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Discussion Paper 11

SEEKING FOOD AND SEEKING MONEY:

CHANGING PRODUCTIVE RELATIONS IN A HIGHLAND MEXICAN COMMUNITY

by

George A. Collier

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May 1990

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Preface

The debate on adjustment-related food policy, and particularly on issues of food pricing and marketing reform, is all too frequently conducted at a relatively high level of abstraction. Positions are defended with very little reference either to the real political constraints surrounding policy formulation or to the complexity of local societies upon which policies eventually impinge. In the end, however, policies are determined by these social and political variables.

In an effort to lay the groundwork for a study of Mexican maize pricing policy, UNRISD organized a seminar on the role of maize in various kinds of rural social settings. The seminar, which took place from 3 to 5 January 1990 in Tepoztlán, Mexico, was co-sponsored by the Centro Tepoztlán and funded by the Ford Foundation. It brought together some 25 social scientists currently at work in the Mexican countryside and involved them in a dialogue with macro-economists and policy makers. The purpose was to build tentative bridges between the macro- and the micro-levels of food policy analysis, setting out from the village or rural region.

The following paper, by Professor George Collier of the Department of Anthropology of Stanford University, was one of the contributions discussed at the Tepoztlán seminar. It deals with the Tzotzil-speaking district of Zinacantan in highland Chiapas - like many other regions of southern Mexico, an area of indigenous communities with a distinctive social structure long based upon ranking by age and ceremonial participation. Despite this cultural singularity, the agricultural economy of Zinacantan has nevertheless been increasingly integrated into regional and national markets, as maize farmers in the highlands have during certain periods migrated to lowland cattle areas, where they have cleared rented fields for maize cultivation, and as the Tzotzil have also periodically been absorbed into and expelled from the wage labour force of lowland farms and cities.

The contribution of the paper rests particularly upon the ability of the author to document the profound changes which have occurred in Zinacanteco society over the course of the past 30 years, and especially in response to the oil boom of the late 1970s. New opportunities for making money in off-farm occupations during that period of accelerated growth played havoc with the traditional economy and society of the district, favouring the young over the old, men over women, and creating a new class of relatively wealthy merchants, truckers and moneylenders. At the same time, maize cultivation was transformed from a labour-intensive to a capital-intensive venture, increasingly dependent upon purchased fertilizers and herbicides to maintain productivity upon lands no longer fallowed or rotated.

As the collapse of the oil boom and subsequent economic crisis curtailed possibilities to earn a living outside agriculture, and outside Zinacantan, the cultivation of maize gained new importance in the economy of the district. But within the context of the late 1980s a growing number of families could no longer afford to farm: to grow maize in the sea of contiguous plots already conditioned to the use of herbicides and fertilizer required a monetary investment beyond their means. At the same time, interest rates were very high and the guaranteed price of corn, established by the Mexican government to regulate the maize market, was being kept low in an effort to combat inflation.

Collier thus documents marked polarization in Zinacantan: the growth of a new "semi-proletariat" unable to afford maize production and the concentration of wealth in the hands of those (particularly among younger generations) who were able to accumulate capital during the boom years and can now obtain interest on loans or savings. It is the latter group which has continued to farm without losses (and apparently with profits roughly equivalent to those obtained from the alternative venture of lending money for interest), even during the recent period of low maize prices. And it is this group which would most benefit from higher real maize prices, given its greater potential productivity and capacity to rent additional land.

The paper raises a number of questions for policy makers and others concerned with problems of food security in Mexico. How can the process of marginalization of relatively poorer and more traditional farmers in regions like highland Chiapas be slowed or halted? Can alternatives be found to the growing dependence upon chemical inputs, which are expensive for the farmer to purchase and increasingly difficult for the state to subsidize? Or can maize prices be raised sufficiently to make cultivation by small farmers, requiring credit for purchased inputs during a period of high interest rates, even minimally viable?

Within the society so carefully depicted in this paper, there are a number of groups which have been partially protected from the market by the nature of traditional livelihood arrangements: they have been accustomed to "seek food" rather than to "seek money", through various forms of exchange not immediately dependent upon relative prices. The elderly, the widowed and orphaned, and many women are to be found in this category. Monetization is, however, proceeding apace; and as these people join much of the rest of the population in having to purchase maize, high consumer prices can only harm them.

Dilemmas such as these form the background for other papers presented at the Tepoztlán seminar, which are currently being edited for publication within the framework of the UNRISD programme on adjustment-related food policy, co-ordinated by Cynthia Hewitt de Alcántara.

Dharam Ghai
Director

June 1990

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Introduction

When the variable impact of food pricing and marketing policy on rural people is discussed, analysts are likely to point out differences between segments of the rural population engaged in modern commercial agriculture and those still forming part of the peasant economy. They are, however, much less likely to remember that forms and relations of production vary considerably within peasant agriculture. It is therefore important to take a close look at how social relations are changing in specific local contexts before coming to conclusions concerning the implications of policy for various kinds of rural inhabitants. That is the purpose of the following discussion, which centres around an analysis of the evolution of productive relations among the Zinacanteco Indians of southeastern Mexico.

At the heart of the discussion lies the question of the changing nature of maize agriculture. For the Zinacantecos, Tzotzil-speaking Indians of highland Chiapas, livelihood has intermittently depended upon intercropping maize, beans and other minor foodcrops in a complex system of cultivation known as the *milpa*. Tzotzil families were *milpa* cultivators *par excellence* in the 1960s, when Cancian and I first studied Zinacanteco agriculture (Cancian, 1965, 1972; Collier, 1975). But in the 1970s, especially after the oil-led development boom got under way in the presidency of Lopez Portillo, Zinacantecos increasingly turned away from *milpa* to wage labour. By 1981, when I surveyed occupations in the Zinacanteco hamlet of Apas, men had virtually abandoned their entrepreneurial farming of *milpa* on rented lowland ranches. While some men still farmed highland *ejido* or communal lands, they farmed not for sale but only for their own use, and on a much smaller scale than before. Instead, most had turned to unskilled but well-remunerated wage labour in construction, on huge hydroelectric projects and in housing in cities as far as Villahermosa. Others had gone into long-distance wholesaling and retailing of flowers, fruits and vegetables. One man in this out-of-the-way hamlet owned a truck (as did several wealthy and politically well-connected Zinacantecos in settlements on the major highway), and was organizing a union of truckers to obtain a state-authorized concession to transport produce and people from Apas to San Cristobal and Tuxtla Gutierrez.

After the 1982 economic crisis, when further dam building was put off and construction abated, Zinacantecos returned to making *milpa* while continuing, nonetheless, in wagework and commercial vending. Yet the agriculture had been transformed from what it used to be, requiring and giving returns to capital in a manner that works to the advantage of a newly emerging class in the community. Before, Zinacantecos had deployed household members in labour-intensive cultivation, giving advantage to elders who could subordinate youthful kin. Today, as Zinacantecos purchase and use chemical fertilizer and weed sprays, their farming has become much less labour-intensive and more to the advan-

tage of those who control commercial transport and capital. The work of the field hand has become more of a commodity to be bought and sold, to the advantage of a class of youthful men who have brought new wealth - derived from construction contracting, commerce, and trucking - into their farming.

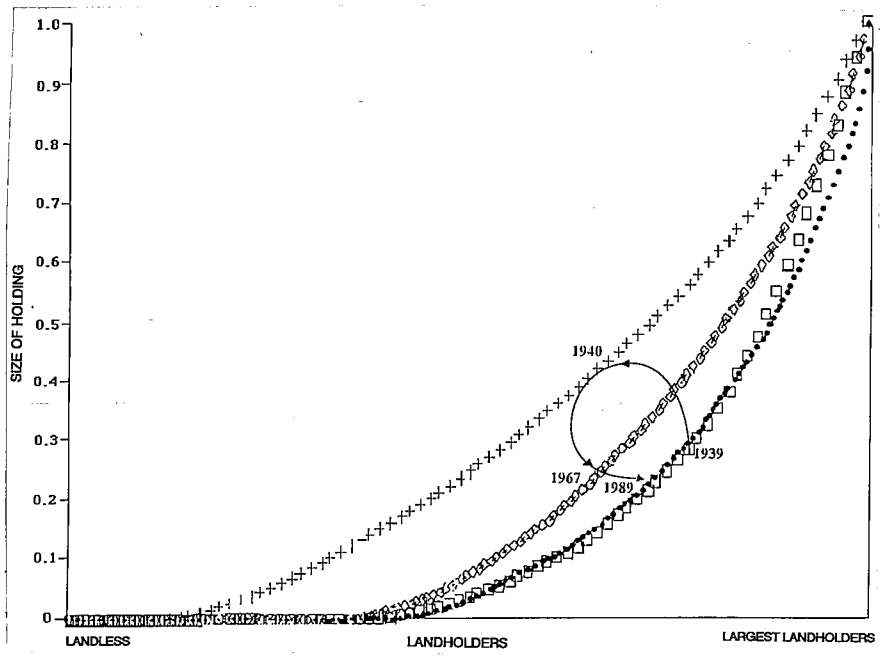
Let us look at this process of change in some detail, taking up the analysis at the point, at the end of the Cardenas presidency in 1940, when land reform made it possible for virtually all Zinacanteco families to specialize in the labour-intensive farming of *milpa*.

