COMMUNICATING FOOD IMAGES:

WOMEN'S CONSUMPTION PATTERNS AND ATTITUDES IN A

MEXICAN VILLAGE

by

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ABSTRACT

This paper is a study of the cultural significance of food, and the social activities that surround its purchase, preparation and consumption, among women in the Mexican village of Acambay. The effects of mass media communication, as expressed by the advertising activities of multinational corporations, are examined with respect to their influence upon consumer patterns, modernization, and changing cultural practices and social mores. The data gathered show a contrast between both the symbolic and the nutritional values of traditional native food, and processed food produced in an international market. Theoretically, the paper draws connections among communication as social constitution, the role of knowledge/interests in cultural systems, and the dilemmas of modernity. Food images, as communication, are linked to the contradiction between aspirations toward modernity and commitment to tradition. The relationship with the environment regarding the collection and consumption of food is fundamentally altered by multinational food marketing practices, especially through advertising, but the lifestyles conveyed through advertising are neither possible nor appropriate in the Mexican countryside.

RESUME

Cette étude porte sur la signification culturelle de la nourriture et des activités sociales entourant l'achat, la préparation et la consommation des aliments, au sein des femmes du village mexicain d'Acambay. On examine les effets des mass media, tels qu'exprimés par les activités publicitaires des corporations multinationales. L'étude considère particulièrement l'influence des médias sur les habitudes des consommateurs, sur la modernisation et sur les pratiques culturelles et les coutumes sociales changeantes. Les données montrent qu'il existe un contraste entre les valeurs symboliques et nutritives des aliments traditionels des autochtones et celles des aliments préparés produits dans un marché international. D'une facon théorique, l'étude tisse des liens entre la communication en tant que composante sociale, le rôle du savoir/des intérêts dans les systèmes culturels et les dilemmes du modernisme. Les images alimentaires, qui représentent une forme de communication, sont reliées a la contradiction existant entre les aspirations au modernisme et le respect des traditions. En ce qui a trait à la collecte et la consommation des aliments, les relations avec l'environnement ont été fondamentallement altérées par les pratiques de mise en marché des aliments des multinationales, particulièrement par le biais de la publicité. Cependant, les styles de vie transmis par la publicité ne sont ni possibles ni appropriés au Mexique rural.

For my children, Mireya, Ernesto and Natalia

To the memory of my grandfather, Dr. Jaume Serra-Hunter

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Thuy was very much appreciated.

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Lastly, although the work could have never been completed without the help and encouragement of so many people, I hold myself responsible for any possible error or mistake either in interpretation of the facts or in the approach to the themes.

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CHAPTER I   INTRODUCTION

1.1 General questions and hypothesis

The cultural significance of food, and the social activities that surround its preparation, purchase and consumption among women in the Mexican village of Acambay are the primary concerns of this thesis. The thesis also examines the impact of multinational corporations on rural Mexico's consumer patterns through advertising campaigns, and how this impact impinges on the worldview and life style of Mexican villagers.

In order to discover the spatial relationship between two different cultural forms and the spread of the dominant one in an underdeveloped region of the Estado de Mexico, the study relies on a philosophical approach based on hermeneutic understanding. The main analytical instrument employed for this purpose is the theory of communication. A balance of theoretical approaches and empirical instances elicits the cultural aspects of food that transcend nutritional and biological necessities. Consequently, the data gathered display a contrast between both the symbolic and the nutritional values of traditional native food, and processed food produced in an international market.

An historical overview of Mexican peoples from

pre-Columbian to contemporary days provides an understanding of the process whereby food becomes ceremony, interplay, social exchange, feast or tragedy, depending on the epoch, the place, the region or culture in which it is formulated, for "a food system is a critically important replica of people's's ideals, values, symbols and lived experiences. It is a comprehensive and intimate system of cultural communication which emphasizes a common stake in food security and collective survival" (Khare, 1985:10).

The study of human alimentation and nutrition is a field of global concern, whether we look at it from the situation of affluent or developing countries. Consequently, the thesis examines the connections of the food trade and food interchange. Equally important is the examination of the vehicles which diffuse eating patterns from one culture to another. Therefore, an analysis of the most widely distributed feminine magazine in Mexico, Buenhogar, will be undertaken with the focus upon its food section and food advertising. Native foodstuffs and Mexican cuisine are used as a background to illustrate the contrast between the promoted industrialized food and the traditional food of the general population.

The general approach encompasses, then, the symbolic meaning of food and its relationship with changes, the social variations of attitudes towards food and the representations of "good feeding", the social and cultural meanings of food, the study of the behaviour and attitudes of consumers and their ideas of products, and the relationship of consumption patterns with other variables.

Theoretically, the paper draws connections among

communication as social constitution, the role of knowledge/interests in cultural systems, and the dilemmas of modernity. Food images, as communication, are linked to the contradiction between aspirations toward modernity and commitment to tradition.

The third part of the thesis integrates macro and micro level analysis, fitting the empirical study into the general theory generated by the former statements. To do so an examination of the Mexican food system, with its social and economic implications, is conducted as a pre-requisite to drawing connections between the case study and the overall panorama of national and international food exchange. The presentation and analysis of the fieldwork demonstrates, in this specific case, the principle of cultural influences on food systems. The research is conducted using as a background demographic trends, urban and rural population distribution, government policy and economic activity.

Although the study consists of a contextual analysis of cultural food patterns and cultural influences, demography, population distribution, government policy and economic activity cannot be overlooked if all of the social interrelationships are to be understood. Furthermore, the current standing of Mexico in the international arena also has to be considered: the third largest trading partner of the United States is on the verge of economic and political collapse, at the same time that the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is suggesting a policy of further austerity in order to sustain a precarious equilibrium.

A hundred billion dollar debt is not matched by the

income from oil exports of just 10 billion dollars (TODO
MEXICO, 1985). The Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)
which has ruled the country for 57 years is losing credibility
after its failure to control the inflation rate of 64 percent
and the federal deficit of about 10 percent of the gross
national product, even before the collapse of the oil prices.
And in the field of food, malnutrition and undernutrition
affect 47 percent of the 80 million Mexicans. The food system,
thus, clearly reflects "the peculiarities of the broader system
of socioeconomic relations in which it is embedded"
(Hewitt,1985:13).

The last section of the thesis looks at the connections
between food images and the concept of modernity and urban
aspirations of Mexican villagers. This panorama suggests that
the relationships with the environment regarding the collection
and consumption of food are fundamentally altered by
multinational food marketing practices, especially through
advertising, but the lifestyle conveyed by the latter is
neither possible nor appropriate in the Mexican countryside.

A brief summary of Mexico's history follows in order to
locate the major themes of the thesis within the broader
context of today's reality.

1.2 Mexican historical antecedents.

When the Spanish explorers first set foot in Mexico's
Central High Plateau (1) around 1519, the Indian peoples in the
region had already attained a high degree of social
organization, which showed in land pattern tenure and

MEXICAN REPUBLIC

United States

MEXICAN REPUBLIC

Gulf of Mexico

Pacific Ocean

Guatemala

2

26

8

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25

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28

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24

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FEDERAL STATES

1 Aguascalientes	17 Morelos
2 Baja California	18 Nayarit
3 Baja California Sur	19 Nuevo Leon
4 Campeche	20 Oaxaca
5 Coahuila	21 Puebla
6 Colima	22 Queretaro
7 Chiapas	23 Quintana Roo
8 Chihuahua	24 San Luis Potosi
9 Distrito Federal	25 Sinaloa
10 Durango	26 Sonora
11 Guanajuato	27 Tabasco
12 Queretaro	28 Tamaulipas
13 Hidalgo	29 Tlaxcala
14 Jalisco	30 Veracruz
15 Mexico	31 Yucatan
16 Michoacan	32 Zacatecas

CENTRAL HIGH PLATEAU

4a

agricultural activities among other developments. Religion,
astronomy, mathematics and all cultural manifestations were
closely tied to land and agriculture, because survival depended
on it.

Land was distributed among clans (precincts or
"calpullis"), and the lord or "cacique" of each clan would give
parcels away to individuals, retaining a part for the
sustenance of the temple, the expenses of war, to pay tribute
to the dominant warlords, and for himself. These parcels were
cultivated by slaves and plebeians, whilst the rest were the
lot of freemen. When the latter died, land would pass on to
their children. Had he no descendants, the land would be given
again to the calpulli. In order to protect the land it was
established that he who did not cultivate it for two
consecutive years would give it away to others, for good
harvests were vital for survival (Pina Chan, 1967, 228).

The "calpulli" was the fundamental institution which
regulated human-land relationship and the economic structure in
the pre-Hispanic world. It functioned, too, as the base of
social organization. "Calpulli" meant "big family", and so was
designated to preserve the ties of kinship groups in a precise
cultural and physical space. In short, "calpulli" meant a
territorial clan. The norms which ruled this institution had a
mystical character, for land was perceived as a sacred good.
The macehual (peasant) worshipped the land in order to ensure
survival. Farming the tlamilpa represented at the same time an
economic-pragmatic activity and a magical-religious act without
which production could not be conceived.

Within this context, maize, the most cultivated cereal

'ever' since Indians became sedentary, took on great symbolism, representing life itself and eventually being perceived as the source of life. The macehual thus fulfilled not only physical labour on the land, but ritual activities to bring about the gods' gift of life, corn, from which humanity as a whole had sprung. The mystical attachment to the land represented, too, macehual's identification with nature and its products, as well as the concept of group unity in the calpulli (Aguirre Beltran, 1982:60-63).

This complex relationship with nature and its sacred implications had to be incorporated within the system imposed by European colonizers after 1542. But Indian idiosyncracy and the agri-political land system, which had already been based on slavery and serfdom, were able to bear the burden of domination by strangers, because both systems shared several characteristics. In the centuries which preceded Spanish colonization, Indian social organization, as previously mentioned, was not dissimilar from European patterns: serfs or 'mayeques' worked for the nobility and formed part of their heritage; freemen or 'macehuales' paid tribute to the lords, much in the fashion of a feudal social organization. Thus, from the calpulli to the encomienda (2), and later to the hacienda and plantation systems, the transition was seen as the natural order of life. Indian peoples had already experienced vassalage and slavery.

Furthermore, many spatial and social patterns of settlement were kept through the centuries, surviving the conquest and colonialism. Among the latter are the concentration of people in the Altiplano (Central High

Plateau), the predominance of Mexico-Tenochtitlan over all other Mesoamerican cities, the scarce population of the North and North East, the flourishing of Spanish cities and villages over the bases of ancient indigenous settlements, the design of roads and routes from the Altiplano to the coasts following Indian ways, the mining of gold and silver ores initiated by Indians before the arrival of the Europeans; and most important, the cultivation of the basic foods, maize, beans, chile peppers, calabash and other vegetables, which today are the staples of Mexican population (Bassols Batalla, 1983:101).

Yet another fundamental feature was that Mexico's wealth derived from its Indian work force as well as from its natural resources. What happened to the majority of Indians during the colonial period can, therefore, be deduced from their economic function. The power structure was built around mining, agriculture and commerce, which were concentrated mainly from the state of Jalisco to Veracruz with some interchange within the Centre-Northern region and Oaxaca, the North East of Yucatan and a few Northern places. The Indians usually lived in miserable huts outside the hacienda mansions, growing corn on tiny plots rented--in exchange for a tithe of corn--from the landowner. Their cheap labour spawned opulent mining towns and, in time, they were brought to work in small factories, known as obrajes, that supplied rough textiles and metalwork, and provided the starting point for subsequent urban growth. Village life certainly changed for the Indians who were forced to labour in the industries; they had to assimilate into a culture which exploited their labour and at the same time rejected them, but:

> wherever the Indian managed to retain his land and his own community, he remained an Indian, keeping his language, his customs, his family organization, his religious rituals even if he became a Catholic, using the same tools, working the land much the same way as before the Conquest, eating the same food and living in the same kind of house....When the Indian community was incorporated into a hacienda, where it retained some of its community organization and collective responsibilities, Indian characteristics could also survive, although to a lesser degree. (Tannenbaum, 1966, 37-38, emphasis added)

The hacienda system, meanwhile, constituted the backbone of the colonial plutocratic aristocracy of land owners and mine owners anxious to preserve their forebears' memory with enduring architectural works. The uprooted urban Spaniards professed strict adherence to European models, and the Creole aristocracy of the smaller towns was more receptive to mestizo forms incorporating indigenous concepts. Mexican writer Octavio Paz (1983) says that colonial society was complex, unique and wealthy, and reflected the image of the cities founded, at the same time solid and ostentatious. A double axis stood at the core of the viceroyalties, one being vertical the other horizontal. The former was a hierarchical society ordered by classes and social groups: gentlemen; common people; Indians and slaves. The horizontal axis ordered people through a plurality of jurisdictions and statutes, thus creating an entangled net of different social and ethnic groups.

The richness and refinement of colonial cities in Hispanic America in the mid-18th Century contrasted with the austerity and simplicity of such cities as Boston or Philadelphia. But the splendor of the former was deceiving: it meant the twilight of power whereas for the latter it meant the dawn of a new era (Paz, 1983). For, as Carlos Fuentes (1985:26) has said, colonial Spaniards were:

Renaissance men on the make. They could have chosen, as the homines novi of England or France did...to stake their claims to personal ambition and social ascension on a constitutional order. Having conquered the Indians, they would have then conquered the Crown. They would have been, as the settlers of New England were to become, the fathers of their own local democracy....The conquistadores did not --perhaps they could not-- choose this avenue. Between individualism as democracy and individualism as feudal might, they chose the latter.

Too much power and wealth in a few hands resulted in social unrest in the colony. But even for those Indians gradually absorbed by the system of economic exploitation, political developments in New Spain meant nothing. When independence from Spain finally came, it did nothing to improve their lives. "Records in Mexico indicate that per capita production of ...corn declined from 282 kilograms in 1877 to 154 in 1894 to 144 in 1907; yet Mexican export tonage spiraled upward. The rural masses lost control over the land, their food supply, and ultimately their fate". (Burns, 1983:145)

The War of Independence (1810-1821) was essentially a struggle between the economic interests of the criollos, Spaniards born in the New World, and the peninsulares, the Spaniards sent over by the Crown to govern the colony. Eventually, one day of September, 1810, the parish priest of Dolores, a largely Indian town, told his parishioners that finally the lands stolen from their forefathers three hundred years ago would be theirs again. The war ignited that day was to continue for eleven more years until the expulsion of the Spaniards was accomplished.

The new nation was born into political chaos. For the Indian and mestizo peasants the loss of the minimal protection offered by the mother country brought new injustice. Large

landholdings--latifundia--grew rapidly at the expense of communal land, and a spurt of modernization and industrialization helped to create yet another elite. Mining continued to be the most important sector of the national economy. Progressively, ores of iron and coal began to be exploited, but the main activities still centered on silver and gold, extracted by underpaid Indian labourers. One hundred more years had to elapse before another major breakthrough to restore justice was implemented. This was the Mexican Agrarian Revolution, which had as its objective land reform. The idea of land redistribution had hovered in Mexico's social environment for several years before the actual outbreak in 1910. At that time:

> more than 40 percent of Mexican agricultural land was owned directly or indirectly by American citizens... who...like domestic landowners...built their own police forces, maintained close ties with federal forces, and at times went in for sharp diplomatic arm-twisting to protect their property from expropriation.....All these obstacles to land reform were compounded by the lack of commitment or enforcement at the national level. (Adler Hellman, 1978:27)

This kind of protection for big landowners (latifundistas), was a characteristic of President Porfirio Diaz's dictatorship, which favored industrial development over agricultural improvements. During the tenure of his government, which lasted over thirty years (1876-1911), there was an expansion of scientific research and geographical investigation. Diaz opened the doors to foreigners, both scientists and capital investers. Railroads, industry, mining and science reflected the positivistic (3) philosophy of the regime, which grew impatient with the "Indian problem". Diaz's policies "divested the Indian communities of several million

acres and literally enslaved entire Indian groups" (Burns, 1983:30). The anti-agrarian policy of this regime was the final catalyst for the armed struggle which was to last for another seven to nine years, roughly ending with the assassination of the agrarian leader, Emiliano Zapata, in April 1919.

The Zapatistas' basic law of Agrarian Reform was as original as their Plan de Ayala (first proclaimed late November 1911) (Womack Jr., 1970:393) famous as the premier banner of modern Mexico's most remarkable and controversial experiment: agrarian reform. This originality showed in:

> the specific limits on individual agricultural holdings,
> in the provisions for direct expropriation of land beyond
> those limits and not in the hands of villagers, in the
> definition of village land as perpetually inalienable, in
> the prohibition of agricultural syndicates and companies,
> in the assertion of confiscatory rights over "enemy"
> property, in the establishment of special agrarian courts
> and federal agencies of irrigation, rural credit, and
> agricultural education and research, in the enormous power
> assigned to the ministry of agriculture, and in the resort
> not to state but to municipal authorities for local
> execution. (Womack Jr., 1970:405)

But the true revival of the _ejido_ system (the communal Indian land tenure) after the revolution did not take place until Lazaro Cardenas took up the presidency in 1934, when a new base for state action was established through the alliance between the peasantry and the working class. He hoped to redefine permanently the balance of power in Mexican politics, by giving far greater weight to peasants and workers. Until then no president had confronted the perennial problem of the landless. But his policy was not welcome in all sectors of Mexican society, nor at international levels:

> Land redistribution with cooperative ownership, as well as
> Cardenas's nationalization of the Rockefeller Standard Oil
> subsidiary and foreign-owned railroads, caused "concern"

in Washington and on Wall Street. United States corporate investment dropped by about 40 percent between the mid-thirties and the early 1940s. (Moore-Lappe, 1978:124)

When Cardenas' successor, Manuel Avila Camacho, took power, the land reform program was halted. In its place, industrial development surged. This change provoked a massive exodus of peasants from the countryside to fill the cities and work in the industries. Tens of thousands of displaced peasants also obtained temporary jobs in the United States under the 1942 Bracero Agreement. In this manner, World War II marked the end of the agrarian revolution and heralded the entrance of Mexico into the conceptual frame of Third World developing countries, under a new set of economic arrangements: control over world-prices; foreign aid; and investment by multinational corporations.

From being a supplier of raw materials in the first years of the century, Mexico became a newly industrialized country, with all the problems that this position entailed. The takeoff that followed could not preclude, nevertheless, that:

> since 1950, the number of landless farm workers in Mexico...soared from 1.5 million, representing only 30 percent of the agricultural work force, to estimates ranging as high as 14 million today, well over half of the people in the countryside. (Baird & McCaughan, 1979:47-48)

Contemporary Mexico still shows the shocking extremes of wealth and poverty which centuries of struggles and revolution have not eradicated. With the system's political, economic and social perspectives blocked by short-term problems (such as feeding the poor and appeasing the middle class), little attention can be given to long-term development questions. Yet, as Alan Riding (1985:369) says, in the event of

continued economic growth, it:

> will principally benefit the upper and middle classes,
> further skewing the distribution of wealth. Rural and
> urban poverty will remain endemic, with its accompanying
> problems of malnutrition, avoidable diseases, inadequate
> housing and functional illiteracy....Governments' will
> continue to regard industrial growth as the only way of
> lifting the majority of Mexicans out of poverty, even
> though this strategy has proved wanting in the past.

Industrial growth as a _panacea_ has its roots in the basic contradiction of underdevelopment: the need to develop and the impossibility of doing so. This dichotomy originated long ago, in the last quarter of the 19th Century. Like most Latin American governments, Mexico's government expanded its economic interests to include industrialization, whose first stages concentrated on the consumer items demanded by the elites and the emerging middle class. To do so, foreign machinery needed for the new industries, foreign investment and foreign technicians were warmly welcomed into the national fabric. The result was a substantial outflow of currency to create industries which benefitted only a few. The concept of progress as "the emulation of Northern Europe and the United States triumphed" (Burns, 1983:34), even though the vast majority did not receive benefits from it. Today, the outcome and continuity of past policies still show in the facts and figures of Mexican social and economic reality.

To understand the historical precipitation of the food crisis, therefore, it is necessary to go back in time and look at the cultural perceptions of food which, through many centuries, have shaped the current Mexican food system. As well, the colonial heritage and its disparities among rich and poor, become apparent when history is outlined.

1.3 Cultural perceptions of food.

Throughout Mexican history, food and other goods have been exchanged between the tropical forest and the dry highland areas, the mountainous zones and the lakes regions. Mesoamerica, the region comprising the south of the Lerma-Santiago and Panuco rivers down to the jungles of Central America, can be defined as an area with a spatial system of regular exchange, in which the archeological record documents the presence of objects or goods in regions other than the ones in which they were produced (Vargas, 1985:3).

The traffic in foodstuffs naturally expanded after Columbus reached "the Indies" in 1492, encompassing both the Old World and the New. Thus, Mexico's host of native foods spread to all parts of the planet. The foremost examples are corn, tomatoes, chile peppers, squash, zucchinis, beans, peanuts, turkeys and cacao. These items, widely consumed, were everybody's lot in prehispanic Mexico, but the nobility and the rulers would also have at their disposal what today could be labelled as elements of gourmet cuisine.

In the words of Bernal Diaz del Castillo, the last Aztec ruler, Moctezuma, would drink chocolate from the Soconusco (Chiapas), eat fish from both the Pacific and the Gulf of Mexico, venison from mountains surrounding Tenochtitlan, and many delicacies from the lakes on which the city was built (Vargas, 1985:3). This chronicler provides a fascinating account of the variety of foods to be found in the huge Tlatelolco market, in what is now Mexico City (Novo, 1967:22).

In this market each kind of merchandise was kept by itself

and had its fixed place marked out. "Some stallholders sold beans, and some other vegetables and herbs, some rabbits, hare, deer, young ducks, little dogs (bred for food) and other such creatures, some fruit, some salt, some honey and honey paste, and some cooked food, dough and tripe" (Tannahill, 1984:252). The "cooked food" would be stews, spiced maize porridge (atole), or tamales. The dough would be ready made tortilla paste (masa). The tripe would be bird giblets, often included in the tamale stuffing.

Many unusual foods were taken from the lakes on which the capital was built. These included tadpoles, water flies, larvae, white worms, as well as more conventional pond life such as frogs and freshwater shrimps. At the court of Moctezuma a variety of newt (ajolotes), peculiar to Mexico, was considered a great delicacy. So, too, were winged ants, the agave worm (from the maguey), and the iguana, a large tree-lizard. The only domesticated livestock of Mexico were the turkey and the dog, which was regarded as a useful but inferior food. When European cattle were introduced, the dog ultimately disappeared as a food animal. The turkeys, by contrast, entered a world-wide distribution after Spanish colonization.

Amaranth, a seed whose existence is recorded from 5,000 BC in Mexico, was a very special meal (Revista del Consumidor, No 101:17). Nomadic groups collected the grain and when they became sedentary, cultivated it along with maize and beans. In Aztec culture amaranth acquired a very important role not only in the nutritional aspect but in religion, economy and politics. It became a communication vehicle, a binding agent of societal processes, customs and traditions. Aside from being

consumed in conjuction with maize, the seed served religious purposes when mixed with sacrificial human blood to form a paste which then would be cast in god-like figurines. These figurines would be eaten at the end of the ceremonial activities, as a sort of communion, by the people. In the economic aspect, amaranth was requested (by the Aztecs) as part of the tribute of defeated groups.

When the Spaniards took hold of the Aztec empire, amaranth was forbidden because it represented paganism and cannibalism, thus contravening Christian teachings. During the 300 years of colonial rule, amaranth almost disappeared. But its total extinction was not achieved because clandestine cultivation took place in many family orchards. Today it is little farmed in spite of its highly nutritious properties, and is mainly used to produce candy of popped seed bound with molasses.

Aztecs were frugal. The average person, the macehual, would go to the field, at dawn, with no breakfast. After a few hours of work he would sip atole seated near the plants. His wife would stay at home preparing food, or spinning or knitting. She would make nixtamal (maize paste) on the metate (figure A), then, would manufacture tortillas. These flat cakes date from about the first century AD (Vargas, 1985:6). To prepare them, corn is first heated in water which has been made alkaline by adding minerals containing calcium.

Tortillas are important in many ways. They are a meal in themselves, but also, in the form of tacos, a vehicle for other foods. They can be used as spoons, or to hold food, or as napkins. It takes only a few tortillas to give an empty stomach a sense of fullness. In their preparation, tortillas gain

Maize Paste (nixtamal) Ground on
the "Metate"

Source: Novo, 1967:7

calcium, phosphorus, iron, niacin, and the quality of corn protein is improved (Vargas, 1985:7). Tortillas, thus, represent a cultural interpretation of corn, which otherwise is not a complete food. Modern nutritionists have discovered that maize lacks certain important mineral and vitamin elements, and over-reliance on it, therefore, results in deficiency symptoms (Tannahill, 1984:248). Its indiscriminate consumption can cause health hazards. When maize was introduced to Africa as a staple food, it provoked health deterioration. The peoples of Africa today are still only too well acquainted with the "disease of the mealies", also known as pellagra. In Mexico and in Central america, the peoples who depended on maize ate it with tomatoes, chile peppers and beans; but most important, processed as nixtamal, from which tortillas, tamales, atole and many other dishes are made. In this manner, a cultural trait would make the difference between nourishment or nutritional deficiency.

The Aztec wife would bring to the field the main meal of the day: tortillas; chile; one tamale stuffed with beans; and some nopales (cactus leaf), and water. At night, again, a few sips of atole (Novo, 1967:8). The lords, certainly, would eat a more abundant diet in which would be included, among other things, the perfume of vanilla extract, chile peppers and chocolate, the paramount Mexican contributions to worldwide cuisine, followed by avocados, pineapples, papaya, peanuts and sweet potatoes.

After 152ɛ, with the fall of Tenochtitlan, a series of rapid changes in the types of food resources available in Mexico signaled a new era in which a syncretic culture would

hide the ceremonial Indian world and replace it with one dressed in the robes of Christianity. The evidence of colonialism showed up in religion, in manners, in taste, in food. Cattle, sheep, goats, were introduced. The combination of Indian and European ways led to a new diet in Mexico, beginning in the mid-16th century. Also, continuous contact with other peoples, including African slaves and the merchants and migrants who came over the years from Asia and other parts of the American continent, had an impact on Mexican food habits.

From the exchange between both Spanish and native cuisine rises the mestizo food culture. Maize, chile, tomatoes, beans, turkey, cacao, wild greens (quelites), interact with rice, wheat, milk, pork, cheese, oil, garlic, wine, vinegar, sugar. The encounter produces all sorts of combinations, and new dishes made up with tortillas appear. Tortillas are stuffed with cheese, or with Spanish sausage (chorizo), or simply fried crispy to accompany refried beans. Other dishes such as chile peppers stuffed with ground meat and raisins, and topped with a creamy sauce made of walnuts, are but a few of innumerable delicacies which run all through Mexican territory with variations depending on different geographical zones. The worldwide acknowledgment of contemporary Mexican food asserts the lucky marriage of two cultures with its gourmet variety and nutritional quality.

Mexican food by tradition is not based on large quantities of animal protein. As a result, according to Spanish chroniclers, the Indians were svelte and slim with a good body build-up. Obesity was a rarity since fats were not employed for the preparation of meals. The abundance of vegetables and

fruits furnished fiber and vitamins, and the combination of maize and beans increased the caloric and protein intake. Without sugar and its derivative, but with calcium included in tortillas, Indian dentures were almost perfect, and even older people would keep their teeth intact.

These qualities of Indian diet have been recognized lately. In Mexico City today there is a movement to revive indigenous food items in some gourmet restaurants. Although this trend caters to high income patrons, it helps to develop the awareness of an otherwise healthy and enjoyable way of eating.

Food as culture, as vehicle of societal values, viewpoints, worldviews, religious traits or tabus, has had a fundamental role in the development of Mexican idiosyncracy and national identity. Therefore, its usefulness as a social indicator for geographical inquiry is without question.

1.4 Conceptual approaches and methodology

The general questions and hypothesis discussed in the former sections are examined by drawing upon critical theory, "a tradition of thought whose central concern is the historicity of social action" (Gregory, 1981b:59), and cultural analysis that looks at contemporary culture and society through its cultural forms, practices and institutions in their relation to social change. The main purpose of this combination is to produce an effective interaction among methodologies employed in social sciences and humanities, so as to develop a communication theory relevant to geographical inquiry.

Moreover, these two methods will be connected with cultural diffusion (3), thus adding to the thesis the spatial dimension needed to deal with the concepts of hegemony and the demonstration effect that run across cultures. A methodology based on a certain philosophical premise permeates the overall purpose of this thesis.

Since cultural influences on consumer patterns in rural Mexico are compounded by a general food crisis in the country, two approaches are needed to look at the panorama. The first one is a macrolevel examination of general issues, at a national level, which looks at economic and political aspects. This is systematically linked to the dichotomy between the industrial mode of production and the traditional rural mode of food production. The macro approach also examines the supplies of food, the general nutritional situation, the current official food program, food business, basic foodstuffs, fruit and vegetable produce, and multinational corporations with their related activities in food production, marketing and processing. Chapter III is based upon secondary sources, and a working out of the food system concept, through the examination of several viewpoints and definitions.

The nature of transnational commercialization of food is analyzed and its cultural impact is assessed both collectively and individually, keeping the time framework from post-World War II up to today. Information on food imports and exports, food production and distribution, food companies and food processing gives a fairly good indication of the cultural importance of food and of external cultural influences on food consumption patterns.

The second approach, taken in Chapter IV, is aimed towards a more specific historical and contemporary examination of aspects of food consumption. This microlevel analysis encompasses a search for both culinary mores and traditional foodstuffs since prehispanic days, based on the field work done in a rural area. The latter was undertaken using the technique of participant observation and gathering data through questionnaires related to food patterns and life styles of rural homemakers. The cultural landscape of Acambay (Estado de Mexico), is depicted from the viewpoint of interpretative understanding, and reflection upon the observed features forms part of the description. Included in the analysis are the village's background, ethnic and historical aspects. My perceptions of the informants and their environment were thoroughly discussed with them, as I conducted informal interviews with village personalities, such as the head of the house of culture ("casa de la cultura"), the wife of the "Presidente Municipal", and several others.

The subjects of the inquiry, being women like myself (a 'common ground'), projected their own cultural values when examining, gently mocking or contesting my personal viewpoints, clothing and manners. I tried to experience what Dilthey called 'commensurability', that enables each one genuinely to inform the other through a dialectic of 'reciprocation' (Gregory, 1981b: 60).

This attitude confirmed that the formal aspect of the research (i.e. the structured interviews), was not as enlightening as the informal one. I found that many of the subjects' answers to the questionnaires, and their attitudes,

were subjectively tinted (4). Some women interviewed had an overwhelming desire to appear modern, non-traditional and with 'avant-garde' mentality; they also hoped to give the right answer at the appropriate moment (I had to take extra time and change altogether the subject of conversation in order to get a more spontaneous response to the questionnaire, after having had a long chat on feminine problems, child rearing and so on). By contrast, other women felt intimidated and projected an image of helplesness. Again, I had to employ a range of different techniques to get responses. Why and how these different attitudes were held is a matter of interpretation. A methodology devoid of philosophical content would prove difficult to apply in this emotional and psychologically loaded subject of food perceptions. Nevertheless, the concept of the demonstration effect, drawn from economics, proved to be a useful analytical technique, when added to a hermeneutic view of the social context. This interpretation of the social context is the trait which makes the difference between this thesis and a regular ethnography of a Mexican village. The context, in this case the examination of the Mexican food system and the hegemonic forces impinging on it, becomes the complement and the instrument to understand Acambay's food patterns.

