

Some Aspects of Social Structure of a Mayanyucatecan Catholic Community, Mani

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The aim of this paper is to describe and clarify some aspects of social structure of a Mayanyucatecan catholic community, Mani, in terms of social space.

The social space of a catholic community, Mani, is composed of two main distinctive areas: El Centro and Barrios. This El Centro-Barrio distinction is from European catholic culture. El Centro is the political and economic nucleus of Mestizo, people of mixed blood, and there are living the Spanish-speaking original vecinos of Mani. In contrast, the Barrios are traditional residential sectors, where the Mayas and their descendants are living in the traditional Indian houses. In Mani there is another core area called Kiwic, which is the traditional Maya social space situated near the cenote and ceiba tree.

According to the archaeological facts about Post-Classic Yucatec settlement patterns, the temple or temples were located at the core area of the each community, and around the temples extended the houses. The Maya communities were divided into four wards, Barrios, Tzuculs or Calpulli and these four endogamous wards consisted of exogamous patrilineages.

In the middle of 16th century, village communities in Mani were, generally termed as Ah-a village name-ob. This Ah-ob was divided into two to four subordinate organizations, Cuchteel. Ahcuchcab, head of Cuchteel, was appointed by Vbatabil Cah, who governed the Ah-ob. Ahcuchcab and Vbatabil were put under the control of Halach Vinic, who governed the community of several Ah-obs. It had its own communal land and the tribute system. The third communal land in Mani was cultivated on condition that he got the right to use the land. The idea of Ejido was overlapped with this communal land.

In Mani today, the core area is surrounded by three forms of land and territory, fundo legal (legal sites or property), tierra de propiedad (land of property) and tierras ejidales (land of ejido). Fundo legal includes Solar (conventional dwelling compound) and Joca (3 to 4 month lease land). Ejido is a communal land and to sell it is prohibited by law. Ejido is confiscated if not cultivated for two years.

Key Words : social structure, Maya, communal land, ejido, parcela

- I Preface
- II The core area of Mani, El Centro, Kiwic, and Barrios
- III The development of land and territory in Mani
- IV The land and territory in Mani
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I Preface

Anthropological data have shown several aspects of the territorial organization of low-land Maya. One generalized model is that there is hierarchy of major ceremonial centers, minor ceremonial centers and villages.¹⁾ Another is, as Joyce Marcus argued,²⁾ that around the traditional Mayan four regional capitals developed the hexagonal lattices of secondary centers and the tertiary hexagons developed around these secondary centers and around these were villages.