Zinacantecos in a Changing Regional Economy

During the early decades of this century, access to land among the Tzotzil was very unequally distributed. In the hamlet of Apas, where much of my own research has been carried out, only a handful of wealthy families held tracts of "communal" land before 1940, and other Zinacantecos had to work for them. But in 1940 almost all married men in Apas received ejidal land, substantially ameliorating differences among them based on property (see figure 1).[1] And for the first time every Apas household farmed, although some poorer men continued to work for others as well.

1. I surveyed land ownership in 1967 on the basis of detailed aerial photographs, which I used to reconstruct the history of land ownership and use of all Apas land back to the 1930s (see Collier, 1975). I updated my land parcel database in 1989.

Figure 1
The Changing Distribution of Property in Apas, Zinacantan

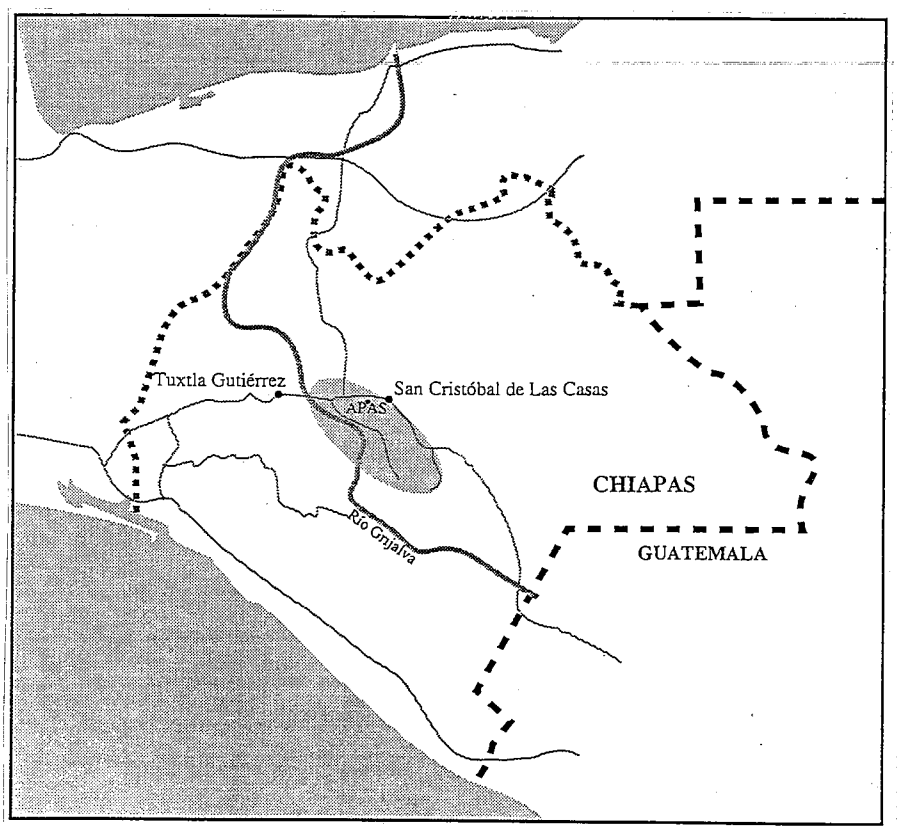


The cumulative distributions of land held by married men in Apas are shown for 1939, just before the distribution of *ejido*; for 1940, just after the distribution; for 1967, at the time I studied Apas farming; and for 1989. In the graphs, individuals are ranked from left to right in terms of the amount of land they owned, and the curves show the total proportion of all property owned by a given individual and all those with less land. Equal ownership in a given year would have resulted in a plot along the diagonal of the graph of cumulative distribution for that year. Disparities in property ownership in 1939 were evened out by distribution of *ejido* in 1940 to most, but not all, married men. By 1967, many maturing younger men lacked land, and disparities had begun to reappear. In 1989, although minifundia prevails, the disparities are as great as they were in 1939.

At first Zinacantecos concentrated on farming in the highlands in labour-intensive swidden, or slash-and-burn, cultivation. But the *ejido* could not sustain the initially intensive cultivation of a growing population, among whom the landless began to grow in numbers. Zinacantecos began to rent marginal farmlands in the Grijalva river valley below them from ranchers who were eager to convert scrub forest to grazing land. As roadways opened up the Grijalva valley during the 1960s, Zinacantecos followed them (see map 1). They rented little-used marginal ranch land, they reaped the higher yields obtainable from fallow lands and they moved on. Zinacantecos farmed to the limits of their household labour and beyond, employing workers from neighbouring Chamula. They produced for profit as well as subsistence, selling much of their crop directly into the federal corn warehouse system established by Almacenes Nacionales de Depósito (ANDSA) in the early 1960s. Some began to experiment with hybrid seed and chemical weed sprays.[2]

2. Cancian's studies (1965, 1972) provide the most complete information on these developments in Zinacanteco **milpa** farming through the 1960s. My own study of Apas (1975) devotes greater attention to **milpa** farming in the highlands in relation to lowland rental farming.

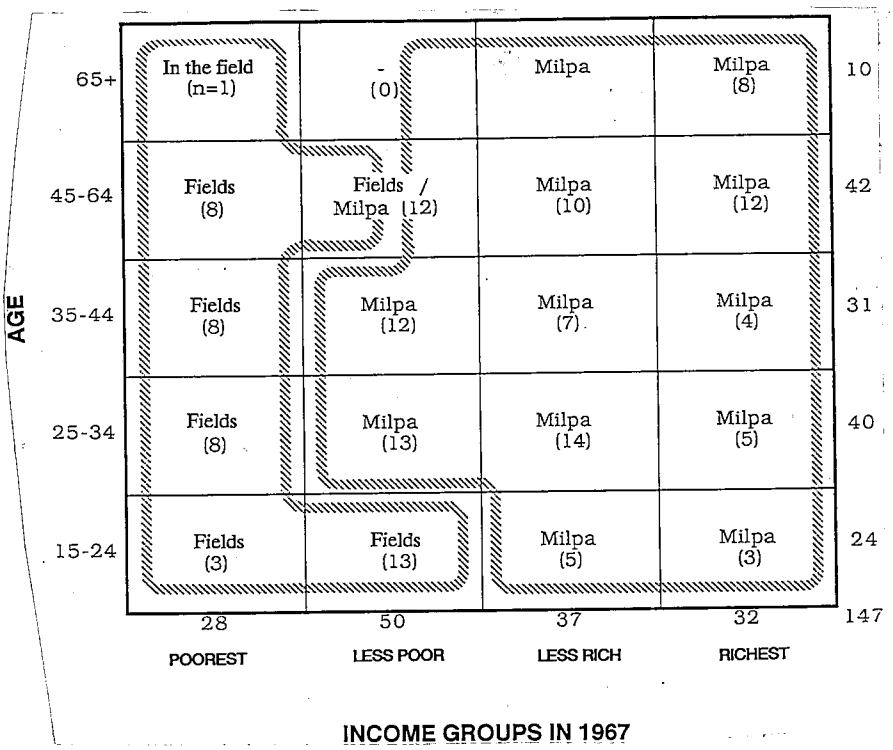
Map 1
Zinacanteco Lowland Rental Farming in 1967



Apas is at the top of an escarpment dropping down to the Río Grijalva. Zinacantecos from Apas and other hamlets primarily farmed parcels in the lowland area shaded on the map. (For a detailed analysis of Zinacanteco lowland rental farming in the 1960s, see Cancian, 1972.)

