chardon 1961: 37). The essence of this law would be included in the Constitution of 1917. In Yucatan, a Comisión Local Agraria was created in order to facilitate the enforcement of measures which amounted to agrarian reform. Each village was required to set up its own agrarian committee (Irigoyen 1974: 11). The work of brigades charged with surveying the limits of ejidos was soon compromised by an American diplomatic intervention; of course, the most powerful hacendados had turned to the U.S.A. for assistance. They thus succeeded in avoiding the break-up of their henequen plantations. Since their henequen contributed to the financing of the armed movements of the Revolution, it could not have been otherwise. The enforcement of the 1915 law was suspended until 1921 (Chardon 1961: 38). In fact, as one of our sources indicates, with the decree abolishing servitude for indebtedness, hacienda workers exchanged their status of serfs for that of agricultural

workers on these same haciendas, yet they had no new rights in practice (Betancourt Perez 1953: 69). This period marks the legal birth in Yucatan of a true agricultural proletariat.

This breach in the law of the 6th of January, 1915, would not be fixed until much later. The ideals of the Revolution continued, however, to stimulate numerous forms of unity and struggle. The Leagues of Resistance in Yucatan and their outcome provide a good example of the aspect taken by proletarian struggle, under petty bourgeois leadership, against a ruling class composed for large part by landowners and a few industrialists.

It is here that there appears the figure of Felipe Carrillo Puerto, whose memory was unfortunately co-opted by elements at the behest of the contemporary ruling class in Yucatan.

Carrillo Puerto, born in Motul (a neighboring town of Mérida) of modest, although petty bourgeois, origins, soon joined the protest movement led by Francisco I. Madero in porfirist times. He seems to have been influenced by the ideas of utopian socialism as well as those of Marx and Engels (Camara P. & Ayora S. 1973: 116). During various visits to the United States, Carrillo Puerto met Samuel Gompers, who would later become president of the American Federation of Labor (Bustillos Carrillo 1955: 11), and developed contacts with the international proletarian movement. In the United States, Carrillo Puerto became familiar with liberal ideas, particularly concerning education (A. Reed 1964: 80).

In 1910, he joined Emiliano Zapata's troops. Zapata and Francisco (Pancho) Villa led, respectively, the southern and northern divisions of the peasant fraction of the revolutionary forces. He returned with the title of cavalry colonel (Camara P. & Aroya S. 1973: 120) and Zapata's precious slogan, Tierra y Libertad (A. Reed 1964: 80).

Upon his return to his native village, Carrillo Puerto was a famous public and political figure. In 1906, he had founded the newspaper El Heraldo de Motul (Camara P. & Ayora S. 1973: 118) and was correspondent for La Revista de Yucatan (directed by Carlos R. Menendez). Shortly after 1910, Carrillo Puerto was elected deputy to the local parliament and the Union Congress of which he soon became chairman (Camara P. & Ayora S. 1973: 120; Bolio 1973: 69). Finally, he became leader of the Motul Agrarian Committee in 1916 (Irigoyen 1974: 11).

General Alvarado turned to him for the task of organizing the Leagues of Resistance. The purpose of the Leagues was to demand the legal limit to the length of the work-day on the haciendas, better wages, sick pay, etc. (Betancourt Perez 1953: 69). The Leagues of Resistance were the first attempt to organize the proletariat and the peasantry in Yucatan. These were overseen by a Central League of Resistance. In 1916, Alvarado and Carrillo Puerto founded what would soon become the southeastern socialist party (Partido Socialista del Sureste), PSSE⁽²⁾. Consistent with the Federal labor law that abolished servitude, the PSSE converted itself into a confederation of leagues

of resistance and was joined by the Workers' League, founded by the Casa del Obrero Mundial. The PSSE thus became transformed into an instrument of arbitration in the conflicts between owners and workers that broke out mainly in the haciendas where the rural proletariat was concentrated (Bustillos Carrillo 1955: 12; Orosa Diaz 1955: 9).

Knowledge of the Mayan language constituted one of Carrillo Puerto's many advantages in a region where unilingualism still prevailed. This is moreover why Alvarado made him the chief of PSSE propagandists in 1917 (Irigoyen 1974: 14).

Given the impossibility of expropriating the means of production of the large landowners, the PSSE set consciousness-raising of the rural proletariat as one of its tasks. In this spirit, the first workers' congress was held in the villa of Motul in 1918. The record of this congress constitutes a striking example of the idealism and even the political naiveté of PSSE leaders, including Carrillo Puerto (CEHSMO 1977a). The reactionary character of the force represented by the large landowners was seriously underestimated and it was believed they could still be rallied to the cause of utopian socialism. Nonetheless, this first congress demonstrated the impressive progress that had been made in the short time since the official abolition of serfdom in Yucatan. In apt expression of the weakness of constitutional government at the time and that of the proletariat on the economic level, the principal resolutions of the congress addressed working conditions and the reproduction of those conditions. Thus, there were proposals to intensify the struggle for the eight-hour

workday and labor contracts. The equality of men and women was demanded, while nevertheless conceding that some positions were not suited to women. Illiteracy was to be fought with the establishment of rationalist schools. No elected position could be occupied by non-union persons. Finally, the PSSE was proclaimed the guardian of revolutionary institutions and promoter of class struggle (Bustillos Carrillo 1955: 12; CEHSMO 1977a).

The exuberance which accompanied the deepening involvement of the PSSE within the proletariat was to be short-lived. Behind the scenes, the forces of reaction were preparing their counter-attack.

While the Leagues of Resistance and unionization were being built among the ranks of the proletariat, "neutral" organizations put themselves forward as friends who could be of service to henequeneros workers but in reality served hacendado interests (Orosa Diaz 1955: 9).

The hacendados now supported the Yucatan liberal party. In fact, when Carrillo Puerto declared his candidacy in 1921 for governor of the state, the Yucatan liberal party led by Bernardino Mena Brito presented their own candidate and launched a defamation campaign against socialism and the person of Carrillo Puerto (Betancourt Perez 1947b: 14; Bolio 1973: 85). The liberal party enjoyed the support and the platform provided by Carlos R. Menendez, director of the Revista de Yucatan, the newspaper for which Carrillo Puerto was one-time correspondent. Menendez constitutes a key person in the identification of the true interests of the liberal party. It was he who had previously given intellectual support to the hacendados in their struggle

against the "divine caste" at the time of the Centro Electoral Independiente. Now that the hacendados' "aristocracy", so to speak, had been eliminated, the hacendados represented the ruling class in Yucatan. The liberal party constituted, in fact, their political instrument for the struggle against proletarian class interests linked to the petty bourgeoisie.

The election of Carrillo Puerto marked a victory for this petty bourgeoisie. He became governor of Yucatan on the 5th of February, 1922 (Bustillos Carrillo 1955: 13). Conscious of the class interests he represented, Carrillo Puerto did not fail to integrate peasant elements such as Pedro Crespo, a Temax peasant who rose up against the porfirist political chief of the locality in 1910, thus preceding the first sparks of the Revolution on the national level. The investiture of Carrillo Puerto gave a second wind to agrarian reform. He undertook, in accordance with the law of 1915 and the Constitution of 1917, to divide up the latifundia and to initiate the distribution of henequen lands and plantations to the peasants. In 1923, the Yucatan government distributed some 208,972 hectares among 10,727 peasants (Irigoyen 1974: 20; Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 247). The following year, the area of distributed land reached 500,000 hectares (Irigoyen 1974: 20). These were provisional awards, in effect, since the distribution had to be approved by the President of the Republic. Such approval would come but not until much later.

However, the lands allocated to the peasants were not always the best in regard to henequen. Since 1915, some hacendados had ceased planting due to the threat of expropriation (Chardon 1961: 39).

In order to counter this hacendado initiative, the government decreed in 1923 a very high tax on abandoned lands or those unused by their heirs (Irigoyen 1974: 29). This decree amounted, of course, to an expropriation.

The reform measures of the Yucatan government were suddenly interrupted by the arrest and execution of Carrillo Puerto on the 3rd of January, 1924, by rebel forces allied with the delahuertista movement.

On the Federal level, Adolfo de la Huerta, Alvaro Obregon, and Plutarco Elias Calles coveted succession to the constitutional president Carranza. Turning back their expectations, Carranza hinted at the possibility of proposing a more obscure candidate. That was all that was needed to provoke the three accomplices into a coup d'état in 1920. With Carranza eliminated, de la Huerta became interim president but Obregon was elected President in 1921. Frustrated in his presidential ambitions, de la Huerta launched an armed campaign against Obregon and attempted a coup d'état in 1924 which ended in failure (Cline 1962: 31).

Precipitated by the delahuertista campaign, rebel elements organized in Yucatan itself. The constitutional government was overturned and Carrillo Puerto fled to the east. A provisional government took its place under General Juan Ricardez Broca, commander of the 32nd military district (Yucatan), who proclaimed himself governor and military commander of Yucatan (Camara P. & Ayora S. 1973: 109). Carrillo Puerto was captured with his companions, brought back to Mérida and summarily shot without further ado.

The causes of the overthrow and assassination of Carrillo Puerto remain the object of debate. In his memoirs, Adolfo de la Huerta states that the rebel movement in Yucatan at the end of 1923 was independent of his own campaign (Betancourt Perez 1974b: 41). This statement has permitted some to assert that the Yucatan forces of the 32nd military zone were alone responsible for the ouster of Carrillo Puerto (Sosa Ferreyro 1969). However, more convincing analyses (Betancourt Perez 1974; Monroy Duran n.d.) show that in one case like another the participation of the hacendados cannot be dismissed. Betancourt Perez (1974) proceeds by deduction, recalling the numerous tumultuous episodes in Yucatan where hacendados participated and adds the assassination of Carrillo Puerto to this list. Monroy Duran (n.d.) examines the concrete attitude of the hacendados in regard to the provisional government and shows that they reached a much better accommodation with this government than the preceding one, despite significant taxes on profits from the sale of their henequen (Monroy Duran n.d.: 479). The provisional government, of course, appointed trusted confidants at the head of the major political and economic institutions of the state. Thus, for example, the private secretary of Governor Ricardez Broca was named consul of the Comisión Exportadora del Henequen while his father became general manager of the same commission. Both civil court and criminal court judges, as well as Federal civil servants in the state, recognized the new government. The government set up a civilian junta in Mérida which brought together several notables, including Gustavo Molina Font (see 1941),

a nephew of Olegario Molina and direct descendant of the "divine caste". Only the village governments refused to recognize the usurper government; they were simply thrown out (Monroy D. s.d.: 480-481). There is nothing astonishing about the attitude that the municipal governments adopted nor the fact that they were alone in it. For the most part, they were formed of peasant elements who had no interest in the new government, unlike other groups of the population. For them, the defeat of the constitutional government signified in effect yet another interruption in agrarian reform. Agrarian reform would be compromised for at least another decade, despite the defeat of de la Huerta and the return of constitutional government in March 1924.

The legacy of Felipe Carrillo Puerto and his ephemeral government on the proletarian movement in Yucatan remained a vivid memory, however. The news of his assassination sparked sharp protests not only in Mexico City but in foreign countries as well, proof that his links with the international workers' movements were well-developed. Had he not once received a message of encouragement from Lenin himself (Irigoyen 1974: 18)? Groups such as the CROM (Confederación Regional Obrera Mexicana) and the International Association of Machinists in Washington, D.C., and many others expressed their anger over the violent fate of Carrillo Puerto (Salazar 1938: 116-118).

The various developments expressive of the class struggle in Yucatan had left the production of henequen to languish. After the end of the First World War, export prices fell back to their 1916

levels and vacillated between \$0.06.50 and \$0.04.50 per pound of crude fiber between 1919 and 1930 only to fall to a level not seen since 1885 of \$0.01.90 in 1933 (see Table 9). For the reasons mentioned above, the area planted in henequen had shrunk. From 320,000 hectares in 1916 (Table 6), cultivated area fell to 234,000 hectares in 1927 (Table 12). Export levels dropped from 798,862 in 1918 (Table 7) to 646,623 in 1927 (Table 12).

TABLE 12

The Situation of Henequen in 1927

	hectares	absolute number	bales tons
Planted area	234,420	—	—
Haciendas with machinery	—	658	—
Small-holdings without machinery	—	226	—
Parcels of 1.5 are (0.86 has)	—	6,262	—
Exports	—	—	646,623 122,932

Source: Betancourt Perez 1953: 72

The henequen sector was in crisis. In an attempt to remedy the situation, the hacendados established the Henequeneros de Yucatan in 1925 but without much success. Nonetheless, they benefited from the disorder Carrillo Puerto's demise had brought upon the PSSE. The distribution of agricultural lands was also interrupted. Alvaro Torre Diaz, governor of Yucatan between 1926 and 1930, categorically opposed agrarian reform under the pretext, of course, of the crisis. In fact, it was not so much the economic crisis which influenced him as the fact he was a shareholder in the daily newspaper that had just been founded by none other than Carlos R. Menendez, the Diario de Yucatan (Betancourt Perez 1968b: 2).

The henequen crisis continued nevertheless. Due to depression the fiber was now worth virtually nothing. Political instability and attempts to apply agrarian reform had caused a loss of confidence among buyers. The market ebbed gradually. As stocks swelled, the revenues both of the hacendados and government inevitably dropped (Betancourt Perez 1968b: 2). The volume of production finally decreased (Vidal Rivero 1979). In 1932, the drop in henequen prices resulted in the suspension of decortication (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 251). Economic conditions were, nonetheless, propitious to a new rise in consciousness among the proletariat and renewed mobilization around the agrarian question. Progressive elements reorganized.

Now that the PSSE had virtually disappeared, a regional committee of the Mexican Communist Party was established. The Federación Sindical Independiente, born in the days of the Leagues of Resistance,

made a new appearance. Rural schoolteachers, who were under Federal administration, tried by all available means (including sports teams) to create collective platforms of action in the countryside (Betancourt Perez 1968b: 2). Once again this petty bourgeoisie, which had established itself during the Revolution, put itself into the leadership of the peasantry and proletariat.

On the other hand, the hacendados were also organizing. Permanent workers on these haciendas were the direct descendants of peones, now termed acasillados. The agrarian reform did not include the acasillados, who were still economically and ideologically dependent upon the hacienda. The hacendados, using to their advantage the control they had over this category of workers, organized the acasillados into the Federación Regional de Obreros y Campesinos, proud heir of the "white" unions of Carrillo Puerto's time. The hacendados infiltrated as well many other organizations, even those of teachers (Betancourt Perez 1968b: 2). Arriving in 1935, the decreased volume of henequen production had by now affected the railroad workers charged with its transportation. The highly-organized Sindicato Ferrocarrillero Peninsular demanded improved economic conditions for its members from the Yucatan government, the principal shareholder in the railroad. The government responded by proposing a lay-off of personnel which, of course, set off indignation and a wide offensive by the union, now supported by several other workers' groups. Unable to settle the strike by railroad workers or to stop their sympathy campaign among the wider population, the governor of the time, Alayola

Barrera, was forced to resign. The railroad was then turned over to the workers under the impetus of the President of the Republic, Lazaro Cárdenas (Vidal Rivero 1979).

However, the intense agitation in Mérida continued and degenerated into general confusion, a situation that is said to have been willingly prolonged by the hacendados. During one of the many mass demonstrations of the time, the crowd took over the Casa del Pueblo, general headquarters of the PSSE, and one group of demonstrators proposed setting up a workers'-and-peasants' Soviet in Yucatan and to secede from the Mexican Republic as long as it refused recognition of this new form of government. Of course, this initiative was put down by the army and the demonstration was crushed. Later, it was discovered that the proposal to establish a soviet originated directly from paid agents of the hacendados (Betancourt Perez 1968b).

This little-known brief episode of Yucatan history gives some idea of the confusion which abounded and which was fostered within the urban and rural proletariat alike. In effect, the proletarian movement had from the beginning relinquished autonomy into the hands of the petty bourgeoisie. Now, the intermediate position of the petty bourgeoisie is precisely what renders it vulnerable vis-à-vis the bourgeoisie. To erect a soviet in Yucatan in 1935 was in complete discord with the objective and subjective conditions of this social formation. That the petty bourgeoisie was incapable of unmasking this proposition and foreseeing its repressive consequences well demonstrates the disastrous effect of its hold on the proletarian movement.

The episode was only a taste of the noose that would soon tighten around the proletariat and the peasantry. The systematic application of agrarian reform beginning in 1937 under President Lazaro Cárdenas would hasten the total subordination of the worker and peasant movement to the ruling class, despite the appearances of political emancipation. The process of expropriating the hacendados, while presented as a storming by the peasants, amounted in fact to the neutralization (a relative one, as will be seen) of one fraction of the ruling class (landowners) by another (the financial and commercial bourgeoisie). Despite the application of apparently socialist measures in the peasant sector, Mexico in the thirties and forties took a decidedly capitalist route. For this reason, it was necessary to eliminate the obstacles in this path. On the one hand, the commercial and financial bourgeoisie had to eliminate the drawing-off of its capital effected by the landed bourgeoisie through its interception of a ground-rent in addition to profit. On the other hand, it was necessary to appease the most militant sectors of society. The application of agrarian reform amounted thus to no more or no less than the disarming of the rural proletariat after several years of arduous revolutionary struggle. Lacking true autonomy, the rural proletariat under petty bourgeois leadership could only acquiesce before the offer of becoming themselves petty bourgeois; that is, small landholders. In effect, one must re-read Marx's analysis of the class struggles in France (1848, 1852 and 1871) in order to unmask the end-result of Mexican agrarian reform in relation to the development of capitalism in this country.

5.3 The Application of Agrarian Reform and the Struggle for Control of the Henequenero Sector

During a presidential campaign visit in 1934, Lazaro Cárdenas had clearly evoked the possibility of a radical application of agrarian reform after his election. Until that time, only 76 ejidos had actually been created, bringing together some 21,142 ejidatarios; on the other hand, 6,289 ejidatarios split up among 14 ejidos still awaited permanent allotments (Betancourt Perez 1953: 70).

Encouraged by the presidential candidate's remarks concerning agrarian reform, the governor of Yucatan, Fernando Lopez Cárdenas, proceeded with the expropriation and redistribution of 7,000 hectares of cultivated henequen land. The hacendados replied by organizing the Asociación Defensora de la Industria Henequenera and attempting to de-stabilize the government through episodes like the soviet and, later, through attempts to corrupt it (Betancourt Perez 1968d: 2). That was all that was needed to incite Federal intervention, despite constitutional guarantees of the sovereignty of individual states.

On August 8, 1937, Lazaro Cárdenas, now President of the Republic, decreed the immediate expropriation of private lands exceeding 150 hectares in henequen under cultivation. The area allotted to each community was calculated on the basis of the number of cultivators in the community (Betancourt Perez 1953: 98,101). The distribution was made under the auspices of the agrarian department (DAAC, a Federal institution) and the Ejidal Credit Bank (also Federal) took charge of financing each ejidal community, now designated as a Ejidal Credit Society Marketing was to be assured by a cooperative,

Henqueneros de Yucatan in which were found representatives of the Federal and State levels, the ejidal credit societies, and, finally, individual producers. Federal intervention, however, despite its impetus to agrarian reform, was not looked upon with favor by the Yucatan government. The presence of Federal and State civil servants within the same marketing board would be the cause of friction that would soon lead to a unilateral take-over of the Henqueneros by the state of Yucatan. For several years, the Federal and State levels vied for control of the henequenero sector, until finally, the Federal government gained the absolute domination it holds today. However, in the meantime, the power confrontation between two levels of government would have the effect of concentrating the attention of the proletarian movement on a fight that was not its own.

The fashion in which the initial allotment of lands was made provided the Yucatan state with an occasion to re-assert its authority in the marketing domain. In effect, of the 272 ejidal credit societies set up after the redistribution of land, only 4% disposed of sufficient cultivated henequen to guarantee their sources of financing. One henequen plant requires at least 7 years before actually producing, for a period that will last between 15 and 20 years. During its years before coming to maturity, the henequen requires surveillance and care (weeds must be cleared away). On a plantation where the majority of plants have not yet reached their producing stage, not only do the workers have insufficient earnings that must be made up but, as well, the plantation falls into debt since maintenance of the plants must

go on whether they are producing or not. Thus, the majority of new ejidal credit societies found themselves in this difficulty at the moment of their formation. Moreover, most of them lacked decortiating equipment, requiring additional costs even before marketing. Lastly, some 12,000 rural workers (Betancourt Perez 1968f: 4) did not belong to any ejidal credit societies while thousands of people who never worked in the henequenero sector were abusively included in ejido censuses (Carta Peninsular 1976: 4).

The allocation of lands was made under the auspices of Federal civil servants, to whom the Yucatan government imputed responsibility for the disequilibrium of the majority of ejido credit societies.

In 1938, Federal civil servants were thrown out of the Henequeneros de Yucatan. The Federal agrarian department (DAAC) and the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal were equally denied the right to intervene (Betancourt Perez 1968d: 5). Henequeneros de Yucatan, with the governor of Yucatan as general manager, became the supreme authority in the administration of the henequenero sector and the sole marketing body for the fiber on the international level. All henequen production, including that of ex-hacendados, ejidatarios, and smallholders had to pass by the Henequeneros, which in turn distributed the revenue from sale of the fiber. The ejido credit societies practically disappeared from existence when they were reduced to a subdivision within a single Gran Ejido, which was thought would level out the natural or sociological differences in the production of

various ejidos. A reserve labor force of 50,000 workers or ejidatarios was thus created in the henequenera zone out of the 21,000 that were found there in 1934 (Betancourt Perez 1953: 70). Since the distinction between individual community ejidos no longer existed, this labor force could be moved at will onto the 200,000 hectares that the Gran Ejido comprised or would comprise in the course of time. The labor supply could then be sent where it was most needed (Kirk 1975: 11)⁽³⁾. The decortivating complexes belonging to the hacendados and which had been expropriated in 1935 (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 254) were returned to their owners in 1942 (Chardon 1961: 44). In order to assure the primary transformation of the product, Henequeneros had to conclude a contract with the owners guaranteeing them redistribution of 52% of the revenue from henequen sales after taxes and administrative costs were deducted. To cover these latter costs, the Henequeneros kept back 40% at the start. The owners of decortivating complexes, who were large landowners, ejidatarios, and small-holders, divided amongst themselves the remaining 60%. The following table (Table 13) breaks down this percentage for the year 1943.

TABLE 13

A: Total Production of Henequen in 1943

volume of production (Kg 000)	total revenue from sales (pesos)
121,237,644	103,512,194.52
21.6% Ex-hacendados 68.4% Ejidatarios 10.0% Small-holders	

B: Breakdown of Revenues from Sales (\$103,512,194.52)

Primary Distribution	Primary Distribution
60%	40%
Producer revenues \$61,773,507.95	Henequeneros de Yucatan, expenses, etc. \$41,748,686.57
Secondary Distribution	Secondary Distribution
to 23,800 ejidatarios: \$21,123,119.72 (34.2%) \$ 887.52 each	Taxes \$19,840,859.37 (19.1%) Administrative expenses \$16,346,137.92 (15.8%)
to 350 owners of machinery \$37,552,212.63 (60.8%) \$ 107,292.00 each	Dividends \$ 2,999,376.44 (2.8%) Reserves for capital authorization \$ 1,212,376.44 (1.1%)
to 2,600 small-holders \$ 3,088,175.39 (5.0%) \$ 1,188.00 each	Social services \$ 1,350,029.41 (1.3%)

Source: after Betancourt Perez 1953: 149,150

As the figure shows, equipment owners, in their dual capacity as landowners and henequen producers, received more than 52% (60.8%) of henequen revenues as stipulated by the initial contract. Some of them also benefited from subsidies for decorticating exceptional quantities of fiber (Betancourt Perez 1953: 127). On the other hand, while the ejidatarios produced the greatest proportion of henequen (68.4%), they received only 34.2% of the revenue after sales and the deduction of taxes and administrative costs. In more concrete figures, while each large landowner enjoyed an average annual income of 109,606.76 pesos, the ejidatario had to make ends meet with a meager 887.52 pesos annually. That was the glorious result of only a few years of administration by Henequeneros de Yucatan. This administration would last until 1955.

Absolute misery reigned in the villages. As we have seen, this was due not only to the low prices for the fiber in the early years of administration by Henequeneros de Yucatan but to a complete contempt for the living conditions of the rural proletariat as well. Moreover, the rural proletariat had to deal with an unprecedented rise in the cost of living. A comparison of Tables 15 and 16 shows the gulf between the level of ejidatario income in various years and the cost of some basic items of consumption. As an elderly ejidatario from a henequenero village says about that time in comparing it to present difficulties: "If my compatriots did not starve to death a few years ago, then it means no one will die from hunger here" (Diario de Yucatan 10/1/79).

TABLE 14

Selling Prices and Volume of Henequen Production Sold 1938-1951

Year	Selling price per pound in dollars	tons	bales
1938	0.03.306	81,264.2	427,450
1939	0.02.731	84,392.9	443,907
1940	0.03.546	96,007.6	505,000
1941	0.03.526	96,197.7	506,000
1942	0.03.525	106,343.9	559,369
1943	0.06.497	120,417.8	633,398
1944	0.08.989	125,520.0	660,236
1945	0.09		
1946	0.11		
1947	0.15		
1948	0.15.5		
1949	0.11		
1950	0.11		
1951	0.15		

Source: Betancourt Perez 1953: 129,131

TABLE 15

Advances to Ejidatarios

Year	Pesos per Day	Increase	Dividends divided among the ejidatarios annually
1938	\$1.00	0	
1939	\$1.33		no
1940	\$1.75		no
1941	\$1.46-1.56(?)		no
1942	\$2.25		?
1943	\$2.95		2,052,109.72
1944	\$3.37	124%	2,285,194.83
1945	\$3.85		1,260,303.44
1946	\$4.35		3,349,325.77
1947	\$4.55		6,310,122.59
1948	\$5.55		6,885,709.27
1949	\$6.85		3,131,594.97
1950	\$7.72		5,294,862.12
1951	\$8.10		9,733,033.21
1952	\$9.60	540%	
1953	\$7.55	500%	

Source: Betancourt Perez 1953: 129,131,132

TABLE 16

Prices of Basic Food Items

Year	Maize	Beans	Meat	Sugar	% of cost of living increase
1934	0.14	0.19	1.00	0.30	0
1944	0.51	0.54	4.15	0.60	189%
1952	0.45	2.30	8.00	1.18	583%
1953	0.42	1.50	7.00	1.18	537%

Source: Betancourt Perez 1953: 145

The living conditions of the rural proletariat did not improve even with the rise in fiber prices during the Second World War (Table 14). War nonetheless provided Yucatan industries an occasion to start up again the rope industry in Mérida (Rodriguez 1966: 307).

The Gran Ejido was a time of confrontation between the two levels of government over economic control of the fiber. However, the Yucatan government and petty bourgeois elements made their resistance in the area of constitutional sovereignty. They challenged the centralizing tendencies which Mexico City exhibited at nearly all levels. The Yucatecan petty bourgeoisie sided with the state government in this dispute and mobilized the support of the peasants' and workers' movement, whose leadership it had assumed. In this manner, proletarian demands were essentially legalistic and confined to the juridical level; the economic aspect of the question was neglected. The historical episode described below illustrates this point.

The beginnings of the Gran Ejido corresponded to a period of uncommon political vitality. Besides the principal antagonists in the henequen dispute, being the Yucatan and Federal governments, forces opposed to Yucatan Governor Canto Echeverria and to the type of government he represented had begun to assert themselves. Henegueneros de Yucatan, which the governor served as general manager, became the object of this criticism. The opposing groups considered that this body retained too large a proportion of revenues from the sale of henequen for tax purposes (40%). As we know, Henegueneros was overseen by a multipartite administrative board. The particularly aggressive Tixcocab Committee for the Defense of Ejidos had succeeded in controlling this institution. First, the committee announced that it would hold back 50% of henequen revenues and, then, it announced it would hold back the total. Since the Yucatan government depended for its revenue upon revenues from the sale of henequen, the situation was intolerable. Despite the fact that the PSSE had once again been affected by the murder of its chairman (this time, Rogelio Chalé: Betancourt Perez 1969a: 6) the PSSE Socialist Youth, militating for the total application of agrarian reform and made up in large part by rural schoolteachers, supported the action of the Committee for the Defense of Ejidos. Canto Echeverria was ousted and replaced by Cardos Ruz, who seemed to be more acceptable to opposition groups. He brought Henegueneros de Yucatan back under control.

Canto Echeverria, however, announced his gubernatorial candidacy in new elections. He was opposed by a body made up of members

of the Socialist Youth and the Committee for the Defense of Ejidos. Both parties claimed victory, of course, and for several weeks Yucatan had two legislatures. Faced with this situation, the majority of deputies demanded Federal intervention. The Federal Government declared that the source of all difficulties resided in Canto Echeverria's control of Henequeneros de Yucatan and suggested that it should itself take charge of the institution in question. Despite their distaste for Canto Echeverria, the Socialist Youth through spokesman Betancourt Perez sharply opposed any Federal take-over of the administration of Henequeneros, preferring to concede the government of Yucatan to Echeverria as an alternative (Betancourt Perez 1969a; 1969b).

Federal government intervention in 1940 had clearly showed that any form of opposition to the Yucatan government ran the risk of inviting renewed Federal control of the henequen industry. The militant petty bourgeoisie, victim of its own idealism, was thus neutralized from the first years of the Gran Ejido onward. Since Yucatan's rural proletariat had not yet attained political autonomy, the miserable conditions to which it was resigned were the most immediate expression of the weakness and idealism of the petty bourgeoisie that led it.

5.4 Federal Centralization of the Henequen Sector

In fact, as long as it remained active, the politicized petty bourgeoisie constituted the guarantee of a little less abusive administration by Henequeneros de Yucatan and the local government. How-

ever, since this petty bourgeoisie was soon neutralized by the threat of centralization by the Federal government, Henequeneros de Yucatan was free to commit all the administrative excesses that would lead to its demise. This time, it was the threat of bankruptcy in the mid-1950s that authorized Federal intervention. The heavy reduction in the income redistributed to rural workers did not succeed in counterbalancing a costly administration and financial losses of all sorts (Betancourt Perez 1953: 148; Orosa Díaz 1955: 22).

In 1954, the Government of Mexico, through its Secretaria de Agricultura y Ganaderia, ordered the dissolution of Henequeneros de Yucatan (Pasos Peniche 1967: 20) that took effect in 1955. Three organizations replaced the Yucatan institution: the Unión de Productores Henequeneros, representing private property owners, both ex-hacendados and small holders; the Banco Nacional de Credito Ejidal and the agrarian department (DAAC), representing once again the ejidatarios and the re-establishment of local ejido credit societies; finally, Cordeleros de Mexico, which headed up henequen processing industries (Chardon 1961: 45; Kirk 1975: 11). Since 1925, these manufacturers had been making a gradual re-appearance. Crude fiber was used in the manufacture of binder cord for agricultural machinery, baling rope, string, and rope. Table 17 shows the increasing proportion of fiber processed by these manufacturers.

TABLE 17

Proportion of Fiber Production Processed in Yucatan 1930-1958

year	number of bales	% of total fiber production	total fiber production
1930	10,520 2,000 tons	10	20,000 tons
1944	211,146 40,141.8 tons	30	133,806 tons
1958	533,027 101,335 tons	88	115,153 tons

Source: Chardon 1961: 45 ff.

Henceforth, Yucatan was not an exporter solely of raw material but of manufactured products as well. During the Gran Ejido period, the owners of these industries became rich as the low wages paid to the rural proletariat depressed those of the urban proletariat. This period allowed certain politicians and administrators to become manufacturers (Menendez R. 1964: 302; see also Table 19). The cost of acquiring fiber, as we have seen (Table 14), remained ridiculously low. The costs of production in Yucatan were thus well below those prevailing in the United States, for example. While the Federal and local levels of government disputed control over the henequenero sector and proletarian militating concentrated on questions of principle, the industrial fraction of the bourgeoisie went on developing,

often out of the landed and commercial fractions of the bourgeoisie (Carta Peninsular 1976: 8). Some industrialists held public office and a few of them benefited from the merger of banking and industrial capital by becoming chairmen or boardmembers of financial institutions. In fact, the actual control of the henequenero sector rested with them. The eviction of the Yucatan government by Mexico City was entirely symbolic for the industrial fraction, which was not the case for the socialist petty bourgeoisie. Moreover, the changeover was effected without the least protest (Carta Peninsular 1976: 7). Unlike the period which drew to a close, local Yucatan politics in the future would have less and less impact on the henequen industry.

It was not until 1962 that any significant event occurred in the sector. That year, the Mexican Government decided to transfer the administration of local ejido credit societies from the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal to a branch, The Yucatan Agrarian Bank (Bangrario). While 99% of the shares of this new institution belonged to the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal, its establishment and format were an occasion to adjust its functions to local requirements. Among these "local requirements" was the rising influence of Yucatan's financial and industrial bourgeoisie, which found a place on the board of directors of the new bank (see Table 18).

TABLE 18

Composition of the Board of Directors of The
Agrarian Bank of Yucatan, S.A., in 1962

person	representing
E. Martinez Adams	Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal, S.A. de C.V.
J.D. Ortiz Mimiaga	Office of the Secretary of Agriculture
F.J. Penalosa	Office of the Secretary of Hacienda
E. Gamboa Alonzo	DAAC
E. Espejo Evia	Office of the Secretary of Water Resources
4 ejidos	Credit beneficiaries
A. Rosado	Private bank
V. Erosa Camara	Industrial sector
G. Patiño Guerrero	Crédito Ejidal, S.A. de C.V.
J. de la Gala	Office of the Secretary of Hacienda

Source: Menendez R. 1964: 64

The functions of the new institutions did not differ from those of the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal. The Yucatan Agrarian Bank made short and long-term loans, supervised the sale of products to its customers, and acquired machinery, real estate, and movable goods, etc. (Menendez R. 1964: 89-90).

The financing of local ejido credit corporations remained unchanged. The Yucatan Agrarian Bank continued to grant credit to the ejidos in exchange for their fiber. Concerning the official prices

for the fiber offered by the Bangrario, it is sufficient to note that most ejidos were constantly in debt, while certain others realized a surplus that the ejidatarios redistributed among themselves. One notable change: the local ejido credit societies were encouraged to subdivide into subgroups (grupos solidarios) (Kirk 1975: 112). Thus, instead of having to deal with a large block of ejidatarios, Bangrario hoped to do business with smaller groups. Better financial control of ejido operations was the official reason for this new initiative (Kirk 1975: 112); a greater division among the rural proletariat was the concrete result.

Henequen processing industries were also to be the object of re-organization by the Mexican Government. The capitalists in this sector competed ruthlessly to acquire fiber, particularly at the lowest price possible. Now, the buying price of fiber on the international market is fixed by the U.N. commission on hard fiber of the FAO. These are, in fact, price guidelines resulting from an accord between selling countries and buying countries (Montalvo, J. 1978: 40). Nonetheless, the lower the selling price of fiber the higher will be the profits realized by manufacturers. Bangrario, in its position as a buyer of fiber, was also victimized by the competition between manufacturers because the prices it must offer to the ejidos were fixed for a certain period. The Federal government requested the manufacturers to curb their abuse but without success.

Thus, the Federal government proceeded with plans to nationalize henequen processing industries; of course, this nationalization

included benefits both in the short and long-term for industrialists. In 1961, a new corporation, Cordemex, was created pursuant to an agreement between the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal and Cordeleros de Mexico (Menendez R. 1964: 149). Originally, the owners of rope industries became members of the new corporation. Each held a number of shares proportional to the value of his enterprise. However, in becoming a member of the new corporation, each manufacturer signed an agreement to sell his shares to the government. In 1964, Cordemex acted upon its purchase privileges. Aided by the capital approved by the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal and shareholders, the government proceeded with the expropriation with compensation of manufacturers.

The purpose of Cordemex was to determine a uniform pricing policy and thus eliminate competition in both the acquisition of crude fiber and the sale of manufactured products (Menendez R. 1964: 149). Henceforth, only Cordemex would acquire and process crude fiber; Cordemex alone would take charge of local and international marketing of manufactured products (Menendez R. 1964: 153). To the public, the creation of Cordemex was justified in terms of a better rationalization of all stages of production which could only lead to lower costs of production (Menendez R. 1964: 156).

Today, it is common knowledge that the establishment of Cordemex greatly profited the industrial bourgeoisie in the henequenero sector. According to some contemporary observers of the period (Menendez R. 1964; Carta Peninsular 1976), the sums obtained by certain industrialists for their manufactured goods surpassed their actual

value. There is, in effect, nothing surprising in the fact that industrialists granted themselves huge advantages. Given the number of shares they held, they along with government representatives were members of the board of directors of Cordemex and made the decisions. Table 19 furnishes a list of the members of this board in 1964 and indicates the sums they received as ex-owners of manufacturing industries. Table 19 also shows that, for most of them it was not the first time they held an administrative post in the henequen sector. Finally, the presence of Vicente Erosa Camara on both the board of directors of Cordemex and Bangrario at the same time is to be noted (see Table 18).

The dual interests do not end there. Despite their expropriation, at least four ex-manufacturers and members of the first board of directors of Cordemex were at the same time owners of henequen fiber or manufactured products importing companies in the United States. Table 20 identifies these four key persons.

Before as after the establishment of Cordemex, the only reason for finding these people in the United States resided in the advantage they could recoup from the difference between supply price and selling price. And, as members of the Cordemex board of directors, they were merely in a better position to work for lower fiber prices. This was the long-term privilege afforded by Cordemex expropriation for the manufacturers that we mentioned earlier.

TABLE 19

Composition of the Cordemex Board of Directors in 1964 (partial)

position	name	sum obtained in compensation for expropriation	position held formerly
President	A. Iturralde	21,764,325.81	Head of the Commercial Dept. of Henequeneros de Yucatan
Vice President	P.I. Manzanilla y Manzanilla	13,957,847.32	His brother Manager of Henequeneros
Directors	V. Erosa Camara	9,465,300.00	Manager of Henequeneros Mayor of Mérida
	J. Macari Canan	44,165,560.00	Manager of Henequeneros
	M. Escalante	9,955,520.00	
	J. Fitzmaurice Péon	7,721,200.00	
	C.J. Jacobo	14,385,600.00	
	H.R. Gaber	22,349,200.00	
	T. Martin	10,909,835.00	

Source: Menendez R. 1964: 149-153,302

TABLE 20

Importing Companies in the U.S.A. whose
owners were natives of Yucatan

company	owner	position held in Yucatan
Point St. Louis, Mo.	A. Iturralde	Chairman of the Board of Directors of Cordemex
Midwest Cordage Co. Fallete, Mo.	P. Manzanilla y Manzanilla	Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of Cordemex
Smith So. Chicago, Ill.	V. Erosa Camara	Member of the Board of Directors of the Agrarian Bank in 1962 Ex-manager of Henequeneros de Yucatan Ex-mayor of Mérida
International Twine Sales New York City	J. Fitzmaurice Péon	Foreign Sales Manager Cordemex

Source: Menendez R. 1964: 164

The creation of Cordemex by the Federal government coincided with a favorable international market for the fiber, whose price was rising. The difference between this price and that paid to direct producers (Table 21) in 1964 allowed Cordemex to realize a profit on the order of 60 million pesos (Menendez R. 1964: 163).

TABLE 21

Price Levels of Henequen in July-August 1964

grade	price paid by Cordemex (pesos per kilo)	international price (pesos per kilo)	difference
AA	3.20	4.05	0.85
A	3.00	3.85	0.85
P	2.95	3.80	0.85
ML	2.77	3.75	0.98
C	2.45	3.70	1.25
MC	2.40	3.65	1.25

Source: Menendez R. 1964: 315

Foreign trusts, seeking to diminish their own costs of production, were soon able to force down international fiber prices and, consequently, those of Cordemex's manufactured products as well (Carta Peninsular 1976: 4). This situation was less advantageous for Cordemex and lead to the deterioration of the condition of direct producers. Thus, between 1964 and 1974 (Table 22), not only did the price offered by Cordemex for the highest-quality fiber drop (Class AA or A fiber, which is, in any case, rarely obtained on the ejido) but the gulf between this price and that on the international market widened as well.

TABLE 22

Henequen Prices Paid to Producers
(pesos per kilo)

Quality	1972	1973 ⁽⁴⁾	1974 ⁽⁵⁾	1974 ⁽⁶⁾
A	1.55	2.90	4.00	6.00
B				5.80
MLX				5.80
C				5.60
MC				5.40
Descl.				5.20

Source: Diario de Yucatan 16 June 1974

As the following table shows, international prices, on the one hand, rose significantly between June 1973 (5.69 pesos per kilo of Grade A), for example, and January 1974 (10.36 pesos per kilo of Grade A).

TABLE 23

World Prices for East African Grade A Sisal

	June 1974	March 1974	January 1974	June 1973	June 1972
dollars per lb.	0.52	0.49	0.37	0.21	0.10
pesos per kilo	14.325	13.29	10.36	5.69	2.71

Source: Diario de Yucatan, August 1974

U.S. Department of Agriculture 1975: 1

On the other hand, comparison of Tables 22 and 23 shows the size of the gap between the international price and the price Cordemex offered direct producers in June 1974 (14.32 pesos versus 6.00 pesos, respectively!)

Further comments may be made regarding Table 22. Between January and June 1974, prices rose significantly. Following the Arab oil embargo (petroleum is used notably in the manufacture of synthetic fiber), international prices for the natural fiber rose. Cordemex not only refused to adjust local supply prices for crude fiber but kept the international price out of discussion as well, just as it had done before (Menendez R. 1964: 290). Thanks to sharpened class struggle in Yucatan at the end of 1973 and beginning of 1974, the rural proletariat discovered the international price that Cordemex had been getting on the market. Rural demands led to an increase in the supply price paid by Cordemex but, of course, this increase did not match international levels. In the short term, this change meant an increase in the credit accorded by Bangrario to the ejidos.

While the ejidatarios were legally dependent upon the DAAC, relations that will be examined in Part III, Bangrario and Cordemex were the two principal institutions that shaped ejido economic life in the henequenera zone. In fact, Bangrario was a credit institution exclusively concerned with the ejidos, while Cordemex, in its position as the sole buyer of fiber in addition to controlling the fiber produced on the ejidos, bought it equally from large (pequeños propietarios) and small landowners. Table 24 shows the relative contribution of the two groups to fiber production in recent years.

TABLE 24

Volume of Henequen Production on the
Ejido and on Private Holdings

year	Ejido			Private Holdings			Total		
	bales	tons	%	bales	tons	%	bales	tons	%
1960	495,465	94,194.8	66.0	255,096	48,497.3	34.0	750,561	142,692	100.0
1961	486,480	92,486.6	64.0	279,058	53,052.8	36.0	765,538	145,539	100.0
1962	480,071	91,268.2	65.0	264,211	50,230.2	35.0	744,282	141,498	100.0
1963	396,300	75,342.2	60.0	255,994	48,668.0	40.0	652,294	124,010	100.0
1972	402,975	76,611.2	64.0	222,050	42,214.8	36.0	625,025	118,826	100.0
1973	385,170	73,226.2	64.0	218,202	41,483.2	36.0	603,372	114,709	100.0

Source: after Menendez R. 1964: 254 for the years 1960-1961-1962-1963
after the Diario de Yucatan. 1/13/74 Unión Agrícola de
Productores de Henequen

Ejidal credit societies and the grupos solidarios (a subdivision sometimes made within these societies) receive Bangrario credit in the form of weekly advances. This is called avío credit. Its amount is calculated on the basis of the estimated annual volume of production of a given society and divided into 52 or 53 parts. The ejidal credit society, through its elected board, distributes the weekly sum among its members according to the work they have accomplished. It will be seen that, in fact, Bangrario loans constitute nothing more or less than a wage, contrary to official wisdom.