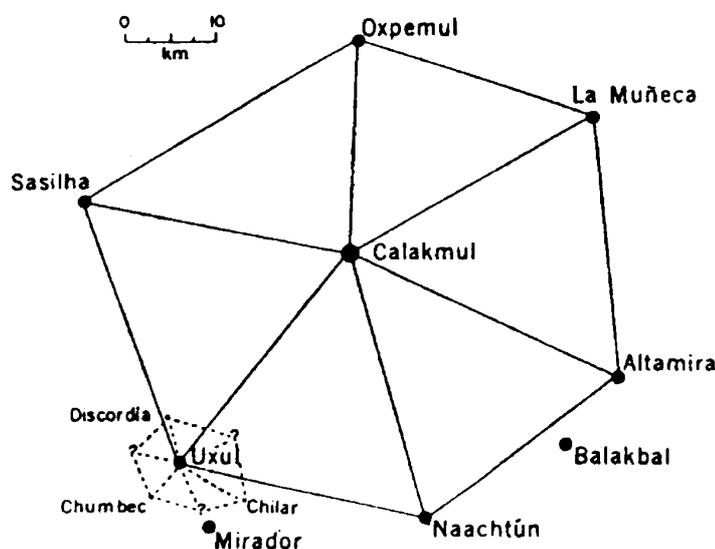


Figure 1

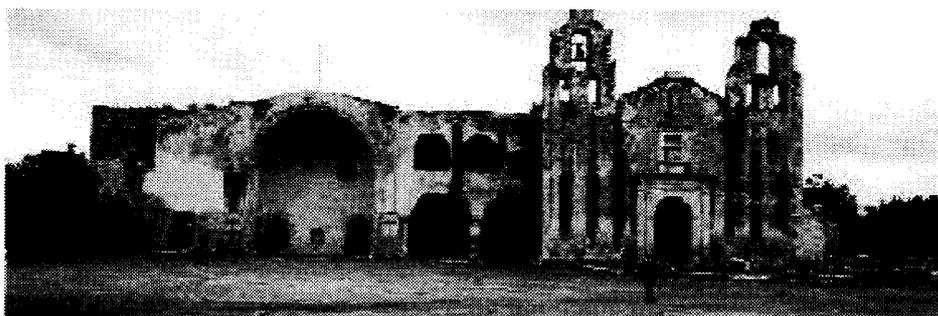
The third is Coe's theoretical reconstruction of the social organization of Mayan villages that the Mayan villages were divided into four tzuculs "wards consisting of exogamous patrilineages. Each ward was associated with a color³⁾. Based upon the Mayan quadripartite view of the universe, the earth is flat and four cornered and each cardinal point had a color value: red for east, white for north, black for west, yellow for south

II The core area of Mani, El Centro, Kiwic, and Barrios

The one central part of a catholic community, Mani, is called El Centro. A grand church stands there and six residential sections, Barrios, spread out in all directions. Six Barrios are San Juan, Santiago, San Jose, Santa Lucia, Candelalia, and San Isidro. Each Barrio has its own church. The patron of Mani is San Miguel Arcangel and the virgin is Virgen de Asuncion. Another core area of Mani is called Kiwic which is situated near the cenote and ceiba tree.

El Centro is the political and economic nucleus of Mestizo, people of mixed blood, and there are living the Spanish-speaking original vecinos of Mani.

The Barrios are traditional residential sectors. The Mayas and their descendants are living in the traditional Indian houses with peaked roofs of thatched palm and white-plastered wattle-and-daub walls.



A catholic church in El Centro of Mani



Traditional Maya houses in Barrio



Virgen de Asuncion

According to the archaeological facts about Post-Classic Yucatec settlement patterns, the temple or temples were located at the core area of the each community, and around the temples extend the houses. And, as Michael D. Coe argued, every community in

Yucatan had two heaps of stone facing each other at each of four entrance to the community for the traditional Maya Uayeb rites⁴. In connection with the Uayeb, as the Table 1 shows, each year was associated with a color and with a cardinal direction.

Table 1

Ceremony for year	in Uayeb days of	Color	Direction	Bacab	Chac
Kan	Cauac	Yellow (Kan)	South	Kanal Bacab (Hobnil)	Kan-xib Chac
Muluc	Kan	Red (Chac)	East	Chacal Bacab	Chac-xib Chac
Ix	Muluc	White (Sac)	North	Sacal Bacab	Sac-xib Chac
Cauac	Ix	Black (Ek)	West	Ekel Bacab (Hosan Ek)	Ek-xib Chac

In Yucatan before the Conquest, as the table 1 shows, there was a Bacab(Sky Bearer and Wind God) and a Chac(Rain God) was arranged for each direction with the appropriate color designation.

Joyce Marcus showed that:

,for the Maya the most important direction was east, *likin*, “where the sun rises.” North, *xaman*, was “on the right hand of the sun,” while south, *nohol*, was on its “left hand” ; the other important coordinates were west, *chikin*, and finally the center, *yaxkin*, over which the sun passed.⁵

He went on to point out that:

the Maya terms for the east-center-west axis all have the second syllable *kin* (“sun,” “day,” or “time”), which indicates the importance of the axis of the rising-setting sun.⁶

This Maya quadripartite organization regulated even the community structure. The Maya communities, according to Coe's reconstruction, were divided into four wards, Barrios, Tzuculs or Calpulli and these four endogamous wards consisted of exogamous patrilineages.⁷⁾

The above-mentioned six Barrios in Mani, as Richard A. Thompson pointed out,⁸⁾ used to be semi-independent residential and ward-like political units and exercised great influence on the lives of their inhabitants. The unity of the Barrio was maintained by common participation in exclusive fiestas and in a preference for endogamous marriage. However, as the table 2 shows, there is no longer endogamous marriage custom that our informants say there used to be. Table 2 includes 41 cases out of 87 families in Mani.