In general terms, village studies, even those with a variety of methodologies, do not take into account the world-system surrounding the specific case, for example in De Walt et al, 1980; Fromm & Maccoby, 1970; Miller, 1973; Pi-Sunyer, 1973; and Reck, 1978. This attitude affects the interpretation of social phenomena which, after the grand

expansion of communication flows since the early 1950s, has altered village life and villagers' worldview forever in many subtle but definite ways.

This is the case whether field research concentrates on the story of a single individual, arguing on behalf of this approach that standardized, replicable methods are diluted into lifeless forms, structures, processes, or simple statistics viewed as objective reporting where countless emotions are irrevocably diluted into explicit relationships among measurable variables (Reck, 1978:221), or the opposite research style which encompasses 950 interviews administered by an interdisciplinary team, in light of the argument that surveys and other systematic methods provide dimensions of reliability and comparability (Miller, 1973:12).

The search for the subtle but transcendental changes in food customs and food images led me to formulate a methodology which would suit my specific investigation. Since the available time in the field could not be expanded beyond two months, I opted for the establishment of a close relationship with 12 key informants, whom I repeatedly sought out during my stay in Acambay. The questionnaires, therefore, were intended as a tool to further my understanding of the informants and their food patterns, and not necessarily as a device to produce statistical evidence. Also, the relationship among the village foodstore and the Sunday market with food preferences was examined. The range of products available was recorded and correlated with foodstuffs employed by the informants in their daily cooking, to allow an approximate idea of items more popular in rural cuisine.

An assortment of research techniques such as a PHOTAM test (in which a set of photographs are shown to the participants in order to get their views on key related subjects) and informal interviews were coupled with secondary data of anthropological research on nutritional equivalences and food consumption patterns in rural areas. At this stage of analysis the subjects were correlated and grouped into typologies on the basis of variables which include age, social status, education/literacy, income and work experience (most homemakers in the village knit, or sell handicraft goods. My informant/hostess cooks breakfast and lunch for passersby). The typologies were based also on physical living conditions. The data sheets included "24-hour dietary recall", "food frequency", "family characteristics", "grocery store record", and "contextual living habits". The analysis rests upon the assumption that receiving mass messages results in certain changes in knowledge, beliefs, aspirations and behaviour, and that these can be studied in relation to the above factors.

An examination of a feminine magazine and its cooking section and food advertising is also part of the methodology employed for this thesis which, as already stated, aims to make a contextual analysis of cultural food patterns and cultural influences on food systems. To complete the task a survey of food images was conducted through informal daily conversations with the informants. In this manner the relation between socioeconomic class and daily menus was more clearly confirmed.

Finally, the thesis is intended to put the significance of food images and prestige into geographical context (rural vs urban food consumption, traditional vs Western oriented food

cultural mores, and so on), by looking at the differences between Western hegemonic cultural traits and values, and those of the people in a rural Mexican village. Chapter V follows a short agenda answering the questions related to differences in orientation that lie behind the failure to communicate.

1.5 Notes.

1) This region comprises the States of Mexico, Morelos, Puebla and Tlaxcala, the Federal District and a small part of the State of Guerrero. During pre-Hispanic times the Central High Plateau (Altiplano Central), was a source of attraction for various groups and peoples, among them the Nahuas or Mexicas that extended their conquests beyond this region's limits (Pina Chan, 1967, 173).

2) Encomienda. A tribute institution used in Spanish America in the 16th Century. The Spaniard received Indians as an entrustment, encomienda, to protect and Christianize, but in return he could demand tribute including labour.

3) Generally speaking, three major European philosophies shaped th ideology of the elites during the nineteenth century: the Enlightenment, the ideas of evolution put forth by Charles Darwin and Herbert Spencer, and Positivism. "The concept of 'progress', perhaps the key word for the understanding of the nineteenth-century Latin American history, linked the three". (Burns 1983:18).

4) James M. Blaut has come to view diffusion theory under a specific aspect: the term "spatial diffusion theory" is associated with the attempt to explain the spatial spread of an innovative trait in a region, usually with the help of mathematical models. This Hagerstrandian view of diffusion, in which the main component is the communication of information about an innovation, is too narrow. The lack of depth in formal diffusion theory is due, Blaut argues, to the lack of a powerful theory of the underlying process, a theory of the forces which propel diffusion. For, "in terms of historical span, we wish to understand the manner in which a trait first enters a region, and this demands analysis of the relevant cultural forces, many of which operate prior to the moment of initial adoption" (Blaut, 1977, 343-49).

5) If one wishes to effect a completely empirical analysis of food consumption patterns to overcome all traces of subjectivity, an alternative technique would be, for instance, the 'garbage project', originated in the University of Arizona. In it there are no subjects of inquiry, no questionnaires, no tests, but a team of multidisciplinary researchers analyzes household garbage samples.

CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Critical Theory

This chapter will examine the possibility of counteracting ideological and other forms of hegemony through the employment of methodological devices such as critical theory and cultural analysis. It is important for our purposes to frame the 'myth' consumer with the communication theory put forward by Jurgen Habermas, in order to isolate the several forms of cultural influences relevant to the development of this thesis.

The literature review begins with an overview of critical theory which, according to Giddens (1982:90), must extend the critique of ideology to encompass the ramifications of technocratic values. Critical theory pursues the vision of an emancipated humanity free from alienation and exploitation; its ideas, reworked by Habermas, are tied to an emancipatory interest.

The critical theory principles originated with the Frankfurt School shortly after World War I. Its main exponents were Theodor W. Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, Erich Fromm, Henry Grossman, Otto Kirchheimer, Franz Neumann, and Leo Lowenthal. Their effort to revitalise Marxism was prompted by a major concern: "to ensure that 'labour' should no longer be conceptualised as the primary measure of wealth, but that instead the essential values of humanity should be restored" (Jackson & Smith, 1984:135). Later, Walter Benjamin joined

this group of academics, and in the last two decades two younger members, Albrecht Willmer and Jurgen Habermas, continued the tradition of critical theory to the present. Their intellectual upbringing springs from the seminal work of the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research, The Dialectic of Enlightenment, which Adorno and Horkheimer wrote during World War II, culminating the first stage of the Frankfurt school. The title summarizes the paradoxical thesis to which the Frankfurt theorists return in all of their works, the progressive decay of Enlightenment reason into the irrationality and barbarism of modern mass society. "Progress becomes regression...that is, modernization means also social irrationalization" (Brantingler, 1983:236).

Combining the strengths of both Marxism and psychoanalysis, critical theory searches for a method through which humans can enlighten their sojourn on earth. Its aim is:

> to lay the foundation for an exploration, in an interdisciplinary research context, of questions concerning the conditions which make possible the reproduction and transformation of society, the meaning of culture, and the relationship between the individual, society and nature. (Held, 1980:16)

The need for a critical theory can be traced to the need to understand what is meant by emancipation (one of its key concepts), and enlightenment. Raymond Geuss (1981:53) has summarized the social transition from an initial state to a final state which has the following stages: from the combination of false consciousness and 'unfree existence', which is a form of self-imposed coercion, the agents have to derive 'power' or 'objectivity' in order to get free from false consciousness, and hence become enlightened, and, at the same time, free themselves of self imposed coercion, in order to

become <u>emancipated</u>.

In this manner, critical theory becomes a guide for human action while producing enlightenment and enabling the agents to determine what their true interests are, emancipating them from self-imposed coercion and self-frustration. It is, therefore, a form of knowledge which differs substantially from theories in the natural sciences, because its methodology is 'reflective'.

Self-reflection, the real emancipatory tool, can be equated to 'insight' which is the term used in psychoanalytic jargon to define the mechanism by virtue of which the patient recognizes his or her self-delusion. This does not mean that the 'insight' becomes a systematic and predictable outcome of the therapy. The insight is not produced as a series of steps that can be quantified and that lead to the conclusion in a scientific, mathematical manner. The analogy would be more accurate if the insight were perceived as a quantum leap, or 'a state of being produced by a kind of knowledge which is organized not only by the intellect, that is the conscious, but by way of an unmeasurable, unpredictable process of the mind. In the same manner we can say that self-reflection "dissolves pseudo-objectivity and 'objective illusion', makes the subject aware of its own origins; brings to awareness unconscious determinants of consciousness and behaviour" (Geuss, 1981, 70) and reflects, reproduces reality independently of conventional normative knowledge.

This sort of knowledge, extraneous to natural science, is what critical theory incorporates in its mode of inquiry, thus enriching and challenging the empirical-analytical method and the bases of its philosophy, Comtean positivism:

> Comte's writings, as filtered through those of Durkheim a
> generation later, connect directly with modern
> functionalism, until quite recently the leading
> perspective in orthodox sociology, anthropology and
> political theory....In envisaging sociology as a science
> of society which could make possible the same kind of
> control over the social world that had been achieved over
> the material world, Comte portrayed the new science as a
> natural outgrowth of the progression of human rationalism.
> (Giddens, 1982:72)

The key words of positivism, 'control' and 'domination' are precisely two concepts which critical theory aims to demystify. Their association with rationalism, technocratic domination, modernisation, instrumental reason, and managerial rationality, gives rise to the 'neutral' standards of purposeful rational action (Schroyer, 1973:19). Therefore, one of the aims of critical theory is to establish the difference between reconstructive (self-reflective) and empirical-analytic analysis, in order to arrive at the ideal state of affairs in which nonalienating work and free interaction can be manifested. Its ultimate goal is to reach this level of human understanding through emancipation.

The full import of critical theory did not, however, become apparent until the work of the Frankfurt School was "revived and revised...in the work of Habermas, who shared Marcuse's interest in the systematic use of Marx and Freud" (Jackson & Smith, 1984:139). The manner in which Habermas develops his own reformulation of 'critical theory' is examined in the following section.

2.2 Communication and Knowledge.

Habermas' thesis in <u>Knowledge</u> <u>and</u> <u>Human</u> <u>Interests</u> is that our knowledge depends on our interests, and that there are categorically distinct but interrelated forms of knowledge and inquiry. Nevertheless,

> the only knowledge that can truly orient action is knowledge that frees itself from mere human interests and is based on Ideas – in other words, knowledge that has taken a theoretical attitude. (Habermas, 1972:301)

Throughout his work, Habermas has addressed a set of issues which have earned him the reputation of a 'right-wing Marxist', a 'radical liberal', (Jansen, 1983:350), or at least a proponent of Marxian humanism. Among the most outstanding of these issues are reason and freedom, emancipation, communicative competence. He brings them together through the concept of 'self-reflection', the philosophical knowledge by which we reflect upon particular features of human existence, especially upon the nature and status of human knowledge itself. Self-reflection embodies thought and action, and is a solvent for illusion and delusion, the main features of human neuroses at both the individual and collective levels.

Knowledge (2) is constituted in three distinct forms: the empirical-analytical sciences, the historical-hermeneutic sciences, and the embodiment of self-reflection. These forms correspond to three constitutive interests: the technical, the practical and the emancipatory.

> The concept of knowledge-constitutive human interests already conjoins the two elements whose relation still has to be explained: knowledge and interest. From everyday experience we know that ideas serve often enough to furnish our actions with justifying motives in place of the real ones. What is called <u>rationalization</u> at this level is called <u>ideology</u> at the level of collective

action. In both cases the manifest content of statements
is falsified consciousness' unreflected tie to interests,
despite its illusion of autonomy. (Habermas, 1972:311
emphasis added).

In this statement Habermas clearly claims that society
suffers from a deformed view of the idea of truth. Thus, his
project tends toward the reformulation of a system, a
treatment, or a therapy which will cope with the distortions
embedded in the falsified collective consciousness. He intends
to posit the role of the theorist as the psychoanalyst of
society. Society is sick, and hence has a need for a cure. But
the cure cannot be achieved unless the 'therapist' and the
'patient' arrive at the same level of insight.

To explain and justify his posture on the role of the
theorist Habermas goes back to the origin of the word 'theory'
and its religious beginnings. In philosophical language,
'theoria' meant the contemplation of the cosmos. In this form
theory already presupposed the demarcation between Being and
Time that is the foundation of ontology. "When the philosopher
views the immortal order, he cannot help bringing himself into
accord with the proportions of the cosmos and reproducing them
internally" (Habermas, 1972:302). But the sciences have
destroyed philosophy's classical claim, for they have abandoned
the connection of theoria and kosmos, of mimesis and bios
theoretikos that was assumed from Plato through Husserl.

> What was once supposed to comprise the practical efficacy
> of theory has now fallen prey to methodological
> prohibitions. The conception of theory as a process of
> cultivation of the person has become apocryphal. Today it
> appears to us that the mimetic conformity of the soul to
> the proportions of the universe, which seemed accessible
> to contemplation, had only taken theoretical knowledge
> into the service of the internationalization of norms and
> thus estranged it from its legitimate task. (Habermas,
> 1972:302)

Philosophy has been dislodged from this position by science, asserts Habermas. As a result, the theory of knowledge has had to be replaced by a methodology emptied of philosophical thought. Habermas seeks to reverse Comte's empiricism which strengthens science's belief in its exclusive validity after the fact, instead of reflecting it, and to account for the structure of the sciences on the basis of this belief (Habermas, 1972:4). In other words, his position challenges the established behavioural beliefs and the social science research based on them.

To accomplish this monumental task, Habermas looks back systematicaly in the history of philosophy: through Kant and Hegel, Marx, Comte, Mach, Pierce, Dilthey, Fichte, Nietszche and Freud. His search does not stop until he reaches the reign of the forgotten and the repressed. In order to descend to the deep cave inhabited by this chained Prometheus, Habermas makes use of psychoanalytical tools applied to linguistics.

2.3 Communication and Linguistics.

Language, power and labour make up the triad which Habermas seeks to disentangle. He regards the semantic analysis of the psychoanalytic dialogues between patient and therapist as prototypes of the ideal, reflexive speech situation. The ideal speech situation is that form of discourse in which there is no other compulsion but the compulsion of argumentation itself; where there is a genuine symmetry among the participants involved, allowing a universal interchangeability of dialogue roles; where no form of domination exists

(Bernstein, 1978:212). To convey this meaning of freedom the ideal speech situation depends on four different validity claims:

a) that the statement is comprehensible;
b) that the presuppositions in it are true;
c) that the speaker is in a position to make the statement; and
d) that the speaker means what he says (Gregory, 1978)

Habermas' conception of social theory, thus, is a critique penetrating the surface grammar of a 'language game' to uncover the quasi-natural forces embodied in its deeper grammatical relationships and rules: by spelling them out it wants to break their social spell (Gregory, 1978).

The connection among words, symbols and myths as components of communicative action is also Roland Barthes' theme in his book Mythologies. The purpose of focusing on these connections (as Habermas' willingness to penetrate the surface grammar of a 'language game'), is to tear away masks and demystify the signs, signals and symbols of mass culture. For any significant unit or synthesis, whether verbal or visual, can be called a type of speech. Myth is a type of speech and thus becomes a message which by no means is only oral. It can consist of modes of writing or of representation. Not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, news, sports, shows, publicity, and the like, can serve as support for mythical speech (Barthes, 1982:110).

Myth can be defined neither by its object nor by its material, says Barthes, for any material can arbitrarily be endowed with meaning. That is why mythical speech is made of a material which has already been worked on so as to make it

suitable for communication.

Myth is an entity which contains three elements: the signified, the signifier, and the sign, as does language itself. The first is the concept, the second is the acoustic image (which is mental), and the relation between concept and image is the sign (the word, for instance), which is a concrete entity. "I must somehow be able to name concepts (says Barthes) if I want to decipher myths" (1982:120).

Going one step further, we find that Barthes names the signification, that is the sign, or more accurately, the concrete unit, as the only one which is consumed in actual fact. But the main function of myth as an instrument of communication consists in how it is received. For myth hides nothing and flaunts nothing; it distorts. Myth is neither a lie nor a confession: it is an inflection. And so:

> we reach here the very principle of myth: it transforms history into nature. We now understand why, in the eyes of the myth consumer, the intention, the adhomination (sic) of the concept can remain manifest without however appearing to have an interest in the matter: what causes mythical speech to be uttered is perfectly explicit, but it is immediately frozen into something natural; it is not read as a motive but as a reason. (Barthes, 1982:129 emphasis added).

Here becomes apparent the connection between this reasoning and the concept of 'systematically distorted communication' proposed by Habermas, in which pseudocommunication produces a system of reciprocal misunderstandings, which are not recognized as such, due to the pretence of pseudoconsensus (Habermas, 1970:14). "Myth is the mark of a human race hopelessly deprived of its vocation to a good and just life and exiled into the cycle of sheer reproduction and survival" (Habermas, 1985:139).

Barthes also identifies myth as depoliticized speech, stating that if our society is objectively the privileged field of mythical significations, it is because, formally, myth is the most appropriate instrument for the ideological inversion which defines this society:

> at all levels of human communication...what the world supplies to myth is a historical reality, defined, even if it goes back quite a while, by the way in which men have produced or used it; and what myth gives in return is a natural image of this reality....Thus every myth can have its history and its geography, each is in fact the sign of the other: a myth ripens because it spreads. I have not been able to carry out any real study of the social geography of myths. But it is perfectly possible to draw what linguistics would call the isoglasses of a myth, the lines which limit the social regions where it is spoken. (Barthes, 1982, 143-149)

Of course, the implications of this last statement are yet to be seen in social research, but the possibilities of finding out the spatial diffusion of myths should shed light on innumerable social issues; for as Barthes says, 'the very end of myths is to immobilize the world', whereas the very end of critical geographical query is to perceive the dynamics of the world. Thus, cultural influences, surrounded by the myth of the 'good life', are hidden into the messages of the mass media that promote capitalist ideology, at least in this part of the planet. To find out how this myth has spread in such places as the village of Acambay, we found that the most adequate tool is communication theory, with its encompassing facets of critical theory and cultural analysis.

For Habermas, too, as with Barthes, depoliticized speech (myth), language must be equally considered as a medium in which violence and power structures systematically distort our capacity to communicate. (On ocasions, communication became

entangled in Acambay when the dialogue could not transcend the encroachment of power structures). Therefore, it was obvious that only the power of self reflection, as Habermas says, would emancipate us and make possible the distinction between an unconstrained consensus and pseudocommunication brought about by violence.

In order to clarify his claim, Habermas makes the distinction between empirical-analytical inquiry and hermeneutic inquiry (this distinction was also noticeable in the field work). The first aims at producing technically exploitable knowledge; the second at clarifying practically effective knowledge (Habermas, 1972:191). But only 'self reflexion' liberates us from ideologies, while the hermeneutic acceptance of tradition or the empirical-analytical cannot free us.

When considering the connection between language, power and labour, Habermas draws on Hannah Arendt's notions. He states that communicative generation of power is given institutional permanence by the confrontation of communicative power with the means of a coercive but impotent state apparatus, the beginnings of a new political order and the attempt to hold fast to the initial revolutionary situation. Habermas cites Arendt (3) when she traces the failure of the revolutionary labour movement upon the economic success of the unions and labour parties (Habermas, 1977:13). Thus, "the institutional framework of the system of social labour serves the organization of labour in cooperation and the division of labour and in the distribution of goods, that is in embedding purposive rational action in an interaction structure"

(Habermas, 1972:279).

So far, we have seen how the main assumptions of critical theory inform Habermas' theory of communication and knowledge, and how the connections between language and myth unveil the nature of cultural influences through the mass media. The next step is to explore the crisis of modernity.

2.4 Contemporary Crisis of Modernity

Before examining the theory of communicative competence which Habermas is developing as a tool for human understanding, we might take a look at the crisis of modernity that, again, as when dealing with power and labour, is confronted by reraising the question of rationality and rational action.

Considering that we live in an era of mass culture, mechanical reproduction of the work of art, massive communications media, and an ever increasing feeling of depersonalization due to the above factors, cultural modernity has to be defined properly. In an essay first published in 1936, Walter Benjamin writes of his belief that the proletarianization of modern society and the increasing formation of masses were two aspects of the same process. He thought that the efforts to render politics aesthetic culminated in one thing: war.

Benjamin states that a technological formula allows for all of today's technical resources to be mobilized while maintaining the property system. Thus, the natural utilization of productive forces is impeded. The increase in technical devices, in speed, and in the sources of energy will encourage

an unnatural utilization such as war. Possessing the inherent

quality of the clairvoyant, Benjamin (1969:242) writes that:

> the destructiveness of war furnishes proof that society
> has not been mature enough to incorporate technology as
> its organ, that technology has not been sufficiently
> developed to cope with the elemental forces of society.
> The horrible features of imperialistic warfare are
> attributable to the discrepancy between the tremendous
> means of production and their inadequate utilization in
> the process of production --in other words, to
> unemployment and the lack of markets. Imperialistic war is
> a rebellion of technology which collects, in the form of
> 'human material', the claims to which society has denied
> its natural material. Instead of draining rivers, society
> directs human stream into a bed of trenches; instead of
> dropping seeds from airplanes, it drops incendiary bombs
> over cities; and through gas warfare...and, as Marinetti
> admits, expects war to supply the artistic gratification
> of a sense of perception that has been changed by
> technology....Mankind's...self-alienation has reached such
> a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an
> aesthetic pleasure of the first order.

This paragraph, of course, was conceived before the

outcome of the fusion of the atom, before Hiroshima and

Nagasaki. But nevertheless it can be read as any contemporary

outgrowth of the menace which confronts the eighties.

Habermas has provided a remarkable restatement of

Benjamin's challenge, for he himself considers cultural

modernity and societal modernization to be an incomplete

project, because "the course of modern history has increased

the dimensions of catastrophe and heightened a certain

eschatological consciousness; it has left us in the situation

of crisis portrayed in Benjamin's philosophical-historical

thesis on Angelus Novus" (Habermas, 1985:xxiii).

For Habermas, Benjamin conceives of the functional

transformation of art as the politicizing of art, for, instead

of being based on ritual it begins to be based on another

practice, politics. Habermas asserts that, under the veil of

politicization, art serves the aestheticizing of naked
political violence.

Benjamin regards the continuum of history as the
permanence of the unbearable and progress as the eternal return
of the catastrophe, says Habermas. Thus, the deritualization
of art has to be understood as part of the world-historical
process of rationalization, and the developmental surge of the
forces of production causes in social forms of life through
revolutionizing the mode of production (Habermas, 1985:141).

The deritualization of art, of course, has an ambiguous
meaning for Benjamin, too. It is as if myth were to be
eradicated without any intervening liberation --as it would
have to be given up as beaten, but its content could be
preserved for transposition into tradition, in order to triumph
even in defeat:

> Now that myth is wearing the robes of progress, the images
> that tradition can find only within the innermost recesses
> of myth are in danger of toppling over and being forever
> lost to rescuing criticism. The myth nesting within
> modernity, which is expressed in positivism's faith in
> progress, is the enemy against which Benjamin sets the
> entire pathos of rescuing. Far from being a guarantee of
> liberation, deritualization menaces with a specific loss
> of experience. (Habermas, 1985:144-45)

The similarities between Habermas' and Barthes'
reasoning, when explaining the essence of myth and its effects,
are obvious. One thinker complements the other. But Habermas
also states that the concept of culture has the advantage of
introducing the cultural tradition methodologically as part of
social evolution and making it accesible to a materialist
explanation (Habermas, 1985:151). Thus, he cites Peter
Steinfels, an observer of the new style which the
neoconservatives have imposed in the seventies:

> The struggle takes the form of exposing every manifestation of what could be considered an oppositionist mentality and tracing its 'logic' so as to link it to various forms of extremism: drawing the connection between modernism and nihilism...between criticism of arms expenditures and subservience to communism, between Women's liberation or homosexual rights and the destruction of the family...between the Left generally and terrorism, anti-semitism, and Fascism... (Habermas, 1983:7)

Habermas' commentary is direct and unequivocal, for he senses that there is a certain irony about neoconservative protests regarding the destruction of the urban and natural environment, and the forms of human sociability:

> the occasions for protest and discontent originate precisely when spheres of communicative action, centered on the reproduction and transmission of values and norms, are penetrated by a form of modernization guided by standards of economic and administrative rationality --in other words, by standards of rationalization quite different from those of communicative rationality on which those spheres depend. But neoconservative doctrines turn our attention precisely away from such societal processes: they project the causes, which they do not bring to light, onto the plane of a subversive culture and its advocates. (Habermas, 1983:8)

Habermas is stating that the neoconservative propositions and statements are spurious because they externalize the causes of decay, without looking at the processess which underlie such causes. This is similar to treating neuroses by looking at the behavioural symptoms instead of the causes which produce them. This means that one is blaming the external symptoms for the internal disrepairs which one is enduring. Thus, the solution for the decay of societal values and the undermining of its bases should be, in the words of neoconservatives, to use Daniel Bell's terms:

> a religious 'instauration' --perhaps a revival of the old, perhaps the birth of a new faith -- to save us from our secularized, spiritually dead-ended selves. (Brantlinger, 1983:51)

But the solution cannot be seen as a massive acceptance of religious forces beyond human control, and although

> these may be satisfying ways to round off prophetic stories...bringing a mythic pattern full circle cannot be the same as breaking out of the circle. (Brantlinger, 1983:51)

Modernity, and the myths surrounding it, are the instruments employed by dominant ideologies to penetrate all kinds of societies and social orders whose postulates differ from their own. Thus, a hegemonic network is arranged in order to spread different world-views and life styles through mass media. In his theory of communicative competence, Habermas has devised the means to uncover the ideological strategies wrapped in myths, employing a series of conceptual tools.

2.5 The Theory of Communicative Competence.

Within the theory of communicative competence the following concepts stand out: systematically distorted communication, 'scenic understanding', explanatory understanding, pseudocommunication, pathologically frozen communication patterns, indirect communication (intersubjectivity), and fragmentation.

With the use of all these elements one analyzes the differences between the general competence of the ideal speaker and the generally distorted communication of the standard speaker. Habermas states that above all, communicative competence relates to an ideal speech situation in the same way that linguistic competence relates to the abstract system of linguistic rules (Habermas, 1970:14).

But only a neutral observer will notice when the participants do not understand one another. For, besides intersubjectivity there is also pseudocommunication which arises as the result of a faulty organization of speech itself. Freud dealt exhaustively with the practice of systematically deformed communication in order to define the scope of specifically incomprehensible manifestations. In Habermas' opinion (1970:118), Freud employed the insights gained from clinical phenomena as the key to pseudonormality, that is, to hidden pathology of collective behaviour and entire social systems.

Considering the system of distorted communication as a whole, one can observe the discrepancy between the levels of communication: the usual congruency between linguistic symbols, actions and accompanying gestures has disintegrated; in its place arise <u>pathological</u> <u>frozen</u> communication <u>patterns</u>.

> There is a communication obstruction in the self between the ego, which is capable of speech and which participates in the, intersubjectivity established language games, and that 'inner foreign territory' (Freud), which is represented by private-linguistic or primary linguistic symbolics. (Habermas, 1970:118)

Habermas asserts that the special type of semantic analysis that deals with manifestations of systematically distorted communication and enables an explanatory understanding presupposes a theory of communicative competence. At this point in his reasoning, he says that communicative competence means the mastery of an ideal speech situation (Habermas, 1970:138).

For Habermas <u>speech</u> is the medium of communication which already presupposes the tacit consensus about what it means to

communicate; and every speech, even that of intentional deception, is oriented towards the idea of truth (Habermas, 1970:144). Here we arrive at the core of Habermas' theory, which is not optimistic, for he believes that communicative competence is only possible if first we could succeed in describing deformations of pure intersubjectivity in which dialogue constitutive universals are applied; and second, if it were possible to distinguish the categorical frameworks of potential views of life in terms of their distribution of dialogue constitutive universals. Only then could semantics be developed on the basis of communicative competence (Habermas, 1970:145).

The point of major social significance is Habermas' conclusion that the greater the share of prelinguistically fixed motivations that cannot be freely converted in public communication, the greater the deviance from the model of pure communicative action.

> I would propose to make the empirical assumptions that these deviations increase correspondingly to the varying degrees of repression which characterize the institutional system within a given society; and that in turn, the degree of repression depends on the developmental stage of the productive forces and on the organization of authority, that is of the institutionalization of political and economic power. (Habermas, 1970:146)

At this stage, the analogy between the "frozen mythical speech" described by Barthes, and the instance of "systematically distorted communication" makes sense. In Barthes, the speech is not read as a _motive_ but as a _reason_. For Habermas, _repression_ is the equivalent of reason (instrumental reason?). Thus, the deviations from the model of pure communicative action seem to correspond to the very

principle of Barthes' myth: that it transforms history into nat<ure, the institutionalization of political and economic power becoming a <u>natural</u> given in society.

One can reflect, then, that unless the unit of society (the individual) understands that his/her behaviour is not a natural, given act, but is conditioned by his/her internal developmental history, he/she will not reach a true understanding of her/himself and surroundings, that is, the world. Habermas extrapolates this meaning of the intimate experience of psychoanalysis to the realm of society. The same mechanism of self-reflection can be applied to the whole (society) or to the unit (individual).

2.6 Communication and the Evolution of Society.

Under the former title Habermas has put together a series of five essays (4) which convey his conception of social theory. I will expand upon the meaning of the already-mentioned validity claims (page 35), so as to view the idea of "universal pragmatics" (which embodies the concept of communicative ethics) through the light of its logical necessity in all situations of symbolic interaction (Sullivan, 1978:73).

Habermas' proposal for the term <u>universal pragmatics</u> is delimited by the methodological difficulties resulting from the fact that linguistics claims the status of a reconstructive science, and the question of whether the universal pragmatics proposed assume the position of a transcendental reflective theory or that of a reconstructive science with empirical content (Habermas, 1976:5).

In order to clarify the distinction between empirical-analytic and reconstructive sciences, Habermas remarks upon the difference between sensory experience or observation and communicative experience or understanding. Observation is directed to perceptible things and events (or states); understanding is directed to the meaning of utterances (Habermas, 1976:9). (In Acambay's field work, though, both "observation" and "understanding" had to be balanced in order to appreciate the shades of subtlety which inform the meaning of food patterns).

This conceptualization is the core of the methodological difference between the empirical-analytical sciences and critical theory, for meaning is the aim of the latter. Habermas distinguishes two explanatory levels of meaning. On the first level, whenever the meaning of a written sentence, action, gesture, work of art, tool, theory, commodity, and so on, is unclear, we try to understand its content by taking up the same position of the "author" producing a sentiment of empathy (Habermas, 1976:11). We must often take into consideration a context of which the author is not conscious. Thus, linguistic expressions can sometimes be explained through paraphrasing in the same language or through translation into expressions of another language. That is precisely what I am doing in this literature review.

In both cases, competent speakers draw on intuitively known meaning relations that exist within the lexicon of one language or between those of two languages. The interpreter then attempts to explain the meaning of a symbolic formation according to the rules which the original author employed. This

attitude changes, however, as soon as the interpreter tries not only to <u>apply</u> this intuitive knowledge but to <u>reconstruct</u> it:

> He <the interpreter> then turns away from the surface structure of the symbolic formation; he no longer looks through it <u>intentione recta</u> to the world. He attempts instead to peer through the surface, as it were, and into the symbolic formation to discover the rules according to which the latter was produced (in our example, the rules according to which the lexicon of a language is constructed). The object of understanding is no longer the content of a symbolic expression or what specific authors meant by it in specific situations but the intuitive rule consciousness that a competent speaker has of his own language. (Habermas, 1976:12)

This kind of self-responsibility is the task of reconstructive understanding. Thus, Habermas contrasts reconstructive and empiricist linguistics with the key question behind this controversy: Is there a direct correspondence between the linguistic theory of grammar and the mental grammar that is, so to speak, "in the mind" of the speaker? (Habermas, 1976:19). He responds by saying that this could be adequately discussed only if there were clarity about the way in which competence theories can be tested and falsified. "I have the impression that psycholinguistic investigations proceed empirical-analytically and neglect <u>a limine</u> the distinction between competence and performance" (Habermas, 1976:20).