Fiber decortivating is paid for by the ejidal credit society and carried out in the complexes held by private owners of Cordemex. Bangrario also gives loans for decortivating fiber. Once decorticated, the fiber is purchased by Cordemex in accordance with the official prices fixed by this institution.

As the following cases illustrate, financing arrangements and the fact that ejido production is never adequate to cover Bangrario loans mean in effect that Bangrario and Cordemex control this process of production.

Through the sums it allocates and the technical and administrative organization it provides, Bangrario establishes the amount of fiber that will be produced. Since the ejidos are indebted, the sums paid by Cordemex for the purchase of fiber are passed on directly to the Agrarian Bank, which reimburses its capital and interest. As we have seen, Cordemex tries by every means to depress fiber prices. In 1969, following a drastic fall in international fiber prices, Cordemex declassified ejido fiber (Kirk 1975: 119); henequen leaves were weighed wholesale without regard to their differential characteristics and were found most of the time to be at the bottom of the grading scale. Thus, supply prices were the lowest possible. Consequently, the sums Cordemex turned over to Bangrario in payment of the fiber of the ejidos under its jurisdiction constituted the result of two of its maneuvers: on the one hand, the declassification I have just mentioned; and, on the other hand, maintenance of the gap between the single international market price and that offered to direct producers.

At the end of the 1960s, the conditions of the rural proletariat were miserable once again. Faced with the unmistakable evidence of a crisis (Carta Peninsular 1974: 4), the Federal government decided to supplement Cordemex prices through Bangrario (Pasos Peniche 1967: 22; Carta Peninsular 1976: 4). Today, Bangrario continues to offer this bonus for each category of fiber. In 1973, this institution offered a bonus of 1.50 peso per kilogram of Class ML fiber. In the two villages under investigation, the fiber of most producers falls into this category. Table 25 situates Class ML with respect to the other categories of fiber by indicating price levels after the bonus has been added for the year 1973.

TABLE 25

Fiber Prices According to Quality (1973)

Fiber Class	Price per Kilogram (in pesos)
AA	3.30
A	3.00
B	2.75
C	2.40
ML (manchado largo)	2.25
MD (manchado desclasificado)	1.75

Source: Informant, Bangrario Motul 1973

Based on the preceding data, it appears more and more obvious that Bangrario constitutes a conveyor belt for Federal government support of ever increasingly indebted industries rather than an institution for the development of henequen production. The following table (Table 26) shows not only that Cordemex's debt has risen since 1970 but that, in fact, the institution now runs a deficit.

TABLE 26

The Cordemex Financial Situation (pesos)

year	income	debts	increase of debt since 1970-71
1975-76	824,522,592	1,266,148,000	952,198,000 303.2 %
1974-75	1,234,488,000	553,205,000	239,255,000 76.2 %
(...)	(...)	(...)	(...)
1970-71	n.d.	313,950,000	0

Source: Based on Diario de Yucatan, August 8-9-10-11, 1976

There were several reasons for Federal support of Cordemex. From the strictly economic point of view, the awarding of bonuses is surely related to the product's context in an international market. This can be examined in Table 27.

TABLE 27

Comparative Data on Sisal and Henequen for Various Countries 1973-1974

	Brazil	Tanzania	Kenya	Haiti	Mexico
Production 1973 (tons) 1974	250,000	155,000 135,400	86,000 86,000	17,000 19,000	148,700 148,700
Surface area (hectares)	230,675.8		74,059.08		280,048.5
Productivity	1.2 ton/hect.				
Exports of crude fiber Baling Twine (tons)	139,000 28,000	100,000	70,500	5,000	83,425
Gross Value Baling Twine	\$114,000,000 ⁽⁷⁾ \$ 25,000,000 ⁽⁸⁾				no export of crude fiber
Local Consumption (tons)		32,000	12,500		62,300 + 86,172 finished products for export

Source: U.S. Department of Agriculture 1975

This table provides several kinds of information. First, it shows Mexico's position relative to other principal producing countries of sisal and henequen. For the year 1974, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimated world production at 821,000 metric tons (1 metric ton = 2,200 pounds) (U.S.D.A. 1975). Thus, Mexican production (in which Yucatan constitutes the principal producer of natural fiber) (Table 28) represented 18% of total world production.

TABLE 28

National Henequen Production

place	tons	% of total
Yucatan	110,000	75.8
Tamaulipas	30,000	20.6
Campeche Islas Marias, etc.	5,000	3.4
Total	145,000 ⁽⁹⁾	99.8

Source: Diario de Yucatan, March 1974

Estimations made by the same source regarding Mexican exports for 1974 (83,425 tons) were largely corroborated by Cordemex's annual report for the same year. The actual figure is 82,478 tons. The price fixed by the FAO-ONU for durable fiber in the raw state for 1974 reached \$482 per metric ton. But, as Table 27 indicates, Mexico

effected rudimentary processing of the fiber which was exported in the form of baling twine. The value added by this operation results in a higher price for each metric ton: \$615 in 1974. In sum, Mexico's export of 82,478 metric tons of baling twine brought revenues of 634,777,000 pesos, or slightly more than \$50 million (Montalvo 1978: 38-39 based on the Cordemex annual report for 1974; U.S. Department of Agriculture 1975). These are moderate sums in terms of foreign currency, particularly if considered in light of the size of Mexico's foreign debt and balance of payments deficit, which in 1974 attained \$9.975 billion and \$2.558 billion, respectively (figures cited by Ayala et al 1979: 49).

Yet Mexico could not afford to neglect any potential source of foreign currency, as Federal support through bonuses for the sector seems to indicate (although this was not the only reason for them). Given the modest return in terms of foreign currency and yet the importance of this revenue, it may be hypothesized that there is a real need to reduce as much as possible the costs of producing the commodity.

As is well known, under the capitalist mode of production the use of machines can considerably reduce the costs of production of a given commodity. Now, in the chain of labor processes leading from the transplanting of henequen to the manufacture of baling twine, those occurring on the plantation are effected on one basis alone, which is the direct labor of producers. Their single instrument of

labor is the machete or coa. Mechanization is limited to the transporting of henequen leaves to the decorticating complex; yet, even in this stage, transportation is effected in part by some workers themselves, who must carry the leaves they have just cut. Before embarking upon a detailed examination of the labor processes involved in henequen production (to be taken up in Part III), we already know at least that the labor processes occurring in the fields provide all the theoretical characteristics which lead to increased costs of production.

As we will later see, the mechanization of two basic labor processes on the henequen plantations seems to constitute a real technical possibility. In other words, contrary to popular belief, ecological conditions do not represent a major obstacle to the introduction of tractors in the fields. However, it is impossible to predict the changes to come in this sector.

Meanwhile, field productivity stagnates. A simple comparison of the Mexican and Brazilian henequenero sectors on the basis of Table 27 shows that the Mexican plantations fall far behind Brazil. In Brazil, each acre produces an average 0.43.8 tons while the figure for Mexico is 0.21.4 tons. This low level of productivity, as we will see, is confirmed in each of the villages under study.

The reasons for the failure to rationalize production on the henequen plantations are, therefore, not exclusively economic. The specific conditions of current class struggle in Mexico are such that the mechanization of labor processes requiring abundant labor power is

undesirable. In effect, while we recognize it could occur, the mechanization of the various labor processes in henequen production would provoke not only an eventual reduction in costs of production but a swelling of the industrial reserve army as well. Now, in the actual state of the development of productive forces in Mexico, capital has no need whatsoever for expansion at this level, which would occur at the expense of an already precarious social peace. Moreover, the low level of development of the productive forces is already compensated for in part by the existence of an industrial reserve army in respectable proportions. It is in this sense that Stavenhagen states that as long as labor power does not constitute either a dear or a scarce element among factors of production, the interest of the system resides in the maintenance of a large and mobile peasant population (Stavenhagen 1975: 163). Agricultural industries, like the henequen industry, benefit as well from this situation in addition to enjoying the particular conditions of the general organization of rural production. These particular conditions make possible a severe reduction in workers' wages - thus an economy at the level of costs of production - without affecting the social peace.

In the absence of mechanization, costs of production can be held down only at the level of living labor (in contrast to the past labor contained in machines); that is, at the level of the cost of maintaining labor power. Under the capitalist mode of production, wages theoretically correspond to these maintenance costs without

which labor power ceases to be available when a new cycle of production begins because that labor power has not been adequately reproduced. In the case of the henequenera region, these costs of maintaining the labor power make up the better part of the costs of producing crude fiber. If capitalists cannot reduce these costs of production by means of an increasing rationalization of the process of production, they can at least maintain those costs at the lowest possible level through direct intervention in wages. In the so-called advanced capitalist countries, capitalists are usually not able to reduce wages below a certain threshold, which is one of the foci of class struggle. Within the limits of working class militancy, capitalists see to it that wages do not rise. In Mexico, on the contrary, and especially in the region of interest to me, capitalists benefit from conditions that are so exceptional they are able to keep wages below the costs of reproduction of the laboring power of workers.

In effect, as we will see, the wages workers are paid on capitalist henequen plantations are not sufficient to meet the costs of reproducing their labor power or maintaining their families. In theory, however, most of these workers can fall back on subsistence agriculture or artisanal activities. Therefore, even if wages do not entirely meet the cost of reproducing their labor power, workers continue to present themselves on the capitalist labor market. In a social formation where the productive forces are little developed, capitalists enjoy enormous advantages. They are, in effect, able to save on the costs of reproducing the labor power they need and, at the same time, to depress the costs of producing a commodity.

Conclusion: The Material Organization of Production:
Result and Focus of Class Struggle

The direct producer's capacity for himself assuring the reproduction of his labor power outside the capitalist market is related both to the specific type of the material organization of production in the region and to the current state of class struggle. The material organization of production is fundamental not only because it constitutes the historical result of class struggle but also because it is the material point of departure for a class struggle that is being constantly pursued. Thus, it is impossible to understand the outcome and regional focus of class struggle without an analysis of the immediate regional components of the organization of production. Such an analysis constitutes, in fact, the central point of the present work. In this part of the thesis, I have traced the history of class struggle through a focus upon a fundamental element in the organization of agrarian production - land tenure. It is, in fact, the coexistence of different types of land tenure that permit in part direct producers to reproduce their labor power outside the capitalist market. These types of land tenure involve relations of production that, at least in the immediate sense, are not capitalist. In these circumstances, there is a need to describe adequately the actual state pertaining to land tenure in the selected villages in order to grasp its implications. Here the aim is not to identify a dominant type of land tenure in terms of specific periods but rather to circumscribe the relations of production that can develop on the basis of different types of land tenure

existing simultaneously. The object thus corresponds to the identification of the social classes present in the henequenera region.

The description and analysis of the organization of production should allow me first to identify the different social classes present in the region. Once these social classes have been identified in terms of their material basis, I will then have a framework in which to make the demonstration I have proposed and which must now be formulated in more precise terms.

In Part II, I have attempted to trace changes mainly on the level of land tenure since the Conquest. Rather than seeking to identify the modes of production or trying to show if or how they "articulate" in relation to land tenure, I have endeavored to show, consistent with Marx, that in class society it is class struggle which constitutes the real motor of history (Marx & Engels 1976: 30). I have, therefore, been concerned to show the state of development of these forces in Yucatan and in the larger context of Mexico, when this latter aspect appeared pertinent. Notwithstanding the complexity of the historical record, the guiding thread of the procedure adopted in Part II was the continual identification of social classes on the material level. Thus, I traced direct producers and non-producers, on the one hand, and on the other, I sought to identify their relationship with the means of production and, consequently, the relations they had with each other as well. In the case of Yucatan, land constituted the principal means of production in the past and continues to be such today. This is the basis for having organized the first part of my analysis around the changes in land tenure.

It will be recalled that in Part I, I presented the historical context of my subject and thereby was able to identify the role of class struggle in terms of the driving force of this particular history. This step back into history provided really a means of bringing out the sense of class struggle. On the one hand, I traced the slow and painful emergence of a class of producers increasingly separated from their means of production which, in this case, is principally the land. On the other hand, the recent formation of the proletariat in Mexico and in Yucatan notwithstanding, and despite the repression they experienced, we have seen that they succeeded in winning various kinds of democratic rights.

The concern in Part III is much more limited. It proposes to describe and analyze the organization of production in two villages of the henequenera zone based on the data for 1973-74. In contrast to Part II, the procedure adopted here has the disadvantage of losing a general sense of large-scale history. However, this focus on a limited time and space-frame has the advantage of showing us the multiple facets of what is too often referred to by the vague and general term "class struggle". In Part III, we will examine more closely the situation of rural workers. The case of this particular category of worker holds definite interest because, as we saw in the preceding historical study, the movement in which they participate is relatively disorganized.

The conclusion of failure regarding this movement to which one necessarily comes is based on indications of sharpening divisions

among workers themselves. The parcellization of capitalist production isolates workers and if this isolation is not countered by an organization working in labor's interest, then workers are forced to deal individually with Capital. I maintain it is this kind of situation which characterizes workers in the henequenera zone. Part III has been written keeping in mind that when the organized proletarian movement is either repressed or muzzled, such as is actually the case in Yucatan, the bourgeoisie must pursue its offensive against any possibility of re-organizing unless it wishes to see a resurgence of militancy that might perhaps change the conditions of production at its expense. Thus, the bourgeoisie must cultivate all instances of division among the workers themselves. These instances are quite numerous, of course, and I do not intend to cover all of them. Rather, I plan to concentrate on an issue of fundamental importance in class struggle; that is, the material conditions which shape it. I believe that the divisions among workers themselves constitute the principal reason for the current stagnation in the Mexican workers' movement. However, this division is not a phenomenon sui generis but rather a concrete effect of class struggle for control of production. We will see, in effect, that in the specific conditions of rural capitalism - and, particularly in the henequenera zone - this division is potentially contained in the material organization of production. If this organization of production is treated as the result of class struggle, then it must be admitted that, for the moment at least,

the bourgeoisie continues to profit by the outcome of past struggle and is content to reinforce that which it has already acquired. By strengthening its control over the organization of production, the bourgeois State reinforces and multiplies the divisive effects of that organization. I consider that these divisive effects are contained within the varied modes of land tenure and land distribution. Not only do we find variety in the modes of land tenure but also distinct relations of production that develop on its basis. Finally, in regard to the capitalist mode of production as such, we find that labor processes are undergoing a deepening parcellization that is all the more remarkable in that it is unfolding in a rural area.

CHAPTER 5 NOTES

- (1) Apparently, Mena Brito follows Turner (1911) and the figures provided do not find exact confirmation in official statistics (Gonzalez Navarro 1979: 223).
- (2) The party at first took the name of The Socialist Workers' Party (PSO) and later the Yucatan Socialist Party (PSY) before becoming the PSSE.
- (3) Labor appears to have been particularly required in clearing land and transplanting henequen. During the seventeen-year existence of the Gran Ejido, the ejidatarios brought an additional 114,000 hectares into cultivation over the cultivated surface area of henequen in 1938 (Betancourt Perez 1953: 133).
- (4) Concurrent international price for raw fiber of the best quality (probably) was 7.13 pesos per kilo (Diario de Yucatan 1973).
- (5) January 1974.
- (6) June 1974.
- (7) 1 crude ton: \$820.10 - 1 lb: 0.37.3
- (8) 1 baling twine ton: \$893.30 - 1 lb: 0.40.6
- (9) Of these 145,000 tons, 90,000 tons (62% of total) were exported and 55,000 tons (38%) were destined for the domestic market.

PART III

THE RURAL PROLETARIAT, PRODUCTIVE FORCES AND CLASS STRUGGLE IN AGRARIAN PRODUCTION

Introduction

Chapter 6 Productive Forces in Yucatan

Chapter 7 Contemporary Yucatan and the Villages Under Study

Chapter 8 The Distribution and Utilization of Land in Different
Types of Land Tenure

Chapter 9 The Principal Labor Processes in the Henequenera Region

Chapter 10 Production and Relations of Production

Conclusion Social Class in the Henequenera Region

INTRODUCTION

This part of the thesis is based on firsthand ethnographic material and attempts to illustrate the incomplete character of the development of capitalism in the agrarian sector, represented in Yucatan principally by the henequen plantations. My illustration of this process begins at the general level of specifying the relationships between the agrarian and industrial sectors in Mexico and moves toward a particular illustration of the agrarian sector in Yucatan. This is the object of Chapter 6.

The following three chapters (Chapters 7, 8 and 9) describe the socioeconomic specificity of the selected villages in the context of contemporary Yucatan, show the ways in which these villages are inscribed in a larger process in terms of the different types of land tenure which prevail in Mexico and, finally, provide a description of the principal labor processes in the region. In other words, I seek to describe the context of production. These three chapters and the last are based on data gathered during fieldwork and direct ethnographic experience. Chapter 7 in particular focusses upon the various facets of that experience and the methods employed in fieldwork.

Chapter 10 concludes Part III by presenting an analysis of production and the social relations it implies. I attempt to situate the rural proletariat in relation to other classes represented in the agrarian sector while, at the same time, I seek to bring out its

relationships with the evolving peasantry such as characterized in the first part of this work.

CHAPTER 6

PRODUCTIVE FORCES IN YUCATAN

The incomplete character of the development of capitalism in the agrarian sector is rooted on the level of the productive forces. Unlike the industrial sector, where machinery and the mechanization of operations are essential conditions of production, the agrarian sector in Yucatan is characterized by a virtual absence of machinery and a high ratio of living labor to capital. This low level of development of the productive forces, combined with the more general conditions of production, results in low productivity. While this would lead to the elimination of an enterprise in the industrial sector, in the agrarian sector the enterprise not only survives but actually derives additional benefits from this situation.

However, it is not the profitability of rural enterprises which interests me but rather the social processes which determine its form. I want to understand how, in the absence of machines, the development of productive forces can continue and manifest itself by an increasing separation of workers from their means of production. I believe I have found a lead in Marx's discussion of the genesis of

the capitalist development of the productive forces (Marx 1967a: 322-370). The expropriation of producers is a necessary condition for this development to take place. This genesis begins with simple cooperation and moves progressively through complex cooperation and manufacturing before culminating in the advent of machinery. Marx shows that one can talk about the development of productive forces well before the introduction of machines into production because the key to understanding the process of the capitalist development of the productive forces lies in the forms of the organization of labor or, more precisely, the increasing division of labor. Therefore, the introduction of machinery into production is not itself a cause of the development of the productive forces but rather an effect of its fully-developed form. In this kind of perspective, the incomplete character of capitalist development in the agrarian sector corresponds to a division of labor that is less developed in relation to the industrial sector.

I will thus attempt to demonstrate that this "incompletedness" which characterizes capitalist development on the henequen plantations in no way inhibits the process of class polarization, which is already proceeding on the basis of relations of production, from pursuing its uneven course through the forms of the division of labor.

As a final note, let it be understood that the present study's demonstration does, of course, differ from Marx's in the chapters cited in Capital inasmuch as I am concerned with the contemporary development of productive forces in Mexico's agrarian sector. Marx

was mainly concerned with the industrial sector and its relations with the larger process of capitalist development in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Methodologically, however, I have drawn inspiration from his discussion by attempting to situate the Mexican agrarian sector within the wider framework of the development of the capitalist mode of production and, particularly, in relation with the sector of industrial production.

6.1 Productive Forces and the Accumulation of Capital

In order for the capitalist mode of production to maintain itself, its fundamental condition of existence must be assured. This condition corresponds to the separation of the worker from the means of production (object and means of labor). Each time the process of production is terminated, this fundamental condition must be renewed in such a way that the worker is continually thrown back onto the market. It is a historical condition which must be constantly reproduced. As a result of the relations of production into which workers are inserted, at the end of a process of production they possess only their labor power and are separated from the means of production. They have no other alternative but to offer once again their labor power on the market. Thus, the separation of the producer from the means of production reveals a dual character; this separation constitutes a historical condition of existence of the process of production and it also constitutes the result of this.

This is the perspective adopted by Marx and Engels who, writing in the Communist Manifesto, emphasize that the productive forces do not develop by themselves; rather, the class struggle in production constitutes the real motor of development of the productive forces. Thus, when the early demands of workers centered around reduction of the length of the work-day, they expressed of course an aspect of class struggle but posed the problem specifically in terms of productive forces. The subsequent reduction of the length of the work-day was the positive result for the proletariat of the struggle it had waged. On the other hand, as we have seen, capitalists fought back on the field of productive forces because their subsequent development went momentarily against the proletariat which, from then on, experienced the extortion of relative surplus-value (rather than an augmentation of absolute surplus-value) brought on by the introduction and widespread use of machinery. The development of productive forces reaches such a point that machines practically replace the worker; by lowering the cost of commodities which go into the maintenance of the labor force, machinery devalues this labor force. However, sooner or later, the situation goes against the capitalists; in effect, the capitalist rate of profit is realized principally on the basis of living labor. Now, as the proportion of living to dead or past labor contained in machines diminishes capitalists experience what is called the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. This situation leads to periodic crises of accumulation which mark an intensification of the class struggle but which also, in general, allow capitalists to

reinforce themselves at the expense of weaker capitalists and, especially, the workers. With the modifications that come about as a result of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, certain capitalists are not able to realize the average rate of profit permitting them to remain active in the sector of the valuation of their capital. They are absorbed by other capitalists who must then reorganize production on a higher level of rationalization. A certain portion of the labor force becomes automatically useless and is eliminated from production in this sector, thus assuring the existence of a relative overpopulation which further devalues the remaining active labor force. In the absence of an organized and efficient workers' movement, the class struggle characterizing periods of crisis momentarily goes in favor of capitalists. In other words:

"Even if (...) (crises) are a potential moment of rupture of the labor force vis-à-vis capital (unemployment, crisis of the politico-ideological hegemony of the bourgeoisie due to the necessity of restructuring itself). These are most often resolved in the capitalist framework (...; (crises) must be considered as the motor of capitalist reform through the "revolutionization" of productive forces and the changes in social relations which it brings about." (Théret 1977: 59)

The analysis of the different moments of development of the capitalist mode of production in Part IV of Capital shows not only that the development of productive forces constitutes the result of class struggle but also that this development represents its principal focus. Crises are equivalent to an intensification of the process of capitalist accumulation. However, this process does not unfold everywhere or always in the same manner. It is only by taking account of

the development of various sectors of capitalist production in Mexico that one can evaluate the pace of capitalist accumulation in general as well as the outcome of its periodic crises in this country.

The Revolution of 1911-1917 constitutes an important landmark in the study of the agrarian sector as an aspect of capitalist development in Mexico. The Agrarian Reform that emerged from this Revolution had ambivalent effects but, at least during its first years, appeared to be working. Thus, the ejido set up throughout the sector in the years 1930-1940 corresponded to an intensification of the obstacles, other than capitalist rent, which were put up against the anarchistic penetration of capital into the agrarian sector. The ejido put a brake on the continued differentiation of the peasantry, assured social peace and stabilized a part of the rural labor force. Beyond its participation in work on the ejido and involvement in petty commodity production, this labor force was made available to capitalist agricultural enterprises which, as it is too often forgotten, were established by the Agrarian Reform along with the ejido. The Mexican State took a leading role in investment within the agrarian sector. The penetration of capital into agriculture advanced at a pace prescribed by the State so as to profit the industrial sector.

In the early period of agrarian reform, capitalist accumulation in agriculture proceeded in a spectacular manner. Given the stagnancy of agricultural commodity prices at low levels, the value of labor power was reduced. This situation prevailed until 1965:

"During this entire period (1940-1965), agricultural production was able to furnish the domestic market in an efficient manner and to contribute gradually to the enlargement of the capacity for import, allowing the obtention of capital necessary for the purchase of equipment in the phase of substituting intermediate goods and durable consumer goods." (Gelot and Leiner 1976: 127)

The growth of the industrial sector had limits, however, which were related as much to the capacity of the domestic market to absorb manufactured products as to the necessity of importing foreign technology in order to increase or, at least, maintain the rate of extracting relative surplus-value. The destination of capital to supplying industrial means of production meant that much less capital for investment in the agrarian sector. Thus, this investment gradually decreased and the rate of growth in agriculture went from 7% in the period 1949-59 to 3.2% between 1955 and 1965 (Gelot and Leiner 1976: 128). The prices of agricultural commodities rose but the price of labor power did not follow this upward movement. In effect, the developing crisis in agriculture freed a labor force that had become useless in this sector. This labor force joined the ranks of the industrial reserve army and contributed to a decrease in the price of labor power (that is, wages), despite its rising value. Within the agrarian sector itself, the possibility of falling back on subsistence agriculture was not unrelated to the lowering of wages across all the sectors of capitalist production.

According to the authors that were consulted, statistical data show a flow of capital from the agrarian sector toward the industrial

sector; however, the agrarian sector in question here is that involved in the production of subsistence goods because, in the case of export crops (cotton, coffee, cane sugar and, we may add, henequen), the sector continued to be the object of investment. Nonetheless, agricultural production as such experienced "a growing stagnation" (Gelot and Leiner 1976: 130). The stagnation in this particular area leading to the current crisis in agriculture and in the economy in general constitutes the situation of the time and place of the field study.

Specifically, beginning in 1972 the price of agricultural consumptive goods rose spectacularly within the inflationary context of agriculture and world economy (Gelot and Leiner 1976: 132). The price of labor power still did not rise and the purchasing power of the working class continued to drop. As Guillen-Romo explains, this situation could never acquire the permanent character in industrialized countries which it seems to have in Mexico:

"(...) Contrary to countries in the centre, capitalist accumulation is not especially founded upon the expansion of the effective demand of the working class (...). (Thus) an increase in the rate of exploitation does not have serious consequences on the process of accumulation." (Guillen-Romo 1974: 198)

The granting of consumer credit and, as will be seen in the case of Yucatan, agricultural diversification projects, are not designed to roll back the limits of the exploitation of the labor power but rather to maintain it in a global economic context that has become problematic. In effect, faced with the advancing stagnation of agricultural subsistence production and the need to maintain the price of

labor power at a constant level, Mexico had to allocate its foreign exchange to the purchase of basic consumer items rather than to the purchase of industrial consumer goods or to the payment of debts. Statistics pay startling testimony to this situation; in 1974, the trade deficit reached \$2.558 billion, an increase of 117.6% over the figure for 1973 (Ayala y otros 1979: 56). Since Mexico confronted a foreign currency deficit which agricultural exports and tourism could not fill, a situation aggravated by the currency drain from Mexicans travelling outside the country (Ayala y otros 1979: 56). Mexico was thus forced to borrow on the international market in order to re-establish equilibrium in its balance of payments. This action produced a swelling in the foreign debt. In 1974 (that is, before the discovery of important petroleum reserves), Mexico's economy seemed bound to a narrow path; the export of petroleum, the major export good and principal source of foreign currency, would according to various estimates bring in \$400 million in 1975 (Gelot and Leiner 1976: 134). Henequen came in far behind petroleum exports in terms of its apparent significance but its contribution, amounting to \$56 million in 1974, could be said to be nevertheless important under the circumstances. Once again, the critical importance of acquiring foreign currency for the Mexican economy cannot be overestimated. In effect,

"(...) the subordinate condition of Mexican capitalism (technical dependence) means that capital accumulation passes through the foreign market, which makes it crucial to dispose of enough currency for the purchase on the foreign market of means of production and raw materials necessary for continued industrial development." (Guillen-Romo 1974: 209)

In terms of the immediate material conditions of the proletarian class, the trade deficit meant a constant deterioration of these conditions. In this time of agricultural crisis, all the energies of the bourgeois class in power centered on the search for and economizing of currency. Workers' demands affecting the costs of production had to be "postponed". In the case of Mexico, the bourgeoisie profited from a deep experience of repression which went from the subordination of the workers' movement to State institutions, to the systematic assassination of workers' and peasants' leaders who labored outside the framework defined by the dominant class. Limited only by the combativity of a class that was literally starving, the intensification of the exploitation of labor power corresponded to a generalized situation. This intensification was even more marked in export sectors, Henequen constitutes one of these.

The exploitation of the proletariat in general, and of the agricultural proletariat in the case which interests me, is effected nonetheless in limits set by class struggle. The historical analysis which I presented in the second part shows that the agricultural proletariat in the henequen region is rich in the experience of past struggles, be these recent or more distant ones in time, which are inevitably waged in the face of capitalist aggression. In concentrating upon the economic aspect of class struggle, it is seen that this articulates around the organization of production in the global sense and around the development of productive forces in particular.

The absence of machines at the level of the direct production of henequen could give the impression that the productive forces are in a state of absolute stagnation. However, if we refer to the example of the development of productive forces in the industrial sector, as the capitalist mode of production develops, we see that even once machinery comes into widespread use, the labor process continues to undergo profound and constant changes: the parcellization of operations on the assembly line is one of these. In the henequen fields, the labor process constitutes the object of a discrete change which is, nonetheless, efficient from the point of view of the dominant class under capitalism. Like its urban equivalent, the rural proletariat is alienated from that which conferred upon it a residual specificity which it owed to its peasant origins; namely, the knowledge of the rhythm of the seasons, of plants and animals.

6.2 Henequen and Production in Yucatan

Yucatan is one of the three states (the other two are Campeche and Quintana Roo) situated on the Yucatan Peninsula. This peninsula is a vast, relatively flat plain whose maximum elevation is 300 meters. The State of Yucatan is ranked twentieth in Mexico in terms of land area, which totals 43,370 square kilometers (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 2).

The hydraulic network is poorly developed in this state and the extreme permeability of the soil inhibits the formation of watersheds on the surface. Yucatan's inhabitants must rely on deep wells

for their water supply (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 2).

The soil is calciferous, covered by a very thin layer of earth. In areas without any vegetation, erosion is common and rocks are frequently exposed, making it difficult to farm (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 3).

In the part of Yucatan where I worked, the climate is hot and dry. This type of climate is characteristic of steppes. The average temperature in the coldest month is around 18° C. In the hottest months of the year (April, May and June), the temperature can be above 40° C, which incidentally is the period during which I did most of the fieldwork.

In addition to these characteristics, the henequenera region reveals some particular dimensions deriving from its history. Once its economic activity had been defined on the basis of the commercialization of henequen, the historical development of the henequenera region took a closely circumscribed path in comparison with other regions of Yucatan. Economic transformations combined with the natural characteristics of the region to make an ecological zone clearly distinct in its configuration from that of the other regions in the state. The government of Yucatan has distinguished six different zones of soil use which may be seen in the following table.

TABLE 29

Land Use Zones in Yucatan

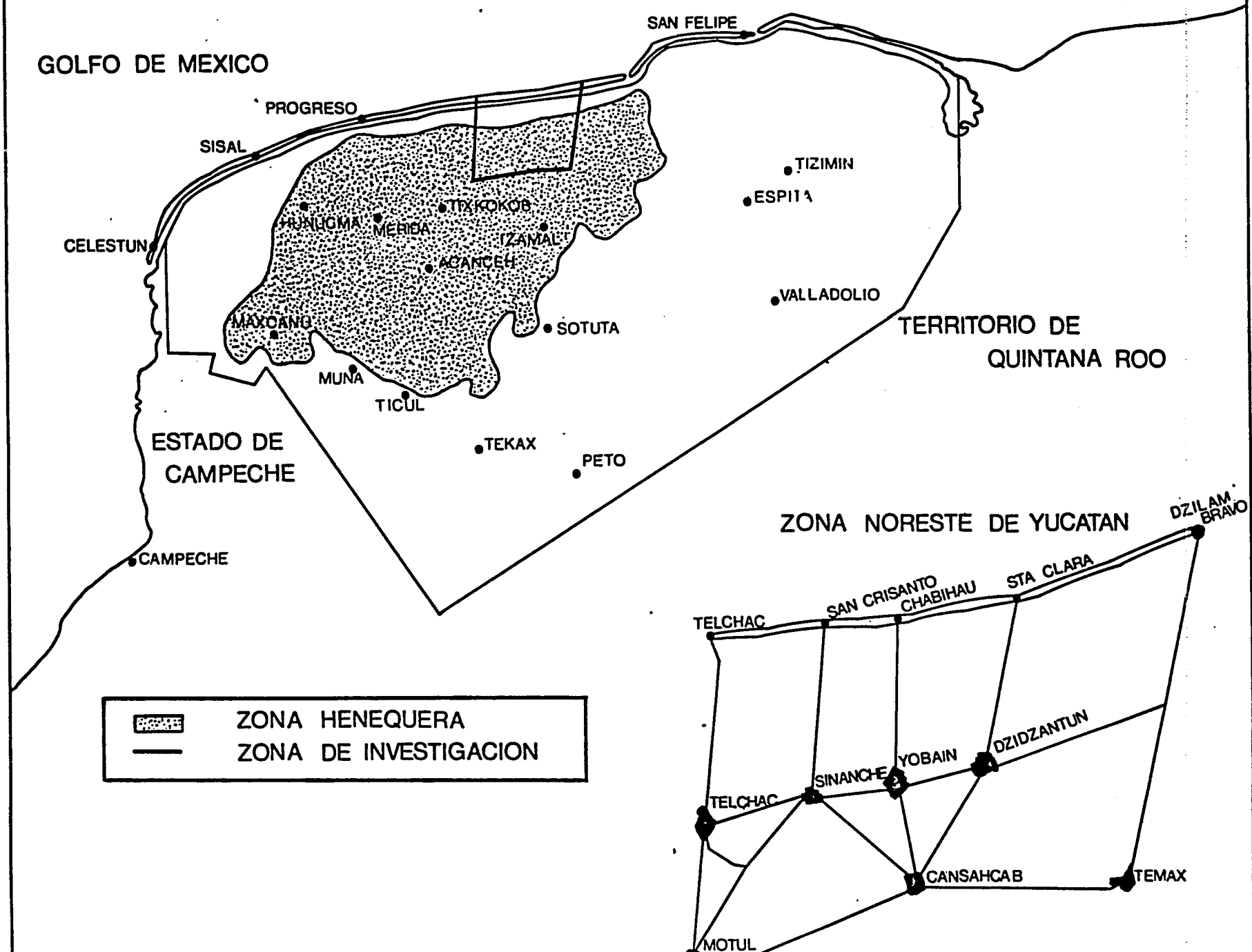
Zone	surface (square kilometers)	% of total
Western Livestock	7,625	20.34
Western Maize	8,896	23.89
Central Maize	3,686	9.89
Coastal	235	0.63
Fruit-growing	5,311	14.26
Henequenera ⁽¹⁾	11,482	30.83
Total	37,235	99.84

Source: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 4

Even if the surface area of the henequenera zone, despite its breadth, is no greater than that of maize, the economic and social implications differ considerably.

By itself alone, the henequenera zone encompasses 56 municipios out of a total of 106 in the state. In 1960, these 56 municipios included 398,862 inhabitants (Menendez R. 1964: 256) or 64.95% of the then-total population of Yucatan (614,049 inhabitants). Ten years later, in 1970, the population of the zone had increased by 20.32% or at about the same rate as for the whole of Yucatan (23.40%) to reach 479,917 inhabitants. In other words, the population of the henequenera zone in 1970 represented 63.28% of the state's total population of

ESTADO DE YUCATAN



The State of Yucatan

MAP no. 3

758,355 inhabitants (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 219-224).

The slower rate of demographic increase in the henequenera zone during the last decade parallels the stagnation of henequen fiber prices.

This situation within the larger context of capitalism's periodic crises no doubt favored the emigration toward Mérida, the capital of the state.

Situated in the henequenera zone, Mérida is the only large city in the state able to draw off the rural population. With its 241,964 inhabitants in 1970 (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 218), it serves as metropolis for the entire state. The principal industries are located essentially in Mérida, leaving only agriculture and connected activities for the countryside; thus, the rural population is almost entirely engaged in agriculture. The following table takes the active population as an indicator of the relative importance of different sectors of production in Yucatan.

TABLE 30

Economically-active Population in Yucatan (1950-1970)
According to Sectors

Type of Activity	1950		1960		1970
	Yucatan 100	Mexico 100	Yucatan 100	Mexico 100	Yucatan 100
Total	100	1.7	100	1.6	100
Agriculture	59.8	1.9	59.0	2.2	55.1
Manufacturing	11.8	1.5	12.1	1.0	10.6
Commerce	9.5	1.9	10.5	1.3	7.5
Services	8.5	1.5	11.3	1.2	14.9
Unspecified	3.7	0.4	0.2	1.7	6.1
Construction and Electric Power	3.6	1.4	3.2	1.1	3.4
Transportation	2.9	1.7	3.1	1.2	2.1
Extraction	0.2	0.9	0.6	0.3	0.3

Source: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1972: 13

If we consider the portion of the population engaged in agricultural activities, we note that this sector clearly dominates the entire rural economic scene in Yucatan. In 1970, 55.1% of the active population was involved in this type of activity, a decrease of 4.7% for the sector since 1950. Linked in all probability to the growth of the tourist industry, the service sector falls immediately behind agriculture with 14.9% of the active population in 1970. In fact, this sector grew the fastest since 1950 (6.4%) and surpassed manufacturing which had until then held greater importance. In 1970, 10.6% of the active population worked in this sector and 7.5% were involved directly in commerce. Finally, other sectors such as construction, electrical energy, transportation and extractive activities involved a very limited proportion of the population.

The direct production of henequen obviously makes up a part of agriculture. The importance of henequen and, consequently, of the henequenera region, can only be appreciated once one compares the data on this crop with that for the ensemble of other crops grown in Yucatan. Maize, beans and sugar cane emerge clearly from this ensemble. As in other parts of rural Mexico, maize and beans are the basis of nourishment for the population. Of course, one can compare these products on the basis of the surface area they cover, as in the following table.

TABLE 31

Cultivated Surface Area for the Principal Products in Yucatan

Product	Surface Area (in hectares)	% of total
Henequen	218,133.4	64.14
Maize	113,623.6	33.41
Beans	3,478.0	1.02
Sugar Cane	4,807.3	1.41
Total	340,042.3	99.98

Source: based on DGE 1960: 188,191,215,245,248,413

Clearly, henequen dominates the agrarian sector in terms of cultivated surface area. However, since these products do not all have the same economic significance, the data concerning surface area in no way constitute an adequate basis of comparison. The comparison of annual volume of production and market value are reliable indications. These two types of data are available for 1973 and 1974, years which form the ethnographic present of the present work. The following table examines these data for the four principal agricultural products we have mentioned.

TABLE 32

Volume, Price and Value of the Four Principal
Agricultural Products in Yucatan 1973-1974

		Annual Production (tons)		Value of Production (pesos)		Average Rural Prices (pesos per ton)	
		1973	1974	1973	1974	1973	1974
henequen	n	109,188	111,983	237,920,650	517,361,460	2,179	4,620
	%	41.35	45.36	58.34	71.29		
maize	n	120,452	93,911	132,497,200	131,475,400	1,100	1,400
	%	45.62	38.04	32.49	18.11		
beans	n	5,284	4,890	10,568,000	24,450,000	2,000	5,000
	%	2.00	1.90	2.59	3.36		
sugar cane	n	14,000	14,000	980,000	1,120,000	70	80
	%	5.30	5.67	2.40	0.15		
total of all agricultural products	n*	264,026.3	246,848.4	407,758,365	725,622,027		
	%**	94.27	91.05	95.82	92.91		

Source: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978

% = Percentage of total for all agricultural products

n = Absolute number

* = This absolute number represents the total of all agricultural products including the four products appearing in the table

** = This percentage corresponds only to the four products appearing in the table. Each one of the other products, such as various categories of fruits and vegetables, amounts to less than one per cent (1%) of the total in terms of volume and value.

Although the volume of production of henequen is approximately equal to that of maize, their respective values differ greatly. For the year 1973, for example, the value of henequen production accounted for 58.34% of the total value of production in the agrarian sector while maize accounted for only 32.49% of this value. The difference is larger for the following year; while the value of henequen production attained 71.29% of the total, maize now accounted for only 18.11% of total value. The years 1973 and 1974 are revealing in this regard. Not only did maize production drop appreciably (its volume went from 120,452 tons in 1973 to 93,911 tons in 1974)⁽²⁾ but also this decrease in the production of subsistence goods seemed to "make up for" by an increase in both the volume and value of henequen production. As I mentioned in the preceding section, this dynamic between a product destined for export and another destined for direct consumption has specific impact on the economy. A decrease in maize production means that imports will increase and, in terms of importing on the international market, it implies as well that currency will be leaving the country, which only aggravates the already considerable Mexican trade deficit. The same table also shows that between 1973 and 1974, the price of maize increased by 300 pesos per ton. As we know, an increase on this level brings about a concomitant increase in the value of labor power. Thus, it is not surprising that the value (price X volume of production) of henequen production (that cultivated on the basis of wage-labor) attained the spectacular sum of 517,361,460 pesos in 1974,

compared to a value of 237,920,650 pesos for a nearly equal level of production volume in 1973. One should not be misled by the figures of the value of henequen production in 1974. The value in current exchange could seem prodigious but it is still moderate in terms of purchasing power. Tamayo (1962: 322) points out that even if the value of henequen production rose by 204,390,620 pesos between 1925 and 1960, the purchasing power of this money actually fell by 26 million pesos (Tamayo 1962: 322).

Referring to this table, it should be remarked that the volumes of henequen production in 1973-74, despite an increase of the commercialized area since 1960, had undergone a constant decrease since 1959 when 148,881 tons were produced (Tamayo 1962: 322). The 1973 level of 109,188 tons was equivalent to the level of 1955 (Tamayo 1962: 322), when the disastrous experiment of the Gran Ejido was terminated.

Without dwelling too much on this table, one notes that the areas corresponding to each product disappeared from the official statistics at our disposal. Data from the Dirección General de Estadísticas for 1970 shows only (p. 127) that the exploited area of henequen covered 261,807 hectares, compared to 218,133.4 hectares in 1960. The areas given over to other products are not mentioned. The non-systematic character of the statistics at our disposal reflects a scattered state that is virtually impossible for an isolated researcher to make up for. It is also to be noted that, especially in

official organs, there is a variation in categories from one year to another which makes certain comparisons very tedious and delicate.

Considering only, for example, the data on henequen in Yucatan, a single overall look on the table which synthesizes this data should convince the reader of their contradictory content, depending on their origin in one source or another. In this table, I attempted to offset the haphazard character of statistics which often cover only a short span of time by contextualizing them in relation to the development of henequen over a long period of time corresponding to the years 1847 through 1974. By indicating the source of any given datum, I hope to counterbalance the confusing effects which contradictory data can introduce. At the same time, certain sources lose their semblance of credibility.