Table 2 Intermarriages between Barrios in Mani

marry out	marry in	case	marry out	marry in	case
Candelaria	Candelaria	4	Kiwic	Kiwic	1
Candelaria	San Juan	1	Kiwic	San Isidro	2
Candelaria	Santa Lucia	2	Kiwic	Xicabachen	1
Candelaria	San Jose	1	Kiwic	Santalucia	1
Candelaria	Santiago	1	San Juan	San Juan	2
San Jose	San Jose	1	San Juan	Kiwic	1
San Jose	Santiago	1	San Juan	Santiago	1
San Jose	San Juan	3	San Juan	Santa Lucia	1
San Jose	Xicabachen	1	Santa Lucia	Santa Lucia	1
Santiago	Santiago	1	Santa Lucia	San Isidro	1
Santiago	San Juan	1	Xicabachen	Xicabachen	2
Santiago	San Isidro	1	Xicabachen	Santa Lucia	1
Santiago	Xicabachen	1	San Isidro	San Juan	1

The inhabitants of barrios call the residents of El Centro Chuloob, non-Mayas or foreigners. This suggests the possibility of Centro-Barrio ethnic distinction. We will reserve it for another investigation.

III The development of land and territory in Mani

In order to know what is the social structure in Mani, the focus of our study should be on the historical development of land and territory in Mani.

In the middle of 16th century, village communities in Mani were, as F. J. Riese argued,⁹⁾ generally termed as Ah-a village name-ob. This Ah-ob was divided into two to four subordinate organizations, Cuchteel. Ahcuchcab, head of Cuchteel, was appointed by Vbatabil Cah, who governed the Ah-ob. Ahcuchcab and Vbatabil were put under the control of Halach Vinic, who governed the community of several Ah-obs.

Halach Vinic (the territorial ruler over the community of several Ah-obs, province or statelet)

Vbatabil Cah (head of each Ah-ob through whom Halach Vinic governed Ah-ob)

Ahcuchcab (head of Cuchteel, Ah-ob community council)

Cuchteel (subordinate organizations of each Ah-ob)

The title of Halach Vinic was not found in any historical documents written by the Spanish, which may prove that the position of Halach Vinic actually disappeared during the Conquest. After the Conquest, Señor was used for the governor of the Ah-ob and the whole community of several Ah-obs. Halach Vinic sent a tax collector to each Ah-ob and got his share from such traditional communal labour as hunting, fishing and salt-producing. He also gave the permission to salt-producing and the fixed land was allotted to him. His office was hereditary within the patrilineage.

Vbatabil Cah passed judgements within the Ah-ob, inspected the conditions and managements of houses or farms, audited the Ah-ob accounts and the granary, distributed the textile cotton to village women and took command of the army. These Vbatabil Cah's duties covered those of Cacique or Gobernador in Colonial days. The Spanish colonial policy was to appoint a local principal governor native of each Ah-ob for its government. In Mani, one person took the responsibility of Cacique and Gobernador. Out of 8 Gobernadors in Mani, 7 were also Caciques and out of 7 Gobernadors in the other communities near Mani, 5 took the responsibility of Cacique.

Almehenob was from the upper class of Ah-ob and lived in the core area of Ah-ob near the cenote or deep well. He claimed his share to the crops, the cultivation of land, military service, and the construction of his house.

This Ah-ob had the following socio-economic organizations or activities in common.