Having thus presented the idea of a reconstructive science, Habermas poses one further question:

> If we now understand transcendental investigation in the sense of a reconstruction of general and unavoidable presuppositions of experiences that can lay claim to objectivity, then there certainly remains a difference between reconstructive and empirical-analytic analysis. (Habermas, 1976, 24)

This position of Habermas has engendered a host of criticism in the philosophical and social sciences. For

instance, critics such as Hans-Georg Gadamer have pointed out that there is no clear warrant in the interpretative standpoint for Habermas' claim that critique, or a critical understanding of tradition, reveals a universal structure of "pragmatic universals", underlying the practices of actual communication (Sullivan, 1978:73). Nevertheless, in examining the 'knowledge' of a Mexican peasant woman, the kind of knowledge that one is addressing as 'another' woman (the common ground), certainly becomes a 'universal pragmatic' in the context of interpersonal relations.

But for Habermas the discussion of the theory of speech acts has given rise to ideas on which the fundamental assumptions of universal pragmatics can be based. So, he draws from different levels of analysis and corresponding object domains of semiotics, to make his point. Explaining the interactions of sentences versus utterances; individual languages versus language in general; aspects of linguistic analysis; particular versus universal aspects of speech acts, and universal pragmatic aspects, he arrives at the conclusion that the establishment of interpersonal relations is central. Nevertheless, he also states that:

> a striking feature of communication in ordinary language is its characteristic 'double structure'. If speaker and hearer are to reach an understanding, they must communicate simultaneously at two levels: a) the level of inter-subjectivity on which speaker and hearer through illocutionary acts, establish the relations that permit them to come to an understanding with one another; and b) the level of experiences and state-of-affairs about which they want to reach an understanding in the communicative function determined by (a). (McCarthy, 1982:282)

We see, then, that communication in language can take place only when the participants, in communication with one another

about something, simultaneously enter upon two levels of communication. However, we make a more interactive or more cognitive use of our language, depending on the specifics of the case in question. "Thus, the illocutionary force of an acceptable speech act consists in the fact that it can move a hearer to rely on the speech-act-typical commitments of the speaker" (Habermas, 1976:62). Therefore, Habermas exposes the following thesis: in the final analysis, the speaker can influence the hearer and vice versa, because speech-act-typical commitments are connected with cognitively testable validity claims --that is, because the reciprocal bonds have a rational basis (Habermas, 1976:63).

Finally, the conclusion that can be reached is that communication in which grammatical sentences are embedded, by way of universal validity claims, establishes legitimate interpersonal relations, and expresses one's own subjectivity:

> according to this model, language can be conceived as the medium of interrelating three worlds; for every succesful communicative action there exists a threefold relation between the utterance and (a) the "external world" as the totality of existing states of affairs, (b) "our social world" as the totality of all normatively regulated interpersonal relations that count as legitimate in a given society, and (c) "a particular inner world" (of the speaker) as the totality of his intentional experience. (Habermas, 1976:67)

In other words, the conjunction of the external world, the social world and the inner world, which in normal individuals have to be balanced to make speech coherent, is also the condition of language. That is, social life is a form of language because social life is a form of communication.

Habermas' inquiry encompasses all sorts of themes. Yet to appear in English is his study on the "public sphere" (5),

where he reviews the evolutionary phases of bourgeois publicity and its social basis, at the same time criticising several political theories of those phases. In this study, Habermas pursues the communication media's history, particularly the daily press, in its specific articulation with bourgeois publicity, and its socioeconomic determinants.

The public-relations techniques are essential to understand what Habermas qualifies as an inclination towards refeudalization in advanced industrial societies. These techniques offer their product as if it were of general interest. They take the public as a public of citizens not of consumers --actually what they look after are consumers with an unlimited buying power.

This book (written in 1961) whose interests anticipate many of Habermas' key themes, offers fundamental definitions of neoliberal politics. Also, it counterpoints bourgeois publicity, idea and ideology; public opinion and publicity as a mediator between politics and morals; and signals the ambivalence of publicity and liberal theory. Habermas discloses, too, "public opinion" as a fiction created by the state.

Habermas' projects sketched in this overview can be summed up, substantially, in three points: the critique of the philosophy of knowledge; the construction of the theory of communicative competence or "universal pragmatics"; and the reconstruction of historical materialism.

All the issues discussed up to now are relevant beyond the argument which informs this thesis. From a practical point of view they show that in trying to effect field research, self

reflection is a <u>sine</u> <u>qua</u> <u>non</u> condition, if one aims at the understanding of social phenomena, beyond the "neutral" positivistic position. From another angle, communication theory helps to unveil many constructions of the "technological formula" put forward by the myth of modernity, and this revelation proves very useful when rural mores and patterns of consumption are examined.

2.7 Cultural Analysis.

So far I have been looking strictly at critical theory. But finding that several of its postulates can be paralleled to epistemological discoveries of cultural analysis, I will try to cross-examine both approaches in order to form a unity worthy of my search for a comprehensive communication theory. This examination is especially useful at the level of practice in the field, for cultural analysis adds a methodological dimension to critical theory actually helping the research task by including several research techniques.

The similarities between German social research and British analysis of social mores deserves a close look, for the two traditions of thought are more closely related than it seems at first glance. It is my belief that contemporary social philosophy differs in style of presentation but not in essential content. Sartre and Habermas, Foucault and Raymond Williams, Benjamin and Barthes, Jean Baudrillard and E.P. Thompson, share the basic humanistic concern for a better and just society. All of them, and many others, can be put together to make a point, without necessarily falling into

eclecticism. In this manner I will begin this examination by drawing a synthetic view of cultural analysis.

The Centre for Cultural Studies (CCCS) at Birmingham was established in 1964 under the directorship of Richard Hoggart. The aim was to inaugurate research in the area of contemporary culture and society: cultural forms, practices and institutions, their relation to society and social change (Hall, et al, 1984:7). Unlike the Frankfurt School whose foundation dates back to the early years of the century, the CCCS found its principal inspiration in Hoggart's pioneering study (The Uses of Literacy, published in the mid 1950s) on how recent developments were transforming and reshaping the cultures of the 'traditional working class'. Hence, cultural studies claims to be an area where different disciplines intersect in the study of the cultural aspects of society.

The different phases of the Centre's work are depicted by Stuart Hall, who acknowledges three aspects: the changes in theoretical perspective through the 1970s; the question of the different areas of concrete research; and the modes of organization. He states that the search for origins is tempting but illusory. Nevertheless, the earlier founding moment is best specified in terms of the originating texts: Hoggart's The Uses of Literacy, Raymond Williams's Culture and Society and The Long Revolution, E.P. Thompson's critique of the latter work and the 'example' of related questions, worked in a more historical mode in The Making of the English Working Class.

What these writers in their various ways confronted, says Hall (1984:17) was post-war British society whose parameters were set by the revival of capitalist production, the founding

of the welfare state and the 'Cold War'. Above all, the question to answer was, how were these historical processes to be qualitatively understood and assessed? The tensions (between what might loosely be called 'political' and intellectual concerns) has shaped Cultural studies ever since.

Each of the texts mentioned above referred itself and its readers to existing traditions of thought. The Uses of Literacy, employed methods similar to those developed by F.R. Leavis and the Scrutiny critics. Even if Leavis' definition of culture was "peculiarly conservative, fundamentally anti-democratic, and depended on historically dubious search, his concern with language has <some> parallels...- <although> in certain ways, differs radically -for example, with those of Karl Krauss and Walter Benjamin" (Hall, 1984:19-279),

What united these various writers into a 'culture-and-society' tradition, was not their often different positions and judgedments, but "the mode of sustained reflection they gave to qualitative questions about the impact on culture of the historic transformations of the past" (Hall, 1984:18). This sort of shared concern led to a quite new range of work in the Centre with emphases on 'lived cultures' --the study of youth cultures, for example--the concern with subcultures and the study of deviance; attention to the institutions of schooling and the relations of the workplace. Furthermore, the first translations of Walter Benjamin, the early texts of the Frankfurt School, and Sartre's Question of Method, marked a decisive break in Cultural Studies: the break into a complex Marxism, because these translations:

> returned to the agenda the key question of the determinate character of culture and ideologies --their material,

social and historical condition of existence. They
therefore opened up a necessary reworking of the classical
Marxist question of 'base' and 'superstructures' --the
decisive issue for a non-idealist or materialist theory of
culture. (Hall, 1984:25)

From this point onwards, cultural studies have had a
direction, an object of study, a set of themes and issues, and
a distinctive problematic of their own, asserts Hall. Culture
no longer means a set of texts and artefacts, but rather
cultural _practices_, in the anthropological sense.

With the extension in the meaning of 'culture' from texts
and representations to lived practices, belief systems and
institutions, some part of the subject matter of sociology also
fell within the scope of cultural studies. Alternative
traditions within sociology itself began to make their
appearances. "Structural-functionalism turned out to be not
science itself but a particular kind of theoretical construct
and synthesis, put together in a very specific historical
moment: the moment of "American world-cultural hegemony" (Hall,
1984:23). Thus, it became possible to pose certain
'sociological' questions (for example, the question of
ideology), to a 'science' which before the cultural revolution
of 1968 had only given the reassuring vista of the "end of
ideology" (Hall, 1984:26).

This challenging position of the Centre explains its
necessarily theoretical nature as opposed to the obviousness of
empirical common sense, which gave its work a new dynamic and a
new elevance to the emergent contradictions in contemporary
advanced societies. "The problematic of cultural studies thus
became closely identified with the problem of the 'relative
autonomy' of cultural practices" (Hall, 1984:29). But what

this position signalled was .not an accomplished haven theoretically secure against all comers; it signalled work to be done, knowledge to be produced --an open Marxism-- rather than the applications of ready-made schema, asserts Hall (1984:29).

The Centre's stronghold in structuralism was provided by Levy-Strauss, Barthes and, principally, Althusser. Nevertheless, structuralism posed rather than answered satisfactorily, certain absolutely critical questions for cultural studies. Another influential figure, Antonio Gramsci, provided very much the 'limit case' of Marxist structuralism. The impact of his thought showed how cultural questions can be linked, in a non-reductionist manner, to other levels: "it enables us to think of societies as complex formations, necessarily contradictory, always historically specific" remarks Hall (1984:36). But other influences, as well, have taken cultural studies beyond the immediate terms of reference (ideology and hegemony, for instance) towards a more difficult but important work stemming from early semiotics, and of parallel developments based on an appropriation of psychoanalytic theories. These techniques are represented by Foucault:

> He has helped further to break down <the> dichotomy between social practices and the ways they are represented in ideologies, in discourse and in particular regimes of knowledge. He has opened up again the problem of 'representation' itself, on which so many theories of ideology and symbolic representation have been based. (Hall, 1984:37)

The different theorists and positions outlined above have been more or less influential, but the Centre has consciously attempted to undercut any initiatives to establish an

'orthodoxy' --says Hall-- in the sense of a set of prescribed positions to which every one has to adhere. Therefore, there has never been a rigidly-imposed theoretical position, though there always has been a general project --the elaboration of a non-reductionist theory of cultures and social formations-- and a defined 'universe of discourse' within whose framework different positions and emphases are exposed to mutual critique (Hall, 1984:40).

Hall makes clear that a certain critical self-reflexivity has been one necessary consequence of cultural studies as a field of inquiry which has no clear precedents, no fixed reference points and no scholarly orthodoxy. Thus, the struggle for the best kind of theoretically-informed concrete practices continues, and has brought criticism more than once for the difficulty and obscurity of its language. It arises, in Hall's opinion, from a too unreflexive practice, but it is also inscribed in the terrain and the institutions where the work is done:

> It arises in part, from the necessity to bend language and inflect its meanings and concepts to purposes which cannot be simply culled from the storehouse of common-sense knowledge. It arises, most acutely, from the fragmentation of knowledge, its ruthless division into watertight compartments; from the doxa and orthodoxy of those divisions and the ways in which they are politically defended, policed and regulated; and from the wider division of intellectual labour which they reproduce. (Hall, 1984:46)

In these circumstances, the aim is to become more 'organic' in the manner of Gramsci, that is, so to speak, to challenge modern ideologies 'in their most refined form', and to enter into the task of popular education. These two tasks are difficult to realize. "The question of language in general

and of languages in the technical sense must be put in the forefront of our inquiry, Gramsci has remarked" (Hall, 1984:46).

The ultimate goal of the Centre is to forge a unity of knowledge and practice, and this commitment reminds us of critical theory, Habermas in Theory and Practice, and, in general, of the break with the established current of sociology (functional-structuralism), which both schools share.

> For American sociology in the 1950s, in either its Parsonian theorization or its structural-functionalist methodology, had abolished the category of contradiction: instead, it spoke of 'dysfunctions' and of 'tension management'. It claimed the mantle of a science. It militantly refused the concept of ideology. At the same time, it preferred a methodology --the method of the social sciences-- modelled on a highly outdated version of the natural sciences, militantly empiricist and quantitative (Hall, 1984:21).

Both critical theory and cultural analysis, in all instances, refute the claims of mainstream sociology, which celebrates the triumph of 'pluralist society' constantly counterposed to 'totalitarian society', a highly ideological couplet which has been advanced as a conclusive scientific fact. This clear-cut assumption which overlooks the forces of hegemony, the imposition of the dominant ideology, and the standardization of life styles in order to create markets for industrialized societies, is methodologically challenged through cultural materialism.

2.8 Cultural Materialism.

Cultural materialism accounts for the position which, as a matter of theory, has become Raymond Williams' concern. This concept has acquired relevance since Williams' early research in Culture and Society, and the impact of the New Left on his intellectual development, his contact with the work of Lukacs, Sartre, Goldmann and Althusser; the access to the Frankfurt school, the work of Walter Benjamin; the work of Antonio Gramsci, and the newly translated work of Marx in the sixties, especially the Grundisse (Williams, 1978:4).

For Williams, 'culture' is a constitutive human process (1978:20). Historically, it was the growth and tending of crops and animals, and by extension the growth and tending of human faculties. The dynamic process, that is, the span of time which took from one definition to become the other, is the subject of Williams' analysis. He proceeds from the notion of civilization as interchangeable with culture in the late Eigthteenth Century, to their eventual divergence which had several causes. He arrives at the point where the idea of a fundamental social process which shapes specific and distinct 'ways of life' is the effective origin of the comparative social sense of 'culture', and its now necessary plural 'cultures' (Williams, 1978:17).

Thus, as Weber had argued, 'culture' is the product of a historical rather than a natural process, and the study of its own 'uniqueness' cannot be expected to yield universal laws of the kind which, from a positivist perspective, would make the study properly 'scientific'. On the other hand, the method of

studying culture through 'interpretation' called <u>hermeneutics</u>, and the procedure of relating parts to whole and whole to parts in an endless process of 'double fitting', described has the 'hermeneutic circle', was not empirical enough in Weber's opinion. He settled for a compromise position: the building up of heuristic models --ideal types-- each of which accentuated a different aspect of a phenomenon. So far as explanation was concerned, Weber argued that cultural objects and historical events required <u>both</u> hermeneutic (interpretative) <u>and</u> causal-historical understanding (Hall, 1978:14-15).

The complexity of the concept of 'culture' is, then, remarkable, but perhaps especially in a Marxist theory, this complexity is a source of great difficulty. At least in the first stage of Marxism, there is one decisive question which was on the whole missed, or not developed, and this is the question of human language, as pointed out by Williams (1978:20). For a definition of language is always implicitly or explicitly a definition of human beings in the world. Yet it is significant that Marxism has contributed very little to thinking about language itself. Williams notes that the key moments of interest to Marxism in the development of thinking about language are, first, the emphasis on language as activity and, second, the emphasis on the <u>history</u> of language (Williams, 1978:21). But neither of these positions, on its own, is enough to restate the whole problem.

After depicting a historical theoretical development of the concept of language from the pre-Socratic unity of <u>logos</u>; the scholastic development of the trivium (i.e. logic, grammar and rhetoric); Descartes and Vico's interpretations, Herder's

definition as a distinctively human opening to the world; and Marx and Engels' passage in German Ideology on language, Williams concludes that ' what we can then define is a dialectical process: the changing practical consciousness of human beings, in which both the evolutionary and the historical processes can be given full weight, but also within which they can be distinguished in the complex variation of actual language use (Williams, 1978:23): (publicity, propaganda and so on). This leads us into the concept 'ideology' which makes a direct reference to the role of ideas, and entails the proposition that ideas are not self-sufficient, that their roots lie elswhere, "that something central about ideas will be revealed if we can discover the nature of determinacy which non ideas exert over ideas" (Hall, 1978:10).

The study of ideology thus holds out the promise of a critique of idealism as a way of explaining how ideas arise. But once the study of ideas is placed at the centre of investigation, a great deal of theoretical effort is required to prevent a drifting into idealism (Hall, 1978:11). Nevertheless, ideology informs a system (with its own logic and rigoeur) of representations (images, myths, ideas or concepts) endowed with a historical existence and role within a given society.

Althusser (1969), remarks that historical materialism cannot conceive that even a communist society could ever do without ideology, be it ethics, art or 'world outlook'. Thus, ideology is neither an aberration nor a contingent excrescence of history; it is a structure essential to the historical life of societies. Ideology is indeed a system of representations,

but has nothing to do with 'consciousness', for these representations, according to Althusser, are above all structures imposed on the vast majority of humans, not results of their consciousness. In this manner, the representations are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on people via a process that escapes them (Althusser, 1969:233).

The three common versions of ideology are all of the common Marxist writing, asserts Williams (1978). They are:

a) a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group;
b) a system of illusory beliefs --false ideas or false consciousness-- which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge; and
c) the general process of the production of meanings and ideas.

In Williams' account of the origin of ideology (coined as a term in the late eighteenth century), its use depended on a particular understanding of the nature of 'ideas', broadly those of Locke and the empiricist tradition combined with elements of a basically bourgeois view of human existence. Later Marx and Engels applied the arguments condemning 'ideology' in the German Ideology, a substantial attack on their German contemporaries. To find primary causes in 'ideas' was seen as the basic error.

Williams explains how the uses of consciousness and philosophy depend almost entirely on the main argument about the futility of separating consciousness and thought from the material social process. This leads directly to simple reductionism: consciousness and its products can be nothing but 'reflections' of what has already occurred in the material social process.

Thus, he draws on the concept of science and the uncritical use of science and scientific to get the conclusion that this notion has had a crucial negative effect on the concept of 'ideology'. For ideology then hovers between "a system of beliefs characteristic of a certain class" and a system of illusory beliefs --false ideas or false consciousness-- which can be contrasted with true sciencific knowledge (Williams, 1978).

In this manner, Williams points out, these varying uses of 'ideology' have persisted within the general development of Marxism. But there has been a convenient dogmatic retention, at some levels, of ideology as 'false consciousness'. This has often prevented the more specific analysis of operative distinctions of 'true' and 'false' consciousness at the practical level. There has been, nevertheless, a difficult attempt to define 'true' consciousness in Marx's point about changing the world rather than interpreting it. Here, Habermas' notion of obtaining 'truth' through interpretation, distances him from orthodox currents.

In Williams' opinion there is an obvious need for a general term to describe not only the products but the processes of all signification, including the signification of values. But it is then an open question whether 'ideology' and 'ideological', with their senses of abstraction and illusion, or their senses of 'ideas' and 'theories', or even their senses of a 'system' of beliefs or of meanings and values, are sufficiently precise and practicable terms for so far-reaching and radical a redefinition (1984:157). "Thus there is now 'proletarian ideology' or 'bourgeois ideology', and so on, and

ideology in each case is the system of ideas appropriate to that class", concludes Williams (1984:157).

Now this takes us to an alternative approach more directly oriented to cultural processes and practical relations: the concept of hegemony, which has been given a significant sense in Gramsci's work. For hegemony at once includes and goes beyond two powerful earlier concepts: that of culture as a whole social process, in which humans define and shape their whole lives; and that of ideology, in any of its Marxist senses, in which a system of meanings and values is the expression or projection of a particular class interest (Williams, 1978:108).

Precisely to analyse these relations within classes and between classes, Gramsci's use of hegemony involves the organisation of 'spontaneous' consent which can be won, for example, by the ruling bloc making economic concessions that "yet do not touch its essential interests", combined with other measures that foster forms of consciousness which accept a position of subordination (Hall, 1978:49):

> The concept allows an analysis that keeps the levels of the social formation distinct and held in combination; hence Gramsci uses 'political hegemony' or 'hegemony in philosophy' to indicate the dominant instance of that hegemony. This more specified use of the concept is not theorised by Gramsci, though he opens the way for a more complex and articulated notion of hegemony. (Hall, 1978:49)

The term hegemony in its sense of a political predominance, usually of one state over another, is not common before the nineteenth century; and has since persisted together with 'hegemonic', to describe a policy of political predominance. In its simplest use it extends the notion of

political predominance from relations between states to relations between social classes. But it is not limited to matters of direct political control. Rather, it seeks to describe a more general predominance which includes, as one of its key features, a particular way of seeing the world and human nature and relationships (Williams, 1984:145).

Gramsci acknowledges Lenin to be the originator of the concept of hegemony, although the latter's idea of it is far more restricted to the political level:

> Gramsci's frequent reference to 'ethico-political hegemony' indicates its breadth; the hegemony of the ruling bloc is seen not simply at the political level, but as affecting every aspect of social life and thought.
> (Hall, 1978:49)

It is in this sense that hegemony is employed to analyze Mexican contemporary food habits in relation with the traditional patterns being eroded not by better or more nutritious aliments, but rather for more processed and commercialized items. It becomes apparent that communication is the catalyst for this change. But how and where occurs will be discussed in chapter IV:

> Hegemony is then not only the articulate upper level of 'ideology', nor are its forms of control only those ordinarily seen as 'manipulation' or 'indoctrination'. It is a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living: our senses and assignements of energy, our shaping perceptions of ourselves and the world. Figure B. (Williams, 1978:110)

Williams asserts (notwithstanding the clarity of the concept), that the major theoretical problem, with immediate effect on methods of analysis, is to distinguish between alternative and oppositional initiatives and contributions which are made within or against a specific hegemony. It can be argued, he says, that all or nearly all initiatives and

FIGURE C

COMMUNICATION FLOW

LIFE/WORLD

diffusion of dominant ideology

hegemony

monopoly distribution of food

advertising

demonstration effect

regional patterns

villager

SPHERE OF BEHAVIOUR

☐   FILTER (human agency)

Source: author
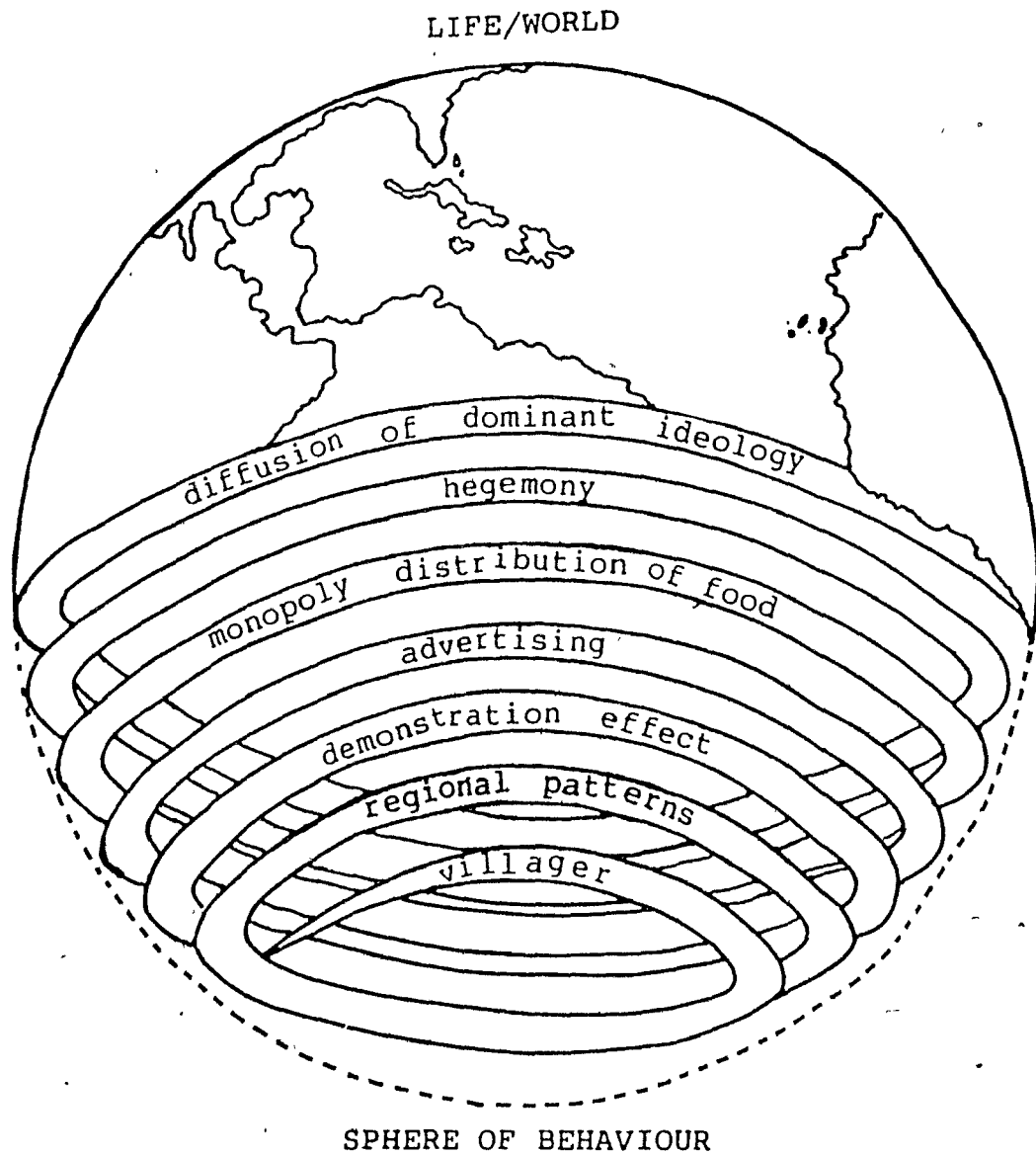
contributions are in practice tied to the hegemonic: that the dominant culture, so to say, at once produces and limits its own forms of counter-culture (Williams, 1978:114).

One can think of hegemony as a kind of structure limiting or impeding action. But this in turn has little effect when 'action' takes the lead in the shaping of cultural, social and political formations. How can this dynamic process take place or not take place in a given society is the subject of debate surrounding the concept of 'human agency'.

2.9 Human Agency.

Whilst some schools of interpretative sociology have accorded primacy to the acting subject, while coping only poorly with the institutionalized properties of social systems, others have been preoccupied with just those properties, and have tended to treat human agents as the playthings of social forces they neither influence nor comprehend, because according to Giddens (1985:168), no social theory should situate itself in such an individual/society dualism, be it the so-called methodological individualism or the social holism.

Giddens offers several reasons for his argument that, summed up, are:

a) the debate on whether social phenomena are "real' in the same sense as individuals are. In his view, however, the concept of agency should be regarded as more fundamental than that of the 'individual' (or even the 'actor').

b) the assertion that society has two meanings: either social association in general, or a bounded grouping --the sense of

the Marxist term 'social formation'. He has reservations about how far 'societies' exist in this second sense, and thus proposes that the concept of 'structure' is more basic than that of society, in much the same way as is the case with 'agency' and the 'individual'.

c) that individuals do not confront preconstituted 'societies' any more than the reverse. Thus he regards the notion of the duality of structure as of key importance (Giddens, 1985:68). By this he means that,

> in the reproduction of social life (through systems of interaction) actors routinely draw upon interpretative schemes, resources and norms which are made available by existing structures of signification, domination and legitimation, and that in doing so they immediately and necessarily reconstitute those structures: in short, 'the structural properties of social systems' are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute those systems... consequently structure is not a constraint on or a barrier to action but is instead essentially involved in its reproduction. (Gregory, 1981:10)

The above argument brings us back to such fundamental questions as the relationship between free will and determinism, in other words, the explanation of social life based on the voluntaristic actions of individuals, and the explanation which accords supremacy to the system of constraint which limit these actions.

In order to examine how this apparent contradiction becomes a dialectical construction, it is necessary to look at four models of historical change: reification; voluntarism; dialectical reproduction; and structuration. According to Gregory (1981:11), reification (the process of treating an abstraction as a material thing), is typified in social theory by Emile Durkheim and by some neo-Marxist formulations. In voluntarism, virtually the converse of reification and typified

in the social theory of Max Weber, society is constituted by intentional action. "Taken to the extreme (which Weber did not pursue), voluntarism places history and development entirely in the hands of human agency" (Jackson & Smith, 1984:60).

In the third conception of historical change, dialectical reproduction, structure is not viewed as a constraint on or a barrier to action, but is instead regarded as being essentially involved in its reproduction, as Gregory has stated. According to him, society forms the individuals who create society in a continuous dialectic: society is an externalisation of humans, and humans are conscious appropriations of society. The fourth model is structuration. a process involving an interplay of meanings, norms, and power. These three concepts are:

> logically implicated both in the notion of intentional action and that of structure: every cognitive and moral order is at the same time a system of power, involving a 'horizon of legitimacy'. (Giddens, 1976:161)

In Gregory's opinion this latter model is developed in the work of Habermas and Giddens, and can be defined as the conditions which govern the continuity and transformation of structures: social systems are both the medium and the outcome of the practices that constitute them. In other words, they are recursively separated and recombined:

> The duality of structures, therefore, refers to the 'fundamentally recursive character of social life and expresses the mutual dependence of structure and agency'. (Jackson & Smith, 1984:61)

For, according to Marx, the ultimate possibility of human self-emancipation must be related to his philosophical premise about the initial creation of the world by human beings:

> Philosophically such a view is a secular version of the Hegelian notion that actuality (Wirklichkeit) is not an external, objective datum, but is shaped by human agency. For Hegel this shaping is performed by consciousness; Marx extricates the activist element of Hegel's doctrine from its metaphysical setting and combines it with a materialist epistemology. (Avineri, 1978:65)

One is reminded, finally, that the realm of human agency is bounded indeed, but the production and reproduction of society has to be treated as a "skilled performance" on the part of its members, not as merely a mechanical series of processes (Giddens, 1976:160).

Up to now I have sought to provide a theoretical basis for using the concept of communication in my empirical study. The definitions of the concepts culture, ideology, society and hegemony, which are fundamental links in the communication process, will be used to clarify my hypothesis, and to understand and interpret the brush strokes which form the cultural landscape of my field work.

The theory as reviewed represents the broader characteristics of the Mexican Food system in which the field work is framed as depicted in the next chapter. It also permeates the approach and the interpretation of the facts encountered throughout the whole project. Thus, in order to clarify and synthesize the procedure, a brief summary of the issues hitherto discussed follows.

We have seen that the critique of ideology must encompass the ramifications of technocratic values which, according to critical theory, do not allow for an emancipated humanity free from alienation and exploitation. The opposites of the latter are emancipation and enlightenment, values produced only through self-reflection--the real emancipatory tool--which

makes the subject aware of its own origins, and reflects, reproduces reality independently of conventional-normative knowledge. Therefore, one of the aims of critical theory is to establish the difference between reconstructive (self-reflective) and empirical-analytical analysis.