TABLE 33

Synthesis of Henequen Statistics for the Years 1847-1974

Year	Surface Area (hectares)	Source	Production (metric tons)	Source	Exports to the U.S.A. (metric tons)	Source	Price/lb. U.S. dollars	Source
1847	2,400	Cline 1948: 41	2,971	Cline 1948: 43	1,150	Cline 1948: 43	0.03.0	Cline 1948: 46
1860	2,600	Betancourt 1953: 54 Cline 1948: 41			340.8	Betancourt 1953: 57	0.03.0	Cline 1948: 46
1861					119.2	Irigoyen 1975: 111		
1865	16,000	Cline 1948: 41						
1870					3,781.9	Betancourt 1953: 57		
1872							0.11.8	Cline 1948: 46
1873							0.09.0	Benitez 1965: 70

Year	Surface Area (hectares)	Source	Production (metric tons)	Source	Exports to the U.S.A. (metric tons)	Source	Price/lb. U.S. dollars	Source
1874					5,803.6	Benitez 1965: 69	0.08.2 to 0.05.5	Benitez 1965: 70
1875							0.05.5 to 0.04.5	Benitez 1965: 70
1877							0.02.2	Cline 1948: 46
1878	31,240 31,200	Betancourt 1953: 54 Cline 1948: 41					0.02.8	Benitez 1965: 70
1879	45,200	Cline 1948: 41						
1880					21,465.9	Betancourt 1953: 57	0.02.8	Benitez 1965: 70
1885							0.01.7	Benitez 1965: 70

Year	Surface Area (hectares)	Source	Production (metric tons)	Source	Exports to the U.S.A. (metric tons)	Source	Price/lb. U.S. dollars	Source
1889					47,990.8	Benitez 1965: 69	0.05.7	Betancourt 1953: 57
1890	99,120	Cline 1948: 41						
1897					79,843.1	Benitez 1965: 113		
1909	146,420	Betancourt 1953: 54						
1915							0.05.8 0.13.5	Betancourt 1953: 57 Cline 1948: 46
1916	320,000	Betancourt 1953: 54			226,507	Betancourt 1953: 57	0.05.5	Betancourt 1953
1918					151,874	Benitez 1965: 114	0.14.7	Betancourt 1953
1921			106,800	Irigoyen 1975: 100				

Year	Surface Area (hectares)	Source	Production (metric tons)	Source	Exports to the U.S.A. (metric tons)	Source	Price/lb. U.S. dollars	Source
1925	127,340	Tamayo 1962: 322	136,930	Tamayo 1962: 322				
1927	234,420	Betancourt 1953: 72			122,932	Betancourt 1953: 72		
1930	81,748	Tamayo 1962: 322	95,044	Tamayo 1962: 322			0.05.5	Betancourt 1953
1933							0.01.9	Betancourt 1953
1936	101,755	Tamayo 1962: 322	112,000 115,230	Irigoyen 1975: 100 Tamayo 1962: 322				
1937	180,000 160,000	Benitez 1965: 235 Anonym	102,091	Benitez 1965: 235				
1938			78,180	Anonym	81,264.2	Betancourt 1953: 131	0.03.3	Betancourt 1953
1939					84,392.9	Betancourt 1953: 131	0.02.7	Betancourt 1953

Year	Surface Area (hectares)	Source	Production (metric tons)	Source	Exports to the U.S.A. (metric tons)	Source	Price/lb. U.S. dollars	Source
1940	108,560	Tamayo 1962: 322	96,242	Tamayo 1962: 322	96,007.6	Betancourt 1953: 131	0.03.5	Betancourt 1953
1941					96,197.7	Betancourt 1953: 131	0.03.5	Betancourt 1953
1942					106,343.9	Betancourt 1953: 131	0.03.5	Betancourt 1953
1943			121,237	Betancourt 1953: 149	120,417.8	Betancourt 1953: 131	0.06.4	Betancourt 1953
1944					125,520	Betancourt 1953: 131	0.08.9	Betancourt 1953
1950	139,550	Tamayo 1962: 322	101,107	Tamayo 1962: 322				
1952	203,605	Menendez 1964: 261						
1955	151,761	Tamayo 1962: 322	109,679	Tamayo 1962: 322				

Year	Surface Area (hectares)	Source	Production (metric tons)	Source	Exports to the U.S.A. (metric tons)	Source	Price/lb. U.S. dollars	Source
1956	140,000	SAG 1966: 59	98,062	SAG 1966: 59				
1958	141,000	SAG 1966: 59	111,001	SAG 1966: 59				
1959	155,000 162,068	SAG 1966: 59 Tamayo 1962: 322	131,373 148,881	SAG 1966: 59 Tamayo 1962: 322				
1960	165,000 169,000 195,770 218,133	SAG 1966: 59 Tamayo 1962: 322 Menendez 1964: 256 DGE 1960: 413	137,648 147,875 142,692	SAG 1966: 59 Tamayo 1962: 322 Menendez 1964: 254	19,563	SAG 1966: 44		
1961	167,000	SAG 1966: 59	139,650 145,539	SAG 1966: 59 Menendez 1964: 254	22,219	SAG 1966: 44		

Year	Surface Area (hectares)	Source	Production (metric tons)	Source	Exports to the U.S.A. (metric tons)	Source	Price/lb. U.S. dollars	Source
1962	165,000 187,282	SAG 1966: 59 Menendez 1964: 261	135,816 141,498 142,585	SAG 1966: 59 Menendez 1964: 254 Benitez 1965: 235	35,506	SAG 1966: 44		
1963	186,000	SAG 1966: 59	117,697 124,010	SAG 1966: 59 Menendez 1964: 254	22,475	SAG 1966: 44		
1964	190,000	SAG 1966: 59	131,267	SAG 1966: 59	16,780	SAG 1966: 44		
1965	185,000	SAG 1966: 29, 30 and 59	128,166	SAG 1966: 59	31,698	SAG 1966: 44		
1970	261,807	DGE 1975: 127						

Year	Surface Area (hectares)	Source	Production (metric tons)	Source	Exports to the U.S.A. (metric tons)	Source	Price/lb. U.S. dollars	Source
1971			113,494	Gobierno... 1978	40,552	Diario 1974		
1972			118,826	Diario 1974	36,405	Diario 1974	0.22.0	Diario 1974
1973			223,897	Diario 1974 Gobierno... 1978	37,972	Diario 1974 Diario 1974	0.46.0	Diario 1974
1974			110,000 111,983	Diario 1974 Gobierno... 1978			0.81.4 1.14.4	Diario 1974

Following this table, we can contextualize each of the preceding tables concerning henequen within the development of this crop.

Finally, we can consider the data on exports. As we saw in the second part of this dissertation, the export of crude fiber to the United States, indicated in the sixth (6th) column of Table 33, underwent dramatic changes in relation to events of international politics. The export of crude fiber continued practically uninterrupted from 1847 until the 1950s. From 125,520 tons in 1950, exports to the United States fell to 19,563 tons in 1960 and never surpassed 36,000 tons annually until 1974. 1960 is the year Cordemex was founded. From then on, the export of crude fiber was displaced by the export of baling twine and manufactured products. The countries of destination also multiplied. Contrary to the impression that this table might give, henequen is still exported; in 1974, Mexico exported 82,478 tons, seventy-five per cent (75%) of which was accounted for by Yucatan. Despite increased control by government, henequen's price continued to be set on the international market at the whim of world production and the needs and influence of consuming countries. Mexico was thus, undoubtedly, in a difficult position but its dominant class was secure enough to have the workers bear the brunt of these difficulties. This is true for all workers but especially for those engaged in the production of export crops, like henequen and its derivatives. Ethnographic evidence on the organization of production in two villages of the henequenera region will bear this out.

CHAPTER 6 NOTES

- (1) See Map 3.
- (2) In 1971, the volume of maize production was 102,038 tons (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1972: 45). Put into context, the corresponding 1973 volume (120,452 tons) seems impressive. In fact, as I have already mentioned, this volume decreased to 93,911 tons. Data for the years subsequent to 1973-74 show that the tendency of volumes to fall continued in 1975 (88,691 tons), 1976 (94,550 tons), and 1977 (79,856 tons - preliminary figure for that year) (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 50).

CHAPTER 7

CONTEMPORARY YUCATAN AND THE VILLAGES UNDER STUDY

7.1 The Fieldwork, the Data and the People

The fieldwork on which this chapter in particular is based was carried out in 1973-74. However, the data would have been incomplete without additional visits to the field in 1976, 1977 and 1979. I spent a total of fifteen months doing fieldwork.

The purpose of my first visit to Yucatan in 1973 was to study a peasant farming community in the framework of economic anthropology and cultural ecology. Using Redfield's and Villa Rojas' Chan Kom as a guide to Mayan ethnography, the study was intended to follow in the lines of a report by the geographer Chardon (1961) but the decisive stimulus came from my reading of an article by the cultural ecologist A. Strickon (1965). It should be noted that at the time of my first visit to the field none of the articles and theses cited in the first chapter of the present work had yet come to my attention. Once in Yucatan, I discovered that some researchers had just completed or were completing fieldwork in the henequenera region. None of them had penetrated very far into the northeastern part of the region, however.

At the Dirección General de Planeación in Mérida I consulted monographies on each of the villages in the northeast and it was then I selected Sinanché as my first destination. I stayed in Sinanché from August to December 1973. This village was not very far from Mérida (65 kilometers) and its population of 3,151 inhabitants was, in terms of size, typical of the sixty-eight (68) towns and villages in the region⁽¹⁾.

My study of henequen production in Sinanché soon convinced of the necessity to go beyond a community-level framework and toward a regional-level study. With this ambition in mind, I chose the village of Temax for a second visit to the field in April through July 1974. Despite its above average population (5,889 inhabitants) and distance from the capital city (83 kilometers), Temax was chosen because, unlike Sinanché, it was outside the core of the henequenera region, located rather in the region's northeastern periphery. After my 1974 stay in Temax, I returned for a month to Sinanché in order to gather some data I had overlooked, due to inexperience, during my original stay there the previous year. Finally, I returned to Temax for a month in 1977 and completed my fieldwork on the village level at this time.

The repeated visits to the field made it obvious that it was impossible for a single researcher to carry out a regional study of plantation agriculture. However, the two villages I studied seemed to provide an adequate comparative basis for a demonstration of the tendencies of capitalist development in the agrarian sector. The compar-

ative approach was also favored by the presence of a colleague in Yobaín (Sinanché's neighboring village) and in Dzidzantún (near Temax) in 1973-74. I made frequent visits to these villages and my colleague Christian Giguère, then a student in anthropology, permitted me to consult his data, from which I was able to deepen my own understanding.

Fieldwork techniques in Sinanché and Temax included participant observation, both formal and informal interviews and questionnaires; in addition, I made frequent trips to the capital city of Mérida and to the regional offices of the Agrarian Bank in Motul and Cansahcab. These day trips were made for the purpose of collecting more general types of data in interview form among government civil servants or officers of financial institutions. These interviews were often brief but the data they furnished were extremely valuable.

As I deepened my knowledge of the institutions governing the lives of the ejidatarios and the population in general, it became clear that I should reconstruct not only the history of these institutions but also of Yucatan as a whole, taking account of the concerns expressed by Yucatecan intellectuals. For this reason, in 1976 I adopted a new field strategy and spent two months in Mérida, making occasional trips to Sinanché and Temax. This stay in town provided me with access to libraries and archives. Most of Part II of the present work is based on the data collected in Mérida in 1976 and during an additional stay there in 1979. During my 1976 stay, I also interviewed some local historians and politicians who resided in Mérida.

In all, I spent six months in Sinanché, five months in Temax and four months in Mérida. The volume of material collected breaks down as follows: 500 pages of interviews and observations, 150 questionnaires concerning production, 100 of which were administered in Temax and 50 of which were administered in Sinanché (see Annex I) and, finally, 500 pages of notes from archives and readings made in newspapers and locally-published books relating to both contemporary and historical periods. The compilations I made of official statistics represent a substantial proportion of the data I collected, as indicated by the numerous tables in the present study.

The questionnaire was constructed in the period between my first and second visits to the field. Interviews with some key informants, including ejidatarios and both small and large landowners, furnished the material necessary for the elaboration of this questionnaire. The questionnaire was primarily intended for the ejidatarios and subjects were chosen essentially on a random basis. However, the number of questionnaires represents an effort to respect the proportion of ejidatarios in each of the major occupations on the ejido.

Since the questionnaire provided only a partial view of the ensemble of labor processes in which workers were involved, I found it necessary to carry out more detailed interviews among carpenters, beekeepers, lime and charcoal producers, horticulturalists and artisans. The ejidatarios' knowledge of a variety of labor processes seems to me indicative of the vitality of their peasant roots.

This type of investigation made economic production a priority. But I found it equally necessary to inquire into areas of social and ideological reproduction and thus I interviewed representatives of the various levels of government in the villages: mayors, comisariados ejidales, administrators of the regional offices of the Agrarian Bank, the Agrarian Department and the Registro Civil. I conducted in-depth interviews with people whose names came up frequently in ejidatarios' references to power-holders: caciques, individuals who played a role in the Juventudes Socialistas, heros, parish priests and even local sports personalities. Thus, although the focus of the present study is upon the rural proletariat, it is the product of an analysis of the processes of differentiation in the region, which required investigation of virtually all aspects of economy, politics and ideology.

Only twenty per cent (20%) of the interviews were recorded on tape because this technique proved to be awkward, particularly when political topics were being discussed. I took written notes during most of the interviews and when this was not possible, I wrote down the information as soon as possible afterward. Finally, I was very fortunate in enjoying a close relationship with local women, from whom I collected some life histories. They shared their knowledge of village gossip (chismes) with me and assisted in the progress of my inquiry by pointing out the importance and status of various people. I was not able to use even half of this interview material in the present work inasmuch as it was not my purpose to furnish an "inside view" of the situation.

Data from interviews and observations were later classified according to a system of codification based on the different elements of economic production and the social and ideological reproduction of this mode of production. The simple method had several advantages. First, it allowed me to identify the strong points of the research in each of the villages. Second, it permitted identification of the similarities and differences between villages. Third, I was able to use the best data from one or another village when the same phenomenon produced itself in two different villages. Thus, when I speak of henequen production on small-holdings, I am actually referring to small-holding production in Sinanché. There are two reasons for this. First, it is because small-holdings are more common in Sinanché and, consequently, the data concerning this particular phenomenon are more detailed in the case of Sinanché.

The collecting of data in the villages was facilitated by the proverbial hospitality of Yucatecans. Except for a transitional period when I lived in a house that had been loaned to me, I was able to live with the families of two ejidatarios. The head of my host family in Sinanché in 1973, an ejidatario, held the post of acting mayor. His lack of real power was matched only by his discretion in political affairs. It was rather his spouse, a midwife (partera), who assisted me the most in meeting informants. Most local women begin making visits to the midwife in the third month of their pregnancy in order to receive massages⁽²⁾. Thus, the midwife with whom I stayed introduced me to the husbands of these pregnant women or to her own ritual

co-parents who, in the case of a partera, can be numerous. My handicap of being a woman investigating a domain reserved for men was thus overcome with the aid of another woman.

I consider it a privilege to have lived under the same roof with the families of ejidatarios and to have observed and shared in their daily joys and sorrows as well as their routine. Fictive kinship was established with one of the two families. The sometimes intimate, private character of the observations I made precludes their inclusion within a scientific study of an aspect of capitalist development.

It might be thought that this living arrangement isolated me from non-ejidatarios. However, the reader should take account of the fact that in a study of the productive forces, I was particularly interested in the labor processes in the agrarian sector. I doubt very much that a schoolteacher or a merchant could have guided my observations, responded to my questions or organized visits to the henequen fields the way in which ejidatarios were able to do. There is, of course, an important difference between making a garden in order to have fresh vegetables on the table and making a garden for the purpose of helping to meet subsistence requirements.

Although merchants, schoolteachers, low-level civil servants and service workers have considerable influence in village life, they are nonetheless a demographic minority. It was easy for me to establish a formal relationship with these people and to interview them without having to share in their daily lives. The four months I spent in Mérida examining, among other items, the writings of local authors and

intellectuals, may be considered as an effort to understand the dominant group. Did not Gramsci say that intellectuals are "the dominant group's deputies ...?" (Gramsci 1971: 12)? The study of relations of production shows that merchants and schoolteachers are much closer in qualitative terms to this dominant group than are the ejidatarios. Since it cannot be claimed that intellectuals are spokesmen for the ejidatarios, direct, daily contact with the latter in their villages is really the only way of access to what they say. This type of relationship with the ejidatarios did not prevent me from establishing contact with the village elite which, in any case, shares with them a common peasant origin.

7.2 The Villages: Facts and Life

Discussions of Yucatan village life indicate a remarkable uniformity in the way of life from one village to another. One has only to read the descriptions of Cholul (Raymond 1971: 168-257), San Antonio (Kirk 1975: 34-83) and Calcacchen (Littlefield 1976: 156-177) to be convinced of this. In all of these villages, one finds the ethnographic features described exhaustively for the first time by Redfield and Villa Rojas (1962) in Chan Kom. Sinanché and Temax are not exceptions to the villages described in earlier works. What is exceptional, perhaps, in the present study is that I am obliged to present these two villages together.

7.2.1 A Statistical Overview of the Villages

The quantitative data available from official sources does make it possible, however, to provide a statistical overview of each of the villages. These data are presented in Tables 34, 35 and 36. The comments and description accompanying these tables are drawn from my fieldwork.

Temax, Sinanché, Yobaín and Dzidzantún make up four of the one hundred six (106) municipalities in Yucatan. The municipality (municipio) constitutes an administrative and political division which covers a certain portion of territory and which can include several localities within it. Thus, the municipio of Mérida, the capital of the state, covers 858.41 square kilometers and includes 69 localities.

TABLE 34

The Municipios Studied

Municipio	No. of Localities	Area (sq. kms)	Distance from Mérida (kms)
Dzidzantún	3	198.0	79
Sinanché	4	131.57	65
Temax	6	329.57	83
Yobaín	2	81.75	72
Yucatan: 106 municipios	1,717	43,379.00	--

Source: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 13-17

In comparison with the rest of the rural municipios of Yucatan, Temax would be considered a "large" municipio and Sinanché an average-sized municipio. Within the henequenera region, the municipios are also distinguished according to their distance from the heart of the region, that is, in relation to Mérida. When one takes into account the considerable importance of transportation in the henequen economy, the distance between a village and the capital becomes crucial. Mérida is an important center of both fiber processing and export. All roads converge on this city and it is itself directly linked to the deep-sea port of Progreso. The Cordemex industrial complex, which processes the fiber, occupies a strategic position on the road between Mérida and Progreso.

The municipios of the henequenera region present greater or lesser similarities according to their location in the core of the region or in the periphery. The chosen villages for purposes of analysis can be distinguished, first of all, with respect to their physical location in relation to the core of the region. Thus, Sinanché⁽³⁾ and Yobaín⁽⁴⁾ are located near the core of the henequenera region at 65 kms and 72 kms, respectively, from the city of Mérida, while Temax⁽⁵⁾ (83 kms from Mérida) is located in the periphery of this zone. In Temax, the cultivation of henequen is outranked by maize on the small-holdings even if it is still widespread on the collective ejido and on the pequeña propiedad. Temax marks the limit of the henequenera zone because in the next village, Buctzotz, the producers are systematically engaged in livestock-raising and the cultivation of maize.

Dzidzantún⁽⁶⁾, located 79 kms east of Mérida, occupied an intermediate position in the henequenera zone but, as mentioned earlier, the growing of vegetables on the small-holdings seems to be taking greater importance with respect to henequen. This phenomenon confers a particular reputation to Dzidzantún in contrast to the other villages I visited.

From the demographic point of view, statistics at my disposal concerning Yucatan's population date from 1970 and indicate a total of 758,355 inhabitants, representing 1.57% of Mexico's total population. The northwestern region, where the henequen plantations are located, shows a greater demographic concentration than the rest of Yucatan. The most accurate data in this regard date from 1950; thus, the census indicated a total population for Yucatan of 516,899 inhabitants; this state covered 38,508 sq. kms and the population density was then 13.4 inhabitants per square kilometer. In 1950, the henequenera region counted 373,506 inhabitants, or 20 inhabitants per square kilometer, and the region represented 47% of the total surface area of the state (Villa Rojas 1962: 210-218). Although I do not have data for the following two decades, the table below shows the general movement of population both in Yucatan as a whole and in the villages under study.

TABLE 35

Evolution of the Population 1950-1970

Village	1950		1960		1970		Increase in absolute numbers since 1950	%
	Absolute Number	% of total population of Yucatan	Absolute Number	% of total population of Yucatan	Absolute Number	% of total population of Yucatan		
Sinanché	1,867	0.36	2,575	0.41	3,151	0.41	1,284	68
Temax	4,723	0.91	5,621	0.91	5,884	0.77	1,161	24
Dzidzantún	3,898	0.75	5,351	0.87	7,568	0.99	3,670	94
Yobaín	1,141	0.22	1,677	0.27	2,166	0.28	1,025	89
Yucatan	516,899	100.00	614,049	100.00	758,355	100.00	241,456	46

Source: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1972: 11; 1978: 219-224

For the state of Yucatan as a whole, the population increased about 49.7% among the villages under study, however, there is considerable variation. At two extremes, Temax had an increase of only 23.2% since 1950, while Yobaín's was 91.4%. Dzidzantún also shows an appreciable increase (87.7%) as does Sinanché with 68.6%. The comparison of official statistics with local data suggests that the current population of Temax has been underestimated. However dubious they might be, these figures might nonetheless be explained by the economic crisis which has plagued Yucatan for several years and especially in the henequenera region following the fall in world fiber prices. The village of Temax is located in the periphery of this region and it may be that the effects of the crisis were felt more rapidly and more sharply here, eventually forcing the population to migrate. With respect to the rest of Yucatan, the population of Temax, which was constant between 1950-60 (0.91%) dropped suddenly during the subsequent decade (from 0.91% to 0.75%). In the other villages, except Dzidzantún, the population remained constant in relation to the state as a whole. It is therefore possible that this analysis reveals phenomena which are peculiar to Temax. The case of Dzidzantún is the opposite to that of Temax; its population rose constantly in relation to the state's as a whole, despite the fact that this village is also located in the periphery of the henequenera zone. The cultivation of vegetables in Dzidzantún seems to constitute an important factor in accounting for the demographic phenomenon. This village is

known for its agricultural activity which, on the one hand, appears to be traditional, and, on the other hand, is increasingly modernizing. Moreover, the proximity of Dzidzantún and Yobaín is such that vegetable crops are becoming more and more common in the latter village. In the opinion of informants, Dzidzantún might be favored by the shallow depth of underground water sources, permitting wells to be dug (essential for the irrigating of gardens) at a lower cost than elsewhere.

Finally, it seems that the population of Yucatan shows little movement into other regions of Mexico (Bataillon 1967: 146). Emigration out of Yucatan does not seem to be particularly developed as a phenomenon, although there was some temporary worker emigration by braceros to the United States until a few years ago. Today, it seems to be increasingly difficult to enter the U.S.A. as an agricultural worker, all the more so in view of the onerous state of transportation leading out of Yucatan. A few producers emigrate to Belize for periods of under three months in order to participate in the zafra or sugar cane harvest.

Besides providing supplementary information on sex distribution among the village populations, Table 36 permits a comparison of the socioeconomic data for each of the villages.

TABLE 36

Data on the Municipios (1970)

		Sinanché		Temax		Dzidzantún		Yobaín	
population	Total	3,151		5,889		7,568		2,166	
	Men	1,283		3,930		3,577		1,182	
	Women	1,868		2,454		3,991		984	
	Number of Households	544		1,041		1,035		383	
working population by sector		no.	%	no.	%	no.	%	no.	%
	Total	766	100.0	1,206	100.0	1,631	100.0	630	100.0
	Agrarian	658	85.9	977	81.0	1,288	78.9	543	86.1
	Extractive	9	1.1	1	0.08	1	0.06	--	--
	Manufacturing	36	4.6	72	5.9	60	3.6	13	2.0
	Construction	1	0.1	12	0.9	11	0.6	--	--
	Commerce	13	1.6	4	0.3	56	3.4	16	2.5
	Transportation	4	0.5	6	0.4	20	1.2	3	0.4
	Services	17	2.2	38	3.1	92	5.6	15	2.3
	Miscellaneous	28	3.6	96	7.9	103	6.3	40	6.3
monthly income	Total ⁽⁷⁾ (in pesos)	733	100.0	1,100	100.0	1,496	100.0	601	100.0
	Less than 199	549	74.8	710	64.5	991	66.2	381	63.3
	200 - 499	141	19.2	280	25.4	307	20.5	193	32.1
	500 - 999	19	2.5	54	4.9	106	7.0	16	2.6
	1,000 - 1,499	8	1.1	24	2.1	43	2.8	6	0.9
	1,500 - 2,499	4	0.5	14	1.3	26	1.7	--	--
	2,500 - 4,999	5	0.6	11	1.0	12	0.8	1	0.1
	5,000 - 9,999	1	0.1	2	0.1	2	0.1	--	--
	10,000 and more	6	0.8	4	0.3	9	0.6	4	0.6

TABLE 36

(continued)

		Sinanché	Temax	Dzizantún	Yobaín
e d u c a t i o n	Total (8)	1,484	2,326	3,159	1,066
	Elementary	1,436	2,266	2,685	1,002
	Secondary	18	19	288	55
	Preparatoria o Vocacional	8	4	69	7
	Profesional Medio	12	13	53	1
	Profesional Superior	10	24	60	1
	No. of elementary schools	4	8	2	3
	Pupils	628	1,437	1,166	451
	Teachers	14	26	29	9
	No. of secondary schools	--	--	1	--
	Pupils	--	--	259	--
	Teachers	--	--	n.d.	--
e c o n o m y	Trade	19	16	19	14
	Industries	1	--	--	1
	Services	17	19	49	8

Source: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1973: 85,145,227,259,303

The rural character of the villages and the predominantly agrarian occupations of their inhabitants stand out on Table 36. In Sinanché and Yobaín more than eighty-five per cent (85%) of the working population is employed in agriculture. The figures for Dzidzantún and Temax are slightly lower (78.9% and 81.0%, respectively) because in these larger villages the service sector employs a greater number of people (3.1% of the working population in Temax and 5.6% in Dzidzantún are employed in the service sector). Next in line to agriculture and services, the manufacturing sector employs 4.6% of the working population in Sinanché and 5.9% in Temax. This sector is in reality integrated into the agrarian sector. What civil servants refer to as the "manufacturing sector" corresponds in fact to the henequen decortiating plants. To my knowledge, there are no other factories in the region.

The data on Table 36 for monthly income give precise indications of the material conditions of the majority of the population in the villages. The vast majority of the working population in all the villages (between 86.7% and 95.4%) earn less than 500 pesos per month. Before the devaluation of the Mexican peso in 1976, this amounted to \$40.00 U.S. When we consider the prices of basic food items and consumer goods⁽⁹⁾, it is difficult to see how this population manages to survive. The picture provided by the more detailed statistical data further on is hardly less grim. The only exception to this pattern concerns the subsistence production of maize by ejidatario peasants in Temax, which partly fills the earnings gap. Even there, however, it is but a small portion of the population.

The fraction of the population earning over 500 pesos per month hardly bears mention. It is made up of individuals in business, services and professions.

Concerning the data under "Education" on Table 36, I would like to draw the reader's attention to the fact that the category "elementary" refers to the first six years of school and includes both the children attending this level in 1970 and adults with no more than two or three years of elementary school education. Moreover, among women both total and functional illiteracy are more common than among men. We will see why below.

7.2.2 The Setting

Although one takes different roads out of Motul and Mérida to go to Sinanché and Temax, the landscape is quite the same along both routes. Fields of henequen at varying stages of growth stretch out as far as one can see, broken only by the stone fences (albarradas) which separate them. The asphalt pavement of the main highway is criss-crossed here and there by Decauville tracks, particularly as one nears an ex-hacienda. These old haciendas can be identified by the chimney stack rising up from their decortivating facility and by the large trees which shade the main buildings (casco). At mid-point on the road between villages, one often sees a modern decortivating complex belonging to Cordemex.

The villages in the henequenera region are spatially-concentrated units. Usually only the main street is paved and it runs through the center. The other streets form a series of quadrilaterals; as one heads out toward the limits of the village, the roads become

less distinct. In the outlying sections, the roads often are partly overgrown and local residents beat a well-trodden path down the middle. It should be added that rocks make it difficult to grade these roads.

The village center is a very important place. The plaza, or what villagers term el parque, the "park", occupies a considerable area in the village center. In several small villages, the "park" is simply a clean, open area. Everywhere, however, the "park" is surrounded by important buildings such as the town hall, the church and the most opulent-looking houses. These houses contain shops, a movie theater (if there is one) and the enclosed market. "Park" beautification is sometimes part of a municipal campaign program. During my stay in Sinanché, for example, improvement of the local "park" was the pride of the municipal council in office, which had obtained a government subsidy for this purpose. "Park" beautification consists in erecting a statue (usually of Benito Juarez, former President of Mexico) in the middle of a concrete structure which is lined with trees and surrounded by benches. Unlike Sinanché's, the "park" in Temax is very old. Overhung by giant laurels, it is a pleasant place to sit and for people to come by to chat (conversar). In both villages, the municipal council hires a person to maintain the "park".

The village center is not just a place for walking and relaxing, however. It is also the site of important gatherings. Although in the larger municipios shops are scattered throughout the village, every family goes to the centro, as it is called, several times a week. The centro is the site of the marketplace and, unlike

other regions of Mexico, there is no special market day in Yucatan, where it is open every day. There one can buy meat and fresh fruit and vegetables. Since no one has a refrigerator for storing perishable items, people must go to the market almost every day. Dry goods are sold in a variety of commercial establishments ranging from the general store down to the modest stands (puesto) lining the street, where one can purchase soft drinks and fruit harvested in the adjoining courtyard. The centro is also the staging area for ejido workers waiting to board the trucks that take them to the fields. Workers also come to the centro to line up to vote on election days, whether it be for ejido managers or municipal or legislative representatives. The centro attracts people out to see the travelling circus when it comes to town. On the feast-day of the village patron saint, a modest temporary plaza de toros is built out of wood and palm fronds. The toreros and picadores are never from the village - how could poor peasants ever afford to learn the art of bullfighting? - but the bulls (toros) are. The killing of the bull is an equally unglorious event but, to the joy of the villagers, the victim's meat is then carved up and sold. When there is a beef shortage - a matter I discuss below - this unorthodox butchering furnishes a real bargain. Finally, it is on the centro that one is likely to find the "important" members of the community, such as the members of the municipal council and ejido supervisors. Those seeking favors from the influential come by to greet these people in the late afternoon. This is an ideal

location for the anthropologist who wishes to make contact with valuable informants. Although the whole scene might at first appear quite relaxed, strollers are probably in the process of negotiating some work for the following day or perhaps seeking to place their eldest son on the ejido. To sum up, the centro is the site of village political life in the broadest and most practical sense of the term.

7.2.3 Houses and Lifestyles: the "Rich" and the "Poor"

The residences of well-to-do families are found in the centro. Although, as in Temax, these houses are sometimes examples of colonial architecture, their austere façades give no hint of the size and airiness of the enclosed courtyard. In the courtyard, there are fruit trees irrigated by a system of pipes leading from a tank (tanque) which stores water that has been pumped up from a well by a beleta (a kind of windmill). As we saw on Table 36, well-to-do families (represented in terms of income) are a minority of the population and are mainly engaged in business. In Temax and Sinanché, there is no example besides the puestos of a business owned by an ejidatario. When I asked a modest-looking merchant in Sinanché who was complaining of inflation and lack of money if he was an ejidatario, he replied firmly, "The ejido is for the poor."

While I don't wish to deny the fact that village merchants also suffer the effects of capitalist penetration into the agrarian sector, it is important not to be misled by the external appearances of merchants and their property. There is nothing here to distinguish

them from the ejidatarios. In daily life they dress exactly alike. Merchants' wives, however, dress in Western clothes while the wives of ejidatarios are often mestizas who wear the traditional huipil. The houses belonging to the village merchants are centrally-located and thus separated from the modest cabins (chozas) in which most ejidatarios live and which are found along the side streets.

While the furniture inside the merchants' homes may be modest, their working capital in the form of commodities may be considerable. They invest their income in livestock and pay for their children's studies (professional studies are preferred). Before bank accounts became prevalent, merchants preferred converting their assets into gold jewelry (alhajas), which their wives would wear on special occasions. Merchants claim that they do not give credit because of the risk it entails but, in practice, all of them hold the infamous little black book in which sums due are meticulously recorded. The ejidatarios' lack of cash obliges the merchants to adopt this practice. Accounts are settled on pay day every week.

Yucatecan merchants are often of Arab origin, especially Lebanese or Syrian. This is the case, for example, of don Arcadio of Sinanché, whose father arrived in Yucatan at the turn of the century. At first an itinerant trader, he later settled in Sinanché and became a shopkeeper. In fact, many of the village shopkeepers started their careers as itinerant traders. They are now perfectly integrated into village life.

Chinese shopkeepers are less common but present as well. The biggest merchant in Temax is of Chinese origin. It may be recalled that at the beginning of this century the hacendados, faced with a labor shortage, imported contract laborers from Asia. Some of these workers were sent to Chenche de las Torres, not far from Temax. At the end of their contract period, several Asiatics who either couldn't or didn't desire to return home settled in the area. Such is the case of don "Cantón", as he is called in Temax (or less reverently, "el chino"). His ownership of the biggest shop in Temax, land and cattle, the local movie theater and the fiestas hall may give some idea of the size of his wealth. Besides providing for the instruction of his many children, don "Cantón" was able to afford a recent trip to San Francisco's Chinatown. To his dismay, he discovered once there that he had forgotten his native language after many years of speaking the Mayan language. In general, however, merchants and wealthy families are in no way distinguished by ethnic particularities. A rigid distinction between Whites and Indians is not characteristic of the henequenera region, where everyone considers himself mestizo; that is, of Mayan origin. In popular opinion, the Indians (los indios) live "farther on" and one quickly learns that the term is not in favor in this region. Moreover, since 1921 no ethnic distinctions have appeared in the statistical annuals. Only economic and material characteristics and the use of the Mayan language serve to distinguish people of Indian origin today.

It is on the basis of economic, and not ethnic, characteristics that one can distinguish the merchants from the ejidatarios. If it was possible fifty or sixty years ago to start up a business from practically nothing, such is not the case today. Today, every kind of enterprise requires an initial investment and working capital that is far beyond the means of poor peasants and ejidatarios. The ejidatarios feel a great deal of frustration in regard to the village wealthy (ricos), in light of the fact that their fathers and grandfathers had shared the same condition. In all the villages, the ejidatarios said that such-and-such a merchant used to be an ejidatario like themselves until he took advantage of a management position and succeeded in accumulating enough money to become what he is today. I discovered that these stories hold little truth in fact but they do reveal the very deep resentment among people who have not yet identified the real cause of the deterioration of their way of life. In Temax, especially, the resentment felt toward the ricos is nourished by phenomena such as the nóminas fantasmas.

Sometimes certain of the names appearing on the ejidatario payroll do not match the names of the people who are actually working. These could be the names of non-ejidatarios or even deceased persons. When this is brought to the attention of local managers, the workers are told that there is no time to continually update the list of names on the payroll and that the names in question belong to the kin of the deceased who have since been working in his place. These explanations

are certainly unsatisfactory and one can only conclude that certain ejidos offer some indication of corruption; it may well be that some people are receiving a wage under an assumed name or are being paid twice. The nóminas fantasmas phenomenon appears to be more common in Temax where it is constantly being brought up by informants. However, wages are so low that one wonders if it is really possible to "get rich" with twice the normal ejidatario wage. In fact, this petty corruption on the Temax ejido serves as an easy target for criticism by civil servants, politicians and journalists (for example, *Diario de Yucatan*, March 1981), while the basic mechanisms polarizing rural social classes escape attention.

One of the most apparent signs of class polarization in the countryside is the contrast between the type of dwelling in which ejidatarios live and that which one finds around the centro. A middle-aged ejidatario usually owns his own house lot (solar), which he inherited from his father and, less frequently, from his father-in-law. In each new generation, the lots (solares) may be subdivided between married heirs (often sons but sometimes daughters). Due to the disagreements (disgustos) which can arise between the wives of sons living in the same house, some potential heirs prefer moving to newly-purchased lots, thus limiting the effects of the partible inheritance. Generally, there is one house lot for each family. The lot is bordered on three sides by the classic albarrada and the house itself constitutes the fourth side, opening directly onto the street.

Within a single village and the same block of houses, different types of dwellings can be seen including masonry, thatched, the oval house built of poles which is characteristic of Mayan culture, mud-and-thatch, and various combinations of these types. The quaint thatched roofs, usually made with guano palm leaves, now tend to be replaced by corrugated board (láminas de cartón) which is less expensive and more readily available. Unlike the thatched roof, corrugated board makes the air inside the house insufferable. This one-room house serves mainly as the family's sleeping quarters. In the morning, the hammocks are folded up (there are no beds in workers' houses) and hung on the wall, transforming the bedroom into a living room. Most household activities take place in the kitchen, which is located in a smaller, more dilapidated-looking building on the lot not far from the house. The walls and roof, blackened with soot, leave little doubt as to the function of this building. Inside the kitchen one finds utensils, a simple hearth on the hard-packed dirt floor and there may be harvested maize stored there as well. People sit on old hammocks or low wooden stools (kanché) to eat.

7.2.4 Women and their Work

The solar and especially the kitchen are the domain of women and their daughters. In the families with whom I lived, the girls had been taken out of school after only a few months. Their mothers - my informants - told me that in school their children learned nothing:

"In school, all they do is play" ("Puro jugar hacen en la escuela").

These women are not ignorant of the fact that school is compulsory in Mexico and they feel they must justify their attitude toward education. The reality is quite simple and turns on two points. First, even if basic formal education is free, the costs of providing their children with clothing and school supplies (notebooks, pencils, etc.) are a considerable burden for poor families. Second, the labor power of children in general and girls in particular is very valuable in the home and their absence presents a hardship. In light of these facts, the data on Table 36 are not at all astonishing. Moreover, the simple fact of attending school does not mean one will reach a higher level of education. In 1970, 97% of the people of Sinanché and Temax who had attended or were attending school had not gone beyond the elementary level. Beginning at the age of five or six, children run errands to the store and carry messages for their families. In households where incomes are very low, purchases are small and made on a daily basis, which means that the role of errand-runner is far from negligible in importance. Girls between the ages of 8 and 12 take the maize to the mill for grinding; it will be used later in the preparation of tortillas. Since the waiting period at the mill can be very long, mothers save precious time by sending their daughters in their place. Contrary to what the rest of this study, which is centered on men's work, might lead one to believe, women's work and their household tasks are at least as physically and emotionally demanding as the

men's. When the ejidatario must be on the plaza around 3 a.m. to board a truck, his wife will have gotten up an hour earlier to re-kindle the fire for heating coffee or hot chocolate which, along with some bread, makes up breakfast. The woman will also have prepared a snack which the worker eats in the field around 10 a.m. When maize kernels have been boiled all night to soften them for grinding the next day, the kitchen fire is often still going when the woman gets up. Of course, an increasing number of families do not produce maize themselves and instead buy boiled corn (nixtamal) that has been ground and from which the women make tortillas. Sometimes people buy the more expensive prepared tortillas. In popular opinion, however, nothing is better than a homemade tortilla.

After her husband leaves, the woman goes off to market to see if she isn't able to find something of variety for the main meal of the day, which is served at noon. As soon as she returns from the market, she starts the laundry. This is a particularly demanding task because there is no running water and water must be repeatedly drawn up from a well. Doing the laundry is a daily necessity, not only because these families possess few clothes but also because the climate and the kind of work people do require daily changes of clothing. No one would think of leaving the house in soiled clothes unless returning to the fields. Laundry soap is an important item in the household budget and ashes from the hearth are added to it to act as an abrasive. Besides washing the clothes of their own family, some women will do the laundry for other families (ajenos) in order to improve their

economic condition. Along with the raising of turkeys, chickens and pigs, candy confection and hammock manufacture, ajeno washings are important sources of monetary income for women. This income not only improves their economic condition but also provides them with a certain autonomy. It seems that the income women make belongs exclusively to them. Not even their husbands have the right to see this money which, in any case, is spent to benefit the whole family. For example, my principal informant in Sinanché used her money for purchasing building materials for an addition to her husband's house. Other female informants in Temax told me that their personal money helped cover family expenses and that without it they would find it impossible to live decently.

The raising of animals in the courtyard is eminently a women's domain. Chickens are raised for subsistence; they require little care and are always available in case of unexpected guests or other unforeseen events. Several turkeys are kept for fattening for special occasions (religious feasts, birthdays, ritual co-parent ceremonies, etc.) and the rest are sold when possible for cash. Pig-raising requires more work and investment in feed (gourds (calabazas), mixtamal) but it is by far the biggest source of cash income for women. Owners of a sow will sell her litter; if it is a pig, it will be fattened and sold for slaughter when a need for cash arises.

Women's work thus includes a variety of activities, the full description of which is beyond the scope of the present work. It should be noted, however, that unlike the case of most men for whom "work" is clearly defined spatially and temporally, women are constant-

ly busy. Not even the siesta seems to be designed with women in mind. At best, they only slow down during the two hours following the noon meal.

7.2.5 Marriages, Births and the "Developmental Cycle of Domestic Groups"

One is now perhaps able to understand the importance of the labor power of children and girls for mothers with little time to spare. In the case of young girls, socialization and training in household tasks are so intensive that by the age of 10 those who stay at home know virtually every aspect of their future role as a wife. They have only to perfect their knowledge while waiting to be married or to run away around the age of 14 or 15 with a young lover. Contrary to what one might think, the lovers do not run very far. Generally, the boy takes the girl to spend the night with him at his parents' house. The next day the boy's father informs the girl's father of what has transpired and they agree to a modus vivendi. Once the "escape" has been made, the girl's reputation would be tarnished if one of the parents refused to accept the marriage which had already been accomplished in fact. Most ejidatarios couples started their life together in this fashion and later formalized it in either a civil or religious wedding (por lo civil or por la iglesia).

Table 37 indicates the civil status of Sinanché's population in 1970. These data show a relatively high proportion of common law to formal marriages in that year.

TABLE 37

Civil Status of the Population Over Age 12: Sinanché 1970

	Population Over Age 12	Unmarried Persons	Married Persons				Cohabiting	Widowed	Divorced	Separated
			Total	Civil	Religious	Civil and Religious				
no.	2,013	733	980	208	51	721	214	61	13	12
%	100	36.41	48.68	10.33	2.53	35.81	10.63	3.03	0.64	0.59

Source: Secretaria de Industria y Comercio 1970

It is very rare for a young couple, married or not, to live alone in a solar. Depending on the point reached in the developmental cycle of a given domestic group, one would find between one and three adult couples and their children living in the same solar. When I administered the questionnaires in Temax, for example, I found twenty per cent (20%) of the families living in an extended family situation. However, very often this meant simply that an elderly widowed relative lived with a couple and their children in their house. Although my data do not permit me to go into detail on this matter, it seems reasonable to believe that the nuclear family arrangement is the most common in the two villages. This kind of arrangement seems to be one of the most noticeable consequences of the spread of wage labor, a form which discourages mutual aid and cooperation between families.

On the average, six (6) persons live under the same roof in both Sinanché and Temax. Data from questionnaires confirm the indications of Table 36 (total population + number of households). In virtue of what has just been said regarding the developmental cycle of the domestic group, this high figure must be attributed mainly to the presence of numerous children (0-14 years of age). Table 38 and Figure 1 present the data on population distribution by age group in Sinanché.