- (1) It had its own communal property for fiestas and slave-trading.
- (2) It had a community assembly hall, Camolna, where women worked for the tribute to Encomendero who took charge of the native population. Until the Conquest, Popolna was used for the community council and Holpop supervised it.
- (3) They went hunting in a group of some 50 men. The traditional way to share a deer, for instance, was that the skin, the internals and the legs went to the hunter himself, and the rest to the Ah-ob.
- (4) Fishing and salt-producing were also communal works. The products were offered to Halach Vinic, Vbatical Cah and Almehenob as a tribute. Chickens, cotton, military service, and the construction of the houses of Halach Vinic, Vbatical Cah and Almehenob were another form of tribute.

Each Ah-ob had its own communal land (tierras comunes). This land belonged to people of the upper classes like Halach Vinic, Vbatabil Cah and Almenhenob. Vbatabil Cah, for instance, was allotted 100, 200 or 300 mecatas (one mecate is 20m×20m). The cultivation of the land was a tribute to them. But no tribute was offered to Ahcuchcab, head of Cuchteel, who worked under the control of Vbatabil Cah. Ahcuchcab, Principal or Regidor in Spanish in the historical document of land contract, used to accompany Vbatabil Cah so that he could work on behalf of Vbatabil Cah. His duties were to fix the land boundary, collect taxes, call up villagers for military service, and to celebrate public ceremonies or festivals.

In Mani, there was another form of communal land (milpas de comunidad), where the cultivation was carried out for the whole community. All the crop from the land was stored in the granary. For a Maya married couple (Hum Vinic), 20×20 pies (feet) was allotted for sowing.

The third communal land in Mani was cultivated on condition that he got the right to use the land. Those who got the right of land use supported themselves on the crop from the land and had the duty to pay to the governor in kind. The land for growing cacao (hoyas y cuevas de cacao) was included in this form of land use. In some cases, a group of 20 men worked together on this form of land. They could not afford any workers in his employ, and were paid each time by the land owner 20 cacao beans per 1 mecate of labour. Concerning the specific organization of this group work, It has been argued that

the workers were from Chibal, lineage or caste, and that they were from different descent.

In addition to the above-mentioned three types of communal land, there were other communal lands: Upach Cahalob (the land of village community); Uxotol Upach Cacahal (the allotted land of our property of village community) ; Tulacal Vtialil Ah Calkiniob (the whole property of Calkini people).

The historical document shows that there were still several forms of communal land in and around Mani in the 16th century. To what extent can these land forms continue to exist and in what way did they get through changes in the past?

IV The land and territory in Mani

In Mani today, the core area is surrounded by three forms of land and territory, fundo legal (legal sites or property), tierra de propiedad (land of property) and tierras ejidales (land of ejido).

Fundo legal includes Solar and Joca. Solar is a allotted personal site for house and ground. This conventional dwelling compound is classified into three groups: Jum Ac In Wotoch (9 mecatas); Ca'Ac In Wotoch (18 mecatas); Tancuch Ac In Wotoch (4.5 mecatas). A great part of Solar in Mani are Jum Ac In Wotoch and Tancuch Ac In Wotoch and they can sell it if they want to for some reason.

Joca is a leased land where tenants generally grow watermelon, red pepper, pumpkin, maize and so on. Joca, 3-4 month lease of land in Mani, is not found in other communities in Yucatan.

Outside of fundo legal extends tierra de propiedad, that is, privately-owned land. This land is most fertile in Mani but they say it is also most inactive and idle, adding that;

Even our revolution did not make the landowners concede this land to anybody else. This land is more productive than any other but it is not used to the full. When we rent it, we have to pay 10 cargos (1 cargo is 42 kg) per 100 mecatas. One landowner possesses 1,000H of land and he keeps most of the land idle. This causes the lack of land in Mani. If we allow it to rest that way, we will bring about another revolution.