Not all Zinacantecos benefited equally from the mid-century expansion of *milpa* agriculture. Labour-intensive *milpa* production gave greatest advantage to elder Zinacantecos who could combine two strategies for accumulating rights in others' labour. One was to subordinate youth of their own households by indebting them through a marriage system based on bridewealth. During the 1950s and 1960s, Zinacantecos elaborated costly and time-consuming courtships that left young couples financially obligated to continue working in parents' production rather than independently. (I shall have more to say about this in my discussion of Zinacanteco productive relations.) The second strategy was not simply to employ poorer Zinacantecos in farming, but to co-opt them into political followings elaborated in the system of ritual cargos. In the heyday of farming *milpa* in the 1960s, Zinacantecos were neither egalitarian, as "peasants" in a closed-corporate community facing outward into a capitalist agrarian economy are often thought to be, nor differentiated by capitalist class relations. Rather, rank was the dominant idiom for differentiating followers from leaders, juniors from seniors, low status cargo holders from more prestigious ones, and poorer peasant households from those who engaged in successful entrepreneurial farming (see figure 2).

Figure 2
The Productive Activities of Apas Men in 1967

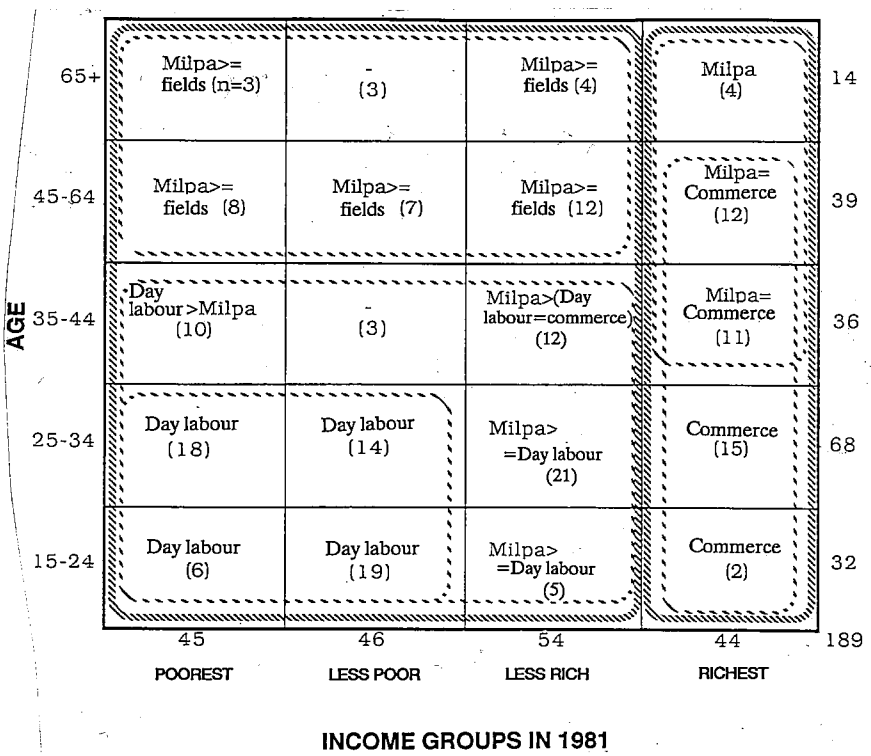


For each group of married men of a given age and wealth, the corresponding cell shows the predominant occupation. Most men farmed *milpa*, but a small underclass of poor Zinacantecos made their living primarily by working in the fields of other Zinacantecos as fieldhands.

The 1970s, and in particular the oil-led boom of the Lopez Portillo presidency (1976-1982), transformed the economy of the region and Zinacanteco participation in it. In the highlands, demographic growth had almost negated the benefits of land reform, swelling the ranks of landless Zinacantecos (figure 1). In the lowlands, Zinacanteco and other peasant sharecroppers (*aparceros*) found it difficult to find land to rent as landowners turned property over to increasingly profitable cattle raising.[3] At the same time hydroelectric projects at Malpaso, Angostura and Chicoasen, and the construction of housing spurred by oil development in and around Villahermosa drew all but the wealthiest Zinacantecos into wagework. Wealthier Zinacantecos of Apas experimented in commerce, buying fruits, flowers and vegetables wholesale to sell retail in urban markets. By 1981, Zinacantecos had virtually abandoned lowland rental agriculture, although wealthier and older men still farmed marginally in the highlands to provision their households (Collier, 1989). To a substantial degree, Zinacantecos had been drawn into regional relations of class, and the primary differentiation among them had come to be between those who worked for others and those who undertook commercial ventures for themselves (see figure 3 and map 2).

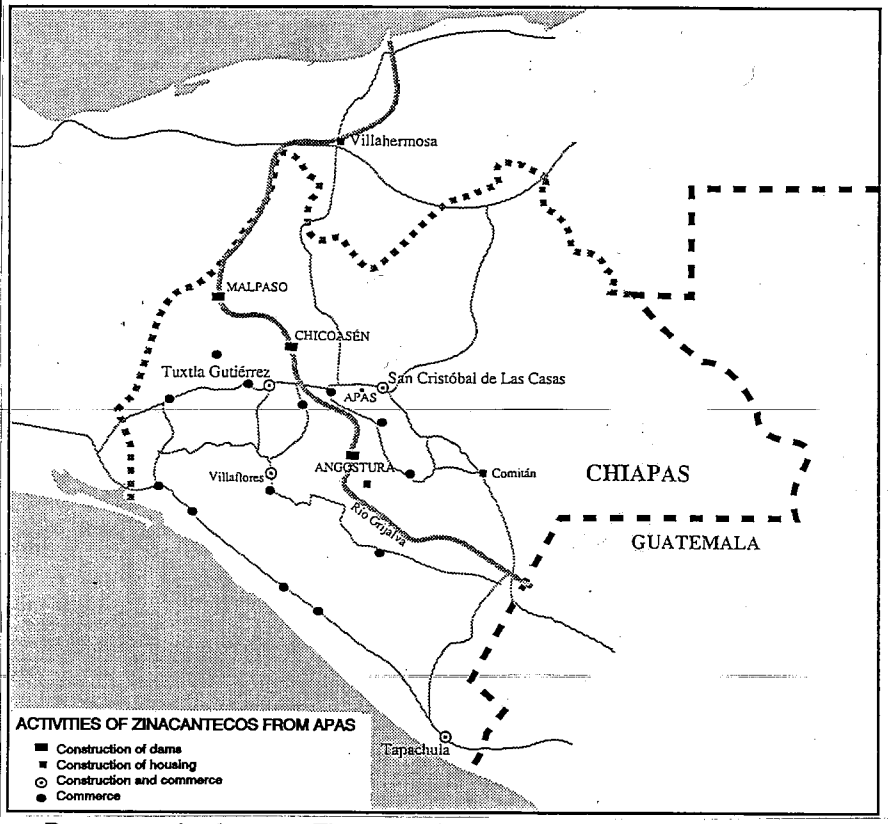
3. Jean Rus (personal communication) argues that, shortly after 1977, the guaranteed price of corn (indexed for inflation) fell to its lowest levels over the previous decade in Chiapas, driving both landowners and sharecroppers out of milpa. In the meantime, after 1975, landowners turned over property to cattle ranching, propelling Chiapas to becoming the second largest beef producing state in Mexico by 1985. Rus thus emphasizes the factors pushing peasants out of agriculture during this period at the same time that hydroelectric dam and oil-related housing construction began to draw former peasants into construction jobs.

Figure 3
Productive Activities of Apas Men in 1981



The oil-led boom semi-proletarianized all but the wealthiest Zinacantecos. Most men in Apas reduced *milpa* farming to a minimum, shifting into wagework in the regional economy as unskilled construction workers or as field-hands for farmers outside their community. A minority of wealthier Zinacantecos went into regional commerce.

Map 2
Zinacanteco Livelihood in the 1970s and 1980s



Dam construction drew many Zinacantecos into wagework, as did the oil-led boom in housing, as far from Apas as Villahermosa and Tabasco. Zinacantecos also entered commerce as wholesale-retail fruit, vegetable, and flower vendors throughout western Chiapas. The map shows places where men from Apas have worked and do business.