TABLE 38

Total Population of Sinanché Classed According to Sex and Age (*)

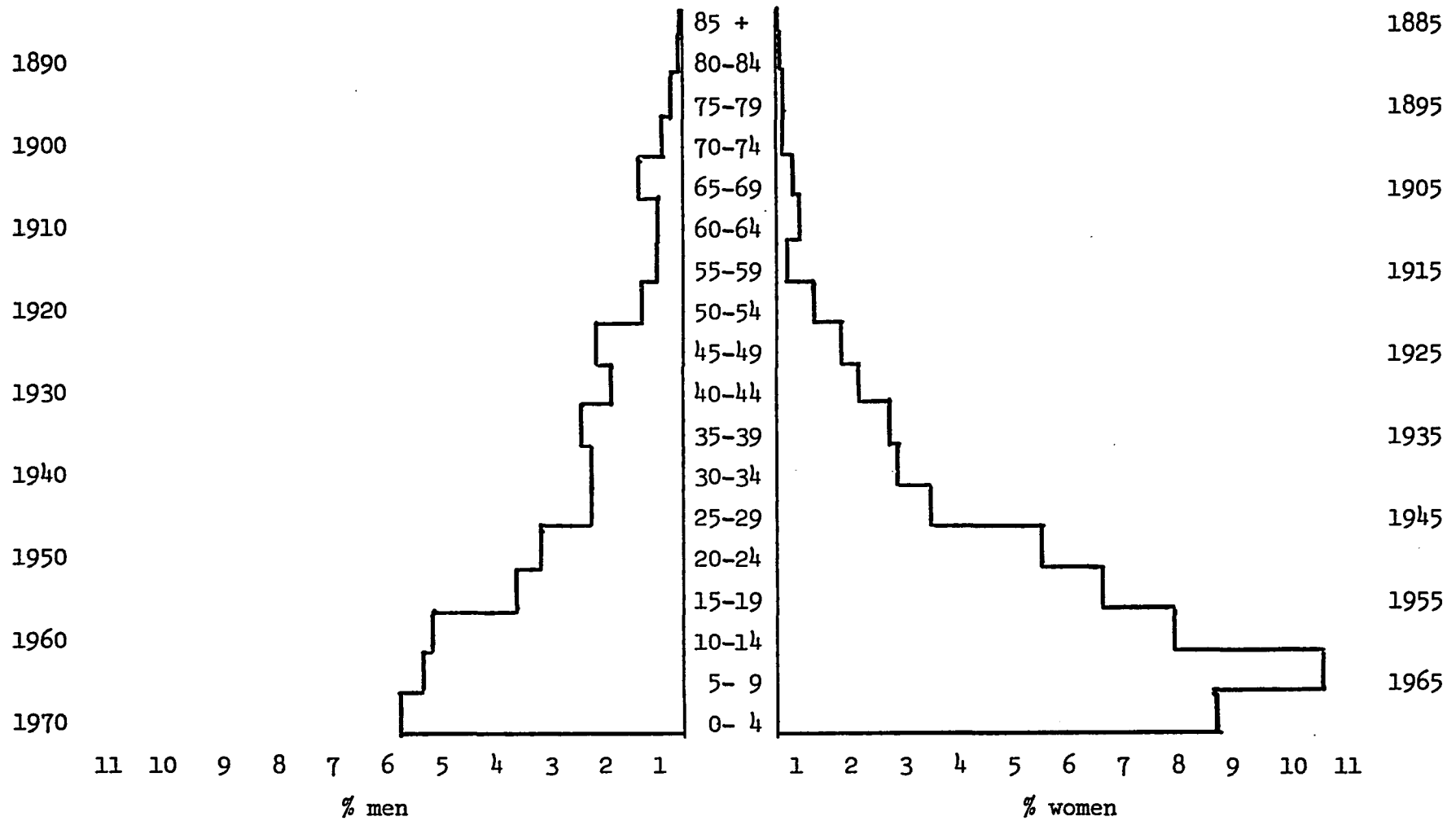
Age	M e n		W o m e n		Total
	no.	% of total	no.	% of total	
0- 4	183	5.80	274	8.69	457
5- 9	164	5.20	344	10.91	508
10-14	156	4.95	254	8.06	410
15-19	111	3.52	207	6.56	318
20-24	98	3.11	175	5.55	273
25-29	73	2.31	108	3.42	181
30-34	73	2.31	93	2.95	166
35-39	77	2.44	86	2.72	163
40-44	59	1.87	73	2.31	132
45-49	65	2.06	63	1.99	128
50-54	47	1.49	46	1.45	93
55-59	37	1.17	34	1.07	71
60-64	36	1.14	40	1.26	76
65-69	45	1.42	35	1.11	80
70-74	32	1.01	18	0.57	50
75-79	19	0.60	13	0.41	32
80-84	5	0.15	2	0.06	7
84 +	3	0.09	3	0.09	6
Total	1,283	40.71	1,868	59.28	3,151

Source: Secretaria de Industria y Comercio 1970

(*) Ages are classed by groups of five (5) years

FIGURE 1

Age Pyramid in Sinanché (1970)



Source: Table 38

Table 38 and Figure 1 show the youthfulness of the population. However, there is an imbalance in the distribution of males and females within the 0-24 years age group, an imbalance that is even sharper in the 0-9 years group. Males are always fewer than females in these groups; moreover, they die younger. What appears to be an anomaly in the female group aged 5-9 years shows in fact what would be the normal curve of development for males as well were it not for their high rate of infant mortality. Therefore, even in the absence of official statistics, it cannot be denied that infant mortality in general is high.

These statistical phenomena correspond to what I was able to observe in the field. Infantile diseases are a major topic of conversation and preoccupation among mothers. While pregnancy does not greatly affect the family group, the baby's first year deprives the family of a large measure of the mother's labor power. The baby demands constant care from her, not to mention the trips to the clinic when it falls ill. Researchers such as Littlefield (1976) and Royer (1982) who studied women's crafts in Yucatan noted a significant decrease in the volume of production of nursing mothers. This is a good reason for the young couple to live in an extended family arrangement where the grandmother can take over household tasks that the young mother is unable to do. Apparently, it is disagreement among the women of the house (sons' wives, for example) which leads to the dissolution of this arrangement. There is no lasting resentment, however, and once the scission is made, the two family groups

issued from the first usually stay in contact. The frequent food prestations between households and cooperation among men at work seem to attest to the enduring quality of these relationships.

Generally, ejidatario fathers and sons are members of the same work crew. Sons often begin learning the trade from their fathers at age five. Ejido managers and supervisors do not mind "helpers" accompanying a worker since they are not paid if they are not members of the ejido. As we will see, the form of payment for labor in the henequen fields combines a daily wage with a piece-rate. Although each of them has a different task, fathers and sons (or sons-in-law) prefer to work together in the same part of the plantation. Workers do not like to be alone in the fields and look simply for companionship. This gives a measure of security in case of accidents (a misplaced swipe of the machete is not uncommon) or snakebite. Secondly, though workers rarely acknowledge it, belief in the savannah spirits (*dueños de la selva*) is still common. There are few people who cannot tell a story relating what happened to a friend during an apparition of the strange lady known as X-tabai (Redfield and Villa Rojas 1962: 122). Dressed all in white, her long hair flowing down over her shoulder (extraordinary among Mayan women who wear the huipil), she floats in the air just over the ground. It is believed that she brings death to those who fall under her spell, so the apparition must be chased away as soon as it appears. The smoke from a cigarette seems to be the best means for doing this and, consequently, one sees peasants who hardly

ever smoke prudently slip a pack of cigarettes and matches into their shoulder sack before heading out to the fields.

Whatever the reason, cooperation among family members is quite routine and survives any scission in the domestic unit. Sometimes a worker will let another member of his family temporarily take over his task on the ejido so that he can spend his time on better-paying pursuits. This happens especially in the case of those of my informants who have a second "trade", such as hammock-making or charcoal production. Since these workers have no capital, they work only to order. Competition is so keen that an ejidatario cannot afford to refuse an order or to put it off until later. This "traffic" in tasks happens only occasionally and does not interfere with ejido work organization⁽¹⁰⁾.

7.2.6 Religion, Values and Ideology

The Roman Catholic religion dominates the spiritual life of the population but as I mentioned, it accommodates some folk beliefs such as X-tabai and practices such as cha-chaac⁽¹¹⁾. If attendance at Mass can be taken as an indicator, practicing Catholics are a minority in the population. Holy Week and the Feast of the Dead are times of the most intensive participation. Events marking the life cycle are also associated with Church ceremonies: baptism, confirmation and first holy communion. Ritual co-parents are implicated in each of these ceremonies. The godfather pays the ceremonial fee and related expenses while the parents absorb the cost of the "little feast"

(fiestecita) which follows. Turkey is served at the feast and much alcohol is consumed. Except for baptism, the poorest families do not participate in this kind of ceremony. Not only are they expensive but, even more importantly, they threaten to compromise ritual co-parents with embarrassing obligations. Some people turn thus to the Protestant sects represented in the village because they do not recognize ritual co-parenthood.

In Catholic homes there is usually a corner of the house set aside for the family altar on which are placed images of the saints, photographs of deceased family members, artificial flowers and a votive light. The light is very practical because it often provides the only light inside the windowless houses at night. The family altar is re-decorated from time to time when the matron of the house or a group of neighbors decide to make a novena to a particular saint. This ritual is presided over by a rezadora ("prayer lady") and is intended to obtain a special favor or to prepare for an important religious holiday. Several neighbors (particularly women) participate in the novena ceremony, which concludes with the eating of a sweet snack prepared by all the participants.

The parish priest and local Protestant ministers are marginal in village life, at least in the villages where I lived. Generally, they are natives of other parts of Yucatan or, as in the case of Protestant ministers, foreigners. Their impact is limited to the devout.

I believe that discussions of the basic values of a society must be approached with care and since this topic is not developed in the present work, I would like rather to leave the reader with a general impression. The internalization of sexual roles through labor apprenticeship seems to be the most powerful means of transmitting the values specific to the populations I studied. The mass media reinforce this internalization both by offering a caricature of these roles and confirming the confinement of women to the domestic sphere and to their specific biological role (Leacock 1978). While men occasionally read newspapers and show interest in what little news is available concerning the henequenero sector, the contact of illiterate women with the outside world is indirect and it is the husband who acts as an intermediary in this sense. Although novelas (photo-illustrated novels) are not usually found in ejidatario families, credit has made possible the entry of television into rural households. The most popular programs are by far the daytime drama series, the novelas' television counterpart, which are vehicles for sexist clichés and the consumer ideology characteristic of the Mexican middle classes. Publicity campaigns promoting women, equality between the sexes and contraception are designed without regard for rural realities. These campaigns do not succeed in triumphing over the conservatism of this society, which has been developed and maintained through centuries of exploitation and dependency and whose effects have been magnified under the impact of proletarianization. The

profoundly contradictory nature of these effects is well illustrated by the fact that while some women now undergo voluntary sterilization, women are still valued in terms of the number of children they bring into the world. Another example of this concerns the situation of old people. While their memory and knowledge are still revered, old people are now left to fend for themselves when they become too great a financial burden. Thus, conservatism is coupled with a gradual abandoning of the traditions and values which had until recently defined this society, leaving a vacuum that can be filled by the dominant ideology, given the absence of any organized political activity by the people concerned which might counterattack its effects.

The experience and gains of past struggles, which I describe briefly in the next section, might eventually furnish the motivation for such efforts were attempts not being made to erase this history from the collective memory of the ejidatarios.

7.3 Contemporary Local History and Remarks on Village Political Life

The etymology of the names of the villages shows that their roots go back to pre-Columbian times. Their continued existence was secured by their integration into the encomiendas set up after the Spanish Conquest. In the following centuries, the history of particular villages is blurred within the overall tendencies of Yucatan's history. During the Caste War, chroniclers concentrated on the villages in the south and particularly on the history of their elites

and the internal struggles among factions of those elites. The social configuration of the villages in the north was only touched upon when it served to illustrate some event in the Caste War or the various battles for hegemony. Of the villages at issue, only Temax was involved in the Caste War; rebellious Indians in fact penetrated the Dzitox hacienda, a part of Temax. The rebels suffered a bloody reverse by government troops and the "loyal" Maya of Dzidzantún and Dzilam "to whom was awarded (also) compensation in recognition of their spontaneous service" (Molina Solis 1927: 94). At the time, Temax was part of the Izamal partido which included 24 villages, 247 haciendas, 150 ranchos and 40,652 inhabitants. Agriculture constituted the dominant activity. Sinanché, Yobaín and Dzidzantún belonged to the Motul partido, which was characterized by extensive cattle-raising (Molina Solis 1927: 294). During the Caste War, Temax was located on the line of fire that, in the words of Molina Solis, "separates the civilized world from barbarity". Nonetheless, the Indians never succeeded in reaching this village which served as a base for one of the six government military detachments. Punitive operations and plunder-seeking raids were launched from this base. Molina Solis states:

"Troops returned from these raids loaded down in plunder, consisting of maize, horses, mules and other goods necessary for the subsistence of a militia in constant movement." (Molina Solis 1927: 126)

A new administrative division of the state, conforming to the postwar distribution of the population, was one of the immediate results of war. In 1867, Temax became the administrative seat of a new partido

with a political chief (jefe político) at its head. Councils, elected apparently by popular suffrage, occupied the municipal administration. However, it seems that the nomination of the members of these councils had to conform to the wishes of the governor in sitting (Molina Solis 1927: 414). This period corresponds to the dictatorship of Porfirio Diaz that lasted nearly 35 years.

There is further data from Temax, on the eve of the Mexican Revolution. In the Revista de Mérida of March 12, 1911, there is the headline, "Ayer fue Asalta por los Rebeldes la Plaza de Temax"⁽¹²⁾.

This assault on the local jefe político and his Federal troops was, along with the action at Valladolid (located more to the east in Yucatan) on June 4, 1910, "la primera chispa de la Revolución"⁽¹³⁾. Influenced by the revolutionary ideas which had beat a path from the center of the Republic to Yucatan, Pedro Crespo of Temax and a small group of free peasants had decided to put an end to the local ramifications of the porfirian dictatorship. The principal manifestation of this dictatorship in Yucatan consisted in a sharpened form of personal dependency between workers and hacendados. In the eyes of our oldest informant in Temax, Pedro Crespo was the local instrument through whom the Revolution put an end to esclavitud. Today, Pedro Crespo rests beside General Alvarado and Felipe Carrillo Puerto, the assassinated governor, in the pantheon of heroes of the Mexican Revolution.

Once the first sparks of the Revolution in Yucatan had been extinguished, several years passed before the agrarian reform was

decreed (the law of June 6, 1915) and still more would go by before its effects materialized. On the 30th of June, 1918, 690 landless heads of households and bachelors over the age of 18 officially requested the governor of the state to restitute the old Temax ejido, in virtue of the law of the 6th of June. This group correctly pointed out that these lands were under the control of neighboring latifundistas who disposed of no document attesting to their rightful claim over the property. The hacendados, of course, made no restitution. After a rather long lapse of time (1918-1925)⁽¹⁴⁾, the government proceeded to the measure foreseen in cases of non-restitution, namely, the dotación or what amounted to expropriation. The dotación provisional declared by the governor of the state on April 25, 1923, would take a definitive character once it became confirmed by the Federal government.

It was not until the 5th of June, 1925, that the expropriation of latifundistas became official with the publication of the request and its results in the Diario Oficial del Estado de Yucatan⁽¹⁵⁾. As Table 39 shows, the total surface of the haciendas and lands in question amounted to more than 18,876 hectares. According to the 1915 law (articles 9 and 11), each farmer was due to receive 24 hectares of land. The total area demanded by the 690 farmers from Temax as a single block thus amounted to 16,560 hectares. However, they received only 13,682 hectares or a little over 19 hectares each. In fact, several haciendas slated for expropriation were also claimed by neighboring villages; officially, then, a part of hacienda lands were held back for distribution to other ejidos.

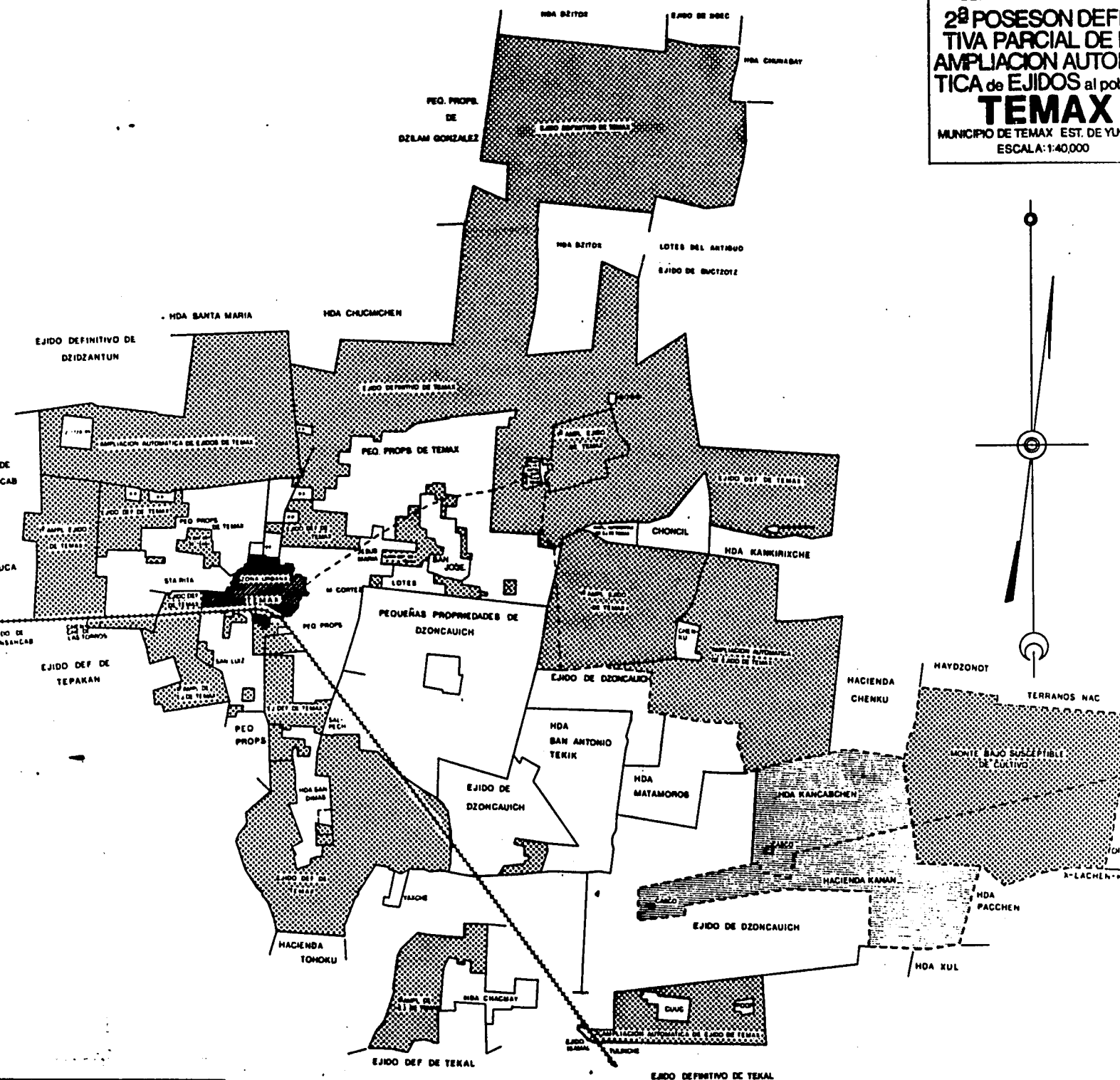
TABLE 39

Temax Haciendas: Surface Areas of Lands Expropriated in 1925

Hacienda	Owner	Area (hectares)	Expropriated Area	Remaining Area
Chucmichen y anexas	Raymundo Camara	4,389	2,389	2,000
San Antonio y anexas	" "	3,423	2,782	641
Dzitox	Tomas Martinez Escalante	5,600	3,600	2,000
San Dimas y anexas	Eduardo Pinkus Troncoso	2,310	1,810	500
265 lots of 11.9 hectares	Temax Ejido	3,154	3,101	53
Total Areas	no.	18,876	13,682	5,194
	%	100	72.4	27.5

Source: Diario Oficial, 5th June 1925: 3

In reality, certain haciendas appearing on this table were equally expropriated to the profit of Temax's neighboring villages. We were able to verify this in the case of two haciendas, Chucmichen and Dzitox. In each case, 1,500 hectares were given to the village of Dzilam Gonzalez, in addition to the 2,389 hectares and 3,600 hectares, respectively, that were turned over to Temax (Diario Oficial, 25th April 1923: 16).



**AFECTACIONES ELIDIO POR DORMIDOR
DE 1º AMPLIACION Y DE AMPLIACION
AUTOMATICA PARCIAL**

DEBARRÉE PAR

To conclude, the Temax ejido also benefited from two complementary ampliaciones; the first of which, on the 16th of September, 1937, corresponded to 1,265 hectares and the second, on the 24th of November, 1948, affected an additional 8,125 hectares (Diario Oficial, 8th of December, 1948: 20). On this date, the Temax ejido covered 23,072 hectares. Map no. 4 indicates the size of this ejido and also underscores the considerable spread of lands with respect to the village, which sometimes oblige the ejidatarios to travel far to work.

In Sinanché, the procedures toward the distribution of land began on the 28th of August, 1922. Beginning on the 4th of October, 1923, Felipe Carrillo Puerto, then governor of the state of Yucatan, effected the dotación provisional of 3,000 hectares among the 200 heads of household and bachelors over 18 who had collectively claimed their ejido. This distribution, provisional in 1923, became final under the seal of the Federal government affixed the 26th of June, 1925. Of the 24 hectares to which each nominally had the right, each farmer received only 15 hectares for the same reasons as I mentioned in the case of Temax. Table 40 shows the importance of the haciendas corresponding to Sinanché (see also Map no. 5).

TABLE 40

Sinanché Haciendas: Expropriated Areas

Hacienda	Owner	Area (hectares)	Expropriated Area	Remaining Area
Xinceila y anexa	Ramon Palma	1217-80-00	433	784-80
Kansohcopo	Eulogio Palma	1040-80-00	369	671-00
San Juan y anexa San Martin	Wenceslao Lizarraga Patron	781-20-41	277	504-20-41
San Pablo	Sra Grafita Ojedo	1317-72-15	468	849-72-15
Santa Cruz y anexas	Ascension Campos	1082-42-19	384	698-42-19
Santa Marta	Arturo Prieto Tamayo	1972-86-65	701	1271-86-65
Boxactun y anexa	Juan Martinez Hernandez	1035-43-11	368	667-43-11
Total Areas } no. %		8447-44-51	3,000	5447-44-51
		100	35.5	64.5

Source: Diario Oficial, 26th June 1925

Apparently, the village of Sinanché did not have the right to any subsequent ampliaciones although, as will be seen, the area of its ejido did increase somewhat. The relevant data evidently escaped me. However, Map no. 5, corresponding to the village and to the ejido of

Sinanché and which was furnished with assurances that it was the most recent issued by the DAAC⁽¹⁶⁾ in 1974, does not reveal any modification after 1925. In addition to affording us a view of the division of the ejido, this type of map can be compared with those I obtained for the ejidos of Dzizantún and Yobaín (Map no. 6 and Map no. 7). The history of the setting-up of the ejidos in these last villages shows important similarities with those of Temax and Sinanché.

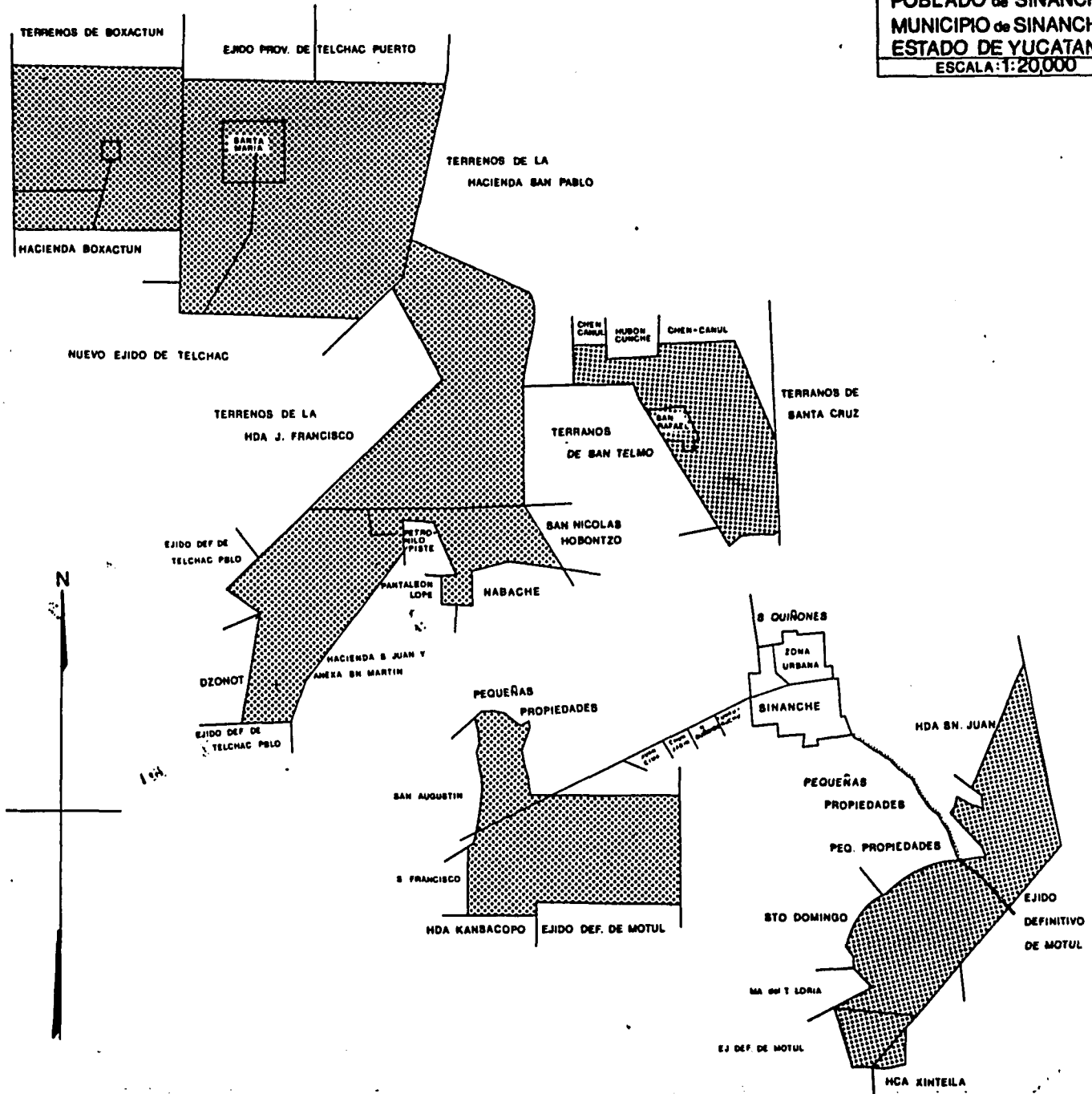
Since the end of the revolutionary struggles and on account of the Agrarian Reform, the village political life reveals an undeniably routine character. Where the ejido regrouped the largest part of the population, such as is the case in Temax and in Sinanché, municipal politics have been overshadowed by the ejidal organization.

However, officially at least, the political organization of Mexican villages functions independently of the ejidal organization. Despite the prescribed formal structure, the actual functioning of these structures varies among different villages. Since the analysis is not concerned with the structure of power as such, I limit myself here to presenting the political posts and to bringing out the role of those who occupy them, according to the way in which my informants perceived them. I will then be able to make comparisons in a concluding section with the organization of the ejido. On the municipal level, there are four propietarios posts as well as four deputy positions. The president or first regidor represents authority and settles minor interpersonal conflicts within the village; the commandant or

MAP no. 5

The Sinanché Ejido

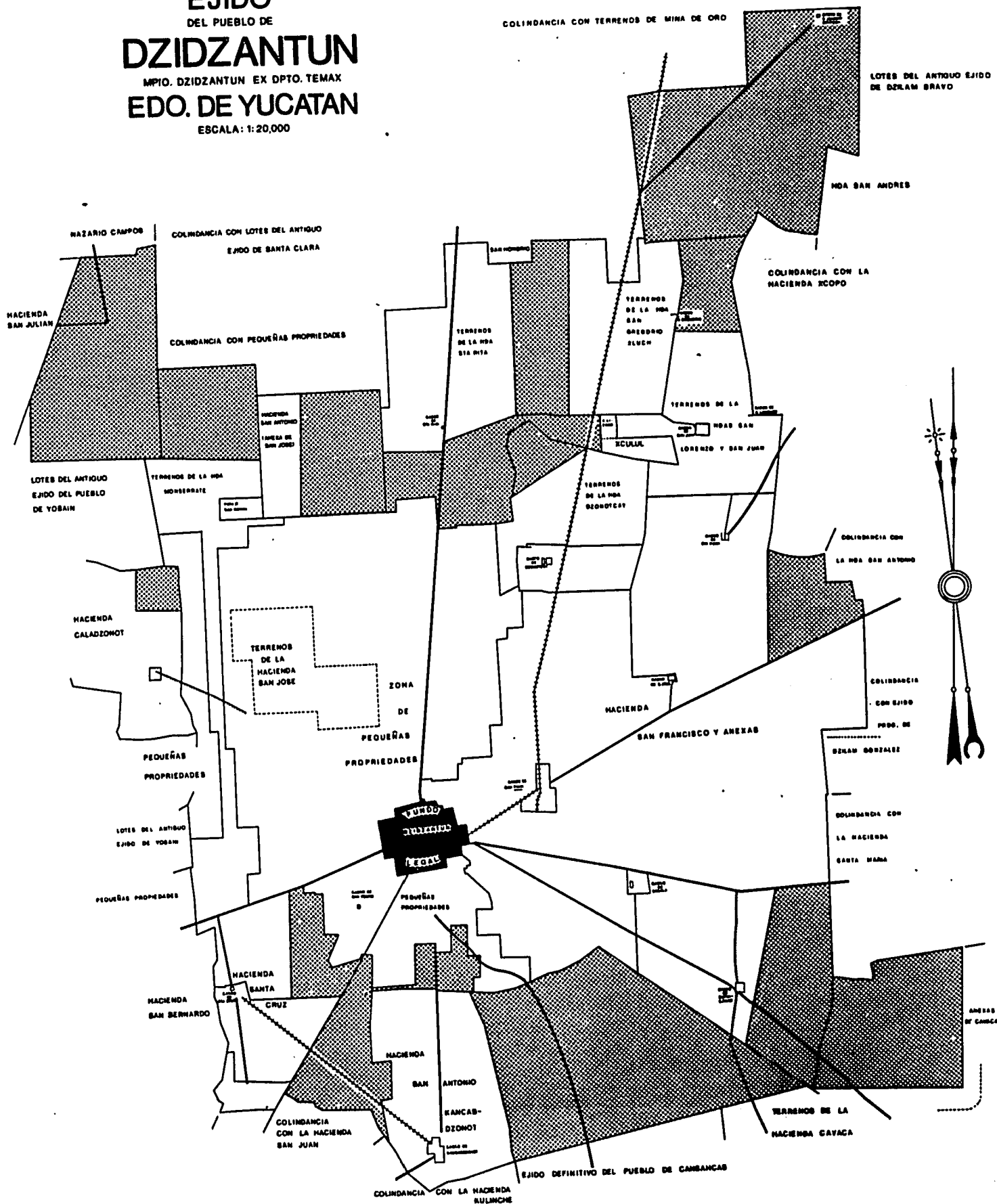
EJIDO DEFINITIVO para el
POBLADO de SINANCHE
MUNICIPIO de SINANCHE
ESTADO DE YUCATAN
ESCALA 1:20,000



AFECTACIONES

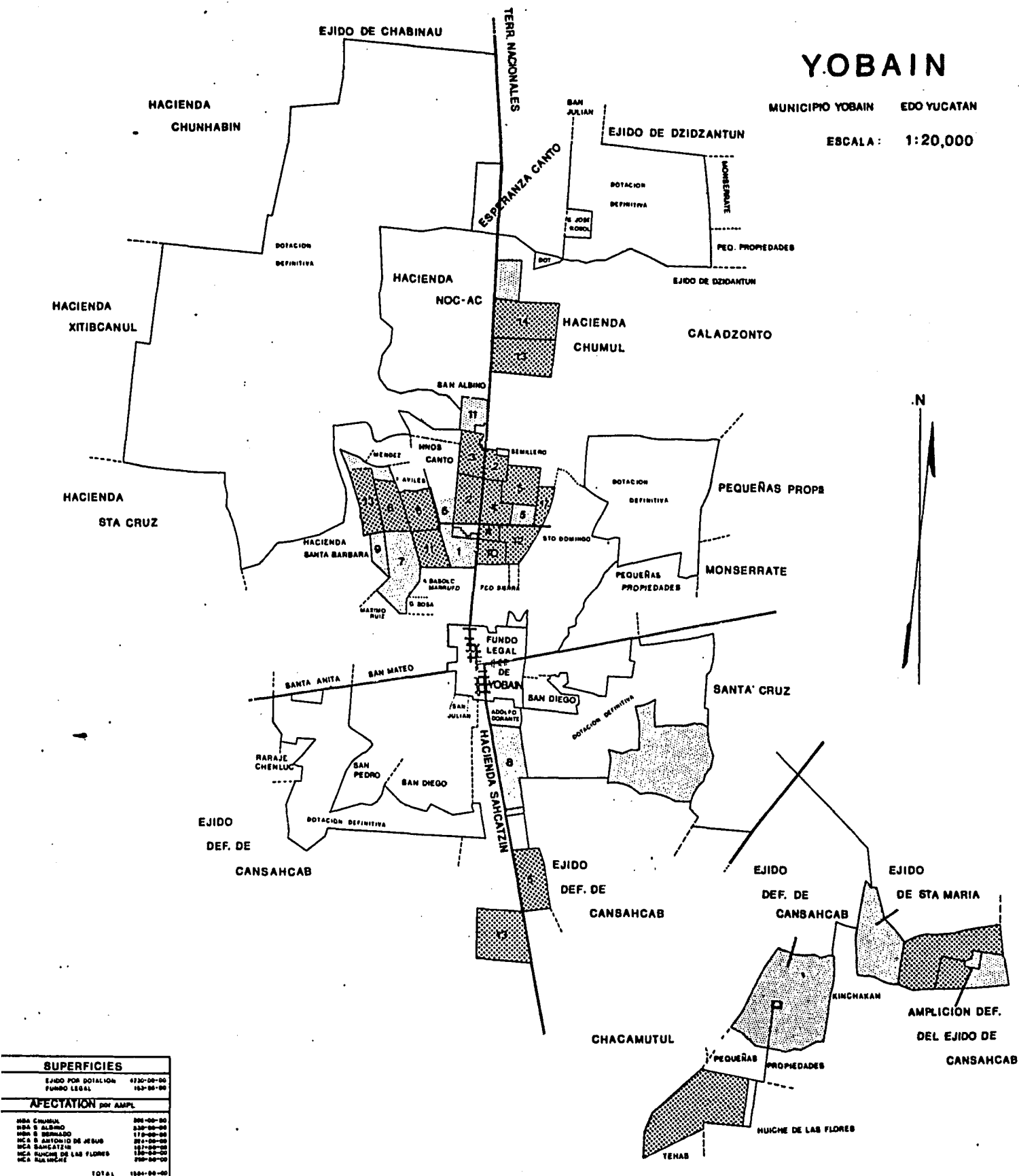
HDA BOXACTUN.....	368-00-00
• SANTA MARIA.....	701-00-00
• SAN PABLO.....	458-00-00
• SAN MARTIN (zona de S. de P.).....	277-00-00
• SANTA CRUZ.....	384-00-00
• KANSACOPO.....	389-00-00
• XINTEILA.....	433-00-00
TOTAL.....	8 600-00-00

EJIDO
DEL PUEBLO DE
DZIDZANTUN
MPIO. DZIDZANTUN EX DPTO. TEMAX
EDO. DE YUCATAN
ESCALA: 1:20,000



AFECCIONES

NBA SAN FRANCISCO VS ANGELES CON	1470 00 00
NBA CHICAGO VS ANGELES CON	1470 00 00
NBA SAN JUAN CON	1511 01 00
NBA SAN ANTONIO BANGOR/CHICAGO CON	1511 01 00
NBA BOSTON VS CON	1526 00 00
NBA SAN JAMES VS ANGELES CON	207 70 00
NBA SAN BERNARD ALBANY CON	207 70 00
NBA WASHINGTON	261 00 00
NBA SAN LORENZO VS SAN JUAN CON	154 00 00
NBA SANTA CRUZ MANAMA VS CON	152 00 00
NBA BOSTON VS ANGELES	152 00 00
NBA CALANCONET CON	152 00 00
TOTAL GMA LSCD	1048 00 00
PUNTO LIGAL	136 00 00



second regidor sees that order is preserved and constitutes, in fact, the village police; the third regidor represents a kind of check on the president and he is charged with "watching": his more concrete role is that of secretary. Finally, the fourth regidor does not seem to have a well-defined charge outside that of watching over the actions taken by municipal council. Other than the deputies, there is a treasurer on the council who, unlike the preceding member, is not elected but rather appointed by those in position and, finally, another appointed member who is supposed to supervise material improvements in the village. Since the majority of villagers are also members of the ejido, at least in the villages I studied, it often happens that the duties of municipal government are assumed by the ejidatarios. Thus, there are two levels of organization, which are closely intertwined.

In the villages, democracy was not always respected. Let us briefly examine the general political configuration of the region, reserving a more in-depth look at the ejidal organization for the next section.

Mexico's national-level parties assure their presence on the municipal level and, in general, political life at this level tends to reflect the outlines of political life nationally. Thus, we find the ruling PRI party (Partido Revolucionario Institucionalizado), which is currently in power in all the municipios in Yucatan, as well as in the state and national governments. Three opposition parties are also represented. In order of their importance, they are: the PAN (Partido

de acción nacional), the PPS (Partido popular socialista or, in its Yucatan version, the PSSE, Partido socialista del sureste once led by Felipe Carrillo Puerto) and, finally, the PARM (Partido auténtico de la revolución mexicana). At election time, these last two parties align themselves systematically behind the PRI; sometimes they do not even put forward candidates of their own and campaign for those of the PRI. Consequently, these parties do not offer any serious or credible opposition. According to certain political scientists, these parties only serve to preserve the democratic appearances of political pluralism on the electoral level (Loaeza 1974: 108).

While it is not any more efficient at the national level, the PAN does constitute the party in opposition, which has not prevented the PRI from holding onto the Federal government ever since its foundation. Until 1970, the PAN obtained a significant proportion of the popular vote according to the Mexican political system. In 1967, the PAN attracted 10% of the vote in 13 states; its strongest showing was in Baja California and Yucatan (Segovia 1974: 64), to the point where, in Yucatan, the PAN briefly dominated the municipal scene in Mérida. The struggle between the PAN and the PRI in numerous other municipios seems to have been particularly fierce. The PAN has practically become the symbol of all opposition of the ruling party. In the villages I visited, dissidents are systematically qualified as panistas.

After 1970, the PAN suffered spectacular reverses in many elections at the same time that popular participation passed from 66.2% of the electorate in 1970 to 91.4% in 1973; there is little doubt that this is the result of electoral practices (Segovia 1974: 62). In the case of municipal elections, for example, these practices involve the recruitment of voters in neighboring municipios (who would not have the right to vote outside their home district) and their transportation by truck to the places they would like to vote. The "purchase" of votes through feasting and with the aid of aguardiente (sugar cane alcohol) are common practices judging by the testimony of informants.

In certain parts of Mexico and particularly in the south and southeast, where Yucatan is located, the partisan struggles between different political parties and diverse factions are transcended by the phenomenon of caciquism. The PRI finds a source of support in this phenomenon that is as unconditional as it is embarrassing (the party loses some credibility among the "enlightened" sections of the population). On the municipal level, this phenomenon tends to recycle the same people through the numerous political positions and assures a large majority by the PRI in elections at the different levels of government. In Temax, I noted that the ejido, the municipal council, and even work access to the pequeña propiedad were in large part controlled not by a cacique but rather by a faction which acts as cacique.

Before taking up this issue, it is necessary to examine more closely the material framework of production and the struggles which surround it. We therefore turn to a description and analysis of the distribution and utilization of land in these villages, to be followed by a description of the labor processes in which their populations are engaged.

CHAPTER 7 NOTES

- (1) The region's municipalities had an average population of 3,284 inhabitants. This average excludes the metropolis, Mérida, whose 1970 population of 241,964 inhabitants is far greater than that of any other municipality in the region. The largest town included in the average figure is Motul, with 20,994 inhabitants. The smallest village in terms of population included in the average figure is Telchac Puerto with 570 inhabitants. It should be added that not all the towns and villages within the henequenera region are actually centers of henequen production.
- (2) Redfield and Villa Rojas report that "the purpose of this is to keep the child in the correct position" (1962: 181).
- (3) The word Sinanché originates from the "scorpion tree" (Zanthoxylum caribaeum Lam.) which is found in this village (Roys 1957: 82).
- (4) The village name of Yobaín comes from the Maya word ayin meaning "crocodile". It appears that the Maya religion honored this animal (Roys 1957: 82).
- (5) The word Temax (in Mayan, Timax or Timaax) could have several meanings, according to Roys. Thus max or maax could mean "ape", "rogue", or even "to crush" (Roys 1957: 86).
- (6) The meaning of "Dzidzantún" (Maya: Dzidzomtun) is poorly defined. It seems to be a reference to a crown or military helmet (Roys 1957: 84).
- (7) This is the total of the working population declaring an income.
- (8) This is the total population over age 6 with at least some formal education.
- (9) Here are a few examples of the average selling price of basic subsistence items in Mérida in 1974 (pesos/kilogram):

Maize	1.90
Beans	8.09
Rice	9.41
Pork	31.92
Beef	29.34
Habanero peppers	24.90
Eggs	12.10

Source: Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 139

- (10) Ejido work organization is discussed in detail in Chapter 10.
- (11) A ceremony of Mayan origin supposed to favor rain and a good milpa crop. It is described in Chapter 9.
- (12) "Yesterday, the plaza of Temax was seized by rebel attack."
- (13) "The first spark of the Revolution."
- (14) The slowness of the process, as we say in the first part of this work, is due to several factors including the resistance and bad faith of the hacendados. Local ethnohistory at Temax has it that after Pedro Crespo overthrew the jefe político and became village leader, he turned into a true cacique allied with neighboring hacendados. No doubt this alliance helped slow the rate of their expropriation. Pedro Crespo had helped in the opening of the first phase of the Revolution (the liberation of the labor force) but he could not preside at the next phase. The Juventudes Socialistas in Cardenas' time reactivated the process by denouncing the existence of caciques who emerged from the Revolution. As we will see, however, this movement in no way meant the end of the caciques.
- (15) See Annex II.
- (16) Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y de Colonización: in 1976 it became the Departamento de la Reforma Agraria.

CHAPTER 8

THE DISTRIBUTION AND UTILIZATION OF LAND ACCORDING TO THE TYPE OF LAND TENURE

In the henequenera region, there are two different forms of land tenure; the distribution of land between these two forms and among producers is unequal; the utilization of land gives rise to two major labor processes and, finally, the henequen development cycle introduces an additional variant in the utilization of land. The material framework of production presents thus a complex configuration and the producers implicated within this framework are often isolated from each other in the measure that their respective work conditions serve to differentiate them.

I found it important to examine the type of land distribution and utilization in each of the forms of land tenure in order to underline the complexity of the system and to understand at least one of the divisions among producers. The variability of this system within any given village, however, tends to be levelled out when one examines several villages within a particular region. The comparisons I make occasionally of the four villages for which I have data serve to underline the fact that despite the complexity of structures, capitalism

tends to level out and to render similar the material conditions of workers in whatever part of the agrarian sector they may be.

The present configuration of the villages in the henequenera region in terms of land tenure and the distribution of lands was firmly established with the vigorous interventions by President Lázaro Cárdenas in the late 1930s. Cárdenas especially made demands of the ex-hacendados, who had become pequeños propietarios, in regard to their respect of the rights that had been acquired through agrarian reform. Some of these rights were extended by him and his successors and led to the present distribution of land in the villages under study (see Table 41). The size of this expansion can be evaluated in comparing Tables 40 and 41 with respect to the beginnings of land redistribution.

If one considers the figures for Yucatan as a whole, one notes that private property regroups a larger proportion of land (63%) than the ejido (37%). The situation is very similar to what Gutelman described for Mexico as a whole on the basis of the official statistics for 1960; in terms of surface area, the ejido amounts to 27% of land and the private sector 73% (Gutelman 1971: 142). However, the distribution of land in each of the villages studied is somewhat surprising. Sinanché and Temax present significant differences in the distribution of land, which, as seen in the last chapter, were already present at the beginning of agrarian reform.