But the theory of knowledge has been replaced by a methodology emptied of philosophical thought. Habermas seeks to reverse Comte's empiricism which strengthens science's belief in its exclusive validity after the fact, instead of reflecting into it. His position challenges the established behavioural beliefs and the social science research based on them. In this manner, his theory of communication is based on an ideal reflexive speech situation, which conveys four different validity claims:

a) that the statement is comprehensible; b) that the presuppositions in it are true; c) that the speaker is in a position to make the statement; and d) that the speaker means what he says.

The opposite of this ideal speech situation is the concept of 'systematically distorted communication', in which a system of reciprocal misunderstandings (not recognized as such) develops a pretence of pseudoconsensus. Thus, myth becomes the mark of a human race hopelessly deprived of its vocation to a good and just life and exiled into the cycle of sheer reproduction and survival.

As a tool of human understanding, Habermas has conceived the theory of communicative competence which, as stated, relates to (and means the mastery of) an ideal speech situation. In other words, the conjunction of the external world, the social world and the inner world, which in normal individuals has to be balanced to make speech coherent, is also

the condition of language. That is, social life is a form of language because social life is a form of communication.

The main postulates of critical theory can be paralleled to epistemological discoveries of cultural analysis--an area where different disciplines intersect in the study of the cultural aspects of society. Above all, this analysis aims to achieve qualitative understanding and assessment of the historical processes of the post-war period which include the revival of capitalist production, the founding of the welfare state and the 'Cold War'. The tension (between what might loosely be called 'political' and intellectual concerns) has shaped cultural studies into a culture-and-society tradition of thought.

Furthermore, cultural studies influenced by the first translations of Walter Benjamin, the early texts of the Frankfurt school, and Sartre's Question of Method, no longer interpret culture as a set of texts and artefacts, but rather as cultural practices, in the anthropological sense. Cultural analysis involves a general project--the elaboration of a non-reductionist theory of cultures and social formations--and a defined 'universe of discourse' within whose framework different positions and emphases are exposed to mutual critique.

The ultimate goal of cultural studies is to forge a unity of knowledge and practice (as in Habermas' Theory and Practice), in order to break with the established current of functional-structuralism. This celebrates the highly ideological couplet advanced as a conclusive scientific fact: the triumph of 'pluralist society' constantly counterposed to

'totalitarian society'. But this assumption overlooks the forces of hegemony, the imposition of the dominant ideology, and the standardization of life styles. Functional-structuralism is methodologically challenged through cultural materialism, in which 'culture' is defined as a constitutive human process, thus being the product of a historical rather than a natural process.

The alternative approach directly oriented to cultural processes and practical relations, which means the application of the concept of hegemony, includes and goes beyond the earlier concepts of culture as a whole social process, in which humans define and shape their whole lives through human agency; and, ideology, in any of its Marxist senses, in which a system of meanings and values is the expression or projection of a particular class interest. It is in this manner that hegemony is employed as a tool to analyze Mexican contemporary food habits--in relation with traditional patterns--in order to provide evidence of the catalyst of change: communication processes.

2.10 Notes

1) In 1965 at Frankfurt University, Habermas proclaimed that his theory of knowledge remained faithful to the "insight that the truth of statements is linked in the last analysis to the intention of the good and true life" (McCarthy, 1982,273).

2) There are several words in German that connote the meaning of 'knowledge'. Erkenntnis means all the knowledge we have acquired through science or the process of learning, either individually or historically. Wissen, means 'what I know', and Verstehen, means understanding.

3) ..."with the transformation of a class of society into a mass society and with the substitution of a guaranteed annual wage for daily or weekly pay... the workers today are no longer outside society; they are its members, and they are jobholders like everybody else. The political significance of the labour movement is now the same as that of any other pressure group" Arendt cited in Hanna Arendt's Communication Concept of power, by Habermas, p.13

4) The five essays are: What is Universal Pragmatics?, Moral Development and Ego Identity, Historical Materialism and the Development of Normative Structures, Toward a Reconstruction of Historical Materialism, and Legitimation Problems in the Modern State.

5) Strukurwandel der Oeffentlichkeit Untersuchungen zu Kategorie der Burgelichen Gesellschaft (Berlin, 1965) (To appear in English by MIT Press)

CHAPTER III   THE MEXICAN FOOD SYSTEM

3.1 The present nutritional situation.

To assess Mexico's alimentary situation realistically, the most adequate procedure would be a national enquiry with a representative sample of all population groups. So far, there has not been any such encompassing investigation, and the results from several studies are inconclusive and at times contradict one an other. However, there are some sources of data and several studies whose conclusions may help draw an approximate view of the national nutritional situation. An overview of these documents commences with the census.

For the general censuses of 1940 and 1950, the notion of sound nutrition was based on the preference for wheat bread over "tortilla" (traditional corn cake). The former was seen as a rich food intake, diversified and complete; the latter was associated with deficient intake, lack of food variety and poverty (Coplamar, 1983). By 1960, the census focussed on "customary" consumption of meat, eggs, milk and cheese. A sound nutrition, in this case, rested on the presence or absence of protein of animal origin. Noticeably, the virtual absence of questions referring to consumption of staple foods in the Mexican diet (corn and beans), made this census quite biased and inconclusive.

These antecedents in the nutritional situation, however, helped to reinforce some changes which occurred between

1940-1980: on one side, the social demarcations which fixed the boundaries among Mexicans who ate either wheat or corn (at present there is no information available on whether wheat consumption really indicates a more balanced diet); on the other side, the consumption of animal protein which determines (like the former indicator) a line dividing the population and shows a large sector who do not consume animal protein. The 1960 census pointed out that 23 per cent of the population do not consume meat, eggs, milk, fish. In the 1970 census 20.61 per cent did not consume meat, 23.17 per cent did not eat eggs, 38.05 per cent did not drink milk, and 70.15 per cent did not consume fish (Coplamar, 1983:35). In Table 3.1 are shown the indicators of the nutritional situation according to the census, which throughout three decades still employs the wheat parameter in a country whose main staple is corn.

TABLE 3.1 Nutritional Situation According to Census

| Year | Conclusions based upon: | |
	basic data (wheat consumption)	and other data
1940	Do not eat wheat bread 54.93% of the total pop	
1950	Do not eat wheat bread 45.58% of the Total pop	
1960	Do not eat wheat bread 30.40% of the total pop (6.25% urban, 24.15% rural)	23.32% of total pop do not consume meat, eggs, milk, fish (6.17% urban 17.15% rural)
1970	Do not eat wheat bread 23.41 of the total pop (8.19% urban, 15.22% rural)	Percentages who do not consume: meat 20.61 eggs 23.17 milk 38.05 fish 70.15

Source: COPLAMAR, 1983:36

In one of the studies conducted in 1962, it was disclosed that daily caloric intake per person was 2500 calories, whereas the normative minimum put forward by the inquiry done by the Centro Nacional de Informacion y Estadistica del Trabajo in 1975, was 2750 calories, including 80 grs. of protein. Discrepancies show in normative criteria and data.

Along with the census, many other nutritional surveys were being conducted between 1957 and 1979. A general finding in all of them was that the Mexican diet had not changed in all those years, although some alterations of nutritional habits could be observed (Coplamar, 1983:18). Parallel to these surveys, the Instituto Nacional de Nutricion (INN) published the so called "hojas de balance de disponibilidad", which examined the availability of calories and proteins per capita per annum. With these two research instruments plus some data drawn from the aforementioned census, Coplamar has attempted to measure quantitatively the present nutritional situation, and to forecast some specific actions which will have to be implemented for the years to come.

Coplamar (1983:38) determined, after the 1970 census, that 55.93 per cent of the population was below minimal nutritional requirements. The criteria used to draw this percentage were based upon those who ate meat from 0 to 2 days a week, and those who would eat meat from 3 to 7 days a week. In another statistical compilation, done by the Ministry of Budget and Finance (Programacion y Presupuesto) in 1981, it was stated that 89.5 per cent of Mexican population do not have an adequate food intake given the parameter of 2750 calories and 80 grs of protein set by the INN. Yet another study claims that

28 per cent of the population suffers from malnutrition caused by poverty. What becomes clear in this panorama, though, is the steady deterioration of the nutritional state. The population which by 1975 did not have access to enough calories and/or proteins (64.6%), had a worse diet by 1978 (Coplamar, 1983:90), and the gap between rural and urban access to food is widening (Figure D).

So far, the knowledge of the nutritional situation of the Mexican population is insufficient and ill defined to serve any planning ends. Research projects and their results give only an approximate idea in a very general manner, and they usually refer to a particular geographic area with no valid generalizations for the whole population.

Coplamar's studies put emphasis on the gap between food intake in developed countries with respect to the Mexican diet, and put too much emphasis in finding out which is the population sector farthest removed from the developed countries' nutritional model. Therefore, the parameter most used to measure nutrition is the intake of animal protein. COPLAMAR's findings (1983:71), indicate that from the total ingested protein of 50.89 per cent of rural population in 1975, only 20.7 per cent was of animal origin, the rest being from grain. In the same sense, the whole population had only 33.8 per cent protein of animal origin.

This criterion based on the demonstration effect (because most food analysts follow the nutritional model of developed countries), obscures the fact that animal protein production is displacing traditional staples cultivation (corn and beans), by concentrating on soy and sorghum for animal

FOOD CONSUMPTION DISTRIBUTION, 1975

(Rural and urban population)

%	cereals	other food	legumes & oilseeds	Mexican population 1975	sugars	all foodstuffs	starches	vegetables	oils & fats	fruits	animal produce
100	57%	53%	52%	51%	49%	43%	43%	36%	33%	32%	28%
				rural pop							23%
								15%	17%	19%	
	6%	2%	1%		2%	7%	7%				
50	— line of equidistribution —										
				urban pop							
0	43%	47%	48%	49%	51%	57%	57%	64%	67%	68%	72%

line of equidistribution

☐ rural consumption   ☐ urban consumption

Source: COPLAMAR, 1983:96

76 a
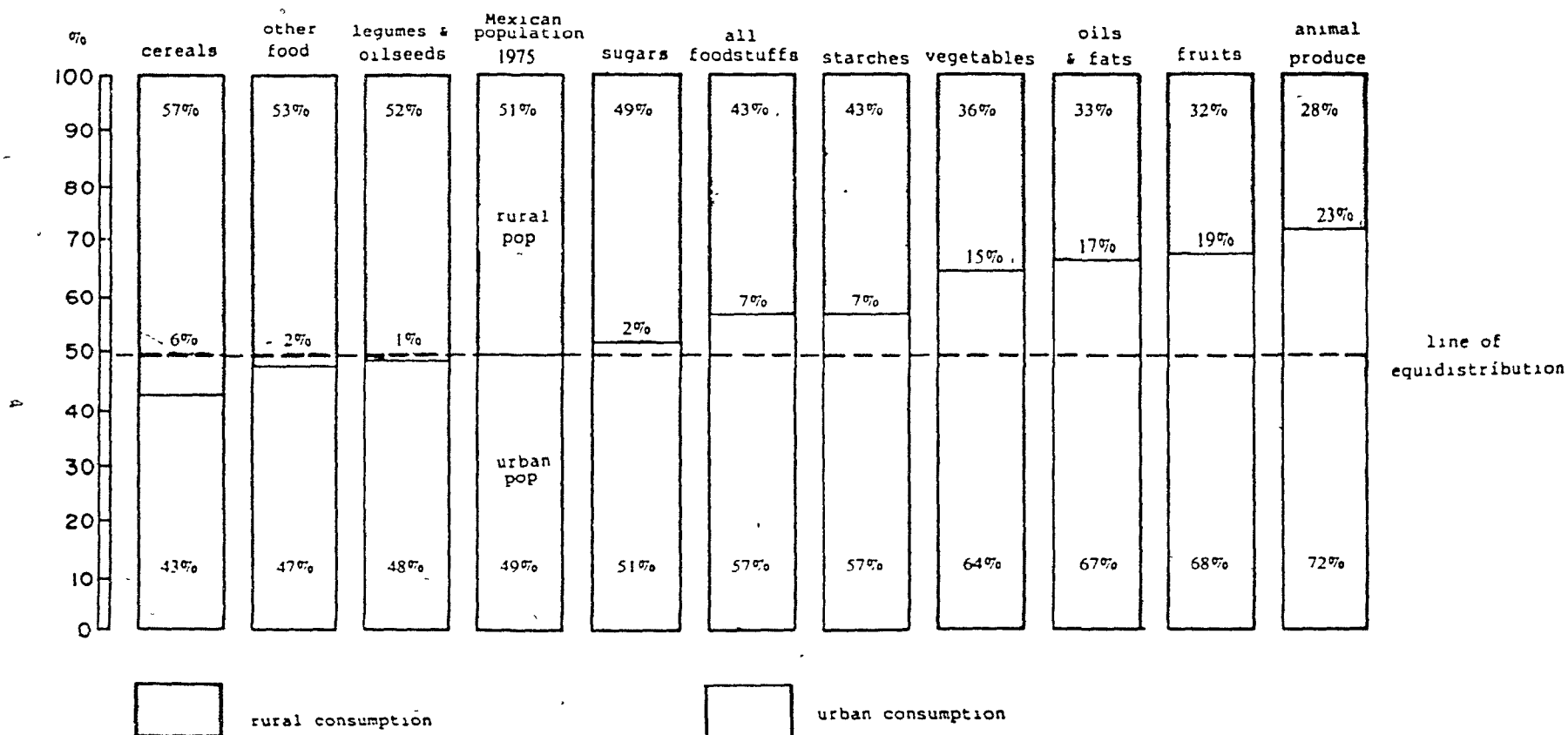
feeding instead. Thus, actions oriented to encourage consumption of animal protein will be useful only for the 11.1% of the wealthy population who may consume meat on an "ideal" basis of seven days a weak. This nutritional policy does not take into account the massive population growth and the projections for the future. Nor does it consider the possibility that promotion of vegetal protein may be more appropriate in the Mexican case.

TABLE 3.2 Urban and Rural Population in 1975 and Projections of Years 1982, 1990, 2000

Years	Population distribution						Population growth					
	Millions			%			1975=100			annual average		
	Nat	Urb	Ru	Nat	Urb	Ru	Nat	Urb	Ru	Nat	Urb	Ru
1975	59.8	29.4	30.4	100	49.1	50.9	100	100	100	--	--	--
1982	73.7	43.2	30.5	100	58.6	41.4	123.3	147.1	100.3	3.0	5.7	0.0
1990	88.8	55.5	33.3	100	62.5	37.5	148.5	188.9	109.5	2.7	4.3	0.6
2000	109.2	75.7	33.5	100	69.3	30.7	182.5	257.6	110.0	2.4	3.9	0.4

Source: Coplamar, 1982

Demographic perspectives (Table 3.2) show that the present nutritional situation has to be reconsidered in order to avoid social havoc by the year 2000, because food production is not keeping pace with population growth. According with Coplamar's research (1983:131), from 1975 to 1978 several sectors of the population had decreased access to food. This trend has not stopped since. COPLAMAR (1983:138) recommends, thus, effective state intervention in price control, if at least there is the will to maintain the present condition. Otherwise, the magnitude of widespread malnutrition will widen in the years to come.

3.2 The economic base of the Mexican food system.

The above statement seems to reflect the reality of the economic base of the Mexican food system. "There is now a consensus that the Mexican economy is going through its most serious crisis in forty years" (Heredia, 1986:1). With unemployment standing at between 12 and 15 per cent and 40 per cent of workers holding only part-time jobs (Newsweek, Jan 13, 1986:37), Mexicans are eating less meat and drinking less milk. Malnutrition is rising, especially in rural areas, and such problems are spilling over to the United States. According to U.S. Border Patrol, arrests of illegal Mexican immigrants rose to a record 1.3 million last year.

In the absence of a broad-ranging program of rural development, much of the rural population has migrated, finding its way to metropolitan centers of Mexico or periodically crossing the border into the United States. "Four million landless peasants, five to six million unorganized workers, and a huge pool of disappointed middle class employees see no hope of improvement or change of direction" (Heredia, 1986:144). Although the Mexican government has been following a policy of subsidies in the last years in order to appease the needs of the majority, economists Garcia Alba and Serra Puche (1984:82) find no sound justification to this policy. They state that neither economically nor socially are these subsidies needed. The ill design shows on the subsidy of corn which, in principle, would enhance income distribution among the poor, however, the wealthy are the ones who draw the most benefit. Table 3.3 shows that corn subsidy per capita is bigger in the

wealthy states than in the poorer states.

TABLE 3.3   Income Per Capita and Corn Subsidy Sales

States	Income per capita per month in 1970	Monthly kilograms per capita in 1982	Population (%)
Aguascalientes	130.0	0.6530	0.75
Baja California N	346.2	1.0342	1.82
Baja California S	200.4	0.5738	0.33
Campeche	132.1	1.0651	0.55
Coahuila	187.2	0.6909	2.31
Colima	172.3	1.3148	0.50
Chiapas	90.4	0.5539	3.11
Chihuahua	222.3	0.2834	2.87
D.F. & Edo. de Mex.	282.8	1.0369	25.11
Durango	134.4	0.8912	1.72
Guanajuato	119.0	0.6773	4.52
Guerrero	97.1	0.6952	3.23
Hidalgo	113.1	0.3305	2.25
Jalisco	194.7	1.2657	6.37
Michoacan	107.3	0.6532	4.52
Morelos	141.9	1.3753	1.38
Nayarit	146.7	0.3247	1.08
Nuevo Leon	257.3	0.7436	3.66
Oaxaca	78.8	0.0879	3.74
Puebla	120.9	0.4463	4.87
Queretaro	112.1	0.6153	1.08
Quintana Roo	94.4	0.5883	0.31
San Luis Potosi	115.9	0.5333	2.48
Sinaloa	172.1	0.3654	2.79
Sonora	251.6	0.3803	2.22
Tabasco	120.1	0.0692	1.71
Tamaulipas	232,8	0.8046	2.86
Tlaxcala	98.4	0.4093	0.81
Veracruz	146.0	0.5122	7.81
Yucatan	117.2	1.2469	1.54
Zacatecas	106.3	0.5810	1.70

Source: García Alba & Serra Puche (1984)

This situation illustrates one of the most notorious characteristics of Mexico's economy: its duality. One part of the population enjoys activities in the modern sector, associated with a relatively high economic level. The rest of the population (the large majority) has activities related to a subsistence level and, although the population increase has been diminishing, the annual rate of increase in the work force

is very high, and will be maintained at four per cent for the years to come (Garcia Alba & Serra Puche, 1984:43). This duality is related to subsidies (corn, for instance) insofar as these represent the ruling class instrument to maintain the status quo. Mexican social scientist, Pablo Gonzalez Casanova (cited in Heredia, 1986:144), states that:

> In the present crisis, there will not be any solid democratic project without an economic policy which protects the consumption, the production and the employment of the Mexican people in a national plan of "decommercialization" of basic food staples, clothing, lodging and medicine for the masses. In fact, it will be necessary to democratize the economic policy by reorienting the fiscal policy of investment and expenditures, the policy of exemptions and subsidies, and the credit policy, to the production and distribution of goods and services for popular consumption. (Heredia, 1986:144 emphasis added)

Due to the above-mentioned policies, the marginal population, which earns a living at a subsistence level, has been one of the resources for industrial growth based upon two paradoxical requirements:

> the availability of cheap labour in both urban and rural areas, with which to lower the costs of relatively inefficient industries; and the option to import advanced, labour-saving technology in the most modern areas of the manufacturing sector. Neither of these requirements of dependent industrial growth has augured well for the mass of the labour force. (Hewitt, 1985:3).

The policies of import substitution, capital-intensive production strategies, and high inflation rates, probably have provoked speculation, rather than investments in areas of productive capacity, showing that the subsistence sector is a product of the modern sector. The real significance of the post-1982 crisis of Mexico, then, is not that the banking community faced the probability of defaults, nor that Mexico's poor were subjected to greater hardship than at any time since the Depression. Rather, it is that Mexico's economy can no

longer finance the traditionally profligate ways of the political system. Subsidies have been one of the major political weapons to ensure stability, at the expense of a more rational economic policy.

Since 1983, when economic activity contracted by 4.7 percent--the country's worst performance since the 1910 Revolution-- Mexico has negotiated postponement until 1987 of principal payments on $23 billion worth of foreign debt which had matured between August 1982 and December 1984 (Riding, 1985:152). Due to measures such as these the productive apparatus has been seriously bruised. Mexico has become an exporter of capital, adding hardship to traditional structural weaknesses: the chronic depression of the agricultural sector; low industrial productivity; an inability to export nontraditional products; insufficient domestic savings; a new but profound dependency on oil; and a vast maze of subsidies (Riding, 1985:155).

In a public declaration of the present economic situation, the Colegio Nacional de Economistas stated that inequalities in income distribution have increased, diminishing tremendously the purchasing power of the working class. Currencies are solely servicing the payment of the external debt. In sharp contrast with this, utilities of national and transnational enterprises are gearing up. The Colegio's declaration concludes that the economic crisis is affecting mainly the poor layers of the population (Excelsior, August 6, 1985:27A). This fact shows in the aggregate overall purchasing power which is lower than it was in 1975; in the accelerated concentration of income and wealth; in the massive transfer of resources abroad due to

the debt service and capital flight; in the recurring inflation that cannot be reduced below the 60 per cent plateau; in the disastrous shape of public finances; and in the rapid erosion of the political consensus necessary to pursue the adjustment (Heredia, 1986:6). All the above impinges on the nutritional situation of a large portion of the population.

3.3 Communication and the food system

On the eve of the economic crisis in 1980, president Jose Lopez Portillo (1976-1982) announced the creation of the Sistema Mexicano de Alimentacion (SAM), whose objectives were self-sufficiency in corn and beans by 1982, and in most other grains and oilseeds by 1985 (Agriculture Abroad, 1981:17). Outputs of basic products (meat, milk, flour, beverages and grains) were expected to rise by 6.9% annually. A key component was the establishment of small-scale agro-industry close to production areas. Food processing ventures were envisioned as peasant-run cooperatives or joint undertakings between farmers, the state and/or other entrepreneurs.

The Mexican Food System (SAM), was complemented by social programs to up-date nutritional quality of food produce, to improve dietary habits through education of the population and to improve the production and distribution of staple food products. The liberal funding by the government (during 1980 it extended 3.7 million U.S dollars in credit for crop insurance, marketing reorganization, farm subsidies, discount on fertilizers and insecticides, free seeds and a variety of other elements (Agriculture Abroad, 1981:18) also included the

communication area. Since mid-1980, the "System has employed 2296 radio stations, 175 thousand comic books and 20 million books to diffuse and broadcast seventeen thousand courses on agricultural techniques. This enterprise was intended to train 13,000 specialists in agro-industry, and 517,000 peasants. (Esteinou, 1983:171).

As a result of these programs, government data indicated a five million tonne jump in corn, wheat and sorghum output during 1981; confidence in reaching self sufficiency in corn and beans was publicly voiced. This positive outlook was due not only to the government's push, but also to good weather conditions. President Lopez Portillo vowed the country was to be self-sufficient in corn and beans in 1982, and stocks were being built up to ensure that imports would be kept at a minimum when the government changed hands. However, reality proved to be different from Lopez Portillo's predictions. After president Miguel de la Madrid (1982-1988) took office in 1982, SAM was immediately dismantled, its staff scattered among other ministries or universities. In 1983, a new National Food Program, PRONAL, was created. The president revived the concept of self-sufficiency, by calling it "food sovereignty" (1).

In a pamphlet published by the Comision Nacional de Alimentacion to explain PRONAL's functions, many of the old concepts put forward by SAM are translated into different terminology. Instead of food system, the new word is 'food chain', for example. This so-called food chain embraces the same processes and stages of the food system with no differences whatsoever, but the phrasing is meticulous and careful in order to avoid similarities with the defunct

program. PRONAL's main objectives are two: food sovereignty and achieving conditions of nutrition for the whole population which will permit the development of Mexican capacities and potentialities (PRONAL, 1984:31).

As with SAM's earlier goals, PRONAL's are ambitious: from 1983 to 1988, the nutritional levels of low income families (40% of the population) will be improved. This means that 30 million persons were reached by 1984 and 33 million will be reached by 1988. The priority items for subsidies are corn, wheat, beans, rice, sugar, oils and vegetable fats, poultry, eggs, milk and fish. The latter will be increased to provide 18 Kg per year per person. Fish will play a bigger part in the diet. PRONAL will also produce and distribute enriched foods directed towards children in the milk feeding stage and pregnant women. Also, it will establish a program of epidemiological supervision to follow the nutritional state of the people.

Critics of the program, however, have signaled that, far from finding a solution, the unveiling of PRONAL coincided with further deterioration in the terms of trade between country and city. It seemed preferable to import grain and subsidize consumer prices rather than risk provoking the urban working and middle classes with new inflation. "PRONAL in fact emerged as a SAM without money, concentrating on improving food distribution but doing little to stimulate production" (Riding, 1985:198).

Still, in the area of consumption and nutrition, PRONAL looks after nutritional orientation, establishment of norms, and planning of collective food services. It also aims at

research of nutritional guides, which will be adapted to regional habits, customs and food availability by region, as well as to the investigation of non-conventional food of high nutritional value. These communication programs are similar, too, to former SAM's campaigns, however, its accomplishements are not clear in the Mexican food panorama.

3.4 Food production and distribution.

We have seen, hitherto, that the problems of feeding the country have been exacerbated by economic chaos, confusion concerning what crops will be grown, how to allocate subsidies, and what kind of imports to be encouraged. Yet in the aftermath of World War II, Mexico increased its food production. By the period 1960-1970 the peak reached the simultaneous demographic growth, meaning that the country was self-sufficient in food production. And not only so, but Mexico could afford the necessities of the growing population and still had a surplus to be exported, such as traditional products like fruits, tomatoes, coffee, sugar, shrimps, and beef, as well as significant quantities of cereals, legumes and oilseeds. The total exports of that decade were 17.6 million tonnes of food and 5 million head of cattle. During that period there were virtually no food imports, apart from 145,800 tonnes of cereals and 5,000 tonne of milk powder, per year.

By 1970, however, Mexico had to import 810,000 tonnes of grains. This phenomenon was thought to be transitory, due to drought and other climatic conditions. But the trend of low productivity and increased food imports has not stopped since,

becoming more acute instead. Paradoxically, exports of fruit and vegetables are much higher, as are those of fish, shellfish, meat, sugar and coffee. This situation is illustrated in figure E. In view of this trend, the prime terrain is assigned to export crops, and the cultivation of corn and beans is allocated to the mountainous slopes. Production of fodder, barley for beer, sugar cane, alfalfa and other products destined for high income sectors is increased, while basic staples have to be imported. At the time of one study done by the INN in 1975, thirty per cent of the poorest population had a ten percent share of agricultural products, whereas the high income population (15%), consumed directly or indirectly fifty percent of such production. This contradiction was attributed, in part, to the tendency of producing expensive and sophisticated food items in a country where its majority has little purchasing power, barely enough to buy the classical diet of corn and beans.

Increments in imports are thus a consequence of a progressive deficiency in production and a growing difficulty in distribution to satisfy the needs of the poor. In 1978 seventy four per cent of the cereals needed for human consumption had to be imported, whereas protein-rich foods from animal origin were not scarce. But only high and middle urban classes could afford the latter. Figure F shows how since 1967 food produce is mostly market oriented, "market" meaning large supermarket networks and export companies. Patterns of imports and exports have changed food availability. There are more fruits, vegetables and animal protein per capita, at the expense of grains and cereals. In theory this trend would prove

TENDENCY OF FOOD IMPORTS AND EXPORTS IN MEXICO

1960-1970 = 100

years

———————— imports   — — — — — exports
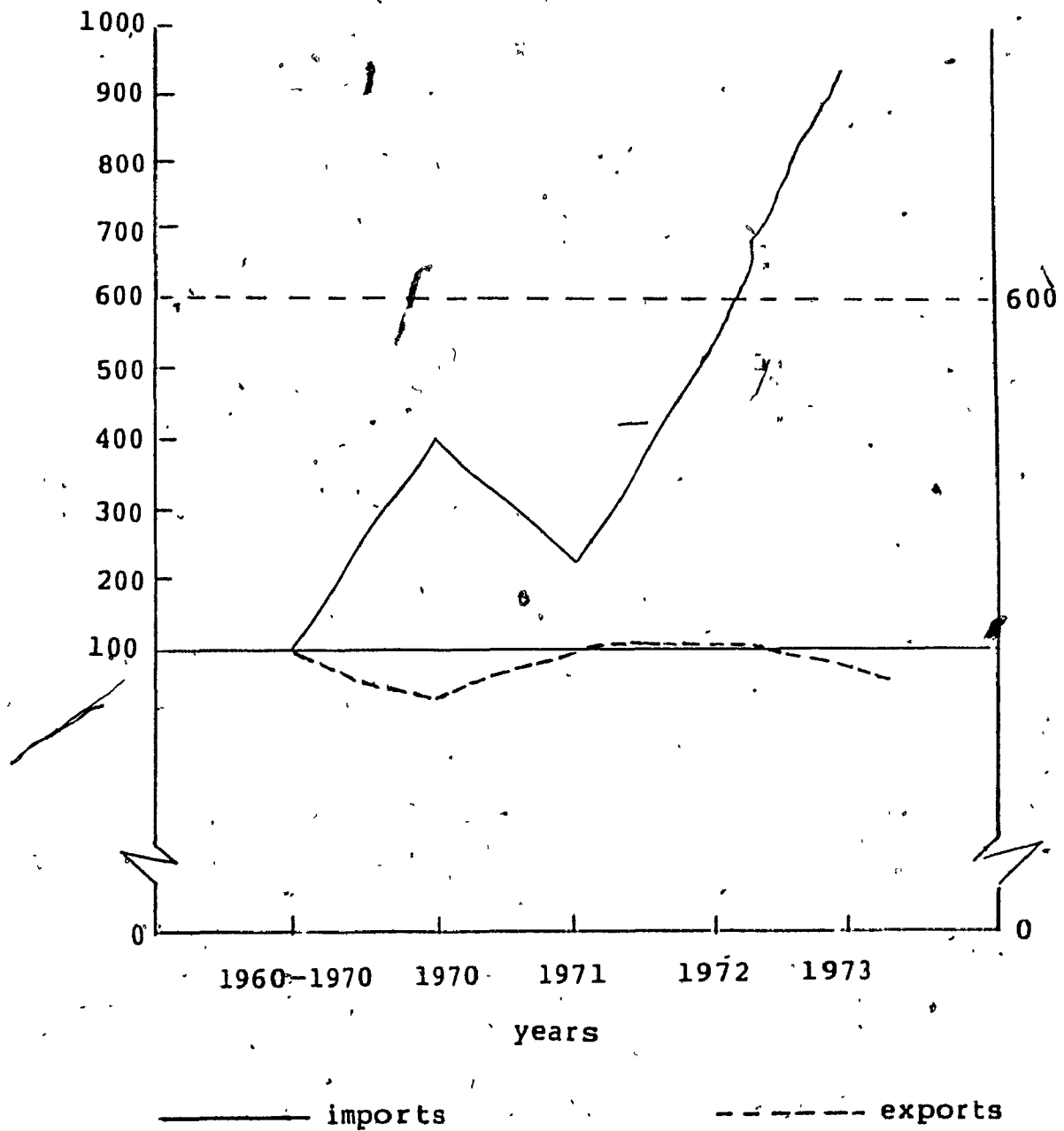
Source: Ramirez, 1975:9

good to balance the diet, but it is not so because of the lack of basic cereals, which in most cases are used to feed animals for the protein sources of the high income and middle classes.