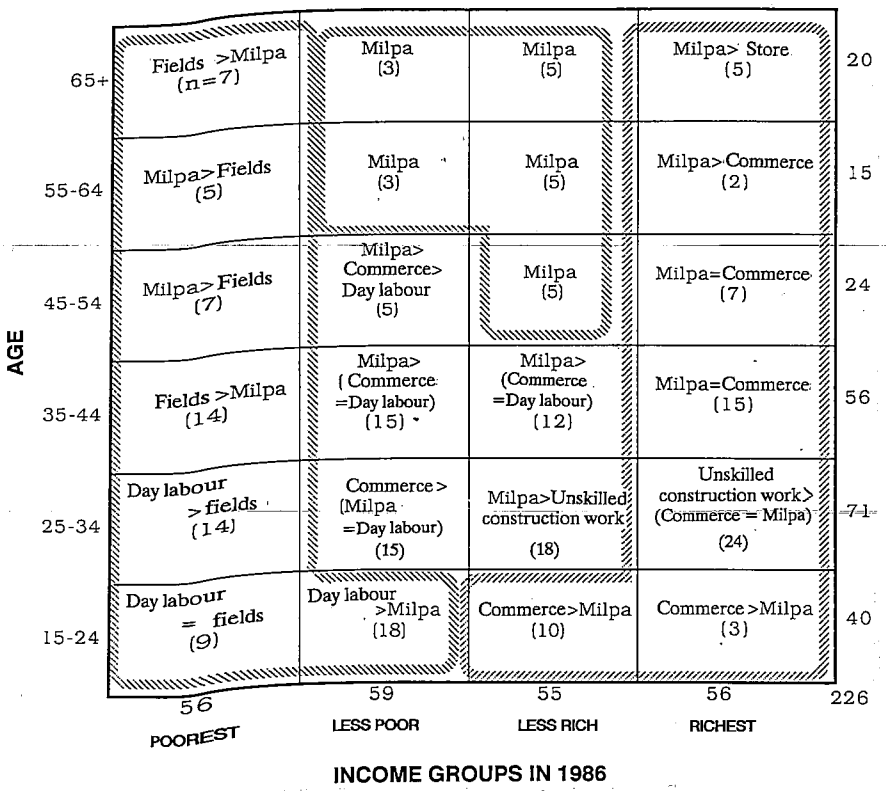
When construction slackened after the 1982 economic crisis, many Zinacantecos returned to farming *milpa*, usually in combination with wage-work or commercial enterprise (Collier, 1989; Collier and Mountjoy, 1988; see figure 4). But their *milpa* cultivation differs now from that of the 1950s and 1960s in three interrelated ways: (1) it is technically altered; (2) it requires new and more extensive capital inputs but less labour; and (3) it has introduced relations of production in which women's roles are changing and in which newly rich youth are wresting power from established elders.

Technical Change in Milpa Agriculture: A Balance Sheet

Bearing in mind that farming *milpa* is only one of the ways in which Zinacantecos make a living, we can learn much about the constraints and opportunities in peasant agriculture by examining costs and returns Zinacantecos realized in farming in the recent 1987/88 farming cycle. Table 1 summarizes data collected by my colleague, Daniel C. Mountjoy, to study Apas farming. Mountjoy collected retrospective budgets from 22 Apas farmers, selected as a sample stratified by age and wealth across the categories of figure 4. These men farmed a total of 57 parcels in the highlands near Apas and in the Grijalva river valley. One can see from

the budget data why Zinacantecos now choose to farm close to home on relatively less productive highland properties rather than in the more distant, albeit more fertile lowlands.

Figure 4
Productive Activities of Apas Men, 1986



The economic crisis of 1982 returned Zinacantecos to farming in the highlands, although many younger men continued to work for wages in the regional economy as field-hands, construction workers, or skilled masons. Wealthier Zinacantecos combined *milpa* farming with commerce.

Various technical changes - all deriving from broader economic transformations - have made Zinacanteco agriculture more local, more concentrated and much less labour intensive. Changes in transportation have favoured Zinacanteco cultivation in the highlands, for example. Cuts in fuel subsidies after the 1982 economic crisis made long-distance transport much more costly. At the same time, new roadways have made the nearby highland ejidal and communal lands accessible to motor transport. The Apas farmlands are on an escarpment dropping precipitously from 2,400 metres in altitude behind Apas to 1,600 metres just above the Grijalva valley. The farmlands are relatively unfertile at higher elevations close to Apas but more productive at lower elevations (see table 1) that used to be accessible only by foot or horse trail. But Apas's first trucker and leaders of the Zinacantan *ejido* recently convinced Zinacantecos to allow loggers - who are active throughout the state - to build dry-season roads to pine forests far down the escarpment in part because these roads facilitated truck transport through farmlands. The

Table 1

Apas *milpa* budgets, 1987-1988 crop cycle

	HIGHLANDS, APAS				LOWLANDS, RENTING				
	Altitude			Total/	Almudes sown				Total/
	2400 m	2000 m	1600 m	Average	1 - 1.9	2 - 2.9	3 - 3.9	4 - 5	Average
Number of questionnaires	17	8	15	40	4	3	4	2	17
Proportion of the crop	0.22	0.10	0.20	0.52	0.08	0.10	0.18	0.12	0.48
Family labour, days	30.2	36.5	33.7	32.8	46.7	50.2	20.1	18.2	35.0
Wage labour, days	6.8	5.9	7.8	7.0	6.6	5.0	16.3	26.9	12.4
Costs of transport [1]	3,473	4,606	8,365	5,534	35,824	8,001	12,789	15,228	19,147
Costs of fertilizers and herbicides [1]	19,482	15,371	17,335	17,855	27,442	15,528	28,136	28,208	25,024
Costs of wage labour [1]	12,850	12,397	15,872	13,893	16,619	10,279	40,793	63,157	29,754
Total cost	35,805	32,375	41,572	37,282	79,886	33,809	81,718	106,593	73,925
Harvest, almudes	36.21	56.65	71.49	53.53	91.29	75.00	99.08	99.35	91.17
Rent, almudes	4	0	3	3	12	6	14	12	11
Net value of harvest [1]	38,506	59,781	76,831	57,156	84,982	94,040	95,235	105,478	93,380
Net returns [1]	2,755	27,406	35,259	19,874	5,096	60,231	13,517	-1,115	19,455
Return to family labour [1]	91	751	1,046	606	109	1,200	672	-61	556
Return to working capital [2]	0.08	0.85	0.85	0.53	0.06	1.78	0.17	-0.01	0.83

[1] In March 1987 pesos (1,018 pesos= US$1).
[2] After covering costs, in March 1987 pesos.

Costs and returns to rain-fed *milpa* farming, based on averages per *almud* of corn seeded. Data are for the 1987/88 agricultural year and show average per-*almud* inputs and returns on parcels that a sample of 22 Apas farmers cultivated in the highlands and the lowlands. The *almud* (.75 litre) is a standard unit of measure for corn and corresponds roughly to the amount seeded per *tablon* or hectare of land. Highland parcels, all of approximately 1 hectare in size, are grouped by altitude zone because yields vary considerably by altitude. Lowland parcels, which vary minimally in altitude (approximately 500 metres) were mostly rented parcels of varying size and are grouped by size to show variations in returns to scale.

All values are per-*almud* values for a given group of suveyed parcels, shown as averages. Peso costs are deflated to March 1987 peso equivalents. Family labour, in days, includes unsalaried work in the field and management. Fertilizer and herbicide costs are cash outlays for the purchase of these chemical inputs. Rental costs are in *almudes* withdrawn from harvest to deliver to land owner. Almost all lowland parcels were rented; almost all highland parcels were not.

The value of the net harvest per *almud* (after rent), which includes the value of fresh corn (*elotes*) harvested early, is based on the price Zinacantecos who sold corn at the harvest (February 1988) received at harvest time. At that time, Zinacantecos received about 258,000 pesos per ton, as compared to the 310,000 peso guaranteed price. Many farmers waited until later in 1988 to sell at a higher price. Net returns are after deducting costs, but not the value of family labour. Returns to family labour are shown in pesos per day (deflated to March 1987 values) and compare unfavourably to then-prevailing daily wages for field-hands (1,500 pesos with food, 2,000 pesos without) and for unskilled and skilled construction workers (2,500 pesos, 5,000 pesos). Returns (after costs and rent) to capital are shown as a ratio (after indexing) of net returns to total cash outlays. Harvest yields are shown as the number of *almudes* harvested per *almud* of corn seeded.

Daniel C. Mountjoy compiled the budgets in Apas in March 1988.

change in transport, in costs and in access, was one factor bringing Zinacanteco cultivation closer to home when farming revived after 1982.