TABLE 41

Distribution of Land According to the Various Types
of Land Tenure for Each Village in 1970

Village	E j i d o		Private Property		T o t a l	
	no. (hectares)	%	no.	%	no.	%
Temax	25,619	83.7	4,973.7	16.2	30,583.7	100
Sinanché	5,795	34.6	10,950.0	65.3	16,745.0	100
Yobaín	6,161	62.5	3,694.8	37.4	9,855.8	100
Dzidzantún	9,252	62.1	5,625.4	37.8	14,877.0	100
Total for Yucatan as a whole	1,074,562.8	37.0	1,870,215.5	63.0	2,944,778.3	100

Source: DGE 1975: cuadro 3

Consider private property, which represents only 16.2% of the land in Temax, but 65.3% in Sinanché. Dzidzantún and Yobaín show distributions which approximate those in Temax. In this last village, the ejido is clearly dominant with 83.7% of all the land in the village while in Sinanché this kind of land tenure regroups only 34.6% of the surfaces. The division of land between the ejido and the private sector in Sinanché (34.6% and 65.3%, respectively) is close to the average for the Yucatan state as a whole.

It is interesting to note that the further one goes from the heart of the henequenera region (in order: Sinanché, Yobaín, Dzidzantún

and Temax) toward the periphery, the more the ejido takes on importance relative to the ensemble of land in each village.

8.1 The Ejido

The henequenera region is distinguished from several other regions of Mexico by the predominance of the collective ejido over its individual version. Originally, the collective ejido corresponded to the agrarian ideal of President Cárdenas, who attempted to spread it throughout the sector. Most of the time, the collective ejidos were set up on the best land and enjoyed favorable credit terms as well as appropriate technical assistance. Landowners obviously felt threatened by what could be a formidable collective basis not only for capitalist accumulation but for peasant militancy as well. Due to the political maneuvering by conservative elements, the collective ejido gradually gave way to the individual ejido after 1950 (Russell 1977: 77).

However, in the henequenera region, these political considerations were countered by the contingencies of henequen production and led rather to the super-collectivist concept of the Gran Ejido. Its abolition in 1955, however, was not followed by an expansion of the individual ejido. On the contrary, in each of the municipios, one finds a considerable area of the ejido reserved for the production of henequen on a collective basis. The requirements for putting even a modest area into production seemed to be beyond the material capacities of most peasant individuals. In 1964, taking the official wage of 14

pesos for a day worker as a base, Menendez estimated the cost of putting one hectare of land into henequen production and its maintenance during the following seven years at 6,749 pesos (1964: 265-270). This sum covers the cost of technical operations (clearing, weeding, etc.) and financial operations (interest on borrowed capital, administration, etc.). If we estimate that wages and interest rates doubled within the subsequent ten year period, the outlay would today reach more than 13,000 pesos. Of course, the concrete conditions of production will qualify these figures. Yet, as we will see in the case study, the monetary and social costs of individually putting into production henequen plantations are prohibitive for most producers. One of the requirements for henequen production involves the potential for obtaining credit. While an individual peasant is usually not solvent, the productive potential of a mass of peasants working on a plantation represents a more serious guarantee.

In the context of an agrarian reform which, among other things, limits private holdings to a maximum area of 300 hectares (150 hectares of irrigated land), the collective ejido is the only other possibility of exploiting henequen on a large scale. The collective ejido seems so intimately related to henequen that it may be supposed that the absence of this crop would remove the collective basis of the ejido. We have only to consider the ejido as a whole and situate the collective ejido in its larger context.

All ejidatarios theoretically enjoy usufruct rights on the entire ejido. The collective ejido comes closest to the realization of this theoretical proposition. Although this form has been especially conserved in the henequenera region, it is only one of the two forms of the ejido, the other being the individual ejido. These two forms of the ejido are represented in varying proportions in different municipios. In virtue of the ejido right, producers must participate in labor on the collective part of the ejido; the same right gives them, in theory, access to an individual parcel.

The general distinction between ejidos in the henequenera region is established, however, on the basis of their collective part. This part forms the "ejidal society" as such. This kind of society is said to be "autonomous" when it makes no recourse to any kind of credit institution; these are the rare cases (38 ejidos in 1965 out of a possible 350 or so) in which particular historical and material conditions made possible the self-financing of henequen cultivation. The ejidatarios receive no advance of credit and, consequently, freely sell their fiber, generally to the pequeños propietarios (Rodriguez 1966: 295-296). However, most of the ejidos in Yucatan, including those we are studying, depend directly upon the Agrarian Bank for the operation of their collective plantations. It can be said that the official credit institutions for the agrarian sector emerged more or less directly out of the Revolution. There was, first of all, the foundation of the Banco Agrícola by President Calles in 1926; in turn,

President Cárdenas established the Banco Ejidal and, finally, in 1964 the Banco Agropecuario was formed (Warman 1972: 74). Since 1955, dealings in this sector have been regulated by an agricultural credit law and the Banco Nacional de Crédito Ejidal is concerned specifically with the ejidal sector (Stavenhagen 1975: 149).

Yucatan's ejidos henequeneros thus operate, generally, on the basis of credit, as has been the case since the foundation of the Henequeneros de Yucatan in 1938, which used to administrate it. Since 1964, the Banco Agrario has served as the ejido credit institution. Over the years, the means of granting credit have changed but the situation is fundamentally the same as before.

An ejido's eligibility for official credit rests on a request from a group of ejidatarios (this might be all of a village's ejidatarios or a fraction thereof) who agree to it on principle. Once the request has been accepted, the ejidal commissar at the head of his society becomes the delegate of the Banco Agrario; in other words, a sort of liaison between the local group and the credit institution.

The credit institution gives the funds to the ejidal commissar, who distributes it among the ejidatarios and contracts to pay back the institution. In Yucatan in 1960, 50% of the ejidos (175 out of 352) depended on the granting of credit for production (DGE 1960: 563). In certain villages like Temax and Dzidzantún, the ejidal society is said to be collective and receives in block its weekly credit. In Sinanché and Yobaín, the ejidal society is divided into grupos solidarios (in

order to distinguish themselves from autonomous societies) and, despite the fact that the society has a single management, credit is divided among the groups to which it is directly given each week. Affiliated with the Agrarian Bank, each group must give the Bank their product in return for credit advanced. This credit is calculated on an annual basis and a part of it is turned over the ejidos on a weekly basis. Where there are grupos solidarios, such as in Sinanché and Yobaín, the jefe de grupo or group chief obtains the sum directly from the Agrarian Bank. On the other hand, in Temax and in Dzidzantún credit is administered and distributed by the central authority to all the ejidatarios.

In order to grasp the nature of the ejido in the form it takes in the henequenera region, it is necessary to make a distinction between the ejido in terms of a mode of land tenure and the ejido in terms of an administrative unit for a vast ensemble of production credits.

As a mode of land tenure, the ejido constitutes an organization with a particular system of representation and dependent upon the Departamento de Asuntos Agrarios y de Colonización. The ways in which it operates are prescribed by the Ley Federal de Reforma Agraria. In virtue of Article 22, the general assembly, the ejidal board, and the vigilance council constitute the internal authority of the ejido (Leyes y Códigos de Mexico 1974: 20). According to Article 37, the ejidal board includes a president, a secretary, a treasurer and deputies, who are responsible for the execution of decisions taken by the general assembly which elects them (Leyes y Códigos de Mexico 1974: 24).

The vigilance council is also composed of a president, secretary, and treasurer who are appointed by the general assembly and, as the name implies, are charged with watching over actions taken by the board.

If during the election of the board there is more than one candidate (as was the case in Temax and Sinanché during my stay), the losing or runner-up candidate in the vote count becomes the president of the vigilance council (article 40; Leyes y Codigos de Mexico 1974: 25).

Described in a long article (no. 48) which runs for 21 paragraphs, the role of the ejidal board is vast and important, at least in principle (Leyes y Codigos de Mexico 1974: 28-30). In everyday life, its most concrete attribute and that most often cited by informants consists in its power of distributing individual lots to ejidatarios or the right to exploit these, subject to approval by the DAAC.

The ejidos' affiliation with the Agrarian Bank introduces numerous instances of division within work organization. The Bank possesses its own ejido supervisory system for the ejidos which receive its credit; each week its inspectors examine the fields, prescribe the work that is to be done and note that which hasn't been done. The ejido executive, whose posts are held by ejidatarios, becomes a mere accessory to work organization and, most of the time, only serves as a conveyor belt for executing the decisions taken by the Bank. Thus, when this body grants credit, the president of the ejidal executive board acts in the role of a local Bank representative (socio delegado) among the ejidatarios.

In the ejidos of the sociedad type, the socio delegado distributes through the channels of the technical division of labor. The checadores, who supervise the execution of tasks within a determinate area of the ejido, distribute the money among the ejidatarios who work in this area. The distribution of money by the checador is for him only a modest management task among several of the same kind. In fact, his task is to organize and distribute work tasks among members of the crew; usually, these involve weeding and cutting leaves, which are the two principal operations on a henequen plantation. I will come back to this in the next chapter.

In the ejidos organized into grupos solidarios, the responsibility of distributing money corresponds to a specific management position represented by the group leader who, unlike the checador on the ejido sociedad, is exclusively concerned with administration. Thus, on the one hand, the organization of the ejido into grupos solidarios isolates the individual groups of ejidatarios from each other and, on the other hand, the formalization of an administrative post at the head of each group corresponds to a sharper division of labor within the ejido. On a more elementary level, it can be said that any division within the domain of work organization neutralizes the demographic importance of the ejido.

In 1960, the number of ejidatarios throughout Yucatan attained a figure of 70,747 (DGE 1960: 557). With respect to the total population of 614,049 (Table 35), the proportion of ejidatarios represented

11.5%. In rural areas this proportion is obviously much higher. Based on the official census data for Sinanché - the only such data at my disposal - the proportion of the population on the ejido can be determined. Through extrapolation, I can also determine if the same proportion holds in Temax.

The official census of the population of Sinanché indicates that men over sixteen (16) years of age form 24% of the total population, or 760 out of 3,149 inhabitants (in 1970). Despite the difference in years, I must work with the data for the ejido in 1973. That year, the ejido had 735 members, including retired persons; that is, men over sixty-five (65) who in reality continue to work actively on the ejido in doing lightened tasks. Thus, the proportion of ejido members (735) with respect to the male population in 1970 (760) amounts to 96.7%. This figure must be viewed cautiously given the way in which I calculated it. In the case of Temax, which will be examined shortly, this proportion comes closer to 90%. However, this suggestion of a high proportion of ejidatarios relative to the total adult male population (that is, over 90%) corresponds with the oral ethnographic data indicating that "everybody is a part of the ejido". The rest of the population is involved in the service sector (mainly, retail sales) as the ejidatarios cannot engage in these activities, given their lack of the even small amounts of capital needed to go into business.

According to a report compiled by a group of local teachers, the total population of Temax in 1971 was 6,450 persons. The teachers

adjusted the official 1970 census figures, which had indicated a total population of 5,884 persons (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan 1978: 216), in light of local data supplied by the Registro Civil. Considering that the age pyramids are probably similar in Sinanché and Temax, it may be assumed that in these two villages the male population over age 16 having a right to be a part of the ejido forms 24% of the total population; in Temax, this proportion corresponds to 1,548 persons. Now, the 1974 ejido population was 1,406 ejidatarios, representing 90.8% of the adult male population, thus leaving a greater proportion than was the case in Sinanché available for other sectors. We will later see that this result matches with the current situation in Temax, where the demographic ratio between ejido members and available land seems to preclude the integration of the young who have come to age.

The demography of the ejidos takes on its real significance only when we have determined the relative importance of the collective part of the ejido in the ejido as a whole, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, when comparison of the collective parts has been made relative to the cycle of henequen production.

Whether the ejido is administered collectively or through the grupos solidarios within it, there are differences between ejidos regarding the stage of the plantation crops. Table 42 shows the proportion of each ejido which is concerned with the collective plantations of henequen.

TABLE 42

Proportion of Total Ejido Area Under Collective Production

Village	Total Area of the ejido (a)	Area Under Collective Production(b)	Proportion of (b) in Relation to (a) Represented in %
Temax	25,610	3,365	13.1
Sinanché	5,795	2,824	55.6
Yobaín	6,180	1,228	19.9
Dzidzantún	9,252	2,524	27.2

Source: DGE 1975: 5,10,11

The proportion represented by the collective part of the ejidos in Temax and Sinanché relative to the ejido as a whole varies considerably. We should bear in mind the fact that the areas given over to the collective exploitation of henequen are relatively constant across the villages, despite their differing size and populations. The data in the preceding table become significant when they are put into relation with the number of active ejidatarios in the ejidal society.

TABLE 43

Number of Ejidatarios on the Collective Ejido

Village	Area of the Collective Ejido (hectares)	Number of Ejidatarios	Average Number of hectares for each ejidatario
Temax	3,365	1,406	2.39
Sinanché	2,824	735	3.84
Yobaín	1,228	330	3.72
Dzidzantún	2,524	1,029	2.45

Source: Table 42 and based on local censuses

From one village to another, the differences in per capita area remain very small. In the 1930s, the problem posed by the presence of rich ejidos and poor ejidos was due to the fact that the former held themselves with considerable quantities of henequen in exploitation and the others without. The problem is still the same from this point of view and perhaps even greater because it doubles as a result of demographic increases, not to mention as well the results of corruption and favoritism. Thus, what best characterizes an ejidal society engaged in the collective exploitation of henequen resides in the proportion of surface area covered in the agave at different crucial stages of its life. The following table shows these proportions for each society and the average surface areas which, in theory at least, fall to each ejidatario.

TABLE 44

Surface Areas in Various Stages of the Plantation Cycle for Each Ejido Society in 1974 (hectares)

Village	Fomento	Cultivo	Mateo	Plena Explotación	Decadente	Monte	Total	Number of Ejidatarios
Temax	91.08 2.70% (1) 0.06 (2)	565.04 16.79% 0.40		1,578.56 46.92% 1.12	207.52 6.17% 0.15	922.52 27.42% 0.66	3,364.72 100.00% 2.39	1,406
Sinanché	135.28 4.78% 0.18	724.28 25.64% 0.98	581.8 20.59% 0.79	458.52 16.23% 0.62	281.16 9.95% 0.38	643.28 22.77% 0.87	2,824.32 100.00% 3.84	735
Yobaín	119.68 10.00% 0.36	367.80 30.00% 1.11	94.36 8.00% 0.29	91.48 7.00% 0.28	192.48 16.00% 0.58	362.00 29.00% 1.10	1,228.20 100.00% 3.72	330
Dzidzantún	121.36 5.00% 0.12	468.80 19.00% 0.46	301.20 12.00% 0.29	744.32 29.00% 0.72	266.92 10.00% 0.26	621.68 25.00% 0.60	2,524.28 100.00% 2.45	1,029

Source: Data taken from inventories of the Agrarian Bank and village offices of the ejido societies

Table 44 indicates the present status of the plantations in each ejidal society and provides a glimpse into their future as well. The greater the proportion of recently-planted henequen (fomento, cultivo) on the territory of a given society, the more it is counting on the future. For the time being, these young henequen plants provide no return and initiate expenditures but, in seven years, they will take over. A society could have a large area of henequen in full production, but that society is necessarily condemned if it has not planted in time and in sufficient quantity for the future. In 1974, the ejidal societies in the region I studied were, in fact, alarmed precisely because they were unable to obtain young plants. These shoot up around the roots of the adult plants. However, they must be cut without delay and transported to a special field where they can grow; otherwise, they will rot and given the moderate price for young plants, producers would rather lose them than pay the labor to cut and transport them. The fate of young henequen plants is related, moreover, to the widespread depression of prices which began more than ten years ago (since the disappearance of Henegueneros, it is said) and continued until very recently. This price situation provoked a disaffection among small-holding producers for henequen. Thus, while producing henequen plantations continued to be exploited, it was found unprofitable to sow new plants. The policy of the ejido and, more precisely, of the Agrarian Bank was very similar: the low prices did not stimulate the starting up of new henequen plantations. In 1973, faced with the

alarming situation presented by the aging of ejidal plantations generally, and the perspective of obtaining a better market price, the Agrarian Bank created vast plantations of young henequen plants in the region of Telchac Puerto, plants taken from the ejidos or bought from small-holders. Two or three years passed before they could be transplanted to the ejidos which requested them.

In regard to new plantations in each of the ejidal societies studied, Table 44 shows that only 2.7% of the total areas of henequen plantations in Temax was newly planted, which is the lowest figure of all the societies. Sinanché follows close behind with 4.5%. In Sinanché, the surface area of still-unproductive henequen covers 30.42% of the entirety of plantations. This contrasts with Temax where the ejidal society has only 19.4% of land growing henequen. On the other hand, if we consider the final stage of the life of the henequen plant, its decadent stage when it produces little, the respective positions of the ejidal societies approach each other. In Temax, 6.17% of the plantation area is decadent; Sinanché follows at 9.95%. As the plant declines, it is left to the bush; the stalk dries up and later it will be cut for firewood by the peasants; an important use given the increasing scarcity of firewood in the immediate vicinity of the villages and its need in households for cooking. If new plantations are not opened, this part is left to regenerate over a period of at least twelve years. These areas are designated as monte on the tables and attain 27.42% and 22.77% of the total areas in Temax and Sinanché, respectively.

It remains to consider the respective areas of henequen in production. For the purposes of demonstration, I have regrouped what appears on the table under mateo and plena explotación. Such a regrouping is in fact made on the statistical tables of the Temax society furnished by the Agrarian Bank. The difference between the mateo stage and the stage of plena explotación concerns the rate of production; a mateo plant does not have as many leaves to cut as does a fully-adult plant. Nonetheless, these two stages are both productive which is why I group them together. Regarding the area of Temax's ejidal society plantation, 46.92% of this area is in production. Each year, on this area, 8 to 16 leaves are cut from each plant (4 to 8 leaves every six months), depending upon whether or not it is in full production. In Sinanché, this area corresponds to 36.83% of its plantations.

Table 44 shows, according to the state of the plantations, the respective position of each of the ejidal societies at a given time. For example, the Yobaín society enjoys for the moment only a small surface area in production (15%) but seems to be banking on the future given the proportion of newly-planted fields (40% of total area). If we imagine a continuum and place each of the villages on it according to their current situation and future perspectives, we would see at one extreme, Yobaín; Sinanché and Dzidzantún would occupy an intermediate position and, finally, Temax would be located at the other extreme with the largest area of all currently in production (46.92%) and the smallest area in young henequen (19.49%), leaving the door open to a gradual aging of its plantations unless planting is done soon.

Numerous informant accounts see the overpopulation of ejidal societies as a negative factor in the operation of these societies and their future prosperity. In principle, work should be equally divided among all the ejidatarios who are members of the society such that each receives his weekly "advance", that is, the portion of the total credit which goes back to him. If, on the one hand, the task of cutting leaves is relatively irreducible, weeding is more flexible in that weeding can continue whether or not the field really needs it and so "keep the workers active"; in other words, in such a way as to avoid paying the workers for doing nothing. According to technicians, two weedings per year are sufficient in the henequen plantations. However, on certain ejidos, the same field is weeded three or four times a year. It is difficult to establish exactly the threshold of overpopulation in relation to a henequen plantation: numerous factors enter into play, including the productivity of henequen and the level of credit granted to a society. Another factor is fundamental - that of the area of which the ejidal society disposes conjugated with the age of the henequen plantations. In this regard, Table 44 shows us, in relation to each stage of henequen cultivation, the surface area theoretically corresponding to each ejidatario in each of the societies.

Consider first the stages of fomento and cultivo which are classified together and correspond, it will be recalled, to immature henequen plants that have not yet reached the productive stage. In Temax, an area of 0.46 hectares corresponds to each ejidatario; in Sinanché, the figure is 1.16 hectares. In fact, these averages are

consistent with the general averages for the societies as a whole when their areas are put into relation with the total number of ejidatarios, as is done in Table 43. There too, Temax presents the lowest average. The area covered in decadent henequen or plants in their degenerative stage follow the same pattern: in Temax, 0.81 hectares and in Sinanché, 1.25 hectares. Production areas show a somewhat different pattern; Sinanché leads with 1.41 individual hectares in mateo and in plena explotación; Temax follows with 1.12 hectares.

These data can be interpreted differently, according to the point of view one adopts. They will not have the same value if analyzed from a diachronic point of view (future perspectives for the plantations, strategic positions, etc.) or from a synchronic point of view. A diachronic perspective raises problems that are beyond the scope of the present study. An ejidal society might today have an excessive area covered in bush but there is no way of knowing whether or when the Agrarian Bank will decide to put it back into exploitation. In order to make predictions about the future situation of a plantation, it would be necessary to take into account numerous factors, including possible changes in the number of ejidatarios, the continual growth of henequen which, considered from the point of view of the plantation as a whole, continues to advance from one stage of growth to the other; finally, and most importantly, we would have to know in advance the Agrarian Bank's strategies because the cycle of henequen is not only subject to natural determinants but, at least in what

concerns its initiation, depends on purely administrative decisions. In sum, diachronic analysis would become in this case pure projection. Thus, if for the moment in Temax, there is little henequen in the growth stage and much land in the degenerative stage, it is quite possible that planting would resume soon. On the other hand, in Yobaín, where there is a lot of henequen in the growth stage and little that is currently in production, will new fields continue to be opened for cultivation once today's immature plants become productive? There are too many possibilities to permit analysis in the present work. In the analysis of data I have just presented, I deliberately adopted a synchronic perspective in effectively stopping the henequen cycle.

The data on Table 44 clearly show that Temax occupied an extreme position regarding the cultivation of henequen; the ejido in this village possesses the largest proportion of producing henequen (46.92%). However, in regard to the areas in production for each ejido, Temax is no longer in the lead (1.12 ha), outranked by Sinanché (1.41 ha). If it seems obvious that the Temax ejido is affected by a phenomenon of chronic overpopulation, the general situation of the collective henequen plantations in each of the ejidos in regard to the stages of cultivation is nonetheless the result of a complex ensemble of factors. The differences between ejidos take on significance only when we study the relations of production which rest on this material framework and when we situate the collective ejido in the larger economic context.

Other than the area of the collective exploitation of henequen, the village ejidos include a small-holding area. According to the principles which regulate the ejido, the ejidal small holdings are cut off from commercial circuits; they can neither be bought nor sold. The small holding ejidatarios have only usufruct rights to the parcels of land and, if they decide to dispose of this holding, they can only sell the labor which they have effected on it since the time they came into its possession (clearing, ploughing, etc.). Nor is the ejidal small holding transferable through inheritance; on the death of the small holder, the son can, if he is an ejidatario, solicit the use of the holding in the same way as any other ejidatario. The usual route followed for obtaining usufruct rights over an ejidal small-holding consists in making an application with a representative of the agrarian department (who, in the case of the villages I studied, coincided with the Agrarian Bank's socio delegado on the ejido).

I do not have precise data concerning the area of the ejidal small holdings. None of the ejidal societies could furnish us with lists concerning the breakdown of the small holdings. Access to ejido usufruct must ordinarily be confirmed by the awarding of an agrarian certificate to beneficiaries. However, in all Mexico only half of the ejidatarios have obtained this certificate and, even so, it is often only provisional. In this regard, Stavenhagen explains that this anomaly is attributable to bureaucratic delays and to the fact that title to individual ejidal small holdings can only be awarded if their dimensions attain the minimal area (Stavenhagen 1975: 147)⁽³⁾. We can

therefore understand the difficulty involved in obtaining precise statistical data on small holdings. The data on Table 43 provide a possible indication of the area of ejidal small holdings. All that can be said with regard to the two villages is that small holdings occupy the sum of those areas not under collective henequen production. In Sinanché, since this area is small, I can assume that it is completely parcellized with a certain character of permanence because in this village, located in the heart of the henequenera zone, the small holdings, whether ejidal or private, are exclusively given over to henequen production. The situation is different in Temax, a village located in the periphery of the henequenera zone. Whether this phenomenon has to do with the nature of the soil or "tradition", the exploitation of maize dominates the small holdings. Since it is an annual crop and exhausts the already poor soils, a producer can only grow maize on the same lot for two consecutive years or, at the most, three. The soils take several years to replenish themselves and thus the small holding ejidatario moves continuously outward from a given point, clearing the land until he comes to the field belonging to another producer. In these circumstances, the ejidatario seeks not so much a well-defined lot as the right to use a given area on which to grow corn. In fact, the small holding ejidatario in Temax does not have the fetter represented by the permanent character of henequen. Thus, the great majority of small holding ejidatarios benefit from rights of use over the land that are imprecisely defined and evoke rather the right of custom that peasants used to enjoy on their commu-

nal land. An ejidatario temaxefio who wants to abandon the cultivation of maize has only to choose his replacement, see to it that his choice does not conflict with another, and advise the representative of the agrarian department of it. In Temax, these small holding ejidatarios number about 400, or 28% of all ejidatarios. Other ejidatarios benefit from a fixed parcel not over four (4) hectares per person and approved by the agrarian department. This group, according to various informants, numbers about 200, or 14% of all ejidatarios; they also are engaged in the cultivation of corn. In this last group, I believe, there were until very recently a few ejidatarios who practiced animal husbandry. Until the government passed a law prohibiting the open grazing of cattle, an ejidatario could possess 5 or 6 heads that he corraled from time to time on his ejidal holding.

Although I do not possess concrete figures for the ejidal small holdings as a whole, according to our informants 50% of the ejidatarios in all the villages benefit from these. Often, the factor of overpopulation is used to explain the restricted and selective access to small holdings. However, to explain why a large part of the Temax ejido was left in bush requires analysis of relations of production, which brings out more pertinent factors, such as the decline of autonomous agriculture and the generalization of wage labor.

8.2 Private Property

As we have seen, once the first, massive applications of agrarian reform had been effected, the principal cleavage in terms of land tenure in Yucatan occurred between the ejido and private property.

Private property is an important element of the regional economic landscape, as Table 41 shows. In terms of its origins, dimensions and juridical status, private property concerns two orders of reality; "large" private holdings called pequeña propiedad which in the region does not in principle surpass 300 hectares, and small private property or private small holdings which due to its much more modest dimensions was not touched by agrarian reform.

The pequeña propiedad is a direct residue of the haciendas after their expropriation. Certain haciendas totalling 3 or 4,000 hectares were expropriated to the profit of the village ejidos, leaving their owners with only 150 hectares of irrigated land or 300 hectares of non-irrigated land. In Yucatan, the ex-haciendas henceforth known as pequeña propiedad kept considerable importance because, as we have seen, their owners succeeded in conserving the decortivating plants. In all the villages I studied, the lands of former haciendas were devoted both to the production and the processing of henequen as well as animal husbandry.

Table 45 shows the distribution of private property according to the categories of area for Temax, Sinanché and Yucatan as a whole.

TABLE 45

Private Property in Temax, Sinanché and for Yucatan as a Whole:
Distribution of Production Units According to Area

Hectares	T e m a x				S i n a n c h é				Y u c a t a n			
	No. of Units	%	Surface Area	%	No. of Units	%	Surface Area	%	No. of Units	%	Surface Area	%
Less than 1.0	--	--	--	--	11	8.94	8.5	0.07	1,256	11.3	807.2	0.07
1.1- 5.0	6	7.50	16.8	0.33	46	37.39	149.7	1.36	2,230	20.1	6,702.8	0.62
5.1- 10.0	3	3.75	23.0	0.46	20	16.26	147.5	1.34	1,315	11.9	10,107.9	0.94
10.1- 25.0	42	52.50	589.4	11.85	16	13.00	226.5	2.06	1,627	14.7	27,676.8	2.57
25.1- 50.0	9	11.25	343.0	6.89	3	2.43	111.8	1.02	1,183	10.7	44,371.6	4.12
50.1- 100.0	8	10.00	567.4	11.40	4	3.25	276.1	2.70	1,096	9.9	85,263.8	7.93
100.1- 200.0	4	5.0	605.1	12.16	3	2.43	406.3	3.71	1,033	9.3	153,933.7	14.32
200.1- 500.0	7	8.75	2,029.0	40.79	14	11.38	3,418.0	31.21	962	8.7	314,267.9	29.24
500.1-1000.0	1	1.25	800.0	16.08	3	2.43	1,827.6	16.69	226	2.0	161,594.0	15.03
1000.1-5000.0	--	--	--	--	3	2.43	4,358.0	39.79	108	0.9	194,977.3	18.14
5000.1 & over	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	9	0	74,859.8	6.96
Total	80	100.00	4,973.7	100.0	123	100.00	10,950.0	100.00	11,045	100.0	1,074,562.8	100.00

Source: DGE (1975)

FIGURE 2

Distribution Curve for Private Property in Temax and Sinanché (1970)

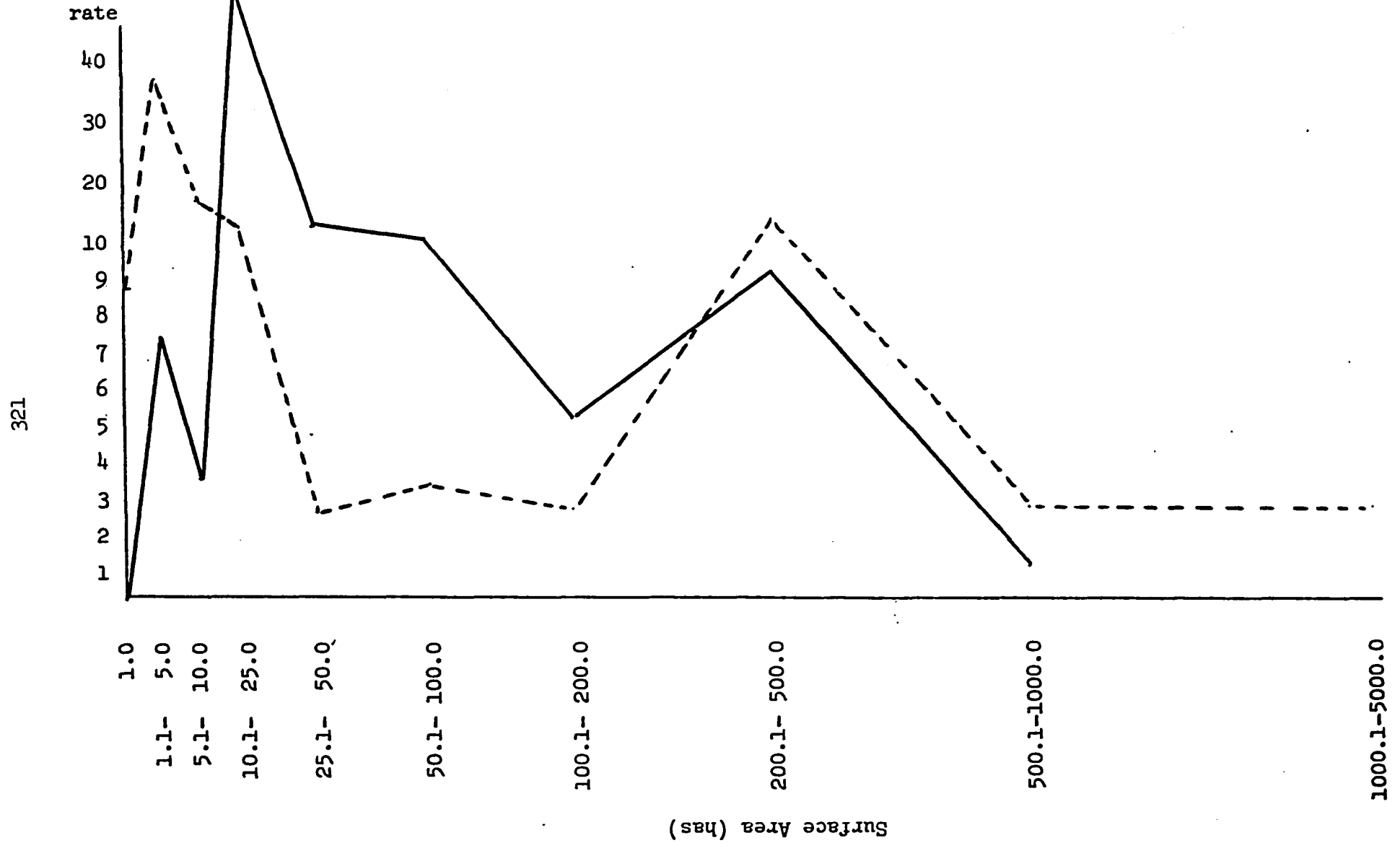


TABLE 46

Private Property in Temax and Sinanché: Distribution
Among Four Categories of Surface Area

Categories of Surface Area (hectares)	T e m a x		Sinanché	
	% of Area Units in this category	% of Area in this category	Units %	Area %
0.1- 25.0	63.7	12.6	75.6	4.8
25.1-100.0	21.2	18.3	5.6	3.7
100.1-500.0	13.7	52.9	13.8	34.9
500.1 & over	1.2	16.0	4.8	56.4
Total	99.8	99.8	99.8	99.8

Source: Summary of Table 45

The classification in terms of the categories appearing in the first column of this table was made on the basis of Figure 2. The curves in this figure are revealing in that for both villages they dip for the same categories of area (notably, in the category of 25.1-50.0 hectares and, in a less pronounced fashion, in the category of 100.1-200.0 hectares) before rising again sharply. The pequeña propiedad which emerged out of the old haciendas corresponds to the categories over 100.1 hectares. All the units below 25 hectares represent small

holdings and the category of 25.1-100.0 hectares is probably a joint classification of small holdings and parcellized residue of the old haciendas. In sum, based on this classification, the boundary between private small holdings and pequeña propiedad remains vaguely defined. In fact, this classification of private property into two groups constitutes the result of a historical process and one cannot be distinguished from the other exclusively on the basis of figures and area distributions. Once again, only the identification of relations of production will allow us to evaluate the meaning of land distribution in terms of area.

On the basis of Table 46, I note that the majority of production units (in this case, lots) in the villages have an area of less than 25 hectares. For example, in Temax 63.7% of the units are found in this category and bring together 12.6% of land in terms of area. In Sinanché, 75.6% of village production units correspond to less than 25 hectares each and represent 4.8% of the total land area of the village.

In a country whose agrarian reform has often been cited for its radical example, the inegalitarian aspect and distribution of what remains of private property is striking. The data cited above show a very marked parcellization for a region of extensive agriculture whose land, moreover, requires several years for regeneration. While the production units of less than 25 hectares in Temax and Sinanché reach an average only of 12.33 and 5.72 hectares, respectively, the production units of over 100.1 hectares present an average in the same order of

286.1 and 417.5 hectares. In concrete terms, these figures signify that in the same village, some individuals hold only 12.33 hectares in average while others are in possession of an average 286.1 hectares. Of course, in the case of pequeñas propiedades, the owners are absentees who leave their assets in the hands of a foreman or encargado; however, this represents just that much more land not available to direct producers.

It would certainly have been interesting to know the exact proportion of ejidatarios who are also private landowners. However, even our small number of systematic questionnaires (see Annex I) concerning this aspect of land ownership indicates that when an ejidatario possesses some land, this is usually only large enough on which to construct a house and outbuildings and rarely surpasses ten hectares in size. Thus, it is particularly the ejidatario households which constitute the lower stratum defined on the basis of the distribution of private property (Table 46).

The utilization of private holdings for production varies in the same way as the utilization of the ejidal small holdings, with the small yet important differences that they never serve for the erection of a house in the village. This private property, excluding the "urban" lots in the village, is in Sinanché covered with henequen while in Temax maize is grown on it.

The exploitation of a private small holding depends on several factors and is the category most vulnerable to such effects as a drop

in prices. In other words, I believe that before an ejidatario would proceed to exploiting a private lot, he would exploit an ejidal parcel if he already disposed of one and leave his private lot to go to bush. This solution can be explained, of course, in terms of the economy and the relations of production.

In whatever village we may consider, the utilization of pequeña propiedad presents a more systematic quality. Here, the large-scale exploitation of henequen is dominant. Below a certain surface area, henequen is not profitable as a commercial product. This phenomenon would also explain why on the private holdings of less than 15 hectares, for example, there is a greater tendency to diversify production from one village to another and, on the other hand, on holdings of over 100 hectares both in Sinanché and Temax, to take the two extremes, henequen constitutes the principal source of income for the pequeños propietarios. We can deduce that it is not so much the difference in climate and soil conditions which leads to a variation in crops grown from one village to the other as an ensemble of specifically economic factors.

It is not surprising that in all the villages the largest estates are those with decortivating plants. The number of these estates varies from about 5 to 8 in various villages. In certain cases, the Agrarian Bank has acquired these plants or is preparing to do so. In fact, before the expropriation of the haciendas, these plants corresponded to the size of the hacendado's henequen fields. Their capacity for decortivating was equivalent to the volume of leaves harvested annually. In Sinanché, for example, the decortivating plants on the

hacienda of Santa Cruz could process 40 million leaves per year. The henequen plantations which still belong to Santa Cruz now supply only 3 million leaves in the same lapse of time. As we will see, the owner must find other solutions if he wants to continue using the machinery which would otherwise deteriorate from infrequent use and incur maintenance costs that would be higher than the revenue it provides.

Returning to the utilization of land by the large owners, besides growing henequen, they also raise cattle in certain cases. Here, it is not a question of the five or six head possessed by the ejidatarios who sell them to local slaughterhouses when in urgent need of cash, but rather of several dozen head bound for urban or export markets. These landowners also usually possess a few horses and mules used for the on-farm transport of henequen. In addition, they own several trucks which are used for transporting the bales of henequen to buyers, most often at Mérida, or, less often, for transporting cattle.

This concludes my outline of the particular conditions of the henequenera region which form the basis for relations of production. Before turning to an examination of these relations of production as such, consideration must be given to the principal labor processes in the region.

CHAPTER 8 NOTES

- (1) In each box, this second figure shows the percentage of the total collective surface area represented by an area in a particular stage of the plantation cycle.
- (2) The bottom figures in each box represent the average surface area for each ejidatario in this ejido.
- (3) The article which is the source of this information is an excellent synthesis of the evolution of the Mexican ejido up to the present time.

CHAPTER 9

THE PRINCIPAL LABOR PROCESSES IN THE HENEQUENERA REGION

The labor processes and the relations of production constitute two inseparable elements of production (Harnecker 1973: 19). Basing herself on Althusser, Harnecker defines it as follows:

"... any process of transforming a determinate object, whether it be natural or the object of previous labor, into a determinate product; a transformation effected by a determinate human activity, utilizing determinate instruments of labor." (Harnecker 1973: 20)

Thus, the elements of the labor process are, a) the object on which one labors, b) the means with which one works and, finally, c) the human activity utilized in the process (Harnecker 1973: 21). No doubt it is useful to caution against the always possible confusion between the concept of labor process and that of the process of production. The latter involves determinate relations of production while the concept of labor process brings in technological aspects in the larger sense of the term.

This chapter describes the principal labor processes in which producers in the henequenera region are engaged. Although these labor processes are actually situated within determinate relations of production, for the moment the relations of production will not be discussed.

The reader who knows little about tropical agriculture and related labor processes can thus acquire a more precise idea of their technical aspects before taking up all their complexity in terms of social relations. In this chapter, it should be recalled that labor processes, considered at any given moment, offer a concrete index of the degree of development reached by the productive forces at that moment. It is hoped that their description will permit us to visualize one of the outcomes of previous class struggle in the production domain; at the same time, these labor processes represent the most concrete aspect around which any future struggle would be articulated.

Judging by my observations, the two major labor processes in the henequenera region are those of henequen and maize. We can measure their importance in terms of the number of people implicated in these activities and the impact they have on the economy in general. After describing these two labor processes, I will look at livestock-raising which, out of all the labor processes of lesser importance than henequen and maize, seems to me to be the most significant. Livestock-raising in Yucatan, especially in the region today dominated by henequen cultivation, constitutes a traditional activity like maize cultivation, considering that it has been practiced since the Conquest. Livestock-raising, moreover, had a decisive importance from the economic point of view before the Caste War. In the present-day context where Mexico is more and more seeking self-sufficiency in terms of subsistence goods, it seems that livestock-raising is regaining its noble reputation.

9.1 The Henequen Labor Process

The species of henequen most frequently cultivated in Yucatan has the Mayan designation SAK-KI; this is Agave fourcroydes Lemaire (Souza N. 1940: 10), commonly known as white henequen. When a producer or group of producers decides to cultivate henequen, they must first of all measure accurately the chosen terrain. The mecate is locally the most common unit of measurement of surface area; it is equivalent to 0.04 hectares. After cutting down the trees which, even in the henequenera region can attain respectable dimensions, the vegetation is burned. They then proceed to the step known locally as molche in which the vegetation that has not been completely burned is gathered up and put into bales, so that the land is left relatively naked. They must avoid planting where henequen roots remain because these continue to live for a long time and can inhibit the development of young plants. Unlike the case of maize cultivation, there is no need to leave the land fallow for very long if henequen is to be grown on it.

In June, after droughts, the young henequen plants are transplanted from the nursery where they were kept until reaching a height of about 40 cms. Since only a thin level of soil covers the rock underneath, the young plant cannot take root unless it is fixed in place with stones that will be removed two or three weeks later when it is set into the ground. When it is time for transplanting, the henequen plants are already three or four years old.

One hundred eight (108) henequen plants are set on each mecate in six rows of eighteen plants each. Certain reports indicate that it

would be possible to increase this number to 120 plants without harm but in fact less than five per cent (5%) of the exploitations have densities greater than 108 plants per mecate (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan s.d.: 2,5). On the ejidos I studied, for example, an inventory of the plantations shows that at Sinanché, there is an average of 62.39 plants per mecate while at Temax the figure drops to 43.46 plants per mecate. It sometimes happens that the plants do not take root or cattle, seeking something different to eat, will knock down fences and devour the young plants. The erecting of fences (albarradas) is one of henequen's costs of production and there are even some specialists skilled in piling the stones without mortar so that they will not fall down in a strong wind. Today it costs 7 pesos a meter for having such a fence built, which is a typical sort in Yucatan. In order to minimize this expense, several producers will join together in having all their lands closed in by a single fence instead of building an individual fence for each. On the ejido, a certain number of workers (vigilante) are assigned to the surveillance and repair of damaged fences or those intentionally knocked down to let trucks pass elsewhere on the plantation than where there are roads for this purpose. Finally, once a year, the workers must weed along the whole length of the fences.

In the first three or four years following its transplanting (the cultivo or fomento stages), the young plant is non-productive and provides no return. However, due to the particular climate in the region, producers must engage in a continual struggle against invading vegetation. Three or four times a year, the young plantation must be

systematically weeded, locally called chapeo, in which the unwanted vegetation is cut away, leaving only some cover at soil level and at the base of plants. Given the local wage current in the region at the end of 1973 and the beginning of 1974, I was able to estimate the initial cost and maintenance of one mecate of henequen during its first seven years of existence at a little less than 200 pesos (without counting the cost of building fences), or 5,000 pesos per hectare⁽¹⁾. During the first two years of its growth, the rows of henequen are sometimes interspersed with corn. This procedure seems to contribute toward keeping the land free of weeds. In hacienda times, landowners let their peones grow their own maize on the young henequen plantations, thus saving themselves the cost of chapeo for at least two years. This practice is still current today on the pequeña propiedad. Mature henequen plantations are weeded twice a year. On the ejido, certain contingent factors make it necessary to weed three or four times in the same period, which seems to affect the plantation yields.

In terms of labor time, it seems that a chapeo that is well done advances at the rate of 2 mecates a day⁽²⁾, especially in rainy weather where the abundance of wild grasses slows down the worker considerably; it can also happen that the humidity brings out the mosquitoes to a point where it is impossible to work on the plantation for a week or more at a time. The only instrument for weeding is the corba or escorba, which are kinds of curved machetes. Even on the ejido, workers must provide their own tools, which can cost as much as fifty pesos to buy.