The INN's 1980 report signals that the changes observed in the Mexican diet are related to the development strategy, and to changes in supply and demand. Urban growth and the emphasis on North American consumption patterns have also provoked an explosion of sugar-based industrial foods and higher demand for protein products. To subsidize agribusiness and the wealthy layer of the population, fodder is imported to feed animals. Rural distribution of corn becomes difficult and so migration to the cities is encouraged. The goal of abundance and diversity excludes the majorities. Political priority is given to avoiding scarcity within the capital city where over one-half of the highest-income families in the nation live.

This situation has created an unprecedented demand for luxury goods, and provided a structure of supply controlled partially by the public sector and partially by private interests. In the case of perishables, for which it is estimated that the capital city handles between forty and sixty per cent of all marketed national production, the private sector predominates (Hewitt, 1985:5). This urban-centered food system channels food products toward the city. Small cultivators are left without sufficient income to obtain from the market the food which they cannot produce. What one sees, then, is a large group of impoverished rural producers who do not in general enjoy the same terms of access to food as their low-income counterparts in the metropolitan area (Hewitt, 1985:6).

The programs oriented toward the equalization of food access in country and city, such as SAM and PRONAL, have been undertaken by the Mexican government for over a decade; but as observed above, they have been the recurring victims of administrative change, economic crisis and structural contradictions. Among the last, the investment of a great deal of private capital in enterprises producing high-priced forms of animal protein (processed meats, yogurts and cheeses), wines and liquors, sauces and seasonings, as well as a variety of "non-food edibles", packaged cakes and candies, and soft drinks of multinational origin, undermines and interferes with governmental policies either at production and distribution levels, or at communication levels promoting sensible eating patterns.

> It is ironic that private enterprises have maintained or expanded their markets despite the current economic crisis, thus illustrating the importance they have attained in the diet of families of the most varied economic means... and, perhaps not surprisingly, there has been a tendency in these times of economic crisis for the most exclusive establishments to proliferate, as the capitalist sector of the food system searches for ways to maintain access to the remaining pools of concentrated buying power within <Mexico> city. (Hewitt, 1985:10-13)

Production and distribution of food have become trapped by enterprises that will not cut their profits below a rate acceptable for the economy as a whole, a state constrained by financial difficulties to cut subsidies, and small cultivators and merchants who are unable to contribute further increments of unremunerated labour to the food system.

7

3.5 Food companies and communication processes.

The former statements are better illustrated and the argument expanded if one looks at national and international food companies and food management in Mexico, for the fact that fruits and vegetables (the raw material for food processing) have not been affected by the agrarian crisis is an indicator of the business-oriented food production of today's agriculture. A result of this orientation is production directed to foreign markets. Vegetables and fruits in their raw state are mostly exported to the United States, whereas the rest of the production is processed for local consumption.

This spatial distribution proves beneficial for transnational investment, which also accrues gains from the internal market expansion, whose growth is due to income redistribution in favour of the high and middle classes, demographic growth, urbanization and the development of the financial system. Thus, foreign capital has managed to hold monopoly control over instant coffee, chewing gum, tea, animal food, milk in condensed, powdered and evaporated forms, soups and sauces, and, as earlier mentioned, canned fruits and vegetables.

It is noticeable, too, that transnational companies get their supplies of raw items directly from the farmers by means of production contracts. In this manner, the firms provide seeds, fertilizers, insecticides, and, eventually, machinery and credit. As one study attests (Rama & Vigorito, 1979:112), the costs of these operations are fixed in advance, that is, before the sowing season when market prices are lower, and this

is one of the factors resulting in high multinational profits. But multinational influence comes not only at the market level. It also encompasses manufacturing, administration and distribution, and so the companies need to devote a large percentage of their income to effective advertising to keep competitive with national firms.

The connection between multinationals and farmers, as in the cases of Ethiopia and the Sahel region, for example, has also provoked modifications in Mexican agricultural patterns. In various states --Queretaro, Michoacan, Guanajuato, Sinaloa, Veracruz-- there has been a correlation between the low production of corn, wheat and beans, with the increase of fruit and vegetable produce for export (Rama & Vigorito, 1979:39), (Coplamar, 1983:131).

The relationship which can be drawn from the above facts involves both technological superiority and foreign capital, with communication strategies imbedded in the free-market economy. This set of advantages establishes a stronghold in the Mexican food system developing in an area, namely consumption incentives, at the expense of a more general access to food.

Ideologically, the message aimed at transforming consumption patterns operates as a catalyst of consumption. The idea put forward by advertising is to switch from fresh to processed produce. But this transformation will be possible only if a series of general conditions in the physical, biological and economic base of the population is met to make them vulnerable enough to receive new schemes or to alter old values. Some of these general conditions are the move towards urbanization, and the rapid economic growth that Mexico has

achieved in the last 30 years. This latter has benefited 50 per cent of the population of higher income (Rama & Vigorito, 1979:73) which constitutes the potential consumer group of transnational products.

Another strategy that appears to legitimize behaviour modified by consumption trends, is the assimilation of the concept of property to the concept of consumption. In accordance, the power of possessing consumer goods is homologous to the power of determination which the property over the means of production bestows. At this level, "the cultural process is not its active practices but its formal products or objects" (Williams, 1978:106). The "fit" or homology between consumer goods and means of production gives rise to _displaced_ connections. This ideological transfer concludes associating consumption with liberty and equality of opportunity as a substitute for property over the means of production.

In this manner, the notion of consumer sovereignty is expanded upon the base of consumer preferences and choices. The concept of consumer sovereignity has to be diffused among the proper group, which is the one which has the economic capacity to alter at will its consumption patterns (Rama & Vigorito, 1979:75). Mass media messages, such as those found in women's magazines, target this group which, in turn, will encourage economic expansion through its consumption patterns. The marriage between capital expansion and advertising will prompt multinational firms to rely on the power of the image makers. The resulting symbiosis of advertising and food companies gives rise to consumption patterns that hold and accelerate

industrial growth. Table 3.4 shows this association.

TABLE 3.4 Relations Between Food Companies and Advertising Agencies

Food companies	Advertising agencies
Transnationals	**Transnationals**
Alimentos Findus S.A.	Publicidad D'Arcy, S.A. de C.
	Panamericana Ogilvy & Mather,S.A.
Anderson Clayton Co. S.A.	Mc Cann Erickson Stanton, S.A.
	Arellano NCK Publicidad, S.A. de C.V
	Publicidad D'Arcy, S.A. de C.V.
Campbells de Mexico, S.A.de C.V.	Panamericana Ogilvy & Mather, S.A.
Clemente Jacques y Cia. S.A.	Publicidad D'Arcy, S.A. de C.V.
Compania Nestle, S.A.	Leo Burnett, S.A. de C.V.
	Panamericana Ogilvy & Mather, S.A.
General Foods de Mexico, S.A.	Arellano NCK Publicidad, S.A. de C.V
	Young & Rubicam, S.A de C.V.
Gerber Products, S.A.	Publicidad D'Arcy, S.A. de C.V.
Kraft Food de Mexico, S.A.	Walter Thompson de Mexico, S.A.
Mexatlan, S.A. de C.V.	Hart y Asociados
Productos de Maiz, S.A.	Foot Cone & Belding de Mexico, S.A.
Productos del Monte, S.A.	McCann Erickson Stanton, S.A.
Transnationals	**Nationals**
Campbells de Mexico, S.A.de C.V.	Noble y Asociados Publicidad
General Foods de Mexico, S.A.	Noble y Asociados Publicidad
Mc Cormick de Mexico, S.A.	Iconic, S.A.
Nationals	**Transnationals**
Alimentos de Fuerte, S.A.de C.V.	Arellano NCK Publicidad, S.A. de C.V
Elias Pando, S.A.	Doyle, Dane & Bernbach de Mexico,S.A
Conservas de Baja California S.A.	Publicidad Ferrer, S.A.
Empacadora de Jugos y Frutas S.A.	Leo Burnett, S.A. de C.V.
Heinz Alimentos, S.A.	Doyle, Dane & Bernbach de Mexico,S.A
Jugos del Valle, S.A.	Arellano NCK Publicidad, S.A. de C.V
Jugos y Mermeladas, S.A.	Publicidad Ferrer, S.A.
Nationals	**Nationals**
Casa Ferrer, S.A.	Suarez Mier Publicidad, S.A.
Empacadora Buffalo, S.A.	Gutierrez Silva y Asociados, S.A.
Herdez, S.A.	Augusto Elias, Publicidad, S.A.
Mg. Industrial de Alimentos S.A.	Cabarga y Asociados, S.A.

Source: ILET (Division de Estudios de la Comunicacion) and Directorio de Agencias y Anunciantes, MPM,S.A. de C.V., 1978.

Advertising companies operate through mechanisms which modify the nature of food products. The latter are presented and propelled in a denaturalized form whose identification becomes an intellectual build up; the recognition of the brand is more important than the physical nature of the product. The

pervasive growth of multinational influence in the food market is represented by the fact that in 1950-1955 there were 34 foreign brands of food produce out of a total 66; by 1965-1970, though, there were 105 foreign brands out of 143 (Rama & Vigorito, 1979:79). This inversion of the terms for consumer preferences in which the nutritional and physical properties of the object are subordinated to its way of looking and the package which contains it, has altered the selection criteria for buying food.

According to ECLA's data (Economic Commission for Latin America), 31% of US capital investment on food related industry in Latin America and the Caribbean, goes to Mexico. This means that Mexico is the country with largest US investment in the whole region. With respect to other manufacturing industries, Mexico has the second place with 29%, Brazil leading with a 36% of US investment (Rama & Vigorito, 1979:158). To indicate the importance of this investment, Table 3.5 shows the impact of foreign capital in the food sector. Table 3.6 lists national and transnational food companies.

TABLE 3.5 Importance of Multinational Food Companies in Mexico's
Food Industry: 1970 (in percentage)

Industrial modalities	Number of companies	Total gross production
Instant coffee & tea	25.0	96.0
Milk in condensed form, powdered & evaporated	83.3	98.3
Chewing gum	18.2	84.9
Syrups	12.6	80.2
Animal food	6.9	54.5
Canned fruits & vegetables	11.2	70.1
Soups, sauces & others	15.8	93.5

Source: Rama & Vigorito, 1979
(data: Direccion General de Estadistica)

TABLE 3.6 Transnational Food Companies in Mexico

	Country	Co. name	Start up date
Alimentos Welch S.A. de C.V.	USA	Welch Foods Suc.	
Alimentos Mundiales S.A.	USA	Better Foods Sales Inc.	
Ambesco de Mexico S.A. de C.V.	USA	Panamericana Investment Inc.	
Alimentos Findus S.A.	Swtzld	AspalimS.A.	
Anderson Clayton Co. S.A.	USA	Anderson Clayton Co.	1934
Alimentos Mexicanos Selectos S.A.	USA	Del Monte Corp.	
Almacenes Refrigerantes S.A(ARSA)	USA	Pet Inc.	
Birds Eye de Mexico S.A. de C.V.	USA	General Foods Corp.	
Campbells de Mexico S.A. de C.V.	USA	Campbells Soup Company	1960
Congeladora y Empacadora Nacional S.A. (CENSA)	USA	Warner Lea M. (Pet Inc)	
Compania Nestle S.A	Swtzld	Nestle Alimentana (ITLAC A. G.)	1930
Clemente Jacques y Cia. S.A.	USA	Stuart Investments Inc.	1967
Champinones de Guadalajara S.A	Canada	Green Giant of Canada Ltd.	
Empacadora de Frutas del Papaloapan S.A.	Swtzld	Getz Bros Co. Inc.	1972
Empacadora del Bajio S.A.	USA	Miles Laboratories Inc.	
General Foods de Mexico S.A.	USA	General Foods Corp.	1963
Gelmex S.A. de C.V.	USA	Marina Colloids Inc	
Gerber Products S.A.	USA	Gerber Products Co	1957
Industrias Citricas S.A.	USA	Miles Laboratories Inc	
International Flavors & Fragrances S.A. de C.V.	USA	International Flavors & Fragrances Inc.	
Kraft Foods de Mexico S.A.deC.V.	USA	Kraft Corp.	1950
Mexacatlan S.A. de C.V.	UK	Reckitt Colman Chiswick	
Mc Cormick de Mexico S.A.	USA	Mc Cormick & Co. Inc.	1948
Productos del Monte S.A.	USA	Del Monte Corp.	1961
Productos de Maiz S.A.	USA	C.P.C. International Inc.	1931
Vitalimentos	Japan	Manubeni Corp.	
Xalpa Industrial S.A.	France	Compagnie Gervais Danone	

Source: Rama & Vigorito, 1979 (data: ILET, CANANCINTRA, 1976 & Who Owns Whom)

In summary, the impact of foreign capital and the logistical operation of multinational food companies affects Mexican society at various levels: first, it has modified the structure of agricultural activity, displacing traditional crops and introducing export-oriented new ones; second, it has effected changes in land tenure; and third, it has altered food consumption habits. Ultimately, economic strategies of transnational origin have impinged on the labour force, and while industrial employment has grown by 3.4%, production grew

9.5% in 1979 (Rama & Vigorito, 1979:250). This difference indicates that cost efficiency and profit rising policies are replacing the labour force by capital intensive production.

3.6 The international traits of multinationals

The policy of spatial distribution of multinational corporations and their marketing strategies are orchestrated in the core countries. Because of this, little attention is given to regional differences, especially in the realm of culture. Political, cultural, economic, and social factors which interact with the environment to bring food from producer to consumer often are overlooked. Warwick Armstrong (1985:7) cites the example of transnational corporations which have managed to create systems linking producer, distributor and consumer while controlling international markets and influencing government policies:

> But because their "sequential technology package" structures...have as their primary goal rapid increases in corporate profitability they have undermined both political and cultural values, created greater socioeconomic inequalities, and have been environmentally destructive in many Third World societies.

One concern of this thesis is the manner in which particular food systems are affected by international policies; therefore, it is necessary to think not just about simple processes but about complex systems (Davidson, 1983:40), for multinational activity encompasses many fields of social concern. In Mexico these corporations control ninety per cent of food and beverage manufacture (Chapoy, 1975:184), and are estimated to be responsible for fifty per cent of worldwide food production (Garreau, 1980:14). What follows from these

figures is the implementation of a process of acceleration and standardization of consumer systems (by the hundred most important international corporations) promoted by life-style models heralded in the mass media. This group of major companies is led by 48 North American firms which account for two thirds of total global food transactions. British companies form the second most important group with 23 consortia (Garreau, 1980:20).

The impact of multinational activity has been responsible for large-scale change from traditional agricultural methods based on diversification, in favour of export mono-crops. This is well illustrated in the case of Ethiopia, for example, where coffee and cotton plantations were extended beyond the Awash Valley, invading traditional pastoral areas. Also, in Western Africa's Sahel region, transnational companies cornered thousands of hectares for cotton and livestock at the expense of local cereal production (Garreau, 1980:25).

The trend towards agglomerating agricultural land in Third World countries dates back to the 1960s when cash crops were essential for the expansion of agribusiness. Multinational corporations depended on tropical and Mediterranean zones for their fruit and vegetable produce, whereas their markets were situated in northern areas. This spatial division of agriculture, labour and consumers has increased pressures on the location and structure of markets. The banana industry best illustrates this situation. Three multinationals--United Brands, the Standard Fruit and Del Monte--provide about seventy per cent of bananas in the world market. This monopoly results in great inequalities in profit distribution. Only 11.5% of

the profits goes to the producing countries. The rest is absorbed by the companies through the different stages of commercialization (Garreau, 1980:251, figure G). This phenomenon is mainly due to price indexing policies by multinationals which amount to more than twenty per cent of the total capital reserves per annum (Chapoy, 1975:195).

National economies, thus, tend to depend for their development on transnational corporations, because both the impact on agricultural systems of oil prices and the price of grains traded in international markets are worked out through macroeconomic mechanisms. For countries dependent on exports of a few primary commodities for both their foreign exchange earnings and domestic incomes in rural areas, price swings play havoc with macro plans and the cost of providing food security to poor households. The economies of the oil-exporting nations thus fluctuate in countercyclical fashion to those of the industrialized countries (Timmer et al, 1983:265).

3.7 Cultural influences on food consumption patterns.

The above overview of technical and economic facts and nuances of the Mexican food system will help to understand how cultural influences are interwoven with international as well as regional policies. To see ultimately how these impinge on food consumption patterns, it is necessary, again, to go to the very historical origins of food customs.

When the Indian elite was replaced by the new European ruling class, Indian culture was reduced to ancient communal agrarian patterns from which previously had risen the states or

The Price of One Banana

FARMERS' GROSS INCOME	11.5
OTHER	26.1
SHIPPING & INSURANCE	11.5
GROSS MARGIN FOR STOREROOM	19
GROSS MARGIN FOR RETAILERS	31.9

PRODUCING COUNTRIES

88.5

MULTINATIONAL
CORPORATIONS

Source: Garreau, 1980:251
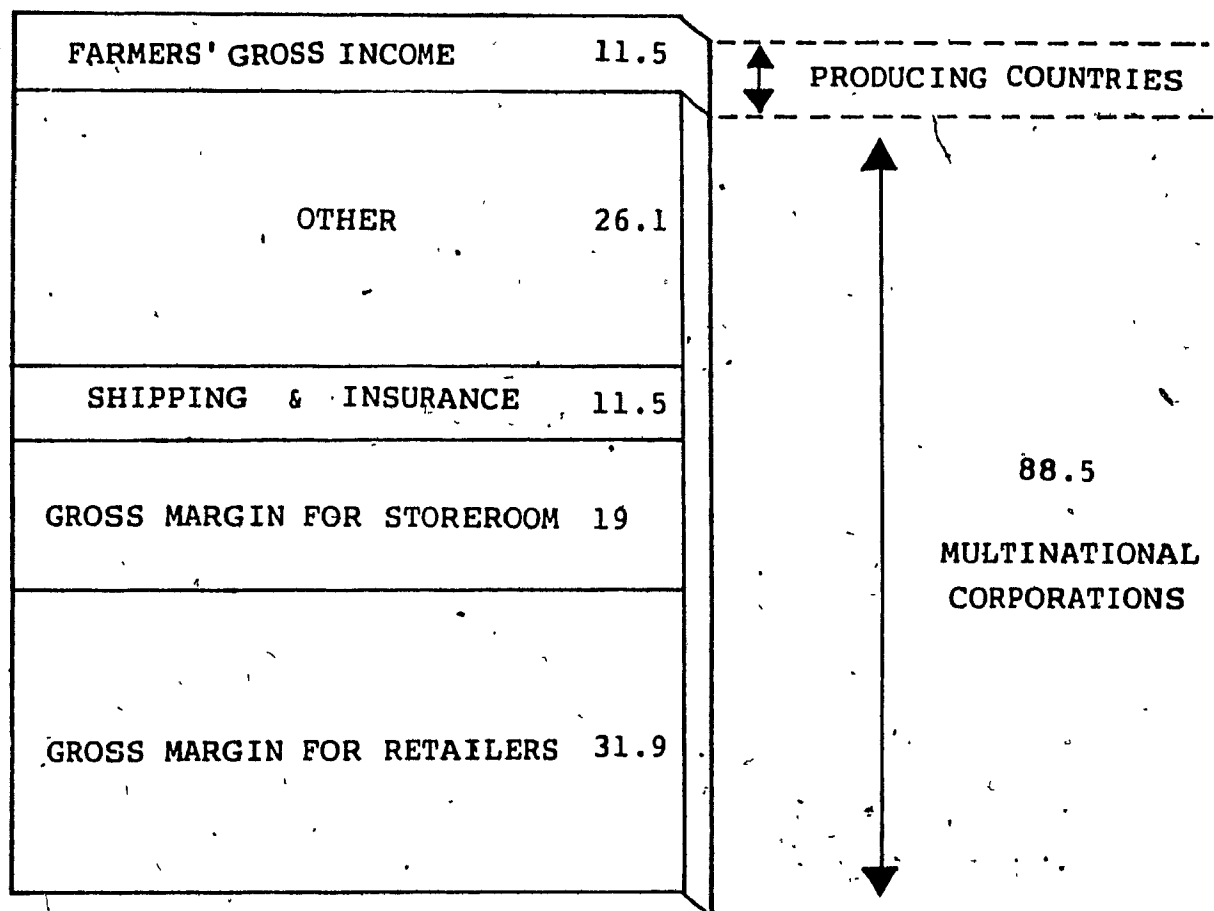
tribal confederations that dominated numerous peoples in the Anahuac or Central High Plateau.

Indigenous societies thrived upon two different cultural forms, the agrarian culture and the complex culture of the ceremonial urban centre. Religious, economic, social, political and aesthetic patterns--even language--varied from one to another culture. The urban-centre culture was based on technical specialty, the relationship with supernatural forces, the differentiation of social strata, an authoritarian bureaucracy, a science and art highly developed and a hieroglyphic literature.

On the other hand, peasant communities lacked specialization, their agrarian religion was simple, their social organization was based on kindred ties, their science limited to land cultivation, and the art forms based on elemental tools for survival. They relied on a paternalistic government and were completely illiterate. In spite or because of these differences, both cultural forms had an economic interdependence which reinforced their respective roles of social organization.

At the time of the European seizure of power, one trait persisted through change. This was the continuity of macehual (peasant) culture reinforced by new measures which ensured the former social polarization. For the authoritarian vertical structures of Indian power were not succeeded by horizontal democratic structures. They were replaced by another authoritarian vertical structure. And so, peasant submission was considerably reinforced by an economic and technological system much more advanced that the indigenous ceremonial-centre

system.

Taxes and tributes, under the new rule, were carefully extracted from the peasantry. And to ensure the total downfall of the Indian elite, the urban Indian was forbidden to carry on his former activities. Also, he was ousted from formal education, medical school, commerce and priesthood. He neither could live in a brick house nor wear Spanish clothes; nor could he ride a horse, carry arms or eat Western food such as beef (Aguirre Beltran, 1982:27).

The emphasised difference between Indians and Spaniards was exacerbated by the gap separating the government and the governed. The notion of distance set the tone in colonial America (Fuentes, 1985:33): distance between isolated communities and central metropolis, between have and have-nots, distance between Indian food ways and criollo food items and patterns.

Today the distance is being reversed without giving much thought to hasty policies which affect whole life styles and the nutritional status of people settled on traditional customs. The peasantry and the urban poor are urged to adopt a Western diet, even though they can hardly afford the classical one of beans and corn. According to Mexican nutritionist Miriam Munoz de Chavez (Vargas, 1985:12), there are two main trends in the Mexican diet today: 1) a polarization of food; and 2) transnationalization. "Polarization" refers to a process in which food items are sent preferentially to certain areas where they have markets. The second concept, "transnationalization of the diet", is defined as the adoption of international foods that are promoted by the media. The main changes are the

following:

a) Some food is being abandoned because it is considered to connote low social status. These are local products that have not received good publicity; for instance, wild greens, dried fish, and in general protein from vegetable origin. Since these are low-cost products, their abandonment jeopardices the nutritional standing of the low-income population which cannot afford to buy more expensive items.

b) Some food habits have been lost, among them the custom of eating five meals a day in rural areas: _desayuno_, _almuerzo_, _comida_, _merienda_ or _cena_. Food intake today is often reduced to three or fewer meals a day. This latter trend of three or fewer meals is due not only to economic hardship but also to urbanization patterns and a different allocation of time in urban industrialized areas.

c) Many food processing techniques have been abandoned. Hand made tortillas are scarce, as are sauces ground in _molcajetes_ which have been replaced by electric blenders.

d) Breastfeeding is being lost, due largely to the influence of medical practices in hospitals and rural health clinics that impose and promote industrialized milk. The consequences of this practice have been well illustrated in many Third World studies that show higher infant mortality due to poor hygienic conditions.

e) Food that can be easily and rapidly prepared is becoming popular, including "instant" dishes such as soups. But in general, these foods have lower nutritional value than the traditional ones, made from scratch.

f) In the lower income population, food of animal origin has

gained momentum. This implies consumption of more industrialized meat in the form of sausages, luncheon cuts, and the like, substituting the highly nutritious couplet of beans and corn or rice and beans.

g) More industrialized food is part of the Mexican diet. Products that give or enhance flavour have an important place. This trend has had an effect on the expansion of food processing companies, while substituting the traditional broth made of chicken with artificial powders.

h) Some foodstuffs with high social status do not have valuable nutritional properties and are costly (for example, canned juices, chocolate flavored powder, jello). Nevertheless, they have become very popular among low and mid-income population.

i) Food patterns common among urban middle classes are being lost; for instance, they eat fewer beans. Ready-made food is preferred and more time and money are spent in restaurants as a way of demonstrating higher socio-economic status. One consequence of this behaviour is the tendency to regard traditional food as a non-educated choice. For instance, dishes such as the famous "romeritos" which are eaten during religious festivities (Cuaresma), have been steadily abandoned.

The tendency of the Third World poor to consume industrialized food has been well documented in many nutritional surveys. One more time this tendency is confirmed in a study done in Mexico City (Restrepo, 1985:9). The researcher found that canned and packaged foods are perceived as goods that give prestige, regardless of their nutritional properties. As a result they are widely consumed. The negative

impact of industrialization is reflected in the loss of vitamins, and fiber, and the addition of salt, sugar, carbohydrates and saturated fats in the processed foods. The survey indicated that in all income levels consumption included candy, pastries, cookies, ice cream, soft drinks, jellies and alcoholic beverages. However, it was also found that industrial transformation of the Mexican diet is not complete, and the final decision as to whether it should be so is up to official national policies which could probably lead a campaign to restore traditional eating patterns. Ivan Restrepo adds that a massive industrialization would signify the complete takeover of Mexico's foodstuffs by multinational companies.

Mexican history shows the undulating pattern of foreign cultural influences on food habits since ancient times. From prehispanic to colonial to modern days, food has been the touchstone of societal subservience. Notwithstanding, a very distinct and nutritious diet has survived through these influences, incorporating and assimilating items which enrich food intake. Ironically, at present, Mexican food patterns are leaning towards North American and European styles of eating, precisely when these societies are trying to promote the alternatives to the high animal protein trend, looking forward to more healthy, "natural" habits which involve less meat, more fiber, less fat, more grains and less sugar: in short, a less industrialized way of eating.

All these new tendencies and their consequences are enhanced by the means of communication and the mass media which shorten physical and cultural distances. No matter how isolated it may be, there is practically no physical or social space

which has not, to some extent, felt the impact of the stimuli of modern consumption styles. Since material goods of transnational origin, such as food, constitute the most obvious part of a cosmopolitan culture, they acquire the character of a veritable system of information which gives significance to everything surrounding the individual. Thus, the theory of value corresponds to an essentially social dimension, asserts C. Filgueira (1981:75). "Material objects have value not only because of their intrinsic physical properties but also because of the value socially attributed to them."

History again repeats itself in concentric circles. This time the Mexican poor are deceived with the appearance of material or non-material goods or styles of life which are superior or perceived to be so, regardless of whether these are objects which satisfy old needs or create new ones, or whether they are well adapted to the way of life of the poor. In one way or the other, in proportion to the expansion of their knowledge of these goods, and to their knowledge of the symbols and values associated with their consumption, new needs arise and the demand for such goods increases. Canned fruits, processed cereals, candy, and the like, become the material expression of the <u>demonstration</u> <u>effect</u> a form of language which operates from the top down through social mechanisms and in which forms of social interaction, leadership and publicity play a fundamental role:

> Ultimately... the demonstration effect implies 'unformalized social leadership' stemming from the upper levels of the social stratification structure, which act as a guide and leader for the aspirations and expectations of the lower strata. (Filgueira, 1981:77)

The formation of needs is a very important factor in the

diffusion of eating styles. We have seen already the close association of transnational food companies and publicity agencies. But it is well known that in developing countries the coverage of basic needs such as food, health and housing is markedly deficient. Contradictions arise between the access to fast industrialized food with its costly packages and processes, and the low purchasing power of the majority. The stage for a democratic access to food is set up where everybody ideally could have the same diet. But the economic reality of the lower strata who are encouraged to buy the food which they cannot afford shows the contradictory meaning of this so called "democratic access to food". And a further consequence is that those who buy this, 'status' food have to neglect more nutritious foodstuffs, for one generally excludes the other on a restricted budget.

Putting forward processed foods with higher 'prestige' and limiting the volume and quantity of subsistence crops in favour of commercial crops or reducing the time spent on the preparation and preservation of food for domestic consumption disturbs the balance reached in the subsistence economy. Unfortunately, forty per cent of the Mexican population (especially in rural areas) does not have full access to the market economy of the country. But due the penetration of the mass media they do certainly have access to the emulative type of money spending promoted by it:

> The classic study carried out by the American Geographical Society in 1953 showed that of the total number of primitive communities studied (209), only 6% showed significant deficits with regard to nourishment at all levels (calories, etc.) and a further 3% had insufficient diets as regards calories, while the remaining 91% had levels that were fully satisfactory in the light of the characteristics and habitual forms of life of the

communities. In contrast, most of the regions of the Third
World completely or almost completely incorporated into
the market economy, especially in the case of certain
regions in Africa, Asia and part of Latin America,
consistenly displayed insufficient levels of nourishment.
(Filgueira, 1981:107/108)

The above statement clearly reveals that modern values
such as progress and development, when indiscriminately
applied, result in Fabian's "one-way history" (from the West to
the Rest) with the negative corollaries being stagnation, and
underdevelopment (Khare, 1985:5). Issues of history, dominance,
power, and food supply appear this way as intensively
interconnected, today as in the past:

> At the core is the point that indigenous systems of food
> procurement and food use be accorded the same attention
> and validity (until proved otherwise) as the
> logico-empirical knowledge of Western science and
> technology. (Khare, 1985:12)

The next section is an overview of Acambay's cultural
landscape that, together with the examination of regional food
patterns and cultural influences, appears to be a reflection of
most of the issues hitherto discussed,; not only of the Mexican
food system _per_ _se_, but also of advertising as a means of
social communication.