Chemical inputs[4] - heavily promoted by agricultural extension agents and manufacturers - also allowed for concentrating Apas farming closer to home, increasing the acreage that Zinacantecos could keep in cultivation by eliminating the need to fallow *milpas* to recuperate their fertility. Zinacantecos once would fallow highland fields for 8 to 15 years after cultivating them for two or three seasons at most. Over time, the required fallowing grew because, as Zinacantecos put it, "the land tired", and highland yields - 44 units of harvest to each unit of seed in 1967 - began to drop. Zinacantecos had experimented with fertilizer as early as 1967 but came to use it regularly only after subsidized fertilizer became available locally in the early 1980s. They used it first in the lowlands and then in the highlands. Now, they say, highland fields must be fertilized to be worth farming, even though fertilizer subsidies have been cut. With fertilizer, Zinacantecos get yields averaging 53 units of harvest for each unit seeded. They farm fields almost continuously through regular application of fertilizer and by using chemical weed sprays to control the runner grasses that used to strangle *milpa* after a year or two of use. Once a scrub forest punctuated by scattered *milpas*, the Apas ejidal and communal lands are today a virtual sea of *milpa*.

In the 1960s, Zinacantecos of Apas undertook only about 20 per cent of their farming in the highlands and the rest on rented lowland fields. In 1987, by contrast, highland acreage accounted for 52 per cent of the farming undertaken by Zinacantecos of Apas. Among the 22 farmers that Mountjoy studied, 12 farmed solely in the highlands. Only 10 also farmed in the lowlands, where farming proved profitable only at a very modest scale with a minimum of hired labour. Several of the 10 suffered losses in the lowlands. No one farmed only in the lowlands.

Zinacanteco farming now requires substantial capital (see table1). Simple tools and equipment (machete, hoe, billhook, bags) and a reserve of corn sufficient to feed one's household and field workers are no longer enough to enable a Zinacanteco household to farm. Fertilizer and weed sprays must be purchased. Workers, if they are hired, no longer wait for payment in kind after the harvest; they expect payment in cash at the time of their work. Local truckers must be paid to haul the harvest home. At the same time, those who have capital can expect reasonable returns to expenditures in farming as long as they keep hired labour costs down. Zinacantecos who farmed in the highlands during the 1987/88 season earned returns to working capital of about 85 per cent, after inflation, except at the highest altitudes.

Returns to capital invested in lowland farming were poorer, except for parcels of modest size farmed with a minimum of hired labour. One can see that returns to lowland farming drop when Zinacantecos farm there on a large scale. When Zinacantecos seed more than 2 *almudes* of *milpa* in the lowlands (an amount roughly equal to 2 hectares), they expend more labour than most families can supply, and the wages and

4. I do not attempt to analyse the long-term ecological and health consequences of the use of fertilizers and herbicides. They deserve serious study. Herbicides, in addition, pose serious health risks when misapplied. Zinacantecos routinely apply herbicides in ways that do not even begin to meet the precautions recommended by manufacturers.

costs of feeding and transporting hired labour rapidly erode returns to larger scale. The negative returns to scale shown in table 1 are based on the assumption that all farmers sell corn at the prices prevailing at harvest time and thus conceal the fact that some who farm on a large scale can afford to wait until later in the season to sell at a more advantageous price. As Mountjoy concluded (1988:53), "Profitable large scale production in the lowlands requires a large capital investment and the ability to retain the crop until prices rise later in the season." But in both zones, capital expenditures were indispensible. As a result, many poorer Zinacantecos no longer have the means to farm unless they borrow money, whereas wealthier compatriots with cash to spare from other enterprises do.

Farming now requires less labour. Fields that used to take two weeks to hoe can be sprayed clean of weeds in a few days. In 1987, families provided most of the labour, but making *milpa* remunerated families poorly relative to prevailing wage rates. Zinacantecos are farming with little hired labour, in part because returns to farming *milpa* do not justify paying prevailing wages to field-hands.

It would seem that highland farming earns Zinacantecos a reasonable return to working capital but a lower return to family labour than prevailing wages. One must bear in mind that Zinacantecos interdigitate farming with other work and business for which not all family members are equally fit. Although Zinacantecos seem always to be busy, it is probably also the case that the regional economy cannot offer them full employment. That they should farm at a poorer return to family labour than prevailing wage rates is perhaps understandable in these terms. We should also consider the cultural terms in which Zinacantecos distinguish "seeking food" from "making money", a topic I shall discuss below. A Zinacanteco household of average size consumes about 60 *almudes* (900 metric litres, 650 kilos) of corn in food, not counting the amount they may feed to animals. On average, a family would have to farm 2.34 *tablones* in the highlands to secure this much corn after paying for the costs of farming. Of the 22 men represented in table 1, ten farmed in excess of this amount in the highlands alone, but 7 farming only in the highlands worked less acreage. Thus some Zinacantecos farm enough to feed themselves and more; others do not and must seek food or make money to buy it in other ways.

Working "Together" in Households

Zinacantecos speak of people as working "together" when they produce and consume jointly, typically as members of a household who cultivate *milpa* together and who feed and clothe themselves from the product of their work. Husband, wife and dependents in a conjugal family usually work "together" in this way. Some households take in as "orphans" infants or children that others cannot afford to raise; orphans work "together" in the households that raise them. Children who marry may continue to work "together," living virilocally or uxorilocally with parents until their work - and consumption - becomes "separate", even

though they may continue to live under one roof. Although being "together" paradigmatically centres around the production and consumption of corn, the concept can embrace other productive activities, for example when parents and children work together in joint selling, or when a young man contributes occasional wagework earnings into the pool from which his family's consumption is funded.

Members of households in which Zinacantecos work "together" can be thought of as engaging in a series of such reciprocal exchanges, of different inputs to production (women's cooking, men's work in the fields; parents' assets, children's labour) entailing a right to share in product (food, lodging, clothing, and ultimately a share of accumulated assets). But they can also be thought of in terms of the playing out of power relations that shape the composition and activities of households in the first instance.

The legacy of patriarchy, law, vests rights in farmland primarily in men and enables them to dispose of women's labour and reproduction. By virtue of age, mature parents have power over immature children. Through the course of life, maturing children gradually acquire power vis-à-vis aging parents. Households result from the interplay of such power differentials. In the Zinacanteco household, the head is paradigmatically the eldest married male whose organization of *milpa* production dictates the pace and scale of women's cooking - to feed field workers as well as household members - and the disposition of the labour of sons and sons-in-law, if any are coresident. He may transact with other household heads the marriage of sons and daughters. The head's wife holds power over the domestic work of daughters and daughters-in-law. New households form as maturing children gain power at the expense of aging, infirm or widowed parents, taking over property and productive assets.

This model of relations among generations and sexes has been profoundly affected by the changing relations of production in maize agriculture. With fewer field-hands to feed than in the past, for example, women have less cooking to do, especially in households where men also seek wagework or do business away from home. Such a situation affects the balance of power between women and their men. At the same time, elder men, who used to control the economic futures of sons, no longer necessarily do so.

Changing Marriage Practices and Shifting Control over Unremunerated Household Labour

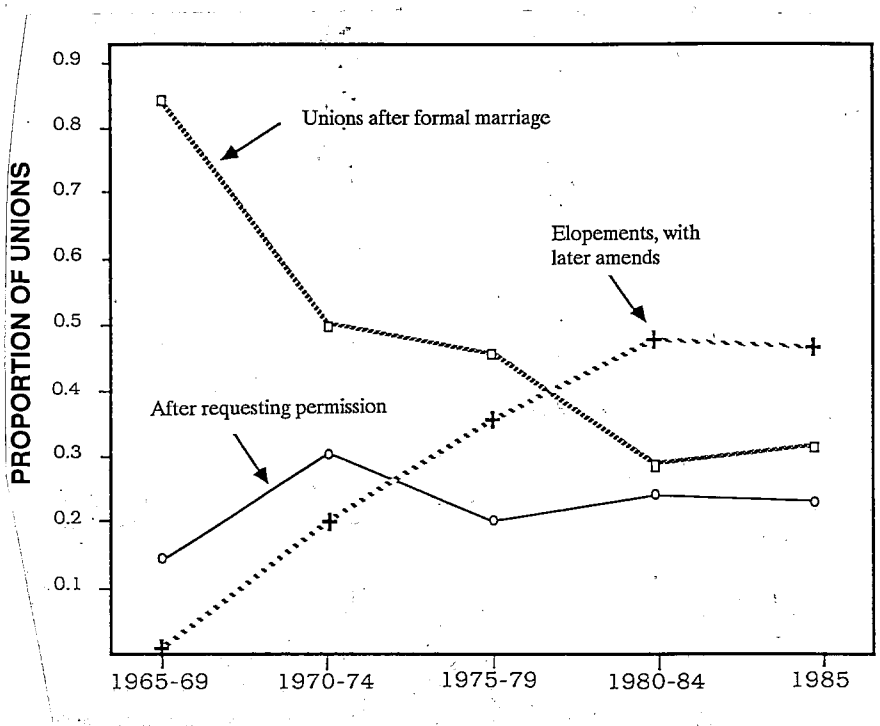
Young men of Apas readily earn income today, much more so than did men of older generations in their youth, through unskilled or skilled wagework, vending or independent contracting in construction. Even though many grow up in farming households and contribute some of their labour to the making of *milpa*, their earned income gives them an unprecedented degree of independence. That they do not draw on household corn supplies while away selling or working, buying food from their earnings when they are in distant towns, partly justifies their contributing only a modest portion of their income, if any at all, to their

parents. They are free to spend their money on clothes - rancher-style boots, pants, hats - or, for that matter, on liquor, and sooner or later on marriage.