In its eighth year, the henequen plant enters its period of maturity and effective yield (the stage of mateo or plena explotación). At this point, an experienced producer marks the plants ready to be cut. The first cut is absolutely determinant because if too many leaves are removed, the plant risks its effects for the rest of its life. The first cut is made in three or four turns (vueltas) in which only three or four leaves are cut in each turn. The second cut, made six months later, is limited to one or two leaves and no more. It is virtually certain that the producer will not succeed in selling the fruit of the first three or four cuts because the leaves are not yet of sufficient size. However, the cut must be made in order that the plant may develop properly. Generally, plants which have reached the stage of plena explotación are cut twice yearly; there is no prescribed time for doing this but when the point of the leaf begins to dry out or flattens, the producer knows it is high time to cut. On the ejido or pequeña propiedad, a specialized worker goes ahead of the cutters and marks each of the plants that will be cut. In general, 18 to 25 leaves will be cut from a plant each year. During its adult life, a henequen plant will produce about 280 leaves (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan s.d.: 3). Although the henequen plant is not very much affected by it, the dry season is its most difficult period of the year.

From time to time during the year, producers can if they want cut young plants that have begun to shoot up from the roots of adult and semi-adult plants, sometimes at a frantic pace in certain places. If they are not cut soon enough to be transplanted into a nursery where

they will have enough space and air, the young shoots will rot. However, if the producer does not have the intention of opening up new fields for cultivation, it is useless to cut the young plants unless they can be sold to those who need them.

After its seventeenth year, the henequen plant enters its decadent phase during which it offers fewer and fewer leaves for cutting. Around the twenty-fifth year, the henequen plant produces its flower on the tip of a rigid stem about two meters in height, called locally the varejón (pole). It is believed that the pollen of this flower constitutes a real danger for the leaves of nearby plants; in effect, it is said that if the pollen falls there it will spot the leaf and negatively affect the quality of the fiber which might then be declassified on the market. One varejón alone can damage the leaves on an entire mecate which is why it is important to cut it as soon as it begins to spring up from the center of the plant. Twice a year the plantation is gone over in order to identify this hazard. However, agronomists have pointed out that the leaf spots are not caused by pollen but rather by microorganisms (Perez Toro 1950: 9,12). Nonetheless, producers are right to cut the varejón because, if this is not done, the trunks will rapidly dry out and become true mini-laboratories for the breeding of microorganisms and encourage the development of harmful insects (TSGA 1974). Once the plant has died, the producer will leave it to dry out, later to be cut for firewood.

Along with the chapeo, the cutting is the most common operation on a henequen plantation because it must be repeated every six months

during the period of yield. A worker can cut 2,000 leaves in a single day if the wild vegetation is not too bothersome or, as it is said, if the weeder who preceded him did a good job. In exceptional cases where the plants are lined up straight and the weeding well done, a cutter can cut as many as 3,000 leaves in a single day. The cutter's tasks include removing the spines which cover the outside edge of the henequen leaves. To do this, the worker, having first protected his left hand with a glove or a rag, takes the leaf in his left hand and with his other hand cuts the spines off with a knife. This operation slows down the cutting, of course, and the worker responsible for it is often accompanied by a helper, who may be a child, who does it in his place so that the cutting may proceed.

The local custom is to gather the leaves up into rolls of fifty (50), attach these rolls with rope (of henequen) and remove them to the guardarraya where there is a waiting truck. The further away the field is from the guardarraya, the more fatiguing becomes the work of cutting since the rolls of henequen must be transported on the workers' backs. The guardarraya is actually a road separating the plantations from one another which also serves as an access road for trucks that come to pick up the bundles. However, the main purpose of the guardarraya is to serve as a fire lane preventing the spread of such an outbreak from one plantation to another; fire is, in fact, one of the principal dangers on this kind of plantation. The danger used to be much greater when the plantations were crisscrossed by Decauville tracks and regular rail lines. Occasionally, sparks caused by passing railroad cars would start fires in the henequen fields. Haciendas in the

region used to have fire towers for warning against just such an eventuality.

Transportation costs are inherent in henequen cultivation due to the extensiveness of plantations. Before the arrival of trucks, henequen leaves were transported from the plantations to the hacienda's decortivating plants by Decauville railway, a kind of narrow-gauge railway on which ran mule-drawn carts. Although this kind of transportation still exists, the truck has tended to replace it. The work of grading and maintaining roads for the passage of trucks represent additional costs over the railroads. Since the purchase of a truck represents a considerable investment, few producers other than the pequeños propietarios possess them. Transportation workers are unionized but their work is irregular. Besides the truckdriver, each crew includes two other members involved in picking up the henequen leaves; one who works on the bed of the truck and another alongside on the ground.

From the plantation, the rolls of pencas (as the henequen leaves are called) are transported to the decortivating factory closest by; as many as possible are sent at one time. On the ejido, a supervisor (punteador) ensures that the rolls contain the correct number of leaves before they are expedited. Decortication must be done as soon as possible after cutting. The local decortivating plants belong either to the pequeña propiedad, the Agrarian Bank (when it has bought them from landowners), or to Cordemex. The Cordemex units are powered by electricity

but most of the time the older facilities operated with diesel power are sufficiently productive to justify their continued use⁽³⁾. The decortivating plants usually work year round unless there is a breakdown. In such cases, parts often cannot be found on the market for the older facilities, at least at affordable prices; this can lead to the abandonment of processing activities such as I observed at Chunhabin, in the municipio of Sinanché. The month of May is the dry season of the year and decortivating activities slow down at this time because it seems that tough leaves can damage the machinery. Cutting is also avoided at this time of the year. Workers in the decortivating plants are paid piece-rate wages based on each thousand leaves processed. In eight hours, a single worker can decorticate between 100 and 120,000 leaves; wages vary in relation to market fiber price fluctuations in the same way as the price offered to the sellers of pencas. If the machinery deteriorates, the workers are laid off; there is no more job security here than elsewhere.

Even if the machinery appears relatively complex and expensive, the decortication operation remains fairly simple. The envelope which constitutes the outer layer of the henequen leaf must be removed without either touching or slicing the fiber located just underneath. The fiber contains not only cellulose but also some liguina hemicolulosa and resin in addition to several other chemical elements; a henequen leaf contains not less than 80% moisture (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan s.d.: 2). For this reason, one must proceed rapidly to decortication.

During this operation, most of the pulp is detached from the fiber itself and some owners of the decortivating plants recycle the residue, known as bagasse as agricultural fertilizer.

The weight of the leaf and its yield in fiber are in direct ratio to its dimensions of length (it can reach 1.2 meters) and thickness. This no doubt explains in part the fact that before decortication, the leaves are classified according to size on the basis of which the Agrarian Bank and Cordemex establish the price to be paid producers. According to informants, one thousand leaves can yield about 40 kilograms of fiber. This appears to be an ideal norm; the government notes an average yield of 27.9 kgs of fiber per one thousand leaves (Gobierno del Estado de Yucatan s.d.: 38). In fact, on the ejidos I studied, the average yield reached only 22.2 kgs which is indicative of the poor quality of henequen.

After decortivating, the wet fiber is left next to the factory to dry in the sun for about twelve hours. It is then pressed into bales weighing 190 kgs each. The fiber is later sent by truck to Mérida; most of it will go to the Cordemex factory at Tapetes in the suburbs of Mérida where manufactured products from henequen are made.

As the reader may have noticed, no agricultural machinery is utilized in the domain of the direct production of henequen. Some claim that this is a contingency inherent to the nature of the soil in Yucatan because such machines are used in competing countries. Some producers, on the other hand, claim that adequate machinery has not been introduced

because of a government policy which seeks to keep the labor force in the rural areas and thus avoid the formation of an urban sub-proletariat. I will come back to this issue. In fact, modern methods have just barely begun to be used in the henequen fields as on those managed by the State through the Agrarian Bank; thus, for example, the use of hormones to stimulate root growth and the use of disinfectants for the leaves are spreading practices. These are intended to attack the two major henequen pests: certain insects and a variety of microorganisms (see Perez Toro 1950; TSGA 1974).

Having surveyed the henequen labor process, at least in its principal forms, I will be able to define the process of production as such and to identify the principal relations of production in the social formations under study. Since maize occupies an important position in one of these, Temax, I will first describe the labor process involved in maize.

9.2 The Maize Labor Process

As in the case of henequen, the producer wishing to grow maize must first measure out the land. Due to the mediocre quality of the soil, a peasant cannot exploit the same parcel more than two years in a row. The land must then be left in fallow for at least twelve years. Thus, at Temax, where the small holding part of the ejido is almost exclusively given over to maize, the producers must continually move about, cutting down a corner of forest once every two years. When the producer measures out his lot, he must take into account the proximity

of those belonging to other ejidatarios in order to avoid conflict with them in the short term, that is, when it comes time to "open up" a new parcel.

After having surveyed his land, the producer closes it off with tree trunks in order to prevent cattle from entering. It is for this reason, moreover, that producers hesitate to make their milpa in areas where large trees are not available for this purpose. As years pass, the limits of the forest become more and more remote, forcing the producers to go further and further away from the villages where such large trees have disappeared. In certain cases, this factor can lead the ejidatarios to rent land from private owners whose holdings are closer to the village. Once his parcel has been demarcated and closed off, the producer must then systematically fell the remaining trees and cut the brush which is then burned, according to local custom. Instead of completely burning the wood, some producers like to make charcoal from it which is then sold in the village. The making of charcoal requires a certain technical knowledge and, what is more, is physically demanding of the producer who, in addition to constantly inhaling the smoke, must stay nearby for almost a week's time, day and night, to watch that the oven doesn't collapse. This no doubt explains why less than ten producers at Temax practice charcoal-making and do so only sporadically. Because it burns more slowly than charcoal, housewives prefer wood as a fuel, although it is becoming less and less common in the immediate environs of the village.

This first step in the cultivation of maize, clearing the land, certainly constitutes the longest and most arduous of all. The producer can adopt his own rhythm in performing this task; since most of the time this activity is complementary to his task as an ejidatario, he can only work on his parcel once his work on the collective ejido has been finished. The producer must be ready to burn in March in order to be able to plant at the end of May or the beginning of June when the rainy season starts. According to the villagers' norms, a producer can clear one mecate in a day, which seems to correspond to reality; the enquiry I made at Temax reveals that, on the average, the totality of operations of clearing and burning one mecate occupies the producer during 1.4 days or 35 working-days per hectare. Seeding can be done rapidly and only requires on average 5 working-days per hectare. Usually, the producer who makes one milpa per year saves the best seeds from the harvest for the following year's planting; if not, they must be bought from merchants or other producers which raise his costs of production. To seed 10 mecates requires about 1 almud of seed (3.5 kgs); in 1974, producers paid an average 7.4 pesos for this amount of seed, not on the market but by purchasing them from friends or neighbors. This type of maize produces only one annual harvest. A few producers use seeds of hybrid maize which are more expensive to buy but which produce two annual harvests. Some claim that the taste of tortillas made from this hybrid maize is affected, an argument that might explain the widespread reluctance among producers to produce it. Planting maize is also

an occasion for some producers to put in squash or vegetables such as beans and a certain species of broad beans. Although appreciated in cuisine, most squash is used to feed the pigs. However, it seems that more and more peasants are abandoning vegetable-cropping in the milpas because of the increasing use of herbicides which inhibit the growth of these plants.

In its second year of maize cultivation, the soil is already considerably impoverished and has a negative effect on productivity. Producers have a precise terminology for this phenomenon. Thus, the first seeding on a new parcel is termed la roza; that of the second year, la caña-roza. In principle, the same parcel should not be exploited for more than two consecutive years but in certain instances (for example, lack of time for clearing land) the producer is resigned to a third season; he then harvests caña maize. Regarding the quality of soils in Yucatan, Steggerda made an interesting observation although it concerns more directly the maicera region in the south of the peninsula. In a study made in the 1940s, the author remarked that a producer should cultivate maize on an average 100 mecates in order to assure the own reproduction and that of his family. Assuming that a given piece of land is fertile for only two years and that it must lay fallow for at least ten years, if a producer wants to make one milpa each year he must dispose of at least six parcels of 100 mecates (Steggerda 1941: 114). In the case which interests us directly, that of Temax, we can see that it was this kind of factor which justified the distribution

(both in the original adjudication and later increases) of larger ejido surface areas that was the case for villages where maize cultivation is not practiced on a significant scale.

In Yucatan, producers have no recourse to any irrigation technique for cultivating maize. They depend entirely on the weather and a hurricane, severe drought, or an onslaught of grasshoppers can seriously compromise the fruit of harvest.

Some producers (no doubt a minority) participate in the ceremony of Kay-col presided over by one of the few H-men (Mayan priest) who still exist. This ceremony, known in the Mayan religion as cha-chaac, seems to have been made when the rains seemed long in coming; in any case, the Kay-col is supposed to favor the harvest. In the rare cases I heard about⁽⁴⁾, the producers in neighboring small holdings assembled for the ceremony. There are no H-men in Temax and one must be sought elsewhere. Each participant supplies a part of the planks and accessories needed for constructing the altar in addition to the chickens and the nixtamal which is offered up and eaten collectively. Finally, God-willing (as informants are careful to state), it will rain.

It is certain that with the secularization of the process of production of maize, the Kay-col ceremony no longer forms an integral part of it. For proper development, maize requires rain two or three times a week. If it rains too much, the stem will grow in a spectacular fashion but the ears will not form at all.

A few weeks after planting, when the stalks start to break the surface of the soil, producers must weed in a meticulous fashion in order to completely remove foreign growth. Most producers will effect this operation at the rate of one mecate per day. It is strenuous work since producers have no other way to accomplish it except by squatting down. This task could be more rapidly accomplished with the aid of portable pump filled with liquid herbicide; each 10 mecates requires one liter of this liquid and in 1974 the price for this amount was 30 pesos. The pump costs 225 pesos, a considerable investment for most producers. Some could rent it but, in any case, only a limited number had recourse to this technique. As a result of this phenomenon, an average 0.8 working-days is devoted to this operation on each mecate or 20 days per hectare.

If no natural cataclysm intervenes, harvesting can begin in August if the maize is to be consumed fresh. In this case, the maize is harvested as the producer's family has need of it. It can also be left, the tip of the stalk broken over, and harvested all at once in December. However, the longer producers wait, the greater the risk of losing a part of their harvest to thieves. A thief will probably not trespass onto the holdings whose owners have performed the ceremony of Kay-col. To do so would be to invite the mal aire (evil wind) and to remain prisoner of the holding until the owner comes to set the thief free. If the harvest is safe and the parcel is near to the village, it can be transported on back to the owner's house; however, in most cases for the reason mentioned earlier, the milpa is a considerable distance

away from the village and the producer must pay the transportation of his maize to its destination. In general, each mecate is expected to yield one carga (about 43 kgs) of maize, corresponding to approximately 1,075 kgs per hectare. In fact, our data revealed an average yield of 1,000 kgs per hectare at Temax; Steggerda noted an effective yield of 900 kgs per hectare at Piste, near Chichen Itza (Steggerda 1941: 117). These averages are excellent compared to that for Yucatan as a whole, where they attain 825 kgs per hectare (DGE 1960: 248,245)⁽⁵⁾. The harvesting of maize can be rapidly accomplished. The number of working-days devoted to this operation when the harvest is normal does not surpass 7.5 days per hectare, at least at Temax.

If we count the total number of working-days that a producer spends in the milpa from beginning to end of the labor process, we arrive at the figure of 67.5 days per hectare. If we compare this to one of the very few references at our disposal on this particular subject, we discover that at Piste, for example, the average number of working-days for each hectare of maize is only 51 days (Steggerda 1941: 125), which perhaps explains the somewhat lower yield the author observed in this village. Domestic groups who have had some success in the maize harvest discretely mark the occasion at home by consuming atole nuevo, a kind of fermented drink made with ground kernels of fresh maize.

The final labor process which I will describe because of its pertinence for my demonstration is closely related to that of maize. Animal husbandry, in particular the raising of cattle, represents one of the principal hazards for maize cultivation.

9.3 The Labor Process in Livestock-Raising

As we have seen, the raising of cattle for export constituted one of the cornerstones of the colonial regime. The very development of this process of production favored the extension of landed estates and the gradual encircling of the village ejidos.

Despite a significant slowdown in this activity after 1821 and particularly during the growth of henequen exploitation, livestock-raising has remained, even on a small scale, an integral part of the landscape in the north of the Yucatan peninsula.

Defining precisely the labor process in livestock-raising is a difficult enterprise. It is not practiced in the same manner with a small number of cattle as with a large group. Here, even more than elsewhere, the conditions of production are closely linked to the system of land tenure. Thus, in the opinion of informants, due to the peculiar conditions of Yucatan (that is, the lack of means for proceeding with the planting of grazing material) each animal needs up to five hectares for subsistence. Until 1973-74, this condition did not constitute a fetter even for those breeders who did not own landed property. Even if large landowners remain the principal breeders of livestock in Yucatan, small holders and certain agricultural workers can also raise cattle. Beginning with an animal received as a gift, for example, a peasant with a little luck can assemble ten or so head of cattle that are like "money in the bank", as the expression goes in Yucatan. Later, whether it be the construction of a house, the marriage of a daughter or

an expensive illness, an animal can be slaughtered and sold for cash. The fact that the animals are left to roam in the fields and woods to scrounge for their own food permits non-landowning livestock breeders to exist on a small scale. Access to a well and a daily visit from the owner are the only requirements for this kind of activity once it has gotten under way.

When they slaughter their cattle in case of necessity or emergency, the small breeders usually sell it on the local market, that is, in the village. At slaughter-time, the butcher is called and when a price has been agreed upon, the animal is taken away in a rented truck. The small breeder receives between 800 and 1,000 pesos for the animal.

This situation began to change in the early 1970s. Under the pretext of controlling damage to the milpas by wandering cattle, the government prohibited the open pasturing of animals. From then on an enclosure large enough for the proper evolution of the beast was required. The formal institution of this measure marked practically the end of small-scale breeding. Those petty breeders who did not have sufficient land to build an enclosure had to dispose of their animals or consign them to a large breeder in return for payment a la parte, that is, one calf given for every two born.

Conflict between maize growers and cattle breeders has existed throughout Mexican history. However, disagreements did not rise so much between petty cultivators and small breeders as between the milperos and large breeders. Be that as it may, the measure intended to check the free pasturing of cattle amounted to a concentration of livestock

breeding in the hands of producers specialized in this domain. This same measure fits into the logic itself of capitalist development both in the context of the world market and that of the henequenera zone. As mentioned earlier, Mexico sought to avoid the drain of its currency and consequently to produce consumer goods locally. For the small breeder, the five or ten head of which he disposed represented more a margin of security than items of consumption. Thus, he could not be counted upon in the larger Mexican scheme of self-sufficiency in the agro-alimentary sector. Hence his elimination⁽⁶⁾.

At the same time this assault was being made on the small breeders and the scheme of self-sufficiency in food was being launched, the government, through the intermediary of the Agrarian Bank in Yucatan, proposed its agricultural diversification plan. Large-scale cattle breeding and domestic breeding of pigs, rabbits, and poultry constitute the principal aspects of this plan.

Large-scale cattle breeding is today spreading under the ejido framework. The labor process unfolds under the supervision and surveillance of the Agrarian Bank. I was able to follow this labor process in the largest pasture yet established by this institution at San Benito de Temax, which covers 1,600 hectares with an initial herd of 400 head of cattle. Although the size of the enterprise is such that the labor process unfolds on a different scale than that of maize or henequen, workers nonetheless must begin by clearing the land, burning the brush, cleaning a field and constructing fences (this time, barbed wire). The initial weeding, preceding the seeding of foraging material and the

arrival of cattle, mobilized hundreds of workers. In connection with the task of clearing the land and in light of a conjuncture of scarcity on the market, several workers obtained permission (and the seed) to plant their milpa at the same time foraging material was being sown.

The first planting of forage required many workers. However, once the preparatory stage had been passed, livestock breeding itself, even for 400 head of cattle, demands only a limited number of workers. Four cowboys and a foreman can round up the cattle every two days into the enclosure, bathe them once every two weeks as a precaution against the garapatas, vaccinate them periodically, and, finally, isolate sick animals and pregnant cows or those who have just given birth.

Pig raising does not share the same historical importance as cattle-raising but responds to about the same needs as small-scale cattle-raising. It is practiced exclusively on a household basis. It requires virtually no initial capital and often this type of activity allows a family to meet unforeseen expenses or improve its material conditions. For pig raisers, the cost of a new house is calculated in terms of the number of pigs exchanged for materials. Often, the raising of pigs in the family courtyard without any special infrastructure (i.e. pen) is a feminine activity par excellence, giving women a monetary independence that would otherwise only come from working as a domestic, sewing or making candy to be sold door-to-door. When pigs are raised in this fashion, they consume maize and squash in addition to feeding upon household garbage strewn about the courtyard for them.

News spreads quickly when a sow gives birth; relatives and friends come to reserve piglets to be brought home after they have been weaned and castrated.

The Agrarian Bank also distributes sows to domestic groups who are members of the ejido and whose application has been made and approved. In this case, the bank subsidizes half the cost of constructing a pen (required) and the purchase (also required) of feed. Half of each litter sowed remains the breeder's property while the other half returns to the bank. Veterinarians employed by the bank visit periodically these breeders to check on the health of the animals and to control the care which is given them.

The breeding of pigs stimulated by the Agrarian Bank fits into the wider project of agrarian diversification in Yucatan. This wing of the project corresponds to a deeper penetration of Capital into rural areas, as does the concentration of cattle breeding in the hands of large-scale operators. The case of pigs is one of vertical integration; this process is extremely advantageous for Capital in contexts of a low level of development of productive forces. Thus, the petty producer-breeder participates like the capitalist in the creation of an infrastructure and in the economic risks of production; moreover, the petty producer retains the illusion of a certain autonomy which in turn maintains his isolation before the Agrarian Bank. However, the control of this labor process in the last instance rests in the hands of the Agrarian Bank. In these circumstances, it is not surprising that the

response to this project was most often passive. To counteract this attitude, the Agrarian Bank had peasants who occupied a public post set the example in taking up pig breeding. However, since the individuals occupying public positions are associated with the established political factions, most ejidatarios believe that breeding pigs for the bank constitutes a prerogative they themselves will never enjoy. Thus, in 1974, only 62 domestic groups out of a possible 1,000 (or 6%) at Temax participated in the breeding program.

To conclude, no type of pig raising represents an important activity in the villages studied. Like small-scale cattle breeding, the raising of pigs offers an economic option on which producers can fall back in times of domestic crisis, despite the disadvantages associated with this type of activity. In a context where capitalists must hold down the costs of producing an export commodity (henequen) at any price, complementary and subordinate activities have their raison d'être.

The labor processes of maize cultivation, cattle and pig breeding, of course, do not constitute the only complements to the labor process of henequen. However, they have a numerical importance (in terms of the number of domestic groups involved) and ethnographic importance (in terms of the producers' own evaluation) that other labor processes such as bee-keeping, the making of charcoal, carpentry and the growing of fruits and vegetables do not have.

CHAPTER 9 NOTES

- (1) This calculation is made on the basis of information provided by petty producers and does not take account of the administrative expenses (principally, interest on borrowing) which big producers have. It can be compared to the estimation made by Menendez R. (1964: 265-268) to which I referred at the beginning of Chapter 8, today amounting to an initial outlay of more than 13,000 pesos. The fact that he does not resort to financial capital and utilizes his own labor power allows the petty producer of henequen to considerably reduce his costs of production and to coexist with big producers.
- (2) On the ejido as on the pequeña propiedad, one worker is assigned to distributing tasks and to the control of labor (quantity and quality). This is the checador, who fulfills the same functions as the former capataz or mayacol on the haciendas. The modern checador is sometimes even referred to as capataz. As mentioned earlier, the checador at Temax also assumes the role of distributing wages.
- (3) Before the advent of the diesel engine, wood was the combustible material used in the decorticating complex. Thus the forested area constituted a considerable and extensive part of the haciendas.
- (4) Producers will not spontaneously talk about this ceremony and are even more reticent about their participation in it. One of my principal informants, one with whom I stayed moreover, had performed this ceremony on his parcel. Women, including anthropologists, were not permitted to witness it. I nonetheless had occasion to see in another region (near Tekax) how the altar was set up and decorated for the offerings to be made upon it.
- (5) We can note in passing that maize yields in Yucatan are among the lowest in the Republic, along with those of Oaxaca (764 kgs/ha) and Guerrero (812 kgs/ha). The average yield of maize per hectare can attain 1,679 kgs, notably in the state of Sonora.
- (6) In 1974 the enforcement of the cattle law started to be felt in Temax. The elimination of small breeders provoked a beef shortage on the local market. The big breeders sold only outside the village on the regional market.

CHAPTER 10

PRODUCTION AND RELATIONS OF PRODUCTION

Today the capitalist mode of production dominates the whole of Mexico. However, the forms of this domination sometimes raise some questions for investigation. Thus, the coexistence in the agrarian sector of two juridical forms as different as wage labor and petty or small holding production presents a challenge for analysis, the identification of relations of production and, from this basis, the identification of the social classes in rural areas.

This chapter considers these two principal juridical forms encountered in the henequenera region. The combination of each of these forms with each type of land tenure previously identified provides the material for the individual sections. Thus, first I will treat wage labor on the ejido, on the pequeña propiedad, and on the small holdings. Then, I will attempt to pinpoint the forms according to which petty production is practiced on the ejido and on private small holdings.

By adopting this procedure, I hope to define the nature of the social classes represented in Yucatan's agrarian sector while, at the same time, specifying the nature of the struggle in which these classes are engaged for the control of the forces of production.

10.1 Wage Labor

If the money that workers receive in exchange for their labor on the pequeña propiedad or on the plots of land not belonging to them undeniably constitutes a wage, the case is not so obvious when these same workers labor on the collective ejido. What is necessary to know is in what sense the ejidatario status and the allocation of production credits affect the relations of production which form the framework of the collective ejido. In other words, it is important to situate the collective ejido with respect to capitalist relations of production. Yet the ejido seems to be insulated on all fronts by an ideological apparatus that directs attention away from key issues.

Theoretically, the ejido regroups petty commodity producers. The illusion of autonomy which is attributed to the petty producers, however, in fact rests on objective bases defined and guaranteed by law. Thus, land is communal property and local affairs are managed by local ejidal credit societies and comisariados ejidales (Stavenhagen 1968: 45). In this context, an ejidatario who neglects his land or who adopts a passive attitude in decision-making is severely judged.

Despite this ideological production, the ejidatario is so strictly regimented that any autonomy becomes outrightly illusory. As mentioned earlier, the ejido as a mode of land tenure depends on the Departamento Agrario (DAAC); the Banco Ejidal controls financing through means of credit and the Secretaria de Recursos Hidráulicos intervenes in irrigation districts. Finally, the ejidos, like the municipios, are

integrated into the national political structure. Viewed as a pyramid, the comisariados ejidales are integrated into the regional peasant committees who, in turn, are linked to the state's leagues of agrarian communities which are, finally, topped by the Confederación Nacional Campesina (CNC)⁽¹⁾ (Stavenhagen 1968: 38).

The ejidos in the henequenera region do not escape the contradictions which constitute the basic fabric of their organization. While I shall be making some reference to the situation at Sinanché, I will concentrate upon the case of the Temax ejido for which the data are more complete.

10.1.1 The Collective Ejido

The Temax ejido, unlike that at Sinanché, is not divided into grupos solidarios. Study of the forms of credit is therefore easier at Temax where the situation of the ejidatarios as a whole can be seen readily. It is curious to note that the division into grupos solidarios creates difficulties not only for the ejidatarios but also for the researcher, who finds scattered and heterogeneous data on these divisions. Since the Sinanché ejidatarios are subsumed under various forms of credit, it was much more difficult to determine an average income for this type of producer. The decision to split up a Sociedad de Crédito Ejidal into grupos solidarios was made by the Agrarian Bank, apparently on the authority of the ejidatarios themselves. While I could not systematically determine the reasons for which the societies in question were split up into grupos solidarios, internal dissension seems to be at

its origin. In one case serving to illustrate his 1975 article, Stavenhagen shows that after a few years of prosperity, the leaders of the ejido in question began to abuse their prerogatives and made a mockery of the democratic principles which were supposed to regulate the administration of funds. A number of ejidatarios thus decided to break away from the society and to obtain credit on the basis of an ejido within the ejido (Stavenhagen 1975: 153). Despite the apparent democracy of this process, in fact dividing the ejido into distinct groups contributes to internal division among the ejidatarios - problems are different for each group at any given moment - and reduces their striking force. The ejidatarios, moreover, readily admit to this. However, this consciousness on their part does not prevent economic measures, such as the granting of production bonuses over and above weekly credit, from having a divisive role. Such a case occurred at Sinanché in 1977 when this bonus was widely distributed; from then on, it became very important to know within a given work group who did what. The capitalist division of labor differentiates workers in their attitude toward labor: a concentration of more or less well-disposed and motivated workers would be catastrophic in relation to the obtaining of production bonuses for the group as a whole. Logically, those who feel slighted by this attitude will attempt to recuperate a bonus in another fashion. Since the fragmentation of a sociedad into grupos solidarios opens the way to other internal divisions, the most plausible solution remains the creation of subgroups. This is precisely what occurred at Sinanché where I witnessed the division into three groups of the grupo solidario San Juan Lizarraga

in a very short time; each subgroup takes account of its production and independently receives its bonus on this basis. Finally, this production bonus may have given way to the organization of work on a new basis; moreover, it may provide for the open expression of the latent internal division of workers. This division is neither natural nor inherent in them but is rather introduced and maintained by Capital, represented in this particular case by the Agrarian Bank.

This case suggests a possible outcome for all the sociedades. However, for purposes of analysis and in order to understand the forms of credit, I will limit myself to a simpler case, that of the Sociedad de Temax where the grupos solidarios, at least during my stay, constituted only a future possibility and where the production bonus had not yet been applied or had not yet had important effects.

Credit that is allocated by the Agrarian Bank to the sociedades like that of Temax consists in two types: avío or short-term credit and refaccionario or long-term credit. In Temax, avío credit corresponds essentially to payment for the tasks executed by the ejidatarios; this credit is much more important than refaccionario, which is used in the purchase of trucks, engines, and so on; in sum, fixed capital in contrast to the variable capital which wages constitute. Although I was not able to obtain satisfactory official data concerning credit in 1974, subsequent data for 1975 show that avío credit amounted to 81.73% of the total at Temax and 85.49% at Sinanché. These figures confirm Warman's remark to the effect that, in general, agricultural and ejidal

banks allocate more than 80% of their resources to avío credit (1972: 77). This policy has important consequences on the economic life of the ejidos, who were constrained to reimburse avío credit with the harvest. In regions where this phenomenon is encountered, Stavenhagen remarks that:

"... the ejidatarios frequently lose control of the product of their labor and their own labor power; they thus become wage laborers for the Bank, working on their own parcels. The relationship with the Bank, rather than stimulating an enterprising spirit among the ejidatarios, transforms them into passive dependents."
(Stavenhagen 1968: 39)

This situation is all the more characteristic of the Temax case in that refaccionario credit for assistance in the acquisition of capital goods is clearly inadequate. Thus, the ejidatarios never succeed in getting out of the vicious circle brought about by stagnation of the productive forces at the level of the means of production.

It should be evident that relations of production within the ejido are capitalist once the ejidatarios have been classified as wage-workers, as Stavenhagen does. However, the question of credit raises many problems for researchers. In effect, the wage-labor form generally disguises the extraction of surplus-value. However, researchers differ on whether or not credit produces surplus-value.

Stavenhagen portrays the debate adequately by contrasting the two fundamental positions in it. Thus, some authors affirm that the Bank is nothing other than an agency for subsidizing the ejidatarios, subsidies that are allocated for more political than financial reasons. Other authors point out, however, that in several regions the Bank

traps the ejidatario in a cumulative process of decapitalization (Stavenhagen 1968: 40).

In all likelihood, the truth is to be found between these two positions which, after all, are in no way incompatible. As Warman states:

"An important part of the sums corresponding to official credit fulfill political functions. They basically serve to mend splits, prevent ruptures, alleviate tensions and distribute favors and services or to solve biological problems like those involved in kinship." (Warman 1972: 82)

Warman's contribution to the debate is interesting in that he cites the case of the henequenera region as an example of the attribution of "political" credit. Production is moderate and of poor quality, he writes, and is destined for a declining international market in which Mexico's participation, so far as henequen is concerned, is marginal. Thus, revenues from this commerce are not sufficient to cover the costs of the geared-down operations which the ejidatarios are made to perform in the fields (Warman 1972: 53). The author continues,

"This cost the Bank one hundred fifty million pesos a year. But the tranquility of Yucatan and the three hundred fifty thousand persons dependent on henequen was worth the price. Moreover, (this credit) helped make the divine caste rich, which is today involved in the sale of henequen on the international market, and even helped make a lower caste, the bureaucracy, flourish." (Warman 1972: 83)

It is thus possible to get rich on the basis of this "moderate and poor quality" product. Contrary to what Warman states, the system did not become entirely irrational simply because there is no work for the ejidatarios during most of the year and they have been made to carry out tasks "so that they are not paid for doing nothing" (Warman 1972: 83). This system is only irrational for the ejidatarios who must live

under it. It is part of the larger logic of Capital and the struggle of the bourgeois class against the proletariat. I have already begun to demonstrate this; I will pursue my demonstration with the aid of some data obtained (with much difficulty and that for good reasons) from the Agrarian Bank, its local agencies, the pequeños propietarios and petty producers. In adopting a class perspective, which simultaneously considers the proletarian and bourgeois classes, I will be able to see that this subsidy is really more important in terms of a base of support for a section of the bourgeoisie than for the proletariat as such. Even though the data are insufficient, I will attempt to demonstrate this aspect of class antagonism in Yucatan.

Table 47 shows the sums of money that the Agrarian Bank allocates in the form of avío credit to the Sociedad de Temax, distributed according to the various tasks to be performed.

TABLE 47

Avío Credit Allocated to the Sociedad de Temax in 1973

Task	Number of Workers	Price for Each Task (pesos)	Weekly Total	Annual Total
<u>Chapeador</u>	1,103	40	44,120	2,294,240
Cutter	219	80	17,520	911,040
Monitor	16	105	1,680	87,360
Warehouseman	10	105	1,050	54,600
Overseer	17	84	1,428	74,256
Overseer at Decorticating Plant	22	84	1,848	96,096
Office Employees	9	143	1,287	66,924
Total	1,396	--	68,933	3,584,516

Source: Sociedad de Temax, Temax 1974: information direct from Comisariado Ejidal

In addition to the 1,396 workers appearing in this table, we should include 82 widows and retired persons who receive a weekly "pension" of 20 pesos ($80 \times 20 \text{ pesos} \times 52 \text{ weeks} = 85,280 \text{ pesos}$). Also, at Christmas and New Year's all ejidatarios receive double the normal sum. To the annual total shown on the table, this last sum (68,933 pesos) should be added along with that earmarked for retired persons (85,280 pesos). Credit allocated in 1974 totalled thus 3,738,729 pesos.

In regard to tasks, from the point of view of the division of labor, only the tasks of chapeador and cutter correspond to tasks of the execution of labor as such; the rest amount to the role of foreman. There is thus an effective division of labor within the ejido itself. This division is only rudimentary, however, especially given that leadership tasks correspond to only 10% of the credit allocated and the ratio of the least-paid to the highest-paid tasks is only on the order of 1 to 3.

Avío credit granted to the Sociedad de Temax must be reimbursed on the basis of the harvest. Let us consider production as such on the ejido. Data furnished by the Agrarian Bank shows that, as a whole, the Sociedad harvests annually 41,050,000 henequen leaves. Expenditures for each 1,000 leaves amount to an average 30 pesos, which includes cutting, transport of the product from the ejido to the decortivating complex, decortication and contributions to the Instituto Mexicano de Servicio Social (IMSS), which assures minimal medical care for the ejidatarios and their families. Thus, for a harvest of 41,500,000 leaves, these expenditures attain $(41,500,000 \times 30 \text{ pesos}) = 1,231,000$ pesos. Besides expenditures for the items enumerated here, we should also consider those for cleaning the plantations. Table 48 shows the surface areas corresponding to each stage in henequen cultivation for the Temax sociedad as a whole, broken down into geographical divisions⁽²⁾.

TABLE 48

The Temax Ejido: Surface Area in Each Stage of Henequen Cultivation
According to the Geographical Divisions of the Ejido (1973-1974)

Group Name		Number of Ejidatarios	Fomento H	Cultivo H	Plena Explotación H	Decadente H	Monte H	Total H M	
Chenche de las Torres		n.d.	91.08	104.56	155.08	94.08	90.44	535.24	13,381
San Antonio Camara		417	0	184.24	468.60	101.16	130.44	884.44	22,111
San Dimas		n.d.	0	38.76	257.44	0	163.72	459.92	11,498
San Luis		n.d.	0	133.60	116.52	0	13.56	263.68	6,592
Cauaca		318	0	103.88	56.40	12.28	69.76	242.32	6,058
Chucmichen		n.d.	0	0	524.52	0	454.60	979.12	24,478
Total	H*	1,406	91.08	565.04	1,578.56	207.52	922.52	3,364.72	
	M**		2,277	14,126	39,464	5,188	23,063	84,118	

Source: Agrarian Bank branch office at Cansahcab

H*: hectares M**: mecates

The Sociedad de Temax comprises 61,055 mecates corresponding to surface areas in fomento, cultivo, plena explotación and decadente. These areas require weeding twice a year. The cost of weeding one mecate of land is 10 pesos. Each year, the cost of this operation amounts to 1,221,000 pesos. If this is added to the costs of cutting, the combined cost of the two basic operations on this ejido reaches 2,452,000 pesos, depending on the volume of production. Calculated in this manner, expenditures vary considerably in relation to Table 47. The contrast is summarized on Table 49.

TABLE 49

Expenditures for Henequen Production
in the Sociedad de Temax (1973-1974)

Task	Expenditures Based on Official Data from the Agrarian Bank	Partially-calculated Expenditures Based on Surface Area and Volume of Production
<u>Chapeo</u> (weeding)	2,294,240	1,221,100
Cutting	911,040	1,231,500
Foreman	379,236	379,236
Pensions	85,280	85,280
Annual Bonus	68,933	68,933
Total	3,738,729	2,986,049

For this table, I assumed that wages correspond to the task of foreman and that pensions and annual bonuses were constant. If we then consider the lack of correspondence between the two columns of figures concerning tasks of execution, we note a difference of 752,680 pesos between official data and that which I calculated on the basis of surface areas and volume of production. Before drawing any conclusions in regard to this sum, let us consider revenue from the henequen harvest.

According to the Agrarian Bank, 41,050,000 leaves are equivalent to 913,731 kgs of fiber, given an average productivity of 22.259 kgs/ thousand. Cut leaves are turned in to the Agrarian Bank by the Sociedad

in order to repay the debt incurred by avío credit. The price at which this fiber is evaluated is of course not determined by the ejidatarios.

An excerpt from a local newspaper supports this statement:

"(...) the price for which Cordemex sells the kilo of industrial henequen has always been a mystery to Yucatan producers. One has to seek out data abroad in order to know that the current price for crude fiber has reached 7.13 pesos per kilo, while here in Yucatan the maximum price paid per kilo is only 2.90 pesos, for a difference of 4.23 pesos per kilo." (Diario de Yucatan, November 7th, 1973)

We can well imagine that if Cordemex buys each kilo of fiber for 2.90 pesos, the Agrarian Bank (which removes the fiber from the ejidos and sends it to Cordemex) pays even less. An article appearing in the Excelsior (November 8th, 1973), a Mexico City daily, substantiates this claim in noting that the Bank offered an average price of 2.51 pesos to petty producers for their henequen. The annual report of the Agrarian Bank does not seem to fall into the public domain. None of its representatives agreed to reveal to me the figures which the press finally made public during my stay in Yucatan.

Given a price of 2.51 pesos per kilo of fiber, we can hypothesize that the Bank evaluated the 913,731 kgs of fiber from the Temax ejido at 2,293,465 pesos. Based on this evaluation, it is clear that the Temax ejido can only go into debt because this amount does not even cover expenses for weeding which reach 2,294,240 pesos annually (first column of Table 49). On the other hand, if we compare the estimated value of henequen production to the sum of expenditures such as we calculated them (second column of Table 49), we see that expenses were greater than the revenue of 692,584 pesos. This sum would correspond

strictly to the ejido's debt with the Agrarian Bank if the Bank allocated credit only on the basis of expenses incurred by the maintenance of surface areas in production and according to the volume of production. Yet, based on official data, the Bank granted credit that surpassed this deficit by 752,680 pesos. In other words, the production deficit of the Temax ejido is more than doubly covered by avío credit. This is in fact a production subsidy, I believe, which other researchers concerned by the problem have spoken about. Moreover, Table 47 indicates that weeding is the operation that absorbs most of this subsidy. Despite the fragile character of the mode of evaluation I was forced to adopt in light of research contingencies, this finding tends to concur with the ethnographic statements by ejidatarios and the conclusions of researchers referring to the chapeos prematuros (premature weeding, Warman 1972: 83).

The allocation of production subsidies by the Agrarian Bank does not mean, however, that extraction of surplus-value based on ejidatario wage labor cannot take place. It is simply not the Agrarian Bank which pockets the value as such directly in this phase. If we reconsider the volume of production of the Temax ejido (913,731 kgs of fiber) and calculate its value on the international market (that is, the value which Cordemex obtains), or 7.13 pesos per kilo, we arrive at the sum of 6,514,902 pesos. The difference in the value of henequen temaxeño on the international market and the local market, at least such as defined by the regulations of the Agrarian Bank, amounts to

4,221,437 pesos or 64.7%. This difference can come only from the intensive exploitation of labor power at the level of production. We know, of course, that Cordemex has serious financial problems but these concern the transformation of fiber into manufactured products. This constitutes one more reason for attempting to minimize costs of production at the level of direct production. To conclude, it can be stated with a certain degree of confidence that the Agrarian Bank's subsidy does not profit the ejidatarios, such as those in Temax, any more than does credit as such because the difference in the value of the same fiber between the various market levels is not pocketed by them but rather by Cordemex. The ejidatario is inserted within a process of "decapitalization" in which the values created are transferred to the industrial sector. As the buyer, processor and marketing agency for the fiber and its products, Cordemex constitutes the financial and industrial bourgeoisie's primary instrument for effecting that transfer. In regard to the class position of the ejidatario, we note that the only difference between an ejidatario and an ordinary agricultural worker is that rather than being exploited by a directly identifiable non-worker, the ejidatario is exploited by the State through an onerous bureaucracy that his labor supports.

The contrast between this situation and the declared ambitions of legislators who seek to make the ejidatario into a commodity producer should be underlined. A commodity producer is defined by the possession of his means of production and his product until it is sold. The

principal means of production in countries where the material forces of production remain little developed amounts to land. On the ejido, the problem of the appropriation of land is not posed because the land is disconnected from commodity circuits. This factor alone would not prevent the ejidatario from being considered a commodity producer. On the collective ejidos I studied, the product is mortgaged even before it is harvested. This phenomenon originates from purely economic factors such as a systematic depression of fiber prices offered to direct producers, a situation that has existed for at least the past fifteen years if not longer. Besides economic factors, I should recall the nature of henequen itself. As we know, henequen's life cycle is spread out over a period of thirty years of which the first seven, at least, are growing time during which the plant is not only unproductive but occasions maintenance expenses as well. Demographic factors should also be considered here. Since the dotaciones and ampliaciones (enlargements) of the ejidos, their populations have increased and any man over 16 years of age without land can become an ejidatario (according to Article 72 of the Ley Federal de Reforma Agraria in Leyes y Codigos de Mexico 1974: 37). On the other hand, there are virtually no lands left for redistribution. In the region I worked in, the last enlargement of an ejido was made in 1948. Per capita surface area has thus diminished since the original distribution; unless the number of ejidatarios is not frozen and certain ejidatarios are prevented from enjoying anti-democratic privileges, such as using the nóminas fantasmas, this movement will intensify.