Ejido is a communal land the Revolution brought about and it is, in Mani, divided

Case 1

Ejido can be sold or leased. When ill or in a severe distress, we sell it by the consent and permission of Ejido Association. In some cases, as we do now, we rent it when we can hardly work ourselves. In this case, the ejido belongs to the lender, but the crop from the leased ejido goes to the lessee, for he himself cultivates the ejido. The lessee does not have to pay any more to the lender. The slash and burn of ejido is very tough but if we leave it behind, the land and the plants will be out of use. This is especially the case in the ejido without any Riego (irrigation well). The plant and fruit do not grow well on the land thickly covered by the grass and weed.

Case 2

Ejido turns to our property after we keep on working on it for, say, 15 years. When our family member falls ill, and we badly need some money, we can sell half of the ejido. We do not sell the ejido itself, but the fruit trees, the fruit, the plants only. Before we sell them, we evaluate them one by one according to the local market rate in Oxkutzcab. If we are still in need of more money, we are obliged to sell the rest of ejido in the same way. When we have the great difficulty, ejido can be disposed of that way.

Case 3

We have 1.6 H of ejido. It can be divided to be inherited. Ejido itself cannot be sold but the fruit and the plants can be sold. When we some of our family members is taken ill, we can rent it to somebody else. We should not sell it only for money. We cannot sell ejido without any consent of Ejido Association.

In Mani, they sell the fruit and the plant on Ejido out of sheer necessity. Ejido cannot be sold. Every Ejidatario should cultivate it hard all the time. They should not sell the fruit and the plant for any reason, though they do so against the rule. Because Ejido is allotted to anybody who applies to the government and it is administrated by Ejido Association, every Ejidatario is expected to cultivate it as hard as he can. He should not use his Ejido for some other purpose. But actually they turn Ejido to such practical use as mentioned above.

V Conclusions

The social space of a catholic community, Mani, is composed of two main distinctive areas: El Centro and Barrios. This El Centro-Barrio distinction is from European catholic culture. A grand catholic church, in which the sacred images of patron of Mani, San Miguel Arcangel and that of virgin, Virgen de Asuncion are set, stands in the core of the community with residential sections extending out in all directions. Each Barrio has its own church for which festivals are performed.

In Mani there is another core area called Kiwic, which is the traditional Maya social space situated near the cenote and ceiba tree.

El Centro is the political and economic nucleus of Mestizo, people of mixed blood, and there are living the Spanish-speaking original vecinos of Mani. In contrast, the Barrios are traditional residential sectors, where the Mayas and their descendants are living in the traditional Indian houses.

These six Barrios in Mani used to be not only semi-independent residential and ward-like political units but also endogamous marriage units. But our investigation shows no tendency to endogamous marriage custom there. It is noteworthy that the inhabitants of Barrios call the residents of El Centro Chuloob, non-Mayas or foreigners. This suggests the possibility of Centro-Barrio ethnic distinction, which remains to be investigated.

According to the archaeological facts about Post-Classic Yucatec settlement patterns, the temple or temples were located at the core area of the each community, and around the temples extend the houses. The social space of Mani today has inherited some modes of existence or customs.

In Yucatan before the Conquest, as Michael D. Coe argued, there was a Bacab (Sky Bearer and Wind God) and a Chac (Rain God) was arranged for each quadripartite direction with the appropriate color designation. This mode of thought was maintained firmly in the traditional medical curing techniques of Men (Maya medicine doctor).

This Maya quadripartite organization regulated even the community structure. The Maya communities, according to Coe's reconstruction, were divided into four wards, Tzuculs or Calpulli and these four endogamous wards consisted of exogamous patrilineages.

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Ejido is a communal land the Revolution brought about and it is, in Mani, divided into 3H, 2H and 1H. Ejido is, in most cases, surrounded by Ko'ot, stone low wall, in Mani and milpas (maize farms) and Parcelas are included in Ejido.