The economic independence of youth has drastically altered courtship and marriage in Apas. In the heyday of Zinacanteco *milpa* cultivation of the 1950s and 1960s, long and costly courtships were the rule, and suitors had not only to borrow from their parents to afford to marry but to rely on elder kin to negotiate the marriage. Young couples began marriage heavily in debt, which they worked off by contributing their labour to the *milpa* production of the household in which they lived, usually with the groom's parents. Elders thereby subordinated youth to the labour-intensive needs of *milpa* production.

But today *milpa* production has become much less labour-intensive, while youth have themselves acquired greater economic independence. Parents need no longer rely on so large a domestic work force of cooks and field-hands to farm, and youthful wage earners and business entrepreneurs need no longer feel so beholden to parents. The balance of power between parents and youth has shifted, and, as a result, so have marriage practices. Increasingly, over recent decades, grooms have forestalled courtship altogether by persuading their brides to elope (see figure 5), restoring relations with in-laws with lump-sum cash payments to compensate them for the cost of having brought up their daughter.

Figure 5
Changing Marriage in Apas



Formal marriages after "house entering" have been in steady decline since 1965, whereas elopements have become the norm. The data concern first marriages only.

The diminished power of elders over youth continues well after marriage. In the past, marriage brought parents of the couple into an alliance, validated by ritual ties of *compadrazgo*, in which they held considerable power over children's affairs. Young couples had little recourse other than to parents for help in marital quarrels, intervention in disputes with neighbours, assistance in ritual, etc. Politics, in turn, revolved heavily, and often decisively, around the hold elders had over married children. Such kin relations continue to be important today, but their tenor has shifted as other bases for aligning power, including class, have grown in importance.

In short, changed economic circumstances have reshaped the power relations within Zinacanteco households to the extent that elder kin can no longer orchestrate junior kin in ways that used to underpin their own broader, but kin-based, factional followings. Younger men, especially those who have gained economic independence from their elder kin, are now in a position to challenge elders as to the constitution and even the meaning of households.

Working for Food vs. Working for Money

Corn, as the quintessential food, has been central to what it means to Zinacanteco men and women to live together in households. But as productive relations in farming change, and as Zinacantecos turn increasingly to wage work and use cash earnings to purchase commodities - including foods - other than corn, those very concepts have been subject to challenge and to change.

For the older generation of Zinacantecos, living together in households meant, above all, sharing in the production and consumption of corn. Although Zinacantecos distinguish different kinds of foods by roots of the verbs for eating (/ve7-/[5] for corn-based foods; /ti7-/ for meats; /lo7-/ for fruits, etc.), the generic concept of food was and is that of corn (ve7el). Regardless of how household members contributed to household production, by cooking, planting, hoeing and even working for wages, they were conceived as working for and having a stake in the corn supply from which a household ate and funded its ongoing production. Whether or not families worked "together" was described in terms of whether or not they ate together. When households split, they divided stored-up corn in proportion to members' contributions to it. The right to inherit hinged on whether or not heirs supported elderly benefactors, by lodging and feeding them if they had the need.

When families were too poor to feed themselves, their members might "seek food" in work for others; and an important responsibility of Zinacanteco employers was to provide them food and lodging. Thus employers used to pay workers in corn. Today, although some Zinacantecos still "seek food" in work, many seek money instead. And while some Zinacanteco employers board their workers, many simply pay cash wages, as do most non-Indian employers.

5. The verb roots are in a phonemic transcription in which the character 7 is a glottal stop.

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Zinacantecos hire field-hands when they farm on a scale that requires more labour than the members of their households working "together" can supply. During the 1950s and 1960s, most Zinacantecos who farmed rented lowland tracts on a large scale contracted workers from neighbouring Chamula on a seasonal basis to work for them. Zinacantecos would work alongside their employees and supervise them. Chamula workers expected their Zinacanteco employers to cover the costs incidental to their work, transport and food. Generally, Zinacantecos paid Chamula workers not in cash at the time of work but in corn from the future harvest delivered to their homes. Some poor Zinacantecos also worked for other Zinacantecos in this manner during the 1950s and 1960s. In Apas, those who worked as field-hands for other Zinacantecos also farmed *milpa* of their own, but they were poor, predominantly of the lowest quartile of wealth.

With the greater proletarianization of the 1970s and 1980s, a much larger proportion of Zinacantecos has taken up wagework for others as field-hands. At the same time, employment practices have shifted markedly toward the payment of cash wages. Seventy-four per cent of the quartile of poorest men do some work as field-hands, and in the middle quartiles the percentages are 36 and 29 per cent respectively. As in the past, many of these men also farm corn in their own right - but they also now work as unskilled labourers in construction, in commerce, etc. As in the past, Zinacanteco employers pay field-hands' transport costs, but employment need not entail the provision of workers' food. Although many employers and workers negotiate for the worker to be fed at a discount on wages (for example, in 1987, being paid 1,500 pesos per day plus food instead of 2,000 pesos per day without food; or in 1989 being paid 42-45,000 pesos plus food per week instead of 55-60,000 pesos without food), some employers do pay straight cash wages. Today, workers have become accustomed to being paid in cash weekly or semi-monthly rather than awaiting payment in corn at the time of harvest.

Men's work outside of agriculture usually involves relations with non-Zinacanteco employers in unskilled construction jobs or other work in distant urban places. In such employment, workers generally receive all-cash wages and purchase their own food. Some Zinacantecos do work for other Zinacantecos in non-agricultural jobs, however, as chauffeurs of trucks, as vendors in market stalls, in construction of homes in Apas. It is true that Zinacanteco employers commonly feed such workers as well as paying them. But they do not pay them in corn. Thus working men, today, work for wages rather than for food.

Many women, by contrast, still work for food. Women from households that experience shortfalls in food - typically women from poor households, or women from households that lack men to head up farming - "seek food" by taking up piecework for other women. They may make tortillas and hardtack for other women, using the other woman's corn, but supplying their own firewood, accepting as pay an amount of corn equal to that which they process.

Some Zinacanteco women, predominantly those who are elderly, poor and/or widowed, also work as remunerated field-hands, especially in *milpas* close to home in the highlands, and in harvest. Generally these women are "seeking food", rather than "seeking money", and receive pay in kind with an option of cash. For example, an elderly widow and her daughter harvested a younger couple's beans in a *milpa* close to Apas and received a standard measure of 4 dry litres of shelled bean for each sack of unshelled bean they harvested, but the younger woman asked for the cash equivalent of beans - 5,000 pesos - for one of the bags she had harvested. It is true that some women weave for other women for pay, but others do so for corn, and many women simply trade weaving to take advantage of one another's different weaving skills or embroidery abilities.

The differences in the meaning of work and its relation to livelihood are thus gendered as well as generational. Young men, above all, who have matured in the contemporary world of work for wages are bringing changed meanings into the lives of their elders and their womenfolk, who did and do live in a world of work for food. In contrast to those who once were fed by their employers, young workers expect to feed themselves in construction work and other employment, just as their self-employed Zinacanteco counterparts who run market stands or do trucking in distant lowland cities and towns. They relish being able to try out foods other than corn. And, ever attentive to style, they experiment with popular clothing, music and electronic wares.