3.9 Notes

1) This program, though, is not original. In 1971, then president Luis Echeverria created the Programa Nacional de Alimentacion, as a department of the Ministry of the Presidencia in conjuction with CONACYT (Consejo Nacional de la Ciencia y la Tecnologia).
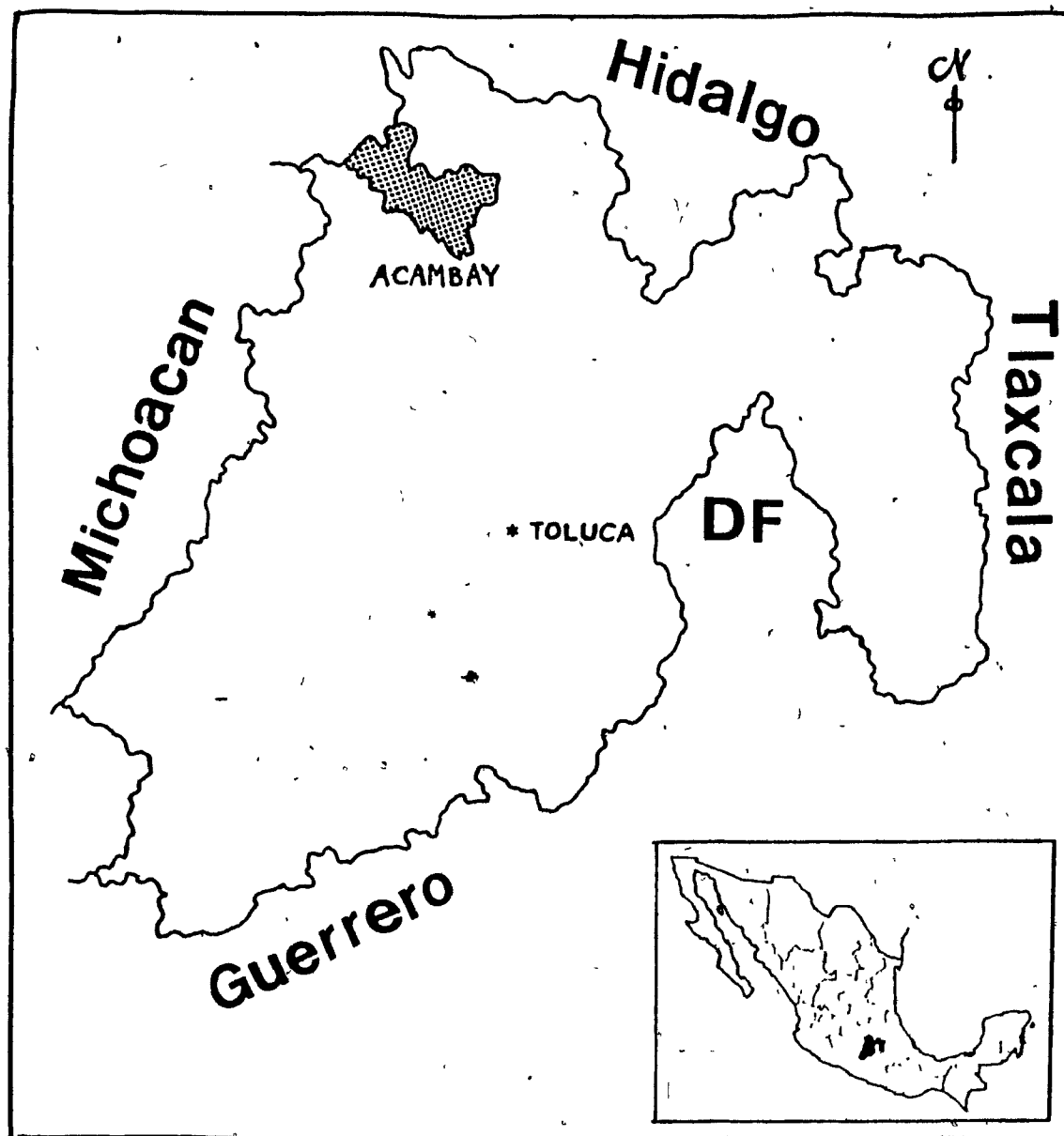
ACAMBAY
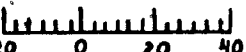2.400 hab.

CHAPTER IV ACAMBAY. A MEXICAN VILLAGE

4.1 Cultural landscape and village background

Acambay is a village located in the Estado de Mexico. It is also the <u>cabecera</u> (head) of the Municipio (1) de Acambay, whose approximate area has an extension of 417,25 square kilometers. The physical beauty of the landscape is striking. Mountainous formations draw the contours of profound ravines and extensive, gentle valleys dipped in the kind of luminosity which Jose Maria Velasco (1840-1912) immortalized in his paintings of the Valley of Mexico (the Central High Plateau) (Rosemblum and Janson, 1984:382). Most of the ravines are the site of seasonal rivers that originate an array of small water deposits throughout the Municipio. Because of this characteristic the region has been named El Valle de los Espejos (The Valley of Mirrors). Around these lakes several varieties of trees and plants, such as "capulines" (a Mexican berry), apples, pears, apricots, "tejocote" (a Mexican fruit), figs, plums, "tunas" (the fruits of the <u>nopal</u> cactus), and peaches, are grown for local consumption.

These panoramic vistas that evoke potent memories of pre-Columbian civilizations are the enclave of the Otomi people who have preserved their language, traditions and world-view from ancient times until the present. Under Moctezuma's reign (1440-1469), the whole area was incorporated into the Aztec empire, and subjected to its taxes and tributes. By the year 1520, Xilotepec province (as the region was known), had 650,000

ESTADO DE MEXICO
and
MUNICIPIO DE ACAMBAY

Hidalgo

N

ACAMBAY

Michoacan

Tlaxcala

* TOLUCA

DF

Guerrero

SCALE |....|....|....|....| Km
        20   0   20   40

Source: adapted from TODO MEXICO, 1985

inhabitants, in 1532 about 460,000, and in 1568, 98,000 (Acambay, 1973:12). These data show the population decline, which was caused by several factors: immune deficiency to new illnesses brought by Europeans, disruption of family life and fertility rates because/of relocation and forced labour in the repartimientos (2); and dietary deficiencies due to lack of food in the labour sites.

The first mention of land distribution by the Spanish Crown dates back to 1596, when the region was called San Miguel Cuemango. Among the beneficiaries were powerful colonial officials who held large repartimientos. During this colonial period the majority of the Otomi population worked as land-labourers for the owners of the land. A few would sell manufactured goods, mostly pottery, drifting from town to town with the merchandise tied to their backs. Whilst the Indians had to earn their living in a hard way, a few Spanish naturals (about eight families) settled among them and started small businesses and enterprises, thus becoming instrumental to Acambay's foundation around the year 1600. San Miguel de Acambay grew rapidly. The church was finished in 1623 and the first tomb in the cemetery is marked with the year 1641. From, then on life followed a slow pace in this isolated community. The colonial years elapsed without significantly changing people's mores or social structures, and when independence finally came, rural life continued with only a few changes. In time, a mestizo population, emerging from intermarriage, became the majority in the village as well as in the region. Table 4.1 shows the ethnic composition of the contemporary population.
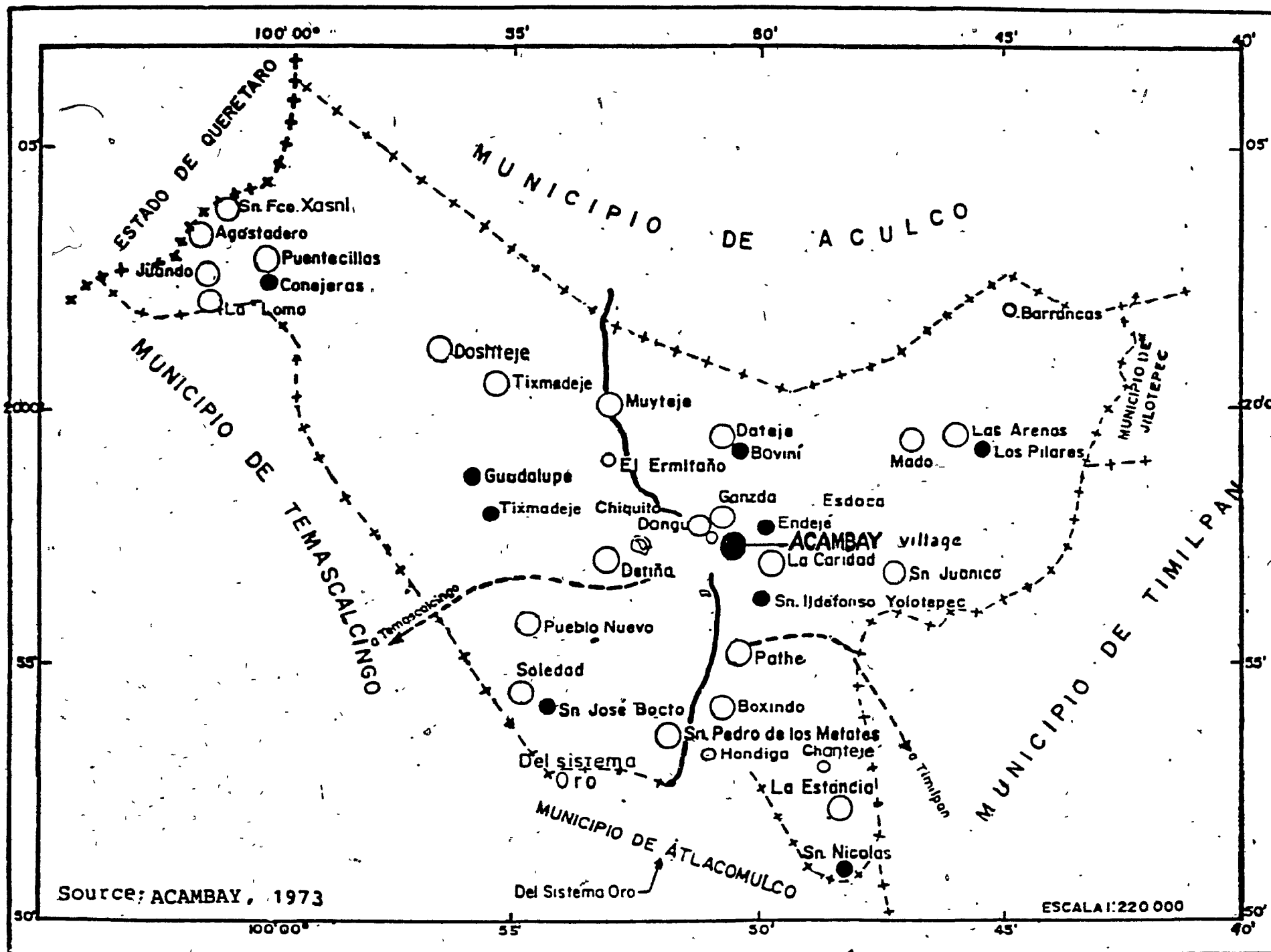
FIGURE I

ACAMBAY MUNICIPALITY

ACAMBAY

Source: ACAMBAY, 1973

ESCALA 1:220 000

TABLE 4.1 Population Ethnically Classified, 1975

	Number	Percentage
Indians	1642	4
Indian-Mestizo	7882	21
White-Mestizo	7013	19
Mestizos	21041	56
Whites	12	--
Total	37590	100

Source: Estado de Mexico,
Panoramica Socioeconomica, 1975

Modernity, in the contemporary sense of industrial development, arrived in Acambay with the first radio in 1925. That same year a public library was inaugurated, and also the first electric plant. In 1928 potable water and pipes reached some Acambayans. In 1947 the Panamerican highway connected Acambay with the rest of the country. In 1951 electricity was installed. In 1954, in order to afford the costs of the high school, the police corps was abolished (at present there is no police force in Acambay). In 1959 long-distance telephone service became available. In 1962 the whole population in the village had access to potable water.

Today, with no more innovations than the above mentioned (there is no movie-theater or shopping center, for instance), people in Acambay are content with the surrounding environment, even if their standard of living is rather precarious. The clash of tradition and modernity shows in the ubiquitous presence of the yoke of oxen plowing the land led by plowboys or girls, near the modern truck that will take the product elswhere. Agricultural practices follow traditional ways, whereas the means of transportation are thoroughly modern as if both were to illustrate the "dialectical relationship among a

set of material elements" that result when one looks at the landscape as a process (Kobayashi, 1985:10). Modernity takes the form of imported innovations rather than a change in the village mode of production.

As well, taxi cabs dot the roads surrounding the village of Acambay, taking the people from one place to another (for example from the "rancherias" and communities such as La Caridad, Bovini, Dongu, or Pathe), with their live chickens or baskets of goods, to the Sunday market or wherever they have business to do. But taxi cabs would also give free rides if they encounter a friend or an acquaintance. In this and other ways Acambayans display their friendly attitude toward the few foreign visitors, and also demonstrate the use of their time in a distinct manner. Whereas the urban-westernized style of living means allocating activities in a rather constricted schedule of work and leisure, Acambayans' attitudes are the other way round. Time has to fill activities. Days in the village are not hectic, and people rarely have to rush. In late afternoon, women take a seat to talk and knit or sew. Afterwards, they walk around the plaza or simply contemplate the coming of the night, which is indeed a pleasant experience in such a peaceful environment.

In order to experience the above, I too, would spend the mornings accompanying the informants in their daily chores. Many of them were very busy, but would take their time to socialize with others while fulfilling their tasks. An example in point is the daily trip to buy food items, which involves at the same time, a practical enterprise and a way to establish communication with one another in the village. It also means

getting to know events and occurrences within Acambay's society, in this way substituting for the role of the newspaper.

There is no tourist industry in the village. This is a blessing on the one hand, a hardship on the other, for no extra earnings can be accrued from one of Mexico's main industries. People there have had to learn how to live with endemic unemployment and underemployment, in spite of the apparent fertility of the land. As stated, in the Mexican agrarian system farmers who do not sow cash-crops are not given enough credit to cultivate staples, and when they succeed in so doing the prices paid for their products are too low to allow them a dignified living. In the Municipio of Acambay the principal crops are corn, barley, wheat, beans and lima beans, none of these used for commercial purposes. Land is distributed in the form of ejidos (6), private property, and tierras comunales (7). From the total 41 725 hectares of the Municipio, approximately 28 570 (68.48%), are suitable for cultivation. Table VII shows the relation between land surface and agricultural produce.

TABLE 4.1   Distribution of Crops

Crops	hectares	tonnes per hectare
corn	4,900	1.0
barley	900	1.0
wheat	550	1.0
lima beans	90	1.0
beans	180	0.450

Source: Acambay, 1973

Nor are there important industries in Acambay. The sole industrial activities are the following: three <u>molinos de nixtamal</u> (3); one ice cream factory; two bakeries; one candle factory; one brick factory; and five blacksmith shops that serve the whole <u>municipio</u>.

During weekdays the inventory of businesses includes 17 <u>miscelaneas</u> (general stores), two mini-supers, two clothes shops, two pharmacies, one furniture shop, four taverns, one newspaper stand, eight meat shops, four pulque bars (4), one hotel, three eateries, one gas station, one fruit and vegetable shop, one radio and TV set repair shop, one shoe repair shop, two seed grinding shops, two <u>tortillerias</u> (5), and two barber shops.

On market day (<u>tianguis</u>) which takes place around the central plaza on Sundays, people gather to buy all kinds of goods, from salted fish, "escamoles" (ant larvae), cured meat, chile peppers and beans, to shoes, shawls, blue jeans, pots and pans. Local handicrafts are brought to the "tianguis" from the surrounding villages and communities. For example, the "metates" and "molcajetes" (traditional tools for grinding and blending food, original from prehispanic days), come from San Pedro de los Metates. From Pueblo Nuevo come the straw hats, purses and other straw articles. In La Soledad, Bocto and La Laguna, are manufactured diverse artifacts such as "tule" chairs, baskets and hats. In Ganzda, villagers manufacture trays, wooden spoons, brushes, and tillage instruments.

The <u>tianguis</u> also represents, in a symbolic manner, the whole cultural landscape of Acambay as a "particular organization of the environment" for it expresses the regional

diversity of the area, and can be read as a "form of language that structures and is structured by the production of social relations" (Kobayashi, 1985:10,11). Being there becomes a thorough experience. One may stop to chat with the vendors, sample small bites of the food for sale (it would be very offensive to refuse it); bargain for the price of any article and, in general, establish social relationships which in all probability will be enhanced when the next meeting takes place the following Sunday. Nowhere is the spirit of the community more apparent than in the Sunday "tianguis", where rich and poor alike share their products, opinions and experiences in a climate of mutual understanding.

This happening is underlined by the music of the loudspeakers and the murmur of conversation. But definitively, the main binder of it all is the presence of food products brought from all over the region, just as used to occur during prehispanic times. Thus, the relation between food and landscape becomes a straightforward event in Acambayan lives. In a coming section this relation will be analyzed with respect to the landscape proposed by Buenhogar.

The last population census dates back to 1975 and there is no further account. In that year the total population (the majority, 73.12 per cent, is peasants) for the Municipio de Acambay was 37,590 inhabitants, and for the village of Acambay, 2,400. In July-August, 1985, at the time of the field research, the total population of the village was said to be 8,000 inhabitants. According to one study done in 1978 (Lagarriga & Sandoval, 1978:44), the Otomi population there accounts for 8,140, from which 6,747 are bilinguals and 1393 speak only the

Otomi language. But the total percentage of Indian language speakers in the region is 32 per cent, Otomi being the dominant language. The rest speak languages from Nahuatl origin (Panoramica Socioeconomica, 1976). These data are relevant because mestizo communities still bear many Indian cultural traits, which in the next section will be examined with respect to food customs.

As an indication of sanitary conditions and nutritional indices, infant mortality has been close to 94.68 per 1,000, throughout the last few years (Acambay, 1973; Panoramica Socioeconomica, 1976). This last datum shows the precarious living standard of Acambay's population, as well as the poor nutritional levels which result in high infant mortality levels. These levels are in accordance with the national statistics on nutrition (especially those referring to rural population), already examined in Chapter III. The last local census taken in 1970 (there are no further data) indicates the per centage of food consumption in five categories. This table VIII, shows that 88 per cent never drink milk, 35 per cent do not eat meat, 53 per cent do not eat eggs, and 59 per cent do not eat bread. But then again, the census only measures proteins from animal origin and wheat (bread) instead of corn (tortillas): as though, in such a culturally Indian region these census parameters could possibly make an impartial statement of the nutritional state of the population! In fact, none of the traditional forms of protein consumption are listed and measured by the census.

It becomes evident, thus, that many of the culturally engrained alimentary practices are best understood through

ethnographic accounts than through nutritional surveys. In this respect, my conversations with the director of "La Casa de la Cultura", and with the wife of the "Presidente Municipal" (who explained how and how much food was distributed through the DIF program) shed more light on the issue of food customs than the official measurements. Maestro Tono, especially, gave me many useful hints on how to approach the people in the village, and he also gave me information on what kinds of fruits and vegetables were grown in the region and for what purposes.

TABLE 4.3 Consumption of Foodstuffs per Week in the Municipio
(1970 census)   % percentages

Food	never	1 day	2 days	3 days	4 days	5 days	6 days	7 days
Meat	35.64	32.19	16.66	17.21	2.25	0.85	0.94	3.39
Eggs	53.83	12.59	14.29	7.65	2.97	1.49	2.16	5.02
Milk	88.18	1.90	1.18	0.83	0.46	0.28	1.44	5.73
Fish	90.08	6.99	1.71	0.64	0.08	0.01	0.11	0.38
Bread	59.09	13.54	7.60	5.14	2.04	1.37	2.28	8.44

Source: Estado de Mexico. Panoramica

Socioeconómica en 1975

In spite of the biased variables of this census and its questionable results, the overall nutritional panorama of Mexico impinges upon Acambay's case study. To examine this process, the next sections deal with the description of subjects, the socio-economic categories, the patters of eating,

food related activities, cultural and commercial processes, the analysis of _Buenhogar_, and women's attitudes.

4.2 Description of subjects.

My trip to Acambay resulted from an old acquaintance with a house-maid named Cata. She had worked in Mexico City since her early youth after leaving her village, Acambay, in the same way in which most peasant women do when they no longer can support themselves in the countryside. She had eight sisters but only one remained in the village. This latter was married and became my hostess-informant there. During my stay with the Rios family, Socorro and her daughters would assist me in choosing the subjects for the inquiry, whom I picked from among their multiple acquaintances. In such a small village almost everybody knew each other. From all the people I met, I decided to do twelve in-depth interviews with persons chosen to be representative of their respective socio-economic classes. Aside from my involvement with these subjects, whom I repeatedly sought out during my stay, I contacted other homemakers in the outskirts of the village, talking with them about their meal patterns, food availability, and cultural mores.

Socorro and Arturo Rios and their four daughters are a well-known family in Acambay. They own two large houses near the Plaza in the downtown area. In one of the houses the elder daughter, her three children, her husband and a sister-in-law occupy two rooms and occasionally the kitchen. The only bathroom (with cement floors, a shower, toilet and sink) is

shared by the inhabitants of both houses, which are connected by two large patios. Each house has several spare rooms and second patios which nobody uses. I lived in one of these rooms during my stay at Acambay.

Don Arturo is a mason and a wall painter, but he seldom finds any work to do. Socorro is the main breadwinner of the extended household. She cooks breakfast and lunch for passers-by, knits all kinds of decorative items, and tries, in general, to eke out a living for the family. One of the daughters has a job in a distant village in an other municipio, and the son-in-law also has a job in the city of Toluca, the capital city of the Estado de Mexico. He comes home during weekends.

Meanwhile, Socorro makes ends meet by stretching the little money as far as possible. In a typical day we would have a breakfast of beans, tortillas and atole (8), a lunch of vegetable soup and sopes (9), and a supper of milk and bread. During my stay with the family, the meals generally included a large array of vegetables grown in the region (10), some dried fresh-water fish, pasta, eggs, beans, tortillas, sardines, chile peppers, fruit, and a little rice which is now expensive.

Otomi customs are part of the everyday life in the village. Courtesy and ceremony are carefully implemented at all levels of social exchange. I took note of a remark by Jacques Galinier (1979:395) in his study of social hierarchy and traditions among Otomi Indians, that "un visiteur, apparaissant au moment d'un repas, est necessairement invite. Il doit tout d'abord decliner, puis ensuite accepter l'invitation". To my fascination, a few days after my arrival two relatives appeared

at dinner time. They performed exactly the aforementioned ceremony before sitting at our table. Time allocation and food are not compartmentalized. Anyone who happens to pass by at mealtime is asked (and expected) to join the table. Meals are not served at regular hours but when the food is ready. There is, however, in general a morning, noon and evening allocation of meals.

In Acambay, food is regarded with respect. The important role of food ceremony in the social fabric dates back to the ages when maize was seen as the gift of gods to humanity. This sentiment is also reflected on the day of the death (November 30th) when people reunite in the cemetery to bring food for the beloved ones. They seat themselves near the tombstones and make the offering to the deceased of their favourite meals. Later that day, the family eats the food as though sharing their life and vitality with the quiet presence of the dead. In this manner, food is also perceived as a metaphysical tool of communication. So, because food is important in many senses, women talk with pride of their daily involvement in nourishing the family. They ponder with care food's quality and taste, as well as its nutritional value.

Socorro, would spend some time in the morning planning the 'menu' for the day. She would then go and buy the items (an everyday routine), as do most of the village homemakers, even those who own a refrigerator. Refrigerators, as in Socorro's house, serve the purpose of keeping a few leftovers. They are also a symbol of status and modernity. The family also owns a gas stove, two television sets, an iron, a blender, and a radio.

Shopping daily for food is a social affair as well as a hygienic practice. In the first instance it becomes one of the few entertainments out-doors for Acambayan homemakers, and a valuable form of vernacular communication. The second aspect is also important because refrigerators are not owned by many women, and because some forms of non-industrialized food have no preservatives added and therefore are highly perishable. On the other hand, most processed food sold in Acambay are chips (corn, potato, etc.), pastries (pastelillos), and salty snacks, which do not need refrigeration: but neither are they the stuff of regular meals, and thus they do not form part of the regular and daily food trips. In any case, the modernity represented by the refrigerator is conceptually separated from the need to reinforce traditional social patterns through daily shopping.

Socorro's parents are Otomi peasants who own two small "ranchos" (11). Her husband is a descendant of the original white settlers; his features and blue eyes balanced by Indian attitudes and culture, are further enhanced by his mild, aristocratic manners. He has no traces of entrepreneurial mentality. His interpretation of time and the pace of his life have little to do with the hectic pace of modern Western way of life. Socorro enjoys being the only one of the eight sisters who married a European looking man with such a respected origin in the village. He is called "uncle" by many people because he is related to several families, and also as a sign of respect. Conflict arises when the elder daughter, from a former "liaison" of Socorro and an Otomi man, challenges her fair skinned sisters, calling herself the only "Indian" whom nobody wants in the house. The extended family is further divided when

Socorro's visiting sisters take the side of the elder daughter against the others.

This relationship within the Rios family provides an example of the fact that mestizo culture involves a much more conflictive approach to life than do clear-cut Indian or White cultures. Social values, self respect and identity are torn apart between two radically different world outlooks. The "good life" is associated with Western values. These, in turn, are represented by modernity projected through the mass media: radio, television, printed materials whether bill boards announcing Coca-Cola, magazines featuring sandwiches, hamburgers and fetuccini or journals which emphasize rural backwardness, against the backdrop of development policies. It is difficult for the villagers to differentiate between some privileged Indian traits and Western advantages. It is difficult to objectively qualify them. So the easy solution is to measure things either bad or good, with no shades in the middle. Being Indian is bad; it means backwardness.

Indian food, although widely consumed, nutritious, and relatively easy to find in the region, has no status. Otomi diet has changed little since pre-Hispanic days. Their basic diet made up of maize, chile peppers, salt and tomatoes, is mainly the same today, discounting, of course, the mestizo additions. Differences account, though, for the kinds of meat Otomies can afford now. Before the Conquest they ate small dogs, rabbits, groundhogs, skunks and weasels. But at present they eat pork, fowl and beef prepared with a thick sauce made of chile and chocolate called mole, during festivities. Nonetheless, Otomies still eat armadillos and crows once in a

while. They also collect wild greens (quelites), and in some places a type of butterfly called "palomas" and red ants.

Middle class women, such as Dolores, another informant, seldom eat the above types of food. Instead they prefer more culturally mestizo cuisine. Dolores takes pride in showing her nutritional knowledge. She has only three children and prepares for them balanced breakfasts, lunchs and dinners. She makes batidos, in the morning for herself and the children. These consist of a banana, an egg, a glass of milk, some vanilla. The ingredients are put in the blender (most homemakers own one) until perfectly liquified. At noon the family generally eats pasta, vegetables and meat or eggs, accompanied, of course, by tortillas and beans. They skip supper because a late meal is regarded as heavy and unhealthy. Dolores reads books on nutrition and likes to find recipes in magazines and papers such as Buenhogar.

Other women in Acambay are less interested in nutrition from a knowledgeble point of view, but nevertheless they always seem to do their best (given their physical and economical limitations) to nourish the family. Such is the case of 21-year-old Adela, for example, who already has a four-year-old daughter and an eight-month-old baby girl. She is not married to the father of her children, but lives with her in-laws. The extended family of 12 persons shares a three-room adobe house, where children of different ages play and sleep. Adela does not know her peasant husband's education (or perhaps does not want to disclose it). Her world is limited by a narrow environment and the same daily chores which most peasant women endure all of their lives, such as doing the family laundry in the near

streams, preparing maize paste (<u>masa</u>) and cooking tortillas, helping to weed the fields, collecting food (wild greens), tending the children, and taking food where the husband works (either the fields or construction sites, or wherever they happen to be), much in the same manner of their prehispanic forebears. The family owns a radio whose sounds are the backdrop of childrens' games, Adela's tasks and the general activities of the family. In spite of her meal patterns: black coffee in the morning, and beans and tortillas late in the evening, Adela knows that there are other ways of eating and living around there, because she listens to the radio. She also knows that life could be improved if only she and the family had access to more traditional foodstuffs, not necessarily the highly processed advertised foods. But on the tight budget of her peasant family food availability in reasonable amounts is unlikely. Nevertheless, with her six years of education and the awareness produced through media communication, Adela can't help having expectations that she hides under a facade of resignation. "We are poor" she says, as a sort of explanation for their meager diet, and also as if stating an irrevocable condition.

Julia also belongs to a peasant family. Five of her eight children, plus a son in-law, live with her and her husband, in a two-room adobe house. They, too, do not have a bathroom but do own a radio, TV set and a tape-recorder. Julia's children go to school, some even to high-school, but in contrast with their knowledge of the world through the media and the school, their daily eating patterns are tailored to their poverty. In a given day, the family eats black coffee

and bread in the morning; broth with noodles, pork rinds with salsa, and beans with tortillas at noon, and black coffee with bread again in the evening, sometimes nothing. Julia would like to have access to more of the traditional food, but just as with Adela and many other peasant women in the region, this is not possible under the present circumstances.

By contrast, Dona Sara is a well-to-do woman who lives near the Plaza in a renovated house surrounded by plants and flowers. Her husband is a businessman. The house comprises three bedrooms, two bathrooms, plus customary living room, kitchen, patio and garage. Only her husband and a goddaughter live in there with her; the rest of the family (seven sons and three daughters aged 28 to 45 years) live elsewhere. The family in the house eats home made yogurt, fruit, milk and home made bread in the morning; soup (either creamed vegetables or broth with pasta), vegetables, meat, beans and tortillas at noon; and milk or orange juice at supper time. Dona Sara can afford to eat cheese, meat, eggs, chicken, milk and beans, every day or thrice a week, depending on the family's appetite. Their food intake is not regulated by economic means, but by individual necessities. Dona Sara watches TV (the family owns two sets), reads Buenhogar sometimes, and regularly listens to the radio.

Maria Salud tends the family's drugstore. Her husband is a medical doctor whose practice is in Toluca city, and they have six children. Some of them go to university, also in Toluca. The large house with four bedrooms and two bathrooms is cleaned with the help of a house-maid. Maria Salud drives a new station-wagon. Her food habits reflect the above standard of living. Yogurt is a must at breakfast time, as are eggs,

bread and orange juice. At noon, soup, vegetables, meat, beans and tortillas. Supper usually is a light meal, sometimes a portion of jello only. Meat, beans, corn-flakes, chicken, eggs, cheese, are eaten every day (but not everything the same day), depending on the menu. Maria Salud reads Buenhogar quite often, and sometimes employs convenience foods such as tuna, or canned chiles (hot peppers), which are part of the brands advertised in the magazine.

Rosario tends the veterinarian dispensary of her family. She lives in the house on top of the business which has three bedrooms, two bathrooms, living, kitchen and patio. The family owns a radio, one TV set, refrigerator, stove, blender, iron and food processor. Because Rosario is pregnant her nutrition is an important issue. She eats two boiled eggs, half a liter of milk and bread with nata (milk byproduct), at breakfast. A mid-morning snack consists of tomato juice, carrot juice and fruit cocktail. At noon she eats chicken broth, mushrooms and Mexican turkey (guajolote) meat. In the afternoon, she has a portion of home-made yogurt, and the evening meal half a liter of milk and cookies. Rosario and her family can afford to eat meat, eggs, chicken, cheese and milk several times a week. She does not read Buenhogar and does not pay attention to food advertising. Nevertheless, as with all the other affluent women interviewed, she too follows the international trend of eating yogurt, until recently seldom known in rural Mexico.

Rafaela is married to a school teacher whose income comes from three jobs since he is involved in politics as well. They own a large seven-room house with two bathrooms, laundry-room, living-room, kitchen, patio and lawn. The family properties

also include four other houses, a car, radio, TV set, record player, blender, sewing machine, iron. Their six children go to school. They have milk, bread and eggs for breakfast, mid-morning fruit snack, and chicken, spagetti and beans at noon. In the afternoon, they eat some more fruit, and milk and bread in the evening. The same food availability of the former two informants applies to Rafaela's family. She, too, reads Buenhogar once in a while, and states that she does not like convenience foods except for canned tuna, Choco Milk, Quick or Cal-C-Tose, which are chocolate powders mainly given to children. Rafaela says that she is not influenced at all by food advertising. But sometimes she prepares pop corn, which is a very unusual way of eating corn in the Mexican countryside.

Maria Gabriela's husband is a driver. They and their seven children live in a two-room plus kitchen unit around a patio with five other similar dwellings. All the families there share the sink facilities installed in mid-patio and the bathroom with shower. The family food intake ranges from milk with coffee (cafe con leche), eggs, beans and bread in the morning; lentils with egg, chicken and beans at noon; fruit in the afternoon, and coffee, bread and tacos in the evening. They eat cheese, meat, eggs and potatoes several times a week, and also beans, pasta, soft drinks, milk and bread daily. Maria Gabriela likes tuna and sardines, her husband prefers pork and quelites. The latter are traditional foods which few people would acknowledge as a preference. In the cramped rooms, a big television set stands out below the image of the Virgin. Maria Gabriela likes to talk about television features and she is eager to show her knowledge of what is going on in the Mexican

soap operas, and other popular features. While she tends the house chores and family meals, she also participates in the social environment and pays much attention to the means of communication.