The modes of work of the ejidatarios vary between ejidos, between groups and even within a single group in certain cases related to certain periods of the year. On all of the ejidos, the great majority of ejidatarios are, at one time or another, weeders and cutters. In Temax, to take only one example, nearly 80% of the active ejidatarios are weeders and 15% are cutters (Table 47). In this particular village, tasks remain fixed; a weeder stands an excellent chance of remaining so all his life. In Sinanché, certain groups rotate the tasks of weeder and cutter. Thus, all ejidatarios do not earn the same amount every week; moreover, the wage for each ejidatario can vary from one week to another or from one season (lasting 3 or 4 months) to another, depending on the tasks to be done. The ejidatario's income can vary in different ejidos, depending on the "credit" which the Agrarian Bank has accorded him. Certain regions are notoriously poorer than others; the Cansahcab region, in which Temax is located, is the most disadvantaged⁽³⁾. Per capita "credit" on the Temax ejido is only half or even less than half that for the Sinanché ejido as a whole. Thus, on the average, a Temax ejidatario receives slightly more than 40 pesos a week while at Sinanché, the figure rises to 110 pesos or even more during cutting time⁽⁴⁾. However, if the Temax ejidatarios must each clear 4 mecates, the ejidatarios in Sinanché must clear between 6 and 11 mecates. A comparison of Table 50, concerning Sinanché and Table 48, concerning Temax, supports the demographic argument as one of the relevant factors. However, if we consider his situation as a whole, the Temax ejidatario is no less occupied than his Sinanché brethren.

Depending upon the task to be accomplished, the ejidatario's work-time on the collective ejido will be greater or less. For most ejidatarios, this work takes up at least half the week. The ejidatario is often accused of lacking discipline and working as slowly as possible. In fact, all that the ejidatario seeks to do is to make his ejido income equivalent to the going day's wage in the immediate region. Thus, at Temax for example, the average daily wage for an agricultural worker on the pequeña propiedad is 20 pesos, if it is for chapeo⁽⁵⁾. The ejidatario will therefore try to finish the clearing of 4 mecates on the ejido in two days, even if in certain periods (the rainy season) the elimination of lush vegetables may require more work.

We can better appreciate what the weekly sum of 40 pesos represents by considering the costs of basic necessities. The results of my questionnaires show that an average family in Temax consists of 6 persons and its average consumption amounts to 29.7 kgs of maize per week⁽⁶⁾.

If one kilogram of maize costs about 2 pesos (at the beginning and middle of 1974), the average family will spend 59.40 pesos for this necessity alone, which is virtually irreducible. In these conditions, meat becomes a luxury, all the more so in that in the summer of 1974, one kilogram of pork cost between 20 and 25 pesos; one kilogram of beef, 30 pesos, both in Temax and Sinanché. The situation appears more precarious in Temax because of the limited revenues procured by the ejido. However, in Temax, some peasants grow maize and thereby succeed

in keeping their household afloat. I will return to this subject in more detail in a later section.

It seems obvious that an ejidatario cannot maintain a family (in other words, reproduce his labor power and that of his household) on the basis of his work as ejidatario alone. Did not the agrarian reform foresee such a situation by setting up an implicit complementarity between the ejido and the pequeña propiedad, simply by conserving these two forms of land tenure side by side? Thus, when the ejidatario finishes work on the ejido, if he still needs cash he can turn first to the pequeña propiedad. In the next section, I will treat wage labor in this sector.

TABLE 50

The Sinanché Ejido: Surface Area in Each Stage of Henequen Cultivation
According to the Grupos Solidarios (1973-1974)

Name of Grupo Solidario		Number of Ejidatarios	Fomento H	Cultivo H	Plena Explotación H	Decadente H	Monte H	Total H M	
Santa Cruz		311	66.0	346.64	355.16	85.6	115.72	969.12	24,228
Kansucopo		157	17.56	243.6	215.20	40.76	65.08	582.20	14,555
Xitibcanul		116	0	121.0	175.16	76.72	331.60	704.48	17,612
San Juan Lizarraga		151	51.72	13.04	294.80	78.08	130.88	568.52	14,213
Total	H*	735	135.28	724.28	1,040.32	281.16	643.28	2,824.32	
	M**		3,382	18,107	26,008	7,029	16,082	70,068	

Source: Agrarian Bank branch office at Motul

H*: hectares

M**: mecates

10.1.2 The Pequeña Propiedad

Several pequeñas propiedades surround the villages I studied. The most important for discussion are evidently those on which a functioning decorticating complex is to be found. Several properties in this category were abandoned in the years following agrarian reform; it may be supposed that these were the smaller among them. In certain cases, the decorticating machines deteriorated and the income of the pequeña propiedad was too little for repairs to be covered.

Generally speaking, henequen is cultivated on a relatively large scale on these large estates both in center of the henequenera zone (Sinanché and Yobaín) and in its periphery (Temax and Dzidzantún). These landowners have their own machines for decorticating fiber from their plantations and use wage labor in every step of the processes of production and transformation. Besides the henequen crop, each landowner possesses at least a few head of cattle destined for the butcher shop or for sale outside their village. Lastly, some of them loan a few hectares to farmers wishing to grow vegetables. Farmers must fertilize the land with henequen bagasse. They must therefore be located as close as possible to a decorticating plant so that the transport of bagasse can be effected as easily as possible (usually on Decauville tracks). Income from the renting of land is however limited compared to that from henequen. Thus, in the finca of San Juan Sauri in Sinanché, 200 mecates are leased at the rate of 60 pesos each for a year. For this landowner, it brings an income of 12,000 pesos. It

seems that it is he who rents the most surface area both in Sinanché and Temax. However, this phenomenon does not have a systematic character that would demand a more in-depth treatment.

The fact that the agrarian reform left ex-hacendados in full ownership of decortivating plants might have been disastrous for them had it not been for the complementary relationship between the ejido and pequeña propiedad which was included in the new rules of the game. In relation to the henequen plantations seriously affected by expropriation, the decortivating plants became in effect clearly dysfunctional. For example, the decortivating plant on the finca of Santa Cruz Campos in Sinanché has an annual capacity of 40 million leaves but the actual production of Santa Cruz amounts to only 3 million leaves annually. The complementary relationship between the pequeña propiedad and the ejido is situated in part at this level. As mentioned earlier, the ejido is composed of land from each of the old haciendas in addition to the 300 hectares which surrounded the different villages during the agrarian reform. Therefore, most of the time the ejido (whether it be a sociedad or a composite of grupos solidarios) is divided into as many groups as there were haciendas in the village. Physically as well, a grupo solidario such as the one at Santa Cruz in Sinanché is located in proximity to the Santa Cruz fiber removal machine, as is the case for other groups whose distribution follows the pattern of the ex-haciendas. Each group on the ejidos must have its fiber decorticated and the most advantageous strategy for them is to have this done in the complex closest by. In

most cases, the Agrarian Bank rents out the decortivating plants which once belonged to the haciendas and puts the charge on the "invoice" which goes back to each ejido. In the last few years, the Agrarian Bank has clearly aspired to purchase the decortivating plants which henceforth, according to prevailing terminology, would belong to the ejidos. In some cases, the Bank has already proceeded to their purchase and the ejidatarios who work there receive a "credit" independent of that accorded to the henequen plantations. Here again it is a wage because the decortivating plants become the property of the State despite all the declarations to the effect that they belong to the ejido. It is, at the same time, a situation in which State Capital absorbs the pequeños propietarios who lose their principal source of income. In all probability, we are witnessing in this particular case one of the manifestations of the struggle for hegemony which the state financial bourgeoisie is waging against the landed bourgeoisie.

When the decortivating plants still belong to the ex-hacendados (the majority of cases, in fact), this group obtains an important part of their gross income from the Agrarian Bank which pays, in effect, a certain sum for each kilogram of henequen fiber processed in the machine. Out of this sum, the owner must pay his workers in the decortivating plant who, for their part, constitute true wage-laborers as for most of them, this provides their only income. Data representing the prices paid to the pequeña propiedad by the Agrarian Bank for decortivating remain contradictory. On the one hand, one of our informants stated (the foreman of San Juan Sauri) that the Bank paid

60-70 centavos for each kilogram of ejidal fiber decorticated at San Juan, which represents about 21 pesos for each thousand leaves. On the other hand, a Bank engineer told us that it was rather 5 pesos per thousand. The question is difficult to settle and in the example I will provide both figures should be kept in mind.

I will attempt to make an assessment of the revenue and global expenditures in the pequeña propiedad of San Juan Sauri beginning with the decortivating process. This piece of property is spread out over 215 hectares of which 100 hectares are given over to henequen. The decortivating plant is not electrically-powered but, in the opinion of most, it works well. It belongs to the landowner. Each year, 26 million henequen leaves pass through this machine: 6 million originate from the five (5) plantations of San Juan itself, 13 million from small holders, and 7 million from the Motul ejido (see Map no. 5), a part of which is located behind San Juan Sauri. If the Agrarian Bank pays 21 pesos per thousand leaves for decortication, the gross revenue in this area for San Juan amounts to 35,000 pesos. Let us see now what the machine owner must pay in wages.

The following table shows the different operations necessary in the process of decortication and the wages paid for each of these steps.

TABLE 51

Henequen Decortivating: Wages per 100,000 Leaves (1973)

Task	Number of Persons	Wage per 100,000 Leaves (pesos)	Total (pesos)
<u>Raspador</u> (scraper)	3 ⁽⁷⁾	27	81
<u>Elevador</u> (elevator)	2	25	50
<u>Recibidor</u> (receiver)	2	22	44
Others ⁽⁸⁾	29	20	580

Source: Foreman of the pequeña propiedad San Juan Sauri, Sinanché

As seen in this table, it costs the landowner 755 pesos to decorticate 100,000 leaves. Therefore, the 7 million leaves from the Motul ejido will cost the San Juan owner 52,850 pesos in wages. What becomes of this? If the Agrarian Bank pays only 5 pesos per thousand leaves, the owner's gross revenue would be 35,000 pesos; if the wages the owner must pay for decortication are subtracted from this figure (wages = 52,850 pesos), he is clearly operating at a loss which is unthinkable and contrary to the successful management of this decortivating complex. Moreover, it seems to be often the case that the owner of a decortivating plant obtains the "privilege" of decortivating the

ejido's henequen on the basis of friendly relations between himself and the officers of the Agrarian Bank. It would therefore be, at the very least, a curious situation were the bottom line to be a deficit. In fact, the owner in question actually receives 21 pesos per thousand leaves and not five. Thus, he draws a gross revenue of 94,150 pesos (21 pesos per 1,000 X 7 million = 147,000 pesos - 52,850 pesos) which represents a gross profit of 64%.

Besides the income from the Agrarian Bank, San Juan draws an income from henequen. Each year, San Juan harvests 6 million leaves on its plantations, representing 150,000 kilograms of fiber. At the time of our enquiry, San Juan obtained a price of 2.90 pesos per kilogram or a gross income of 435,000 pesos. By the time the planter realizes his gross income, he has already encountered two types of expenditure which draw off some of this income. First, henequen's process of production involves two stages, chapeo and corte: in 1973, the chapeo of one mecate of henequen cost 10 pesos. San Juan comprises 2,500 mecates of henequen which requires an expenditure of 25,000 pesos. The corte costs 15 pesos per thousand leaves; to cut 6 million leaves cost 90,000 pesos in wages. Secondly, the process of transformation of henequen leaves also involves expense. Basing ourselves on the preceding table, the decortication of 6 million leaves with wage labor involved an expenditure of (6 million leaves X 755 pesos/100,000 leaves =) 45,300 pesos. Finally, the cost of transporting the fiber to Mérida must be counted. A truck (assuming that it does not belong to the machine owner) can transport 40 pacas of

fiber weighing 190 kilograms apiece. San Juan's fiber production represents 790 pacas, requiring 20 trips (or 20 trucks) at 250 pesos each, or a total expenditure of 5,000 pesos. Therefore, adding up all of the owner's expenditures, we arrive at a total figure of (25,000 pesos + 90,000 pesos + 45,300 pesos + 5,000 pesos =) 165,000 pesos. Thus, in the area of henequen alone, this capitalist entrepreneur, though he be a small operator, realizes a gross income of (435,000 pesos - 165,300 pesos =) 269,700 pesos, representing a profit of 62% in relation to gross income, a high rate of profit which can only be explained by the intensive utilization of wage labor both in production and processing. However, I use the term "profit" with caution throughout this section. In fact, wage labor creates a mass of surplus-value which includes both profit and ground-rent. The data at my disposal (which does not include the real value of constant capital, for example) does not allow me to specifically distinguish profit nor can we assess the definite decrease in the rate of profit brought about by the gradual deterioration of machinery and the aging of henequen plantations (depreciation of capital), for example. In sum, I use the term profit here in its widest sense.

Another source of income for the San Juan owner is to be found in the purchase of the henequen production of petty producers, its transformation (using wage labor) and its sale on the market. Each year, San Juan buys 13 million leaves which after decortication represent some 325,000 kilograms of fiber. In 1973, the ex-hacienda's

owner paid 2.40 pesos per kilogram, representing an expenditure of 780,000 pesos. This same person spent (755 pesos/100,000 leaves X 13 million leaves =) 98,150 pesos for decortivating the fiber. Transportation involved expenses in

$$\left[\frac{325,000 \text{ kgs}}{190 \text{ kgs/paca}} = \frac{1,710 \text{ pacas}}{40 \text{ pacas/truck}} = 42 \text{ trips} \times 250 = 10,500 \text{ pesos} \right]$$

the order of 10,500 pesos (see calculation above). The total expenditure for the purchase, transformation and transport of the small holders' product thus is 888,650 pesos. All of this fiber is sold to a single buyer, Cordemex, at 2.90 pesos per kilogram for a gross revenue of (325,000 kgs X 2.90 pesos/kg =) 942,500 pesos and, consequently, a net revenue of (942,500 pesos - 888,650 pesos =) 53,850 pesos which represents a rate of profit of six (6%) per cent. Such a rate of profit, particularly considered in light of an intensive utilization of wage labor, remains moderate once it is compared to that which the landowner draws from his own henequen and the transformation of the ejido's. Since my data are quite accurate in this regard, it is helpful to refer to the precarious situation of henequen production which renders it rather unprofitable. Henequen prices are so low that the ex-hacendado cannot offer any price less than 2.40 pesos per kilogram to the small holder without risking to see the latter abandon, at least temporarily, his exploitation of the agave. Now, the decortivating plant must operate on a regular basis and the loss of the small holding clientele would be disastrous for the pequeña propiedad. Moreover, this property owner

must be able to provide wage labor to a relatively stable work force so that these workers can continue to reproduce their labor power and sell it to the capitalist entrepreneur represented by the owner of the finca. The decortication of the small holders' henequen undoubtedly contributes to complete this process of production. Lastly, by assuming the role of local intermediary in the process of circulation of the small holders' henequen, the ex-hacendados can seize a part (however minimal this may be) of the surplus-value created in the agrarian sector which would otherwise fall directly into the hands of the industrial bourgeoisie. The table below summarizes the preceding discussion in quantitative terms.

TABLE 52

Finca of San Juan Sauri, Income Sources

Income Sources	Gross Income (pesos)	Expenses (pesos)	Net Income (pesos)	Proportion of Total Income %	Rate of Profit %
1)Decortication of Ejido Henequen for the Bank (6 million leaves)	147,000	52,850	94,150	22.54	64.04
2)Production and Processing of Finca Henequen (7 million leaves)	435,000	165,300	269,700	64.56	62.0
3)Purchase-processing-sale of Smallholders' Henequen (13 million leaves)	942,500	888,650	53,850	12.89	6.90 ⁽⁹⁾
Total (26 million leaves)	1,524,500	1,106,800	417,700	100.00	average 27%

I now provide another illustration of pequeña propiedad income realized from wage labor. My example concerns the ex-hacienda of Santa Cruz Campos in the municipio of Sinanché. Table 53 presents an overview of its situation.

TABLE 53

Finca of Santa Cruz Campos, Income Sources

Income Sources	Gross Income (pesos)	Expenses (pesos)	Net Income (pesos)	Proportion of Total Income %	Rate of Profit %
1)Decortication of Ejido Henequen by the Bank (37 million leaves)	777,000	279,350	497,650	77.7	64.04
2)Production and Processing of Finca Henequen (3 million leaves)	226,200	84,150	142,050	22.2	62.79
Total (40 million leaves)	1,003,200	363,500	639,700	99.9	average 63.76

As can be seen, the Santa Cruz finca realizes a higher rate of profit than does San Juan. This feature is directly connected to the fact that Santa Cruz does not process the henequen originating from small holders (a transaction which radically affects San Juan's rate of profit) and to the fact that Santa Cruz's decorticating plant has a larger capacity, which probably assured it bigger stakes in the contracts forthcoming from the Agrarian Bank.

It would be redundant to provide additional examples of the rate of profit allowed by the intensive utilization of wage labor on the pequeña propiedad. One is astonished by the high rate of profit realized in the case of the two fincas we have examined on the basis of contracts with the Agrarian Bank. At Santa Cruz, these contracts represent 77.7% of all income! Indeed, it seems that the Agrarian Bank is subsidizing the pequeños propietarios. Yet I have hypothesized an antagonism between the interests of the landed bourgeoisie and the rest of the bourgeoisie. It is necessary to understand, however, that the objective, the elimination of a fraction of the bourgeoisie, proceeds in a direction and at a pace required by Capital within the limits of a particular moment in time. For the moment at least, the coexistence of the pequeña propiedad fulfills a particular role in the reproduction of the ejidatarios' labor power by contributing to its devaluation and, consequently, to the reduction of the costs of producing henequen.

The precise determination of the part of his income that the agricultural worker obtains in this sector remains a laborious task given the unstable character of the labor force. Except for the workers in the decorticating complexes, who constitute a relatively stable force, labor is implicated in a constant movement of coming and going. Hiring is done on a weekly basis and each week the worker himself must inquire about employment opportunities. Most of the time, hiring is done on the pequeña propiedad although it often happens that

the owner's foreman will come into the village to recruit workers. Laborers in search of work can eventually meet him Sunday afternoons on the central plaza and sign up for two, three or four days of employment in the week beginning. Generally, Temax's workers will seek employment on the pequeñas propiedades nearest to the municipio; more frequently, they will have a tendency to work on the pequeña propiedad originating from the ejido to which they belong. At certain times of the year, when work is scarce in the immediate vicinity (and depending upon the demand for labor power), laborers will emigrate outside of the village but always in search of work on a pequeña propiedad. In these cases, the workers were hired in their native villages by contratistas (labor contractors) who are paid at a rate decided upon in advance by landowners in search of labor power. These people (who remind one of the sacagentes found in other Mexican states) travel from village to village and set up on the central plaza Sunday afternoons. Sometimes, his arrival will be announced on the Church microphone. In fact, anyone can be a contratista by simply going to see an employer in a neighboring village who has work to be done but too few workers. The contratista will act as his recruiter in exchange for a percentage of the money that the owner will pay in wages to the workers whom he will bring along. The contratista is also responsible for finding the trucks that will transport the workers back and forth each day from the village to the pequeña propiedad, although the cost of transportation remains the worker's responsibility.

During the rainy season, there is considerably more work to be done both on the pequeña propiedad and the ejido. Weeds grow profusely and chapeo operations intensify. However, even in the dry season when there is much less work to be done, landowners distribute a minimum number of tasks to be accomplished so as to insure that their labor force will be ready to come back when activity resumes. For example, if Temax landowners have no difficulty in recruiting labor power, in Sinanché, where henequen is more abundant, the owners must find workers outside the village. Distributing work throughout the year thus attaches this labor force to the plantations, making it available for busier periods.

The floating nature of employment on the pequeña propiedad prevents us from effecting exact calculations. The questionnaires distributed in Temax and Sinanché in the summer of 1974 only reveal general tendencies. At Temax, I attempted to determine the part of the ejidatarios' income from the pequeña propiedad. Each week, our informants earned an average 127 pesos, nearly 73% of which (79 pesos) was made on the pequeña propiedad. All of these informants are ejidatarios and the majority are chapeadores. By calculating the difference between the weekly income of 127 pesos and the 79 pesos earned on the pequeña propiedad, I arrive at a figure of 48 pesos which constitutes rather closely the chapeadores' wage. Despite imprecision concerning the number of days spent on the pequeña propiedad, I was able to calculate that the ejidatarios worked there an average 2.5 days per week. As we

already know, ejido chapeo (involving 4 mecates and paid at the rate of 10 pesos per mecate) requires 2 days of labor or even less, according to popular opinion. Therefore, the ejidatario would work about 4.5 days a week on the ejido and on the pequeña propiedad. If we divide the weekly wage of 127 pesos, which the ejidatario declares as his earnings, by the maximum number of days he claims to work (4.5), we arrive at a daily wage of 28 pesos, which corresponds closely with the current daily wage in the municipio at the time of my fieldwork.

It remains a much more hazardous enterprise to determine the annual wages which the ejidatario draws from the pequeña propiedad because, as my informants repeatedly stated, he may work there for several weeks at a time and then work not at all. In fact, while the ejidatario wishes to profit from the employment opportunities that are opened to him, he will work especially hard when a specific and pressing need for cash presents itself. Competition among workers for the same tasks can certainly be great but it seems that when a worker agrees to widen his field of action by going to other municipios he will find work most of the time. This is no doubt what leads several ejidatarios to say that "there is no lack of work for those who really want to work". But, under what kind of conditions? The majority of ejidatarios are not ready to go far away from their village even if doing so would improve their income. Among the possible explanatory factors, the cultivation of maize in Temax could reasonably be connected to this reluctance. For the ejidatario of this village, the milpa seems to consti-

tute a priority. If work on the milpa is more intensive during planting, it is nonetheless an activity which continues throughout the year in periods where the worker is not engaged in wage labor. In fact, it is the planting time that constitutes a priority; when, with the arrival of the rains in May, the ejidatario can plant he does not leave the village even to work on the ejido, for a period of one or two weeks. Since the work group leaders on the ejido (who are responsible for distributing money each week) are generally themselves milperos as well, they understand this situation. In exceptional cases, the ejidatarios will receive an advance for the task they will work doubly hard to accomplish the following week. We can profit from this occasion to note the articulation between the ejido and the milpa which presents every indication of being a closely dependent relationship. I will return to this point in the discussion of small holding petty production.

In Sinanché, despite the limited nature of the formal inquiry aided by questionnaires, numerous accounts permit the suggestion that there the ejidatarios have less frequent recourse to wage labor on the pequeña propiedad than do those in Temax. This phenomenon would explain the local shortage in labor power and the fact that landowners are obligated to find workers elsewhere. One element of explanation has certainly to do with the fact that in Sinanché there is more work for each ejidatario on the collective ejido (an average 6.6 mecates for the chapeadores versus 4 in Temax) and the work is better paid, probably

because the credit ratio is higher in relation to the number of ejidatarios; for the chapeo of 6.6 mecates, the Sinanché ejidatario receives 110 pesos, which is more than 16 pesos per mecate versus 10 pesos per mecate in Temax. Moreover, in Sinanché the work tasks differ at various times of the year; except for the oldest ejidatarios who devote themselves exclusively to the chapeo, all the rest rotate between the tasks of chapeo and corte. Their wages are higher when they are assigned to cutting. I calculated that the average ejido wage for a chapeador attains 104.5 pesos per week. But when he is assigned to cutting, his wage rises to an average 177.3 pesos. Cutting proceeds at a pace that varies with the grupo solidario of which the ejidatario is member. At San Juan Lizarra, cutting is done throughout the year. Each week and all year long, the ejidatarios alternate between the chapeo and the cut. The only thing that can vary is that in the dry season the number of leaves to be cut is less. At Kansucopo and at Xitibcanul, this rotating procedure is also adopted but in these places the cutting period is more limited and occurs within periods of six (6) and four (4) months, respectively. The rest of the year the ejidatarios devote themselves exclusively to the chapeo. On the whole, it can be said that for the ejido groups in Sinanché cutting takes up seven (7) months of the year, two weeks a month (the average wage for this being 177.3 pesos per week) and chapeo necessitates 5 months of full-time labor and 7 months of work at the rate of two weeks every month (average wage was 104.5 pesos). Calculating annual wages on the basis of these figures, we arrive at the approximate sum of 6,525 pesos,

which gives a weekly wage (52 weeks) of an average 125.5 pesos, a figure within 1.50 pesos of what the Temax ejidatario makes weekly working both on the ejido and the pequeña propiedad. If we consider the number of days that the Sinanché ejidatario must devote strictly to work on the ejido, we see that this number is higher than that in Temax (less than two days); 2.8 days, during chapeo and 3.4 days during cutting. This brief demonstration leads to two conclusions. On the one hand, ejido labor in Sinanché requires more time from the worker, thus limiting his availability for labor on the pequeña propiedad; on the other hand, the ejidatario's income from labor on the ejido is higher than in Temax which in turn provides a larger portion of the reproduction of his labor power and his family. Thus, in regard to the reproduction of the ejidatario, in Sinanché he does not (or cannot) resort to wage labor in the private sector. This is one reason why private landowners must resort to labor from elsewhere in order to exploit their plantations. In addition, the Sinanché ejidatario can, in certain cases, round out his economic reproduction by cultivating henequen on his plot of land. This crop yields a cash income, unlike maize which is usually destined for household consumption.

10.1.3 Wage Labor on Small Plots (Private and Ejidal)

If the ejidatario's income drawn from the pequeña propiedad remains indeterminate due to its irregular character, his income from plots of land is even more difficult to assess. All that my data indicate is that wage labor exists in this sector without constituting an

important source of income for the ejidatario. The commercial character of henequen and the technical contingencies of its cultivation are such that wage labor on individual plots seems more widespread in Sinanché than in Temax, where these plots are used for growing maize. The questionnaire utilized in Sinanché leads me to believe that the ejidatario will more often work on these plots than on the pequeña propiedad when in need of money, which obliges large property owners to find a labor force outside the village. Although my data do not permit calculation of the proportion of total income gained from these small plots of land by the ejidatarios (I do not really know the extent of the surface area exploited under this mode), I am at least able to consider the relative importance of wage labor in this sector within the various villages.

In Sinanché, my sample shows that a petty producer of henequen expends an average 530 pesos annually per hectare in wages. It should be recalled that this sum covers the chapeo and cutting, which is done twice a year. If we divide this total sum by the local daily wage of 20 pesos⁽¹⁰⁾, this corresponds to 26 days of wage labor per hectare annually. I will thus show what these figures mean for the petty producer in section 10.2. In Temax, a hectare of maize costs an average 80 pesos in wages to the producer annually, or about four days of work. Thus, we see that a petty producer in Sinanché spends 7 times more in wages than his counterpart in Temax. All that can be concluded with certainty on the basis of these data is that the Sinanché ejidatario

has a much greater chance to work as a wage laborer on the small holdings than does the ejidatario in Temax.

Before turning to small holding production, I may summarize the analysis of wage labor in the collective ejido and on the pequeña propiedad. First, we saw that the "unfree" character of the ejido labor force in no way constitutes a fetter upon the formation of surplus-value based on the production of henequen. On the contrary, despite this juridical particularity of labor power, it continues to be available for the capitalist entrepreneurs represented by the pequeños propietarios, who are also engaged in cultivating henequen. This availability varies, of course, between villages but the general result in both cases seems to be the transfer of values to the industrial sector (the processing of fiber by Cordemex, resting on the agrarian sector). The role of the Agrarian Bank is much greater than the allocation of credit to the ejidos. We saw that when credit is insufficient for assuring the reproduction of the ejidatarios' labor power, this group can and must offer its labor power to the pequeños propietarios. The latter group is able to realize an extraordinary rate of profit based on the intensive utilization of labor power in production and the first phase of the transformation of fiber in the decortivating complexes.

The relations between State capitalism, represented by the Agrarian Bank, and the landed bourgeoisie of which the pequeños propietarios form a part are certainly complex. We saw that this latter group was able to retain a part of the value created in the

agrarian sector, which is no doubt why the State seeks to absorb the pequeñas propiedades and to eliminate the landed bourgeoisie. However, for the time being, the ejido and the pequeña propiedad seem to fulfill the same role; that of the cheap production of henequen. Henequen fiber is produced for about the same costs under the two types of land tenure and, in the last analysis, it is the State industrial bourgeoisie represented here by Cordemex which seems to reap the greatest advantages of this system. We also saw that divisions among the workers form an integral part of the ejido as administered by the Agrarian Bank. The coexistence of the ejido and the pequeña propiedad reinforce these divisions because the ejidatarios are obligated to sell their labor power on an individual basis to the pequeños propietarios. The unstable, mobile character of the labor force prevents workers from uniting and constructing collective bases of demands that would go beyond purely reformist and limited measures. There has yet been no consensus in regard to this type of demand. To this must be added another framework of production - small holding - in which it is not the autonomy of producers that is sharpened but rather their isolation opposite Capital. The purpose of the next section is to clarify this proposition.

10.2 Petty Production on Individual Holdings

Henequen, maize and vegetables constitute the three principal labor processes effected on individual plots of land which exist both within the framework of the ejido and within the framework of private

property. This type of production generally has a familial level of organization and wage labor is employed only during part of the labor process. In fact, certain indices permit us to believe that, particularly in the case of maize cultivation, payment in money for work done on these individual holdings is a feature that owes its existence only to the fact that the wage-labor form is widespread in other sectors. In Temax, for example, certain small holders pay their labor in maize. It can even be stated that, in certain cases, the introduction of payment in money has not yet succeeded in eliminating traditional forms of the exchange of labor which continue to coexist alongside and subordinated to wage labor. Thus, in Sinanché, a petty producer will do wage-labor for his neighbors after they have done their turn for him for an equivalent number of days and equal wage.

If one admits that wage labor on the small holdings exists only in virtue of the generalization of this form of labor throughout the region, the small holdings then constitute the framework par excellence of the union between the producer and his means of production and product and by the consequent absence of relations of exploitation at the level of production. Peasants who practice this mode of exploiting the land participate in the dominant mode of production through their insertion in the capitalist market in virtue of the sale of the commodity they produce and by the sale of their labor power. The production of commodities in this process of production leads to a transfer of value from the former sector to the capitalist sector in the same way, finally, as does wage labor in the agrarian sector.

However, in terms of value, strictly speaking this transfer is not significant either for the dominant class or that section implicated in the industrial sector. Contrary to what the theory of articulation of modes of production suggests, in this case the dominant capitalist mode of production can do without precapitalist forms of production. The absence of machinery on the level of the labor process of henequen effectively constitutes an indice of the low level of development of the productive forces in the agrarian sector. Yet, although it is claimed that this absence results from the rocky nature of Yucatan soils, we know that in other countries where henequen and sisal are cultivated, the mechanization of production operations has already been accomplished (TSGA 1974). As I have already suggested, the introduction of machines at this level would shortly result in a reduction of costs of production but also in a decrease in the rate of profit. However, given the international market conjuncture of henequen, costs of production must absolutely be reduced. If there are no machines to do this, only a devaluation of labor power itself can produce the same result. Only by guaranteeing the instability of the labor force can this process take form in the present context. For the agricultural proletariat, this instability is characterized by the possibility of falling back upon subsistence activities or by the periodic reinsertion within relations of production characteristic of the peasantry as a social class. In this way, the dominant class assures itself of the availability of cheap labor because this labor force accomplishes in part the reproduction of labor power outside the capitalist sector as such.

In more concrete terms, we saw that the ejidatario in Sinanché and Temax earns an average 125 pesos per week on the collective ejido (in Sinanché) or through combining work on the collective ejido and on the pequeña propiedad, as in Temax. Yet, it is said that under present economic conditions, a family must earn at least 200 pesos a week in order to live decently. We see, therefore, that the capitalist sector, by providing only 125 pesos per week to the worker, participates only partially (though it be the single largest part) in the reproduction of his labor power.

This brief study of small-holding production rests on the assumption that capitalism develops out of and on the basis of agriculture and that this development represents an incompleting process.

The petty production of henequen and maize serve as two illustrations of small-holding production such as practiced in one or the other of the villages under study. There are other activities practiced on the individual plots of land, such as livestock-raising and bee-keeping. However, in the interests of economy and conciseness I will deal only with the most widespread processes of production in the region.

10.2.1 Henequen Production and Small Holdings in Sinanché

The figures which are used here originate from a limited sample and are subject to the margin of error this implies. Consequently, the conclusions I draw must be taken as indications of general tendencies. The following table summarizes the data on the small holding production of henequen in Sinanché.

TABLE 54

Petty Production of Henequen in Sinanché
(Average per Hectare)

Leaves Harvested Annually	Price per Thousand Leaves (pesos)	Gross Income	Monetary Expenditures (pesos)	Producer Expenditures in Work-days	Net Income (pesos)
47,000	64.5	3,000	800	30	2,200

It seems that in Sinanché nearly half of the ejidatarios⁽¹¹⁾ grow henequen, especially on the individual plots within the ejido. On the average, each ejidatario has two hectares in plena explotación. On the basis of his henequen plot, a petty producer realizes an annual income of 6,000 pesos, based on an average price of 64.5 pesos per thousand leaves. At the time of my inquiry, this price varied between 48 and 80 pesos per thousand leaves, dependent not only on the length and quality of the leaves but also on the buyer. Now, henequen producers are obligated to sell their commodity to Cordemex. However, when henequen prices rise, certain individuals in the village will act as buyers for the petty producer's henequen. The petty producers are more than ready to sell to them. Clearly, these buyers are only intermediaries since they, too, must eventually sell to Cordemex⁽¹²⁾, but not first without having made a commercial profit on the transaction, a profit that can be enlarged if they process the leaves into fiber. For a petty producer, it makes no difference whether he sells directly

to Cordemex or to an individual buyer in terms of his monetary income, except that by selling to the private buyer he can eliminate the need of finding a truck to transport his henequen to the decortivating complex. In effect, the individual buyer can offer a lower price than Cordemex for the same thousand leaves but, on the other hand, he takes care of everything from cutting to transportation. The petty producer has only to cover the cost of chapeo. In other words, if the buyer judges on sight (as is done) that the value of a given thousand leaves amounts to 55 pesos, the petty producer will pocket that money which to him represents practically a net profit. On the other hand, if Cordemex offers this petty producer a sum of 80 pesos per thousand leaves from the same plantation, the producer must deduct from that the cost of the cutting (15 pesos per thousand leaves), transportation, and handling (10 pesos per thousand leaves), without counting the chapeo. In addition, the petty producer has to find someone himself to transport the henequen. Even if this were possible, he might not have the cash to pay for the truck and field-handlers; Cordemex only pays once a week, Saturdays, and does not pay on delivery. Thus, a producer who sends his henequen to Cordemex on a Thursday must wait two days for payment and he must go receive it himself because money is only turned over in person to the seller, which represents a waste of time. On the other hand, the individual buyer pays in advance and completely relieves the producer of various obligations. In general, these buyers are retail merchants as well who dispose of the necessary operating capital, especially cash and at least one truck.

However, the intervention of the individual private buyer of henequen corresponds to the beginning of change on the level of forces of production. In effect, this insertion of the buyer into the process of production introduces a division of labor which previously did not exist. What characterizes the petty producer is that in addition to the control he exercises over his means of production, he realizes the effective unity of the tasks of control and execution of labor over his plot of land. By himself discharging a part of the task of execution over which he no longer has control, the petty producer loses some of the characteristics which defined him; if he does not already form a part of the agricultural proletariat as an ejidatario, he comes very close to that, at least momentarily. This is an example of the instability inherent in the peasantry, such as I discussed in chapter 2.

Even if sale to the individual private buyer can be particularly advantageous, his presence is only periodic and most of the time producers have no choice but to sell to Cordemex. Since the net income of producers remains the same whether they sell to this institution or to private buyers (the average price per thousand leaves notwithstanding, which differs slightly in the two cases), I did not take account of the difference involved when calculating the averages which appeared in Table 54.

On the average, a petty producer encounters expenses on the order of 800 pesos per hectare, or 26% of his gross income. Data concerning the process of production indicates that 66% or 530 pesos of expenses are for wages and the rest (33%) or 270 pesos cover trans-

portation, out of the total 800 pesos. Wages essentially cover the chapeo and cutting, which constitute the two principal operations on a plantation in plena explotación. Some 66% of wages (354 pesos/800) are used to pay labor during the cutting. While the chapeo can be easily accomplished during the producer's spare time, the cutting of leaves must be rapidly effected and consequently requires a concentration of labor power. Diligence is required of the producer because once the leaves have been cut they can deteriorate if left too long on the side of the road; thus, the cutting must be synchronized with the availability of trucks.

Finally, the sum of monetary expenditures appearing in Table 54 can be multiplied by two because the average surface area of the small holders' plantations is two (2) hectares or 1,600 pesos. The gross income is therefore 4,400 pesos.

Parallel to monetary expenditures are expenditures in terms of the work-days of the producer and his family. On one hectare, these amount to an average 30 days, or 60 days on two hectares, covering in particular the chapeo operation. Although it is risky to translate this kind of "expense" into a monetary equivalent, had the producer worked elsewhere as a wage-laborer during the same number of days, he would have earned 2,400 pesos or 40 pesos a day⁽¹³⁾. Now, as already pointed out, there are opportunities to work as an agricultural wage-laborer on the large plantations in Sinanché. However, these plantation owners must to a certain extent hire labor from elsewhere to complement the locally-available labor force.

It may be supposed that the income the small holders draw from their little henequen plantation fully justifies the time they devote to it in relation to the time they might have allocated to wage labor activities and the income they could make on the large plantations.

For some 60 days of work on a henequen plantation two hectares in size that he exploits on a semi-familial basis, the petty producer realizes an annual gross income of 4,400 pesos, a part of which must be considered profit because it was made possibly by the limited utilization of wage labor. This particular form of wage labor, however, is founded on the reciprocal exchange of labor rather than the "free contract" which links workers and capitalists in a relation of exploitation that has nothing free about it. The net income in question would constitute especially the remuneration of the producer's own labor. If we evaluate the total on a daily basis, we see that for each of the sixty (60) days spent on his plot of land, the petty producer pockets a sum of $(4,400 \div 60 =) 73$ pesos. Income from the Sinanché ejido rarely surpasses an average 40 pesos a day (or 125 pesos for 3 days of work). The difference between these two figures is certainly striking but, although data are lacking, I should emphasize that in calculating the petty producer's net income, I had to omit the high costs represented by the initial investment in a small henequen plantation and the depreciation resulting from the gradual aging of plants which is no doubt represented in the capitalist ground rent.

Ground rent comes into play on the small-holdings through, for example, the price obtained on the market. Even if it has not radically penetrated into production, the capitalist mode of production has direct effects on the small holdings through ground rent. In particular market conditions, ground rent can even determine whether the small holder will produce or not. Thus, since in recent years fiber prices have remained rather low, small holders had to momentarily abandon their plots and to even cease cutting henequen leaves. Although real estate transactions in the private domain do not seem to be proceeding at a particularly rapid rate, it may be assumed that the petty producers caught up in a difficult situation would eventually have to sell their plots of land. Even if the small holders on the ejido do not receive the money-price for the land, they experience the assault of an unfavorable economic conjuncture in about the same manner as the private small holder; their henequen plantation also represents an investment and it "contains" ejidatario labor, hence it can be the object of a monetary transaction with another ejidatario. However, the possibility that an ejidatario might acquire a plantation belonging to a confrère when that plantation is not producing "like it should" appears very slim and it must be supposed that the ejido small holder will keep his plantation even while neglecting it for years on end.

Recently (the spring of 1974), henequen prices rose appreciably. In Sinanché, ejido income rose to the point where the price of consumptive means increased as well, an event passively awaited by the ejidatarios, and reproduction of the ejidatario's labor power came to be nearly entirely assured by the ejido sector. The most immediate

consequence for local large landowners was a more serious labor shortage than ever before. As for the individual plots of land, I cannot yet say whether the petty producers will continue to exploit them. The problem is that during all those years of low henequen prices, petty producers had completely ceased to plant young henequen. In Temax, this long period of low prices had signified the end of henequen exploitation for certain intermediate small holders. Today, they are irreversibly engaged in livestock-raising. In the particular case of Temax, however, the changeover was easily effected because the village is traditionally and ecologically situated in the periphery of the henequenera zone and the small-scale production of henequen was never widespread such as in the case of Sinanché.

10.2.2 Petty Production of Maize in Temax

In Temax, small holders almost exclusively practice maize cultivation of the ejido plots which most of the time lack the character of permanence they have in Sinanché. As explained earlier, this phenomenon in Temax is inherent in the impossibility of cultivating maize for more than two consecutive years in the same place and the necessity of leaving the land fallow for long periods of time. The following table displays the average figures for maize production, obtained on the basis of a sample.

TABLE 55

Maize Production on Individual Small Holdings in Temax
(Average per Hectare)

Production (kgs)	Monetary Expenses (pesos)	Producer Expenditures in Work-days
1,000	165	57

Although statistical data on the number of small holding producers of maize do not seem to exist, informants state that about 50% of the ejidatarios practice the cultivation of this crop. The sample shows that these producers exploit on the average one hectare whose average yield is 1,000 kgs per year⁽¹⁴⁾. Unlike henequen, maize does not constitute a commercial crop but rather a traditional subsistence product. In general, the producer and his family consume it directly; it is only sold when a pressing need for cash presents itself.

For purposes of demonstration, I calculated the income that a petty producer would draw from his maize if the entire product of the harvest were sold. Since the price of one kilogram of maize was 2 pesos (at the beginning of 1974), the producer would obtain 2,000 pesos for his harvest. If we subtract the monetary expenses (165 pesos) from this sum, net income would be 1,835 pesos. A major part of expenses, or 50% (83 pesos out of 165), goes into paying wage labor, which corresponds to slightly more than four (4) work-days. The harvested maize

is transported from the field to the village by truck or cart, which represents 35% of monetary expenses (58 pesos out of 165). The other expenses involve the purchase of insecticides and seeds for planting. Insecticides are coming into widespread use and maize yields are increasing as a result. However, it seems that their use makes it henceforth impossible to grow the vegetables (squash, calabash and, more rarely, beans) that producers traditionally planted with maize.

Besides these monetary expenses, the producer and his family devote 57 work-days to their field of maize. This number surpasses by far the number of work-days filled with wage labor (4 more or less). Thus, in Temax, the maize harvest constitutes the remuneration of labor that is almost exclusively the petty producer's own. If we translate all this in monetary terms, proceeding in the same fashion as in the analysis of small-scale henequen production, we can calculate that the 57 days devoted to labor in the maize field would have brought a return of 1,140 pesos (20 pesos per day in Temax) in wages on the pequeña propiedad, for example. If the producer had wanted to buy maize with this money, he could only have obtained 570 kgs. Moreover, even in producing his own supply of maize, the small producer must go to the market to complete the annual volume of this product which he needs for himself and his family. In a preceding section, I calculated the weekly consumption of a family of six (6) members at 29.7 kilograms of maize. This gives an annual consumption of 1,544 kgs; if the producer harvests 1,000 kgs, the rest must be procured on the market, which requires an

expenditure of slightly more than 1,000 pesos. In terms of work-days, this sum in Temax is equivalent to some 50 days of wage labor.

Finally, in the case of Temax, labor on the individual plots of land does not really enter into conflict with labor on the large plantations (except during planting, which must be done within a given period) because the 57 days of labor that the producer devotes to his hectare of maize usually means only a few hours work daily spread out throughout the year. This dispersal of time constitutes, moreover, an obstacle to attempts to estimate with certainty the number of days required on one hectare of maize in the henequenera region.