As they bring new consumption home in the form of non-corn foods, faddish clothes and even changed house construction, youthful Zinacantecos are altering concepts of living together in ways that challenge meanings held by the older generation and by women of their own generation that centre on shared production and consumption of corn. The conflict over changing meanings emerges poignantly in marital disputes. In airing quarrels with their husbands, many women take their mates to task for spending their wages in unessential consumption rather than on inputs for the production of corn or on the provision of corn and beans for their families. In disputes that pit young wives against their in-laws, the wives seek resolutions in terms of setting up independent households through the division of corn supplies, even when their husbands earn most of their income in wagework and commerce. For their part, young men are likely to counter charges of neglect by reference to new goods they have provided - such as the different kinds of footwear they have bought for their children (tennis, sandal, boot). And they try to resolve disputes through cash settlements. Living together, for them, does not centre on provisioning their homes with corn, but rather with commodities bought from earnings.

Labour Futures: Labour as an Alienated Commodity

Wealthy Zinacantecos whose trucking, vending or construction contracting businesses give them cash to spare resort increasingly to prepaying workers at a discount to contract for their future labour. Zinacantecos who are desperate for cash and cannot secure loans (see below) resort to selling their labour early, placing themselves at the disposal of their employer to call upon them when their labour is needed throughout the following agricultural cycle. In recent years, as wages have risen to adjust for inflation, the prepayment for future labour early in the agricultural cycle has been at about half the rate of wage that prevails by the close of the cycle. For the employer, prepaying wages at a discount brings the wage down closer to the poor rate of return that *milpa* farmers receive on their own family labour (refer to table 1), making it feasible for the employer to substitute hired labour for family labour. Such employment forces the worker to accept a low wage and strips him of discretion to work for other employers later in the season except with the consent of the employer to whom he is indebted. The worker may even find himself assigned by his employer to work for someone else. His work has become alienated as a commodity.

New Meanings for Old Land

Zinacantecos continue to acquire land primarily by inheritance and not by purchase. Ejidal land, by law, passes from the head of household to whom it has been assigned to a single designated heir - usually from father to son. Tracts of communal farmland generally pass from parents to sons; settlement land passes to all children. By Zinacanteco custom, children legitimate their right to inherit by supporting parents in their old age and burying them properly. Heirs who are willing to support elderly kin can thwart alienation of land from the line of descent, for example if a parent endeavours to sell a parcel of communal land. Although some Zinacantecos have managed to purchase land, especially settlement land, farmland continues not to be a freely marketed commodity. It should be borne in mind that demographic growth has negated the effect of the distribution of *ejido* land on inequalities in land tenure (refer to figure 1); as in 1939, just before the distribution of land in the *ejido* of Zinacantan, half of Apas's married men lacked land in 1989.

At the same time, ownership of land has shifted over the years to reflect the growing power of youth vis-à-vis their elder kin. When I surveyed farmland in 1967, 56 per cent was in the hands of men over 45 years of age and only 35 per cent was held by men aged 25-44 years. The distribution reflected the relative power that elder Zinacantecos held over youthful heirs. By virtue of the marriage system, that indebted youth to them, and by making respectful obedience a precondition for the distribution of a household's productive assets, elders used to control the productive labour of offspring well after children's marriage. Today,

by contrast, elder Zinacantecos control only 44 per cent of the land, while men aged 25-44 hold 49 per cent. This shifting of ownership to young men is related to changing age structure of the population, but it also mirrors their increasing economic independence and the concomitant advantages they have in transacting relations with elder kin. Today's youth can marry without incurring debt. Many are unafraid to challenge parents and in-laws in the realm of public politics. And young adults can command earlier distribution of inheritable assets as the price of supporting their parents in old age, rather than having to demonstrate the right to inheritance through respectful obedience.

While land itself has not become a commodity to be bought and sold, the use of land has become so, to a substantial degree, in ways that also reflect the growing economic power of Apas's younger adults. Firewood once was free for women to gather anywhere in the *ejido* or communal lands, but today Zinacantecos treat woodlot fuel as a private good to be bought and sold. Rental of highland parcels for cultivation has also become more widespread.

Zinacantecos of means who own land do not give out their fields in rental. A trucker, who was also a farmer with land, criticized his half-brother to me as foolish for having rented out land for others to use. His brother should have kept it fallow for his own use in another year if he was not going to farm it at the time, he said. But his half-brother told me he was happy to rent out fields that he could not farm himself because he could not afford chemical inputs. Zinacantecos generally pay one another rent in kind (3 of the average 11 to 13 bags of corn harvested for each hectare rented), and the half-brother was happy to receive the corn.

Now that highland farming requires capital expenditures, poor families with non-liquid land assets more readily turn land over in rental to those who have capital. During the 1987 farming season, the majority of those who gave land in rent were single or widowed women "seeking" food in the form of rent in kind and poorer married men who made most of their living from work not requiring capital, as field-hands or peons. Those who farmed rented land were wealthier young adults, many of whom derived substantial income from skilled wagework and commerce and who thus could afford fertilizer, weed sprays, and even the cost of labourers to farm for them.

Renting farmland is one of the many alternatives, furthermore, in which Zinacantecos with cash can invest their assets flexibly. Rented land need not entail a long term commitment of renter to landowner. Thus, a wealthy merchant and truck owner rented enough Apas farmland in the 1987 season to employ as many as 25 field-hands at a time to work those fields for him, but in 1989 he rented not at all in the highlands, having decided to farm land he had rented near lowland Villaflores, where he owns and runs his fruit and vegetable business. Such employers may be too deeply involved in activities other than farming to be able even to work alongside and directly supervise their workers. They may

leave supervision to a dependent, or they may trust their employees to work on their own. One Zinacanteco who works full-time in commerce simply contracted the harvest of his *milpa* to three Zinacantecos as piece-work to be paid a set amount regardless of how they organized the work.

Lending and Borrowing: "Letting Money Work" for New Elites

The character of lending and borrowing in Zinacantan has changed as productive relations have become more class-based and capitalist. Zinacantecos have always borrowed from one another for the expenses of curing, ritual cargos, and funerals, but often from kin or ritual kin (*compadres*) without interest. The giving of loans was one of the ways in which the powerful could obligate others through generosity. This is not to say that borrowing was always without the payment of interest: Zinacantecos did pay interest on loans taken out for production of *milpa*. Today, Zinacantecos still expect not to have to pay interest on loans taken for ritual, but loans taken at interest for production have proliferated. Some poorer women make production loans as a way of "seeking food". But most rich lenders, men and women, now loan for the purpose of "making money" by letting money "work", rather than as a way of building personal followings through generosity.

Lending and borrowing have become more prevalent in production as Zinacantecos need more cash than ever before to farm *milpa*. Fertilizer and chemical weed sprays must be purchased, if not acquired on credit. Wages for field-hands are generally paid in cash close to the time of work rather than in kind from the future harvest. Truckers expect cash payment for transporting farmers to the field or harvest to market or home. Zinacantecos also need cash to earn a living other than in *milpa*. Merchants need funds to purchase their inventory and cover transport and living costs while on selling trips. Zinacantecos who invest in such capital equipment as trucks or corn mills may resort to banks and government agencies for credits, but they also borrow from compatriots.

Those Zinacantecos who have rights in the *ejido* of Zinacantan or who own communal land tracts are eligible for credit from the state, through the Banco Rural, for the purchase of fertilizer with crop insurance from the Aseguradora Nacional Agrícola y Ganadera (ANAGSA). Farmers receive credit in June to pay off after harvest in February. Zinacantecos do use these credits, especially if they lack cash in June when fertilizer must be applied, but they feel penalized by having to repay credits in February at harvest time, when crop prices are at their seasonal low. At the same time, they also borrowed significantly from one another, even at higher interest rates than offered by the Banco Rural, avoiding the paperwork loans require and the unfavourable date of maturity at harvest time.

Tzotzil distinguishes two kinds of loans that Zinacantecos make to one another, those used to pay for future delivery of a crop by buying it while it is still "green", and those that bear interest. Loans against future

delivery of a crop simply purchase the crop at a discount - for example, in June at half the market price anticipated at the time of harvest and delivery the following January or February. Interest-bearing loans pay an agreed-upon monthly rate on principal, typically 10 to 20 per cent per month, over a specified term; interest is not compounded. The rates of interest are roughly similar to the returns Zinacantecos earned to cash inputs in *milpa* farming in 1987 after inflation (refer to table 1), suggesting that loans and farming are comparable investments for those who have capital to spare.