Blanca is a case in point for Acambayan social standards. She is a divorcee with a twelve-year-old son. Both lived for several years in Mexico City, and just came back a year ago when the marriage broke up. Her husband is a textile worker and they used to live comfortably in the capital. Now she works as a librarian in the "Casa de la Cultura". Blanca lives in a single room with neither bathroom facilities nor kitchen. She cooks outside in a small gas stove and has adapted a sink to bathe herself and her son. She complains bitterly of the social environment in Acambay. Her son is harassed in school and she feels ostracized and criticized by the villagers. In spite of her poverty she drives a car, and describes life in Acambay as primitive and gossipy. She has no women friends and does not like village life. Her food intake consists of one egg, milk and bread in the morning, broth with noodles, rice and egg, meat and vegetables at noon, and milk plus leftovers in the evening. Blanca reads Buenhogar sometimes. Her preferred foods are bean sprouts, octopus, Chinese food, spagetti and spinach, and almost never eats traditional food. She likes convenience foods such as canned beans, peas, Chinese noodles, chiles, sardines and tuna. She thinks that food advertising does promote nutritious food and informs about new products.

Maria de Lourdes is married to an employee in the government. They live with two children and her brother in a three-bedroom house with two bathrooms. Accordingly, they own a

radio, a tape-recorder, two TV sets, two gas stoves, food processor, blender, iron and refrigerator. Nevertheless, she likes to bake her own bread, and only allows her children to eat Gansitos (mass-produced cakes), and chips once in a while. In the morning they have a thorough breakfast with bread, processed cheese, beans, salad and coffee or tea, and "licuado". At noon they eat meat with peas and "chile", beans with cheese and tortillas (12). An afternoon snack (ice-cream or candy) is allowed too, and in the evening the family eats milk and bread. Maria de Lourdes likes to read Buenhogar and follows the recipes to bake bread, to make custard or jello. She enjoys "carnitas" and "barbacoa" (the traditional party meals), custards and mangoes. She only buys canned peas, but would like to buy ready-to eat items. However, she says that is not attracted by food advertising.

Marcelina uses two kitchens: one outside the house to cook tortillas, the other, inside, for the rest of the meals. Her husband is a blacksmith and they live in the outskirts of Acambay (about fifteen minutes walk), in a two-room house with no bathroom. They own a piece of land to grow corn. In the house they have a radio, a TV set, blender, iron and gas stove. In the patio several pear trees, with branches full of fruit, look as though ready to harvest. Marcelina and her children give away the pears to neighbours and passers-by. The family eats "sopa" (broth with pasta), and beans daily. Otherwise they have milk and bread in the morning, "salsa" and tortillas, and sometimes meat at noon, at night, a cinnamon or lemon infusion. Their favourite food is eggs. Marcelina has never read Buenhogar.

4.3 Socio-economic categories

All of these informants can be loosely grouped into three socio-economic categories. The first one would be women married to professional men such as a doctor, a veterinarian, a teacher and a businesmen (group A). The next category includes women living in the center of Acambay whose houses have bathroom facilities (group B) and the last one consists of women either in Acambay or the outskirts living in houses without a bathroom (group C). Husbands' jobs for women in group B range from draftsman to government clerks, a house painter, a mason and a textile worker. Group C includes wives of a blacksmith, peasants and a bakery employee.

Although the subjects of the inquiry were chosen among a variety of social strata, at the time of doing in-depth interviews, it became evident that socio-economic categories overlap quite easily in Acambay. Thus, Josefa, the wife of a veterinarian who would be expected to belong to the first group, because of the husband's lack of steady practice appears, in fact, as a very poor person in her daily food intake. This woman goes almost without food, sometimes, as would any poor peasant of the region. Her life is filled with social-structural contradictions. Occasionally, she will employ a servant to help her with housework and the care of her three children. In a typical day she consumes a glass of milk and bread in the morning, beans, chile sauce and tortillas for lunch and nothing at supper time, while breastfeeding a three-month-old baby. But she and the husband own a house with two and a half bathrooms, several rooms, one radio, a gas

stove, a blender, and an iron, thus showing that other items of modernity and status come before food, in this specific case.

This sort of socio-economic overlap was observed in many cases. Another woman, Columba, whose husband is a draftsman for a government office, declared in the first part of the interview that, she and the family (husband and two children) had meat and vegetables at noon. Later she admitted that they ate mushrooms, quelites (wild greens), and beans. She was ashamed of the menu because it included 'quelites', widely regarded as an Indian food, and no meat. Her reluctance to talk was due to the disparities between her middle class status (they own the house, an automobile, land, radio, TV set, stereo-recorder, a refrigerator, gas stove, iron, blender), and what was regarded as a backward eating style. At the time of the first interview, she was preparing a party. The food included was 'mole de guajolote' (13), cake, chocolate drink, rice, beans and jello. This party food is what the majority of people would serve, and some would include a dish of 'barbacoa', which is goat meat wrapped in cactus leaves and cooked in the ground.

The poorest women observed in this study owned their houses and some of them also had a piece of land. One of these women had a radio, TV set, record player and a blender, but toilet facilities were not part of the house. Another woman used two kitchens: one outdoors to cook tortillas; and one indoors for the rest of the meals. She and her four children, nevertheless, used the fields as substitute for the toilet. She too owned a radio, TV set, blender, iron and gas stove. Her food patterns were absolutely similar to the former women and,

for that matter, to most of the other peasant women in the region, the main staples being beans, tortillas and chile, as in the rest of the countryside. This contrast between hygiene and food with the modern appliances (which in large proportion are instruments of communication: radio; TV set; tape-recorder), highlights the incongruence of rural lifestyle against the backdrop of modernity. Yet another woman who owned a car did not have bathroom facilities and her food intake reflected disparities among her socio-cultural standing and her eating habits and food availability.

But, what is the real meaning of this contradiction? Although it is not known for sure what is the impact of publicity on real consumption patterns, cultural and psychological factors influence the way people perceive themselves and their environment. Perhaps the fact of owning modern appliances which enhances social status, becomes more important for the villagers than the intimate aspect of personal hygiene, or trading these appliances for food. It is in this sense that the three groups underline not only the socio-economic status, the cultural bias and the ethnic division, but the eating habits resulting from them all.

4.4 Patterns of eating

In Acambay the patterns of consumption are conditioned by economic factors but also by cultural perceptions and cultural influences. This is why I researched not only the dietary patterns, including food frequency, but also family characteristics and contextual living habits. Furthermore,

women's attitudes in respect of many issues were also analyzed.

The greater number of sampled women had less than six years of education, / whereas husbands had ten to fifteen years (education pie charts, Fig. J). The informants were, in general, middle-aged, and half the women sampled had lost one or more infants. Almost all (rich and poor) owned their houses, but one third had no bathroom facilities. All of them had radios and at least two additional electric appliances.

TABLE 4.4 Standard of Living Indices

Home ownership	No	No of rooms	No	Bathroom	No	Kitchen	No
none	1	1 to 2	5	none	3	one	11
one	10	3 to 4	6	one	3	two	1
four	1	over 4	1	two	6		

Land ownership		Radio		TV set		Electric Appliances	
no land	9	one	9	none	2	two	2
land	3	two	2	one	7	three	3
		three	1	two	3	four	2
						five	4
						six	1

n=12   Source: field research, 1985

Years of Education

WIFE

HUSBAND

years

0 to 6

7 to 9

10 to 15

$>$ 15

n = 12
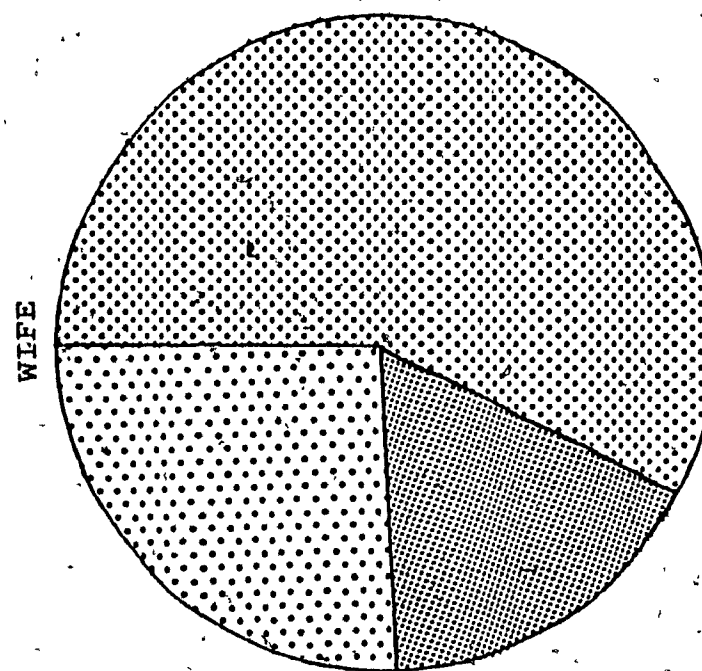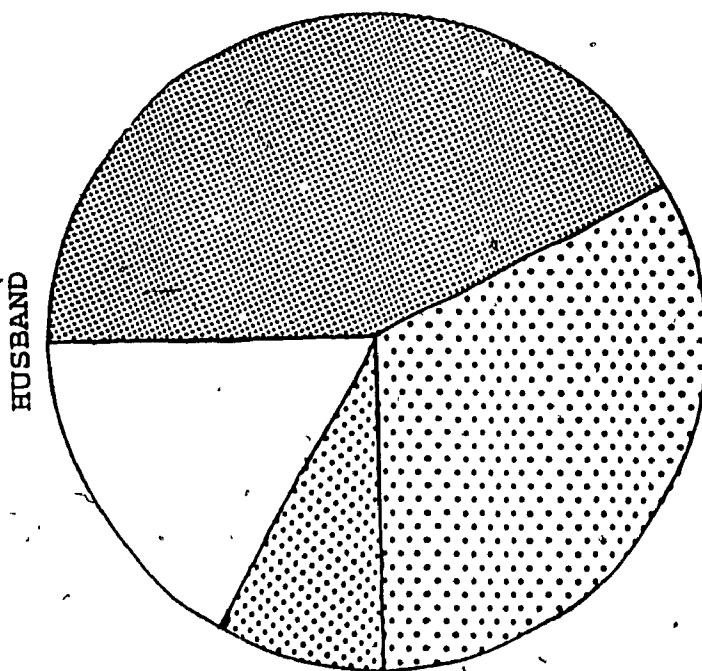
Source: author

As already stated, these groups organized by socio-economic categories, overlapped in many instances making it difficult to assume clear cut divisions.

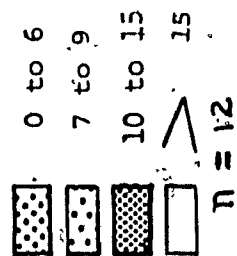The following eating patterns appear regularly throughout the sample: almost everybody ate unripened peasant-style cheese at least once a week, whereas processed or aged cheese was rarely or never eaten. Beef was claimed to be eaten several times a week by the majority, but a further informal inquiry (in subsequent visits after the interview) and the comparison between two types of questionnaires, "24-hour dietary recall" and "food frequency" shows that this was not so, indicating that to eat beef is seen as a sign of social status. Pork also was eaten rarely, although pork rinds which are less expensive and regarded as food of the poor were eaten often but reluctantly. Beans appeared to be the everyday staple. Corn flakes were rarely or never eaten, although one reader of Buenhogar ate this cereal several times a week. Fish, which is difficult to obtain in this mountaineous region far away from the coast, is eaten only dried or smoked, not very often and comes mostly from fresh water. Table 4.5 illustrates the "typical meals" according to the three groups. The table was done from the responses obtained through the "24-hour Dietary Recall Interview". However, a standard item such as "atole", which it is almost indispensable at breakfast time (I had it all the time while living with the Rios family), was not declared by any of the informants in this specific questionnaire. Also "quelites" were not acknowledged in the interview. This fact is discussed in a coming section, for it reflects the reluctance to show Indian eating patterns in the

first encounter with a foreigner.

TABLE 4.5   Typical Meals

	Breakfast	Noon	Afternoon	Evening
Group A	yogurt orange juice eggs bread fruit milk	broth vegetables meat or chicken tortillas pasta salsa beans	candy fruit	jello milk orange/ juice bread
Group B	beans milk fruit eggs coffee bread "nata"	meat vegetables salsa beans cheese tortillas broth	ice-cream candy yogurt	milk bread cookies
Group C	coffee bread beans leftovers	soup pork rinds chile beans tortillas	bananas	coffee beans tortillas leftovers herbal tea

Source: field work, 1985

Eggs, potatoes and pasta are eaten regularly, the last as a substitute for rice, whose price has increased very much in recent years. (But pasta is not as well liked as rice). The majority of women sampled drank milk regularly but the poorest segment almost never. Soft drinks were regarded as an item with strong connotations. Some homemakers saw them as unhealthy beverages, whereas others had no opinion and drank soft drinks without giving them a thought. Half the sampled women would drink them often, and the rest said they never drank them. Chicken, fruit and vegetables are almost everyday meals, but

candy only on occasions. Sweet bread (pan dulce), which is a traditional staple at supper time was also eaten fairly often. Butter or margarine, in contrast, are almost never found in Acambay's tables. When employed, it is to bake cakes.

Breakfast patterns appeared fairly clear cut: almost everybody had bread and milk, sometimes coffee and eggs. At noon, tortillas and beans were the regular staples, together with vegetables, some meat and salsa, made of chile peppers, onions, green or red tomatoes and herbs such as coriander or others.

Snacks at mid-afternoon were rare, but a few people had fruit. The evening meal is traditionally a light one, and sometimes disregarded altogether. Again, the trend was mainly towards bread and milk.

In order to put these findings in context a comparison with a nutritional study published by the INN in 1981 (tables 4.6, 4.7, 4.8), suggests that the urban low income population eats more of certain foods than their rural counterparts in places such as Acambay.

TABLE 4.6 Food Frequency of Urban and Rural Population at breakfast. (%)

Foodstuffs	urban	rural
tortilla or bread	98	83
milk	85	75
eggs	61	33
fruits	25	8
soft drinks	2	--

TABLE 4.8   Food Frequency of Urban and Rural Population at Noon

Foodstuffs	urban	rural
pasta	22	25
rice	64	17
beans	54	67
meat	89	66
vegetables	85	50
fruits	24	25
soft drink	27	--

TABLE XIV Food Frequency of Urban and Rural Population at Supper

Foodstuffs	urban	rural
milk and bread	82	42
leftovers	31	8
vegetables	8	--
fruits	6	8
soft drink	13	--
no supper	2	16

Source: La situacion nutricional de algunos barrios urbanos de Mexico INN, 1981, and field survey in Acambay, 1985.

In this INN's research a strong preference was found for animal protein to the detriment of other important nutrients such as complex carbohydrates (beans and corn). This tendency, although not clearly pinpointed, was thought to be a consequence of media propaganda. The research also emphasized the higher consumption of soft drinks which was rated as a glass per day per person (INN, 1981:49,50). In Acambay's research soft drinks were not listed in the responses to the questionnaires. Nevertheless, the comparison indicates that in spite of the differences in quantity, cultural influences impinge both in the urban and rural population.

4.5 Food related activities

One outstanding feature of Acambay's environment is its cultural dichotomy, which shows in several areas, for example, in the two sets of food, processed and traditional; two ways of buying this food, in the tianguis, and in the grocery stores; and two ways of eating this food, Indian or Mestizo style (although, again, one overlaps with the other).

To illustrate this point one could refer to a typical day of the Acambayan homemaker. This would start early in the morning (as in most rural communities), when she pours the boiling water on the pot which contains freshly collected leaves that produce an herbal tea (Flor de Azahar, Te Limon). Socorro, for instance, has several kinds of trees and plants in her interior patio whose leaves make a fragrant beverage. She then would go to buy the masa which is the ingredient to prepare the atole. So, when the rest of the family wakes-up,

breakfast is ready. Reheated tortillas left from the previous evening, salsa and beans will complement the atole, which is liberally drank by the family.

After everybody has eaten breakfast and she has cleaned the dishes, many other duties await the homemaker. She has to clean the house, do the laundry, do the shopping, tend the children, and, in many cases, supplement the family's income through petty jobs in the informal sector, such as knitting, sewing (the wife of the veterinarian supports her family in this manner), selling small amounts of foods in the streets in the so-called "puestos" which are small spaces on the sidewalks, where a table or cloth laid on the floor, serves to display the merchandise. Some cook for passers-by, which is Socorro's activity after everybody leaves the house in the morning, her daughters towards the school, her husband in search of a job. The homemaker's day is, thus, in general, full of activities. Only late in the afternoon will she take a seat to watch some TV program or listen to the radio, while still knitting or sewing, after having cleaned the kitchen from the midday meal, usually eaten between two and three o'clock.

This break before supper time, which is a very light meal around eight o'clock, serves to communicate the experiences of the day, to receive visits from other women, and to make commentaries about the village developments and the people's involvement in them. An example would be the social activities that take place in the "Casa de la Cultura", where the villagers attend to listen to lecturers from Mexico City, or music recitals, to take lessons on arts and crafts, or on health care and family planning, and so on. All the activities

are free and the public is a mixture of all three
socio-economic categories described. Women, specially, attend
quite often, attracted by sewing and knitting lessons.

The daily shopping for food also plays an important role
in Acambay's women's activities. It becomes a sort of ritual
for women attached to traditional customs and local patterns of
eating, who know exactly where to find a specific food item
(either in the near orchards, or in the house of such and such
person who makes a living selling home-made cheese or other
things). However, this shopping pattern does not apply to women
included in group A, who rather would send the maids to do it,
since they are busy tending the businesses.

The manner of eating is different in the three groups.
But the differentiation shows more acutely between the first
and the last one. For women such as Adela, for instance, the
time allocation of meals does not follow the same pattern than
for women in groups A and B. These have enough food
availability to be distributed according to "meal-hours",
whereas Adela has to wait and see at what time of the day, and
from where, the next meal will come. Even masa and tortillas,
the main staples, can become scarce or disappear altogether in
a given day for a poor villager. As well, women in group C, are
not able to make food choices in the daily menu, except for the
kind of wild greens, or seasonal fruit at their reach. Some of
them, the peasants' wives, grow their own food.

Cooking also becomes differentiated in the three groups.
Only the women in group C would have two kitchens, that is, one
special place to cook tortillas and the regular place inside
the house for the other meals. The rest of the women would buy

their tortillas at the "tortilleria" (shop). And, as much as the socio-economic standing increases, so the consumption of tortillas decreases, as they are substituted for other foods. This fact appears as a natural outcome of affluence. The more choice there is, the less of a single item has to be consumed.

Women from group C stick much more to ancient cooking tradition than do women from the other groups, however, there is a feature which no single household will miss, the presence of the "metate" and the "molcajete" standing side by side with the electric blender or the food processor. It is said that only the "molcajete", made from volcanic stone, gives that special flavour to "salsa" that no electric appliance can give.

Cultural dichotomy, thus, makes its appearance all the way through the Acambay homemaker's day. But some women, mainly those of group A, have the means and the orientation towards buying and consuming more mestizo style foods. They have the choice from which the others are excluded.

4.6 Cultural and commercial processes

As stated elsewhere, things related to Indianness are seen as backward and lacking status. Acambay's food stores ignore traditional items and sell a variety of soft drinks, chips, cake mixes, candy, and all sorts of multinational processed foods. The variety of foodstuffs in Acambay's stores includes fresh, processed and canned items. Table 4.9 illustrates this.

TABLE 4.9   Variety of Foodstuffs in Acambay's Stores

Items	name brand	fresh	canned	processed
jam				x
luncheon meat				x
cheese doble crema				x
cheese Oaxaca				x
cheese Ranchero				x
cheese Manchego				x
cheese panela				x
cheese amarillo				x
butter				x
margarine				x
cream				x
flour tortillas				x
sausages				x
'chorizo'				x
'longaniza'				x
bacon				x
milk	Nestle		x	
milk	Nido		x	
milk	Carnation		x	
coffee	Nescafe			x
jello	Rapida			x
Ketchup	C. Jacques			x
Choco milk				x
Quick	Nestle			x
Maizena	Maizena			x
cake mix	Tres Estrellas			x
pancakes	Tres Estrellas			x
broth powder	Knorr Suiza			x
honey	Karo			x
cookies	La Corona			x
chiles	La Costena		x	
pastas	La Moderna			x
sweet peas	C. Jacques		x	
pan tostado	Bimbo			x
panque con pasas	Bimbo			x
white bread	Bimbo			x
whole bread	Bimbo			x
sweet bread	Bimbo			x
Sabritas				x
Ruffles				x
juice fruits	Jumex		x	
fruites	Herdez		x	
cookies 'marias'	Ritz			x
cookies	Gamesa			x
chocolates	Larin			x
chocolates	Carlos V			x
cereals	Kellog's			x
soft drinks				x
'mole'	Dona Maria			x
jelly	Mc Cormick			x

Source: field work in Acambay, 1985

These items are surrounded by carefully-implemented marketing campaigns. The products' appeal is promoted by emphasizing Western style mores and aesthetics, and not nutritional advantages. These values are exemplified in the magazines, radio and TV ads, where food is associated with status, modernity, development and cosmopolitism (see analysis of Buenhogar). Mestizo and Otomi realities are far distinct from this image projected by the mass media. Acculturation, then, does not necessarily mean better food habits or better nourishment, but a set of intangible qualities that do little good to villager's lifestyles:

> However, it would be mistaken to insist on the absolute autonomy of 'cultural' and commercial processes. As Lefevre... puts it: 'Trade is... both a social and intellectual phenomenon', and commodities arrive at the market-place laden with significance. They are, in Marx' words... 'social hieroglyphs' and their meanings are inflected by conventional usage. (Hebidge, 1983:95)

Therefore, what has become conventional after media exposure, are certain nutritional trends (such as the yogurt fad) which are mainly followed by the women of the group A, and also some of the group B. The last group (C), which has a subsistence level, is also aware of these innovations, but cannot afford to try them.

In Acambay the process of communication takes as many disguises as a modern Circe. Together with jogging shoes and blue jeans, the young women in the village are more than willing to accept the whole package of Western modernity, which also includes totally different eating patterns. In this aspect, the role the media play in shaping and maintaining consent is crucial. Stuart Hall (cited in Hebidge, 1983:156), argues that "the media serve, in societies like ours,

ceaselessly to perform the critical ideological work of 'classifying the world' within the 'discourse of the dominant ideologies'. This is done by the continual drawing and redrawing of the line between 'preferred' and 'excluded' readings, the meaningful and the meaningless, the normal and the deviant." We find then, that up to certain point, tradition and Indianness in Acambay pertain to the 'excluded' reading, for the media portrays mainly the commercial and cultural values of Western society, which is also the one who owns these media.

In spite of the heavy input of mass media messages, one could speculate that these are grasped at a very subjective level, mainly because they do not have a direct relation to rural reality as a whole. Therefore, only the most superficial and meaningles facts of modernity are read by the people receiving them. Thus, if the 'good life' is represented in the media both by a material well being (hygienic facilities, drainage, and so on), and by cheap items such as junk food and blue jeans, for example, the latter being accessible whereas the former is perceived only as a remote possibility, almost impossible to attain, people will take from the message what they can. In this manner, the communication gap between two different versions of the world will widen in spite of the continuing flow of information. Also, provision of hygienic facilities requires political organization, while provision of consumer items requires only multinational marketing, which is much more effective and easier to achieve. As has been observed in Chapter III, the political will to improve the life of the majority in a country such as Mexico lags far behind the will

to succeed as an industrial developed nation sharing the international market of goods.

Predictably, most brands of transnational origin employ mass media advertising as has been shown in Chapter III. However, the majority of women interviewed were not impressed by food advertising at a conscious level. Some said food ads featured items unknown to them. One of the women said it featured nutritious food. Half of the sampled women read Buenhogar once in a while, or at least knew about it. The rest had never seen this magazine before. But all of them listen to radio and the majority watch television quite regularly. Radio and television, as well as billboards, posters and so on, advertise the same food products also present in Buenhogar. So the message gets across one way or the other. For the purpose of this thesis only Buenhogar was chosen for the analysis.

4.7 Analysis of Buenhogar de Mexico

This communication vehicle is used in Acambay's study because its message is more easy to pinpoint in a short field trip than would be the examination of other media (radio and TV for instance), and because it represents the transnational diffusion of values and life-style in a highly standardized visual form. Since it is recognized that the entire complex process of communication and cultural change could not be grasped in a study such as this, the analysis of one magazine serves to illustrate a particular theme, rather than to attempt a general explanation.

The examination illustrates but one facet of media images

on food linked to life-style. The purpose of <u>Buenhogar's</u>
message is to show how the "ideal" modern woman must behave;
that is, what kind of dress, child care, food or home she has
to produce. The ideological package is completed including the
linkages of advertising and features, cooking recipes, and
norms of socially acceptable behaviour.

Women's magazines have been examined from many points of
view (see Santa Cruz & Erazo, 1983 and Garcia Calderon, 1980),
but one aspect has been neglected, the food section and food
advertising. This should not be the case because food reflects
societal values, life-style and the role that advertisers and
consumers play in the shaping of a whole set of cultural
traits. Social stimuli define the meaning and use of food and
determine whether it has prestige, sex appeal, or health value.
Moreover, individual relationships to food depend on the
response to sensory stimuli and emotional attachments to food,
to its use as a crutch or as a source of satisfaction. As a
result, the dialectic of food pervades all of its connotations.

Three issues of <u>Buenhogar</u> (June-July 1985, which roughly
correspond in time to the field trip) are looked at from the
above point of view. The procedure is the examination of the
covers, the format of the magazine, the publicity, the food
section and the items employed in some chosen cooking recipes.

Before proceeding with the analysis it should be noted
that <u>Buenhogar</u> belongs to the Hearst Corporation and was the
first transnational feminine magazine to be introduced in Latin
America in 1966. Currently, it is distributed in the Caribbean,
Mexico, Central America, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela, and also
reaches Japan and some parts of Europe (Garcia Calderon,

1980:28).

Its sections include features (articulos), personalities (personalidades), beauty and fashion (belleza y moda), embroidery and needlework (labores), decoration (decoracion), food (cocina), fiction (novela), babies (los bebes de BH), and horoscope (horoscopo).

The covers highlight the important features of the issue, and always announce something related to food. The cover models are usually smiling. Only the face appears. They are atractive young Caucasian women with a nice girl-next-door look.

With respect to content, food ads in these issues included Decaf (Nestle), Canderel (Nutrasweet by G.D. Searle Co), Tonic, Ginger Ale and Soda Mundet, Bimbo Bread, Pizzerolas (Sabritas), condensed milk (Nestle), canned soups (Campbells), broth powder (Knorr Suiza), Cerelac (Nestle).

The food section seems to provide a connection between the ads and the recipes. Whole grains, legumes, fruits and vegetables are not often mentioned, whereas canned and processed foods are items of most recipes. The dishes featured have an international flair. "Pilaff" and Portuguese rice, duck a l'orange, turkey steaks with cherry, chicken with white wine, chicken 'souffle', liver pate, aspic pate, chicken breasts stuffed with shrimps, salmon and pineapple, crab sandwich, roast beef with potatoes, 'tournedos Rossini', veal 'parmegiana', 'filet du porc Chasseur', 'terrine a la maison', lobster 'termidor, all sorts of Italian pastas, salad 'Nicoise', corn 'souffle', 'quiche', chocolate 'mousse', crepes 'grand Marnier', all sorts of sauces (Hollandaise, Spanish,

French, etc.), hot dogs, cheese fondue, hamburgers and fruit 'parfait'.

When the food section is devoted to fish recipes, the suggested species would not be easy to find in Mexico, for example, salmon, mussels, lobster. The advice on how to freeze fruits also looks like nonsense in a country with tropical year-round crops. Other advice tells homemakers how to improve canned soups with sour cream, yogurt, milk, and English sauce. But the really grotesque suggestion is a taco recipe which asks for bottled taco sauce, ground beef meat, cheddar cheese and olives, plus 8 taco shells. These ingredients are a complete mystification of the real thing. Nobody in Mexico would prepare tacos with ground meat, olives, cheddar and taco sauce. Taco shells simply do not exist in Mexico.

From all these facts several assumptions can be made. First, it looks as though for food to become a commodity it has to be processed, marketed and advertised, hence food in its natural form is not as good a subject of commercialization. Second, the patterns of consumption heralded by Buenhogar coincide with those of the industrialized countries. In one ethnographic study (Jerome, 1975:92) whose hypothesis was constructed around the way in which diet individuation is expressed in the contemporary United States, one of the conclusions was that the diet could be expanded to accommodate a large number of nonstaple items without increasing food energy consumption (in relation to energy input), only through a rhythmic inclusion/exclusion/replacement pattern developed by each individual or family to promote diet variation. It looks as if food consumption in affluent societies would be more

related to a system of illusory beliefs than to true scientific knowledge or physiological signals. As a result of this the energy consumption of people is not matched by an increase in food item offerings.

The third assumption is that food recipes and advertising reflect a totally different world-view and reality from that of Mexican idiosincracy. The system of representations shown in the magazine pertain to a woman who can afford to live in the ideal world of a homemaker free to choose all the material things portrayed in the magazine. Thus, Buenhogar becomes the perfect vehicle for "a system of beliefs characteristic of a particular class or group" (Marx, cited in Williams, 1978). But that class or group has no relation to the people in Acambay, as shown by the Photam test. Thus the way in which women perceive the magazine is very different from the intended message. Acambay women cannot identify with the stereotype portrayed by the magazine, but they do certainly aspire to become like their affluent counterparts through the consumption of items advertised.

4.8 Women's attitudes

A further example of this 'disinformed information' springs up when analyzing the responses to a photographic test for attitude measurement (PHOTAM), administered to a cross-section of Acambay's homemakers. The purpose behind the administering of this test was to observe the reactions to images taken in its majority from Buenhogar, showing several patterns of consumption and luxury items, counterposed to

images of traditional rural life in the Mexican countryside.

The method followed consisted in showing these images to the informants and recording their comments and reactions on a tape-recorder. Although they would not recognize the images as taken from the magazine, the linkage established in this manner would shed light on the influence of the media in women's attitudes and hence in their eating habits.

The PHOTAM, however, was difficult to apply. Many of the informants showed reluctance to talk because of the tape-recorder, and probably because they did not want to say an inappropriate comment on a given issue (image). Thus, this test does not represent a succesful form of getting the most of information in this study. Nonetheless, the responses obtained serve to analyze some attitudes and orientations.

Despite the selling by advertising companies of the Western life style, only one woman in twelve (who previously had lived in Mexico City), could recognize the photograph of Ronald and Nancy Reagan. This fact underlines the fragmented image put forward by the media. This projective test consisted of a set of 13 photographs (most of them taken from Buenhogar) designed to elicit attitudes either to modernization or to traditional life style. The photographs included scenes of a modern Western family, family distress, child nourishment, traditional Indian life and historical Indian products, traditional peasant family life, Western style food, multinational food products, sexy feminine lingerie, and the blond model stereotype.

The responses encompassed a spectrum ranging from shy guesses to a fair degree of knowledge of the outside world. In

one of the photographs showing a variety of Western food, the respondents invariably saw avocados in place of the green figs portrayed, thus indicating how much perceptions can be tempered by mental images.

Almost nobody knew what to say of a big hamburger topped with melted cheese. Again, two sets of realities stood side by side. The puzzling fact here is that one symbol of mass culture, the ubiquitous hamburger, becomes a total stranger in the Acambay context. Being unknown, the hamburger loses its property as a popular hallmark in society. Without advertising it projects nothing and has no more appeal then a bunch of grapes, oranges or whatever. For as Barthes (1982:143-49) has signalled, the main function of myth (in this case the nutritious and popular appeal of the hamburger) as an instrument of communication consists in how it is received.