To sell Ejido is prohibited by law and it is confiscated if not cultivated for two years. But some are compelled by poverty to sell it or rent it. When ill or in a severe distress, they sell it by the consent and permission of Ejido Association. In this case, the Ejido belongs to the lender, but the crop from the leased Ejido goes to the lessee.

They do not sell the Ejido itself, but the fruit trees, the fruit, the plants only. Before they sell them, they evaluate them one by one according to the local market rate.

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Footnotes

- 1) Wendy Ashmore edited 1981 *Lowland Maya Settlement Patterns*. University of New Mexico Press. pp.361-364

R.E.W Adams and Woodruff D.Smith 1981 *Feudal Models for Classic Maya Civilization*. University of New Mexico Press.pp.335-349.

R.E.W Adams and Woodruff D.Smith suggested a general hypothesis about social and political structure in the Classic Maya lowland by organizing evidence from settlement patterns as follows. Diffusion of authority accompanied a kind of hierarchical pattern of distribution of sizes of Maya communities. The single largest community coincided with the residence of the most powerful Batab, to which a number of smaller size of community were in a subordinate position, and so on down the scale. This form of hierarchical pattern was repeated in different regions and at different levels within the same region.

- 2) Joyce Marcus 1973 *Territorial Organization of the Lowland Classic Maya*. *Science*. Vol.180.No.4089.pp.916

Joyce Marcos pointed out that "responsibility for village government rotated counterclockwise from one ward to the next, falling on the shoulders of Ah Cuch Cabs, the pre-Columbian equivalent of the Mayordomo in today's Maya villages." (p.914) He went on to summarize the Maya sociopolitical structure:

The Maya had an overall quadripartite organization (rather than a core and buffer zone) and that within each quadrant there was at least a five tiered administrative hierarchy of capital, secondary center, tertiary center, village, and hamlet.(p.915)

- 3) Michael D.Coe 1987 *The Maya*. Thames and Hudson. p.164

The earth was conceived as flat and four-cornered and "the sky was multi-tiered and also supported at each corner by four Bacabswith the appropriate color

associations. The sky was held up by four trees of different colors and species, with the green ceiba or silk-cotton tree at the center.”

4) Ibid.,pp.99-100

The Maya had a 52-year Calendar Round based upon the permutation of a 365-day “vague year” with a 260-day “almanac year.” Uayeb is a ritual related to the Calendar Round “which took place throughout the 18 months of the ‘vague year,’ as well as in the nineteenth month of five days,”

5) Joyce Marcus 1973 op.cit.,p.912

6) ibid.,p.912

Joyce Marcus proposed a hypothesis that this color-direction may be an ancient organizational principle because “it was widespread among North American Indian groups such as the Hopi, the Tewa, and the Oglala Sioux.”

7) Michael D.Coe 1965 A Model of Ancient Community Structure in the Maya Lowland. Southwestern Journal of Anthropology.Vol.21.,No.2.pp.97-114

Michael D.Coe noted the further fact that “the patrilineage (Ch’ibal) was important in the inheritance of office and land, besides being strictly exogamous”

8) Richard A.Thompson 1974 The Winds of Tommorow. The University of Chicago Press. pp.22-35.

In Ticul where Richard A.Thompson did his anthropological research, the Barrios have little degree of cohesion and autonomy and only the formal municipal government, Presidencia Municipal, remains to administer the affairs.

9) Frauke J.Riese 1981 Indianische Landrechte In Yukatan Um Die Mitte Des 16.Jahrhunderts. ss.1-222.

In Mani today, fruit growing is done in Parcela. The right to use it belongs to Parcelero and the allotted land and the Parcela belong to the community itself, Mani. The Parcela in the tierra de propiedad is called pequeña propiedad. 1 carga (42kg)de crop per 1 mecate is estimated to be good enough and 1/2 carga, usual. The Parcelas in Mani have irrigation facilities system, so they can expect a good crop but this is not the case in Milpa because there is no irrigation water there.

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