Seven women, all of them never-married, separated, or widowed heads of households, give out loans in the form of the purchase at a discount of corn to be harvested in the future. Most of these women are elderly and poor. Most are following a subsistence strategy in which corn purchased early at a substantial discount is used both for food and for fodder for pigs and chickens. A woman will fatten pigs from part of the harvest received in January or February, retaining corn for her own consumption; she will sell the pigs in June or July and use the proceeds to give out loans against next year's harvest to farmers who lack the cash needed to buy fertilizer and weed killer. These women are said to be "seeking food" rather than "seeking money", in contrast to the wealthy women who give out loans at interest and to the wealthy men who give out both kinds of loans.

Among men in Apas, eight of the 29 most wealthy give out loans of one or the other kind. Except for three older men who earned their wealth long ago in *milpa*, all derive substantial income from activities other than farming *milpa*, activities in which cash assets play an important part. They are said to be "seeking money" by letting their money "work" for others for a price. Some are young truck owners (two of the four who make regular runs to Tuxtla Guiterrez and San Cristobal markets); others are middle-aged merchants who own and run lucrative market stalls in lowland towns. Another received a windfall of cash as indemnity when the government closed down the reforestation programme in which he worked. Two of the 10 who give out loans also run stores in Apas, and two operate corn grinding mills. All are married heads of households.

Through lending, these wealthy Zinacantecos are living in substantial measure from the product of others' work in a manner that used to characterize only non-Indian usurers. Their advantaged position enables some of them to explore new ways of living and working. One, for example, who is 32 years old, works less hard as a trucker today than when he ran both a truck and a van because he now earns interest on the money he made when he sold his van. He is reputed to have 20 million pesos out in loans. Unlike elders of yore who gathered followings by making loans to common folk, he lends only to men of substantial means. And althouth he told me that he could easily earn 1 million pesos per month by running his truck every day, he only does so on the weekdays

that give him the most lucrative business, because he earns so much income from interest.

Transport and Politics

In the 1950s, Zinacantecos walked to their *milpas* and packed tools, food and harvested crops on horse or mule. Wealthy Zinacantecos might own five or six beasts of burden that they would rent out to other Zinacantecos in harvest season and to some who engaged in long-distance trading. As roadways spread into the Grijalva valley during the 1960s, Zinacantecos began to hire motorized transport to reach fields rented in more distant zones than before (cf. Cancian). Zinacantecos living along major roadways invested in trucks. Today, wealthy Zinacantecos own a fleet of trucks and vans, undertaking the majority of shipping paid for by other Zinacantecos, and the *Camioneros* (Truckers) have emerged as the dominant élite.

To engage in commercial transport of passengers and their produce, truck or van owners must affiliate with associations that obtain route concessions from the state, and in practice they are thereby beholden to the party in power, the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI). There are three such associations in Zinacantan, one for the fleet of Zinacanteco owned vans and two for truckers. A man from Navenchauk, the hamlet on the Pan American highway that developed commercial flower trading in conjunction with trucking, founded the larger of the two truckers' unions several years ago. His union represents over 60 truck owners, most (but not all) Zinacantecos. When a competitor from Apas attempted to form a rival union with some 20 trucker members about six years ago, while he was still associated with an opposition party, state authorities made it clear that the union would not receive its route concession until he reverted to the PRI, which he did. Most truckers in both unions consequently are *priistas*, who are thereby referred to as *Camioneros*, although there are some truckers who form part of the opposition to the PRI in Zinacantan, as well as many *priistas* who are not owners of trucks.

Zinacanteco-owned transport has become increasingly important to Apas *milpa* cultivation as logging roads have opened up the ejidal and communal lands to truck transport since 1982. Transport had always been a major cost of *milpa* production, especially for those who farmed on distant rented lands in the lowlands. After the economic crisis of 1982, when the state began to cut fuel subsidies and to raise gasoline prices, the cost of transport to and from the lowlands became prohibitive for many Zinacanteco farmers; and this change, coupled with the opening of nearby highland tracts to motor transport, contributed to the shift of Apas *milpa* cultivation from the lowlands to the highlands as Zinacantecos returned from wagework to *milpa* after the 1982 crisis. Zinacanteco trucking has also made it easier to transport new fruit and garden crops to market and more comfortable for the monolingual - especially women - to do so.

It would seem that transport costs account for much of the variation in prices Zinacantecos receive for their harvest. Zinacantecos who sold corn at harvest in February 1988 received about 258.50 pesos per kilo, as compared to the 310,000 peso per ton guaranteed price which they might have received if they had paid to deliver the crop to a federal warehouse. In December, 1989, when the guaranteed price had risen to 435,000 pesos per ton, Zinacantecos were receiving 360 pesos per kilo at the site of harvest, about 390 pesos per kilo after transporting corn back home, and about 420 pesos per kilo if they hauled it from home to San Cristobal to sell - differences largely attributable to the cost of transport. A trucker speculated that the price per kilo might be higher than the guaranteed price in distant Villahermosa, perhaps as high as 500 pesos per kilo, but that the cost of transport did not justify transporting to this market of high demand.

The Apas truckers hold a monopoly on transport from the hamlet to the Tuxtla and San Cristobal markets by virtue of their route concessions. As the Zinacanteco truckers' unions meet regularly to co-ordinate and set transport fees, they protect one another from pressures from clients to compete in shipping fees. Truckers demand - and receive - cash on the line for transport, whether the product is hauled from field to home for consumption or is destined for sale in the market. As almost all produce from Apas lands sold into regional markets is transported by Apas truckers, they are in a position of power that could be expected to wrest advantage from any increase in the market value of products.

Ritual and politics also generate passenger business for truckers. Fares from Apas to the ceremonial centre, Jteklum, where cargo-holding families perform ritual and where the municipal court and other municipal offices function, are 2,400 pesos each way per passenger. A litigant seeking to settle a dispute outside his or her hamlet must also foot the bill for transport of spokespersons and witnesses to the municipal court. Therefore the cost of transport is an important weapon in political disputes; and truckers, who can provide transport, hold an important political asset.

In the past, Zinacanteco public life was founded upon stratification based on rank. Politics revolved around the personal followings of men of the generation who were beholden to the PRI for distribution of *ejido* lands during the land reform. Political leaders - often brokers for the programmes of the state - were those who, in the manner of elders, orchestrated kin and followers to help them fund prestigious careers as cargo holders, thus gaining the prerogative to speak for others.

Today, the politics of Zinacantan have become increasingly class-based. *Camioneros* (Truckers) affiliated with the PRI are the dominant faction. In opposition to them stand the *Campesinos* (Peasants), so-called despite the fact that many of them are semi-proletarians who

depend heavily upon wagework for their livelihoods. Even though the PRI encompasses peasants and workers, as well as the wealthy truckers, while the semi-proletarian *Campesinos* may be led by newly wealthy, the opposing groups do nevertheless conform roughly to the classes emerging in Zinacanteco productive relations.

As the *Campesinos* have sought support in the larger political arena, they have turned to various interest groups within the PRI, to the opposition Partido de Acción Nacional (PAN), and even - in the case of the hamlets of Apas and Nachih - to the Partido Revolucionario Democrático (PRD), as new *cardenistas*. They have used the rhetoric of recent elections to lambaste the *Camioneros* as corrupt power holders who have used public resources for personal gain. And they have held forth the promise to their followers that opposition parties, if they are brought to power, will improve the lot of peasants - even poor peasants or semi-proletarians - by raising the prices paid to primary producers of corn and other staple crops, which have recently been extremely low.

The hope of these poorer Zinacanteco farmers is that, with higher crop prices, they can offset to some extent the rapidly rising cost of cultivation and thus forestall their further marginalization within the context of an increasingly capital-intensive maize farming environment. There is no doubt that low producer prices hurt such people. Nevertheless the overall picture is a complex one indeed. In a context like that of Zinacantan, raising the price of corn will most directly benefit those who farm corn not for subsistence, but for the sale of surplus into the market. It is the Zinacanteco entrepreneurs, who have capital to deploy at will in commerce, trucking, and farming - wealthy men of the PRI as well as young, newly wealthy upstarts among the *cardenista* opposition - who stand most to profit. Those who stand most to lose are the growing number of people in Zinacantan who have no recourse but to buy food in the market.

Once a peasant society stratified by rank, Zinacantan was a place where the disadvantaged - young, or poor, or female and widowed - could count on the generosity of elders and leaders who relied upon them for their own standing. They could count on others for their basic livelihood, corn food, as long as they were willing to work in others' corn production. But corn food, and its production as such, is being displaced from its once-central place in Zinacanteco life by the making of money and the consumption of commodities. Ironically, this is increasingly so, even as Zinacantecos have returned to farming corn - as capitalist enterprise - in the post-1982 era of economic crisis.

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