What myth gives in return is a <u>natural</u> image of reality, but in this case the hamburger has not been defined in Acambay as having a historical reality, and hence communicates nothing. In order to become "a hamburger", with all the connotations of modernity and appealing Western style, it will have to wait for the appropriate diffusion by the mass media, which then will build up the myth as the appropriate instrument of ideological inversion. It becomes clear how every myth can have its history and its geography, each in fact being the sign of the other: a myth ripens because it spreads. Barthes had already hinted the possibility of carrying out the study of the social geography of myths (1982:143-49). In Acambay it would be possible to do so by looking at many food items foreign to its traditional context such as soft drinks, chips, cake mixes, canned

vegetables, and so on.

Nobody identified herself with peasant families. The photographs of the cowboys with many cattle passing a stream was not thought Mexican, probably because of the abundance of livestock. Peasantry in Acambay is perceived as a low socio-economic status. Most people working the land are poor and do not own large quantities of cattle. Being peasant is pitiful, it is a very different conceptualization from that of being a farmer in a developed country. Most peasants are poor and hungry.

In general terms, in this PHOTAM test, the respondents were not very talkative, looked very cautious and showed little desire to expand their thoughts. Furthermore, the presence of the cassette recorder probably inhibited their spontaneity. Nonetheless, when the formality of the interview was relaxed, and the subjects began to talk on other topics, communication was restored. The pattern of reluctance and relaxation after the interview was observed in several homemakers. In some of them it appeared as though the matter of food was a touchy issue, especially among those who had difficulty feeding themselves and their families.

Understandably, a stranger asking questions and taking their time without giving anything in return (not even the hope of a better access to food), was perceived as an intruder. On those occasions the task of doing research turned sour, because some of the formal questions seemed inappropriate in the context of extreme poverty. For, according to Habermas, language must be equally considered as a medium in which violence and power structures systematically distort our

capacity to communicate. He adds that "action is severed from communication and reduced to the solitary act of the purposive-rational utilization of means. And individuated experience is eliminated in favour of the repeatable experience of the results of instrumental action" (Habermas, 1972:193); in other words, the will to produce technically-exploitable knowledge. Being conscious of this condition in my research, I too became inhibited when visiting the poorest women of the sample, because it is difficult to talk about food in the absence of it.

4.9 Conclusion

The message put forward regarding food products by a medium such as <u>Buenhogar</u>, is the same message as that of the other media: an image of modernity associated with the food processed and marketed by large corporations which employ international publicity agencies. Thus, the items more widely perceived through these media by people in Acambay are generally those beyond the means of rural homemakers, or else cheap items which give an illusion of modernity without necessarily changing or improving the real material conditions in the countryside.

Now, the contradiction arises when thinking how these mundane images of the 'good life' communicate facts or myths wrapped into systematically distorted patterns of communication. To begin with, food is not a 'neutral' stuff. Food reflects societal values and life-styles. Cultural traits and ideology are ever present in each bite of bread or

tortillas. Thus, consumer patterns cannot be examined outside the context which shapes them. The forces of society, human agency, the structures of power, economic and hegemonic influences, are definite factors which affect food intake, as well as national policies followed by the government through education (elementary and secondary school), the DIF campaigns that distribute food, the communication established by mothers and children, and the expectations raised by the awareness of other lifestyles perceived as better that their own. The women of the sample knew all that. And they reacted accordingly by concealing in their answers what they thought to be a low status food, regardless of its nutritious properties. Women in Acambay see themselves as part of the world, and they want to belong and be accepted.

The version of the world of the multinational food companies does not include traditional values, different cultural mores and individuated world-views. Standardization is the rule, whether people can afford it or not. Progress is represented by soft drinks, fast food, canned vegetables and so forth. In India, nutritionist Alan Berg noted that:

> industrial processing inevitably elevates a product's cost beyond that of an equal quantity of the staple. <He> found that saturation food advertising convinced many low-income families they must buy certain high-priced nutritious products to keep their children well and alert. As a result, Berg found low-income families 'seduced into spending a disproportionate amount of their income on canned baby foods and similar items at the expense of more needed staples'...<thus> in underdeveloped countries where is common for families to have to spend 80 percent of their income in food, the impact of shifting to more costly but less nutritious food is grave. (Moore Lappe, 1978, 335)

So, what specific role do the media play? Would life be any different if the media were not there? What is the actual

result of this fact? As early stated, the marginal population, which earns a living at a subsistence level, has been one of the resources for industrial growth in Mexico. The availability of cheap labour in both urban and rural areas that lowers the costs of relatively inefficient industries, and the option to import advanced labour-saving technology have not improved life for the mass of the labour force. The above governmental policies impinge on the poorest people of Acambay, and so it would seem as though the media has little to do with the state of their material condition. But in truth, the media raise expectations difficult to attain and, on the other side, do not really produce any tangible form of improvement in the villagers lives. At the same time, the media accrues economic gains from the whole of the population.

In the following chapter Acambay is reviewed in context through the spatial perspective of the international food trade, its grasp of Mexican markets, and the internal factors that on one side promote this state of affairs, and on the other side, under the representation of tradition (cultural resistance), oppose cultural hegemony.

4.9 Notes

1) Municipio, is a geopolitical division of Mexican territory. States are subdivided in municipios.

2) Repartimientos. A labour institution in colonial Spanish America in which a royal judge made a temporary allotment of Indians for a given task.

3) Molino de nixtamal. Shops where maize is transformed in _masa_ (a paste), which is the stuff for making tortillas.

4) Pulque bars. Places where _pulque_, the fermented sap of maguey cactus, is sold. This is a very popular drink in rural Mexico and dates back to pre-Columbian days.

5) Tortillerias. Shops where cooked and ready to eat tortillas are sold.

6) Ejidos. The common land held by Indian communities and used for agriculture in Mexico.

7) Tierras comunales. A similar pattern of ejido-land tenure.

8) Atole. A thick beverage made of _masa_, sugar, cinnamon, and water or milk.

9) Sopes. Thick patties made of _masa_ with crumbled cheese, beans and _salsa_ on top.

10) Vegetables: chilacayote, chayote, camotes (sweet potatoe), quelites (wild greens), flor de calabaza, huanzontle, tunas, avocados, pahuas, zapote blanco, zapote negro, chirimoya, capulines, papaya, plums, aguamiel, mushrooms, escamoles (ant larvae).

11) Rancho. A piece of land where agricultural and/or cattle raising activities takes place. Small plots or large latifundia may be indistinctly called 'ranchos'.

12) Since tortillas are ubiquitous in rural Mexican meals, some times are not included in the account although always are eaten with the rest of the food.

13) Mole de guajolote. The national dish for celebrations and parties, in most parts of Mexico. It is made with Mexican turkey (guajolote) meat, and a spicy hot sauce of chile pepper and chocolate.

CHAPTER V   CONCLUSION

5.1   The village in context

.Food consumption patterns, today, are partly shaped by
the   conjunction of 'traditional communication and the mass
media. What remains to be examined,' though, are the following
questions: why are these things happening?; why did the
subjects behave in the way they did?; why do certain areas
remain obscure or unexplained?; and what differences in
orientation lie behind the difficulty in communicating?.

Following through this agenda, a reconsideration of the
theory of the demonstration effect associated with the concept
of "far places" put forward by John R. Gold in his study on
Communicating Images of the Environment, is seen as a necessary
step to frame the former questions and to further the
understanding of villagers' needs and wants.   Gold (1974:86)
says that "mass communication influences the way that people
perceive space and, it is believed, their locational behaviour.
Media messages are a vital source of images about locations
which people have never visited, the far places." These "far
places" have different meanings depending on the material
conditions in which they are 'imagined'. There is probably a
great difference between how an individual of an affluent
society perceives a "far place" such as, for example, a village
in a Mexican valley or a Peruvian hamlet, and how a member of
the village imagines the affluent city. For the former the far
place is associated with travel, adventure, curiosity or,

perhaps, business (1). The inhabitant of the village or hamlet, however, probably visualizes the "far place", that is, in this case the site of industrial society, as the location of material wellbeing, cosmopolitan culture and ideal life style (2). In Acambay's case, the objects received from the far places are selectively transmitted. For instance, yogurt is understood and consumed while hamburgers are not.

Such visions arise, in both cases, from the images put forward by the mass media. When the latter advertise rural life, they do so in an unreal manner, presenting images such as an idyllic setting where Colombian coffee, for instance, grows in harmony with nature cared for by the smiling "Juan Valdes" in a Nescafe ad. But mass media do not portray villagers drinking soft drinks or eating processed transnational food associated with the good life. Rather, urban inhabitants of the industrialized "far places", with different looks and sophisticated appearances, are the ones which project seductive images diffused by the media. The demonstration effect thus operates not only to stimulate the desire for goods and services far beyond the reach of rural people, but also to emphasise a land of utopia, a spatial dimension which could become a reality if only one would consume certain advertised goods (3). If, to this imaginary construction, are added rural self-deprecating images (Fromm & Maccoby, 1970:37; Pi-Sunyer, 1973:7; Miller, 1973:126), then the impact of publicity becomes much stronger, underlying contrasts and differences beween two far distant worlds, and the 'magical' quality of advertised goods which can bridge that gap.

The generally-held idea that the destruction or

relegation of traditional cultures is a necessary prerequisite to the raising of living standards (Smith, 1980:102), echoes both rural perceptions and advertising agencies' policies. Juan Somavia (cited in Smith, 1980:102) argues that the present system is "a vehicle for transmitting values and life-styles to Third World countries which stimulates the type of consumption and the type of society necessary to the transnational expansion of capital."

As has been noted, Mexico is the third largest economic partner of the United States, sharing a border of 3,326 kilometers. Hundreds of thousands of rural workers cross this border each year to work in American fields and factories. They bring back home the image of a culture based upon massive consumption with an economy stimulated by consumer goods. Beyond any doubt, this image symbolizes the good life for Mexican villagers. John P. Digging, cited in Hamelinck (1983:365), says that "the fetishism of commodities lies in their prestige-value, in their ability as 'signs' to command respect, authority, deference." Following this stream of thought, it can be added that knowledge, attitudes and practices have been identified in influencing food habits. According to Deva Sanjur (1982:292), no segment of the population will support a product that is not eaten by those peoples who produce it (remember that Mexican ac's on food picture Western models such as the blue-eyed Gerber baby) and, also, "the food must have status: a product's success is enhanced when people who can just afford to buy it know their more prosperous neighbours will use it" (Sanjur, 1982:292).

In consequence, the more expensive high-fat-protein food

is regarded as better than low-fat vegetable food in the Mexican context (Chapter III). As anything else (be it food, appliances, clothes, etc.), this perception is conditioned by cultural hegemony. Socorro's son-in-law, who works in Toluca (the capital city of the Estado de Mexico), made sure to ask me, if I ever came back to Acambay, to bring him a Canadian "chamarra" and several items for his wife and children. This and the other facts of Acambayan acculturation suggest that in examining aspirations toward a national culture, one should ask who is attempting to define such culture and what interests are involved, because transnational advertising does much more than sell products and shape patterns of consumption, "it informs, educates, changes attitudes, and builds images" (Hamelinck, 1983:16,29), images, so to speak, such as the "good life" in the "far places".

It is common knowledge that the millions of copies of Latin American women's magazines disseminate the North American ideal of the efficient, well dressed, non-political housewife and homemanager (Hamelinck, 1983:3; Folch, 1985). How this process of cultural 'imports' affects the receivers in the long term, especially with respect to cultural norms of behaviour, shows in the attitudes of Socorro's daughters and many other young women in Acambay. The married daughter buys chips for her children them whenever they ask if she has money. She, her sisters and other young women wear tight blue jeans and sneakers in place of the more traditional skirts or dresses with the "rebozo" attire. On the other side, they have become aware of birth control methods and do not shun them. Only very poor women still breastfeed: otherwise they follow the pattern

of bottle feeding which, it should be noted, is encouraged by the policy of subsidies (referred to in Chapter III) put forward by the DIF program (Desarrollo Integral de la Familia) implemented all over Mexico through the system of municipalities.

These governmental programs are aimed at alleviating the plight of the poorest families in the municipio of Acambay. But the programs underline that the effect of multinational corporations is not only directly received through advertising or retailing of food items, but also through government intervention. This is so because the "canastas" (literally baskets of food), allocated weekly, reflect the influence of foreign eating patterns. The content ranges from milk powder to jello, processed cereal, wheat "atole" (the traditional is made of masa), flavoured milk powder, and so on. In this manner, the Mexican food system (Chapter III), and the case study (Chapter IV), are linked in yet another aspect of the transnationalization of food and its influence on food patterns.

5.2 Why are these things happening?

Why are the villagers being uprooted from their traditional ways and given new ones via mass media messages and industrial penetration without giving them a better standard of life? And why are the products offered not adapted to suit local needs? In general terms, there is no concrete answer to these questions. Acambayans have at their disposition both the "tianguis" (with the traditional food brought from all over the

region), and the grocery stores with convenience and packaged foods from transnational origin, heavily loaded with publicity, be it billboards announcing Pepsi or Coca-Cola, radio spots, TV commercials, or feminine magazines with their food sections. But the fact that there exist these two sources of food, does, not mean that the poorest villagers can afford to buy enough food. Rather, they are offered the objects of consumption without being provided with the _means_ to afford them, that is, without changing the economic base of the Mexican food system.

Ethnographic studies indicate, thus, that modernization has done little to improve the conditions of the rural poor in Mexico (Pi-Sunyer, 1973:vi; Fromm & Maccoby, 1970:237). It seems that it is easier to create new consumer patterns for rural populations that lead to a wasteful spending for what little is available in order to foster the market economy than it would be to inform the population about a sound nutritional behaviour. According to Cees Hamelinck (1983:15) "the needs of the poorest persons are not met if they are identified with the consumption of Kentucky Fried Chicken, Coca Cola, Aspro, or Peter Stuyvesant cigarettes." In this manner the definition of the basic needs is tailored to the marketing needs of food companies. In other words,

> insofar as information processes are a reflection of existing power relations, they will in general follow a synchronic model. In this model there is a great distance between sender and receiver; the receiver is supposed to synchronize with the input from the sender. The sender becomes the specialist who alone can select, process, and distribute the messages. (Hamelinck, 1983:114)

This bring us back to Carlos Fuentes' explanation of colonial life\ where the concept of distance sets the pace of social organization.

Distance between the law and its practice, between the Crown and its colonies and between the social layers and institutions of the colonies themselves. Between the isolated localities and the central metropolis. Between the old and the new Gods. Between the real country and the legal country....Between the two nations: haves and have-nots....Between expectations and rewards. (Fuentes, 1985:33-34)

This conceptual distance (both in Hamelinck's and Fuentes accounts) apparently bridged in theory, is nevertheless accentuated by the artificial cultural closeness brought about by the standardization of needs and wants which today are thoroughly entangled in the history which they help to perpetuate. Thus, not one, but many elements conjoin to facilitate rural change in the ambiguous manner shown up until now. Yet, the strong, powerful Indian tradition offers in some instances a sort of cultural resistance which stirs hope for the recuperation of pride and gusto in wearing a "rebozo" or eating "nopales" (tender young leaves of the opuntia cactus with a consistency, when cooked, like okra), or publicly aknowledging the superior nutritional quality of tortillas as compared to non-enriched wheat bread:

> There are also unique satisfactions in being a peasant villager in Mexico. One of the most important is the sense of rootedness, of living in a small village where each person knows everybody else. While gossip is sometimes hostile, it is also a means of filling out one's knowledge of a common world...the villager is more concrete, descriptive, specific, and less abstract or generalizing in his mode of ordering experience. The differences in modes of thought reflects differences in the demands of culture on cognition. In the industrial world, time is money and value is constantly converted into abstract terms. People must learn ways of approaching tasks rather than specific operations, so that as methods are continually modernized individuals will not have to learn them from scratch....The villager <on the other hand> spends his life learning to know a few things deeply...<she has> not learned the modes of thought and abstract principles which are useful in the industrial world, but what <she has> learned about <her> fellows and their physical world gives <her> a satisfaction of being related to <her> surroundings, of feeling at home. (Fromm

& Maccoby, 1970:40)

The former commentary is not an argument to defend rural status quo. Rather, given the circumstances in Mexico's stage of development, it should serve to emphasise the fact that in villages such as Acambay, people should be given the opportunity to develop their environment by themselves, in other words, without being pushed toward policies of commercialization proper of urban areas where obtaining food is not a task shared by the community.

5.3 Why the subjects behaved in the way they did.

The answer to this second question is implicit in the fact that the diffusion of artefacts and behaviour of a powerful fetishised way of life, one which comes to be preferred over indigenous culture, impinge on the mentality of the women of Acambay even without their realizing it. This occurs because of the role of communication media promoting consumerism, and

> the techniques used involve particularly the provision of manufactured 'experience' in audio and visual formats which replicate, and especially exaggerate, real events... After a certain period, the mind comes to prefer such exaggerated, edited, 'perfectized' forms of 'experience' over the more mundane real experiences (Peet, 1982:293)

These exaggerated, perfected forms of experience are put forward by the media under the assumption that real experience (that is, the environment and life style of the villagers) is not worthy, whereas those environments and life styles of the "far places" are the goal to attain. People, partly intimidated, part envious and part defiant to visitors coming from afar, react to such stimuli. This is why research

techniques have to be adapted in order to penetrate the surface and overcome informants' reluctance. Current circumstances in the countryside are different from those of 20 or 30 years ago when few external influences disturbed the villagers. Today, the impacts of multinationals manifest themselves at the behavioural and global scales in a number of ways, for instance in the:

> cultural realignment towards mass consumption and the accompanying modification of family life and personal goals and motivations, and even the health problems caused by modification of diet. (Taylor & Thrift, 1982:139, emphasis added)

Due to this cultural realignment it has become imperative to understand and evaluate the international context which shapes attitudes and perceptions of the villagers, for particular forms of territorial-cultural identity are related to specific patterns of economic growth and social change (Jackson, 1986:123). After all, the demonstration effect operates even in the most remote places in Mexico, showing that cultural influences through communication do not always occur in a direct manner. These influences happen when the ruling class accepts imported social models and their action becomes decisive for the rest of the population, although they have a different influence in the city than they have in the country, where the trickle-down is lessened by the physical and cultural distance. Thus, "the concept of development is marketed in its equation with the concept of modernization" (Hamelinck, 1982:6-7).

Except for the poorest key informants (for example, one who lived with her husband, two children, the parents in-law and eight of their children in a small two-room house with an

outside kitchen to cook tortillas; but no toilet facility), the majority of women aspired to reach whatever representation of modernity they could afford, even if this reflected only a fictional improvement in life style and standard of living. By such representations of modernity are meant Western-style clothes, bottle feeding, non-Indian food, electric appliances, birth control, medical care as opposed to folk medicine, processed food (especially chips, candy and soft drinks), and a penchant for high-protein food, such as meat, regarded as a unique source of good nutrition. But of course, the most influenced and affected by Western mores were the younger informants. They had a stronger desire to conform with the norms and values of a cosmopolitan style of living.

In an ethnographic study conducted in a similar Indian-Mestizo agricultural community (De Walt, et al, 1980:219), it was found that villagers are clearly not deterred from changing their diets, as the substitution of sopa (pasta) for the more traditional beans demonstrates (although the change to pasta did not satisfy the villagers. They would rather have had beans which women said were much more satisfying whereas a few hours after eating pasta, they felt hungry again). In this case, just as in Acambay's case, the change appears to reflect economic and cultural factors, to the detriment of good nutrition. The change is gradual and subtle, yet irreversible. In Acambay's field work this change was reflected in the overall attitudes of homemakers influenced by communication media. The study also suggests that economic conditions (such as lack of purchasing power and increased prices of food, especially beans and rice) are a major factor

for poor nutrition in rural areas, and sees the solution in improving the latter as well as teaching modern nutritional ideas in the communities. It also recognizes that some economic development programs in the area may be unwittingly contributing to a further decline of nutritional status of the poorer families, because new agricultural practices in the area and the use of fertilizers and pesticides have wiped out the wild greens (quelites), which used to grow in the middle of corn plantations. The study, nevertheless, completely overlooks the cultural factors that may influence nutritional conditions, such as the impact represented by international food companies impinging on Mexican villagers and their patterns of consumption.

As a corollary of the above statements it can be said that in all probability, Acambay's women behaved and reacted to research interviews and the presence of an inquiring stranger, with their psychological being stimulated by socio-economic-cultural conditions which reflect a world-wide system of marketing, production and consumption, as well as by the familiar traditional cultural context.

5.4 Why do certain areas remain obscure or unexplained?

In the opinion of several authors (Hall, 1978; Hebdige, 1983; Fromm & Maccoby, 1970), a certain amount of uncertainty is the price the researcher pays for the attempt to arrive at a deeper understanding of the most relevant data. Moreover, Fromm states that "the traditional behavioural scientist often has greater certainty, but he pays the price of having to restrict his research to problems which are hospitable to his methods", and he adds that "it is the small detail in behaviour and expression which is important in...investigation, not that which is embodied in general statements of opinions and beliefs" (Fromm & Maccoby, 1970:27-28-29).

In keeping with this methodological approach through the development of the paper, much importance has been given to Acambay's environment and cultural landscape, for it is my belief that both play a key role in shaping behavioural and cultural patterns of food consumption. Thus, women's attitudes in daily life, for example their different way of perceiving time and their general domestic routines, are viewed as the symbols and meanings of cultural resistance to the effects of multinational marketing. Women who displayed with pride their accomplishments in feeding the family, and who would search for a specific food item in different orchards (where they knew that some foods were grown: "nopales", "calabazas" or the like), illustrate the power of their resistance to ideological impositions, such as the marketing of convenience food, for they were willing to prove their knowledge about good

foodstuffs in spite of the time spent in the search. How far these attitudes are from the synthetic way of media's food display!: frozen time-saving dinners, precooked items, canned vegetables, baby food in jars, instant puddings and cake-mix, instant coffee and so on.

The latter symbolize a hectic pace of life, and have become the signs of modernity and progress. Thus, one of the difficult things to explain is the ambivalence with which these signs are received or acknowledged by Acambayans. On one side, modern food is associated with progress, and upper living standards; on the other, it is regarded as unhealthy food deprived of its freshness, and its primary relationship to the environment. And it is precisely the observation of these ambivalent feelings that makes difficult the explanation of social phenomena.

Opinions and conscious attitudes of the informants do not elucidate many of the issues surrounding this ambivalence, for the process of communication includes perceptions which cannot be measured by behavioural methods, such as the historical baggage stretching from prehispanic days when food was seen as a gift of the Gods, and also the pride involved in producing--rather creating--traditional dishes which no amount of industrialization (such as packaged taco shells, or canned "Mexican salsa") can mimic. On the whole, therefore, Acambay's women still do not prefer packaged foods. Processed foods are thought to be both unhealthy and the recourse of the incompetent cook. But one thing is their conscious attitudes; the other is how they receive the pervasive penetration of images put forward by the media that present advertising as

social communication, disguising the commercial message through symbols of the "good life".

5.5 What differences in orientation lie behind the difficulty in communicating?

We know now that "the struggle between different discourses, different definitions and meanings within ideology is...always, at the same time, a struggle within signification: a struggle for possession of the sign which extends to even the most mundane areas of everyday life" (Hebdige, 1983:17). In this light, even if the Mexican Food System (SAM) and PRONAL discussed in Chapter III, have been trying to reach the rural population in order to enhance and promote nutritional strategies, the struggle for the possession of the sign (i.e. the message) is being lost to the mass media managed by private enterprises. They, for reasons of maximizing profit, do not care much about villagers' nutritional status. Thus, traditional communication (such as the established day-to-day contact among women and the vernacular knowledge of food properties) and the mass media engage in a struggle to win the villagers' hearts and minds.

Some Mexican ethnographies illustrate this point. Frank C. Miller (1973:135) concludes that:

> the advent of modern technology...and the messages of mass media, demonstrated to <the villagers>...that certain kinds of goods -consumer goods, jobs, and knowledge, for example- were not limited...<but> just as many of the people were beginning to embrace a faith in continual progress based on modern technology, progress reached a plateau...industrialization opened up opportunities but not fast enough to keep up with rising expectations.

These expectations are the ones aroused by the mass media,

and the contradiction becomes evident when villagers in Acambay, spatially separated from the opportunity to participate in the industrial process become, nevertheless, immersed in the communication which arises from this industrialization. Once again, Habermas' notion of systematically-distorted communication underlines the villagers' reality, a reality where technological advances do not catch up with mass media messages about the "good life".

As stated elswhere, the poorest informants were less cooperative than the others and would not easily establish a relationship with me. Probably they regarded their state of poverty as a obstacle to socializing and interacting with a visitor. The other women who did not perceive themselves as poor, noticed a difference, though, between the country and the city, that is between "pueblerinas" (villagers) and "capitalinas" (from the capital). This was a useful differentiation when talking on food issues, for, generally, country food is regarded as more fresh and healthy than food obtained in the city. Since they could meet their families' necessities, they talked proudly of their customs and domestic habits.

People in the countryside know by instinct or intuition that fresh food (bought daily, Chapter IV), makes for a more sensible and healthy way of eating. The latter is corroborated even in the industrialized world where nutritionists call for a return to natural food, and signal that from the 12,000 food items available to consumers, the majority are fabricated and their nutritional value is not good (The Gazette, Mtl. April 16, 1986:D-4). But the differences in orientation, which

conceptually separate the approach to food from one worldview to another, make it difficult to understand vernacular communication, as well as the evaluation of the impact of mass media's images upon the villagers patterns of consumption. As a result, the study has been limited by constraints beyond the scope of this thesis. The data gathered show only the results of two months of field work. Hence, it is acknowledged that the work could have been improved and expanded in the event of continued research.

5.6   Conclusion

One of the aims of this thesis is to underscore the fact that the study of social issues in Mexican communities cannot be undertaken in isolation: that is, without considering the pivotal role of mass media in shaping lifestyles and world views through the spread of hegemonic forces with different values and outlooks from those of the communities. Hence, the examination of traditional customs and deeply ingrained mores of Mexican villagers has had to be weighed in light of the external influences impinging on their lives. Two different versions of existence which spring from internal and external drives have been analyzed: that of modernity with its industrial mode of production and consumption; and the historical/traditional way of living, producing, and consuming of traditional Mexico.

In order to understand this dichotomy which affects so many lives in the countryside, an overview of cultural perceptions of food from prehispanic times until the present

has helped to build up an appropriate background for Acambay's case study. The impact on Mexican food habits, begun in the mid-16th century, has not stopped since. But contemporary mestizo food culture and Indian food ways are presently undermined by commercial interests. The Acambay study illustrates this point, through the evidence of two sets of food, processed and traditional; two ways of buying this food, in the tianguis and in the grocery stores; and two ways of eating and preparing this food, either Indian or mestizo.

Throughout the paper the role of communication in this interplay of opposing factors has been examined, keeping in mind theoretical assumptions drawn from critical theory and cultural analysis. With these methodological instruments, a spatial dimension has been added to the concept of hegemony, which includes and goes beyond culture as a whole social process, and ideology, in any of its Marxist senses.

In the study of women's consumption patterns and attitudes in a Mexican village, the following major characteristics have proven to be of great significance. The first indicates that the structures of power, the economic and hegemonic influences, as well as the national policies followed by the government, affect the food intake of people in Acambay but, in most cases, do not improve their food availability.

Second, most women consider that the traditional habits of consuming fresh food, are the better choice for them and their families.

Third, the spread of "myths" (meat vs legumes as a source of protein, bottle feeding vs breast feeding, white bread vs tortillas etc), is reinforced by the media, and by government

programs.

Fourth, the disruption of food customs, such as the substitution of beans by pasta, for instance, brings hazards to the nutritional status of the villagers.

Fifth, the relationship with the environment regarding the obtaining of food is altered by food marketing and advertising.

And sixth, the products marketed and advertised by food companies do not offer a viable alternative to undernutrition in Mexico's countryside, as has become evident in Chapter III.

To present these research findings in a coherent way, it has been necessary to invoke a historical and cultural context. Inserting them into the proper enclosing of time-space gives meaning to the whole project, and reinforces the conclusion that in the Mexican countryside, the collection and consumption of food are fundamentally altered by multinational food marketing practices, but the lifestyles conveyed through advertising are neither possible nor appropriate for rural women.

5.8 Notes

1) Capitalism is a system which develops unevenly in space, continually making centres and peripheries, with relations of dependence and exploitation between the peoples in the different types of region. International monopoly capitalism can thus be comprehended by tying the institution 'multinational corporation' into a systemic process operating in space, a process understood simultaneously in terms of economic structure and space (J.R. Peet, 1982:300).

2) For example, in Peruvian villages, peasants too poor to buy transistor radios carry stones painted black as 'status items' (J.R. Peet, 1982:296).

3) Stavenhagen, cited in Fromm & Maccoby (1970:237), says that while it is certain that a large number of consumer goods have been distributed to the underdeveloped areas in recent years, this does not automatically imply the development of these areas, if by development we mean an increase in per capita output of goods and services, and in the general social welfare. Often this diffusion of products is nothing but the diffusion of the culture of poverty into the backward, rural areas, for it involves no basic institutional changes... The "diffusion" is often nothing more than the extension into rural areas of monopolies, and monopsonies, with negative consequences for a balanced and harmonious development... This process of "diffusion" to which are attributed so many beneficial results, has been going on in Latin America for more than 400 years -- and aside from certain dynamic focal points of growth, the continent is still as underdeveloped as ever.

APPENDIX

FAMILY CHARACTERISTICS

No of children	male	female	ages
Husband	age	job	income
House size	rooms	bathroom	kitchen

Household inhabitants other than children
Dead infants

Family properties   land   radio TV electric appl.

Literacy (years of schooling)
Miscellaneous characteristics

FOOD FREQUENCY

Name:--------   Code:------

Item	Once a day	several times a week	once a week	once a month	rarely or ocassionally

1. helado (ice cream)
2. queso fresco (soft cheese)
3. queso anejo (ripe cheese)
4. carne de res (beef)
5. higado (liver)
6. carne de puerco (pork)
7. frijoles (beans)
8. corn-flakes
9. pescado (fish)
10. huevos (eggs)
11. papas (potatoes)
12. pasta de sopa (macaroni)
13. refrescos (soft drinks)
14. leche (milk)
15. pollo (chicken)
16. verduras (vegetables)
17. fruta (fruits)
18. dulces (candy)
19. pan dulce (pastries)
20. mantequilla (butter)

24-HOUR DIETARY RECALL INTERVIEW

Name------- Code-------

What did you eat and drank in the last 24 hours?
Start with the last food eaten and work back 24 hours

	Item	Amount
morning		
mid-morning		
noon		
afternoon		
evening		
before bed		

CONTEXTUAL INTERVIEW

Name---------- code------

Do you read Buenhogar?   often   sometimes   don't know
Do you go to church   often   sometimes   seldom

Which are your preferred foods?
Which are your husband's preferred foods?
Which are your children's preferred foods?
Tell about your ideal breakfast, lunch, dinner

(time saving)
Do you prefer convenience foods?

Tell about party (fiesta) food

If you had lots of money,
what would you eat?   same food   more of same   different

If you had lots of money,
where would you like to live? same place   capital city   elsewhere

If you had lots of money,
what would you like to do? same thing   don't know   specify

Food advertising does
promote   nutritious   expensive   unknown
                            food   food   food

Other coments:

GROCERY STORE

Items	price per items or package	name brand	fresh	canned

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