We now possess all the elements necessary for constructing a table of annual income (52 weeks) of ejidatarios in Sinanché and Temax and permitting comparisons to be made between the two. Since in Temax a part of incomes is included in the form of the maize harvest, I chose to represent this in the table as such; in effect, to convert this volume of maize into money terms would have introduced a bias into our analysis because, in general, this product is destined for consumption by the peasants themselves. Lastly, I have included as items of expense only those entailed by the purchase of maize on the market: first, because in Mesoamerica this product constitutes the basic dietary staple and represents a practically irreducible need; second, because I do not have precise data for the rest of expenses.

TABLE 56

Income and Annual Expenditures for Maize: Ejidatarios of Sinanché and Temax (1973-1974)

Village		Annual Income				Annual Monetary Expenses for Maize	"Balance"
		Collective <u>Ejido</u> Wage Labor	<u>Pequeña Propiedad</u> Wage Labor	<u>Ejido</u> & Private Parcels Product Sold	Total		
Sinanché	Money or Maize	\$ 6,500	--	\$ 2,400	\$ 8,900	\$ 3,088	\$ 5,812
	Number of Days	161	--	60	221		
Temax	Money or Maize	\$ 2,496	\$ 4,108	1,000 kgs maize	\$ 6,604 + 1,000kgs maize	\$ 1,080	\$ 5,524
	Number of Days	104	140	57	301		

What stands out in this table is the wide spread between the number of days worked in the two villages: 221 days in Sinanché and 301 in Temax. However, the "balance" after the consumption of maize is about the same in the two cases. Thus, for a smaller number of work-days, the Sinanché ejidatario earns more than his counterpart in Temax, at least in terms of cash in the pocket. In fact, the Sinanché ejidatario benefits from a higher daily wage than the Temax ejidatario and, notably, he can work a greater number of days on the collective ejido. In fact, the Sinanché ejidatario probably works more than the table indicates. I was not able to assess the number of work-days devoted to work on plots belonging to his neighbors to which this ejidatario turns more often than to the pequeña propiedad in search of supplementary income. I believe it is quite possible that the number of work-days for the Sinanché ejidatarios never attains the same proportion as in Temax. Considering that the basic needs and price paid to obtain these are about equal in the two villages, the motives which would lead the Sinanché ejidatarios to work beyond their simple reproduction and that of their families seem rather lacking. Although I do not dispose of concrete figures in this regard, it is not uncommon for chronic underemployment in a disadvantaged milieu to be linked to a shortage of labor in local enterprises and it is quite possible that this phenomenon manifests itself in the henequenera zone. According to one of my informants, a representative of the ejido, the current policies of agrarian diversification on the part of the Agrarian Bank are designed, among other things, to mitigate the tendency toward inactivity

to which climate and inadequate nutrition contribute to a certain extent⁽¹⁵⁾. Thus, the breeding of pigs, chickens or rabbits in the family courtyard, stimulated and financed in part by the Agrarian Bank, are activities which both fill the ejidatario's unoccupied time and permit him to realize a supplementary income. It can be noted that this kind of program relieves the dominant class of the necessity of installing a costly infrastructure and permits it to profit from a transfer of value which, once again, is effected through the marketing of livestock products. In practice, the application as such of this program does meet obstacles and the fact that the ejidatario is very critical of corruption on the ejido and, especially, in the bureaucratic ranks of the Agrarian Bank does not make it any easier. Stories abound of the fortunes made by civil servants off the backs of the ejidatarios. It is remarkable that the contradictions of the capitalist mode of production are felt to such an extent by the ejidatarios. However, the dominant ideology masks its real mechanisms and neutralizes, for the moment, all possibility for action by the ejidatarios through the coming into force of reformist measures. The wage increases in response to the demands of ejidatarios - there were at least two in the henequenera zone between September 1973 and July 1974 - are of this nature, in my opinion, and are intended only to mask contradictions and to mollify them but never to do away with them.

To conclude, small holding production may be situated in relation to the dominant capitalist mode of production. The examples I provided of the petty production of henequen and maize⁽¹⁶⁾ show that an

ejidatario who takes up one or the other (depending to the village to which he belongs) succeeds in making up what the ruling class through the Agrarian Bank consents to insure only partially, namely, the cost of his simple reproduction and that of his family. The reliance of rural proletarians on petty production does not only insure their simple reproduction, however. Above all, it contributes to the expanded reproduction of capital by allowing a continuous transfer of value from the agrarian sector to the capitalist sector through the market. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Sinanché, where peasant consumption necessarily passes through the market. In Temax, unless there is an urgent need that presents itself, the producer of maize consumes it directly but he does finally resort to the market when stocks are depleted. In both cases, there is a transfer of value which perhaps does not appear directly but which can be pinpointed through the study of capitalist ground rent.

Along with tenant farming, capitalist ground rent constitutes one of the two still-current forms of ground rent. Originally, ground rent was founded on the existence of landed property and constituted the relation of production specific to the feudal mode of production. This relation of production linked and opposed two antagonistic and complementary classes: peasants and landowners. In virtue of juridical-political powers, lords extorted the surplus labor produced by the petty producer on land belonging to the owner. I have already stated that the majority of petty producers in the two villages studied exploited

inalienable small holdings on the ejido where the effect of landed property as a juridico-political form should not be felt.

Even if the small holders are not owners of their plots of land, they do nonetheless feel the effects of capitalist ground rent; more precisely, the effects of differential rent. As will be seen, the source of differential rent is not so much to be found in the eminent rights of property over the soil which, in the case of the ejido, fall to the juridical person representing the ejidatarios as a whole, but rather in the "immediate" ownership of land on the part of the small holding ejidatario.

According to Marx and the Marxists, who have inquired at length as to the nature of ground rent, an industrial capitalist entrepreneur can realize an extraordinary profit when he is disposed of potentially advantageous means of production. This situation could eventually allow him to produce below the ordinary prices of production or to sell above the prices of production. This involves, in fact, the realization of a surplus profit based on a situation of monopoly either over the resources or the market. Due to its character of "givenness", the land presents itself as a "natural monopoly" of social class (Kautsky 1900/1970: 102). In agriculture, this kind of surplus profit takes the name of ground rent and is divided into differential and absolute ground rent.

Differential ground rent results essentially from differences in the character of cultivated land both in terms of production and location to markets (Kautsky 1900/1970: 102).

In his work on the "agrarian question", Kautsky presented a demonstration of differential rent in the framework of capitalist agriculture where a class of landowners, capitalist farmers and wage-laborers are simultaneously present. It seems that ground rent appears most clearly in such a situation because there it is materially distinct from profit. However, in the case which interests me (Yucatan), capitalist ground rent is usually fused with profit because land is exploited by direct producers. For this reason, my aim is not to numerically decompose the respective parts of rent and profit but simply to indicate the existence of rent (the existence of profit being more obvious) and to expose its effects.

Differential rent originates from the fact that in the domain of agriculture, prices of production are established not by the combined average cost of production and average profit as in industry, but rather by the costs of production on the worst land which must be cultivated in order to satisfy a given level of subsistence needs plus the average profit. The effect of this form of ground rent is mediated by the price that the producer obtains on the market for his products. This price being equal for the same category of products, a permanent surplus profit results on the more fertile or better-located land. Where landed property and tenant farming coexist, the landowner pockets all of the surplus profit (through the mechanism of ground rent) and leaves tenants with only the average profit. In the case of small holdings on the ejidos, no single landowner can claim the surplus profit which is collected in a differential fashion by the direct producers (Marx

1967b: 803). In practice, differential rent reflects variations in productivity on different land and manifests itself in the difference in revenue pertaining to an equal surface area from one small holder to another in the case of henequen. As for maize producers, inequalities resulting from differential rent will precipitate some of them on the market (where the shortage in maize will be made up) more rapidly and render them more dependent upon wage labor.

Absolute ground rent appears to be less significant for my proposal. However, it can provide an explanatory element in regard to the phenomenon of the temporary abandonment of henequen plantations. Briefly, the monopoly in land allows the landowner to draw a rent even on the worst land, giving it up only when the market prices for agricultural products surpass their prices of production. For the small holding ejidatarios, absolute rent works in a negative fashion. The ejidatario can decide not to exploit his holding if doing so would mean that his costs of production would be higher than market prices. In this case, he must resort systematically to wage labor in order to assure his economic reproduction because he cannot assure it with his plot of land, even partially. Such a phenomenon has been noticed in the henequenera zone in recent years. The general depression of henequen market prices incited producers in Sinanché to temporarily abandon their plots of land and drove Temax producers, engaged in the cultivation of henequen, to abandon it definitively in favor of inter-village migration as agricultural labor. Only the most privileged among them

could opt for agrarian diversification, either as vegetable farmers or bee-keepers. With the recent rise (beginning of 1974) in henequen prices, petty producers could only cut the leaves of adult plants which they had not been maintaining properly and whose yield certainly suffered as a result. More tragically still, the future of these petty producers as small holders remains uncertain; in effect, they stopped planting with the depression in prices and today they find themselves with plantations that are essentially aging.

I note, therefore, the proletarianizing effect of ground rent on these petty producers. Even if the ejidatarios are really not the owners of their plots of land, the right of which they dispose assures them the appropriation of the product from this holding: under the capitalist mode of production, in fact, only this final appropriation of the product counts in the last instance and it matters little whether the producer is really the owner. The small holding ejidatario does not sense the variation of land prices on the market but, as we mentioned earlier, it is at the moment of the sale of the product that ground rent takes effect. Both on the ejido small holdings and private small holdings, petty production enters sooner or later into a decline. In his chapter on the genesis of ground rent, Marx (1967b: 782-813) lists several causes including, for example, the progressive deterioration of conditions of production and the rising cost of means of production. The fact that the petty producer must resort to capitalist markets for his supply of means of production and subsistence implicates him in the reproduction of merchant's capital. In this manner, surplus

labor is extorted from the petty producer by the capitalist class. Once again, the only advantage that the small holding ejidatario enjoys - resides in the fact that he is not confronted with the obligation to buy the land or to buy it back such as frequently happens in social formations where, on the one hand, land is not cut off from free trade and where, on the other hand, rules of inheritance (partibility of inheritance) engenders a partibility in each new generation against which the petty producer must ceaselessly struggle (for example, by buying the parcels accruing to his co-inheritors).

As is undoubtedly already known, the reproduction of capital itself can only entail that of the workers as well (that is, their consumption) and it is on this level that petty production comes into play by assuring the devaluation of their labor power within the limits imposed on the capitalist mode of production, at least in Yucatan, during the agrarian reform. The juridico-political level does not contribute directly toward undermining petty production but, above all, to retarding the differentiation of the peasantry. However, the low level of development of the productive forces renews this development. I must close on a pessimistic note by referring to what Marx said about small holding production, to which the specific case of individual holdings on the ejido is very similar.

"Proprietorship of land parcels by its very nature excludes the development of social productive forces of labour, social forms of labour, social concentration of capital, large-scale cattle-raising and the progressive application of science. Usury and a taxation system must impoverish it everywhere ... An infinite fragmentation of means of production and isolation of the producers themselves. Monstrous waste of human energy. Progressive deterioration of conditions of production and increased prices of means of production - an inevitable law of proprietorship of parcels."
(Marx 1967b: 807)

Conclusion: Social Class in the Henequenera Region

The analysis of production in the henequenera region involves the interplay of a complex totality of phenomena which go beyond the economic aspect as such. An examination of the different labor processes in this geographic zone, as was done in Chapter 9, would lose its pertinence had it not been linked to the system of land tenure in which these are practiced. For its part, the system of land tenure (Chapter 8) constitutes the outcome of specific historical conditions and cannot be analyzed outside of the juridico-political mechanisms which assure its existence under a particular form. Agrarian reform constituted a means par excellence for an intensification of state intervention in agriculture. Although on the level of land tenure the State expropriated large landowners to the profit of the ejidatarios, the measure in fact contributed toward assuring and reinforcing the conditions for the domination of the capitalist mode of production on the levels both of production and circulation. The analysis of relations of production, specifically, in the domain of henequen shows in effect that the State has infiltrated into the level of direct production. The extortion of surplus-value on the level of the ejido is facilitated not by the juridical separation of the producer from his means of production but rather by the attribution of production credits. Through this mechanism, the product takes the form of interest on capital and appropriation is effected at the base, even before the product exists as such. The creation of organisms of financing such as the Agrarian Bank

and marketing institutions in control of prices such as Cordemex assures the State absolute control over henequen production. It is possible to believe, based on what we know of the mechanism of equalization of the rate of profit in capitalist industry, that not only do the values created by the ejidatarios escape them but that these are taken out of the region as well through forms of transfer that are managed by the State. In this context, it becomes clear that the ejidatarios are reduced to the condition of proletarians employed by the State.

Capitalist production on the ex-haciendas (pequeñas propiedades) for its part, seems able to take place in one sense thanks only to the latitude which the State had to grant landowners subsequent to their demands and their influence peddling. The complementary role which the pequeñas propiedades play in the reproduction of the labor power of workers is certainly not negligible in a context of underdevelopment of the productive forces. However, it is important to recall the composite character of the State: the relative importance of the private sector in a domain where the State seems more and more to be assuming the role of manager (the agricultural sector) shows the extent to which its apparatus can still be controlled by private interests and, in certain cases, especially by the landowning fraction of the bourgeoisie.

The comparative analysis of ejido production of henequen and the production of henequen and maize on small holdings serves to bring out the subordinated character of the mode of land tenure in relation to State capitalism. Communal land tenure, despite the fact that in principle it is a form contrary to the capitalist mode of production, has nonetheless become the locus of specific capitalist relations of

production. The role of the small holding mode of land tenure is peculiar in that surplus-value is extorted from it in an indirect manner. In effect, producers enjoying either rights of ownership (private small holdings) or rights of use (individual plots on the ejido) are in a direct relationship with their means of production and contribute only their own labor power or that of the domestic group to the labor process. However, the existence of these forms of individual property is guaranteed by the capitalist mode of production and particularly by the State.

In the current conditions of development of the capitalist mode of production in Yucatan, petty or small holding production cannot be analyzed without considering the ensemble of sectors of the economy. The historical review permitted me to state that the industrial sector in Yucatan had to develop on the basis of an export crop; consequently, industry could only develop within the serious limitations put upon it by the world economic context. Since 1890, the history of the Yucatan economy has been an uninterrupted sequence of periodic fits and starts coinciding with political crises, such as the Spanish-American War, the two world wars and, recently, the Arab oil embargo. All of these circumstances favored the rise of a State monopoly which continues to extend its control by invading the private sector. In the race for foreign currency, the State had an interest in producing export goods at the lowest possible cost. The low wages on the collective ejidos might have had a dramatic differentiating effect on the peasantry - which industry could not absorb - had it not been for the dynamic

which kept the peasantry tied to the land. I maintain that the root of this dynamic is to be found in the small holding and petty production. This completes the reproduction cycle of workers while permitting them to realize just enough surplus value or surplus product to encourage them to stay on the land and to work on the large henequen plantations for the State. In this sense, the State's agrarian diversification policies seem intended both to extend its control over the sector and to compensate for the deficiencies of the subsistence sector in Mexico. This is the source of the importance of petty production in Yucatan, which was discussed in Chapter 10. Although subordinated to the capitalist mode of production, petty production does not represent so much its economic support as its political and ideological support, without which this mode of production could not reproduce itself and extend its domination.

My data show that three social classes are represented in the henequenera region. First, a large proportion of the population are rural proletarians; specifically, the ejidatarios and a part of the small holders. The analysis shows that the ejidatarios, far from being unified with their means of production as is portrayed to them, are radically separated from those means, particularly by the mechanism of credit allocated to production and transformation. The ejidatarios are alienated from their product which, in addition to going to reimburse the capital advanced, enriches financial capital on the scale of the Republic and assures the transfer of value to other sectors of the economy. Although the forms of exploitation and relations of production

have undergone radical changes, producers tend to establish an analogy between the hacendados of the Porfirian period and the State. Through the credit mechanism, the State has effectively taken possession of the means of production (such as the land and the instruments of transformation of henequen) and of the product. In sum, the State now represents the ejidatarios' "boss". The dominant class relies on the ideological apparatus of the State in order to mask the class position of the ejidatarios and to isolate them from other members of their class, the proletariat in general. This dominant class controls the means of information and publicity through which it puts the emphasis upon a romanticization of rural life and the "status" of the ejidatario. The dominant ideology also contributes toward dividing workers amongst themselves in such a way that their demands lose their striking force. We saw an example of this in our description of the subdivision of ejido societies within a larger one. This division, as it were, is generated or at least sharpened by dynamics beyond the immediate level of the workers, who may be neither conscious of them nor able to unmask their consequences. The fact as well that the ejidatarios may be disposed of a plot of land which, in addition to providing an essential means for completing their physical reproduction, furnishes an occasion for retreat which can eventually reinforce their isolation from other categories of workers and even among themselves.

The positions which the proletarian class may adopt are often unpredictable and the fact that different classes are represented in rural areas makes analysis risky. The same is true on the level of the dominant class where representatives of diverse sectors of produc-

tion are present. The presence of landowners who hold a certain strength, such as the owners of ex-haciendas (pequeñas propiedades) provides some support for the State and complements the ejidatarios' process of reproduction by furnishing them with some occasion for work. The scale and scope of this landowning group was considerably reduced by the agrarian reform but it contributes toward keeping rural proletarians tied to the land. If these toilers were not able to obtain employment on the pequeñas propiedades, it is very likely that they would migrate to cities unless, as a last resort, they could be self-employed on the small holdings. The actual state of development of industry in Mérida is such that these industries are not even able to absorb the labor that is already available in town. In short, the ejidatarios would simply swell the urban lumpenproletariat and eventually starve to death, since social assistance measures in Mexico are conspicuous only by their absence. The presence of landowners who recruit workers on an irregular basis also contributes toward lowering the wages on the ejido. In effect, the State assumes that the existence of small holdings means that these workers can take charge of completing their own economic reproduction. The State justifies the inadequate wages it pays the ejidatarios by pointing to the presence of other employers in the rural areas and the existence of small holdings, whose position was guaranteed by the reformist measures of bourgeois State itself. We can note that there is a conflictual alliance between two fractions of the bourgeois class, the landowners and

those legitimized by the State; that is, the financial and commercial fractions. It is certain that this type of alliance is made on the level of concrete economic mechanisms and is not necessarily "lived" as such. Landowners compose a class fraction that is essentially manipulated by the State and, consequently, is deprived of any real power. The fact, for example, that the State continues to sporadically expropriate the decortivating plants belonging to former hacendados, thus sapping an important source of their income, well illustrates this statement. Yielding to its role as so-called "conciliator", the State does not, however, fail to offer compensation to expropriated persons. To really grasp the interplay of the various forces at hand, it would be necessary to be able to define the nature of State monopoly capitalism which is the form toward which Mexican capitalism is tending to develop. This task is beyond the scope of the present analysis.

Besides the two opposed and antagonistic classes of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie, we note the presence of a class which, due to its fluid character, is less well defined but which we might call the "peasant" class. In the villages I studied, between the ejidatarios and the large landowners allied with the State, there is a stratum of small landholders. This group generally does not resort to wage labor and devotes itself, within the framework of the domestic group, to agriculture. It could be said that they constitute the small holding peasantry par excellence because they bear a direct relationship to their means of production and do not alienate the labor power of others. As I showed in bringing out the effect of capitalist ground rent on these producers, they oscillate between the two antagonistic classes and

often are precipitated toward the proletariat due to the variations in price on the markets where they sell their products. Even the limited presence of this stratum of small holders results in the depression of wages because they are usually able to complete their own cycle of economic reproduction. Yet, more importantly, their existence reinforces the internal divisions of the workers. Although their situation is hardly any better - and sometimes is worse - than that of the ejidatarios, the small holders have a tendency to distinguish themselves from the ejidatarios in virtue of their property-owning status. They tend to endorse the petty bourgeois ideology which idealizes property and separates them from rural proletarians. Often intellectuals help diffuse this petty bourgeois ideology by considering the small holding peasants to be a class clearly distinct from the rural proletariat.

What emerges is certainly the complexity of the class structure in the Yucatan countryside. Thus, a single producer may be simultaneously engaged in several different relations of production. He might be at the same time engaged in capitalist relations of production which put him in the position of a proletarian and also be the owner of a plot of land. Precisely because this class structure involves such complexity, class struggle is fettered by a systematic confusion of the class interests of different groups of toilers. This confusion is often fed and maintained by the dominant class itself.

However, one should not prejudge the outcome of the class struggle in the Yucatan countryside. If for the moment the situation appears confused to the ejidatarios, they have identified their primary class enemy, the Agrarian Bank and through it, the State. The State is hardly threatened at the present time by the reformist demands (mainly, wage increases) of rural proletarians. However, with the dramatic deterioration of the living conditions of the ejidatarios and even of those of the small holders, we can expect a brutal explosion of the economic contradictions in the Yucatan countryside. There, where the second major cause of mortality is malnutrition (Solis Torres 1975), it is really a question of life and death.

CHAPTER 10 NOTES

- (1) To understand the role of the CNC, it is necessary to recall the circumstances surrounding its creation. The CNC was organized at the same time as the CTM (Confederación de Trabajadores Mexicanos) by the PRM (Partido Revolucionario Mexicano). This party integrated four sectors of the population: the workers, the peasants, the popular sector (especially employees of cooperatives) and the military sector which, for its part, was later separated: "such a union was at the same time a means of dividing the different exploited sectors of society and to keep them separate; each core of workers is compartmentalized (...) relations between workers and peasants, for example, had to pass through the intermediary of bureaucrats" (Anguiano, Pacheco y Vizcaino 1975: 50-51).
- (2) Groups appearing on Table 45 are not independent from each other from the administrative point of view such as is the case for the grupos solidarios at Temax. Each group works a specific part of the ejido which generally corresponds to the expropriated hacienda of the same name. This physical division of workers constitutes nevertheless the beginning of internal division within the ejido even in the formal absence of grupos solidarios. Moreover, the distribution of the ejidatarios' habitations in the village has a tendency to be effected according to the proximity to the workplace. For example, ejidatarios attached to San Dimas lands nearly all live in the same block of houses. Their fathers, from whom they inherited their plot of land and their house, no doubt worked as peones in the San Dimas hacienda before the agrarian reform.
- (3) In this regard, see Benitez 1965: 219.
- (4) An ejidatario (both at Sinanché and at Temax) can earn double or more working as a cortador than as a chapeador. However, he works twice as hard as a cortador.
- (5) For example, in Sinanché at the end of 1973, Cordemex employees received an average daily wage of 22.50 pesos.
- (6) Most families possess a few animals, especially chickens which also consume their part of maize.
- (7) Team labor.

- (8) Among these workers, we find for example the plataformeros receiving about 2 pesos per 1,000 leaves.
- (9) Calculated on the basis of the price paid small holders for their leaves (780,000 pesos).
- (10) In the opinion of informants, the wages paid by small holders is about equal to those paid by large landowners for the same jobs.
- (11) Once again, I do not dispose of precise statistics on this item. The individual holdings do not seem to be the object of accurate statistical censuses in regard to their surface area and even less so in regard to the surface area actually under cultivation. Individual small holdings on the ejido are registered with the ejido comisariado who does not, however, keep a list in the village. Some people told me that these statistics were available at the Casa del Pueblo but when I arrived there I was told that only the villages kept such lists. Here is a concrete example of the Mexican bureaucratic labyrinth.
- (12) Unless he smuggles it to Campeche, an option that belongs to the realm of the fantastic today since the henequen market is tightly controlled on all fronts.
- (13) This sum can be easily weighed. In fact, I do not believe that the daily wage on the plantations is so high in Sinanché. It hardly surpasses thirty pesos or so. I based myself, however, on the figures pertaining to the ejido where the worker obtains an average 125 pesos for an average 30 days of work, which brings the daily wage up to 40 pesos. This situation is recent since ejido credits only attained this level in the spring of 1974. I suppose that wages on the pequeña propiedad will be readjusted, which had not been done during my stay in the summer of 1974.
- (14) This level of productivity seems to be confirmed by official sources. In effect, although the average productivity of maize is 825 kgs per hectare for Yucatan as a whole, this yield rises to 918 kgs per hectare on the plots smaller than 5 hectares (DGE 1960: 245,248).
- (15) Kautsky (1900/1970: 269), in any case, involves similar factors to (partly) explain the phenomenon of local underemployment and even the birth or rise of domestic industries, that is, crafts.

- (16) Although my analysis did not concern the petty production of vegetables such as it exists in Dzidzantún and more and more in Yobaín, I believe that it bears a relation similar to that of petty production of henequen and maize and the capitalist mode of production. However, in this case there is much larger capitalization but since the producer must often mortgage his land or income, there is a transfer of value effected which contributes toward enriching financial Capital.

SUMMARY AND GENERAL CONCLUSION

This thesis has considered the theoretical, historical and ethnographic aspects of the rural proletariat in a region with peculiar characteristics. Although the study did not specifically concern the peasantry, it nonetheless lies within the developing corpus of peasant studies of both the North American and European schools. I noted, in effect, that with the changing conditions accompanying the development of capitalism, the traditional object of peasant studies has itself undergone an important shift. It becomes increasingly important to study the rural proletariat as peasant differentiation proceeds and anthropological recognition of the fundamentally dynamic quality of peasantries widens. The title of this work, From Peasantry to Proletariat, marks an effort to translate this line of development into the framework of peasant studies.

As we saw, the peasantry and the rural proletariat in Yucatan in no way constitute discrete groups that can be rigidly defined. The title of this work emphasizes an interest in the study of processes rather than of groups as such.

In the present work, this interest was developed in a three-pronged approach. The premise according to which the capitalist mode of production develops out of and on the basis of the agrarian sector

served as a point of departure for the work as a whole. In the first theoretical section, after having presented and summarized the history of peasant studies, I attempted to show that, historically, the rise of capitalism was based on the separation of direct producers from their means of production; once these conditions were established, the development of capitalism on the basis of the agrarian sector rests on the process of differentiation of the peasantry. Despite the varying pace of this development, a pace that differs with the context of class struggle in determinate social formations, I wished to show that this is an essentially incomplete and ongoing process. Finally, I thought that this particular character of the process would be that much more apparent in a region such as the henequenera region of Yucatan where the productive forces are relatively little developed. At the same time, I sought to fill a gap in the empirical study of this region which has been ignored for too long by anthropologists.

Chapters 1 and 2 laid down the theoretical basis of our approach. A survey of the theoretical contributions of the corpus of studies on the peasantry indicated that there was inadequate treatment of the proletariat which emerged directly out of the peasantry. This led us to critically consider the traditional approaches to peasant societies and to suggest the contribution of historical materialism to the subject. Recent contributions by anthropologists also have been taken into account. The historical depth they conferred both upon the peasantry and concepts we use to talk about it brings a new dynamism

to this peasantry and the agrarian classes which emerge from it. It is only the uneven development of various sectors of capitalist production which gives the impression that the peasantry and the agrarian sector passively submit to aggression by the capitalist mode of production and are peripheral to the class struggle.

In this view, a concept such as that of differentiation of the peasantry requires recalling the very development itself of the capitalist mode of production. To do this, it is necessary to resituate it in the concept of primitive accumulation and the expanded accumulation of capital.

In light of this approach, we learned that the development of capitalism is in no way exogenous to the peasantry. The concept of differentiation of the peasantry specifies the peculiarities of the peasantry and of the agrarian sector in this development in relation to the other sectors of capitalist production as a whole.

The apparent permanence of what is generally termed the peasantry puts the concept of the differentiation of the peasantry to a rigorous test. For example, in Mexico alone, the agrarian reform particularly as applied by Cárdenas raises the possibility of the reversibility of the process. Some have viewed this reversibility as definitive and, moreover, as a condition essential to the development of Mexican capitalism. By raising the debate around the validity of this concept, I was at the very least able to provide a sense of the relativity of the speed at which peasant differentiation advances. Nonetheless, the direct examination of the conditions of existence

of rural groups shows that this reversibility arises only under particular conditions and that, on the contrary, the rural class structure is far from being fixed once and for all; the peasantry involved in petty commodity production tends to disappear to the profit of the two antagonistic classes of the capitalist mode of production and, particularly, to the profit of the rural proletariat. The case of Mexico is particularly striking in this regard. The agrarian reform contributed to the growth of petty commodity production and to the maintenance of a large peasantry. At first retarded, the process of peasant differentiation then resumed as never before under the specific effect of the rural class struggle with the pressures introduced by the uneven development of other sectors of production. In this regard, the limited, reformist measures of the ruling class, illustrated in Yucatan by the awarding of subsidies and production bonuses as well as by programs of agrarian diversification, bespeak eloquently the need to retard the process of peasant differentiation at any cost through juridico-political intervention in the domain of production. However, even if the capitalist mechanism gives the impression of working backwards, the process of completely separating labor power from its means of production and the concomitant destruction of the peasantry is still evident in analysis. The proof of this is the small holding peasantry's gradual abandonment of small-scale henequen cultivation under the combined effect of the crisis of henequen prices and capitalist rent.

In contrast to other regions of Mexico, the henequenera region is relatively homogeneous⁽¹⁾. As we saw, more than ninety per cent (90%) of the producers in each of the villages we studied form a part of the ejido. I demonstrated that on the collective ejido given over to henequen production, the ejidatarios are really wage laborers for the Agrarian Bank. More importantly, the major part of the economic reproduction of the ejidatarios and their families is assured (however minimally that may be) by the wage they receive on the plantations subsidized by the State. In this way, it can be said that the ejidatarios of the henequenera region of Yucatan properly form a part of the rural proletariat. This situation bears an irreversible character which is equally manifested by the sale of "freed" labor power to rural capitalist entrepreneurs on the pequeña propiedad when there is a lack of work on the henequen ejido. On the other hand, for the historical reasons detailed in the second part of this work, the peasantry as such (defined in terms of its oscillation between the two antagonistic classes of the capitalist mode of production) was practically wiped off the agrarian scene. There are still some private small holdings, as we saw in Chapter 8, but their exploitation is neither self-assured nor continuous and depends in large measure upon fluctuations of the international market. Thus, the peasantry remains a limited group which tends to join, at least periodically, the ranks of the large group represented by the rural proletariat.

However, the historical conditions of capitalist development in Mexico in general and in Yucatan in particular are such that despite the homogeneity of the rural population in the henequenera region, rural proletarians have a particular characteristic which distinguishes them from the proletariat in general, at least on the economic level. These are the conditions under which its labor power is sold. One of the major contributions of historical materialism concerns precisely the nature of labor power. From the history of its genesis under capitalism we learn that human labor power is the only kind able to produce value beyond what is needed to meet its costs of reproduction. Within the limits of worker militancy and the class struggle, labor power in most capitalist sectors is effectively bought at its value; the wage corresponds in general to the value of products necessary for the maintenance and reproduction of labor power. The rest of the values created by this labor power are pocketed by the owner of the means of production.

However, in the agrarian sector of capitalist production, the conditions of production retain a specific character which has much to do with the low level of development of the productive forces. In the case which interests me, this specificity is manifested by the possibility for capitalists to buy labor power for less than its real value.

Although the emergence of a rural proletariat is historically definitive, the history of its development shows that its peasant character survives the destruction of the group from which it emerged.

Under capitalism, the peasantry is essentially characterized by its instability, an instability which within certain contexts can endure.

The application of the concept of the differentiation of the peasantry to a concrete situation such as that of the henequenera region constituted the main thread of the whole of the second part of this work (Chapters 3, 4 and 5). We saw that the proletariat - whose emergence was long and painful in this region - shares numerous characteristics with the peasantry. The separation of the rural proletariat from it proceeds according to the speed of peasant differentiation. This is the reason why it is important to state all the factors which could affect or modify the pace of this development.

One of the indices of this which I employed resides in the formation of the material conditions behind the "birth" of the rural proletariat. The struggle over land which has been going on since the Conquest served as a landmark for analysis in this part. I attempted to illustrate and to comment upon the gradual, sometimes retarded, dispossession of the means of production from the direct producers. What is striking in the henequenera region - as elsewhere in Mexico - is the coexistence of several types of land tenure, which often are not only contradictory in terms of their principles but in terms of their forms of exploitation as well. This situation has very deep historical roots around which the rural class struggle has continually developed.

The Mexican Revolution had a profoundly peasant character and unfolded at a time when the proletariat as a whole was little developed. The militant peasantry and the nascent rural proletariat at the time

could do nothing other than trade a fragile autonomy for clearly reformist gains. I would suggest that, since then, the ruling class has efficiently controlled the struggles which continue to develop in the countryside. This bourgeois class relies on the gains made in the Revolution, gains which it co-opted, and attempts to maintain the isolated character of agricultural producers both internally and in relation to the wider proletariat with which, however, it shares many characteristics.

The contemporary system of land tenure constitutes, in my opinion, one of the gains of the Revolution which has been co-opted by the dominant class. Working against the agricultural producers, this system has become a means of maintaining their isolation before Capital and equally a means for Capital to purchase labor power below its value. Access to a parcel offers rural proletarians a possibility for retreat and by facilitating their insertion in a variety of processes of production intensifies their internal division. The autonomous labor of rural proletarians on the parcels does not make peasants of them but does imprison them in a peasant condition with its well-known illusory effects on the ideological level. Finding themselves momentarily in this peasant condition, rural proletarians become once again mere individuals incapable of systematically confronting Capital.

Perhaps the main advantage of the historical part of this work was to have brought out the essentially transitional character of the current situation. In effect, despite the great similarity of the

forms of domination and subordination over the course of the last few centuries, one must emphasize the profound character of changes on the level of modes of production and, consequently, in the class structure. If the rural proletariat seems to bear similarity to the virtually-enslaved labor force that existed at the beginning of the century, the facts reveal a different story. Although a landed bourgeoisie persists in the rural areas, an apparent heir to the hacendados, we know that it is no longer an important element of the economic landscape. On the contrary, it is the financial and commercial bourgeoisie, constituting a State bourgeoisie, which today reigns supreme. Unlike the peones of the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century, today's rural proletariat is situated at the source of a transfer of values which end up in the hands of the ruling class to the profit of the industrial sector. Through its insertion in the commercial exploitation of a good, henequen, that is destined for export on the international market, the rural proletariat in the henequenera region contributes, however nominally that may be, to creating values which will be sources of the foreign currency so crucial for Mexico as a whole and its international relations. The miserable condition of the rural proletariat seems undeniably linked to the way in which their product fits into the national economy; namely, the need to hold down henequen's costs of production at any price.

In the third part of this work (Chapters 6 through 10), I discussed the concrete conditions characterizing the rural proletariat in the henequenera region. By contextualizing the labor power of direct

producers in Yucatan within the development of the productive forces in Mexico, I wished to show that labor power still, to a certain extent, constitutes "the principal regulator of production" (Marx's expression). To this extent, labor power on the henequen plantations can and must be the basis for intervention by Capital in its search for ever-increasing profits necessary for its expansion. Therefore, class struggle must articulate itself around the control of this labor power and of its price: higher credit and, consequently, higher wages are currently the only object of ejidatarios' demands.

To support our argument concerning the status of this labor power, it was necessary to set out the material context in which it evolves. Direct observation of activity in the fields and its interpretation in light of the contributions of historical materialism permitted me to put into context what is generally implied by the development of forces of production. I noted that even in the absence of machinery, the productive forces nevertheless undergo a discrete yet continuous modification. This is expressed by the maintenance and introduction of measures which accentuate the internal divisions among workers. This division occurs not only because rural proletarians must resort to day labor on the large landholdings but also because they must work on the collective parts of the ejidos. The constitution - or involution, as I might say - of production groups and subgroups on the ejido isolates producers and counteracts the greater socialization of means of production which normally characterizes large capitalist enterprises and furnishes workers with a collective base. The similarity of

the labor process in the fields with that of the assembly line in large-scale industry makes the contrast on this level even more striking. In both cases, producers are not only separated from their means of production but also become confined to executing a fractional part of the labor process. Task specialization in weeding and cutting, which was discussed in Chapter 9, provides an index of the significance of an increasing division of labor in the absence of a spectacular development of productive forces, such as that which would be associated with the introduction of machines into production.

The conditions of labor of rural proletarians are undergoing a sustained revolution and constantly modify the very definition of these proletarians. On the one hand, the development of capitalism in the agrarian sector is an incomplete process and, consequently, the material conditions of the rural proletariat are worsening. On the other hand, its peasants roots, rather than constituting wealth, contribute to isolating the rural proletariat both from the proletariat as a whole and from the peasantry as such, with whom it no longer shares the same economic conditions. The situation of the rural proletariat might appear desperate, indeed, but history is not linear. Rather, it shows that the "long march" of the proletariat has only just begun.

CONCLUSION NOTE

- (1) For more on this subject, see Paré 1977.

ANNEX I

QUESTIONNAIRE USED FOR SINANCHE'S AND TEMAX'S EJIDATARIOS

- Nombre Municipio
Edad Pueblo
Grupo familiar: número de personas

- Ejidatarios en la casa (número)
Grupo de trabajo en el ejido colectivo

- Ocupaciones

		henequen	legumbres	ganaderia	frutas	abejas y otros					
Agricultura	ejido						desfibración	transporte	administración	comercio	cantinero
	parcela ejidal										
	propiedad privada										
	terreno arrendado										
Trabajo asalariado											
Otros											

4. Ejido: tareas

	no. tareas por semana	ingreso por tarea	no. días/ sem. en el ejido	no. personas trabajando con productor	ingreso/ semana	ingreso/ temporada	ingreso/ año	aguinaldo
Chapeador								
Cortador								
Destroncador								
Otros								

5. PARCELA EJIDAL

Superficie en mecatres:
 Cuando tuvó su parcela:
 Con cuantas personas:
 Siembra(s):

6. PROPIEDAD PRIVADA

Comprada o heredada:
 Superficie:
 Siembra(s):

7. TERRENO ARRENDADO

Superficie:
 Dueño:
 Renta:
 Siembra(s):

8. CULTURA DE HENEQUEN

Superficie total:

En propiedad privada

o/y en parcela ejidal:

Superficie en fomento:

año de siembra:

Superficie en explotación:

año de siembra:

Superficie en decadencia:

año de siembra:

Cosecha en el año 1973 (millar de hojas):

Comprador:

Forma sobre cual vende: hojas o fibra?

Precio por millar de hojas:

Promedio Kg de fibra por millar de hojas:

Trabajo Propio					Trabajo Ajeno									
no. dias/ temporada	no. dias/año	no. ayudantes	no. dias/ temporada ayudantes	no. dias/año ayudantes	Chapeo					Corte				
					no. tarreas	no. personas	salario/tarrea	salario/ temporada	salario/año	salario/millar	salario/ temporada	salario/año	no. personas con sigo	

Ingreso Bruto	Gastos
Venta de hojas: Venta de fibras: Venta de hijos de henequen: Otro	Salarios: Desfibración: Transporte y cargo: Etc.
Total	Total

Ingreso
Neto

11. LEGUMBRES

Modo de tenencia:

Superficie dedicada a los legumbres por especie:

Costo inicial de la irrigación y herramientas:

costo del abono y fumigación	costo de las semillas	trabajo propio/ temporada	no. ayudantes (familiares)/ temporada	no. dias/ temporada de los ayudantes	no. dias asalariados/ temporada	salario dado/ temporada	costo transporte/ temporada

Total gastos por año:

Cantidad cosechada por temporada/especies:

Precio/unidad (caja, kg., etc.):

Ingreso bruto/temporada:

Ingreso neto/temporada:

Ingreso neto/año:

12. TRABAJO ASALARIADO

Patrones	Tipo de trabajo	Jornal	No. dias/sem.	Total/año

ANNEX II

EXCERPTS FROM THE DIARIO OFICIAL DEL ESTADO DE YUCATAN RELATING TO THE DOTACION OF LANDS TO THE TEMAX EJIDO

"... Con fecha 30 de Junio de 1918, los vecinos del pueblo expresado, con fundamento en la ley del 6 de Enero de 1915, elevaron una solicitud al C. Gobernador del estado, pidiendo restitución de las tierras que formaron el antiguo ejido del municipio de Temax, manifestando que tales terrenos estaban en poder de los latifundistas cormarcanos, no exhibiendo sin embargo, los títulos correspondientes ni aportando los datos indispensables para que pudiera prosperar la acción restitutoria intentada.
(...) que los habitantes del lugar (Temax), 690, todos agricultores, tienen derecho a ejidos, entre jefes de familia y varones solteros mayores de 18 años y que carecen de tierras propias; que las fincas colindantes y que por tanto son afectadas con la dotación de referencia, son: "Chucmichem y anexas" del señor Raymundo Camara Palma, con una superficie de 4389 has.; "San Antonio y anexas" del mismo propietario, con 3423 has. 14 as. 53 cs.

"... Dzitox" del señor Tomas Martinez Escalante, que cuenta con 5600 has.; "San Dimas y anexas" de don Eduardo Pinkus Troncosco, 2310 has.; y terrenos que formaron parte del antiguo ejido de Temax, divididos en lotes y que se hallan en poder de algunos terratenientes comarcanos, como los señores Tomas Castellanos Acevedo, Candelaria Peón de D. de Falcon, y otros.
(...) "que los vecinos del pueblo de referencia no acreditaron por medio alguno que se les haya desposeído de las tierras que afirman les pertenecen,
(...) que de acuerdo con lo que previenen los artículos 3 de la ley del 6 de Enero de 1915 e inciso IX del 27 constitucional, cuando la restitución no proceda, debe resolverse el asunto por dotación, pues que por ningún motivo dejen de asignarse a los pueblos las tierras necesarias para su subsistencia y bienestar, por lo que debe otorgarse a los vecinos del pueblo de Temax la dotación precedente.

... "que dado que las tierras de que se dispone para la dotación son incultas, de mala calidad, pedregoso-calcareas, que carecen en absoluto de corrientes pluviales y cuya naturaleza es tan débil que cada agricultor de la región acostumbra labrar unas dos hectáreas de terreno, quedando éste después en estado inculto por espacio de doce años, para

poder recuperar en ese tiempo las substancias fertilizantes indispensables. Que por tales razones (...) deben corresponder de las mismas (tierras) a cada agricultor 24 has.; pero que en atención a que en las inmediaciones de las fincas colindantes existen otras poblaciones que aun no recibido su ejido (...) debe considerarse justa la superficie acordada en dotación provisional a Temax, en la que corresponde a cada uno de los 690 vecinos con derecho a ejidos, un lote de 19 has. 82 A - 60 C, habiendo un total de 13,682 has., por lo que es de confirmarse, como en efecto se confirma la resolución de primera instancia que se revisa y debiendo hacerse las afectaciones relativas a la dotación definitiva en la forma siguiente: de Chucmichen y anexas, 2389 has.; de San Antonio y anexas, 2782 has.; ...

... de Dzitox, 3600 has., de San Dimas y anexas, 1810 has. y 3154 has. de los terrenos que pertenecieron al ejido de Temax, a que va se ha hecho alusión y que comprenden 25 lotes con la enumeración (...) pasando las tierras al pueblo con todas sus accesiones, usos, costumbres y servidumbres. .

(...) Que para cubrir la dotación de que se trata, deben expropiarse las 13,682 has. por cuenta del gobierno nacional (...)

(...) Se previene a los vecinos del pueblo de Temax que a partir de la fecha de la actual resolución quedan obligados a mantener, conservar y fomentar la vegetación forestal existente en la superficie de terreno que se les concede y a explotarla en común, aplicandose el producto de dicha explotación a los servicios publicos de la comunidad (...)

(...) Las aguas para el riego de las tierras se usaran de acuerdo con un plan general encaminando a obtener el máximo de utilidad, el cual sera siempre sujeto a la aprobación de la Comisión nacional agraria; y una vez que se acepte dicho plan, se procedera a la construcción de las obras hidráulicas respectivas.

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